

Interpreting for people with hearing disability in the area of employing

(scientific paper)

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Abstract: *The area of employing people with health disability is a wide topic. The contribution focuses on the matter of employing people with hearing disability from the Czech sign language interpreters' point of view. The theoretical part focuses on a job interview and a new employee adaptation. From the deaf education point of view, the communication of people with hearing ability and interpreting was mentioned. The method of a structured questionnaire was selected from the empirical methods. Professional interpreters in the Czech Republic were addressed. The contribution is an output of the research and among others it offers a basic summary of problems on the part of an employee with hearing disability and on the part of the employer established by the questionnaire.*

Keywords: *interpreting, person with hearing ability, communication of people with hearing disability, job interview, employee adaptation.*

1 Introduction

The area of employing people with health disability is a current topic. The society is being developed and its view of employing people with health disability is being improved. There are still significant obstacles and in particular for people with hearing disability. Even the quotation by Helen Keller, although it is directed to people with deaf blindness but very often quoted in connection to the hearing disability itself: "In the complete darkness and silence, which separates me from the world, I miss the friendly sound of a human voice the most." Blindness separates people from things; deafness separates people from people (Hrubý, 1999) implies how serious problem the language barrier is. Most people with hearing disability use Czech sign language

for communication. We cannot expect that employer would master this language. At some working positions, it is sufficient that the employer respects the language and finds alternative ways to communicate with its employee such as written communication. The most frequent problem, which people with hearing disability experience, is usually calling. In spite of the fact that Alexander Graham Bell originally wanted to invent a device to help deaf blind children, this invention became a huge gap between the deaf and hearing societies.

It is not easy to define clearly that employing people with hearing disability is a problem. It depends on the individual person with hearing disability, his communication code, knowledge, skills, willingness to adapt and other factors. Simultaneously, it depends on the employer to what extent he is willing to employ a person with hearing disability and to what extent he accommodates to his requirements. Other factors influencing the course of events are particularly the working team, environment, finances etc. Therefore it is necessary to see this matter individually from the point of view of each individual and situation. Despite this, I would like to try to outline this matter from a general perspective.

2 The Area of Employing

2.1 Job Interview

As stated by Dvořáková (2012), the job interview is used especially because it offers a verification of the judgement regarding the applicant, his prerequisites and particularly his motivation to work. It is a significant moment not only from the point of view of the employer but also from the point of view of the applicant, which enables acquiring authentic information to assess reciprocal requirements and ideas.

The interview may be unstructured and it is led by the interviewer who is able to plan, organize and control the process of the interview and is able to judge and assess the reliability of the answers followingly. (Dvořáková, 2012). Koubek (1995) claims that this interview is considered to be less reliable as there is also the possibility to ask personal questions as well as the possibility of being influenced by so-called halo effect.

On the other hand, the structured interview contains questions prepared in advance which should get to know the applicant, even uncommon and unexpected questions may occur, these aim to provoke instinctive answers (Dvořáková, 2012).

Koubek (1995) assumes that a structured interview is considered to be more effective, reliable and accurate. The interviewer has lesser likelihood that he forgets certain facts. The interview is recorded and archived.

We may meet one round of the interview but also more of them. An interview between the interviewer and the applicant, an interview before a committee and an interview determined to verify professional knowledge belong among the most frequently used ones (Dvořáková, 2012).

According to Koubek (2007) the main function of the interview is primarily to assess working capacity. The task of the interview is subject to these following aims:

- Acquire sufficient and deeper information about the applicant and judge whether the applicant is the suitable candidate for the given position.
- Provide the applicant with information about the company and work for it. The applicant acquires the possibility to decide whether the position is appropriate for him.
- Assess the character, character features of the applicant.

