

Proposal

Title - Oppression, Empowerment, and the Role of the Interpreter

Program of Study – American Sign Language and Interpreting

Presentation Type – Print Poster

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Abstract: This paper examines the history of oppression on the Deaf as a culture minority and how interpreters can be oppressive. The paper then shows different ways that interpreters can recognize and stop oppressive tendencies and how they can empower the Deaf as an ally interpreter. There is a long history of oppression in minority groups, one such group being the Deaf. They have been told to conform to the majority and become more like hearing people and that they are defective. This negative view has impacted the way interpreters, who bridge the communication between Deaf and hearing people, think about their Deaf clients and often results in disenfranchisement and paternalistic mindsets. Although the goal of interpreters is to bridge the gap of communication between Deaf and hearing, many times they end up oppressing the Deaf; whether subtly or purposefully. Because interpreters are often the only ones that understand what is going on between both languages and cultures, they are in a powerful position that could easily be abused. Interpreters are often placed in situations that can cause oppression on the Deaf community, whether the oppression was communicated through the interpreter due to ignorance or lack of respect, becoming aware of such tendencies will help stop oppression from its cycle. The interpreter can support and empower the Deaf community. This can be done

when the interpreter becomes an ally, someone who comes alongside and supports the Deaf. Although an interpreter will never fully be able to comprehend being Deaf, they can develop their skills in sign language and immerse themselves in Deaf culture. They must respect the Deaf community and their language. Accepting feedback and being willing to accommodate the Deaf client are some ways that can empower the Deaf. The end goal is dynamic equivalence for Deaf and hearing clients. It is only when both hearing and Deaf people work alongside each other that will allow oppression's effect to lose its grip.

Christian worldview integration: Since the Fall, when sin first entered the world, people have struggled to get along. This issue became much more problematic after the tower of Babel once different cultures and languages were formed and dispersed throughout the world. In the bible, there are many passages of scripture that discuss how to treat one another and help those in need; this mindset has greatly helped throughout my research process as I dug into the issues between Deaf and hearing individuals. Because of the culture and language differences, people struggle to communicate; this is where interpreters step in. An interpreter's job is to serve their clients equally, which reflects the biblical principle of not treating others different regarding their class or status. Although everyone struggles with treating people fairly, it is clear in the bible that God made all humans in His image; because of this, all people have an intrinsic value, whether they are hearing or Deaf. This research is impactful within the culture at large because oppression still exists. I have Deaf friends at Liberty University and even though this university has Christian values, oppression still occurs. A lot of this is due to unawareness, which this paper would help spread. Oppression is a sin, whether it is done purposefully or in ignorance, and Christians are called to love and encourage one another, not to put others down. It is time that people,

especially those that are interpreters and Christians, learn to see and recognize the different forms of oppression so that they can stop and in turn become allies and support the Deaf.