Job title
(American) Sign Language Interpreter

General overview
Sign Language Interpreters bridge communication gaps between individuals who converse through sign language and those who use spoken language (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014). The job of an interpreter is to provide a service in which ensures clear communication on behalf of both parties. An interpreter converts spoken words into the sign language as well as translates sign language into an oral language (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014). The two main sign languages used in Canada are American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ). An American Sign Language Interpreter works with deaf or hard of hearing individuals who communicate in ASL. It is possible for Interpreters become fluent in more than one type of sign language. Interpreter’s commonly work in places such as government, schools, court, social service agencies, health care services, television stations, interpretation services, or can be self-employed (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014; “Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2013).

Job duties and responsibilities
Interpreters are responsible for being fluent in two languages, their native language, such as English, and the corresponding form of sign language, ASL (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014). The main responsibility of an interpreter is to translate an oral language into sign language and vice versa, at the highest level of accuracy (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014; “Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). This requires listening or watching what is being communicated, remembering, restructuring the information into the other language and conveying the information through that mode of communication with clarity. Interpreters must translate at an almost simultaneous rate as the flow of conversation (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014).

ASL is a language that is always changing and can be different depending on the town or city in which the individual is from, thus it is the interpreter’s responsibility to remain current on signs used wherever they are interpreting and whoever they are interpreting for/to. Depending on the setting and topic of conversation interpreters might be required to obtain background information to ensure that they have the knowledge to properly convey terms or points that are going to be discussed (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). While translating interpreters must remain completely impartial any personal opinions, thoughts or feelings must remain hidden. Interpreters must be knowledgeable and compliant to the codes and ethics (“Canadian Evaluation System,” n.d.; “Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct,” 2011).

Typical Workday
The concept of a typical workday does not exist for Interpreters; what a workday looks like in the field of Sign Language Interpreting is not standard for all interpreters. The only aspect of a workday that is the similar for all interpreters is the service that they provide. The structure of a workday depends on the type of setting the interpreter is working in and the form of employment. For example if a Sign Language Interpreter works as a Video Relay Service
Operator work hours would be based on the hours of the call center where they work (“Frequently Asked Questions About Interpreting at Sorenson,” 2014). The interpreter would be responsible for interpreting conversations between oral communication and sign language, taking calls and connecting all the parties involved in the conversation (“Frequently Asked Questions About Interpreting at Sorenson,” 2014; “Video Relay Service,” 2014). An Interpreter that works for a Video Relay Service has a very different typical day than an Interpreter that works at a school, for a business company, or at public events.

**Educational requirements and other qualifications**

There are two common paths to becoming a Sign Language Interpreter. One option is to complete a college training program, such as the American Sign Language-English Interpreter program offered at George Brown College (“Interpreter Education Programs,” n.d.). The second common path is to obtain a university certificate in sign language interpretation (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014). After obtaining a university certificate in sign language it is highly encouraged to become members of a recognized sign language association, such as the Association of Visual Language Interpretation of Canada and Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters, a chapter officiated with the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014; “Becoming an OIS interpreter,” n.d.; “Interpreter Education Programs,” n.d.). It is recommended that all Sign Interpreters join some sort of recognized sign association even if they have completed a college interpreting program (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014).

Membership to the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada requires the completion of three different phases to ensure credibility. Phase one consists of passing a written test designed to confirm that the candidate has the appropriate background knowledge of ASL and interpretation skills (“Interpreter Education Programs,” n.d.). Phase two includes workshops, readings and videos on interpreting to help prep candidates for the next phase, in which individuals must complete and pass the Test of Interpretation. Once phase three is completed membership is granted (“Interpreter Education Programs,” n.d.). Some jobs may require a membership to an association in conjunction with a diploma or certificate (“5125 Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters,” 2014).

**Related skills, interests, and qualities**

It is expected that interpreters have a good memory and good listening skills so information can be interpreted accurately (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). Creativity and an expressive personality is also an asset in the sense that sign language involves hands, face, and body to communicate. Interpreters work in a field that involves continual contact with other people, thus social skills are important (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). It is imperative that anyone working in this field is dependable. Determination and passion are qualities that are highly beneficial due to changes that occur within sign language. Most importantly interpreters must have an interest in Sign Language (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012).

