

## AHEAD Conference

### Foreign Languages and Students with Visual Impairments: How to Prepare?

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Office for Students with Disabilities  
The University of Texas at Arlington

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### Agenda

- ▶ Discuss language acquisition and what is successful language acquisition
- ▶ Discuss key players and their roles
- ▶ Tips and tricks for conversion
- ▶ How we did it
- ▶ Some examples



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### What is Language Acquisition?

- ▶ "Language acquisition is defined as a natural progression or development in the use of language."  
Rene Jackson R.N., Rebecca Frey, The Gale Group Inc., Gale, Detroit, Gale Encyclopedia of Nursing and Allied Health, 2002
- ▶ How do you define successful acquisition of language?



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### What is your Institution's goal for language studies?

- ▶ The Modern Language Department at the University of Texas at Arlington lists its goal of language study as the development of deep translingual and transcultural competence in addition to development in the four basic language skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing. <http://langlab.uta.edu/modl/about/>
- ▶ Know what your Institution considers successful acquisition of a foreign language.




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A student who is blind comes to the DSS office and says, "I want to take a foreign Language".



- ▶ What do we do now?
  - ▶ Look at all the players involved and consider their expertise and what they bring to the table.
  - ▶ Set up meetings to discuss what needs to be done and the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved.
  - ▶ Determine how to create the accessible materials.




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### Those Involved

- ▶ DSS Office
- ▶ The Student
- ▶ Faculty
- ▶ Chair/Dean
- ▶ Publisher
- ▶ Tutoring Services
- ▶ Colleagues
- ▶ Information Technology
- ▶ Teaching Assistant
- ▶ Lab Supervisor
- ▶ Etc.




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### The Student

- ▶ Find out what the student brings to the table.
  - ▶ What is their goal and expectations?
  - ▶ When did they lose their vision?
  - ▶ What type of vision loss and how much?
  - ▶ Do they know Braille?
  - ▶ What is their level of technology?
  - ▶ What do they know about the foreign language?
  - ▶ What types of research have they done?
  - ▶ Does the student have previous experience in learning a foreign language?

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### Faculty

- ▶ They are the experts of the language and the class.
  - ▶ What are the course requirements?
  - ▶ What can and cannot be altered?
  - ▶ What are their expectations?
  - ▶ What is their level of knowledge regarding disabilities?
  - ▶ Have they ever worked with a student who is blind?

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### DSS Office

- ▶ Serves as the coordinator, moderator, liaison and researcher.
  - ▶ Coordinates the meetings with faculty and student.
  - ▶ Moderates the meetings to ensure all the pieces are included in discussions.
  - ▶ Liaise between faculty, staff and others involved.
  - ▶ Researches how to make the language accessible.
  - ▶ Establishes roles and responsibilities, expectations; ensuring all parties are on the same page.
  - ▶ Conducts follow-up on students' progress

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### Additional Players

- ▶ Chair/Dean may need to establish essential elements.
- ▶ Publisher can assist with getting usable documents.
- ▶ A Teaching Assistant can help with one-on-one activities or with conversion of materials.
- ▶ Lab Supervisors can assist with lab work.
- ▶ Tutoring services can team up with student and faculty.
- ▶ Information technology department may need to install software.
- ▶ English Language Institute for students learning English as a foreign language.
- ▶ Colleagues can be a great asset and share similar experiences.

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### Commence with the Meetings

- ▶ Coordinate separate then joint meetings
  - ▶ Student meeting - Used to assess knowledge base and what skill sets the student possess.
  - ▶ Faculty (and possibly Chair/Dean) meeting – Used to determine core requirements, essential elements, what can or cannot be altered.
  - ▶ Joint Meeting – Used to establish roles and responsibilities, along with expectations.
  - ▶ Follow-Up Meeting – Used to ensure any issues or concerns are clarified and addressed.

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### Tips and Tricks for Conversion

- ▶ What's in your toolbox?



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### Translation Software

- ▶ Tiger Languages
  - ▶ 31 language translations
- ▶ Duxbury Languages
  - ▶ 56 language translations
- ▶ Both will do the main languages taught at most institutions.
  - ▶ English, French, Spanish, Russian, German, etc.
- ▶ Each translation software is different on how you define the language.
- ▶ Determine if you will translate to the native Braille or translate to English with adjustments.




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### Adjustment Examples

- ▶ Transliteration from one alphabet to another.
  - ▶ (Russian Cyrillic) На всей земле был один язык и одно наречие.
  - ▶ (Russian Latin) Na vsej zemle byl odin jazyk i odno narechie.
- ▶ Changing special characters to another.
- ▶ German Example
  - ▶ ä = ae
  - ▶ ö = oe
  - ▶ ü = ue
  - ▶ ß = ss




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### The Chinese Experience

Chinese Romanization Converter

<http://www.mandarintools.com/pyconverter.html>




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### How we did it

- ▶ Started with the PDF document and stripped the text.
- ▶ Inserted the Chinese Pinyin into the converter.
  - ▶ Nǐ hǎo
- ▶ Converted to Pinyin with numbers for tone marks.
  - ▶ Ni3 hao3
- ▶ Pasted into a word document.
- ▶ Copied the characters.
  - ▶ 你好
- ▶ Enlarged characters to font size 140.
- ▶ Translated to English Braille and embossed.
  - ▶ (characters remained graphics)



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### Unexpected Events

- ▶ Remember, not every student is the same.
  - ▶ Adept Braille user, not JAWS user.
  - ▶ Reading Braille visually.
  - ▶ English as the foreign language.



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### Put all the pieces together!



Image by Erik Johansson  
<http://donbanelleky.nireblog.com/post/2009/06/03/inspirational-photo-manipulation-by-erik-johansson-2009>



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Questions and Comments

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