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By Janet Fedorchuk and Laura Paulsen.
Building a Favorable Transcriber-Instructor Alliance
4/27/2013

Janet Fedorchuk: We're ready to start. Can I get your attention? My name is Janet Fedorchuk. I'm from White Rock, B.C. We'll talk about the favorable transcriber-instructor alliance.

Laura Paulsen: I'm Laura Paulsen from Idaho.

Before the semester starts, a handful of things need to be done. The service coordinator should be sending these to the instructors. You should be familiar with this email. [On screen.] Janet has a copy of Whatcom's handout called "There's a Transcriber in my Class".

Janet: This is a copy from Whatcom Community College. It is sent to every teacher that will have a TypeWell transcriber in their class, before the term starts. It also goes to every transcriber in case the teacher didn't read the email or didn't receive it. It has helpful hints as to what to expect. I can email more copies if they're needed.

It has good helpful tips and logistics of power cords along with everything else. It lets the instructor know what to expect with a transcriber in the classroom.

Laura: With the subject matter in the class, it helps to know what's coming up. At some sites, you can get a hard copy of the textbook to look through ahead of time. Familiarize yourself with terms. If you know they're talking about the endoplasmic reticulum, you can save yourself a lot of keystrokes by putting "ER" in your PAL.

At my school, we have a flash drive with all of the textbooks for the semester on it. They're all together. If you have access to the books, that's a huge resource.

Janet: It's great for prep. It helps you to have an idea of what the course content will be. It will also tell you whether or not it's a class that you can handle. If it's not your strong suit, it's best to get another transcriber.

Laura: It also helps to cut down on your confused looks; the instructor notices when you look like you have no idea what he just said.

Janet: Some of these policies may vary depending on the site you're working at. At first, I usually introduce myself to the instructor and to the student. I give a brief description of what I'm going to be doing there. I carry the hard copy of the site's policies for possible questions as well.

Laura: We all need a brief definition of what's going on, the thirty second speech to explain what we do to somebody else.

Student: I have a question. I am under the impression that there is student confidentiality to respect. I would love the other students to know what I'm doing there, but could you address that?

Laura: The trick is to find the line to explain something, but not to cross the line. I typically say, "I work for the disability department" or "I work with hard of hearing students." By saying just that, it's usually enough for them to go off happily.

Janet: You can even say, "I am providing services for a student" without identifying the student.

There is one other thing to be aware of before the first day. Check out the logistics to make sure you can get power from an outlet if needed, see the screen, and hear the professor. It can always be helpful to carry an extension cord in your bag as well.

Laura: You want to be out of the way, but you need to see the board at the same time.

There are several steps to stay on a professor's good side. Remember boundaries. When the teacher calls on you the first day, you can say "I am not a student" and they will move on. Never make comments or answer questions. They will treat you as the professional you act as.

Janet: Maintaining boundaries can go in the opposite direction as well. You might become friendly with the professor and engage them in conversation after class, but during class, chit-chat cannot happen.

Laura: We have one class this semester where the professor is the husband of our supervisor. I'm sure he's been coached and he doesn't say a word to us during class. I've never seen a teacher ignore us so well.

Student: A lot of professors struggle with the technology of getting captioning to work. Could you talk about that?

Janet: Well, the handout sort of addresses that. When I introduce myself at the start of class, I mention captioning videos and getting those videos ahead of time. Hopefully, they tell you then that they do or do not know how to do that. Unfortunately, it can be different in a lot of classrooms.

A lot of schools have cheat sheets for making the captions happen. In the worst case scenario, the student will get the transcriber's summary.

Student: This is an important point because with every semester, we see more and more video in the classroom. I call some teachers *video professors* because that's how they teach. We really need to figure out how to deal with that. It's a growing issue.

Janet: It's really hard when they don't give you advance notice. I've had one instructor say, "I don't know what I'm going to show until I enter the classroom."

This is something that needs to be addressed.

Student: Do you think it's appropriate if you know the video is captioned and the professor can't get it to work that the inactive transcriber team go up and help?

Janet: Yes, definitely.

Student: One pitfall with that is that the professor then associates you as the tech person in class.

Janet: That's true.

Laura: One curveball comes from the example of entering the classroom and the teacher leading the class out of the room onto a campus tour. What do you do? Talk with your neighbor about what you would do.

[Small group discussion.]

So what ideas do you have?

Student: It depends on the student and whether they're very oral or have some residual hearing. If they have some ASL, they will all handle it differently.

Laura: So feed off the student and think about their needs.

Student: You might need an interpreter.

Student: With the wireless hot spot on my phone, I could continue to transcribe on the laptop. Hopefully, we have enough power to get through the class.

