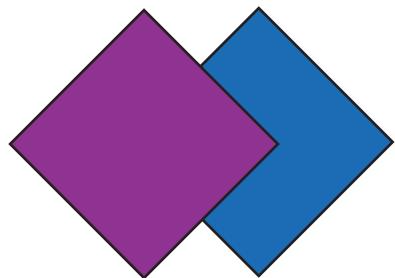


A publication of the  
Conference of Interpreter Trainers



# **International Journal of Interpreter Education**

*Volume 1, November 2009*



**CONFERENCE OF INTERPRETER TRAINERS**  
[www.cit-asl.org](http://www.cit-asl.org)

ISSN - 2150-5772

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# **Editorial: The Real Voyage of Discovery**

**Jemina Napier, Editor<sup>1</sup>**

*Macquarie University, Australia*

Many readers are familiar with metaphorical descriptions of previous definitions of the interpreter's conduit role, equating interpreters with telephones, bridges, channels of communication, and so forth (Frishberg, 1990; Solow, 1981). However, they are no longer used, as metaphorical analogies can be restrictive in considering the role of the interpreter (Roy, 1993).

The interpreting process has also been described in analogical terms by mechanistically comparing interpreting practice to machine processing, involving a process of decoding, analysis, and re-coding of language (Moser, 1978). It was later argued that this description was an over-simplistic way of examining the interpreting process, as other psycho-, socio-, extra-, and para-linguistic factors need to be taken into account, along with social, cultural, psychological, environmental, and physiological demands (Pöchhacker, 2004). Although we have "moved beyond the code model" (Turner, 2009), a mechanistic analogy may still be appropriate in representing the complex triad of an interpreter-mediated dialogue, in which the interpreter is involved in co-constructing the meaning of a message. Turner suggests that three inter-dependent cogs of an engine represent the three participants in the triad and illustrates the uptake of meaning by each interlocutor. Although the use of metaphor or analogy may be limited in its usefulness for the analysis of the interpreting role or process, these methods can still be worthy linguistic tools for the reflection and (sometimes humorous!) introspection of the translation and interpretation profession and practice. For example, Turner (2007) used analogy to metaphorically equate signed language translation and interpreting with the Wright brothers' feat of flying a plane for 12 seconds over 37 meters. In the same way that their aircraft left terra firma, Turner stated that the signed language translation and interpreting profession was being launched into a new era, with the publication of more research in the field.

I have also used metaphor in the title of a forthcoming chapter that I am writing: *If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a noise? The merits of publishing interpreting research*. If researchers are investigating aspects of interpreting, but are not publishing their findings, how can we benefit from the research?

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: CITjournaleditor@gmail.com

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Likewise, if interpreter educators are reflecting on and evaluating their teaching, and not publishing their reflections, how can the quality of interpreter education improve?

Furthermore, in an invited oration to the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA National) conference (Napier, 2006a), I posited that there is an analogy between signed language interpreting and Star Trek, discussing how mentoring is vital to support the “next generation” of interpreters. I used a range of well known quotes from Star Trek episodes to demonstrate (a) how interpreting can be exciting, challenging, and confronting and (b) that the professional interpreting association and experienced practitioners have a role in supporting novice interpreters as they enter into (and as they stay in) the profession.

Essentially, my point is that we all have a responsibility to take newer interpreters by the hand and guide them, encourage them, mentor them. We should have faith in the next generation of interpreters; by educating them, guiding them, and mentoring them, they should be better interpreters than we are, and we should “make it so.” This message applies to translators and interpreters of all languages.

I would also like to apply the same message to translation and to interpreting educators and researchers—that is, encouraging not only newer educators and researchers but also students and practitioners (both novice and experienced) who are interested in self-reflection as an action research process. We are still learning about the processes and products involved in translation and interpreting; thus, we still need further research from all perspectives.

The paradigm of translation and interpreting is now broader and much more encompassing, incorporating discussion of spoken and signed languages in a range of different contexts, using various research methodologies. We are witnessing more dialogue and collaboration among spoken and signed language interpreter researchers, which should be further encouraged (Shaw, 2006). For example, a recent conference was coordinated by Lessius University College and the University of North Florida and was hosted in Antwerp, Belgium on “Aptitude for Interpreting,” featuring presentations from signed and spoken language interpreting researchers. Speakers from the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Italy presented information about their own research on various screening tests used with interpreting students to ascertain how linguistic, cognitive or personality factors may predict potential proficiency and success as interpreters. These presentations generated thoughtful and critical debate on research methodology, data, the use of statistics, and the applicability of findings across languages and in interpreter education.<sup>2</sup> We also observed greater collaborations among spoken and signed language interpreter educators in delivering and evaluating interpreter education across languages (Mikkelsen & Solow, 2002, 2005a, 2006b; Shaw, Grbic & Franklin, 2004). This partnership is evidenced by a new program that trains translator and interpreter educators in Australia; the program is open to educators of all languages.<sup>3</sup>

Burgeoning relationships in interpreter education are conducive to joint research projects that focus on interpreter education and training. Research into interpreting practice and interpreter education go hand in hand. Research informs education, which in turn informs practice (Napier, 2005b). Hence, the *International Journal of Interpreter*

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.lessius-ho.be/tt/nieuws/aptitude/Aptitude.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/postgraduate/coursework/tip/mtip.htm>

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## Editorial

*Education* plays a significant role in contributing to best practices in interpreter education. If the Wright brothers could take flight again, they would surely do so in a vehicle that incorporated lessons learned from the first flight, an enhanced understanding of aeronautics in general, and consideration of the potential implications for pilot training.

Interpreter education research enables us to explore how findings from interpreting research can be incorporated into the classroom. It provides us with the opportunity to compare educational outcomes with real-world expectations. It presents us with the challenge of identifying what else we need to know about interpreting in order to improve the education of interpreters. Interpreting education research can take many forms. It is a genuine multidisciplinary, multimethod domain of research, drawing on psychological, linguistic, sociological, and educational research disciplines. Educational research comprises (a) case studies, surveys, longitudinal evaluations, and action research; (b) analyses of teaching activities, program delivery, or assessment; and (c) critiques of applications of educational theory. Consideration can be given to, and drawn from, different stakeholders: practitioners, educators, students, researchers, consumers, service providers, societal institutions (e.g., government), and the educational institutions themselves.

To use metaphor once more, I borrow from the work of Angelelli (2004) who reports that some interpreter participants involved in her study likened their role to “diamond connoisseurs,” as they picked through the information (dirt) to discover the most salient and relevant particles (diamonds). As interpreter researchers, educators, and educational researchers, we too can forage through the soil for a range of jewels (skills, attributes, experience, technologies, methodologies) to create the most stunning necklace (ideal program structure/delivery) that other designers will want to replicate.

This new journal, the *International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE)*, brings together spoken and signed language interpreter researchers and educators to discuss research, literature, and more important, ideas. The journal is a locus of debate where we can share our jewels and work together to design the perfect necklace. I encourage anyone teaching interpreters to consider submitting an article to the journal, whether it is based on empirical research, reflection or observation.

This particular issue comprises articles by signed language interpreting contributors, primarily influenced by the fact that the journal is published by the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT), which has its roots in the delivery of American Sign Language/English Interpreting education. The topics discussed are broad ranging, and the editorial board consists of skilled interpreter educators and researchers who represent many different languages and communities. This first issue demonstrates the commitment of CIT, the board, and the editor to make *IJIE* all-inclusive for spoken and signed language interpreter educators alike. We encourage the sharing of research, ideas, and knowledge, in order to explore new dimensions in interpreter education and to launch the *IJIE* on a new journey of discovery!

This editorial provides me with the opportunity to establish a convention regarding the writing style of the journal. Many readers will be familiar with the fact that in deaf/signed language linguistics and interpreting literature the “D/d” convention is used to distinguish between members who use the signed language of a linguistic and cultural

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minority community (Deaf) and those who have a hearing loss but do not use sign language or identify themselves with this linguistic minority (deaf).<sup>4</sup> In developing a policy for this journal, I have decided not to adhere to this convention. Given the evolving nature of the deaf community due to medical advancements and changes in educational policy,<sup>5</sup> greater numbers of deaf people come to the community as late learners of signed language. Thus, definitions of deaf community membership are changing. In order to be inclusive rather than exclusive, the focus of this journal will be on the languages used and interpreting as social practice with empowered and disempowered communities in both conference and community contexts. No judgment is made about the hearing and linguistic identity or status of people who use a signed language. If articles are submitted that refer to deaf people or the deaf community, all references to deafness will be edited so as not to distinguish between Deaf/deaf.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the CIT journal committee in laying the groundwork for the establishment of this journal and for bringing me on board as editor. These people include Annette Miner (CIT Board Liaison), Suzanne Ehrlich-Martin and Len Roberson (Co-Chairs), Kimberly Hale, Brenda Nicodemus, and Sherry Shaw. I would like to recognize the hard work of Annette Miner, the CIT Director of Research and Publications, in organizing the logistics of the journal publication and for her liaison between myself and the CIT board. Doug Bowen-Bailey deserves special thanks for his support in working on the *IJIE* homepage and developing the online version of the journal, including library subscriptions.

This is the inaugural volume of *IJIE*, and we welcome feedback from our readers as to the style, content, and scope of the journal. Future plans for the journal include publication on an annual (rather than biennial) basis, and a section dedicated to the emerging research of new interpreter educator scholars. As demand increases, we hope to publish more often, with special volume themes. There is now a rolling call for manuscripts, so please consider submitting an article and assisting us on the journey of discovery regarding interpreter education.

Revisiting the Star Trek theme and their voyage of discovery. . . . What is our final frontier? We should boldly go and disseminate, discuss, and dissect interpreter education and research. There are always new ways of looking at things. This relatively new field of research requires us to open our eyes and really look at what we are doing. So I would like to end with a quote from Marcel Proust (1871\_1922), which I feel sums up this new journey:

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

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<sup>4</sup> See for example, Bauman (2007); Johnston and Schembri (2007); Lane, Hoffmeister and Monaghan (2002); Stewart, Schein and Cartwright (1998); Sutton-Spence and Woll (1998). Bahar (1996); Senghas and

<sup>5</sup> See articles Johnston (2006) and respondents in a special edition of *Sign Language Studies*

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Merrison at Mediation and Conflict: Translation and Culture in a Global Context: Third Conference of the International Association of Translation and Interpreting Studies, Melbourne, Australia.

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# The Ontological Beliefs and Curriculum Design of Canadian Interpreter and ASL Educators

Campbell McDermid<sup>1</sup>

*George Brown College, Canada*

## Abstract

This study involved interviews with Canadian educators in the fields of interpreter training and American Sign Language (ASL), which were conducted within a qualitative framework to explore their ontological beliefs concerning curriculum design. Questions posed included how their curriculum was fashioned and the nature of course delivery. Eisner's (2002) three curricula (i.e., *explicit*, *implied*, and *null*) were used as a framework to interpret the findings. The educators typically designed their curricula in-house and followed a "Designing a Curriculum" methodology (Mitchell, 1983). Most educators, however, did not mention the inclusion of representatives from the field, a curriculum expert, or a literature review, all of which are recommended by Sinnott (1976). Because some participants described a lack of documentation or the need to redesign resources, there existed an ad hoc quality to curriculum construction that made a scaffolding approach to teaching and learning problematic. The continued existence of disparate teaching resources, subject specialization, and lack of curricular integration could lead to educational silos and having separate language and interpretation programs in one department.

Keywords: education; curriculum; ontology; ASL; sign language; Deaf

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [cmcdermid@rogers.com](mailto:cmcdermid@rogers.com).

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# The Ontological Beliefs and Curriculum Design of Canadian Interpreter and ASL Educators

Signed language interpreting, or visual language interpreting, is a relatively new field. Curriculum construction and the ontological beliefs of educators, the knowledge or facts they regard as significant to their curriculum, are but two of the many areas in need of further study. To investigate these areas, 34 interpreter educators and American Sign Language (ASL) instructors in Canada were interviewed and asked to describe how their curricula were created and delivered (see appendix) and encouraged to discuss the challenges they faced. The following manuscript is a synthesis and qualitative analysis of their comments, drawing upon Eisner's (2002) discussion of the explicit, implied, and null curricula. The decision to use this framework mirrored the methodology used by other authors (Sawyer, 2004) and was also grounded in the comments from the participants. For example, once the data analysis began, and as the principle researcher, I believed that the concepts of explicit, null, and implied curricula provided a significant lens for understanding the ontological beliefs of the participants and that it helped to discriminate between what they actually taught, what they had decided to leave out of their curricula, and what they hoped to accomplish through indirect instruction.

## 1. Review of the literature

As mentioned, Eisner's (2002) conceptualization of the three curricula that all schools teach (i.e., explicit, implied, and null) was chosen as the framework for this qualitative study and served as the major headings in the organization of this manuscript. In addition, a separate category was noted, curriculum development, which focused on the design of the above three curricula. A similar model was used by Sawyer (2004) to discuss the curriculum design of spoken language interpretation programs, albeit different labels were used, such as the "official curriculum" (p. 41) to denote the explicit and the "hidden curriculum" (p. 42) to mean a combination of the implied and learned curricula.

I first review the concepts of explicit, implied, and null curricula based on the definitions found in the literature (Apple, 2004; Eisner, 2002; Sawyer, 2004). Next, I present a brief review of the literature on signed language interpreter education with reference to spoken language interpretation programs that provide examples of these three curricula. Within a qualitative methodology, the initial literature review was expanded upon in response to the comments of the participants and to provide context for their insights. For example, several educators mentioned a mapping or Designing a Curriculum ([DACUM]; Mitchell, 1983) process that then became a property of the category of curriculum development, and so a further review of the literature was done in this area to contextualize the participants' comments (see Figure 1, Examples of Categories and Properties).

As a construct, the *explicit curriculum* is both the planned content and abilities that constitute the taught lessons (Eisner, 2002). Often this is conceptualized as a document (Sawyer, 2004), "which includes details about goals,

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objectives, content, teaching techniques, evaluation and assessment" (Marsh, 1997, p.4). Much of this manuscript is given over to a discussion of this curriculum.

The *implied or hidden curriculum*, on the other hand, could be thought of as the process of student socialization (Eisner, 2002; Marsh, 1997). According to Apple this hidden curriculum encompasses "the tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools" (2004, p. 13). Students typically work to discover this curriculum, to emulate the expectations of their instructors, and to read the *value code* around the amount of time and level of importance assigned to specific classes or activities (Eisner, 2002). In addition, Eisner states that the implied curriculum includes the inculcation of good work habits, such as flexibility and punctuality, initiative and independence, and adherence to routines that prepare students to enter the workforce. Eisner also asserts that an unstated and typically undocumented curriculum possibly makes up a great deal of what is actually taught.

The third curriculum that schools teach is described by Eisner (2002) as the *null curriculum*—consisting of two major areas: (a) the content that was purposefully not addressed in programs and (b) the abilities or cognitive aptitudes that were not required or fostered in learners. In some secondary settings, for example, students were not given the option of studying law, anthropology, the arts, communication, economics, as these were not part of the ethos of traditional teaching and so have not been included in the explicit curriculum (Eisner). Students then graduated with little to no understanding of critical topics, such as the legal system or their lawful responsibilities (Eisner). Eisner also argued that some educational systems preferred literal and verbal-sequential reasoning to abstract thinking, thus ignoring students' creative, abstract, and cognitive abilities and potentially producing literal thinkers with less ability to think metaphorically.

### 1.1. *Explicit curriculum*

Beginning with the explicit curriculum, we review what the literature has said about signed and spoken language interpreter preparation programs. Concerns have been raised in Canada about the lack of a standard, explicit curriculum for signed language interpreters (Stratiy, 1996) and a history in the field of educators not clearly documenting or sharing their efforts (Taylor, 1993). The same could be said for ASL programs in the United States (Smith, 1988). Several authors (Roberts, 1990; Sawyer, 2004) have noted a similar lack of resources (i.e., published manuals or curriculum guides) for spoken language interpreter educators and a lack of research of curriculum design for their profession (Albir, 2007; Sawyer). A review of the literature, however, uncovered a number of resources that could be used in the design of a curriculum for interpretation programs. As properties of the explicit curriculum, these resources are discussed in the following order: philosophy, curriculum resources, skill sets, models, and coursework.

#### 1.1.1 Philosophy and mission

It could be argued that an identified mission statement and teaching philosophy are important first steps in the design of a program; therefore, it will be the first area that we look at in the explicit curriculum. Gile (1995) suggested a historical tension in the philosophical approaches to spoken language interpreter preparation in that educators believed interpreters were either born or made. Sawyer also noted two competing paradigms in spoken language programs in the 1980s and 1990s, either a pedagogy based on "cognitive science and linguistics," or a holistic approach based on the liberal arts and humanities (2004, p.11).

Malcolm (1999) shared a similar observation to Gile's (1995) about signed language interpreter educators, in that some teachers doubted interpretation could be taught. Malcolm also believed that instructors too readily adopted a model of practice, what Deninger described as a "remarkably unsuccessful pedagogical technique" (1987, p. 310). Within a pedagogy of practice, Finton described the teaching practices of some instructors as the "sink or swim" method of teaching interpretation (1998, p. 38).

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## Ontological beliefs of interpreter educators

Instead of a model of practice, educators have been advised to adopt a teaching philosophy based on theories of learning and cognition (Deninger, 1987), a bilingual-bicultural approach (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980), a constructivist philosophy (Albir, 2007; Napier, 2004; Sawyer, 2004), or the view of interpreting as a discourse process (Cokely, 1992; Napier; Russell, 2002). Apple (2004), in a general discussion of curriculum design, encouraged a social justice framework.

A number of theorists were also recommended in the literature on signed language interpreting for study, such as Piaget and Bandura (Deninger, 1987), Freire (Baker-Shenk, 1986; Gish, 1993; McDermid, 2009), and Vygotsky (Gish). One of the participants in this study mentioned the work of language acquisition theorists Cummins (1979) and Krashen and Terrell (1983). Cummins suggested at least two forms of language fluency, Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), an individual's ability to use language communicatively, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), an individual's ability to describe their language and its grammar. In a description of language learning, Krashen and Terrell pointed out the need to use language in meaningful ways and to use it incrementally in order to avoid overwhelming a learner's affective filters.

While not necessarily a philosophical approach, several methods of teaching interpretation were cited in the literature, such as grammar instruction (Stauffer, 1992) and a Demand-Control Schema framework (Dean & Pollard, 2001). In the Demand-Control framework, students prepare for interpreting by brainstorming and then reflecting on the demands placed upon them in four areas: linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental (Dean & Pollard). To teach ASL, a Functional-Notional (Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 1988) and Direct Method approach were recommended (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980; Smith & Savidge, 2002). The focus of the Functional-Notional approach was on communicative competence and lessons are taught in context (Smith et al.). The Direct Method was described as being an immersion approach, with ASL being taught "without voice and without English equivalents" (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, p. xi). Some ASL instructors employed a revised Direct Method, which included instruction in grammar and scripts of ASL dialogues in a written English gloss to initiate dialogic activities (Cokely & Baker-Shenk).

### 1.1.2 Curriculum resources

Various curriculum resources were noted in the literature, the next property of the explicit curriculum that we address. As early as 1973, a curriculum for signed language interpreting existed (Sternberg, Tipton & Schein, 1973), which was followed by the creation of a taxonomy of aptitudes interpreters needed to perform a successful interpretation (Conference of Interpreter Trainers [CIT], 1986). Since 1988, a number of other curriculum documents have been created to teach signed language interpreting (Baker-Shenk, Bienvenu, Colonosmos, Cokely, Kanda, Neumann-Solow & Witter-Merithew, 1988; Baker-Shenk, 1990; Kelly, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998; Resnick & Hoza, 1990; Taff-Watson & Northup, 1988). Of course at the same time, several curricula or teaching resources have also been created for instructors of spoken language interpretation (Albir, 2007; Gile, 1995; Sawyer, 2004; Seleskovitch, 1978; Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1995).

In 2000, Roy edited the first in a series of volumes for interpreter educators that cover various teaching methodologies and research. Concerned about the lack of attention (in the programs) to culture and race, a group of educators met to create the National Multicultural Interpreter Program ([NMIP], 2004) curriculum.<sup>2</sup> While not designed specifically for signed language interpreters, Pollard (1997) created a mentored curriculum for mental health interpreting. A variety of textbooks have also been published on the subject of signed language interpretation (Frishberg, 1986; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Napier, McKee & Goswell, 2006; Solow, 1981; Steward, Schein & Cartwright, 2004) and ASL instruction (Cassell, 1997; Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980; Smith et al., 1988). In addition, CIT has published biennial conference proceedings and a number of positions papers on interpreter education. While the contribution to the education of signed language interpreters of these resources has been significant, there were limitations as well. Some have concentrated on research (Roy, 2000) or were not designed to teach interpreting (Cokely & Baker-Shenk; Smith et al.; Taylor, 1993). Other resources focused

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.epcc.edu/nmip/Curriculum/tabid/2763/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

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specifically on interpreting from English to ASL (Taylor) or ASL to English (Kelly, 2004), while others did not provide lesson plans or means of assessment (Humphrey & Alcorn; Pollard).

