

Watch & Learn

How can a person learn a skill or a language without models to observe? And if an interpreting student only sees perfect examples of the skill, does that distort the perception of the performance of that skill? Student interpreters, as well as working interpreters, should take every opportunity to watch other interpreters working in live settings. We all can learn from each other by seeing how another person uses the language and can develop our own confidence through that observation.

As we watch another interpreter, we are exposed to different ways of using the languages with which we work. We can acquire new vocabulary in both ASL and English by paying attention to unfamiliar terms and those that are different than we would use. By taking those unfamiliar terms and researching their meanings and usage we can expand our own vocabularies in both languages. We can also improve our grammatical structuring and use of space by focusing on these factors in another's interpretation. These adoptions can lead to the development or adjustment of our own style of language and fluency in the languages we use.

In addition, by watching another interpreter we can build our own confidence in our skills. By comparing how we might approach something with what we see the working interpreter doing, we can find similarities that can boost our confidence and trust in interpreting decisions that not only include language and word choice, but also logistical and ethical decisions. Also, though not comfortable, it is relieving to take note of another (especially more experienced) interpreter's mistakes and remember we cannot always be perfect.

It is hard to put our work out for possible critique by other interpreters, but it is important that we not work in vacuums where we all do our own thing and never see another's work. Watching each other during teaming assignments, televised interpretations, YouTube, and other internet-based videos can tremendously improve our own vocabulary, language, decision making, and confidence.