Student: There is always the question about whether they're lecturing while they walk or are they going to go somewhere outside and stop to talk.

Student: When we're talking about the service at the beginning (the student and I), we discuss their preference. At my site, we do have a laptop stand that can be lengthened to work from a standing position.

Janet: There are also laptop holders that work as a harness --

Laura: Which are not good ergonomically. It does require a second transcriber to keep from killing yourself.

Student: This is far from ideal, but potentially, one person can carry the laptop while the other types.

Student: It's also important to remember to check-in with the student. I can bring my laptop. I transcribed a rally at an event once, from under an umbrella, but checking with the "consumer" or the student is the important part. It's not about what works for me.

Janet: For that reason, you can always go back to the service coordinator to ask for

clarification on what to do.

Laura: We had a vet class once where the professor said that there would be days when we would go to deliver a baby horse. With that in mind, we had a charged phone ready to go so that we could use it on the go. Be ready with a contingency plan.

Student: It's also nice if you have an available Comtek. Otherwise, it's really hard to hear the professor.

Laura: A Comtek is an assisted listening device for a student. The teacher wears a microphone and the student can wear the headphones or attach it to their hearing aids. It works better for the student as the listener than the transcriber.

Student: Does the school own the device?

Laura: We use one for our office.

Student: I work with a deaf/hard of hearing student but he has his own device.

Student: What is that?

Laura: Comtek. It's an assisted listening device and there are many others. We refer to it as the Comtek. They allow you to stay further from the action. If you're in a horse arena, you can be away from the middle of the action and still work.

Pocket TypeWell comes with access to the regular license. It goes on a Windows based phone. It is similar to TypeWell, but it's on a phone. We use really old phones that only get used for this.

The other option is web browser which goes to a web page, but it only works within internet capable areas. The phone is IP linked to our computer, just like a reader device.

On the TypeWell website, you can learn more about Pocket TypeWell.

Student: What version comes with Pocket?

Laura: 5 Premium, and any premium above that. Any other questions?

Student: If you don't have all of that and you're using the traditional setup, when the student leaves the computer behind, do you err on the side of student self-advocacy? If you're surprised by that, is it appropriate to stop the student and ask them what to do?

Laura: I would try to catch the student. We assume that if they leave the computer, they don't need it. That's just our site policy.

Janet: You could ask the student quickly in square brackets through the computer before they take off.

Student: I have a comment. Sometimes, I feel like the students don't want to bother me. It seems like they're giving me space because it's a difficult situation. In that case, I encourage

them to take the reader because they're allowed and entitled to that access. Is that okay?

Janet: Yeah! Also, in square brackets, you could say "I can take just the notes for you."

Laura: If they need you, but don't want to carry the computer, you can always old-school it.

Janet: [On screen: During the Semester.] This can be site specific, but in most places that I've worked, it's not out of line to ask the speaker to repeat themselves. If you can't hear what's being said, it's likely that others didn't hear it as well.

Laura: You can also ask for spelling clarification because others probably didn't know how to spell it correctly either.

Student: If we specifically have a professor that is testing on spelling like I have in the past for a cytology course, we told her that we needed her to spell the words out for us slowly and clearly. They were using a textbook for which we couldn't get a digital copy. Plus, a lot of her information was based on slides.

Janet: If she's teaching from PowerPoint, you can ask for the slides ahead of time. It can really help.

Student: What do you do if the teacher is quiet overall? Right now, I have a class with a quiet teacher. We're on the side or in the back, but closer would be in the way.

Laura: It's better to err on the side of hearing and be in the way then not be able to hear.

Janet: You can say from the back of the room, "We're having a hard time hearing you; could we move closer?"

Student: Where I work, we've gotten into the habit of doing something after the first few weeks. We check in with the professor and make sure it's working for them and us. We say things like, "Could you repeat the question that is being asked?" I sometimes forget that I can have an ongoing dialogue with professors.

Janet: That develops good rapport as well.

Student: A lot of teachers don't read their emails and so they have no idea who I am on day one. Prior to class, if possible, it's a good idea to go over all of those things. Telling them what to expect with voicing is another point to clarify.

Janet: That means you're approaching them from professional to professional as well.

Okay, practice introducing yourselves to a professor, in pairs.

Male: "Wassup?" [Joke/joking.] [Class laughing]

[Working in pairs.]

Laura: Does anyone have any really good or really bad introductions?

Student: I like the "What's up" introduction. [Joke/joking.] It's very effective.

Student: I've had an instructor tell me that I am making the class go beyond fire code capacity for the room. It came up in the past.