### 1.1.3 Skill sets

In addition to the resources mentioned above, several authors listed specific skill sets they believed should be included in the explicit curriculum of interpreter education programs, perhaps best described as pre-interpreting, cognitive abilities (Cokely, 1992; Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980; Colonos, 1992; CIT, 1986; Deninger, 1987; Finton, 1998; Lambert, 1988; Stauffer, 1992). These skill sets include areas such as note taking (Winston & Monikowski, 2000), visualization (Stauffer), and mapping (Russell, 2002; Winston & Monikowski). Steffen (1998) found that some students were not motivated to practice these aptitudes until they were tied to a model of interpretation.

From a curriculum design perspective, many of the tasks noted above seem premised in the belief of interpreting as an individual, cognitive-psychological activity, not necessarily as a socio-linguistic or social phenomenon. An instructor who has adopted a philosophy of learning as being a social activity might instead teach activities such as team building or peer support and feedback. Similar to Sawyer's (2004) observations concerning the anecdotal nature of the curricula in spoken language interpretation programs, there is little empirical research to validate many of these tasks. Little seems to be known, for example, about the time required for their mastery or the ability of an adult student to develop these aptitudes.

### 1.1.4 Models

As a feature of the explicit curriculum, it has been argued that programs must incorporate a model of interpreting (Cokely, 1992; Janzen, 1994; Napier, 2006). A model, it was believed, could serve as the basis of program evaluation, help to operationally define needed competencies (Cokely), and structure feedback (Isham, 1986). One researcher noted how challenging it was to determine message equivalency without such a model (Slatyer, 2006).

In 1974, Ingram conceptualized possibly the first processing model specific to signed language interpreting. Since that time, and especially over approximately the last two decades, various models from spoken language interpretation (Gile 1995; Seleskovitch, 1978) have been incorporated into signed language interpreter preparation programs as well as a number of models postulated by signed language interpreter educators (Cokely, 1992; Colonos, 1992; Gish, 1987; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Russell, 2002). Although not considered a model of interpretation, Isham's (1986) article on text analysis has also been included in interpreter education (Resnick & Hoza, 1990).

Common themes in the models cited above include an emphasis on contextual or environmental information (Cokely, 1992; Colonos, 1992; Gish, 1987; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Ingram, 1974; Isham, 1986; Seleskovitch, 1978) and bilingual language fluency (Cokely; Colonos; Seleskovitch). Many authors conceptualize the process as three broad stages in which the interpreter (a) disregards the source message form, (b) mentally represents the speaker's message in meaning-based or goal-based units, and then (c) produces an equivalent target text (Colonos; Ingram; Seleskovitch). In general, while models help to broadly inform the ontology and pedagogy of interpreter educators, it is then up to the educator and students to determine the sequencing of learning activities, their intensity and duration, and assessment.

### 1.1.5 Coursework

The final property of the explicit curriculum of signed language interpreter education programs we address is that of coursework. Cokely (2003) believed that most signed language interpreter education programs began with translation and were followed by classes in consecutive interpretation, then simultaneous interpretation. Other areas for inclusion in the explicit curriculum included ethics (Cokely, 2003; Janzen, 1994; McDermid, 2009;

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Napier, 2006; Slatyer, 2006), a signed language (such as ASL; Cokely, 1992), and Deaf<sup>3</sup> culture (Janzen, 1999). In the early 1990s, Malcolm reported that students at Douglas College took "Introduction to the Community, Wellness, Lifespan Development, and Working with Others" (1994, p. 8). During that same time period, practicum or placement courses were a requirement of the Canadian programs (Decator, 1994; Janzen, 1994; Malcolm, 1999), though some programs found it challenging to find hosts (MacFarlane, 1990). Russell (2002) noted a difference in opinion about the value of consecutive interpretation between the programs where the consecutive mode was taught and with hosts who didn't seem to support it. Douglas College had also twinned their students with a working interpreter (Malcolm), and mentorship programs were recommended for recent graduates (MacFarlane; Malcolm).

### 1.2. *Implied curriculum*

Turning to the second of Eisner's (2002) three curricula in the field of spoken language interpretation, the *implied*, this curriculum might include the objectives outlined by Gile (1995), such as: (a) the enhancement of the professional status of the field, (b) support for graduates in networking and employment, (c) standardization of practices through education, (d) the promotion of research, and (e) efforts to foster support for working practitioners. In the signed language interpretation field, the implied curriculum of programs was defined by one author (McDermid, 2009) as the inculcation of "good citizens" of the Deaf community in terms of five broad areas: attitude and values, cultural sensitivity, community involvement, ethical behaviour and a willingness to pursue life-long learning (McDermid). Within these five headings, it was hoped that programs instilled in students a commitment to volunteerism, community participation (Malcolm, 1994; McDermid), and the value of reciprocity (McDermid). Instructors were seen as being responsible for encouraging their students to become agents of change (Witter-Merithew, 1995) and to prepare their pupils for the workforce (Malcolm). At the same time, however, interpreters needed to be made aware of professional boundaries (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Johnson & Taylor, 2004; McDermid; Witter-Merithew) and recognize that the Deaf and wider communities had different views concerning these boundaries (Page, 1993; Still, 1990).

The socialization of signed language interpreting students was also frequently described as the cultivation of an appropriate attitude (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; McDermid, 2009). This attitude encompasses student characteristics such as the view of Deaf people as a cultural group, commitment to their program, independence, motivation, and a willingness to participate (McDermid). Authors also expected students to avoid certain behaviors, such as the role of victim or rescuer (Smith & Savidge, 2002), and behaviours described as oppressive (Witter-Merithew, 1995) or competitive (Shaw, 1997). Instead, it was expected that students demonstrate introspection (Witter-Merithew), respect (Humphrey & Alcorn; McDermid), ownership of their education (Witter-Merithew), a cooperative attitude (McDermid; Shaw), and a willingness to accept feedback (McDermid).

Several authors (McDermid, 2009; Smith & Savidge, 2002; Witter-Merithew, 1995) believed that the implied goals described above should be made part of the explicit curriculum. It was found that educators were reticent to challenge inappropriate or oppressive behaviors in their classes. It was suggested that these implied expectations be discussed and that further research with program alumni was needed regarding the efficacy of this unwritten curriculum (McDermid).

### 1.3. *Null curriculum*

Turning to the *null curriculum*, the third, and final, curriculum that Eisner (2002) described, a review of the literature identified topics that were not covered in Canadian programs, such as transliteration (Janzen, 1999). Transliteration could be thought of as the representation of a spoken language manually through the use of a

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<sup>3</sup> Editorial note: The author has requested that use of the upper case 'D' in describing culturally Deaf people is retained throughout his article.

signed language. It was perhaps not taught, nor openly practiced, due to the recognition of Deaf culture and ASL in Canada (Malcolm, 1992). One educator suggested that the increase in research and knowledge about ASL meant more time was needed to teach the language and its features (Janzen, 1999). Coursework in specific disciplines (e.g., legal, medical) was also not a priority in the late 1980s in Canada (Dubienski, 1988); though a decade later specialized training had come to the forefront in the discourse of interpreter education (Madore, 2000; Malcolm, 1999). Offering specialized training, however, meant that there was less time available to spend on foundational skills (Dubienski).

In addition to consciously omitting specific topics, programs for signed and spoken language interpreting might also have left out specific cognitive skills. In a text for spoken language translators, Robinson referred to the necessity of learning cognitive aptitudes such as the ability to make “transfer patterns” (1997, p. 172) from three types of cognitive reasoning: deductive (i.e., the application of theory), inductive (i.e., from parts to whole), and abductive (i.e., intuitive)\_areas perhaps not covered in some programs. In a review of program assessments, West and Whitney (2000) wondered about the absence of higher-order or advanced cognitive skills, in particular those needed during student self-assessment in ASL-English interpretation programs. As the topic of transliteration was not covered in Canadian programs (Janzen, 1999), nor were the cognitive skills needed to perform this work, it was believed that if an individual could interpret between ASL and English, they could learn to provide transliteration services later (Russell & Malcolm, 1992).

#### *1.4. Curriculum development*

As identified from the comments of the participants of this study and a review of the literature, the process of designing a curriculum was significant and, therefore, was included as a major category. In a discussion of general curriculum development, Marsh (1997) described how some educators espoused a model based on a process of decision making or a variety of orientations (i.e., societal, student-centered, knowledge-based, cognitive processes, self-actualization, etc.). Sawyer (2004) described a model of development in spoken language interpreter education programs as being open or closed, based on the amount of student input allowed or how rigidly the written curriculum was followed. Apple believed that, historically, the creation of a curriculum was informed by individual, psychological theories of learning where content was “usually accepted as given, as neutral” (2004, p. 28). Within this paradigm, curriculum designers followed an “academic achievement model,” a merit-based approach that emphasized individual success and that incorporated metaphors of management and accountability, and they viewed education as a technical procedure to teach and master (Apple, 2004, p. 28). A more recent approach to curriculum was a sociological or “socialization approach” that took a critical look at “the social norms and values” being taught in schools (Apple, 2004, p. 29).

As a political process, Apple believed curriculum design and delivery was “repeatedly filtered through ideological and economic commitments,” whose function was replication and indoctrination into the dominant culture and unequal distribution of power (p. 8). The selection of materials, for example, created “high status knowledge,” leading to competition among the students for possession (p. 34). As the academic achievement model and the sociological model of education failed to consider issues of power or politics, curriculum designers had begun to consider a social justice orientation (Apple).

Turning to signed language interpreter education, the literature review identified a number of methodologies used in curriculum design, such as an *action research* approach (Napier, 2006; Slatyer, 2006) or *scaffolding* (Gish, 1993; Napier, 2006). Cokely and Baker-Shenk (1980) also believed a spiral philosophy was appropriate for ASL programs. Based on Donato’s (2003) discussion of the action research process, a curriculum designed within this framework could consist of four steps, in which the teacher-as-researcher develops a plan concerning some aspect of their pedagogy, implements the plan, documents the results, and then reflects on its impact. A curriculum based on a spiralling or scaffolding process would reintroduce content and abilities over an extended period of time, perhaps the entire program, thus providing for repetition; it would also require sequentially more complex abilities and deeper understandings from the students.

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As mentioned under the category of coursework, Cokely (2003) believed that signed language interpreter education programs typically followed a sequence of classes that began with translation, followed by consecutive interpretation, then by simultaneous work. Sawyer (2004) noted a similar linear design in spoken language programs but also found that some programs followed two other approaches in which students learned both translation and interpretation in tandem (i.e., a parallel model) or took common courses initially and then branched off to specialize in either one (i.e., Y-forked model). This segregation was challenged in signed language programs (Cokely, 2003; Russell, 2002), as was the separation of coursework based on source and target languages; it was argued that all classes required the same cognitive abilities (Cokely). Russell worried that when signed language interpreter education programs taught simultaneous interpretation last, students would value consecutive work less, perhaps an example of the value code that Eisner (2002, p. 92) believed programs unknowingly espoused.

Sawyer (2004) advocates for a top-down approach to curriculum design in spoken language programs, in which program outcomes are identified first and then followed by the design of individual classes. Based on the literature review, specific areas for consideration in the design process include philosophy, specific objectives, pedagogy (Madore, 2000; Sawyer), and assessment (Albir, 2007; Madore; Sawyer). A student-centered approach was recommended by some authors (Albir; Napier, 2004); it is also referred to as an open curriculum approach, as mentioned earlier (Sawyer).

In a survey of Canadian educators and program graduates, Madore (2000) questioned the model of development that education programs followed. Only two of the eight ASL/English interpreting programs in Canada, she believed, were categorized as following a structured approach, whereas three seemed to do so partially, and three did not seem to follow a model at all. In a similar view, Sawyer (2004) thought that in spoken language programs, curriculum design was driven by curriculum reform or individual innovation, not necessarily a structured framework. The lack of a program development model, Madore (2000) thought, could be tied to a number of factors, such as the instructors' lack of understanding concerning the interpretation process and lack of expertise in program development. As a result, she recommended that experts in program development be employed and a qualified review team be established (Madore).

### 1.4.1 DACUM

A popular model for curriculum design in ASL-English interpreting programs was the Designing a Curriculum (DACUM) process (NMIP, 2004; Witter-Merithew, et al., 2004). The DACUM procedure involves identifying occupational outcomes and then mapping those to specific courses in an appropriate sequence (Sinnett, 1976). Strengths of the DACUM include flexibility and the ability to quickly respond to a community's needs (Sinnett).

To complete a DACUM, however, requires a knowledgeable expert or leader, a comprehensive review of the literature, the creation of a panel of experts, and the identification of specific outcomes that can be measured (Sinnett, 1976). While the process identifies content, it does not necessarily address pedagogy (Sinnett). Similar to the performance-based or objectives-based model of curriculum design described in the literature, the DACUM process leads to a curriculum with perhaps an "over-emphasis upon behavioural outcomes," which are believed to be difficult to operationally define at times (Marsh, 1997, p. 4).

As a summary of the literature review, curriculum development in signed language interpretation programs could be considered multifaceted, involving consideration of explicit, implied, and null curricula. In regards to the explicit curriculum, and contrary to the beliefs of some educators (Stratiy, 1996; Taylor, 1993), there exist a number of curriculum resources regarding both signed (Baker-Shenk, 1990; Kelly, 2004; Resnick & Hoza, 1990; Roy, 2000) and spoken language interpreter education (Albir, 2007; Gile 1995; Sawyer, 2004; Seleskovitch, 1978; Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1995). In literature there are several examples of the application of learning styles and cognition to pedagogy (Deninger, 1987; Gish, 1993; Malcolm, 1999; McDermid, 2009; Napier, 2004) as well as information concerning specific coursework. There also exists a growing canon on the socialization of interpretation students (McDermid; Shaw, 1997; Witter-Merithew et al., 2004), the implied curriculum, and encouragement to bring these unwritten expectations into the explicit curriculum (Smith & Savidge, 2002; Witter-Merithew, 1995). In addition to what is being taught, interpreter educators have consciously, or unconsciously,

omitted some topics from their programs, the null curriculum, such as transliteration (Janzen, 1999), and perhaps, specific cognitive abilities. Finally a number of models of curriculum design and development exist for programs to use, such as the DACUM model (Sinnett, 1976), the action research approach (Napier, 2006), and the linear, parallel, and Y-forked designs, as described by Sawyer.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1. Selection of data and research participants*

A purposeful sampling technique was used in which the instructors from all five existing ASL/English Interpretation Programs (AEIP) in Canada were invited to participate in this study (i.e., Douglas College, Red River College, St. Clair College, George Brown College, and the Nova Scotia Community College). The faculty members of four Deaf studies or pre-interpreter programs (i.e., Vancouver Community College, Red River College, St. Clair College, and George Brown College) and two professors from the University of Manitoba's faculty of linguistics were also contacted and invited to take part in this research. Many of the instructors in the Deaf studies programs at Red River College, St. Clair College, and George Brown College were cross-appointed to teach in the AEIP in their respective colleges. While the professors from the University of Manitoba did not teach in the interpretation program, they taught linguistics to the students from Red River College, as the two institutions had created a joint diploma (i.e., signed language interpreting) and bachelor's degree (i.e., general arts degree) program. The instructors at Vancouver Community College (VCC) did not work in the interpreting program, but Douglas College routinely required graduation from VCC prior to enrolment; therefore, this program and the Deaf studies or pre-interpreter programs in the other institutions were seen as the beginning of the educational preparation of students.

### *2.2. Participant demographics*

There were a total of 34 participants in this study, 18 Deaf and 16 hearing individuals. Seven of the hearing instructors and none of the Deaf faculty members had graduated from an interpretation program. Five of the hearing instructors were members of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers and only one had a degree specific to teaching interpreting, from the Teaching Interpreting Program at Western Maryland College. An equal number of Deaf and hearing instructors held a master's degree (five Deaf, five hearing) and three of the hearing educators had obtained a doctorate. Thirteen of the eighteen Deaf staff had achieved either a bachelor's degree or a college certificate or diploma. Ten of the sixteen hearing instructors and nine of the Deaf staff had education-related degrees or coursework related to the field. Eight of the Deaf participants mentioned training with the *Vista Signing Naturally Curriculum*.<sup>4</sup> Three of the Deaf instructors held ASL instructor certification and eight of the hearing staff were nationally certified interpreters.

### *2.3. Data gathering*

The methodology for this research project began with a preliminary review of the literature to identify trends within the field of signed language interpreter education, followed by the creation of a questionnaire featuring open-ended questions (see appendix), which were forwarded to the program chairs for dissemination. Follow-up face-to-face interviews by the author were then conducted with all of the instructors, who later transcribed verbatim the notes from the hearing participants and translated and transcribed the notes from the Deaf participants. During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to discuss issues of relevance to them and

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<sup>4</sup>A popular and widely used curriculum for teaching American Sign Language as a second language.

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were not limited by the research questions. The individual translations or transcriptions were then sent to each participant electronically for verification of content and further discussion.

Identifiers were created for each individual to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Two letters followed by a number, such as HP2 or DP3, indicated a hearing or Deaf participant, respectively. The choice of identifiers based on cultural affiliation as either Deaf (D) or hearing (H) proved to be fortuitous, as some interesting differences were noted in terms of course assignment, teaching philosophy, and resources used.

### 2.4. Data analysis

Within a broader, qualitative framework, an analytic-induction process was used to drive theory development (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Throughout the process, tentative themes were identified in terms of broad categories, and then relationships were examined for more specific properties (Bogdan & Biklen). An example of the major categories found, and their properties, can be seen in Figure 1.

Categories	Properties
Explicit Curriculum	Philosophy and Mission Curriculum Resources Skill Sets Models Coursework
Implied Curriculum	Socialization Preparation for Employment Student Self-Awareness
Null Curriculum	Transliteration
Curriculum Development	Scaffolding DACUM Ad Hoc

Figure 1. Examples of categories and properties

## 3. Findings

Having described the data gathering and data analysis process, we now turn to the findings of this study. These have been presented within the research categories described above as the explicit curriculum, implied curriculum, null curriculum, and finally, curriculum development.

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### 3.1. *Explicit curriculum*

#### 3.1.1 Philosophy and mission

Five (three hearing, two Deaf) of the instructors reported having a mission statement that included their philosophy while seven (five hearing, two Deaf) knew that their program did not have a mission statement. Fifteen instructors (eight Deaf, six hearing) either were not aware of their program's mission statement or doubted that there was one.

When asked specifically about their philosophy of teaching, many of the Deaf participants reported following an immersion philosophy. This was also the philosophy posted on the program website at St. Clair College (2005). Five hearing and two Deaf participants labeled their approach as bilingual and bicultural. Two instructors admitted that they were not sure how to characterize their teaching philosophy.

For some of the hearing educators, the role of an instructor was about "shaping" students (HP7) and being student-centered, and acting as a "guide" (HP3). One teacher believed programs should be transformative and develop a student's ability to "think critically, act ethically, in becoming a change agent in their personal and professional communities" (HP3). Another recommended that programs "work from a sense of empowerment," as students were working with Deaf people who had traditionally been oppressed (HP5).

In terms of pedagogy, modeling or demonstrating was mentioned repeatedly (nine Deaf, three hearing), as was practice (five hearing, one Deaf) and an outcomes-based approach. Other methods or philosophies included grammar activities (three hearing, six Deaf), translation activities (five hearing, six Deaf), topic-based teaching (four hearing, two Deaf), a discovery model (three hearing, one Deaf), a Functional-Notional philosophy (three Deaf), the Silent, Silent Way (one Deaf), applied linguistics (one hearing), following the work of Cummins (1979) or Krashen and Terrell (1983) and a whole-language approach (one Deaf).

Pedagogical activities mentioned by the participants ranged from group or team work, lecturing, meditating, journaling, participation in a student and faculty retreat, the use of various games, class debates, peer dialogues, student-led presentations, peer feedback, and error correction techniques. Some classes were structured around topics generated by the students (one Deaf, one hearing). Two hearing instructors asked students to read and present on current articles from the field or present a case study in class. A Deaf instructor talked about having students answer questions from their peers as a form of lesson review. In a practicum class, the students were given a chance to grade themselves, which became part of the final assessment.

