

# LANGUAGE MEDIATION AS AN AREA OF RISK FOR A DEAF PERSON

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**Abstract:** The article presents the risk areas of dependence in communication of persons with disabilities. In particular, it describes interference with communication and social relations of deaf persons and their sign language interpreters. Based on long-term observations and 25 autobiographies of deaf/hard-of-hearing students, seven major risk areas were identified and described: 1) risk of intentional or unintentional meaning distortion, 2) risk of mediator's dominance in the process of communication, 3) risk of initiating communication only in presence or through mediator, 4) risk of a "social filter", 5) risk of "protective umbrella" and isolation, 6) risk of the instrumental relations and 7) risk of excessive attachment – personal dependency.

**Keywords:** sign language, disability, communication, dependence, language mediator.

## Introduction

The sign language interpreter's support is a basic form of compensation for the limited ability of the deaf to communicate with hearing people. He is also treated in terms of the right of disabled people to freely use the form of communication he or she chooses, but also to take advantage of help from chosen person when it comes to contact with obliged entities. Art. 21 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), obliges States Parties to "accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions" [4].

Engaging a sign language interpreter is currently treated in most countries as an obvious social service. It can be perceived as a form of situational intervention, eg. for health services, in office, in criminal justice situation [10], but often takes the form of long-term interpreter's assistance, related to education or work by the deaf. There are more and more such cases.

Contemporary literature forms the theoretical foundations of the translating/interpreting process, useful in the education of interpreters, such as sign language interpreters. Monikowski and Winston [12] describe two major models of interpreting which have had significant impact in this field: 1) Colonomos's

integrated pedagogical model, 2) Cokely’s model of overall interpreting process (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The main models of interpreting of sign language

Author	Type of interpreting model	The main aspect/steps of interpreting process
Betty Colonomos 1992	The integrated model – pedagogical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C – concentrating on the source message</li> <li>• R – representing the meaning</li> <li>• P – planning the target text</li> </ul>
Dennis Cokely 1992	The process model – sociolinguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• message reception</li> <li>• preliminary processing</li> <li>• short-term message retention</li> <li>• semantic intent realization</li> <li>• semantic equivalence determination</li> <li>• syntactic message formulation</li> <li>• message production</li> </ul>

Source: own elaboration based on [13].

Translation models, similar to those in the Table 1, may be useful in developing translators' skills and play an important role in their vocational education. There are also other interesting concepts of interpreting – see Taylor, Seleskovitch, Metzger, Wadensjo or Roy [11, 13, 19] – however, they do not analyse the social and personal consequences of long-term deaf’s dependence (and in general – persons’ with disabilities dependence) on language mediator. The reflection on the potential threats associated with such situations is unfortunately rarely observed. The interpreter gives deaf people an opportunity to contact with the world and to achieve their life goals. On the other hand, there is a risk of interference with social relationships, including the threat of a new kind of dependency: the dependency from linguistic mediator [18]. Von Tetzchner and Martinsen, who deal with alternative and supportive communication (AAC) issues, validate concerns about an excessive dependence of people with disabilities on communication support [21]. Following the research, the author of this paper synthesized her own experiences gathered during her many years of academic work with deaf students to identify the threats to which deaf people are exposed as well as their interpersonal relationships arising from the long-term support of a sign language interpreter.

## Research objective and methodology

The purpose of the research was to identify threats to the deaf person and his or her interpersonal relationships, which occur in the situation of a long-term support by a sign language interpreter. The research is based on a constructivist paradigm. The basis of analysis were the 9-year observations made by the author – psychologists, special educators, academic spokesperson of students with disabilities and tutor of deaf students at the Pedagogical Academy (WSP) in Lodz [17]. More than 60 deaf and hard-of-hearing have studied there in 2004-2012.

For their needs, Pedagogical Academy employed seven sign language interpreters hired under the “Pitagoras” program founded by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PFRON).