2.2 Employee Adaptation

Guided adaptation as stated by Dvořáková (2012) represents a systematic orientation and joining the new employee within the cultural, social and working system of the organization. It is possible to meet a written form or handing over from “generation to generation” while the written form is more beneficial. The purpose of the adaptation is to cut the costs related to employee fluctuation, lower the productivity loss and increase working satisfaction in the organization. In huge companies, we may meet processing and implementation of an adaptation programme which accelerated joining process and adaptation of new employees.

Dvořáková (2012) assumes that lately company culture, norms and values are emphasized. A new employee has to orientate being helped by the HR specialists and superiors. An introductory training of the new employee is common; this is used to hand over main information about the company.

The HR specialist accompanies the new employee to his new working space and hands him formally over to his superior, who informs him of his rights and duties, possibly the new employee attends health and safety training. Simultaneously, the superior introduces the new employee to his colleagues. The new employee is then guided to his working space, which was assigned to him, and hands him over the necessary equipment for performing his work. The information needed to perform work is necessary to be handed over continuously. Encouragement, trust and pleasant atmosphere is recommended (Koubek, 1995).

3 Communication of People with Hearing Disability

3.1 Czech Sign Language

Doležalová (2012) brings into attention that it is an own sign language of the deaf people which consists of a set of signs which follow rules and express symbols of real or abstract meaning according to the manifestation of the deaf person.

Czech sign language is a visual-motoric language. It is characterised by hands, body and mouth language of the speaker and is followingly perceived by the sight (Servusová, 2008).

According to Horáková (2012) Czech sign language shows basic attributes of a language: signability, double division, system, productivity, peculiarity and historical aspect. Doležalová (2012) adds that sign language is stable regarding grammar and lexical features. The specific feature is linear ordering signs one after another and the possibility to order the signs simultaneously for example by non-manual components.

The following pieces of knowledge related to the Czech sign language were proved during decades of researching the sign language:

- Sign language is a natural language.
- Sign language is independent of spoken language of the majority.
- Hands, head, body, upper part of face (eyebrow, look, eyelids), nose, mouth, cheeks, chin and tongue function as articulators in a sign language.
- These articulators may be used at the same time – simultaneously and each one participates in creating the meaning of announcement.
- Knowledge of sign language does not obstruct acquisition of the language of the majority.

Acquisition of the sign language may contribute to effective study of the language of the majority as the second language (Okrouhlíková, Slánská Bímová, 2008).

3.2 Signed Czech

Langer (2013) states that signed national language, in our case signed Czech, is not a natural language system, but artificially created system, which is based on the grammar and rules of Czech language, when each word corresponds to a relevant sign expressing the content of the word as precisely as possible. It is an artificially created pidgin, when a combination of two languages arises while they are fully independent of each other.

Regarding the fact that signed Czech requires the knowledge of Czech language, this communication system is suitable for people with hearing disability who master

Czech language. At the same time, the hearing society learns signed Czech much more easily than Czech sign language.

3.3 Speech and Lip-Reading

Czech language as well as other spoken languages is an audio-oral language. In contrast to sign languages, which exist on the visual-motoric base, it is produced by an oral system and followingly the sound is perceived by the recipient via the hearing system. The speaker works also with nonverbal elements when using spoken language. However, nonverbal communication is independent of using spoken language. These meanings may be announced in a written form or they may be recorded in a sound form (Servusová, 2008).

Doležalová (2012) defines Czech language as a linear language which is divided in time, lacks the attribute of Czech signed language, which has the possibility of being expressed simultaneously too.

The speech requires the skill of lip-reading on the part of the person with hearing disability.

Lip-reading is a skill, which enables an individual to perceive speech by his sight, which he can do on the basis of mouth movement, gestures, expression, gesticulation, the whole body posture, situational factors and context of the content of the spoken (Krahulcová, 2002).