#### 3.1.2 Curriculum resources

Twelve of the Deaf teachers talked about using the *Vista Signing Naturally Teacher's Curriculum Guide* (Smith et al., 1988). It was described as "best" by two instructors, "perfect" (DP16), "great" and "well laid out" (DP29), and "the broadest available" (DP37). Several teachers enjoyed working with the third level, the newest addition, as it includes information on grammar, new vocabulary, and classifiers. The hearing instructors did not discuss this curriculum.

The Deaf educators had some concerns about the *Vista* curriculum, for example, its emphasis on dialogues. One found that many students felt "intimidated having everyone else stare at them" during conversations (DP37). Another teacher doubted *Vista* followed a spiral philosophy, as there were few resources that incorporated prior learning. One teacher described *Vista* as just a list of topics, and three others felt compelled to create their own resources to supplement the curriculum. For example, one had to add vocabulary items, as some of the signs were American, and they would rather use signs from their community. Another teacher had to change the sequence of lessons to accommodate their students.

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Overall, one Deaf participant found the first two levels of the *Vista* curriculum fine for recreational classes but lacking in information for an interpreting program. The third level, on the other hand, was much too advanced for the students in a Deaf studies program, because it covers topics such as anatomy and diabetes.

Many of the Deaf faculty and one hearing faculty member described using the “green book” series (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980). Two teachers characterized it as the best resource available, and another “still refers to it as the Bible for interpreting” as “it was the easiest text for students to grasp” (DP27). Concerns ranged from the lack of Canadian content to the belief it was outdated. Several other resources were mentioned, including:

- Cumulative trauma disorder text and resources from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf,
- Bravo curriculum (Cassell, 1997),
- University of New Brunswick curriculum (Baker-Shenk et al., 1988),
- Patrie's (2000) *Effective Interpreting Series: English Skills for Interpreters*, and
- Taylor's (1993) *Interpretation Skills: English to American Sign Language*.

### 3.1.3 Skill sets

During their interviews, faculty described a variety of curriculum activities or goals that were taught in the first year of their programs, such as pre-translation, pre-interpreting, and text analysis activities. As noted by a few of the staff, the students did not always understand or appreciate why they had to practice these various abilities. It was suggested that instructors discuss how these activities related to interpreting in order to elicit student interest, as some exercises were described as “a bit high schoolish [sic] in a way” (HP32).

### 3.1.4 Models

During the discussion of their curriculum, many instructors described one or more of the models of interpreting mentioned in the review of the literature (Cokely, 1992; Colonos, 1992; Gile, 1995; Gish, 1987; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Isham, 1986; Lambert, 1988; Seleskovitch, 1978). These were described as being helpful for the identification of miscues in a student's work, such as additions and omissions. They also helped the students identify where their process was successful or where it was breaking down, especially “that rehearsal, feedback, and monitor loop thing that runs in our head, the last part of the Colonos model” (HP13).

While five of the six Deaf instructors teaching interpreting courses described a model or models they worked with, many of the remaining Deaf faculty, and one hearing participant, had little or no knowledge of the models. One Deaf participant had no interest in learning about them, and three Deaf instructors remarked that they left that to the hearing faculty to teach. For one Deaf instructor, interpreting was equated with learning ASL, which was described as a process of correcting students' mistakes while signing.

Two Deaf faculty members questioned the need to include models, and one felt it took up a lot of instructional time. Instead, it was suggested that students would be better off seeing “real life examples” (DP35). Two hearing instructors did not believe that specific theories, such as models of interpreting, belonged in placement courses, and so, the students were not expected to apply those while on site.

### 3.1.5 Coursework

Coursework for interpretation that is offered by the programs includes: translation theory, cross-language processing, critical thinking, community-based language and culture in action, introduction to interpretation theory, interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting. Specialized coursework for students was also mentioned, such as classes in technology, physical and emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships and public speaking or communication. Recommended coursework in the first year includes ethics, to help students understand the role of an interpreter and to prepare them for their second year of study. Another

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participant mentioned a professional issues class that explores the field of visual language interpreting. For the second year of study, several participants mentioned introducing ethics at that time and others described coursework in professional and business practices for interpreters, field placement, and specialized settings or general interpreting settings.

It was suggested by a majority of the participants that interpreting and ASL be taught every semester and several Deaf and hearing participants talked about the need for additional English study as well. One Deaf instructor was worried that there was an over-emphasis on interpretation theory in the first year when there should have been more time spent in language (i.e., ASL) classes.

In addition to coursework, all of the programs required a practicum or series of placements. Several institutions also required a set amount of hours of community involvement, and three programs had established a student-run referral service, which provides free interpreting services to the community. Organizing placements was described as being difficult, a challenge, or a chore, that involved “a lot of begging to get hosts to accept the students” (DP27). Only one instructor described the process as being manageable. Locations include provincial schools for the Deaf, the local interpreting community, and due to the shortage of sites, students have also been sent to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester and Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.<sup>5</sup>

Challenges were noted by the participants when it came to their placement courses. Several instructors believed students weren’t given an opportunity to practice consecutive interpreting, as only simultaneous interpretation was used or valued by the working interpreters. As a result, at least one instructor felt pressured to introduce simultaneous interpreting early in the program, to counteract what was considered a significant program weakness. There were several concerns about the students’ readiness for placement, as some seemed to lack an understanding of their own community, making it doubtful that they would be successful in the Deaf community. Some students interpreted in situations where they didn’t understand the vocabulary, such as medical settings, perhaps due to pressure from Deaf friends or their Deaf parents.

Of interest to note, from the comments of the participants concerning these courses, only the Deaf staff taught the Deaf culture and ASL classes. The hearing staff typically taught the courses related to the profession (i.e., introduction to interpreting, ethics, and business) and the practicum courses in which students were placed with working interpreters.

### *3.2. Implied curriculum*

#### 3.2.1 Socialization

Various implied goals were described by the participants concerning the socialization of their students. For example, the participants talked about the need for students to be motivated (seven instructors), not passive (six instructors), and not competitive (four instructors). Frequently, the instructors brought up the need to inculcate in students an appropriate/good attitude. This attitude encompasses respect, a sensitivity to issues of power, maturity (nine instructors), and introspection. It was also hoped that students would demonstrate independence or self-reliance while in the program and upon graduation, and a commitment to life-long learning.

As part of the implied goals of the programs, instructors often mentioned their desire for the students to (a) become sensitive to Deaf culture and recognize differences in Deaf and hearing values systems (six Deaf), (b) develop a cultural view of Deaf people, (c) understand professional boundaries, and (d) value community involvement. Deaf instructors, in particular, were concerned about their students’ willingness to accept feedback on their fluency in ASL, indicating that some students would argue over vocabulary with their instructors, who were native signers.

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<sup>5</sup>Gallaudet University is the only university in the world designed specifically for Deaf students.

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Ethical behaviour was also mentioned by a number of staff (six hearing, two Deaf) as an unwritten expectation for the students. To the participants in this study, the characteristics of ethical behaviour include confidentiality and neutrality. Some educators also expected that their students would be honest about their abilities with clients and, when working, would acknowledge and repair translation errors as they occurred instead of ignoring them.

### **3.2.2 Preparation for employment**

In addition to the various social and interpersonal skills described above, the instructors talked about preparing students for the profession. Two instructors hoped, for example, that their pupils would learn to be a good team player with other interpreters. Attendance was raised by at least six participants and several faculty members also mentioned punctuality; it was noted that both were important once the students graduated and became a professional. It was also the goal of some instructors to ensure the students would become what they described as being productive members of society.

### **3.2.3 Student self-awareness**

Many staff felt that students developed a deeper awareness of their own identity and career choice during the course of the program. According to eight instructors, some students realized that they did not want to become interpreters. Others discovered that they could not remain neutral or handle the workload, or that they did not even like Deaf people. Therefore, it was felt important that students must recognize their own sensitivity to some issues or settings. Some had “weird ideas about what it mean[t] to work with Deaf people” and wanted to “save” them (HP26). After learning about oppression, the students eventually started to feel that they were “responsible for all the oppression that has ever taken place,” which led to “an identity crisis” (HP26).

### ***3.3. Null curriculum***

In terms of the content of the null curriculum for Canadian interpreter education programs, from the comments of the instructors it would appear that coursework on transliteration and specific settings (e.g., medical, legal, and mental health) were not a part of the programs. As a group, a variety of teaching modalities and activities were described as being outlined in the section on coursework that tapped into different cognitive abilities (e.g., constructivist, logical, abstract, inductive, and deductive).

### ***3.4. Curriculum development***

When asked about their curriculum design, the instructors offered several pieces of advice. One suggested, “You need to develop the curriculum before you recruit the students” (DP6). Several instructors, particularly from Ontario, mentioned following the outcomes published by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1998). Two Deaf instructors discussed the creation of lesson plans, but not a curriculum, and one Deaf teacher cautioned faculty not to stringently follow any one textbook.

There was a sense that instructors were committed to ongoing curriculum discussions and viewed the curriculum as a living document. For example, in one program the educators were committed to having monthly meetings; in another, curriculum changes occurred throughout the year, and then were discussed at year’s end. A third instructor described their curriculum as “becoming, because I don’t believe it ever becomes” (HP3). Another said that an instructor’s philosophy should change as they discovered new resources.

In terms of course sequencing in the first year, faculty described building the translation skills of their students, and some participants were planning on spending more instructional time in this area. In one program, the translation work began about halfway through the semester, after the students had practiced text analysis. Five of the hearing participants also described the introduction of consecutive interpreting in the first year. While the instructors were not asked to describe consecutive work, it may have involved an interpretation after a short

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utterance in ASL or English; as two instructors taught note taking as a topic, students might have been expected to interpret from their notes into ASL from longer segments of spoken English texts. After having conducted exit interviews with the students, one program made the decision to move simultaneous interpreting to the second semester of the first year. The students there were described as “eager to move on” to simultaneous interpreting, as they equated the ability to work simultaneously with more competence (HP20). It was felt this better reflected the experiences of working interpreters, who typically began interpreting simultaneously, but would then switch to consecutive work when overwhelmed. In the second year of study, six of the faculty focused on consecutive interpretation and several (three hearing, one Deaf) stated that simultaneous interpreting was begun in the second year.

To design a curriculum, models based on scaffolding or the DACUM process were mentioned, and these are explored next. From a general perspective, however, several instructors talked about the need to establish the course goals first, develop weekly objectives that include the book/chapter/videotapes to be used, and, finally, write the course descriptions.

### 3.4.1 Scaffolding

Eleven instructors said that they developed their curriculum with scaffolding or a spiral model in mind. To a Deaf instructor, scaffolding meant teaching classifiers in the first year, and in subsequent years, examining the categories in which each classifier fit. Two hearing instructors defined scaffolding as reinforcing the theory presented in the first year by repeating it a second, third, or fourth time; another believed scaffolding ensured continuity from course to course. A Deaf instructor was worried that other educators were not, in fact, following this process. Four instructors (two Deaf, two hearing) equated scaffolding to preparation. For example, when giving tests, they allowed the students to see sections (or the entire) videotape before interpreting, provided a warm-up on a similar topic, or asked the students to complete a quiz or generate questions prior to a test on the same topic.

### 3.4.2 DACUM

The DACUM process was recommended by ten of the participants, and only one person specifically mentioned not following a mapping process. As described by the educators, they had completed a map for their program, but several believed theirs needed reviewing. Only one teacher suggested that their program engage an external expert to guide them, who “...would tell it like it is, too. Say things like, what do you mean you teach this but test that?” (HP26).

Mapping involves the creation of a list of topics to cover in each course; it requires educators to examine common principles and student requirements, and then write objectives that are learner-based. In some instances, mapping helps identify program gaps and courses to keep or remove. It also encourages the instructors to verify program outcomes, as the topics in their courses must be mapped back to what they had taught. Mapping, from the view of two instructors, also helps them to design evaluation tools and ensures a consistent format for coursework.

### 3.4.3 Ad hoc

At least six of the Deaf instructors and three of the hearing teachers mentioned the lack of a curriculum for their classes or labs. Two Deaf staff found the documents they were given to be outdated. This lack of resources led at least five of the Deaf educators to substantially redesign the curriculum they were given. Some found this to be a challenge; although they might have felt competent teaching ASL classes, they were not experienced teaching at the level of interpreting students. One Deaf educator said he had developed the curriculum while “learning how to teach interpreting” and that his first few years were an experience in “trial and error” (DP2). A second educator described a process of creating activities or brainstorming information on-the-fly, while teaching. Still another

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Deaf instructor felt she was still learning the best teaching methods and never taught the same way twice, as her courses were constantly being revised.

A lack of curriculum planning might have explained why two Deaf instructors were not sure what to teach, or why another two did not know what had been taught in other sections. For example, one instructor wondered if classifiers should be part of the curriculum and how important they were for students. Another was not sure if she was spending enough time on a specific topic, or if she was covering too many topics too quickly. Another Deaf teacher was concerned about having to “make something up” when not given a lesson from the classroom instructor (DP16).

The hearing participants echoed similar concerns. Although their programs had a curriculum, its design was best described by two instructors as having happened informally or haphazardly. A third educator identified a lack of consideration of the research in their curriculum. A fourth cautioned that educators did not always share a similar philosophy, which led to a disparity in practices and expectations. A fifth, a hearing instructor, even questioned the definition of a curriculum and wondered, “What do you mean by curriculum, the content of individual courses or how they fit together?” (HP24).

Two instructors (one Deaf, one hearing) believed written lessons were not needed. The hearing educator thought the best philosophy was to empower the students and let the class go where it needed to go; the Deaf instructor did not believe lessons about ASL could be documented in written English.

## 4. Discussion

Based on the findings of this research, the following is an analysis that draws upon the literature review and the three curricula (i.e., explicit, implied, null) in which Eisner (2002) believed all programs engage. After having looked at the three curricula, we then explore curriculum development in the programs, drawing upon the models of curriculum design as outlined in the literature. Finally, we will briefly discuss the limitations of this study.

### 4.1. *Explicit curriculum*

#### 4.1.1 Philosophy

One of the first aspects of the explicit curriculum that we will look at is a program mission statement and teaching philosophy. From the comments of the participants, a mission statement had not been drafted for most programs, nor was it a priority for many, and so might be identified as part of the null curriculum. When asked about their teaching philosophies, although some were not sure how to label their practices, other instructors reported following a number of different methodologies, including immersion and bilingual-bicultural, and the Functional-Notional approach. Based on the descriptions of their teaching activities, others followed what could be considered a revised Direct Method (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980), an immersion approach that includes some translation and grammar exercises. The hearing instructors, in particular, and some Deaf educators, were also using translation-based activities.

It was not clear, however, how these philosophies or methodologies were used to teach interpreting as a discourse process, as recommended by a number of authors (Cokely, 1992; Napier, 2004; Russell, 2002) or how they fit into the framework of interpretation studies. For example, an immersion or Functional-Notional approach, which advocates for the complete separation of languages and the exclusive use of one language at a time, might be appropriate for a language acquisition program, but it is unclear how either one might be applied to an interpreting program.

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Based on a description of their pedagogy, many of the educators also described modeling or practice as a frequent pedagogical strategy. An over-reliance on either activity, however, ran contrary to the advice and experience of other interpreter educators (Deninger, 1987) who believe that practicing, in particular, is not a successful strategy and that the interpreting process can be taught (Malcolm, 1999). These activities also position teaching within a philosophy of learning as being an individual, behavioural activity (mimicry) and not to be found within a social or constructivist paradigm (Albir, 2007; Napier, 2004; Sawyer, 2004).

Only three hearing instructors described teaching methodologies within what might be called a social cognitive or social justice framework (Apple, 2004). These individuals believe their role as educators is to help the students transform and recognize issues of power and oppression (HP3, HP5, and HP7).

Given the nature of these findings, perhaps a program mission statement and a discussion of teaching philosophies are needed to clarify the philosophical and pedagogical expectations of instructors. A discussion of philosophy might include a review of modeling or practice as a predominant methodology. As an alternative pedagogy, it might be beneficial to explore a constructivist approach to teaching as four instructors had done through a discovery method of teaching. This philosophical approach seems better positioned to foster student independence and critical thinking, as required by the implied curriculum of several programs, when compared to a pedagogy of practice, for example. Also, with the understanding of the Deaf community as an oppressed minority, should programs not explore a social justice philosophy in an effort to ensure that issues of power are included throughout? Again, a social justice philosophy would speak to the goals espoused by the participants in the implied curriculum, such as respect for the Deaf community and recognition of oppressive behaviours.

### 4.1.2 Curriculum resources

Many educators lamented the lack of curriculum materials, another facet of the explicit curriculum; there are, in fact, many guides or resources available. As a collective, the instructors mentioned resources they had found helpful from both spoken language interpreting (Gile 1995; Seleskovitch, 1978) and signed language interpreting (Baker-Shenk, 1990; Baker-Shenk et al., 1988; Kelly, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998; Resnick & Hoza, 1990; Taff-Watson & Northup, 1988).

A second common concern was the lack of resources with Canadian models of Deaf culture and ASL. Increased Canadian content could be addressed by scheduling time for the staff to develop materials in-house or by encouraging the sharing of resources nationally. Perhaps professional interpreting groups or Deaf associations could be approached to be volunteers for this project.

### 4.1.3 Models

Several hearing instructors and a few Deaf educators mentioned incorporating a model of interpretation into their program, whereas many others did not feel comfortable or support the inclusion of a model. For example, instructors in ASL classes, placement courses, and some interpreting classes or labs either did not mention a model of interpretation or questioned the need for one. The lack of a model precluded the benefits associated with following one, for example, as the basis of program design and evaluation (Cokely, 1992) and to structure feedback (Isham, 1986). As an interpreter educator, Steffen (1998) found that sequencing pre-interpreting skill sets and tying them to a model also helped to make the lessons more meaningful for students and reduced their resistance to practicing these disparate skill sets. One might also wonder what students read into the lack of a model of interpretation and its importance, the unwritten “value code” described by Eisner (2002, p. 92).

### 4.1.4 Coursework

The coursework offered by the programs in this study mirrored much of what has been written in the literature. For example, instructors mentioned curricula including classes in translation, consecutive and simultaneous interpretation, ethics (Cokely, 2003), Deaf culture (Janzen, 1999), and placement courses (Decator, 1994; Janzen, 1994; Malcolm, 1999). Comments from the participants also supported ongoing ASL and English classes. In

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regards to the educators' comments about placement courses, it would seem that programs must consider the "value code" (Eisner, 2002, p. 92) of the field when students attend practicum sites. Professional interpreters, for example, viewed simultaneous work as requiring "high status knowledge" (Apple, 2004, p. 34) compared to the consecutive mode. This is an area in need of exploration and discussion within the field if the programs hope to gain support for consecutive work.

It appears that some subject specialization had occurred, in that the Deaf instructors teach the language and culture courses, or while working in the interpreting labs, focus on ASL acquisition or vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, many of the Deaf teachers either follow an immersion or Functional-Notional methodology or they are unsure how to teach interpreting students, relying on language-learning texts, such as the Vista curriculum. The hearing instructors, on the other hand, teach most of the interpretation courses and use interpreter-specific texts. This division of labor has been supported by the participants and perhaps serves as an example of Apple's (2004) observation that curriculum design or delivery is a political process. In this case, the programs ensure that Deaf instructors are employed as cultural role models and as native language experts.

Given the subject specialization noted above and disparate teaching resources and philosophies between the instructors, from an interdisciplinary framework, it might be beneficial for both Deaf and hearing program staff to review their practices in order to ensure a consistent, cohesive curriculum delivery. Perhaps the inclusion of a model of interpretation would help to create a common framework for their pedagogy, as well as a platform for a much needed discussion of teaching philosophies. Otherwise, the result could be the existence of educational silos, where the Deaf and hearing instructors teach in almost virtual isolation, as had come to happen, based upon the comments of some participants. This isolation and specialization may have led to the existence of two distinct programs of study in one department, an ASL course taught by the Deaf instructors and an interpretation course taught predominately by the hearing instructors.

### 4.2. *Implied curriculum*

In addition to describing their expectations for the explicit curriculum, the participants shared many undocumented or unofficial expectations concerning the students they taught, their program's implied curriculum. These expectations entail a number of goals, such as preparing students for the profession, but also pertain to values and the socialization of students into the Deaf community. In this regard, Apple's (2004) observation that educational programs serve to indoctrinate students into a specific ideology seems relevant. As the programs did not explicitly state the values or attitudes they expect of students towards becoming a good citizen of the Deaf community (McDermid, 2009), it is not clear how they avoid replicating the wide-spread view of the "deaf as disabled" and deal with oppressive behaviors in students who entered their programs with this ideology. According to their comments, some students have resisted this implied curriculum and had left the programs without an understanding of Deaf culture. Several instructors were also unsure of how to deal with what they deemed inappropriate attitudes and behaviors.