Observations were collected in the course of daily work with students and their interpreters, while resolving problems and interventions. This was a form of action research, which allows for linking theory with practice and specific activities with scientific exploration. *Action research* is a form of studies on the social situation in which the researcher is located, with the intention of improving it. As an inspirer and active participant of events, the researcher makes some changes, but also systematically collects information about perceived and investigated phenomena [5]. At the same time, created situation made it possible to make systematic observations, consisting of the further presented generalizations, grounded in the observations (*grounded theory*) and supplemented by a review of literature [3]. A part of the corpus also comprises 25 in-depth narrative autobiographies of deaf students – 18 women and 7 men aged 23-28. Each of them knew the sign language (mainly PJM), all used interpreters. Only a few people were able to effectively communicate orally. Persons with deep pre-bladder deafness (N = 15), 16 people declared themselves as a (culture) Deaf, 6 as hard-of-hearing, but related to Deaf Culture [10]. For 3 students such a categorization had no meaning. Detailed characteristics of this group are presented in the other author’s monograph [17].

## **Research results**

Attempts of regulating various situations observed between interpreters and deaf students lead to the seven risk areas which I will discuss in separate section: 1) risk of intentional or unintentional meaning distortion, 2) risk of mediator’s dominance in the process of communication, 3) risk of initiating communication only in presence or through mediator, 4) risk of a “social filter”, 5) risk of “protective umbrella” and isolation, 6) risk of the instrumental relations and 7) risk of personal dependency.

### ***Risk of meaning distortion***

The risk of meaning distortion is connected with the dependency from competences and intentions of a mediator. Mediators are usually parents or close relatives who accompany the child in a natural way. The choice of a therapist, a teacher or an interpreter is usually chosen by accident in a random way. In WSP some interpreters were bilingual using Language-Sign System (SJM) and natural Polish Sign Language (PJM). There were situations of matching an interpreter to a particular student or a group as well as restrictions to such matching. It is important to stress that an interpreter who matches some students

does not have to necessarily match others. Such situation should be treated as normal – but is not.

When using a help from an interpreter, supported persons are not able to confront the transmission with an original text, they are at the mercy of an interpreter, they cannot identify the source of potential disturbances of communication process: whether it is a sender or a mediator. The problem may only be solved by a control and certification of the work of interpreters with simultaneous care about their high ethical level and the feeling of responsibility. In numerous countries the process of vesting translation and teaching as well as alternative teaching or supporting communication means certifications are formalized for example in Poland, inter alia, Pictograms, Makaton, Bliss system, Fonogesty (Polish version of Cued Speech) or Sign Language (PJM, SJM). Similar systems are in other countries [14]. The certification system is a sign of responsibility for the quality and standardization of communication methods.

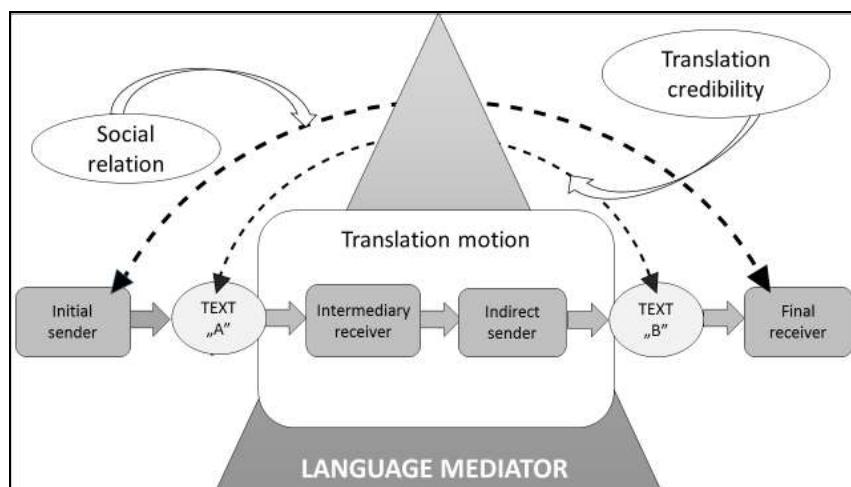
It is important to add that while preparing various groups of language mediators (e.g. interpreters or sign language teachers) also the introduction of various professional ethic codes with rules regulating certain behaviors and reactions towards taught people is included. One of the examples may be the Ethic Code of the Polish Sign Language Interpreters Association. The code includes the following areas of regulation: professional secret, professionalism, professional development, impartiality, respect to the sides of a translation, respect to other interpreters [9]. In the analyzed aspect of a translation especially important seem to be the rules on professionalism and professional development. The professional requirements are defined by a general rule that “a translator or an interpreter has professional and practical abilities as well as specialist and substantial knowledge about the deaf people’s environment necessary to conduct a translation” [9]. Following the rules in a reliable way increases communication security of a person with disability forced to use language mediation.

