

# Real-Time Captioning In the Classroom

## Introduction

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing often require classroom accommodations so they can understand and learn the material presented. Some individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing prefer to use a Real-Time Captionist as opposed to writing, lip reading, or if the individual possesses residual hearing, possibly using a device to amplify sounds.

When real-time captioning is the preferred form of communication, the services of a Real-Time Captionist may be arranged for the student. This comes as a reasonable and useful classroom accommodation to help the student learn and understand course content. Therefore, it is important for both students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and instructors who teach these students, to know how to utilize the services of a Captionist effectively.

The student has signed an agreement that the transcripts acquired from the Captionist will be for their personal studies only and will not be shared with other people without the written consent of the instructor. The student also understands that the transcript documenting the comments of class activity may not be used in any way against the faculty member or students.

Effective use of captioning services requires an accurate understanding of the Captionist's role and responsibilities, as well as your own role and responsibilities as an instructor when a Captionist is present in your classroom. Listed below is a brief definition of the Captionist's job, followed by suggested guidelines that can help make the teaching process go smoothly for you, the Captionist, and most importantly the student.

For more information on captioning in the classroom or on teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing, please contact Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS). **Erika Martin**, the DSPS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator, can be contacted if you need any assistance at:

[emartin@msjc.edu](mailto:emartin@msjc.edu) or 951-487-3306.

## Description

A Real-Time Captionist is a stenographer (similar to those used in court), who uses a stenomachine or laptop computer to provide a record of the lecture and classroom discussion. The captioner is either on site or working from a remote location. The words of the lecture are instantaneously readable on the screen of a laptop computer for the student. The student reads the typed record while the instructor is lecturing, and a

transcript of the lecture will be provided to the student afterwards. The aim of this skill and technology is simple, effortless communication.

The Captionist may or may not sit next to the student because the Captionist does need access to an electrical outlet; though the front of the classroom is often an optimal location. The Captionist's mission is to facilitate communication; he/she should neither add nor delete any information at any time. Due to the specific nature of the Captionist's role, it is important not to ask the Captionist for his/her opinion or to perform any tasks other than captioning.

It is also important to keep in mind that sometimes, depending on the length of the class, more than one Captionist may be present. Typically, any class over two hours requires the service of two Captionists who will take turns captioning.

## Guidelines

- **Helpful Hints to Remember Before Using Captioning Services-**

*Acknowledge Captionist's Role:* Remember that the Captionist is in the classroom to facilitate communication for the student. As mentioned above, he/she should not be asked to run errands, proctor exams, or discuss the student's personal issues. He/she should not participate in the class in any way independent of the student or express personal opinions.

*Use Captioned Materials:* Captioned DVD's or videos are REQUIRED to allow the student direct visual access to the information. If you need assistance with this, please contact your department chair well in advance of the planned showing of the video.

*Establish Captionist's Location:* The Captionist and student will discuss where the Captionist should be located in the classroom to provide the greatest benefit for the student, and minimal distraction to other class members. Keep lines of sight free for visual access to information. In class, the Captionist will attempt to position himself/herself so the deaf or hard of hearing student can see both the instructor and any visual aids.

*Consider Classroom Arrangement:* For interactive situations, circles or semicircles work best for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

*Share Lecture Content:* Familiarity with the subject matter will enhance the quality of the captioned message. If possible, meet with the Captionist to share outlines, texts, agenda, technical vocabulary, class syllabus, and any other background information that would be pertinent.

- **Helpful Hints to Remember While Using Captioning Services-**

*Speak Directly to the Student:* The Captionist is in the classroom to facilitate communication for the student. Speak directly to and maintain communication with the student. The Captionist may request clarification from you to ensure accuracy of the information conveyed.

*Spell Out Technical Words:* It is helpful to have technical terms or jargon relating to a particular discipline or concept spelled or written out. Either on the board, an overhead projector, a class handout, or with some other visual aid.

*Speak at a Reasonable Pace:* Captionists normally caption with a time lag of about a sentence after the speaker because Captionists must first process the information before relaying it. Speak naturally and at a modest pace. Keep in mind that a Captionist must listen and understand what is being said before captioning.

*Use "I" and "You" References:* The Captionist will relay your exact words. Use personal references such as "I" and "You" when communicating with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Avoid speaking of the individual in the third person; phrases such as 'ask her' or 'tell him' can be confusing.

*Encourage Communicating in Turn:* It is important that only one person speak at a time. The captioning process only allows one person to speak at a time. Therefore, encourage students to wait before speaking or signing until you recognize them.

*Allow Ample Time for Reading:* The student cannot read materials and read the screen with the captions at the same time. Avoid talking while students are focused on written work or overhead projections/multimedia presentations.

*Allow Ample Time for Questions:* During class discussions or question/answer periods, give the student an opportunity to raise his/her hand, be recognized, and ask questions. Making time for questions allows the Captionist to finish captioning for the current speaker, and enables the student who is deaf or hard of hearing to participate in class.

*Repeat or Paraphrase Questions and Responses:* No matter where the Captionist is positioned, chances are they will be unable to hear everyone clearly at all times. When questions are asked, be sure to repeat or paraphrase questions before a response is given. Likewise, responses should also be repeated or paraphrased.

*Incorporate Strategic Lecture Breaks:* Plan periodic breaks so that both student and Captionist can get a rest from the rigors of captioning. For the student, receiving information visually without breaks can be tiring and cause eye fatigue. For the Captionist, relaying information to the student while simultaneously processing new information from the speaker can create mental and physical strain. For classes longer than 50 minutes in which only one Captionist is available, a 5-10 minute mid-class break is essential.

## **Other Pointers for Effective Teaching**

*Expectations:* Although many students with disabilities need accommodations, expect these students to perform at a level commensurate with their peers. Do not have a

special grading scale or other criteria for them. Do not alter or water down your curriculum for that individual.

*Guided Notes on the Web:* Providing students with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class can assist them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.

## **Collaboration**

Do not hesitate to call your DSPS office (Menifee ext. 5305 or San Jacinto ext. 3306) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, the DSPS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Coordinator, and the student, to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

## **Additional Resources**

*Gallaudet University:* <http://www.gallaudet.edu>

“Gallaudet University, located in Washington DC, is the only liberal arts university in the world designed exclusively for deaf and hard of hearing students.” Site offers information on the campus, academic programs, and latest research.

*The National Association of the Deaf (NAD):* <http://www.nad.org>

“The NAD, established in 1880, is the oldest and largest constituency organization safeguarding the accessibility and civil rights of 28 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans in education, employment, health care, and telecommunications.” Site offers information regarding issues related to deafness including, “information on deaf people, sign language, and legal rights.”

*The Postsecondary Education Programs Network (PEPNET):* <http://www.pepnet.org>

“PEPNET is the national collaboration of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. The goal of PEPNET is to assist postsecondary institutions across the nation to attract and effectively serve individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.” Site offers information regarding the four Regional Centers, current news and events, a listserv to ask questions and share experiences, and online training for education professionals.

*The United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

homepage: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Site includes information regarding disability rights and laws, ADA questions and answers, and a list of ADA publications.