As suggested by the literature (Smith & Savidge, 2002; Witter-Merithew, 1995), perhaps programs should make explicit their implied curricula and actively challenge inappropriate behaviors in students. It was unclear, however, how their current teaching philosophies and methodologies (i.e., immersion, modeling, Functional-Notional, and translation) fostered this curriculum. As mentioned earlier, perhaps a social justice approach is more appropriate to explore issues of oppression and power, yet only three of the hearing instructors described teaching within this philosophy.

In addition to an unwritten expectation of socialization, interpreter educators hope their students will demonstrate or develop a number of characteristics, such as motivation, maturity, and independence. These traits are considered to be particularly important given that some graduates are destined to work as independent contractors. Perhaps the current model of a closed and explicit curriculum, as described by many of the instructors might be replaced with an open curriculum design (Sawyer, 2004) or some combination of the two. An open

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design, in which the students would experience a higher level of choice and independence, might encourage the development of the implied curriculum and the characteristics expected by the teachers.

Some instructors are worried about a competitive attitude in students, in contrast to a cooperative nature, as is expected in their implied curriculum. This competition among the students may have been fostered by the closed or set curriculum design (Sawyer, 2004) that some programs have followed. In the current model of a closed curriculum, for example, perhaps the students concentrated on individual survival, trying to meet the expectations set by their instructors and to read the “value code” of the program (Eisner, 2002, p. 92). As Apple (2004) described it, the students competed for what they perceived to be “high status knowledge” (p. 24). Perhaps an open curriculum would encourage a sense of interdependence, what Eisner referred to as a sense of conviviality, as the students and educators develop the courses and assessments together, thus fostering a cooperative mind-set.

The challenge for faculty members in initiating a social justice or open curriculum, and thus fostering the goals of their implied curriculum, will be to conceptualize teaching with the view of interpreting as a social process, in which issues of power and justice are routinely addressed. In this model, perhaps a significant portion of the activities and students’ grades would be based on group work with each other and with Deaf and hearing consumers, to reflect the nature of learning and interpreting as having a social component. Also, in such a curriculum, both Deaf community involvement and participation in a professional association might be promoted as central to the curriculum, fostering a view of learning as participatory and convivial.

### *4.3. Null curriculum*

As part of the research process, and as mentioned earlier, the participants of this study did not mention teaching transliteration, perhaps an example of the null curriculum. They also did not describe teaching their students to interpret in specific settings (i.e., educational, medical, and legal). The lack of attention to educational placements was problematic, as during a discussion of graduate employment, many students had reportedly found work specifically in educational settings. Perhaps this is an area of the null curriculum that should have been reviewed with an eye for inclusion in the explicit curriculum.

In addition to the deliberate omission of specific topics, the null curriculum comprises cognitive abilities that were not required or taught. As a cohort, and as mentioned in the findings, the instructors include a wide variety of activities that foster different forms of reasoning or cognition; it could, therefore, be inferred that many different learning styles are required. However, some instructors emphasize the use of activities such as modeling, practice, or lecturing and, therefore, should be aware that these might only require deductive reasoning (i.e., the application of theory taught by the instructor) and tap aptitudes such as rote memorization or mimicry.

### *4.4. Curriculum development*

In curriculum development, the final category identified by the research process, it was found that many, if not most, of the participants had engaged in some form of systematic curriculum design that typically involved a DACUM or mapping process. According to Sawyer’s (2004) description of curricula models, the documentation of a curriculum through a DACUM method could be characterized as a closed design. At the same time, there was some evidence of an open curriculum (Sawyer), as several educators include activities in their classes, such as student-led presentations, student-generated topics, and student self-assessments. The prevailing philosophy of the participants also describes the curriculum as being a living document. There was, for example, much discussion about the need to renew and review curriculum and pedagogy, perhaps at set times each year.

Many participants talked about how their curriculum design was informed by a philosophy of spiraling or scaffolding and most of the participants from Ontario talked about following the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training’s (1998) curriculum. Due to their disparate definitions of a spiral or scaffolding curriculum, however, these might be areas for further discussion. Some instructors, for example, appeared to have conflated

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the concept of preparation for assessments with a spiral or scaffolding design; they described activities that were performed only once, such as allowing the students to see a text prior to interpreting it. It should also be noted that the standards designed by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training only consist of a list of program outcomes and do not include a teaching philosophy, lesson plans, or information on assessment.

According to the progression of courses in most programs, from translation to consecutive interpreting to simultaneous interpretation, it appears that educators have been following a linear model, as described by Sawyer (2004). It was also interesting to note that three of the colleges had separate courses on ASL-to-English interpretation and English-to-ASL interpretation. This sequence of coursework, based on modalities and only one source language, is counter to the recommendations of Cokely (2003) who felt these required similar abilities. Instead, he recommended a model similar to Sawyer's (2004) description of a parallel model, in which different modes (i.e., translation, consecutive, simultaneous) are used, when appropriate, in each class.

Instructors might also wish to consider the implied value (Eisner, 2002) students perceive from the course sequencing described above. As one participant reported, the current structure has led students to believe that only simultaneous work is legitimate and that it is superior to consecutive interpreting and translation work, a hierarchy predicted in the literature (Russell, 2002). It may have also led students to believe that interpreting from one language to another requires special or more advanced aptitudes. This progression of modalities or separation of source languages seemed to create what Apple (2004) described as "high status knowledge" (p. 34) in the minds of the students. To change this perspective, programs might wish to encourage the use of all three modes (i.e., translation, consecutive, and simultaneous), a parallel model of curriculum design (Sawyer, 2004), and include both languages as source languages and target texts throughout the program.

### 4.4.1 Ad hoc

When it came to the curriculum design and lesson plans in some courses, there was an almost ad hoc quality, based on the comments of the instructors, in which lessons were created at the last minute or were constantly being revised. For example, several mentioned a lack of a curriculum, missing lesson plans, or the need to redesign the curriculum they had been provided. Participants commented that they were repeatedly changing the curriculum as they gained teaching experience and a deeper understanding of their jobs. Others were concerned that they could not document their lessons as that did not allow for a flexible student-centered approach or because ASL was a visual language and could not be represented in written English. This lack of documentation supported the findings of Madore (2000), which indicated that some institutions were not following a specific program design model; it might also help to explain the lack of resources, as described in the literature (Roberts, 1990; Sawyer, 2004; Stratifiy, 1996; Taylor, 1993).

The lack of a documented curriculum seems to be an on-going source of stress for several instructors. It also called into question their ability to incorporate scaffolding or a spiraling curriculum design, which in turn raised questions about the level of support experienced by the learners. One is also left wondering if a lack of curriculum has led to a practice-based approach, or a "sink or swim" program, as described by Finton (1998, p. 38). How could instructors do little else if there was no progression of lessons to which they could refer?

When colleges are considering the establishment of an ASL-English interpretation program, they would do well to heed the advice of the participants of this study and establish the curricula before accepting students. This had not been the experience of several participants in this study. It should be recognized that a number of curriculum documents and resources exist (Baker-Shenk, 1990; Baker-Shenk et al., 1988; Kelly, 2004; Resnick & Hoza, 1990) and that there are texts demonstrating how to document an ASL curriculum (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1980; Smith et al., 1988).

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### 4.4.2 DACUM

Several programs followed a DACUM process to design their curriculum, and a number of themes emerged related to this process. The committee of experts established in most colleges consisted of program instructors, and not professionals from the field, as recommended by Sinnett (1976); which could lead to a potential source of bias in the curriculum design. Instructors might not be familiar with the demands of the field; certified interpreters might have unreasonably high expectations of the students. There was no mention of a DACUM leader or a review of the literature, which was an area of concern; many of the interpreter educators in this study did not have a background in education or curriculum development nor had many attended an interpreter education program. As several Deaf faculty members were worried about their ability to teach ASL at a more advanced level for students of interpretation, how could they then design a curriculum to do this through a DACUM process?

As recommended by the participants of this study and as described in the literature (Sinnett, 1976), if not yet in place, colleges might want to explore involving experts in curriculum design (Madore, 2000), draft a current review of the literature, and establish committees involving representatives from the field and potential employers of their students. Staff members who have the necessary experience and credentials could be given time to lead curriculum discussions within their own programs and be supported to share their expertise with other colleges as well. If feasible, additional training on curriculum design and models (Eisner, 2002; Marsh, 1997; Sawyer, 2004) might be a consideration.

## 5. Limitations of this study

As a function of the research process, there are a number of limitations to this study that need to be recognized. As the principle researcher, I was a colleague of the participants, and thus, there might have been a tendency for the instructors to present their best practices as a means of saving face. It should also be kept in mind that the interviews involved memory work and so some details might have been forgotten or remembered in a more positive light. Having said that, and as can be seen in the findings, the participants shared a variety of experiences with me, both positive and negative, perhaps a sign of their support for the research process. As this study involved translation from spontaneous ASL to written English, translation errors were a very real concern. This was controlled by asking the Deaf participants to comment on the English transcripts of their interviews for accuracy and for further information. As this study utilized only interviews as a means of data collection, additional research could be done to strengthen the findings, such as observing the delivery of the curriculum by the instructors, reviewing the written documents they have created, or interviewing students and/or graduates of the programs in order to determine the learned curriculum, as well as the other three curricula.

As a final note, the participants of this study should be thanked for their willingness to share their experiences and for their role in shaping this project. It is hoped that the information gathered and insights shared will help interpreter educators to continue reflecting on their ontological beliefs and aid in the development of their curricula.

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## **Ontological beliefs of interpreter educators**

### **7. Appendix – Examples of Questions for AEIP Faculty**

#### *7.1. Demographic questions*

- Gender?
- Education and field of study?
- Courses taught?

#### *7.2. Program questions*

- Can you describe the philosophy and mission statement of your program?
- Can you describe the outcomes of your program?
- What does your program evaluation entail?
- What are your duties as a faculty member?
- What courses do you teach and can you describe their content?
- Can you discuss curriculum design and decisions for your classes and program?
- Can you describe what a typical class would look like?
- What teaching methodologies do you employ?
- Can you talk about how you evaluate the students you teach?
- What readings or coursework have informed your practices?
- Can you discuss the model or models of interpretation you follow in your program?

#### *7.3. Student demographics*

Can you discuss the following areas concerning the demographics and background of your students?

- Age?
- Ethnicity?
- Competencies?
- Employment?

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# **Characteristics of an Interpreted Situation with Multiple Participants: Implications for Pedagogy**

**Masato Takimoto<sup>1</sup>**

*Monash University, Australia*

## **Abstract**

By examining a naturalistic interpreted situation with a number of participants, this paper identifies and considers the distinctiveness of such a context. With an increased number of participants, the interaction becomes highly complex, and an interpreter is required to undertake functions that may be considered additional to or different from an interpreter-mediated interaction with two primary interlocutors. Such additional tasks consist of the management of information, including reporting and summarizing, and monitoring the participants' information needs. In order to analyze the complex nature of the interaction, the notion of *footing* is employed as a theoretical framework. These findings have important implications for interpreting pedagogy. Recommendations for interpreter education and training include the promotion of students' awareness of similarly complex interpreting situations.

Keywords: interpreting; multiparty interpreting; footing; third person; reporting; pedagogy

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: *Masato.Takimoto@arts.monash.edu.au*

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# **Characteristics of an Interpreted Situation with Multiple Participants: Implications for Pedagogy**

## **1. Introduction**

Thanks to the recent advancement of research in interpreting studies, we have come to understand the complex nature of interpreter-mediated interactions, in depth and from various perspectives. Research efforts to date, however, have been directed mostly towards the investigation of the so-called triadic (Mason, 2001) interaction in which two primary interlocutors and an interpreter are involved, regardless of the language combination or language modality. In this study, I discuss some of the characteristics of a spontaneous interpreting situation in which a multiple number of people participated and show the added complexities. I refer to such an interaction as a *multiparty interpreting situation* in this paper. Although “party” may imply a certain affiliation of participants to a particular role (e.g., a party for “pro” or “con,” or “interpreter” and “other-party”; Bruxelles & Kerbrat-Orecchinoni, 2004), I use the word simply to indicate a multiple number of participants. Added complexities in such an interaction may result in additional and difficult tasks for the interpreter, as shown in this paper. These findings pose significant implications for the education and training of future interpreters, which is discussed in the latter part of the paper.

### *1.1. Theoretical framework*

In order to analyze the dynamic and complex interpreting situation, Goffman’s (1981) notion of *footing* is utilized. Footing is understood as a participant’s alignment or stance vis-à-vis other participants as a listener and/or speaker. According to Goffman, people constantly change and adjust their footing during interactions. The notion has been applied widely in interpreting studies. For example, a study by Cambridge (1999) analyzed simulated face-to-face medical interviews by using the notion of footing. The study showed that the untrained interpreters’ use of the third person in their renditions resulted in a shift in footing, which, in turn, caused miscommunication. Sergio (1999) examined interpreters’ footing, particularly as a speaker, in a televised talk show. He concluded that the interpreter in such a situation participated actively in the interaction, including participation in turn-taking and the negotiation of meaning. Wadensjö (1998) also highlighted the nature of complex involvement of the interpreter in interaction, drawing upon the notion of footing. The study by Metzger (1999) investigated a signed language interpreter’s footing during a pediatric interview, which revealed that the footing changed when a shift in the use of pronominal reference occurs. All these studies confirm that an interpreter is involved in the interaction in a highly complex way by changing his/her footing constantly. At the same time, the studies also clearly indicated that an interpreter’s footing has a significant effect on the interaction as a whole.

This study is an attempt to apply the notion of footing to a multiparty interaction. In an interpreter-mediated interaction with two primary interlocutors (e.g., “A” and “B”), an interpreter speaks on behalf of the primary interlocutor. In other words, the interpreter serves as a “spokesperson” of the previous speaker. For example, when “A” speaks, the interpreter conveys “A’s” message in a different language so that “B” can understand it.

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This is characterized by his/her usage of "I," the first person pronoun. By doing so, both primary interlocutors can maintain the conversational floor without confusion. That is to say, "A" remains as the (original) speaker, while "B" is the addressee, despite the fact that it is the interpreter who speaks in the language which "B" understands. Here, the footing, or the alignment between the participants, is considered to be rather steady. Of course, as many studies have revealed to date (Wadensjö, 1998), actual interpreting situations are much more complex. However, the pedagogy for consecutive interpreting, and in particular, dialogue interpreting (or short consecutive interpreting), is based largely on this simple model. That is to say, the main assumption appears to be that an interpreter is required to, and also able to, provide turn-by-turn interpretation. In such a model, as discussed above, the use of the first person pronoun is considered to be imperative.

When the notion of footing is applied to a multiparty interaction in general, that is, a non-interpreting situation, it becomes much more complex. As Goffman (1981) points out, a speaker may speak to a particular person or group rather than targeting a message to all participants. In that case, not all participants are equal in terms of the footing because the alignment of the particular addressee with the speaker would be different from that of the non-addressee participants. Furthermore, there may be parallel or "local" conversations within the whole group, in which case there are multiple hearer-listener alignments. Therefore, the footing can be quite multifaceted in multiparty interaction. Once a multiparty situation becomes an interpreter-mediated interaction, it is not difficult to envisage that a further complexity is added, especially in terms of the footing and the temporal organization of talking and turn-taking. At the very least, there are likely to be two distinctive groups, based on the language backgrounds of the participants. In addition, there is an interpreter who mediates between these two groups. In this paper, therefore, this seemingly complex multiparty interaction is investigated by employing the notion of footing. In light of the previous research findings investigating dialogue situations with two primary interlocutors, one can hypothesize that the footing of the interpreter in this study also shifts from time to time. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the nature of the shift in a multiparty situation and to consider its implications for pedagogy.

### 1.2. *The data*

This is a qualitative case study, based on a naturalistic business interaction that was audio-recorded in Australia. The meeting took place in the boardroom of a Japanese subsidiary company. This is a weekly executive meeting where top managers of various sections meet to discuss corporate matters. Since the management team consists of both English and Japanese speaking personnel, the meeting has always been interpreted. This time, the topic concerned the corporate financial situation. The meeting was chaired by the CEO (J1). There were eight participants: two native English speakers who are Australians (A1 and A2), five native Japanese speakers (J1\_J5), and the interpreter (I). The meeting lasted for approximately an hour; this paper examines the first half of the recorded data. The recording was done by the interpreter, using a small hand-held digital audio-recorder; the researcher was not present at the meeting. An audio-recording was chosen rather than video-recording in order to minimize disruption to the interaction (Wadensjö, 2001), as well as to respond to the participants' preferences. Although the participants were aware that the interaction was being audio-recorded for the purpose of research, no concrete research questions were given to them. A few hours after the recording was completed, this researcher conducted a stimulated-recall interview (Gass & Mackey, 2000) with the interpreter, in an attempt to understand the reasons for the interpreter's particular behavioral choices. In addition, this process proved to be helpful in understanding the interaction itself, because the recording was limited to audio data, thus lacking a visual perspective. In the interview, the actual recording was replayed, and the researcher asked specific questions at various points. Alternatively, the interpreter explained what was occurring at the time of recording. In this paper, both the recorded interpreting discourse and the recorded stimulated-recall interview are used as data. Both situations were fully transcribed. The transcriptions were then categorized according to topics for further in-depth analysis, and illustrative examples were selected for this paper.

The interpreter in this situation was a female Japanese native speaker who was employed by the company for a short period of time as a temporary staff member. She was professionally trained and has a postgraduate degree in interpreting and translation. She is also accredited as a professional interpreter and translator by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), which is nation-wide and the sole accreditation body in Australia.

## 2. Characteristics of multiparty interpreting situation

### 2.1. Diversity of participants

In any multiparty situation, the background of each participant is never the same. The interpreting situation examined here is not an exception. In particular, two aspects are relevant in the situation: the participants' language backgrounds and the participants' relative positions within the corporate structure. The interpreter clearly evaluates each Japanese speaker's level of English proficiency, as evidenced in the stimulated-recall interviews. This implies that she often determines her interpreting strategy based on the requirements of a particular person. In addition, the interpreter explicitly states that the main person for whom she provides interpreting is J1, the CEO of the company. Needless to say, this relates to the fact that the CEO's position is relatively higher than that of any other participant. This aspect is important because it suggests that the interpreter in this study does not treat all participants equally. In fact, it may be unavoidable to have the *main* participant for whom interpreting is primarily provided, given the fact that it is extremely difficult to provide interpreting to all seven participants equally in the complex interaction discussed in the following section. This further suggests that the interpreter's footing, or alignment, with J1 may be quite different from that with other participants. The diversity of participants described here directly relates to the different needs of the participants.

### 2.2. Interaction without the help of the interpreter

As mentioned above, the background of the participants in the interaction examined here is diverse, including their language backgrounds. While some participants are quite competent in their non-native language (i.e., English), others are not. When a Japanese participant has a good command of English, interpretation may not be required. In Excerpt 1, the communication is successfully achieved between J1 and two native English speakers without the help of the interpreter. (Transcription conventions can be seen in the Appendix).

#### Excerpt 1

- 85 A2 Ok, so my suggestion is it, we treat this one as a bonus  
86 A1 You think we leave out for the moment  
87 A2 Anything that X [name] can achieve is safety margin  
88 I (h)  
89 J1 Good idea  
90 A2 What do you think  
91 J1 Yea, good idea, I think, um

Discourse that remains uninterpreted can also occur in a dialogue interpreting situation with two primary interlocutors (Mason, 1999). However, in that case, an interpreter does not have to take any further action. That is to say, the interpreter is not required to interpret the English conversation between two people into another language if the two primary interlocutors can successfully communicate. Rather, it is considered awkward if s/he provides interpretation. However, in the above excerpt, the interpreter may have to convey the discourse in Japanese, depending on the situation. This is because participants other than J1 may not have understood what was discussed. In fact, in the turn that follows (Turn 93), the interpreter summarized and reported the whole discourse in Japanese. Here, from the perspective of the participants other than the interpreter, their footing is rather multidimensional. There are countless possibilities when it comes to the pattern of the listener-speaker alignments. In this case, J1 aligns with A1 and A2 directly, as a listener and speaker, without the help of the interpreter. The other participants, apart from these three (i.e., the four Japanese native speakers), are either a listener to the discourse presented by the J1, A1, and A2 or simply an observer of the interaction between the three, without knowing what is being said. When the interpreter's footing is considered, she is certainly relating to the conversations as a listener, but she does not participate as a "spokesperson" after each turn, using the first person

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pronoun. When she presents a summary of multiple previous utterances, her footing changes to that of a “reporter.”