Doležalová (2012) states that lip-reading is perceived as an imperfect replacement of the sense of hearing which cannot be fully replaced by this skill. It is necessary to follow a wide range of rules and create convenient conditions and adjust to the situation so that lip-reading had an effective impact. *External and internal conditions* belong to the conditions which influence the quality of lip-reading. *External* conditions consist of perfect and uninterrupted eye contact, appropriate lighting, the distance of the speaker, speech, its pace and rhythm, way of articulation of the speaker and current situation. *Internal* conditions for lip-reading are differently set for each individual. The differences may occur in processing the information in the central nervous system and other phases. The psychic and somatic conditions of permanent and current type may be influential as well.

Other factors influence lip-reading which may occur individually by each individual during the situation.

3.4 Finger Spelling Alphabets

The visual-motoric system enabling production of speech. It works on the principle of position and posture of fingers, which represent individual letters of the alphabet. We may meet a few finger spelling alphabets:

- One-handed finger spelling alphabet which is the most frequent and is used at schools for people with hearing disability as a learning aid.
- Two-handed finger spelling alphabet is used for communication of people with hearing disability and serves to express foreign words, titles possibly if a correspondent sign is missing.
- Mixed finger spelling alphabet is used by some people with hearing disability, when a combination of one-handed and two-handed finger spelling alphabet occurs (Doležalová, 2012).

4 Interpreting

In general, we may state The Constitutional Act n. 1/1993 Sb., The Constitution of the Czech Republic, where in the Article 3 we find that A part of the constitutional order of the Czech Republic is The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which mentions that *basic rights and freedoms are guaranteed to all people without difference*. Later we may also find a mention that people with *health disabilities are entitled to special protection in working relations* (Toráčová, 2008).

The right to interpreting services is ensured for the people with hearing disability by the Act n. 155/1998 Sb., On Communication Systems of Deaf and Deaf-blind People (as amended by Act n. 348/2008 Sb.). Conditions of providing the services are subject to the Act n. 108/2006 Sb., On Social Services, as amended. The clients with hearing disability are entitled to interpreting at the doctor, at the police, at work, when dealing with contracts or at the offices free of charge. Within the educational system, interpreting is free of charge.

People with hearing disability are compared to foreigners in their own country. They may learn Czech language. However, they cannot learn to hear it. Therefore interpreting in all its forms is a significant factor in interpersonal communication of people with hearing disability with the intact society.

As the Act n. 155/198 Sb., *On Communication Systems of Deaf and Deaf-blind People*, as amended by the Act n. 384/2008 Sb., (in its full version published under the n. 423/2008 Sb.) states that it is possible to meet more types of interpreting. Interpreting into Czech sign Language, transliteration into signed Czech (the client masters Czech language), visualisation of spoken Czech, possibly interpreting for deaf-blind people. The most frequent type of interpreting is interpreting into Czech sign language – primary and full communication means.

We may meet simultaneous interpreting as well (the interpreter interprets simultaneously with the speaker) or consecutive (the interpreter waits until the speaker finishes a clause or idea and followingly translates). We meet simultaneous interpreting by professional interpreters (Horáková, 2012).

According to the situation, which is interpreted in, we distinguish two types of interpreting. The first type is court interpreting, interpreting at the offices or police. In such case the body orders and pays for the interpreter. The second type is interpreting everyday situations so-called community interpreting. It is interpreting personal matters at the offices or at the doctor (Horáková, 2012).

In such a case, the person with hearing disability orders the interpreter on his own. The deaf, the hard of hearing and those who have lost hearing as well as deaf-blind clients from the Czech Republic may order an interpreter by several organizations; the most important organization in this area is The Centre for Mediating Interpreters for Deaf People (Centrum zprostředkování tlumočnicků pro neslyšící – CZTN), where we can find a database of interpreters. The operators in the centre process the requirements of clients using a special software database. It is possible to address the Czech Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters (Česká komora tlumočnicků znakového jazyka – CKTZJ), where interpreting is provided to a limited extent as the organization especially takes care of improving professional level of interpreters, protects the interests of interpreters and offers their further education. They also inform the wide public about specifics of interpreting for deaf people. It specialises in interpreting of theatre or musical performances [1].