### ***Risk of mediator’s dominance in the process of communication***

In supported communication, an interpreter has a primary role in terms of communication efficiency and marginal role in terms of the real contact of both sides of a translation. It is very difficult to maintain balance between the two roles. Sometimes it seems that the role of a mediator is bigger than it actually is. The activity of an interpreter is naturally greater than any of the sides’. They repeat and sums up the utterances of both sides. That is why minimalizing their personal dominance may be difficult. It is also a craft proving high professional qualifications [10, 13].

When accepting the meaning of an interpreter and sides contacting through him it is worth underlining that there is a difference between focusing on the craft of translation itself and the interactive setup creating between the participants of this specific act of communication. The first aspect is rather connected with translation studies and the latter – social psychology of

interpersonal communication. Translation studies as a science about translations uses a term of translatorial setup (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Translatorial setup in case of communication with a usage of language mediator  
*Source: own elaboration based on [15, 16].*

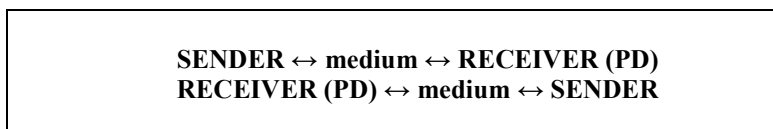
The Fig. 1 – inspired by classical translative theory of equivalence of Nida [15, 16] – focus on the interpreter, and secondly on texts whereas both a sender initiating the content, and the final receiver are in the last place. But it is not a suggest of primary role of an interpreter and secondary roles of the sides of a translation. Within translation studies, the mechanisms of switching languages in a brain of an interpreter are the most important. The mechanisms are the subject of shaping various professional competences. This is a thing that must be learned by each interpreter. A communication phenomenon is that a translator/interpreter is both a sender (indirect) and a receiver (indirect). The credibility of the translation results from the consistency of text A and text B, which is the result of not only formal equivalence, but also dynamic. According to referred rules of translation studies, a text as a macro-sign conveys different meanings and it may replace subjective knowledge of an interpreter. There are texts which can be translated and interpreted on a basis of the knowledge coming from them. Nonetheless, it cannot be argued that also a non-language knowledge of an interpreter about translations decides about the understanding of a text. Only when a text “do not speak for itself”, it must be decoded and it must be given a certain meaning, an interpreter must find a particular context of the utterance – cultural and situational – and particular intentions of a sender and premises of understanding the text by a receiver [15, 16]. Obviously, there is no such an easy division on text with and without a context – a discursive character of a text always points at SOME personal, situational or historical context. That is why the broader the subjective and objective knowledge of an interpreter and experiences connected with cultures and environments of the users of both

languages are – the more adequate the translation becomes. It is also important in the case of communication mediation for people with disability. It is easy to notice that the more disturbed, incomplete and ambiguous the text of the initial sender is, the more important context factors are and the more attention should be paid to the persons of sender and receiver. It happens often with a translation for people with disabilities or translation of their distorted utterances. This points to the importance not only of linguistic, but also cognitive, technical [10], intra- and interpersonal skills of interpreter.