### 2.3. *Timing difficulties and management of information caused by conversations between speakers of the same language*

The following excerpt is an extended discussion between two English speakers. Similar cases, where same-language speakers talk directly, can be found elsewhere in the data. For example, just before this segment, after J1 speaks in Turn 40, J3 questions J1 directly in Japanese; J1’s response follows in Turn 42. In Excerpt 2, it is clearly shown that it is difficult for the interpreter to start her rendition, despite the effort of the chairperson (J1) to coordinate the interaction.

#### Excerpt 2

- 51 A2 A new budget, we, we put nearly six hundred thousand dollars, so from April to March next year, we everybody’s gonna be in the plant making sure it happens, we have got more than two times the budget for last, for the current condition, where many travels happen to Japan, so it’s just a crazy story, so budget is wrong
- 52 A1 So, yea, so we agree, I guess there’s a bit of a, bit of opportunity in, as I said, I just put two hundred against that, um five hundred against the Axxx, that gives me six point one five, now as you say, the big issue in there is that still a million dollars of Kxxxx, which I guess is what we are talking about here
- 53 J1 Sorry
- 54 A2 With the sales reduction still, sales price increase still there or not
- 55 A1 No, it’s been taken out
- 56 A2 You already getting the six million
- 57 A1 Yea, this, that’s what I said, this is my, my calculation, we’re sitting here at the moment, this five point two,
- 58 A2 We really need a whiteboard
- 59 A1 Yea, where is it, now, this, can jump on, I’ll put all up there (0.9)
- 60 J1 nanka, \_, \_XXX to, // shuccho to //
- (something [like], A, Axxx and // business trip and, //)
- 61 I \_XXX ga 500k nano de //
- (Axxx is 500K so, //)
- 62 J1 UN,
- (Okay)
- 63 I 50-man de, toraburu, ano, shuccho ni taishite, e, kore, tabun, ano, herasu gaku o itteru to omoun desu kedo, ai, aiXXX ga 500 k\_ de, toraburu ga 200 k\_ de, \_b\_taimu, zangyo ga 1.2 mirion, de, seringupura, seringu, hanbai-kakaku no inkur\_su ga 2 mirion, de, ato, kXXXX de 1 mirion to osshatteta no kana
- (500 thousand, and, travel, well, against business travel, um, probably this, [I] think [they are] talking about the amount to be decreased, ai, Axxx is 500K, travelling is 200K, and, overtime, overtime is 1.2 million, and, selling- pra, selling, sales price increase is 2 million, and, well, 1 million from Kxxxx, [is that what they’ve] said )

The difficulty of stopping the conversation is evidenced by J1’s utterance, “Sorry,” in Turn 53 when he tries to terminate their talk, but without success. In the stimulated-recall interview, it was confirmed that J1 attempted to help the interpreter so that she could start interpreting. However, A1 and A2 did not stop, even when J1, as the

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chairperson of the meeting, attempted to intervene. Then, in Turn 62, J1 prompted the interpreter to provide information regarding the content of the conversation between A1 and A2. According to the interpreter's explanation in the stimulated-recall interview, she was able to start conveying the message here, because A1 and A2 finally stopped, in order to fetch a whiteboard.

This excerpt clearly highlights that management of the communication flow between speakers of the same language, or *interaction oriented coordination* (Wadensjö, 1998, p.110), can be extremely challenging, particularly when there are multiple participants. Because of this, while A1 and A2 alternatively take the conversational floor as listener and speaker, all other participants observe the two, most probably without understanding, which is reflected in J1's prompt in Turn 62. The interpreter's footing, on the other hand, is considered to be that of an active listener in this segment. In a later part of the interaction (Turn 158), even when the interpreter is successful in commencing interpreting, A1 and A2 started their discussion, again, in English. Therefore, the interpreter needs to monitor what they are talking about while she also provides rendition. That is to say, the interpreter is a speaker, and at the same time, a listener.

Another important issue in relation to the conversation between the same language speakers is the management of information. When the interpreter regards a certain conversation as being local and not relevant for the entire group, she may not convey that message in the other language (Wadensjö, 1998). The interpreter, for example, reports in the stimulated-recall interview that the reason for not interpreting a certain segment as follows: "...*around that part, foreigners [Australians] were having a chat together, and the content wasn't particularly important.*" Therefore, she did not convey the local conversation between the two English speakers. In other words, she considered the segment as *subordinate communication* (Goffman, 1981) which is not relevant for the overall interaction. On such an occasion, while the two English speakers align as a speaker/addressee, others participate only as an observer/listener. The interpreter, on the other hand, participated as a listener initially and made a decision of non-rendition. The footing, therefore, is quite intricate. The management of information can also be seen in the context of a summary presentation. It is clear that the interpreter's rendition in Turn 63 in Excerpt 2, above, is very condensed. That is to say, when rendering the previous multiple turns in the form of reporting, the interpreter actually chooses the essential information and then presents a summary rather than the full interpretation. This strategy of managing information is found throughout the recorded discourse. This is considered to be related also to temporal constraints. For example, in the stimulated-recall interview, the interpreter repeatedly emphasized the importance of presenting a concise rendition in meetings where only limited time was allocated.

Although they are not discussed in detail here, there are other cases in which the interpreter cannot interpret due to the complex sequence and overlapping of turns. For example, after A2's utterance (in English) in Turn 176, the interpreter attempts to interpret, but A2 does not stop. Then, J1 started his utterance in Japanese right after A2 finished his turn. This is perhaps because J1 was able to understand A2's utterance without it being interpreted. Therefore, the interpreter was not able to convey A2's message in Japanese for the other Japanese native speakers. One can see that it is extremely difficult for the interpreter to accurately provide interpreting for all participants equally in the complex interactions described here.

### 3. The required functions of the interpreter in the multiparty situation

#### 3.1. Reporting and footing

Unlike dialogue interpreting situations with two primary interlocutors, an interpreter's functions can be drastically different in multiparty situations. In order to cope with the cases discussed in the above section, the interpreter in this study was required to report the previous multiple turns in one rendition. As we have seen above, there are occasions when participants spoke directly, without the help of the interpreter. When this happens, it is considered appropriate for the interpreter to explain what they were talking about for those other participants who may not have understood the content of communication. The same thing can be said when there are conversations between the participants with the same language background, just as the case quoted in Excerpt 2. However, in doing so,

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the interpreter's function, as well as her footing, changes dramatically. When an interpreter renders interpretation using the first person pronoun "I" in a triadic interaction, his/her function is that of a spokesperson. When s/he is required to report the content of multiple turns in the form of reporting or summarizing, however, the interpreter is no longer a spokesperson. The interpreter now assumes the role of a reporter, by shifting footing to become a narrator or storyteller, and embeds the actors in her rendition (Goffman, 1981). More important, the use of the first person becomes irrelevant in fulfilling this role. In such a situation, it is imperative that the interpreter indicates who said what, using appropriate nouns (i.e., names) or pronouns. This is in line with Metzger's (2005) assertion that source attribution is critical, especially in the interaction that involves more than two people.

### 3.2. Use of subject reference in the rendition and effects on footing

One may consider it straightforward to report using correct nouns and pronouns. However, because of the number of participants, the options of choices expand significantly. In an extremely simplistic scenario of a two-party conversation, "I" and "you" may be sufficient to address each other. However, even the first person pronoun now has the option of plural and singular forms. Therefore, unless an interpreter is careful, a shift may occur through the choice of an inappropriate subject/pronoun. In the example in Excerpt 3, J3's utterance in Turn 174 clearly indicates that it is his own opinion. However, the interpreter chose the plural pronoun form, and because of this, J3's footing as the owner of the opinion is somehow shifted. That is to say, the statement now sounds like a generally shared view rather than J3's own opinion.

#### Excerpt 3

- 174 J3 dakara, kaisha no porish\_ toshite s\_desuyotte iu f\_na, ano, kaisha no tachiba deno meigen ga hitsuy\_ dato, boku wa omoimasu  
(*So, it is as the policy of the company, something like, well, a clear indication as a corporate stance is required, [that's what] I believe*)
- 175 I So, if we want to carry out this, we need to clearly um, specify it as our company policy

The interpreter's rendition in Excerpt 4, also indicates a slight shift, this time by the use of two different words for the same referent.

#### Excerpt 4

- 218 J1 s\_iu imide ne, ima ga hij\_ni j\_y\_na jikidato omoimasu to, sorewa nazeka to iuto, atarashii membr\_ga dondon haitte kite, de, imamade no membr\_ga, imamade d\_rini, toire ky\_k\_ya nanka shiteru to, atarashiku haittekita hito mo, kore wa mitomeraretererutte iufuuni omotte, e, okonauto, dakara, imano dankaide hayaku ne, e, shitsuke o shiteoku hitsuy\_ ga arimasu to  
(*In that sense, now is very important time, [I] think, it is because, new members join [the company] one after another, and, [if] the existing members, as [they] have done, take [their] toilet break and the like, then the newly joined people also feel it is permitted, um, [they] do [the same], so, at an early stage [which is] now, well, discipline is required*)
- 219 I Um, Y-san [name] thinks we are in a critical stage to um give some um kind of the regulations to workers because the, we are receiving the, accepting new workers in the plant and if they see that the current workers take the toilet break so often and I think they follow that practices

Here, in Turn 219, the interpreter started her rendition using the name "Y-san" (Mr. Y or J1's name) to specify the subject. Subsequently, she uses different pronouns to indicate the subjects, namely "we" and "I." Although the plural form may be considered to indicate all participants or to indicate a general subject, the use of the first

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person pronoun (to refer to the same person as “Y-san”) in this rendition is confusing. It is difficult to suggest why the interpreter used “I” here, but at least it is possible to point out that all interpreters are accustomed to using “I” in their renditions. In fact, in the stimulated-recall interview, the interpreter claimed as follows: “... *[I am not accustomed to [using the name and the third person], fundamentally, [I] thought all subjects could be dealt with 'I.'*” Using the actual name and the first person “I” at the same time should be avoided unless “I” refers to the interpreter.

The data shows that there are occasions when the interpreter in this study, in fact, refers to herself in her utterances. For instance, in the above quoted Excerpt 2, after the interpreter is requested by J1 for information, she attempts to report the previous conversations between A1 and A2. In Turn 63, although the subjects are ellipted, as is the case in many Japanese sentences, the verb “omoundesu” (i.e., “think”) clearly indicates that the implied subject is the interpreter herself. In other words, the interpreter is expressing how she feels in this particular rendition. At a slightly different level, the expression at the end of the turn “osshatteta no kana” ([i.e., “is that what they’ve] said?”) also suggests that she is incorporating her own view in the utterance. In both expressions, she shows her level of uncertainty, possibly due to the very long conversations that had taken place between A1 and A2. In this instance, too, there is a shift in the interpreter’s footing. Interestingly, the interpreter reported her experience in the previous meeting (a week prior to the examined interaction) in the stimulated-recall interview as follows: “... *when I said "I" ... I was asked by a foreigner [Australian], something like, whether it was Z's [her name] [own] opinion ....*” This suggests that the interpreter is well aware of potential confusion when using the first person. Nevertheless, the data shows that it is not easy to maintain a proper and consistent footing as the neutral interpreter by choosing appropriate subjects/pronouns in the multiparty situation.

### 3.3. Expanding and footing shifts

Another interesting case of the interpreter’s rendition is found in the following excerpt.

#### Excerpt 5

- 70 A2 Selling price, up, achievable or not, X-san [name]  
71 I hanbai kakaku o ageru nowa kan\_ desuka, 2 mirion, kin\_ ano, hanashi o sareteru mitaide, X-san ni hanashi o suru jikan ga  
(*[is it] possible to increase the selling price, 2-million, well, yesterday, [they] seemed to have discussed [about it], [there wasn't] time to tell X [you]*)

Here, it is clear that the interpreter expanded the rendition by attaching additional information. According to the interpreter’s explanation in the stimulated-recall interview, the addressee (X) came to the meeting a little bit late. Therefore, he was not aware of the content of earlier discussions. The interpreter, therefore, explained the background for this particular person. Although the use of “X-san” in the interpreter’s utterance is understood as “you” rather than the third person (in Japanese, the actual name can be used to indicate “you”), one can see a shift in the footing within this rendition. That is to say, the first part is considered to be the interpretation of A2’s previous utterance in the conventional sense, the interpreter being a spokesperson. However, the rest is the utterance which involves the interpreter as a speaker who actually creates the content. Using Goffman’s (1981) terms, the interpreter’s role as a speaker is that of author. Although an interpreter may add information, even in a triadic interaction, this particular case should be understood in the context of a multiparty interaction. That is to say, the interpreter chose her strategy of adding this particular information for this particular participant in this particular instance. This example confirms the earlier claim that the interpreter makes necessary adjustments with regard to the footing according to the requirements of an individual participant. This further indicates that the monitoring of all participants in terms of their needs constitutes an important and integral part of the interpreter’s job in a multiparty interpreting situation.

In this section, various instances of shifts in the interpreter’s footing have been illustrated from the data. At one level, the interpreter, intentionally or otherwise, shifts the footing, which is closely related to the functions she provides. In particular, the importance of the footing as a reporter\_ or the storyteller\_ has been emphasized in the

## Interpreting Situation with Multiple Participants

multiparty interaction. However, we saw that an inappropriate choice of subject reference, especially in the inconsistent use of pronouns, can cause inadvertent footing shifts.

### 4. Implications for pedagogy

It has become clear that the multiparty interpreting situation investigated in this paper has a number of characteristics that are not usually discussed in the consideration of dialogue situations with two primary interlocutors speaking different languages. However, this is a case study that looks into one interpreter-mediated interaction; thus, generalization of the nature of multiparty situations is not appropriate. First of all, the number of participants may differ for each situation. Second, each interpreting situation is particular in terms of content, venue, style, atmosphere, and other variables. The situation examined here is a board meeting that was chaired by the CEO. In a more casual interaction, there is even more likelihood of side activities and overlapping speech. On the other hand, at an extremely formal meeting, the rule regarding turn-taking may be more strictly observed. In different interpreting situations, there might be additional important variables to be considered other than the ones discussed here. However, additional responsibilities, such as reporting and summarizing, are considered to be a strong possibility when s/he undertakes interpreting in multiparty interpreting situations. Discussion of multiparty interpreting in two modalities (i.e., between a signed and spoken language) have been explored in another case study conducted by van Herreweghe (2002), which validates the findings of this study. Based on the above findings, I would like to discuss implications for interpreting pedagogy.

In the context of Australia, interpreter training is closely related to the requirements set out in the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics.<sup>2</sup> Adherence to this ethical code is supposed to be mandatory for all NAATI accredited interpreters. However, it is obvious that the code cannot accommodate the complex situation examined in this paper. In particular, requirements with regard to accuracy must be understood more flexibly. While future interpreters should continue to be exposed to the underlying philosophy of the code, they must be taught that flexible application may be required, and they should be provided a variety of examples.

There is an urgent need to discuss the nature of multiparty interpreting situations in training and education. This is particularly the case for the Japanese language, due to the fact that interpreting in this language is used far more often in business situations than in community interpreting in Australia (Takimoto, 2008). In business interpreting, multiparty interactions are not unusual. Therefore, in addition to practicing and discussing dialogue interpreting situations with two primary interlocutors, students should be exposed to practicing interpreting for multiparty situations as well. However, it is impractical to teach and cover all types of possible scenarios in the curriculum. At the least, students should be aware of what could happen in such a situation. The analysis above has shown that various additional features may effect the interaction. For example, the participants' individual bilingual proficiency has been a factor that influenced the interpreter's interpreting strategy. The study also suggests that the status or authority of the participants may influence the footing of the interpreter. This would directly relate to the interpreter's strategy, in particular, in terms of managing information. In addition, the study indicates that the interpreter's employment status may also have an effect on the ability and motivation to add information using prior knowledge, as well as judgment of the information needs of the participants. A similar aspect has recently been investigated in signed language interpreting in the context of *designated interpreters* (Hauser, Finch, and Hauser, 2008). In the case of the interpreter in this study, she was employed as a staff member, albeit on a short-time basis, and as such, she is considered to be in a better position than a freelance *one-off interpreter* in terms of understanding and responding to the needs of the participants. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate for students to be aware of the various aspects that may effect the interaction in a complex interpreting situation.

Throughout the analysis in this paper, it has become apparent that reporting and summarizing are critical techniques that may be required for interpreting in a multiparty interpreting situation. A particular emphasis should be placed upon stressing the importance of properly indicating the speaker and the addressee (Metzger, 2005), including their relationship (i.e., footing) in the rendition. This can only be done with a proper choice of

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ausit.org/eng/showpage.php3?id=650>

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## Takimoto

names and third person pronouns. Previous studies report various cases where interpreters use the third person (Bot, 2005; Cambridge, 1999; Metzger, 2005; Tebble, 1999; Wadensjö, 1999) because they find it necessary to differentiate the *currently speaking self* and when *meaning other* (Wadensjö, 1998) even in typical dialogue interpreting situations. However, this study indicates that the use of the third person can become a necessity in a multiparty situation. In other words, the use of the third person should be understood to be a possibility, and often a requirement, rather than as a prohibition in the context of the multiparty interpreting situation. As we saw in Excerpt 3, above, the use of the first person "I" can be rather misleading, depending on the situation. It is essential to stress that the use of the first person is only relevant when a turn-by-turn rendition is possible. In fact, Gentile, Ozolins & Vasilakakos (1996) point out the possibility of breaking the rule of using the first person in a situation in which there are more than two participants. However, there is hardly any literature that discusses the concrete techniques to be used in such contexts. The notion of footing employed in this paper would be extremely useful as a framework for presenting and considering these issues in a classroom. By incorporating such a view, students will be able to understand how footing shifts are created within a rendition and their potential impact on the communication.

The notion of footing also provides a perspective on the wider context in which the interpreter interacts with other participants. That is, by analyzing the interpreter's alignment with the participants, it enables us to understand various (i.e., additional) functions that the interpreter undertakes in a multiparty situation, including the important role as the storyteller. The study also suggests that the interpreter makes continuous adjustments in the footing vis-à-vis the knowledge and the language proficiency of each participant. This further implies the importance of emphasizing interpersonal aspects in interpreter-mediated interaction, in particular, in a multiparty situation. Each participant may have different expectations of the interpreter, and the interpreter may, in turn, have to respond to such expectations in mediating the communication.

In a dialogue situation with two primary interlocutors, research studies to date have revealed that the interpreter plays a critical role in coordinating the interaction, including the control of turn-taking (Roy, 2000). In a more complex interaction, such as the one examined here, an interpreter's function of controlling the flow of interaction is considered to be even more important. However, the analysis of the data in this study suggests that it is extremely difficult to manage or to intervene for the purpose of interpreting in interaction with several participants. The study shows, for instance, that conversations between the speakers of the same language may not be easily interrupted, yet may need to be consecutively summarized for other participants. Although it is difficult to teach future interpreters exactly how to manage the interaction successfully, they can be made aware of the constraints they may face and consider the merits of various strategies for responding to these. For example, it is quite legitimate to emphasize the importance of pre-meeting briefings, so that participants have an opportunity to discuss overarching rules for interaction, including the advantages of one participant taking responsibility for monitoring and controlling turn-taking.

## 5. Conclusion

By examining the recorded discourse of a multiparty interpreting situation in which the interpreter provided interpreting for seven participants, this study identifies some aspects that are different from dialogue interpreting between two primary interlocutors. In short, the interaction becomes more multilayered with the increased number of participants. The interpreter was required to respond to this complexity. Accordingly, she performed functions that are not usually required in dialogue situations with two primary interlocutors. In addition to acting as the previous speaker's spokesperson, it has been revealed that the interpreter in this study functioned more widely. In doing so, she constantly adjusted her footing as the required function changed. The ability to monitor the information needs of each participant is essential in mediating multiparty interactions.

The function that is considered to be vital in the interpretation examined here is reporting and summarizing. That is to say, the interpreter adopted a footing as storyteller in order to render discourse that was conveyed over a number of turns between speakers of the same language, which does not usually happen in a dialogue situation with two primary interlocutors using different languages. In order to convey multiparty discourse accurately, it is imperative to use the third person correctly, in order to clearly indicate the speaker and the addressee. This

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technique may sound simple enough, but it may not be the case for those who are so used to using the first person consistently. These techniques need to be widely discussed in interpreter education and training, as conventional curricula may not cover such complex interpreting situations.