5 Problems of Interpreting on the Part of the Client

Most interpreters who interpreted a job interview for a person with hearing disability experienced client's worries that he would not pass the entrance health check. The employer does not have to fully realize the impact of hearing disability in the working process; in contrast the person with hearing disability himself is fully aware of his deficiencies arising from the disability and its possible compensation. The biggest problem, when applying for a job, is particularly calling which is impossible for most people with hearing disability and nowadays, it is completely unexpendable during the working process. Another reason for worries during a job interview is the communication barrier. Most people with hearing disability worry how the new employer will react to the fact that they communicate only through Czech sign language. The clients using lip-reading and speech may be troubled by the communication in this way as stress, unknown surrounding and strange people may influence the quality of lip-reading; as well as other factors such as insufficient lighting of the room or an inappropriate position of the interview participants.

Employees with hearing disability are worried about the way they will join the team at work and how the communication will work.

6 Problems of Interpreting on the Part of the Employer

The most frequent indiscretion of the employer, possibly the person leading a job interview, is addressing the interpreter and not respecting the fact that the participant of the communication is the person with hearing disability.

Most employers are biased to certain extent towards people with hearing disability. Applicants with hearing disability experience refusal as they use hands for communication and therefore they are not capable of manual work. Another argument was safety measures where the applicant with hearing disability was informed that if there was a fire, he would not hear warning sound signals.

The employers often do not know the situation of people with hearing disability; they lack orientation in the matter and have no experience with Czech sign language, possibly with the possibility to use an interpreter. They cannot imagine cooperation with a person with hearing disability; they do not look for any solution of reciprocal communication such as writing messages on a piece of paper or other forms of communication.

People with hearing disability when stressed cannot often react, suggest optimal solution of the situation and it is not appropriate for the interpreter to enter the interview, although he is aware of the fact that there are often reasons for worries on the part of the employer, which are trivial and insignificant.

It is necessary to add that the stated problems with employers or selective procedures may not be generalized; there are still experienced HR specialists and employers at the job market who orientate in the matter very well and who are interested in employing people with hearing disability.

7 Research Objectives

The main objective was to establish which problems the interpreters for people with hearing disability experience when interpreting in the area of employing people with hearing disability not only on the part of the employer but also on the part of the client.

8 Description of Research Set

Among criterion of choice the research sample contained professional interpreters in the Czech Republic and willingness to provide information. The research sample consisted of professional interpreters from the whole Czech Republic who were addressed via a questionnaire in an electronic version. They were chosen on the basis of the database of interpreters or on personal meeting. Gender, age, education or the type of interpreting that they provided was not taken into consideration. The professionalism of the interpreter based on attending courses, seminars and other activities deepening his ability to provide his activities professionally was taken into consideration. The significant parameter of selection was professional interpreting occupation based on performing legal conditions.

9 Methodology

The base of the research was a quantitative research. The research method of a questionnaire was used for this contribution from the empirical methods. The questionnaire was anonymous.

The questionnaire contained 27 questions. Introductory part contained social-demographical data of respondents as gender, age, achieved education and education in section of interpreting in Czech sign language. Questionnaire was concentrated at several research goals, for example favorite areas of interpreting from view of interpreter in Czech sign language and areas which are most preferred with people with hearing impairment. Further it focuses on thesis of employment of people with hearing impairment and problems with interpreting in these area. Questionnaire focuses on satisfaction of people with hearing impairment with interpreting in this area too and criterions used by people with hearing impairment to choose interpreter in Czech sign language. Last questions were focused on code of ethic of interpreters. Questionnaire contained closed and open questions, which offered to respondents possibility to comment given issues.

Questionnaire was sent via electronic mail, where was public address link of questionnaire, to interpreters given in database of Center of mediation interpreters for Deaf. Further questionnaire was sent to interpreters working at Teireiás center MU and another selected interpreters. Possibility of filling up questionnaire was one month.