**Relevance of Psychology undergraduate degree**

Psychology can be very beneficial to the field of Sign Language Interpreting because it provides insight into human nature and individual differences (“Welcome to the Department of
Psychology,” n.d.). Sign Language Interpreters are required to understand and communicate in a language that essentially uses the entire body and thus demands that interpreters be not only creative but also perceptive in order to accurately convey information (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). Psychology offers knowledge and understanding of behaviours, abilities, personalities, interests, and motivations at an individual level, all of which is an asset in the field of Interpreting (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012). Personality holds great influence in sign language; every person shows their personality when communicating in Sign Language. It is important to understand that no two people will ever sign exactly the same; having an understanding of personality help interpreters to better understand each individual signer. Developmental and cognitive psychology classes explore language development, how memory develops and works (“Psychology [PSYC],” 2014). Interpreters need to have a good memory (“Detailed Report for: Interpreters and Translators,” 2012), understanding how the memory works can offer insight into improving an Interpreters memory. Social Psychology provides an understanding of how social situations can influence thoughts, behaviours and feelings (“Psychology [PSYC],” 2014), all of which are important when bridging a communication gap. It is crucial when communicating on someone else’s behalf to capture the feelings behind the information in order to accurately represent what they said, making Social Psychology a benefit when interpreting. Due to the level of human interaction in the profession of Interpreting, Psychology is highly beneficial.

Salary potential

In the year 2010 Interpreters that worked in the Ottawa, Ontario region had salaries that ranged from $22.00 per hour to $39.26 per hour, with an average amount of pay at $28.61 per hour (“Translator/Interpreter Salary Canada,” n.d.). This data includes all types of interpreters and is not specific to Sign Language Interpreters. According to Statistic Canada (2013) the yearly income for an interpreter, translators and terminologists fell between $45,157 and $49,988. Current job postings indicate that Sign Language Interpreters can start with a minimum salary ranging from 34,713 to 57,855 per year (“Canadian Hearing Society,” 2014). It is important to note that there are pay discrepancies in this field of work depending on location of employment and company/employer, this includes if the individual is self-employed or not.

Job outlook

Interpretation as a field has a bright outlook, it is expected to grow at a rate of 22% or higher in less than a ten year period (“Bright Outlook Occupation,” n.d.). Sign Language is expected to grow at a rapid rate as well due to the increase of video relay services (“Interpreters and Translators, Job Outlook,” 2014). Video relay services provide a service that is offered across Canada in which deaf or hard of hearing individuals connect with a video relay operator in order to communicate by phone to hearing individuals (“Video Relay Service,” 2014). The signing individual is connected to the operator by video and the operator places the call to the third party. Using the video conferencing technology the deaf or hard of hearing individual signs to the operator and the operator translates the information orally to the third party and vice versa (“Video Relay Service,” 2014).

To apply

There are many ways to apply for jobs in the field of Sign Language Interpreting. Members of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada or affiliated chapters...
have continuous access to exclusive job posting (“Why Hire an AVLIC Member,” n.d.). The Canadian Hearing Society has a private job board that registered members of Ontario Interpreting Services have access to (“Canadian Evaluation System,” n.d.). In order to become registered with the Ontario Interpreting Services interpreters must take part in video skills screening process as well as participate in an interview with the Regional Manager and Program Manager in the individuals desired working area (“Welcome to OASLI,” 2011). Completing this registration allows individuals to work in any Canada Hearing Society office in the Ontario region and be eligible to partake in Emergency Interpreting Services (“Becoming an OIS interpreter,” n.d.). Individuals who are already a member to the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada are not required to complete the video skills screening portion required when becoming registered to the Ontario Interpreting Services, however they are still obligated to complete the interview process (“Interpreter Education Programs,” n.d.). Job postings can also be found regularly on job boards in which any special requirements will be made known.

To know more
For more information on the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada visit:
http://www.avlic.ca/ces

For further information on Interpreting as a job refer to the following website:
http://www.onetonline.org/link/details/27-3091.00
References


