

## **Cued Speech & Foreign Language Instruction**

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At the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), many of the approximately 1,100 deaf and hard-of-hearing students have expressed interest in studying a foreign language. Until recently, however, few have taken Beginning and Intermediate French, German and Spanish offered in mainstream classes. Because the curricular objectives for these courses emphasize speaking (and pronunciation), listening comprehension, reading and writing, most deaf students have not seriously sought access. In many cases, those few who have, have complained of feeling marginalized in the classroom and of failing to understand the lessons.

Two teams of faculty from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf--one of the seven colleges at RIT--developed beginning-level foreign language classes for deaf students. The French team included one French teacher, one audiologist, and one interpreter/cued speech transliterator. The Spanish team included one Spanish teacher, one audiologist, and one speech/language pathologist who is also a cued speech transliterator. Piloted in the 1994-95 academic year, one section each of Beginning Spanish I, II and III was offered exclusively to deaf and hard-or-hearing students. Class size was limited to fifteen, and classes were available to all deaf students regardless of their degree matriculation (associates or baccalaureate). These designated sections were offered again in 1995-96. Also in 1995-96, deaf students were registered into mainstream sections of Beginning French I, II and III. Although technically limited to twenty, enrollments in the first two courses reached twenty-eight and twenty-three, with deaf students representing twenty-five percent. In addition, all students in the French classes were required to be matriculated at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

Early in the planning phase of this project, team members decided to make Cued Speech (Cornett, 1967), an integral part of the Spanish and French curricula. Team members hypothesized that the teaching and use of Cued Speech in language classrooms would facilitate deaf students' acquisition of language, help understanding of spoken French and Spanish by removing ambiguities of lipreading, and enhance pronunciation. Spanish Cued Speech was adapted minimally and taught to students in a supplemental language lab during an extra, fifth hour of instruction. The French version of Cued Speech, le Langage Parlé Completé (LPC), was taught to equal numbers of deaf and hearing students in a language lab held during the fourth, regular class hour.

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