A translator/interpreter who works with disabled people with major communication disorders usually do not have a full text but only its distorted fragments, clippings, parts. Apart from the literal translation, there are many other detailed translation techniques, among others: free translation, chaining, sandwiching, chunking/bridging, codeswitching, translanguaging and other [10]. Interpreters can use suppositions and evaluate intentions directing themselves towards the sides of a translation and the situation they are into. Loebel describes a work with people with profound disability, as follows: *In education supporting* “the process of shaping communication abilities it is important that professionalists do not focus only on realizable and instrumental aspects (methods, means and helps) but also that they have an ability to interpret unusual communication situations and behaviors of a partner. Furthermore, the belief about the necessity of creative and unconventional usage of various means, communication support and treating communication interaction as a meeting is very important. The condition for experiencing a meeting is understanding the way a child with disturbed development perceives the reality, what it feels and how it perceives our presence as a partner” [12]. In the most difficult communication cases, more often than in regular translation, intentions are – sometimes repeatedly – confirmed, meanings verified and fragmentary utterances or even single non-verbal signals and signs developed. In such situations we observe an especially distinct dominance of an activity and initiative of a language mediator and a great personal dependence of a person with disability from their presence. In extreme cases disabled are understood by few people (sometimes only one) and they become the only available “communication gates”. Even in such cases though, the dominance of a mediator may be limited by strengthening the feeling of control over communication situation, intentionality and making decisions that is always an attribute of self-reliance and independence.

From the point of view of the psychology of social contacts and interpersonal communication an ideal translation setup would be with a transparent, “see-through”, neutral mediator and complete correspondence of text A and text B. “The position of interpreters in the process of communication is unusual. They are in the middle. Being neither a sender nor a receiver, an interpreter is not only an interlocutor but, first of all, a part of the process itself. Because of that, they must be invisible” [8]. Obviously, such an ideal setup does not exist and not all agree on this point, for example Metzger “deconstructed myth of neutrality” [11]. But still most people expect that mediators should be a non-aligned and

detached medium. A simplified scheme of an optimal indirect communication with a person with disability should be like in a Fig. 2.



**Fig. 2.** Optimal indirect communication of person with disability with the roles of a sender and a receiver exposed (the size of the letters symbolizes primary and secondary role in the communication act: **medium** = language mediator; **(PD)** = a person with disability)  
*Source: own elaboration.*

Nevertheless, as stated above, in practice we can experience various distortions coming from decreasing the role of one or both sides and excessive exposure of the role of interpreter/mediator. Possible relations are in a Fig. 3.

1)	<p><b>sender</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>receiver (PD)</b>  <b>sender (PD)</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>receiver</b></p>
2)	<p><b>sender</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>RECEIVER (PD)</b>  <b>SENDER ((PD))</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>receiver</b></p>
3)	<p><b>SENDER</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>receiver (PD)</b>  <b>sender (PD)</b> ↔ <b>MEDIUM</b> ↔ <b>RECEIVER</b></p>

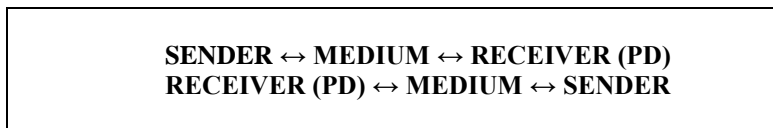
**Fig. 3.** Indirect communication of person with disability disturbed by excessive exposure of the role of a mediator (the size of the letters symbolizes primary and secondary role in the communication act: **medium** = language mediator; **(PD)** = a person with disability)  
*Source: own elaboration.*

The schemes in Table 3 illustrate the following cases of indirect communication disturbed by excessive exposure of the role of a mediator:

1. diminished roles of both sides of communication – a mediator takes the initiative, dominates during the act of communication, practically steers it; the sides of the translation become passive, communication intention of both sides becomes limited only to the necessary minimum or the willingness to communicate may even disappear.
2. the communication side with no disability is marginalized – a conversation practically takes place between a mediator and a person with disability; they make several agreements and additional explanations; the other side becomes passive and may feel uncertain not knowing the meaning of the agreements; the side may have doubts whether its communicate was conveyed properly.

3. the communication side with disability is marginalized both as a sender and as a receiver – the conversation takes place between an interpreter and a healthy side of a communication; person with disability becomes passive and uncertain similarly to the situation described in point 2; lost control over the situation; communication intentions become limited and a disabled person often awaits for a mediator to decide upon certain things with the other side only. A generalization linking the cause of marginalization with disability may breed in the conscience of the person with disability.