The total of twenty-eight respondents at the average age of thirty-three years filled in the questionnaire; 85.71% of the respondents were of the feminine gender and 89.29% stated completed university education. The chosen results are analysed, graphically processed and commented on.

10 Results

The total number of twenty-eight respondents at the average age of thirty-three answered the questionnaire; 85.71% were of feminine gender and 89.29% stated completed university education.

Time demandingness was 15 minutes in average. The questionnaire had the total of 27 questions. Professional interpreters from the whole Czech Republic were addressed.

Concerning education in the area of interpreting the most common was university study at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University major Czech in Communication of People with Hearing Disability, various courses of Pevnost, the Czech Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters, the Institute of People with Hearing Disability, APPN, attending conferences dealing with linguistics of Czech sign language, interpreting or generally the matter of people with hearing disability. In addition, there were seminars organized by the Centre Teiresiás or artistic workshops by the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno. The project COMIN run by the Masaryk University in Brno was mentioned often and the major Special pedagogy with the specialisation of Deaf Education.

53.57% of respondents assume that there is definitely not a shortage of university majors with specialisation of interpreting Czech sign language. 39.29% are persuaded that there is not a shortage of university majors in this area and only 7.14% assume that there is a shortage of these majors.

82.14% of respondents answered that the occupation of an interpreter is significantly demanding and 10.71% are persuaded that this occupation is maximally demanding. Only 7.14% are persuaded that this profession is rather demanding.

The respondents agreed that by 89.29% the most frequently required interpreting is in the area of health care, followed by 78.57% at the offices and 60.71% at schools or other educational organization and 57.14% at universities. 17.86% require other interpreting than it was stated in the offer such as in the banks, at the wedding, within the family, business meetings or courses. 14.29% require interpreting for audio-visual media, 10.71% at court proceedings and 3.57% at the registrar office. None of the respondents have experienced interpreting at the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

According to the respondents, interpreting in the health care by 60.71% belongs among the favourite interpreting particularly because of education of the interpreter in this area as preparation for interpreting does not take so much time. Interpreting in this area is considered to be very important. According to the respondents, this interpreting is required a lot. Simultaneously, interpreters state that this interpreting is highly demanding in the mental way as it requires mental hygiene and especially empathy. 57.14% stated interpreting at schools and educational organizations as favourite and as the reason they state education and work in this area. 57.57% state

interpreting at universities as favourite. It is their opportunity to acquire new information, view and they can meet interesting people. It is known environment for them as they also studied university. They also appreciate that interpreting in this area enables them to educate themselves in other areas. The same percentage (57.57%) of respondents marked interpreting at the offices as favourite, they consider it to be less stressful than for example interpreting at the court proceedings.

As other, the respondents state – wedding, funerals, interpreting within the family or at work. 28.57% of respondents did not choose from the offer of favourite interpreting and stated the notion “other”. 14.29% of respondents like interpreting for audio-visual media and 7.14% of respondents consider interpreting at the registrar office to be their favourite as it does not require significant preparation. 3.57% of respondents like interpreting at court and consider it to be highly demanding and interesting at the same time.

78.57% of respondents stated that they have already interpreted a job interview. 21.43% have not experienced such a situation yet.

The most frequent type of interpreting in the situation of a job interview was Czech sign language which was stated by 76% of respondents. 21% of respondents stated as the type of interpreting the option “other” and followingly they stated that they have not experienced this situation yet. 3% selected interpreting into the signed Czech.

The respondents stated the following problems on the part of the employer as the most frequent: worries about communication with people with hearing disability, communication with colleagues at the workplace and joining the team, furthermore they stated the impossibility of calling.

The respondents met the following problems on the part of employee as the most frequent: inability to express himself and expecting help or answering questions by the interpreter, inability to react to possible questions and informal or inappropriate behaviour on the part of the person with hearing disability. In addition, there is also a late coming or insufficient knowledge of the course of the interview.

