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Defining Appropriate Communication Access, Identifying Challenges, and Discussing the Suitability of Using TypeWell in Foreign Language Classes

Presenter: Liz Chibucos

Session 2 10:20-11:05

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Liz: I'm Liz and I want to talk to everyone about my experiences during my second year high school Spanish class. It's been challenging. The student that I'm working for is used to working with our agency. He's had TypeWell services in the past as well as the CART system. He prefers the TypeWell over CART, even though we suggested that he use it for the Spanish class. It was too expensive.

I'm not fluent in Spanish but I can understand what is going on with conversation at the level the students are at. After discussing some things with the student and parents, we decided to give TypeWell a shot. Most of the class is in English and TypeWell can be used. However, the very first class was numbers in Spanish. It was a review in Spanish. I immediately realized that I couldn't transcribe the numerals because every other student in class was expected to be able to translate what the teacher was saying. The teacher spoke in Spanish and I realized that it would take a lot more work.

We did work out some prep time and the student and the parents realized that there would be more time involved with this. I came up with a PAL that worked for me but it is literally, hundreds of words. I would get lists of the vocabulary words and I would enter all those into the PAL. It was all done individually.

Woman: How did you remember all of them?

Liz: I didn't.

Woman: Did you run into conflicts?

Liz: Yes. There were a few.

Woman: I was doing the same thing in a French class.

Liz: Have you been doing a similar thing?

Woman: Yes, I had a sequence of words that came up. [Giving an example in French.] If there is a

phrase that I need to program in, I would take the first letter of each word in the phrase, and use that as my set of abbreviations.

Liz: Yes, programming is key. When I needed a question phrase, I programmed into the PAL that capitalizing the beginning of the phrase would make it come up with an upside down question mark. I programmed in many common phrases that are used and it works most of the time. This is okay when the instructor is teaching however, when students speak, it can be very difficult. The students speak very fast and inaccurately because they are nervous.

As I've gone through this class, I've come to the conclusion that equal access isn't translating. I often distinguish between "transcriber translation" and "transcriber's summary." "Transcriber translation" lets the student know that I'm trying to figure out the translation.

Woman: Are the students responsible for listening skills?

Liz: Yes. I've had to disable expansion and spell things phonetically. There was a student in the class that would sound out the "h" for a while and I had to explain what was happening to the student.

I think this whole process has been largely successful but there are times when I'm uncomfortable.

Woman: Sometimes it feels like we're inventing parts of TypeWell.

Liz: Yes, for sure. I think the most important thing I've learned is to communicate. All people involved need to know what is going on in each situation.

Kate and I talked about equal access versus appropriate access and you have to consider what works for each situation. There are times when we have had to spell things out phonetically for the student. Also programming letters with accents have worked too.

Woman: Programming words like "telephone" with accents have really helped and other words that have come up regularly, however it doesn't work in every situation. There's not much else you can do.

Liz: You have more notations going on with French. Sometimes there are many words that the teacher will say that is beyond the student's ability. I've come up with a programming for that too.

Woman: If a student uses incorrect grammar, do you make the mistake in your transcript?

Liz: I have a huge debate about that in my head. If they're conjugating the word incorrectly, that's a completely different word.

Woman: From a TypeWell standpoint, isn't it equal access so the mistake should be made?

Liz: Yes, but it's a bit different in a foreign language class. Things are spelled out phonetically. You don't want to say, "Student is pronouncing incorrectly" in square brackets. The big challenge for me in Spanish is to chunk. It becomes an issue of verbatim. There are definite issues with this method. There are a few other things that people have tried. One is to have a remote transcriber along with the on-site transcriber. The on-site transcriber is doing the English transcribing while the remote

transcriber would do all the vocabulary.

Woman: Would the remote transcriber have to be a TypeWell transcriber?

Woman: I was in a Japanese class where we used a remote transcriber as well. I didn't hear any feedback from the student about how it worked for them. The Japanese class was a first year class. We would cut and paste the vocabulary into the transcript that was being relayed by the remote transcriber. Cutting and pasting might not be feasible in a fast paced class. However, it worked in this class because it was slower paced. It makes you confident to have someone to back you up. I don't think that the remote person would have to be a transcriber.

Liz: I included that on the second page of my handout. I think CART has some issues as well. CART should be suggested to students that are taking a foreign language class. This all made me think about how we could improve TypeWell or any other type of transcription software.

One thing that helped me was that I capitalized letters to make words expand with different accents, depending on the tense.

Woman: What was your workload like for prepping all this?

Liz: Just about an hour a week. Half of that programming into the PAL was during class. If there was a new word, I would type it out verbatim. Before, I would put a note to put an accent over a certain letter as a reminder to myself. As I continued on and there was a short break, I would put words into the PAL. Once I developed the systems, it became a faster process. It's a never-ending process. I've managed quite well this year as they're not covering as much new vocabulary. I don't have any prep time anymore.