Especially cases 1 and 3 show the strengthening of the dependence of a person with disability. Nonetheless, I believe that the model of indirect communication with equally exposed roles of a sender, a mediator and a receiver should not be treated as distorted. It is illustrated by the next frame (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** Indirect communication of person with disability with equal roles of all three subjects of communication situation (the size of the letters symbolizes primary and secondary role in the communication act: **medium** = language mediator; **(PD)** = a person with disability)  
*Source: own elaboration.*

Such setup is acceptable and may be beneficial for both a sender and a receiver as their primary roles in the process of communication remain. In connection with the theory of communication within social interactions by P. Watzlawick [6], it may be stated that a supportive (service) role of an interpreter towards the need of communication is of complementary character against the need of communication from both sides. It may be debatable if one perceives an interpreter as a necessary condition for communication to occur between people so dependent from mediation; interpreter – as a professionalist and a specialist, a person who controls situation and supports helpless communication sides experiencing various negative emotions like anxiety, uncertainty, embarrassment or irritation. Good interpreters realize the fact although it is not an easy task. According to B. Fraser and H. Titchen Beeth “being a mediator, trying to be invisible or, at least, transparent and devoting so much time to analyze other people’s identities may lead to rapid exhaustion” [8]. It is, however, possible with self-limitations coming from the awareness of one’s willingness in the whole process. It is a suspension of an existing hierarchy increasing the chance for communication to become successful and complete. Fig. 5 presents such situation. All three persons taking part in indirect communication process accent their presence and they are all subjects of a communication situation. Although mediators lose their ‘transparency’ but it happens with the acceptance or even with a request from both sides of a translation. Although their professionalism obliges them to refrain from giving advices and sharing opinions, they are sometimes the only source of knowledge on the reasons behind an unsuccessful



communication. We can observe such situations at various universities while interpreting lectures to sign language for students with hearing disturbances. While mediating contacts among students they are often forced to explain the context of applied didactic solutions difficult to understand by the other side (e.g. what a deaf student needs a permission to record lectures; why they are unable to take notes from lectures; why they ask for a test composed of closed questions, etc.). Interpreters do not only interpret or translate thing e.g. in offices and public institutions but also help disabled to move around such institution, to fill various applications or petitions, to search for various sources of information. Practice shows that such current help from an interpreter is invaluable but some additional regulations should be taken into consideration:

- if an interpreter-mediator cannot become a spokesman of one side only because it may result in losing credibility,
- the sequences of an utterance of other person and conditions and context, must be clearly separated – the sides of an interpreting have the right to know when conveyed communicates are exact words of an interlocutor and when they are interpreter's words,
- it is unacceptable to modify and manipulate the content of an utterance of either side just to make it easier to accept by the other side [9].

There are some contradictions to the Ethic Code of and interpreter e.g. to the rule of impartiality “an interpreter is the only participant of interpreting that knows both environments and both languages so he has an advantage over the remaining sides of the interpreting. A high quality social communication is possible only with keeping impartiality and without using the advantage” [9]. When we observe the size of roles – the risk of dependence increases: the responsibility is not only to convey information to a receiver but also finding a solution to a problem. It also seems appropriate to define linguistic mediation as a form of discourse, and such analysis can contribute a lot to understand what takes place between people in the interpreting process [11, 19].

### ***Risk of initiating communication only in presence or through mediator***

The problem has already been mentioned before and pointed out, inter alia, by quoted von Tetzchner and Martinsen [20]. Communication takes place only in particular situations and in presence of a trusted language mediator. Obviously, we can talk about such dependence in the case of one mediator who is the only person able to understand a person with disability. The problem may get worse by choosing exclusive communication method that requires a special preparation from the participants – not only with disabilities – to be able to use it. When hearing damages are concerned, we can often observe a disadvantageous situation when a method of communication is mastered by only one person in a family – e.g. a mother or a father who teaches sign language or cued speech. That is why developmental and methodical premises of communication self-reliance are composed of several rules:

