A Rating System: One Answer to Both Skill-Based Routing and Quality Assessment

Rating System

VRS providers should offer a way for both video and audio users to rate VRS interpreters as calls are completed. The rating system should mirror the well-known five-star system used on the Internet for retail items, movies, restaurants, and hotels.

After each VRS call, an optional survey would display on the videophone for the caller to do any or all of the following:
(1) Rate the interpreter from one star to five stars, with five stars meaning “excellent”.
(2) Select a keyword from a list to indicate the general topic of the completed call, such as “medical”, “legal”, “technical”, “financial”, “social services”, “insurance”, “business” or “conversational”.
(3) Offer additional comments.

Likewise, an audible survey would be provided for audio users to do the following:
(1) Rate the interpreter using the same scale of one to five.
(2) Offer additional comments.

If a call had been handed off to multiple interpreters, the users would be able to rate each interpreter who had worked during the call.

Using the Rating System for Skilled-Based Routing

Over time, the results compiled from the Rating System would generate many Personal Lists and one General List for the VRS provider.

When a video caller chose to use skill-based routing for a particular call, he or she could select the criteria. For example, a video caller could select:

Topic: medical
Rating: 4 or above
From: My List

The next day, that same user might decline to choose a topic but select other criteria:

Topic:
Rating: 3 or above
From: All Users’ List

Using the Rating System for Quality Assessment

Both national and state tests of sign-language interpreters fail miserably in one regard: the measurement of an interpreter’s ability to produce readily understood, fluent interpretations. Due to cost constraints, each of the testing systems uses its own selection of standardized source materials and its own pool of evaluators. Once its evaluators are familiar with the source materials, however, the evaluators begin to overrate the clarity of the interpretations by focusing

on specific signs or words rather than the comprehensibility of entire sentences and discourse. In the field of written translation, however, it is imperative to “test a translation” using subjects who are not familiar with the source message. This is the only way to accurately evaluate the naturalness of a translation, whether it is understandable, and whether it accurately conveys the meaning of the source message.

Although VRS videophone users do not have access to the source message—the audio side of their calls—they are an excellent gauge of the comprehensibility and fluency of the interpreters. Their input must be considered when ranking interpreters for skill-based routing and for quality assessment.

A Rating System as described above would put the evaluation of VRS interpreters where it should be: in the hands of the D/deaf users themselves.

Sincerely,
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