Laura: The law states that the student has a right to proper accommodations in an academic setting and I am their accommodation. The fire marshal won't be checking the classroom anyway.

Janet: If that's their site policy, then they need to change the classroom.

Student: Some professors are more aggressive than others. Not many are aggressive, but you really don't want to pull rank too much. Ultimately, they see it as their classroom which it really is. In your job, you have to be careful when pulling rank.

Janet: That's why I say to defer to your coordinator. Any other questions on that one?

[On screen: examples of sticky situations] Read these through.

Laura: With the first one, any suggestions?

Student: Chuckle and keep doing your job.

Student: You can explain the confidential nature of the transcripts because only the student gets to see them.

Student: You can also offer to send them a copy. Sometimes, they request a copy.

Janet: Most times, I find that with professors who are seeing this for the first time, they ask for a copy. After that first time, they don't ask for any more copies. [Class laughing.]

Laura: At my site, we're happy to show them the one copy, but if they want more after that, they have to go through different channels.

Student: With some professors, they think it's a great way to get copies of their lectures. You might not want to be too anxious to offer them.

Janet: There is a bit of a controversy on this topic. A few years ago, a professor said, "These are my words. I want a copy of the notes."

Student: Yeah, I was taught that it is their intellectual property in a way. They may have "ownership" over that transcript.

Laura: Does it extend to anyone beyond them? It's for the student.

Student: They're a steward for the university as well. I'm a copyright lawyer and I would think that they're a representative of the university first.

Student: The University is supposed to teach general topics. Just like with any business, when you create for that business, it's the business's property. It doesn't belong to the

professor.

Student: There is usually an intellectual property provision in the university policies. Also, the ADA law does specify for the situation. You don't want to pull the trump card, but...

Laura: I've seen a professor want to kick the transcribers out of the classroom because they were distracting and we pulled the trump card.

Student: I had an instructor accuse me of being from the FBI. We had a talk out in the hallway and he said he wouldn't start class until I was gone or it had been resolved. I called the office, but there was only a voicemail response. Eventually, he started class again. He continued this in each subsequent class. He also didn't use email so correspondence was difficult outside of class time. He was like 100 years old. [Class laughing.]

Student: I'm curious about that occurrence. Did you initiate moving the conversation to the hallway?

Student: Yes, I did. I know that we're not supposed to have private conversations, but all of the students were watching and it was just going not going to end quickly.

Student: Were you transcribing all of that?

Student: My team was.

Student: Good job.

Student: It's always a good idea to start those conversations with "Do you want to step outside?" [Joking.]

Janet: The second problem that I've had related to this was not with transcribing. We had a professor in a film appreciation class and the professor said that captions would ruin the viewing experience.

Laura: We had a professor who said the same thing. "Instead of getting the meaning and feeling of the video, all of the students are now reading." What do you do?

Student: We had a similar situation, but it was with a church video and he said it was too spiritual.

Student: If you're in a situation where you have time before class, you can ask them to think about how they would want a student with accessibility issues to access the presented information.

Student: I would just do the transcriber summary and then forward it.

Laura: Has anyone ever been transcribing and then been told by the professor, "Don't type that!"

[Class laughing]

Student: Those are the best things to transcribe.

Janet: I think everyone has experienced that.

Student: Then, of course, you get to type "don't type that" and "wait . . ." [Class laughing.]

Student: What do you do in that situation?

Student: Transcriber summary and tell your supervisor about it.

I think it's important to talk to the student about their role. At BYU-I, there wasn't much we could do. A certain professor would lean in and whisper things to keep us from typing them. That was particular to BYU-I. A lot of those times, the student doesn't understand that it's their job to speak up. I think it's important to help the student to understand their rights.

Laura: I had a student the other day say, "My accommodations don't mean I have to accommodate everyone else." She is getting the captions because she needs them. She doesn't have to accommodate her life to everyone else.

Janet: That's a good idea.

Student: I would be fully supportive of that.

Student: I wish we had more students like that.

Student: You have to coach them, especially when they're freshmen and just starting the process. You can role-play to help teach them.

Janet: If it's their first year with accommodations, they do need to be educated as to their rights. I don't think that's our role as a transcriber, but they have meetings with coordinators and counselors who tell them what can be provided and what their rights are.

Student: I had a recent situation where a professor didn't want to give the other transcriber a video to be transcribed. I played the Jedi mind trick where I played dumb and said, "So I hear that you have a video to be transcribed" and I just kept talking about it from that angle. Eventually, I walked out with the video and it was captioned for the next class.

Janet: Wow, good job.

Laura: We are out of time.

Janet: Any other questions or comments?

Thank you.

[End of presentation.]