1. The choice of communication method that would isolate a person with disability in a minimal possible way from other users of a mother tongue, people from the closest surroundings, peers at school or Internet society etc. Sometimes a communication method useful at a certain level of development may – unfortunately – become a trap that closes a person in a communication ghetto. The choice of an alternative communication method should always have its deeper justification – psychological, pedagogical, physiological, ethical or anthropological. When acknowledging teleology and anthropology as factors determining actions of a special pedagogue it should refer to such aims-values like integration, self-reliance (autonomy), dignity of a person with disability.
2. Building communication environment around a user of alternative and supportive communication forms – spreading the chosen form within a society and environment of the user. Such actions should be taken in parallel to introducing a person with disability to a certain system of communicating [20]. The final scale of the environment will define the range of communicational independence of the person with disability.
3. Breaking the monopoly of one or few people communicating with a person with disability, especially a child entering social world and mastering communication methods. Even with methods with limited number of users it is possible to create occasions to initiate contacts with people – direct, or e.g. online, to initiate contacts with other people to use communication as an instrumental skill (with an amplifying effect through a successful communication process).

### ***Risk of a “social filter”***

The communication process between people is not only an exchange of words: it is also non-verbal communication, exchanging looks, mimics or proxemics carrying rich content about relations between people. It is also a code of ritual behaviors connected to entering various social roles. They are a sing of communication competences. This area contains a whole wealth of signs and their interpretation limited by the participation of a language mediator. There are two active mechanisms here:

- attention distortion: a person using a communication mediation distracts attention when trying to pay attention both to an interpreter and a proper communication partner; we may expect a situation when one or both persons concentrate exclusively on the mediator,
- “social filter” disturbing the attribution process – default attributing of motives and placing the feeling of control.

Attributions are a natural phenomenon in interpersonal contacts and – despite some false tendencies while judging situations by people – they allow to regulate own image of the world and social relations [7]. The “filter” is connected with mediation – it limits a natural income of information that might

be the basis for initiating attribution process. On the other hand, it should be underlined that in the described situation some processes of indirect attribution are initiated through the interpreter/mediator. In the relation initial sender – receiver, an eventual change of grammatical form of an utterance is also important for attribution (1<sup>st</sup> person communicate *I would like* may be passed as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person *he would like*) or a divergence between the subjects of utterances of a sender and a mediator (a mediator says in 1<sup>st</sup> person *I would like* but he does not speak about himself but only repeats sender's words verbatim). In such grammatical and situational context, in connection to the content of an utterance, attributions may create differently I respect to the subject of the communicate we receive [7]. The “filter” concerns also the role of an impression. In case of indirect communication some generalization takes place – identification of a partner of an interaction with a mediator. Some features of a mediator may be connected to the person he represents in a conversation. It is a quite strong mechanism and because of that skillful negotiators choose their companions of negotiations carefully, following the rule *my companion (my interpreter/my mediator) reflects me* [7].

The role of distortions in attribution process caused by the “social filter” should not be dismissed because of yet another reason. The contemporary approach to the theory of attribution defines its role clearly in building so called studied helplessness [7]. According the theory, the way we perceive interaction partner and his role in proceedings of various situations has a great value not only in shaping personal attitude towards him. It also influences the values attributed to successes and failures, the feeling of control and influence on various events. It shows itself during cognitive, emotional and motivational processes. It may also have serious results in functioning of people and their self-evaluation. Contemporary empirical research regarding attribution processes connect them with e.g. behaviors in difficult situations and individual proceedings of stress reactions, the risk of depression or health-related behavior of a person (including dealing with disability, with the problem of losing good health or other traumatic events) [7]. Studied helplessness is definitely a factor that limits independence and sometimes it shows itself very early.

### ***Risk of “protective umbrella” and isolation***

Another area of special human dependence is connected with having an interpreter or a communication mediator in places that people constantly meet each other. Sign language interpreters who accompany students during learning are a good example. An interesting phenomenon in integrative schools was spotted by M.T. Weiner i M. Miller. In such schools deaf students were often victims of bullying in specific places. They might expect aggression from their peers in areas out of a direct control, e.g. on a way back home. At school, they were visibly under the protective umbrella [22]. Especially when there is a supportive teacher working in a class, an assistant or an interpreter of sign

language – they isolate the student from peers and unconsciously becomes a personal protection of the child. Isolation does not allow to enter a group fully, to know each other well and when a lesson ends there is a signal of the end of protection and a feeling of impunity occurs.