Woman: I don't have any prep time. I use all my downtime to prep all our material.

Woman: You mentioned sustainability. As an interpreter, I got roped into a fourth year Spanish class. I looked at prior accommodations and they had had prior accommodations. How do you sustain that? I had another student and most of her class was in English. She used MS Word and that was fine for a first year class. However, it didn't work for her later. Sustainability worries me.

Liz: I don't think it's as sustainable as we'd like it to be. I would like some feedback from all of you. I have a brother that is fluent in Spanish. He is an early childhood speech pathologist. He started working when I started the Spanish class, and it made me realize that there is such a need for services in the Spanish-speaking community.

Woman: I spoke with Steve and there wasn't much feedback from the Spanish community, so he decided not to develop anything for TypeWell in Spanish.

Liz: Another issue that we might come across is outreaching to those communities in the first place. The Spanish-speaking community is a minority and they don't have as good of access or awareness of these services as English speakers do. We don't really think about the disabilities within those minority groups.

Man: Spanish-speaking students are typically learning English and accessing English classes as opposed to Spanish. In this case, Spanish TypeWell wouldn't be appropriate. Perhaps a plug-in would be more appropriate like Spanish mode.

Liz: I'm addressing both groups a little bit. As the minority group grows, the services and events and classes will also grow.

Woman: Services would also grow.

Man: Like tutoring?

Woman: Yes.

Woman: In terms of outreach, I think maybe recruiting more transcribers that are fluent in Spanish is more important.

Woman: One of my teammates is from the Dominican. He's been doing really great and thinking about developing a Spanish PAL.

Kate: I think developing a Spanish dictionary is not really the hard part. However, there is an expense of developing that and whether it will match the demand is unknown. I think the use of TypeWell software in foreign language classes needs to be more well-known. I think it's great that you've brought up the challenges. From a software development perspective, people use software in many different ways.

Woman: This student that I transcribe for will be planning on going to France. She needs the support.

Kate: I think a lot of those immersion programs involve field work to places where transcribing might not even be possible. You have to be really up front about all the settings and knowing what you're capable of.

Man: If we're talking about access and not just the software, how can we have access and mould the software to support that? If you're in France and you're on top of a mountain and you're providing access, what is the next step of providing equal access?

Woman: I've been to cocktail parties to transcribe!

Kate: A lot of people don't think of all the issues before pushing for transcribers. I think that's all part of the training. I think it takes a dedicated transcriber to develop systems to make things work. Are we exposing ourselves to liabilities? If there was a full version Spanish TypeWell, I think it would take a lot to develop that. The English version took years to develop. I think this is all different from developing a Spanish dictionary. This is what I spoke to Steve about. To get into chunking in Spanish versus English, how do you do that?

Woman: We're dealing with the issue of standards right now. My teammate is by herself today because the class runs on a Saturday. We're going to do some work based on the recording so that I

can help her out later.

Woman: This is on a bit of another subject like training. There is some bilingual CART but it's difficult to find transcribers for it. We have some.

Liz: If the teacher doesn't correct the students' mispronunciation, does the student get the right information?

Woman: It's not equal access because you're feeding them information.

Woman: It requires assumptions for what is going on in the student's head.

Kate: In an English class where there is a strong transcriber, you assume that the transcriber is good enough to know that they are putting that mistake on purpose.

Woman: As a coordinator, we have to have evidence that meeting standards are successful.

Woman: The student that Liz works for has a cochlear implant. How much he hears and how much she supplements is a bit unknown. Coordinating is not just scheduling. You have to assess the whole of it. I don't think we take any of this lightly. It's an important point. As much as I want a Spanish dictionary, it's not a free for all.

Kate: We only allow the license and use for TypeWell for experienced transcribers. If there is an inexperienced person using TypeWell, it could bring down the standards.

Liz: As I was doing the Spanish class, there was an offer for an advanced chemistry class. I actually felt more comfortable transcribing the Spanish class because chemistry could be a language in itself.

Woman: There are no math modes training. It's all on your own.

Liz: There is no quality control in terms of math.

Kate: It's all on the coordinator and the transcriber. The transcriber also has to recognize their own limitations.

Woman: You should also involve the instructor. You should show the instructor their own transcript and make sure that the information getting across is correct.

Liz: My instructor is really helpful.

Pepnet has a whole thing on what are reasonable guidelines for what we need to provide in a foreign language class.

Woman: We're coordinating for three Spanish classes right now. I think it's going to be a big deal.

Woman: ASL classes are being used to satisfy the foreign language classes. Thank you, Liz.

Liz: I'll try and post all the articles that I talked about so that you can access it.

[End of session]