The main objective of this paper has been to raise awareness of the pedagogical implications of preparing interpreters to deal with multiparty interactions. However, this study also raises implications for further research in interpreting studies. Clearly, it is crucial to examine multiparty interpreting situations in more depth by investigating additional cases. Indeed, in a multiparty interpreting situation, the interaction becomes much more complex, and at the same time, provides opportunities to see the interpreter's behavior and decisions from different angles.

## Appendix

### Transcription Conventions

- // overlapping speech commences
- \* overlapping speech ends
- (h) laughter
- (word) uncertain transcription
- [ ] transcriber's remarks, explanations

### Notes for translation of extracts

I translated all transcribed Japanese texts into English when quoted in this paper. They are indicated in italics. Because the study uses natural data, many utterances (in particular, in the interview discourse) are spontaneous and not necessarily grammatically correct. I attempted to translate so that the texts reflect the original, rather than making the translation into grammatically correct English. That is to say, the overall approach can be summarized as literal translation.

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# **One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites: A Comparison of Factors and Outcomes**

**Karen Petronio<sup>1</sup> and Kimberly Hale**

*Eastern Kentucky University, United States*

## **Abstract**

The past decade has seen an increase in the number of 4-year signed language interpreter education programs in the United States. However, there has been no corresponding increase in research that investigates the factors contributing to student success in these programs. As a start in examining possible factors, this article provides a longitudinal case study of 1 program that ran concurrently at 2 sites over a 10-year period. Although both sites used the same curriculum, had qualified faculty, and required the same prerequisites, the data show that 1 site had consistently higher graduation rates and a higher percentage of graduates achieving national signed language interpreter certification. In comparing the 2 sites, several factors are described that may be related to higher student outcomes. We conclude by proposing that the higher outcomes at the 1 site are influenced by not just 1 factor, but by a combination of factors that together provided students with a more intense experience with a higher degree of engagement.

**Keywords:** interpreter education program; interpreter training program, 4-year degree; bachelor's degree; longitudinal case study; student outcomes; signed language interpreting

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<sup>1</sup>*Correspondence to: Karen.Petronio@eku.edu.*

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# **One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites: A Comparison of Factors and Outcomes**

## **1. Introduction**

When recent bylaw changes enacted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in the United States become effective, they will require that, as of July 1, 2012, all hearing candidates who sit for the performance portion of certification tests have a bachelor's degree. Although the requirement does not stipulate that the degree must be in interpreting, many predict this will cause further growth in the already increasing number of interpreter education programs (IEPs) offering a four-year degree. To illustrate the growth, consider the 43 four-year programs that are listed on the website of the National Consortium of Interpreting Education Centers (NCIEC);<sup>2</sup> this is quite an increase from only 12 four-year programs in the late 1980s and 25 programs in 2006 (Peterson, 2006). Although this growth has resulted in an increase in student enrollment, there is little research that investigates how well students are faring in four-year programs. And as several authors have noted, there are very few research-based articles to guide new programs in best practices for the field of interpreter education (Cokely, 2005; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Shaw, 2007). In order to make effective curricular and program decisions, it is essential that we have a better understanding of the characteristics of currently available programs and the factors that affect student outcomes.

In an effort to begin describing and analyzing data related to student outcomes in four-year IEPs, we focus on and describe one IEP. This IEP offers a unique research opportunity because over a ten-year period, the program was offered at two different sites. As each site used the same curriculum, had the same prerequisites, and had equally qualified faculty, this provided the opportunity to compare the two sites and examine other factors that could impact students. The goals of this article are twofold: (a) to describe this IEP and present data on student outcomes and (b) to provide this information as a starting point that other programs can use to build upon and contribute additional knowledge as we seek to find the best ways to educate IEP students.

We begin with a brief overview of the field of interpreting and interpreter education in the United States and then proceed to describe the IEP that was offered at the two sites. After describing several factors of each site in detail, we then present the results, including student outcome data on graduation rates, sign language assessment scores, certification rates, and the types of certifications achieved. After discussing our findings, we conclude by

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.nciec.org/resource/iep.html>, June 10, 2009.

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identifying those factors \_ or more specifically, a combination of factors \_ that we believe led to higher student outcomes at one of the sites. Future research directions are provided.

### **2. A review of the field of signed language interpreter education in the United States**

The passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1965 is often noted as the beginning of the signed language interpreting profession in the United States. This act, which identifies interpreting as a service to be provided to deaf clients, was the first federal legislation to set precedence for the payment of signed language interpreters (Humphrey & Alcorn, 1995). Those initial interpreters learned ASL through their involvement with the deaf community, usually from deaf parents and siblings. These early interpreters were selected by the deaf community and deemed to be trustworthy and skilled enough to interpret (Cokely, 2005). As further federal legislation was passed, the demand for interpreters soon surpassed the supply of qualified interpreters. This has lead to the increasing need for interpreters.

Whereas the deaf community initially had the primary role in selecting and grooming interpreters, when the need grew more quickly than the community was able to produce interpreters, outside sources became involved (Cokely, 2005; Peterson, 2006). Just as federal legislation played a major role in creating the demand for interpreting services, it also provided much of the initial funding for training interpreters. This started with the funding of short workshops and courses in the mid-1960s and led to the establishment of the National Interpreter Training Consortium (NITC) in the 1970s. The NITC, which originally included six IEPs, represented the first national effort to establish regional standardized training (Frishberg, 1990). In the 1980s, the original six programs increased to ten regional programs, which provided interpreter training as well as technical assistance and resource development to emerging IEPs in their respective regions. Currently, federal funding supports the NCIEC, which directly and indirectly provides resources and support to IEPs. An understood goal of the NCIEC, as well as individual IEPs, is to find effective ways to prepare students to become qualified, competent and ethical interpreters.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, expectations about the length of time necessary to prepare interpreters have increased. The earliest training opportunities, in the mid-1960s, were workshops or very short courses of two to six weeks (Humphrey & Alcorn, 1995). Eventually IEPs \_ which offered two-year associate's degrees \_ became the norm. Later, recognition of the complexity of interpreting and a corresponding increase in the number of students entering with little or no prior exposure to ASL or the deaf community resulted in longer programs. The first four-year IEP was established during the mid-1970s at Maryville College in Tennessee. Today, although two-year associate's degree programs are still the most prevalent type of program, the number of four-year programs continues to increase.<sup>4</sup> As stated earlier, this increase in four-year programs has not been accompanied by parallel increases in descriptions or publications on the characteristics or outcomes of programs. One goal of the remainder of this paper is to serve as a springboard for such research by describing characteristics, issues, and outcomes of one four-year IEP.

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<sup>3</sup>For a detailed review of the history of interpreter education in the United States, see Ball (2007).

<sup>4</sup>On June 10, 2009, 72 associate degree programs and 34 bachelor degree programs were listed on the RID website, [www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org), and 97 associate programs and 43 bachelor programs were listed on the NCIEC website, [www.nciec.org/resource/iep.html](http://www.nciec.org/resource/iep.html).

### **3. Description of an interpreter education program: A case study**

The IEP under study is housed at a regional state university within the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University. Until recently, when the program formally became a separate department, it was under the Department of Special Education.

This program was established as a two-year associate's degree program in 1987 and changed to a four-year bachelor's degree program in the late 1990s. The bachelor's degree program was designed for students to take prerequisite, lower level core classes and support classes, and the majority of their general education courses during their first two years. Students applied to the IEP in the spring semester of their second year and, if accepted, started the following fall semester. During their final two years, they took the majority of their IEP core courses, including a full-time practicum during their final semester. Prerequisites to the IEP consisted of four semesters of classes including American Sign Language (ASL) Professional Ethics & Issues in Interpreting (ITP 215), and Processing Skills for Interpreters (ITP 220).

The bachelor's degree requires 128 semester hours of coursework. This includes 46 hours of general education courses, 18 hours of ASL, 55 hours of interpreting-related courses, and 9 hours of supporting courses. The core and supporting courses are listed in Table 1, with the number of credits in parentheses.

<b>General education (46 credits)</b>
<b>Core courses (73 credits)</b>
ASL 1_ASL 6 (18)
ITP 115: Heritage and Culture of the Deaf (3)
ITP 210: Application of Fingerspelling and Number Systems (3)
ITP 215: Professional Ethics & Issues in Interpreting (3)
ITP 220: Processing Skills for Interpreters (3)
ITP 310: Interpreting in Private Practice (1)
ITP 320 and ITP 420: Voice to Sign I and II (6)
ITP 325 and ITP 425: Sign to Voice I and II (6)
ITP 350: Historical Perspectives on the Deaf Community (3)
ITP 370 and ITP 430: Interpreting in Specialized Settings I and II (6)
ITP 390 and ITP 490: Linguistics and ASL I and II (6)
ITP 470: Practicum in Interpreting I (3)
<b>Supporting courses (9 credits)</b>
ANT 120: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (3)
SED 104: Introduction to Special Education (3)
SED 337: Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (3)

*Table 1: The IEP curriculum*

At the same time the IEP was transitioning to a four-year degree, the administration was in the process of establishing a satellite site that would help increase the number of interpreters in the state. In 1998, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed with another public university located two hours from the

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## One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites

main campus.<sup>5</sup> The MOA allowed for IEP faculty to have offices, ASL lab facilities and the use of classrooms at the satellite university. Students who were accepted at the satellite location took all of their coursework on that campus. Their general education coursework was taken through courses offered by the satellite university; IEP faculty who were housed at the satellite location taught their ASL and interpreting-related courses. The original main campus university conferred the final degree. Because of issues related to ownership and regional accreditation, the MOA was not renewed in 2006. The satellite location accepted its last group of students at commencement of the academic year in 2007, and its final class graduated in May, 2009.

### *3.1. Methodology*

The data presented in this article come from students who were accepted into the IEP at either the main campus or the satellite location. Conforming to a long established worldwide demographic in the signed language interpreting field (see for example Bontempo & Napier, 2007; Brien, Brown & Collins, 2002; Cokely, 1981; McIntire, 1990; Napier & Barker, 2003), the students were predominately female; only 10% of graduates from the main campus and 12% of graduates from the satellite location were male. Both sites included both traditional and non-traditional students, and at least 85% of the students from both sites worked while they went through the program. We do not have demographic data for the ages or ethnicity of the participants, although this data should be collected in future studies.

Several variables that may have contributed to student outcomes are discussed in more detail in section four. These variables were chosen because they were the salient factors that differed between the two sites. They include (a) the student selection process, (b) student progression through the program, (c) the physical proximity of facilities, and (d) faculty and staff.

The results presented later in section five, are based on measurable student outcomes, including successful completion of the program, sign language assessment scores, and national certification achieved by graduates. Data on student graduation rates came from the university's registrar office. Data on language assessment came from summary data provided to the departments by the state Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI)<sup>6</sup> coordinator and self-reports. Certification data were obtained from self-reports and the searchable RID member database. These data were collected and compared across sites.

## 4. Variables that differed between the two sites

While there were many similarities between the two sites, there were also differences. The following sections discuss differences related to how students were selected and progressed through the program, the proximity of facilities, and some characteristics of faculty and staff.

### *4.1. Student selection process*

The application process at both sites required students to submit transcripts, a letter of intent, and at least two letters of recommendation. Each site accepted students independently; therefore, students applied only to the site(s) they wanted to attend. The minimum requirements for admission to the IEP at both sites included an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher, a passing score on a reading test administered by the IEP, and a minimum grade of C in all of the prerequisite courses (ASL 1\_4, ITP 215:

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<sup>5</sup>The university is a major research university in a metropolitan area.

<sup>6</sup>This is now called the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI). For more information see:  
<http://www.ntid.rit.edu/slpi/>.

Professional Ethics and Issues in Interpreting, and ITP 220: Processing Skills for Interpreters). Students at both sites were commonly enrolled in ASL 4, ITP 215, and ITP 220 during the semester in which they applied to the program. If they were accepted into the program, their acceptance was contingent upon receiving a C or higher in each of these courses.

Although both sites required the same prerequisites and application materials, there were differences in how and when students were accepted at each site. The satellite location accepted students every year. Interested students applied in the spring and, if accepted, started the program that autumn. Between 1999 and 2006, all applicants who submitted the required documentation and met the minimum requirements (as described previously) were accepted at the satellite site. The satellite site implemented a formal screening process in 2006. This screening process (modeled after the process used at the main campus) is described in the paragraphs that follow. Although screening interviews were used, no students were eliminated during the screening process in 2006, and only one student was eliminated in 2007. At the satellite location, the number of students accepted each year ranged from 10 to 23.

In contrast to accepting students every year, at the main campus applications were accepted in the spring semester of even-numbered years. After students submitted all of the required documentation and met the requirements, an interview was scheduled for each applicant. The screening interview, which typically lasted 40 minutes, was viewed as an essential component of the selection process by the faculty at the main campus. All interviews were held during one week of the spring semester. The applicant was interviewed in ASL by a team of at least six IEP faculty and staff members.

Prior to the interview week, faculty and staff members decided on a series of questions to be asked of the applicants. Questions were designed to provide the interview team with insight into the applicants' content knowledge, previous experiences, personal traits, and opinions. During each interview, the faculty and staff paid particular attention to the applicants' content knowledge, signing skills, and disposition or *goodness of fit* (GOF), for example, would the applicant benefit from, and be a good fit for the program, and vice versa. At the conclusion of each interview, interviewers individually rated the applicant using a 5-point Likert-type scale for each of those three categories: content knowledge, signing skills, and GOF (see appendix for the rating rubric). After completing individual ratings, the interviewers then had a discussion in which they could share other relevant information about the applicant; this could include any concerns or commendations about that particular applicant related to his/her class work, performance in the ASL lab, or comments related to other attributes that were not apparent during the screening interview. On the basis of the discussion, each interviewer then determined a final GOF score for the applicant, which could be the same as the interviewer's initial score or could be adjusted on the basis of additional perspective gained during the discussion.

Upon completion of all interviews, a final score was calculated for each applicant on the basis of weighted scores in the following areas: GPA, reading test score, content knowledge, signing skills, and GOF. The final weighted score was used to rank students. The top-ranked students were selected in the spring and entered the program the following fall semester. Typically, 27–32 students applied and 18–21 were accepted during each cycle. Although the procedure became more refined through the years, a similar interview procedure and ranking process was used with each new group of applicants.

#### 4.2. Student progression through the program

In addition to the differing selection processes, the sites also differed in terms of the options available for students to complete the program. On the main campus a *cohort approach* was used; the students entered as a group, attended full-time, and remained with their group for two years.<sup>7</sup> A cohort approach was not used at the satellite site, as students could attend either full time or part time.

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<sup>7</sup>If a student previously satisfied all the general education requirements, they did not have to attend full time for the first year after acceptance into the program. Unless special circumstances allowed a student to be waived from a class, all students at the main campus attended full time during the final year of the program.

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## **One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites**

At the main campus, students completed the required coursework and internship in a prescribed sequence over the two years following acceptance; this is known as a *closed cohort model* (Maher, 2004; Reynolds & Hebert, 1998). Under the cohort approach, the selected students entered the program as a group and moved through the entire sequence of coursework together. Because of the two-year acceptance cycle, each cohort had full faculty attention for the two-year period; one cohort group completed their internship and graduated in the spring before a new cohort group started in the fall. Because skill classes were divided into smaller sections of approximately 10 students, they did not necessarily have the same classmates for each course. However, multiple sections were scheduled during the same time period, thus allowing the sections to occasionally meet together as one group. Although all students did not graduate at the same time, because some needed additional time to complete general education requirements, they all completed the advanced IEP coursework together over the same two-year period.

In contrast, the satellite location did not use a cohort approach. Students, once accepted, could attend either full time or part time. Although the courses were taken in a prescribed sequence, they were not taken in a prescribed time-frame. Students took classes with a wide variety of other students; some of their classmates could have been accepted the same year they were, whereas others could have been accepted several years earlier or later. Some students attended full time, whereas others took one or two classes per semester. After acceptance, the time for students to complete the program at the satellite site ranged from two to seven years.

### *4.3. Physical proximity of facilities*

Although both sites had faculty offices, an ASL lab, a media room, and classrooms, the physical proximity of the facilities differed. On the main campus, all of the facilities are close to one another; at the satellite location, often they were not.

On the main campus, all of the faculty offices and the ASL lab are located off the same hallway. With the exception of one classroom (which is one floor above), all of the classrooms typically used by the IEP are located on the same floor and are parallel with the office hallway. The multimedia room that interpreting students use to watch video material and to complete interpreting-related homework is accessible only via the ASL lab. This lab, staffed with full-time and part-time employees who are deaf, is an ASL-only zone and a place of socializing for many ASL users on campus. Because all of the facilities are physically close to one another, students have the opportunity to regularly see and interact with a variety of ASL users\_ASL students, interpreting students, deaf students as well as faculty and staff.

At the satellite location, the facilities were not in close proximity. Faculty offices and the multi-media room were housed in the same building; however, the multimedia room was located on the first floor, and faculty offices were located on the third floor. The ASL lab and classrooms were housed in other buildings that were some distance from the building that houses the offices and multimedia room. Because of the distance between facilities, it was less likely that students would have readily available access to impromptu interactions with ASL users, including faculty, staff, and other students.

### *4.4. Faculty and staff*

Although there have been changes in the teaching faculty between 1999 and 2009, the main campus usually had the equivalent of five teaching positions, whereas the satellite program had four teaching positions. This included both tenure-track and non-tenure track positions at both sites. With very few exceptions, faculty at both sites had RID and/or American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) certification. Typically, teachers at the main campus included two or three hearing individuals (including Codas) and two or three deaf faculty members. The satellite location typically had one or two hearing faculty members and two or three deaf faculty members. Faculty members at both sites were considered well qualified and were respected in the field and in the community. Academic degrees held by faculty members on the main campus range from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. Faculty members at

the satellite location held either a bachelor's or master's degree. Both sites also included deaf staff members who worked in the ASL lab and multi-media room.

Although the main campus had the equivalent of one more teaching position and some faculty had higher degrees, we believe there was another factor that created a more important difference in terms of faculty and staff. On the main campus, the IEP is housed in the same building as an interpreter outreach program, a Center on Deafness (COD) and a deaf education program that offers both bachelor's and master's degrees. The COD and the interpreter outreach program were located on the same hallway as IEP faculty offices and the ASL lab. Thus, students on the main campus also had regular exposure to, and additional opportunities to interact with, other faculty and staff that are involved in the fields of interpreting or deafness, including interpreters, deaf education teachers, and other deaf professionals.

In summary, the factors identified as variables that differed between the two sites were the student selection process, student progression through the program, proximity of facilities, and additional faculty and staff members on campus. Given the nature of a case study, it is impossible to directly link any one factor to specific outcomes; however, in the sections that follow, we provide a range of student outcome data by site. The outcomes can be viewed as outputs resulting from the composite inputs of the variables at each site.

## 5. Results: Student outcomes

This section presents comparative data from the two sites. Data described include graduation rates, sign language assessment scores, certification rates, and the type of certification achieved by graduates.

### 5.1. Graduation rates

Between 1999 and 2009, the graduation rate at the main campus was consistently higher than that of the satellite location. Of the students accepted at the main campus, 97.5% have graduated, compared with 73% of the students accepted at the satellite site.<sup>8</sup> Table 2 shows the number of students accepted by year and then, of those accepted for that year, the number who graduated. (Recall that students were only accepted in even-numbered years at the main campus.)

Year accepted	Main campus		Satellite site	
	Number accepted	Number who graduated	Number accepted	Number who graduated
1999	0	0	10	9
2000	18	18	11	7
2001	0	0	18	13
2002	20	19	11	7
2003	0	0	16	12
2004	21	20	23	18
2005	0	0	16	14
2006	21	21	13	6
2007	0	0	10	7
Totals	<i>n</i> = 80	<i>n</i> = 78	<i>n</i> = 128	<i>n</i> = 93
Percentage		97.5%		73%

<sup>8</sup> There have been very few students at both sites who were accepted in the spring but, due to financial, health, or family circumstances, never started the program in the fall. These few students are not included in the acceptance counts.

## One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites

Table 2: Graduation rates at the two sites (1999\_2009)

During the ten-year period that the program ran concurrently at the two sites, 128 students were accepted at the satellite location, with 93 graduating. A few students are predicted to finish their general education classes and graduate in 2010. If we include these students, the predicted number of total graduates from the satellite site would be 98.

In 2008, 23 additional students were accepted at the main campus. These students are not included in Table 2 because they will not graduate until 2010. The 80 students who are listed in Table 2, plus the 23 students accepted in 2008, result in a total of 103 students accepted at the main campus between 1999 and 2009. On the basis of the graduation rate at the main campus, we can predict that at least 22 of these 23 students should graduate in 2010, thus bringing the predicted number of total graduates to 100. Even though the satellite program has accepted more students over the ten-year period (128 students at the satellite site compared to 103 at the main campus), it is expected that slightly more students will have graduated from the main site\_a predicted 98 students at the satellite site and 100 students at the main campus.