Another example of the specific function of interpreters comes from an academy where a deaf student, coming from a deaf family and using sign language but at the same time functioning in Polish language, asked an interpreter for help. She read words from lips and she was speaking with legible articulation. The direct cause for searching for an interpreter was a growing tension between herself and other students who did not understand problems connected with deafness: they did not want to lend lecture notes, did not understand why the deaf friend does not make them herself during lectures, etc. Loneliness and the feeling of being misunderstood were so great that she seriously thought of quitting studies. “That was the most difficult period for me. I could not live peacefully and I was constantly embittered and I had some dark clouds above my head like quitting studies” [deaf student – own research]. Introducing a sign language interpreter changed the situation radically: “When the INTERPRETER came in it was a great happiness for me. I finally had someone to laugh and to cry with. I started to think positive. I liked to go to all lectures because thanks to the interpreter I started to understand better” [deaf student – own research]. The girl said several times that she does not feel lonely with the interpreter because they are together all the time and she can ignore mean behaviors of the friends from the group. The example not only proves that Weiner and Miller [22] were right but also shows a malfunction of the “protective umbrella” of an interpreter or other language mediator being constantly present next to a ward, not only little children.

### ***Risk of lack of personal relations – instrumental dependency***

Another aspect of a communication supported by w mediator is a difficult and tender problem of the relations of disabled towards their interpreters. It can be spotted during a longer cooperation with the same interpreter. Seldom – in case of incidental interpretations. One of the negative scenarios of developing personal relation may be an objective and instrumental treating of a language mediator by a person with disability. In fact, in such situation we cannot talk about a personal relation as sometimes we may even witness some signs of dehumanization towards an interpreter. Various observations and confessions of sign language interpreters show that sometimes deaf people treat them as their property, their slaves, they do not care about them and sometimes even try to show their power as clients. That does not – let’s hope so – happen often (I do not know any research treating about this problem) but especially difficult in practice. They cause mutual charges, insinuations, sometimes it even results in a refusal to interpret for certain people. It had to be said and it is necessary to think about the mechanism of such disturbances of interpersonal relations.

From a psychologist's point of view there are two the most probable explanations to such behaviors:

- it may be treated as a symptom of a demanding approach,
- it may be a mild form of dehumanization in interpersonal relations.

The problem of demands is often mentioned in the context of working for people with disabilities: Hale (1996) speaks about difficulties in normal social interactions caused by negative experiences connected with disability. These experiences, may result in socially unaccepted behaviors being the reason for stereotypical etiquettes characterizing people with disabilities e.g. parading and boasting about one's disability, demanding, auto-aggressive, having major complexes, overcurious and aggressive, demanding [1]. This is an often image of people with disabilities in the eyes of officials, and other people offering help services. Sometimes such behaviors are mentioned by interpreters and communication mediators.

Demanding attitude is excessive demands disproportionate to the actual needs of a person with disability, too high in comparison with actual help possibilities and accusing others for the situation. It occurs in various forms and refers to different areas of life. It is worth underlining here that in Polish research on the demanding attitude there were no signs of the attitude stronger in case of people with disabilities, although the factor of people presenting such attitudes is very high – it is almost a half of the society [19]. “Demanding attitude has different forms – Stanisławski writes – It may come from helplessness, oversensitivity, egoism, calculation or from the lack of a basic knowledge on where to get a particular support. “Mercy” is one pole of the demanding attitude. On the other there are demonstrative stands. They usually are a tone of a voice and sometimes even a verbal aggression” [19].

In academies, we may observe not only putting guilt for failed exam onto interpreters but also expectation that the interpreters will cheat during exams (the situation is unacceptable and it breaks the ethical code of an interpreter!) or prepare written forms for students etc. Additionally, there are situations when a student does not inform an interpreter about his planned absence, disdains their work (when the student, for whom the interpreting is prepared, reads a comic), the way they address interpreters. I would like to emphasize once again that these situations may be of an incidental character with the percentage of disturbed interpersonal relations similar to the one of healthy people.

