**REBECCA FOSTER**

Hello. I am Rebecca Foster and I am the principal lecturer in the School of Sport and Exercise Science. I suppose my main area of interest is adapted sport. Although I work in HE now, my background is that of being a PE teacher in secondary schools where I found the interest for Special Educational Needs but in my spare time I also did a lot of volunteering for the UK Deaf Sport via the Deaflympics and for several Deaflympics I was the team manager and coach for the athletics team. It was through those very valuable experiences that gave me a chance, as a hearing person, to be submerged in deaf culture and to make me, as a hearing person, more deaf aware in order to help people with hearing impairments come to university and have an enriched experience, I would hope, through our teaching and learning. So, unsurprisingly, I’m going to be focusing on how I have used those skills to help people with hearing impairments in my lessons and I’m hoping that some of these might be of use to you as well.

I’ve got two examples, really; one is face to face teaching and due to the circumstances that we all know about I’ve also got advice about online sessions, and with those I’m hoping that you will be able to pick up some top tips. First and foremost, it really does depend on the level of hearing loss that the individual might have. Some people will sign, some people will lip read, some will have implants and a variety of different … and some might not actually know that they have a hearing impairment until they realise that they might be missing words. So, what I suggest, and this is a delicate nature of how you interact with different people, but I would have a word with them about their experiences of education and what advice they could offer you, perhaps. So, this is not about me saying ‘this is what I am going to do for you’ it’s what you can learn from them. So, it might be they say ‘right, actually if you can stand on my left hand side or deliver on the left hand side, that will make it a lot easier and I’ll do the rest.’ Job done! That communication is really quite vital. So, I think that sort of breaking down that communication barrier initially will be excellent.

For generic hearing loss, a key is obviously to try and stand face to face. A lot of time when we deliver as practitioners or when I delivered as a practitioner, I would drift in front of the projector. This would cast a shadow over my face and would make lip reading extremely difficult. Another thing is that I would gravitate towards the light and again if I go towards the windows or I’m by a bright light, that will also sometimes cover my lip pattern and make it difficult for people to lip read.

There’s also when the student might have a note taker. If they have a note taker, you can probably continue to deliver at pace but if they have a mild hearing loss I suggest you try and pause every now and then because if they are looking at you, looking at the screen they will then have to try and take notes, or you would hope they take notes, so therefore you need to pause if you see their head go down in order to allow time to note take.

Another top tip is to make sure that you tell the student you’re about to change subject. A lot of the time, as a hearing person, we just merge one subject into another but it is really quite important if you say, ‘that’s the introduction, over and done with, now we’re going to move onto the next subject area’, which could be models of disability. This is what I’m going to talk about, so hopefully it gives the student, and all students, an idea of where you’re going to take things. I believe that if you display good practice in your class, the students will follow. So, for instance, I would purposely move around the room and if the person was more impaired on their left hand side, I would make a point of discretely moving to that side. It might be, again, that you allow students to say, ‘it’s probably better if you stand here or if you move round the classroom, make sure you turn your head.’ In class discussions, it might be, again, very difficult for a person with a hearing impairment to follow the conversation because again, as hearing people, it’s a sort of rat a tat, I say, you say, I say, and we use our hearing subliminally to actually pick up what’s going on. If you take that away, all you hear is what one person is saying and you’re thinking ‘where’s that noise coming from?’ So, again, it might be that you direct that conversation to say, ‘OK, Jonathan, what would you like to say?’ and you’re making an active visual and hopefully that person will turn around and follow and again it might be that you say, ‘Jonathan, once you’ve finished talking and so, Melissa, if you want to say something, can you direct it so we’ve all got an idea of where who’s talking.’ That might be a discrete way of making sure that people are included.

In a presentation, I would also consider putting up subtitles on my PowerPoint presentation and thereby all students can read the script as I go along. We also know that PowerPoint subtitles are flawed but I can assure you that if you put a disclaimer at the front saying ‘not all of my correct English might come up’ this also makes a funny interlude if some words come up a bit obscure!

The second scenario, which I previously mentioned, was online teaching. Now, again, I found that PowerPoint subtitles, live subtitles, are absolutely vital for students with a hearing impairment. You can easily do this by going to your PowerPoint, look for slide show, move across to where it says ‘subtitles’. You choose the language, you also choose where they are on your screen and then you hit activate, then they will be live time for you. There’s also Panopto and Panopto is really good for doing subtitles after the event. If you know you want students to revisit or students want to listen to your work again, then Panopto is also useful to do.

Students with hearing impairments have actually said that the discussions online are far more easy for them to follow simply because there’s a dialogue. There’s often a script that people are typing in to or we have to take it one-on-one because, as you know, when we’re talking online you can only hear one person at a time. I also had a number of guest speakers that delivered online and they were quite intrigued about how to activate the PowerPoint subtitles. I was doing a virtual talk at a conference and they asked me, ‘we know you’ve got a hearing impaired student, can you tell us how to activate this via Zoom?’ So, really this was about sharing this good practice even wider to make it inclusive for a wider group of people.

So, just to revisit, those are really good top tips that I’ve found have helped me with my practice and the students have really appreciated that interaction but, again, I would reiterate by talking and actually communicating ‘does this work for you and if it doesn’t, please tell me or is there another way that I don’t know about that you know about or shall we try this?’ All of these conversations are really worthwhile. I think also, if you have met a student who is really quite keen to share stories about their journey, about education, or learning or how they can perhaps raise awareness about deaf culture in your session, a five/ten minute interlude of ‘so, can you tell me a little bit about what’s the best way for us to do this discussion and sometimes, more often than not, and I might be really lucky that a number of the students have offered that willingly and the class has appreciated their honesty. I also respect that there are some students who want to be private, and it might be a discussion between you and them but that’s at the discretion of you and you’ll only know that by communicating with the student.

So, I hope some of those tips have helped you and good luck!