As detailed in the previous section, students at the satellite site could attend either full or part time and the time period to complete the program ranged from two to seven years. For the 93 students who graduated from the satellite program, Table 3 shows how many students graduated within the different time-frames. The bottom row shows the percentage of students who completed the program in the respective number of years.

Number of years to complete the program after acceptance	2yrs.	3yrs.	4yrs.	5yrs.	6yrs.	7yrs.
Number of students (n = 93)	51	29	7	3	1	2
Percentage of students	55%	31%	8%	3%	1%	2%

Table 3: Number of years to graduate after acceptance at the satellite location

Table 3 shows that 55% of those who graduated from the satellite program attended full time and finished in two years, and another 31% completed the program in three years. In general, as the number of years to complete the program increased, the number of students who graduated from the satellite site decreased.

### 5.2. Sign Language assessment

Scores from the SCPI were used as a measure of ASL proficiency. Although we do not have scores for every student, we have scores for 74 students who took the SCPI between 2003 and 2008. The majority of these students took the SCPI during the fall semester of their final year in the program, whereas the others took it the following spring. The number of students receiving the different scores is shown in Table 4.

SCPI scores	Survival	Intermediate	Intermediate +	Advanced	Advanced+	Superior	Superior +
Main campus n=41	0	3	15	15	8	0	0
Satellite site n=33	1	11	14	4	0	1	2

Table 4: SCPI scores for students between 2003 and 2008

At the main campus, 23 of 41 students (56%) received a score of advanced or higher. One of the students who received an Advanced + was a hearing native signer. At the satellite site, 7 of the 34 students (21%) received an advanced or higher score; the top three scores were received by either deaf or hearing native signers. Excluding the native signers, the scores received by students at the main campus were notably higher than scores from the

satellite site.<sup>9</sup> The range of scores was much wider at the satellite site; scores range from survival to superior plus.

### 5.3. National certification

When reporting on certification data in this section, we include only students who have graduated two or more years ago (by 2007). The decision to use this time-frame is based on two factors. First, two years is often assumed to be the expected gap between graduation and certification (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). The second (and more important) reason is due to state licensure. The state in which the program resides requires interpreters to be licensed. Graduates of a bachelor's degree IEP can apply for a two-year temporary license. After that time, they must either have national certification or request an extension. Thus, some graduates do not take the test until they approach the two-year deadline. By only looking at data from those who graduated at least two years ago, we hope to eliminate possible differences resulting from graduates who waited to take the test because they had this flexibility compared with those who waited (or failed) due to skill deficiencies.

At both sites, there were a few students who had certification (usually the National Association of the Deaf-3 [NAD-3] or NAD-4)<sup>10</sup> prior to taking any ASL or interpreting classes offered through the IEP. A few of these students have not received any additional certification. These few students are not included in the data presented in this section since their certification was not influenced by the program's ASL or interpreting classes. On the other hand, there are a few other students who entered with certification and have since achieved additional certification; these students are included in the data because it can be argued that the program influenced their receiving additional certification.

The method used to report certification rates can affect how the results look. Our field does not have a standard way of reporting certification rates. That is, do we report by just counting how many graduates are now certified, do we consider all students who have graduated and see what percentage are now certified, or do we count all students who were accepted into the program and then see what percentage are now certified? Because there is not an agreed upon reporting method, the data will be reported in the three different ways \_straight counts, percent of certified graduates, and percent of accepted students who are now certified.

As a last caveat to the certification data, certification rates are constantly increasing as graduates continue to test and receive results. Thus, the data reported here reflects a snapshot of certification rates at each site. This snapshot is useful in gaining a broad perspective of the certification trends, even though the specific numbers will increase, most likely, before this article is published.

Using a simple straight count of the certification data, if we look at those who graduated two or more years ago, the numbers for each of the sites are very similar. Thirty-three graduates from the main campus and 31 graduates from the satellite campus have achieved national certification. However, this count does not provide a full picture due to differences in the acceptance and graduation numbers at the two sites.

Year graduated	Main campus		Satellite site	
	Number who graduated	Number certified	Number who graduated	Number certified
2001	0	0	3	2
2002	13	9	7	4
2003	5	3	6	3
2004	18	10	11	6
2005	1	1	8	4
2006	19	10	23	9

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<sup>9</sup>Although the scores were higher at the main campus, even these seem low for students in their senior year. This issue is of concern and is currently being addressed by faculty at the main campus.

<sup>10</sup>The certification system of the NAD, which was used across the United States, awarded certification using a leveled system. The scale measured from 1 to 5; however, certified interpreters were those receiving a score of 3, 4, or 5—with 5 representing top performance and the ability to interpret in a wide range of settings.

## One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites

2007	1	0		14	3
Total	<i>n</i> = 57	<i>n</i> = 33		<i>n</i> = 72	<i>n</i> = 31
Percent		<b>58%</b>			<b>43%</b>

Table 5: Number of students who graduated by 2007 who are nationally certified

The second way to view the data is using ratios to compare the percentage of certified graduates between the sites. Table 5 displays the number of students who graduated each year and, of those, the number who are now nationally certified. Note that even though students were accepted only in even years at the main campus and most graduated two years later, there were some students who had to complete general education classes and took three years to graduate; in these cases, they graduated in an odd-numbered year. (Table 5 includes only those who graduated by 2007, following our criteria, those who graduated at least two or more years ago.)

As shown in Table 5, when looking at the percentage of graduates who attained national certification, there are differences between the two sites. At the main campus, 58% of the graduates presently are nationally certified compared with 43% of the graduates from the satellite site. Recall that at the satellite site, students could attend either full or part time. Of the 31 certified graduates from the satellite site, 17 (54%) attended full time and finished the program in two years, and 11 (35%) completed the program in three years.

The last way to look at certification rates is to take the total number of students accepted into the program and then look at the percentage of those who are now certified. Table 6 shows the total number of students accepted each year and then how many of those are now certified. (Only those who were accepted by 2005 are included in this table\_those students who could have graduated by 2007, at least two years ago.)

Year accepted	Main campus		Satellite site	
	Number accepted	Of those, number nationally certified	Number accepted	Of those, number nationally certified
1999	0	0	10	5
2000	18	12	11	3
2001	0	0	18	6
2002	20	11	11	4
2003	0	0	16	6
2004	21	10	23	5
2005	0	0	16	2
Total	<i>n</i> = 59	<i>n</i> = 33	<i>n</i> = 105	<i>n</i> = 31
Percent		<b>56%</b>		<b>30%</b>

Table 6: Number of students who were accepted between 1999 and 2005 and who are now certified

Examining the data in terms of the percentage of accepted students who are now certified, produces the largest differences between the two sites. For the time period examined, 56% of the students who were accepted at the main campus are now nationally certified, as compared with 30% of the students who were accepted at the satellite site.

### 5.4. Types of certifications

In addition to our field having a scarcity of published information on graduate and certification rates, we also lack information about the type of certification that graduates have attained. For the reasons explained previously, the

data presented in section 5.3 included only data from students who graduated two or more years ago. In contrast, in this section, we include students who graduated last year and who are now certified. This will increase the number of certified interpreters from 33 to 40 at the main campus and from 31 to 33 at the satellite location. (From the main campus, five students who graduated in 2008 have received their National Interpreter Certification [NIC], one student has her NIC-advanced and one student has the Certificate of Interpretation [CI] and Certificate of Transliteration [CT] from RID;<sup>11</sup> from the satellite site, one 2008 graduate received her CI.) Table 7 shows the types of certifications held by graduates. From the main campus, 42% of the certified graduates have multiple certifications; from the satellite site, 41% have multiple certifications. These are included in the following table.<sup>12</sup>

Total number of certified graduates	NAD-3	NAD-4	NAD-5	CI	CT	NIC	NIC-adv	Total number of certificates
Main campus n=40	8	1	1	15	13	22	2	62
Satellite site n=32	6	4	0	13	15	12	0	50

Table 7: Types of certifications held by graduates from 2001 to 2008

Table 7 contains counts from students who have multiple certification as well as those who had single certification. Twenty-three of the 40 certified graduates from the main campus and 19 of the 32 from the satellite site held a single certification. The single certifications held by these graduates are shown in Table 8.

Single certifications	NAD-3	NAD-4	NAD-5	CI	CT	NIC	NIC-adv
Main campus n=23	1		1	1	2	16	2
Satellite site n=19	3	1		1	3	11	

Table 8: Types of certification held by graduates with a single certificate

The various types of certifications shown in Table 7 and 8 reflect changes within the field of interpreting over the ten-year period of this study. The NAD interpreter certification tests stopped being administered around 2003 and RID's CI and CT stopped in 2008. The NIC, which resulted from a collaboration between NAD and RID, started being offered in 2005. Thus, unless they have prior certification, the old NAD and RID certifications are no longer options for future graduates.

In summary, section five has looked at graduation rates, sign language assessment scores, certification rates and the types of certification achieved by students from the two sites. Data showed that graduates from the main campus had higher percentage rates in all four of these areas.

<sup>11</sup>See [http://www.rid.org/education/edu\\_certification/index.cfm](http://www.rid.org/education/edu_certification/index.cfm) for RID's description of current (NIC) and former (CI/CT) certification options.

<sup>12</sup>As mentioned earlier, some students had their NAD-3 and NAD-4 certification before they entered the program. If they had achieved additional certification while in our IEP, they are included in Table 7. Because we do not have the dates of when students received their first certification prior to entering the IEP, Table 7 includes some NAD-3 and NAD-4 certifications that were received before the student entered the IEP.

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## One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites

### 6. Discussion

The measurable data reported previously clearly indicate that the main campus consistently had higher outcomes than the satellite site. Since the prerequisites, curriculum, and faculty qualifications were equivalent, other factors must have been involved in accounting for the differences. Although a specific individual factor could have influenced the higher outcomes, we believe that it was the combination of factors that, together, created an intense immersion-like type of learning environment that led to higher student success at the main campus. Each of these factors, and the combination thereof, are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

The student screening and selection process at the main campus site is the beginning of a very intense learning experience. The students know that the program is selective and that completing the required pre-requisites does not guarantee admission into the interpreting program. Even before they are accepted, students work hard to increase their chances of admission. Having a competitive application process with a pool of applicants allowed the faculty and staff to select students who they felt had the qualities and disposition that would allow them to successfully complete the program and enter the field. Once selected, students and faculty were together for the next two years. That is, the students and faculty were part of a closed cohort (Maher, 2004, 2005; Reynolds & Hebert, 1998). Because of the two-year cycle, faculty members were easily able to focus their attention on the needs of the current group of interpreting students. Other studies have found increased academic performance and program completion rates for cohort groups (Dabney, Green & Topalli, 2006; Jamelske, 2009; Lawrence, 2002; Reynolds & Hebert, 1998). At the main campus, we believe that the two-year, closed cohort system contributed to creating an intense, immersion type of atmosphere, that, we would argue, led to the more positive outcomes. At the satellite site, 86% of those who graduated did so in two or three years, and 89% of the certified graduates completed the program in two or three years. It is possible that a modified cohort experience, albeit unplanned, occurred at the satellite site. From the data collected, we are not able to determine which of the three-year-completion graduates of the satellite site actually completed the interpreting program in two years and took additional general education requirements in the third year; thus we were not able to compare certification rates for those who completed the IEP sequence in two years, even if it took three years to complete the degree. This would be important data to collect and consider in future studies.

Given the discussion in the signed language interpreting field regarding the need for longer interpreter education programs, it seems counterintuitive that students who completed the program in shorter amounts of time may fare better in terms of graduation and certification; however, the nature of the group support that occurs in cohort groups appears to have played an important role in the learning and increased retention rate at the main campus (Dabney et al., 2006; Jamelske, 2009; Lawrence, 2002). In addition, we believe that other factors further reinforced the positives already occurring due to the cohort structure. The proximity of facilities and the scheduling of classes to accommodate student work schedules differed between the two sites. As noted previously, all of the main campus IEP facilities were close enough to allow easy and frequent access to ASL users. At each site, both traditional and non-traditional students were enrolled, and a majority of students worked while attending classes. Although we do not have specific data, we estimate that at least 85% of students at each site worked. The two sites used different approaches to accommodate students who had to work. At the main campus, where students had to attend full time, all of the ITP and upper-level ASL classes were offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with an occasional evening class. This allowed students more flexibility in scheduling work and also in scheduling time to complete their assignments and attend outside events and workshops. We believe that the two-day-per-week full-time experience added to the language immersion and intensity of the learning environment. For at least two days each week, they were fully immersed in the content and language of interpreting and interacting with deaf faculty and staff.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the satellite site accommodated the needs of working students by providing a part-time option. The data indicate an inverse relationship between time in the program and graduation rates; as time in the program increased, graduation rates decreased. Thus, it appears that part-time students were disadvantaged in terms of program completion. It also appears that additional support

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<sup>13</sup>The Tuesday/Thursday schedule was not applicable for the students' final semester practicum at the main campus. Their practicum was full time and could take place either in state or out of state. Because of the practicum requirements, it would have been very difficult for students to work during this time.

systems and changes in the program design are needed to better meet the needs of part-time IEP students and help them to achieve greater graduation rates.

## **7. Conclusions**

In this article, we have compared a four-year IEP that was offered at two sites over a ten-year period and presented data showing that one site consistently has had higher student outcomes. Factors that differed between the two sites included the student selection process, how students progressed through the program, the proximity of facilities, and the opportunity for interaction with a variety of faculty and staff as well as other students. Although each of these factors, individually, can have a positive impact on students, we believe that it was the combination of these factors that led to students at the main campus having a very intense and engaging experience, and that it was this intensity and engagement that lead to higher outcomes. In other words, educating interpreting students appears to be another example of “the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.” We described the combination of factors that we believe engendered higher student outcomes on the main campus, including students entering and going through the program full time as a cohort group.<sup>14</sup>

Our study was limited in several ways. First, we were limited by the type of data that we had available to us. For example, we did not have consistent and complete data on the SCPI scores, nor did we have complete demographic information on students. Although we used graduation rates, language assessment scores, and certification rates as measurable outcomes, there are other important considerations when looking at student and program success, such as graduates’ employment rates and job satisfaction, time taken to obtain certification, and the number of graduates who remain in the field. This type of data is critical to determining long-range success. We are currently in the process of collecting this data from our graduates. We suggest that future research can help the field standardize student outcome reporting and tease apart the multitude of factors that are essential for promoting increased student outcomes.

One goal of this article is to provide a springboard for more research and discussion about IEPs: what practices appear to be effective, ineffective, or benign. We hope that by sharing this comparison of factors and outcomes from two sites for an IEP, other signed and spoken language interpreter education programs will begin investigating their own programs more closely and will publish those findings so that the information can be shared and the scholarship of interpreter education can continue to develop.

## **8. Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank several colleagues, particularly Audrey Ruiz Lambert, for their helpful comments and insightful feedback on earlier drafts of this article. We accept responsibility for any and all errors.

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<sup>14</sup>The cohort literature points to both positive outcomes (Dabney et al., 2006; Lawrence, 2002; Radencich et al., 1998; Reynolds, 1998) and limited or negative outcomes (Jamelske, 2009). Thus, it is important to review the literature to ascertain if any of the cohort models fit the student population served by individual programs.

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## One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites

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Appendix: Scoring rubric used during applicants' screening interview

**Answers to the Content Knowledge Questions:**

**1---2---3---4---5**

1 point - Very minimal answer. Did not show a good understanding of the issue(s).

3 points - Adequate answer. Showed a basic understanding; however, may not have a deep understanding of the issue(s).

5 points - Very clear, detailed answer. Touched on the important points. Displayed a deep understanding of the issue(s).

**Signing Skills:**

**1---2---3---4---5**

1 point - Definite NO. Does not have the signing skills or the potential to acquire the necessary skills to successfully complete our program.

2 points - Mostly NO. Does not have the skills or the potential to acquire the skills to successfully complete our program at this time.

3 points - To some degree. Uncertain regarding how his/her signing skills, or potential for acquiring the skills, will allow applicant to successfully complete our program and have success in the field.

4 points - Mostly YES. Has the skills, or the potential to acquire the skills, that will allow him/her to successfully complete our program and be an asset to the field.

5 points - Definite YES. Has the skills or the potential to acquire the skills that will allow him/her to successfully complete the program, be a positive representative of our program upon completion of his/her degree, and an asset to the field.

**Goodness of Fit:**

**1---2---3---4---5**

1 point - Definite NO. Would not be a positive asset to our program.

2 points - Mostly NO. Would not be a positive asset to our program at this time.

3 points - To some degree. Uncertain regarding how well he/she would complement our program, have some concerns about commitment to program and/or potential success in the field.

4 points - Mostly YES. Would be a positive asset to our program and would benefit from our program. Has the potential to succeed and be an asset to the field.

5 points - Definite YES, would be a strong asset to our program and would benefit from our program. Has the potential to succeed, would be a positive representative of our program upon completion of his/her degree, and an asset to the field.

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## **One Interpreter Education Program, Two Sites**

Interview Scoring Rubric developed by Karen Petronio, Department of ASL and Interpreter Education, Eastern Kentucky University.

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# The Experiential Learning Theory and Interpreter Education

Jessica Bentley-Sassaman<sup>1</sup>

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA

## Abstract

Learning to become an interpreter is a hands-on and interactive experience. Students entering an interpreting program have a wide variety of language skill levels and backgrounds. In the context of American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreter education, some students arrive at an interpreting program with no knowledge of ASL, whereas others have more experience and some proficiency with the language. Even though some of the students may be familiar with ASL, the process of interpreting is often a new skill set. As students learn how to interpret through hands-on practice, they follow a 4-mode learning cycle that is based on their experiences. D.A. Kolb (1984) developed the *experiential learning theory* (ELT), which is grounded in the experiences of the learner. This article focuses on how interpreting students learn, using the experiential learning cycle. Although this commentary is directed at students, the learning cycle can be applied to mentoring programs, and working interpreters can use it for life-long learning.

Keywords: experiential learning theory; interpreting students; learning cycle; reflective practice; mentoring; interpreter education program

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: jbentley@bloomu.edu

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# The Experiential Learning Theory and Interpreter Education

## 1. Experiential learning theory

Learning through experience is an important aspect of training for all interpreters. Much of the learning for American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters takes place in the field where they have hands-on experiences. For students, this learning occurs during their practicum, when they learn experientially, as they interpret under the supervision of a mentor (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Prior to the students' practicum, educators should attempt to develop experiential learning opportunities; as Sawyer phrased it, they should have "the ability to bring the field into the classroom and the classroom out into the field, for example through a reflective practicum" (2006, p. 118) to give students a taste of their future career. Kolb's (1984) *experiential learning theory* (ELT) takes the learner through a cycle of four learning abilities. This theory and the four learning abilities of the cycle directly relate to how interpreting students learn as they advance through their classes, commence their practicum, and subsequently participate in mentorship programs; they can then apply ELT to their work as practitioners.