Another explanation for shaping an instrumental relation of people with disabilities towards their language mediators is the dehumanization phenomenon – in its mild form. We can observe such form of dehumanization in various offices, in the work of officials or even medical personnel and pedagogues treating a client, a patient or a student not as a human being but rather as a “case”, “number” or “daily number”. It also works the other way round – clients, patients or students do not see a human being on the other side but rather an official. It should be remembered that dehumanization is a form of a defensive mechanism in which on the cognitive level a deconstruction of a social reality

image takes place. Changes within perception of others are to deliver the lack of a psychological comfort while performing certain activities or tasks that could cause moral conflict and that cannot be avoided (e.g. the necessity to take a certain benefit from a person, the necessity to cause pain, to fulfill certain formal recommendations with no option to take somebody's subjective situation into consideration). It is easier to cause pain, suffering, to humiliate somebody, to be cruel or hostile when we do not perceive him as a human being. It is easier to expect an interpreter to be "at one's beck and call", always available when he is not perceived as a human being but rather as a "interpreting robot". What is more, such attitude towards an interpreter may be a kind of a "punishment" for being dependent from his help. In the applied defense mechanism people dependent from other try to decrease the meaning and value of the people who prove the communication dependence, whose constant attendance helps as much as stigmatizes. Such decrease may be achieved through presenting the person as an object. Unfortunately, it cannot be accepted. You can discuss the "invisibility" of an interpreter, but its subjectivity should be obvious [11].

Also in a case when there is no option of refusal to cooperate with an unaccepted interpreter, the line of defense of a person with disability may be the objective treating.

### ***Risk of excessive attachment – personal dependency***

The last of the analyzed areas of risk concerns the possibility of excessive attachment of a person with disability to a language mediator [18]. On the one hand, it may result from the situation described above, when a mediator is the only way to contact outer world. His presence is a reward itself for a person with disability and it causes positive emotions or even such feeling as gratitude, sympathy, adoration. For people with small social experience – and people with disabilities often have such experience on a low level – it may be hard to define their own feelings. In noticeably limited social contacts the person of a language mediator, an interpreter, may be one of very few people constantly met who are not family members [17]. Naturally, it also applies to other specialists e.g. therapists working with a disabled person. They may have to cope with a substitutive function of a companion, a friend or even a person to love for the disabled. Intensity common being together may be sometimes confused with the level of intimacy. With a shortage of other contacts the meaning of these contacts may be overestimated and that is why while working with people with disabilities mutual relations should be carefully observed. It is crucial to:

- define exactly own professional role,
- setting rules and negotiating the boundaries of the contact,
- balancing between interpersonal closeness and openness and professional distance,
- doing every possible thing to avoid excessive attachment of the ward and additional commitments (it does not mean there is a complete ban

on initiating real friendship but it cannot be treated instrumentally and temporarily; a friendship is a root of commitments and if we enter a closer relation with somebody – we must meet that obligation).

Excessive attachment to the person of a communication mediator may be a problem for both the person attached and the mediator himself. On the one hand – it is all about respecting other people's feelings. On the other hand – avoiding troublesome professional situations, avoiding imposing contacts and provoking situations that impose them. In a radically difficult situation a change of the person of mediator should be considered.

## **Conclusion**

The previous analysis of the problems of deaf people (and in general – persons with disabilities) who need help from a language mediator showed numerous dilemmas and areas of risk connected to such form of help that change their place to the continuum between independence and dependence. When setting up an interpreters' service, attention should be paid to the potential risks of the secondary effects of a long-term dependency relationship. To avoid them, much depends on the professionalism and competence of the interpreter – not only language and technical but also cognitive and social skills [10, 13]. In practice, the support of people with disabilities is still very limited in the sense of supervision of interpreters, communication facilitators, assistants as well as other professionals, and therefore a new task for the all psycho-pedagogic staff is emerging: reflective observation and monitoring of ongoing changes and relationships to prevent secondary disruption. There is an increasing awareness and more and more solutions for the independent life of persons with disabilities [2, 4]. But it is above all social relations marked, designate and will determine the old and new areas of independence and dependence.

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