The respondents expressed also their opinions on the matter of interpreting a job interview for the client with hearing disability. In general, there is insufficient information of the matter of hearing disability and communication principles with an interpreter on the part of the employer according to the respondents. Even people with hearing disability make mistakes by the fact that they do not know how to present themselves, they rely too much on the help of the interpreter and they expect the interpreter to act on behalf of them. Nonetheless, it is highly individual and it depends on each client. The respondents agreed that people with hearing disability should be better informed for example via courses that would be dedicated to the matter of searching a job so that they learn how to behave at a job interview, possibly some service focused on help for people with hearing disability when searching

a job. The respondents also assume that possible problems may originate in the little necessity to find and keep a job, as it is a job, which they mostly do not enjoy and they are not well paid for it, so they do not feel necessity to aspire to it.

64.29% of respondents stated yes to the question whether they experienced interpreting of the first day at work for a client with hearing disability and 35.71% of respondents stated no. 85.71% of respondents experienced interpreting of important meetings or courses (such as fire protection, health and safety etc.) for a client with hearing disability. 14.29% have never experienced such a situation.

At the scale: excellent, good, bad and neutral relationship towards the clients with hearing disability; 39.29% of respondents selected the notion excellent and 53.57% good. 7.14% stated a neutral relationship.

According to the respondents, clients choose an interpreter on the basis of the knowledge of Czech sign language (85.71%) and confidentiality (82.14%). Furthermore, they state reference from surrounding (71.43%), sympathy (53.57%), other (25.00%) (As other they stated for example reliability, trust, habit), the interpreter's look (17.86%) and friendship (10.71%) as important factors. 7.14% of respondents identically stated price and education.

According to the respondents, their clients with hearing disability consider accurate transfer of information (78.57%) and confidentiality (75.00%) to be the most important, later they stated following the Code of Ethics for Interpreters (25.00%) and the option other (14.29%). As other, they specified flexibility, the knowledge of the interpreter for a long time and being used to him, appropriate clothes and the interpreter's behaviour. 7.14% stated a friendship as an important factor for a client with hearing disability.

96.43% of respondents have experienced a dissatisfied client. 3.57% have not experienced a dissatisfied client. According to the respondents, possible dissatisfaction is mostly demonstrated in such a way that the client does not order the interpreter any more; possibly he makes a complaint to his superior.

At the scale: definitely yes, yes, no, definitely no; for 64.29% of respondents it is not demanding to follow the Code of Ethics for Interpreters. 14.29% stated that it is demanding to follow it and 21.43% expressed that it is definitely not demanding to follow the Code of Ethics for Interpreters.

To the question whether clients require strict following of the Code of Ethics, 17.86% of respondents agreed on the answer yes and the same percentage (17.86%) agreed on the answer no. 3.57% selected the answer definitely no. The option other was crossed by 60.71% of respondents and followingly they specified why they chose this option of the answer. The most frequents answers were those although clients themselves require confidentiality; they themselves require information about other clients. Some require strict following; the others do not as they would like the interpreter to act on behalf of them, which is not allowed by the Code of Ethics. The

interpreters assume that young generation does not require strict following, in contrast older generation is not aware of the existence of the Code of Ethics and therefore they do not require it. 82.14% of respondents do not feel the need to amend the Code of Ethics by new articles. 3.57% of respondents chose the answer definitely no and 14.29% chose the option yes that they would amend it. They would amend an article stating that interpreters behave in situations according to their feeling and conscience.

11 Summary

Interpreting for people with hearing disability in the area of employing is still a current topic. Not only on the part of employers but also on the part of people with hearing disability problems or deficiencies occur that influence job applicants possibly an already accepted employee with hearing disability. These deficiencies arise especially from the limited information in the area of people with hearing disability. The contribution views this matter through the eyes of interpreters for people with hearing disability. The work of interpreters for people with hearing disability is demanding. The Code of Ethics for Interpreters is supposed to be a support in this uneasy occupation. As the research showed, it may also be limiting and restricting for their work.

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[1] (<http://www.cztn.cz/21.8.2015>)

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