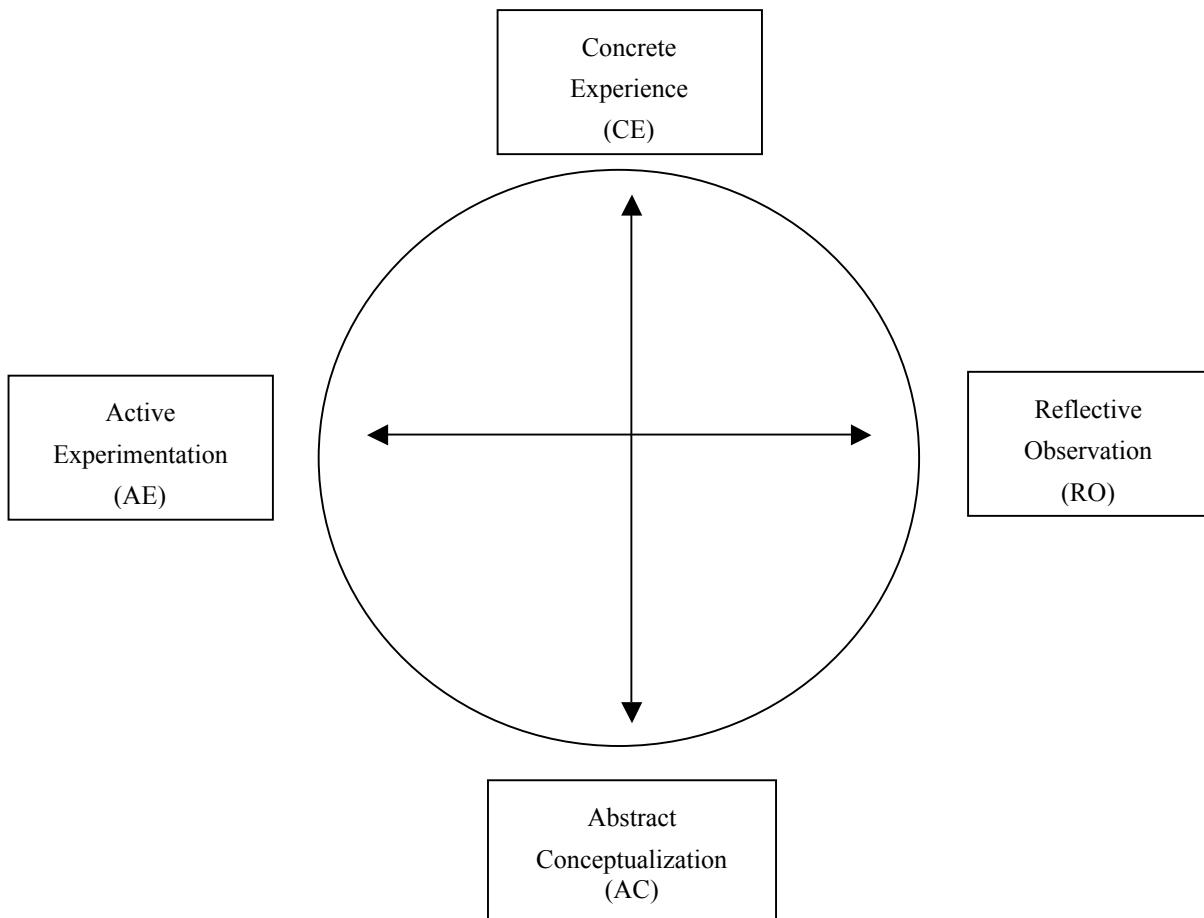
### 1.1. The ELT defined

To understand how the learning process of interpreting students relates to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, one must understand the theory itself. Kolb's book, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, introduced the ELT and the theories that paved its way. Kolb divided his book into three sections: (a) experience and learning, (b) the structure of learning and knowledge, and (c) learning and development. Kolb defined *learning* as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). As student interpreters progress through this cyclical process, they learn more about interpreting and about themselves.

Four abilities and their associated forms of knowledge are acquired in the experiential learning process (Kolb, 1984). These abilities comprise a cycle that includes: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). Kolb went on to describe the abilities in relation to students in the following way:

That is, they must be able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE). They must be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives (RO). They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC), and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE). (p. 30)

These abilities are the core of the ELT. Students must progress through each ability for effective learning to occur. As depicted in Figure 1, CE and AC, and RO and AE complement each other in the cycle for an optimum learning experience.



*Figure 1: The four abilities of the ELT*

Furthermore, Kolb (1984) addressed the developmental aspect of the ELT. He applies the theory to development in higher education and for lifelong learning. For higher education, the skill set that is learned is then applied to the first job as a continuing apprenticeship. This is where the experiences and knowledge acquired in school are now applied and mastered in the field.

## **2. Application of the ELT**

Kolb's (1984) ELT is representative of how students learn in the field of interpreting, in their coursework, during their practicum, in mentorship programs, and beyond. The four learning abilities described by Kolb are ways that students learn through experience during their education. *Concrete experience* (CE) occurs each time an in-class situation is interpreted. Students naturally have feelings associated with the interpretations that they have rendered. *Reflective observation* (RO) is grounded in understanding through observation. Witter-Merithew and Johnson discovered that when students work together to reflect on their work, they “gain deeper levels of understanding” (2005, p. 45). When students videotape themselves interpreting in-class assignments (CE), they

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are required to look at their work, both observing and analyzing what they interpreted. Students must observe and examine their work and reflect on the effectiveness of their own interpretations. At Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, students are required to spend time during their coursework and their practicum observing certified interpreters. Through observation, students witness how the certified interpreter interacts with the participants, they learn new vocabulary in both English and ASL, and they have the opportunity to reflect on how the Code of Professional Conduct (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf [RID], 2005) was implemented. Students are encouraged to talk with their teacher or mentor about what they have observed/interpreted and learn through the feedback they receive.

The third ability is *abstract conceptualization* (AC). At this point, students need to employ critical thinking in relation to the interpreted event (e.g., how it could be improved, what ethical decisions were made) and self-analyze their work. During AC, the teacher or mentor should be facilitating active listening skills and allowing the students to conduct an analysis of their work. Through their own analysis, they can discover areas where they did well and opportunities for improvement. In their book *Toward Competent Practice: Conversations with Stakeholders*, Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) noted that there needs to be more attention on teaching critical thinking skills in IP. The abstract conceptualization portion of the ELT addresses critical thinking because students must self-critique and analyze their interpreted work. The fourth, and final, ability is *active experimentation* (AE). During this phase of interpreting, students can apply what they have learned to a new interpretation. The more varied settings and clients that the students encounter during class simulations and their practicum, the more it helps them to refine their skills and develop their potential as interpreters.

Affording opportunities for students to learn through the ELT during their time in an IP will better prepare them for working in the field upon graduation. An IP offers various outlets for learning. These range from hands-on activities that involve translating or interpreting to discussion of ethical decision making and assessments of classroom interpreting work; this is done to examine what is appropriate for certain clients and situations. The ELT can be applied to all of these areas. Monikowski and Peterson (2005) recognized that the classroom provides a structured and standardized environment for the students. They also noted Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The stages of the ELT parallel the sequential nature of the interpreter training course work. Students need to see a variety of interpreting and signing models to construct how they might interpret a similar situation. Requiring observation hours provides a foundation for students to learn by observing certified practitioners. The provision of observation allows students the opportunity to reflect on what they have seen, think about how they could interpret that situation, and then test their conclusions by interpreting something similar in a laboratory environment. After rendering a new videotaped interpretation, students can view and analyze their work. This process enables students to progress through each learning ability in the ELT cycle.

Interpreter educators should become familiar with this cyclical process of learning (i.e., CE, RO, AC, and AE), so that they can understand how each phase applies to student learning. Educators can explain the ELT to students prior to their first hands-on interpreting course so that the students understand how the cycle applies to their interpreted practices and projects. Without these guidelines, students may not know how to reflect on their work or self-critique what they have interpreted. Educators should take time to guide the students through these experiences for optimal learning to occur. Educators should also provide diverse and frequent hands-on experiences, affording students the opportunity to work through the ELT cycle.

### 2.1. Application to practicum

The capstone of an interpreter education program is the practicum. Students have the opportunity to apply the foundational knowledge they obtained during their training and interpreting situations under a mentor's supervision. If students were required to complete observation hours or field experience prior to their practicum, they may have become accustomed to seeing a certified interpreter at work and should be aware of proper interpreting etiquette.

As students begin to interpret during their practicum, they can take their experience (CE) of interpreting and reflect on their interpretation choices after the assignment. When the mentor asks the student, "How do you think you did?" the student reflects (RO) by contemplating their interpretation. Through discussion of the interpreted

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assignment with their mentor, the choices that the student made during their interpretation can be analyzed (AC). AC occurs when students critically think about their linguistic, cultural, and ethical decisions. Through feedback from their mentors and preparation for future assignments, students can take the final step of application by using what they have learned from their assignments and applying it to their next interpretation (AE). Winston states that “practicums, service learning, and interacting with community groups all reinforce the underlying understanding that students need...to learn through [sic] interactive, collaborative experiences with others” (2005, p. 223). Winston goes on to say that the aforementioned activities are “student-centered learning activities that foster the development of critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment that are essential to interpreting effectively and competently” (p. 223). Critical thinking, ethical decision making, and self-assessment are key factors deemed necessary characteristics for students to possess as they enter the field of interpreting. The interactive and collaborative experiences relate to the learning cycle, as this cycle is based on experience. Through their practicum, service learning and interacting with the deaf community, students are continually learning based on what they experience\_hence, the term *experiential learning*.

### 2.2. Application beyond interpreter education

Upon completion of their practicum, Bloomsburg University signed language interpreting students are encouraged to become involved in a mentorship program or find a mentor to work with on a one-on-one basis. Mentoring is a significant aspect of skill development and refinement for new or seasoned interpreters. Through mentoring, interpreters are able to observe another interpreter work, dialogue with their mentor about things they observed or interpreted, and ask any questions they may have, thus learning via reflection and experience. Gordon and Magler (2007) co-authored a book about mentoring in the field of interpreting. Their book provides a myriad of skill-building activities for mentors and protégés. The authors discuss the mentoring process whereby the protégé interprets (CE) and the mentor takes notes, later engaging the protégé in a conversation about their perception of how they did. The mentor can provide immediate feedback on the protégé’s interpretation. Then, the protégé can reflect (RO) on the experience through self-analysis (AC) and the feedback provided by the mentor and then formulate a plan to improve the interpretation by using critical thinking/analyzing skills. They then apply what they learned to the next activity or interpretation assignment (AE). In this way, the ELT cycle can be applied to interpreters in mentorships.

Working interpreters who strive for excellence in their interpreting can apply the ELT as a means for enhancing their personal growth. They can do this independently or with a team. If the interpreter is working independently, after completing an assignment, s/he can reflect on the interpretation, analyze the effectiveness of the work and consider ways in which the interpretation could have been enhanced. The interpreter can implement these ideas in a future assignment. If working with a team, the interpreter can ask the team to sit down after the assignment to discuss the interpretations. The interpreter should reflect on his or her work, analyzing it prior to asking colleagues for feedback. Through this dialogue, the interpreter reflects on the work, analyzing what was done well and what could have been improved. The interpreter can take the feedback and implement what was learned into the next interpretation. By having a conversation about his or her work with a team, the interpreter is learning through experience and can keep following Kolb’s ELT cycle. Progressing through the cycles of the ELT can benefit a seasoned interpreter and keep interpreters from becoming stagnant in their professional skills development.

## 3. Conclusion

The ELT specifies a four-ability cycle that mirrors how students learn to interpret. If students are exposed to this learning process, they can apply it to their interpreting program and how they learn. Students need to grasp the importance of first trying to interpret a stimulus then reflecting on the work they have done. Work should be analyzed by employing critical thinking skills to explore alternative interpretations for the stimulus and areas that need improvement. After students identify these areas, they are ready to analyze how a concept could have been

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conveyed more clearly. Once this is determined, revisions can be implemented during the next interpretation. The process can be repeated indefinitely.

Educators can take the information gleaned from this article and apply it to the classroom. Preparing students for entry-level interpreting assignments upon graduation is paramount. Educators need to be grounded in the theoretical framework of the ELT and how it applies to learning the interpreting process. Mentors who work with students during their practicum should be equipped with the tools (including the ELT) to successfully assist in skill development of their protégés. Teachers, as well as mentors, should understand the ELT and how each step works in order to guide students or protégés through the learning process. When discussions take place after a concrete experience (CE), such as in-class practice or interpreting during their practicum, the students are engaged in reflective observation (RO) and abstract conceptualization (AC). Students can then apply their knowledge to the active experimentation (AE) stage in a new setting. Thus, the cycle begins again. Daley (2001) found that learning from experience relies on prior experiences and subsequent experiences that guide learners from doing to reflecting to thinking and back to experiencing again. Not only can the ELT process provide students with a rich learning experience, it opens an avenue for the seasoned practitioner to achieve life-long skills refinement.

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# Modifying Instruction in the Deaf Interpreting Model

**Carla M. Mathers<sup>1</sup>**

*Hyattsville, Maryland, USA*

## **Abstract**

While there is much current discussion of the use of deaf interpreters, in practice, deaf interpreters in the United States are generally used for a small segment of the population and typically confined to legal settings. The use of a deaf interpreter paired with an interpreter who can hear, in an ancillary or supporting role, is a reasonable accommodation in a variety of settings, for a variety of deaf individuals, and with a variety of interpreters who can hear. Interpreter education programs need to develop or revise their curricula to incorporate the discrete tasks as performed by deaf interpreters. Research-based curricula need to address how to instruct deaf interpreters in the mechanics of interpreting and instruct non-deaf interpreters in how to acknowledge the contributions of, and negotiate for, deaf interpreters. The statutory scheme in the United States provides a model that can be incorporated into education programs to effectively advocate for including deaf interpreters as an integral part of the interpreting team accommodation.

**Keywords:** deaf interpreters; court interpreting; reasonable accommodation; statutory standards; common law standards

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [Carla.Mathers@gmail.com](mailto:Carla.Mathers@gmail.com).

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# Modifying Instruction in the Deaf Interpreting Model

## 1. Statement of the problem

While the use of deaf interpreters has received much lip service in the short history of the signed language interpreting profession, deaf interpreters are generally under-utilized and reserved for a small segment of the population who present unique linguistic qualities that interpreters who can hear struggle to understand. The proposition outlined here recommends using deaf interpreters in a relay capacity between deaf consumers and hearing signed language interpreters in a wider range of settings, tailoring certain areas of interpreter preparation curriculum to the tasks performed by deaf interpreters and engendering support for hiring deaf interpreters from pre-existing legal interpreting statutes as enacted in the United States.

Deaf interpreters provide a reasonable resolution to both the declared shortage of interpreters caused, at least in the United States, by the drain of talent to the video-interpreting industry and to the documented lack of skill demonstrated by many interpreters who can hear (*Wahid v. Long Island R. Co.*, 2007; United States Department of Labor, 2009; Taylor, 1993). A deaf interpreter paired with an interpreter who can hear is a reasonable accommodation in any setting in which a signed language interpreter is required. Typically, when a fully qualified interpreter cannot be located for an assignment, hiring authorities resort to *any* available interpreter, whether or not they have the skills to do the assignment. Deaf interpreters supply an important ingredient to the interpreting team. They can provide the linguistic skills in sign language that the interpreter who can hear may not yet possess. As a result, a deaf interpreter coupled with an interpreter who can hear serving in an ancillary or supporting role is an accommodation that can be considered in a wide range of interpreting assignments, such as educational, medical, performing arts, legal and business settings (Keller, 2008; Forestal, 2005; *People v. Vandiver*, 1984).

### 1.1. Preparation programs need more research-based curriculum

Obviously, the proposition that deaf interpreters should be used in a wider array of interpreting assignments faces an immediate barrier to implementation because most interpreter education programs are ill-equipped to admit deaf students. Curricula cannot be adapted to teach deaf interpreters until those essential tasks have been identified and are supported by a solid foundation in research. Cokely has suggested that “there is much about the work of our Deaf colleagues that we do not yet understand and that they may not be able to fully articulate” and without this understanding it may not be possible “to assess and certify competence in the absence of such fundamental research” (2005, p. 20). Deaf scholars, likewise, have called for a principled approach to research and curriculum development, focusing on the interpreting process as used by deaf interpreters (Forestal, 2005).

There is some support in the literature for delineating certain knowledge and skill areas and instructing deaf interpreters separately from their peers who can hear (Boudreault, 2005; Cokely, 2005; Forestal, 2005). Boudreault suggests that in certain courses deaf and non-deaf interpreting students could be integrated, such as “American Sign Language (ASL) linguistics, theory of interpreting, deaf culture, whereas other courses would need to be offered separately, such as those developing International Sign skills, alternative communication for individuals who are semilingual or without language, Deaf-blind interpreting, [and] mirroring ....” (Boudreault,

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2005, p.351). Further, it has been suggested that because deaf interpreters in the interpreting unit are at the same time both consumers and practitioners of interpreting during the assignment because they receive an interpreted message as their source language from their teammate who can hear in a relay-type process; a separate discussion regarding this issue may be merited (Keller, 2008).

Both Keller (2008) and Forestal's (2005) work suggests that this frame of *consumer* of interpreting services, generally, and as part of the interpreting unit, needs to be explored more fully to understand the deaf interpreting process. Most interpreters would agree that when interpreting for a deaf consumer, it is the consumer who should be in control of the communicative event and should lead the interaction. The concept of "deaf interpreter as *consumer*" supports the proposition that the deaf interpreter functions as the lead interpreter in the deaf-hearing team. Some case law in the United States even suggests that interpreters who can hear serve in a supportive function to the deaf interpreter, who functions as the court's interpreter (*People v. Vandiver*, 1985). Interpreters are accustomed to subordinating their person to the desires of the consumers of interpreting services. In the Deaf Interpreting Model proposed in this paper, both the ultimate consumer and the deaf interpreter are recipients of interpreting services in the interaction. Logically, then, the deaf consumer should be in charge of the communicative event, and the deaf interpreter, as consumer and practitioner, should lead the interpreting unit.

In response to calls for a solid empirical foundation, interpreter educators have begun to implement coursework tailored to the unique skills and attributes that deaf interpreters bring to the interpreting assignment and to report on these focused activities (Keller, 2008). A number of important recommendations for modifying course structure and content specifically for deaf interpreting students include adapting Dean and Pollard's Demand-Control Schema (DC-S; 2001)<sup>2</sup> to address issues raised when a deaf interpreter is working: providing supervision for working deaf interpreters, creating case-conferencing techniques for pre- and post-assignment analysis, using DC-S to address the specific linguistic demands prompting specific controls when working with deaf interpreters who may present unique linguistic characteristics, structuring opportunities for observation, and implementing on-site practicum and mentorship opportunities (Keller).

Likewise, Forestal's (2005) qualitative research presented a number of knowledge and skill areas to be addressed in the core curriculum for deaf interpreters, including: native language skills; linguistic and cultural knowledge of ASL and English; sensitivity to and understanding of other cultures; interpretation skills, including an emphasis on the consecutive nature of the work; interpersonal skills; attitudinally-appropriate skills; cultural mediation skills; expansion skills; gestural skills; the ability to incorporate props and environment into the interpreting process; respect for the interpreting field; and interpreting in general. Finally, Boudreault (2005) suggested a series of competency areas for which instruction should be incorporated into the curriculum for training deaf interpreters, including courses focusing on interpreting in International Sign, for deaf-blind individuals, and for individuals without formal language, as well as courses on the role and tasks of the deaf interpreter, including ethical and protocol modifications that may need to be made when providing interpreting through a deaf-hearing team. These knowledge and skill areas apply to teaching deaf interpreters in interpreter preparation programs; however, deaf interpreters have traditionally been used in the legal settings. While the suggestion here is that deaf interpreters can be used in any setting, particularly to increase the availability of interpreting services where qualified interpreters who can hear are unavailable, it is fruitful to look at the challenges posed to deaf and hearing interpreters in the legal setting.

### *1.2. Deaf interpreters increase the availability of high quality interpreting services*

Evidence suggests that many ASL interpreters who can hear are not fully bilingual, which impedes their ability to interpret accurately (Taylor, 1993). Evidence also suggests that deaf interpreters can be more effective than non-

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<sup>2</sup> Demand Control Schema (DC-S) has been adapted for use in the interpreting profession in the United States by Robyn Dean and Robert Pollard of the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. The DC-S framework analyzes the challenges (demands) of an interpreted assignment and the interpreter's responses (controls) to those challenges. The demands can derive from environment sources, from interpersonal sources, from intrapersonal sources or from paralinguistic sources. The responses are categorized on a scale of more liberal to more conservative options. The options chosen by the interpreter also can cause additional issues to arise that the interpreter may then need to address.

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deaf interpreters, which has been discussed in legal cases where deaf litigants were able to ask intelligent questions and participate in the defense of a case with a deaf interpreter and were unable to do so without a deaf interpreter (*People v. Vandiver*, 1984). Evidence suggests that interpreters, at least in the United States, do not actively seek to specialize in legal interpreting. In a national survey of 4,000 interpreters, only 23% indicated that they worked at all in legal settings (Mathers, 2009). Of those 23% only 5% specialized in legal settings. However, of the 23% who did some legal work, nearly half of them worked with deaf interpreters 75% of the time. Although the numbers are low, it is interesting that nearly half of those who work in legal settings see the value in working with deaf interpreters and do so three-quarters of the time. Hence, the dearth of interpreters working in legal settings is an area that can be remedied, in part, by the implementation of a model of consistently staffing legal assignments with qualified deaf-hearing interpreting teams.

### 1.2.1 Some competency requirements for legal interpreters

In the legal system, the competencies required for effective spoken language interpreting have been well described. Those competencies include “high-level proficiencies in the source and target languages and cultures, including knowledge of geographic variation, an understanding of the legal process and related terminology, the ability to manipulate the various discourse styles used in the courtroom, along with interpreting skills and adherence to standards of ethics and professional conduct [which are] essential in protecting a non-English speaker’s right to due process” (de Jongh, 2008, p.21). In the legal system, it is also well recognized that the English used is specialized and difficult for the untrained to understand. Legal English presents difficult barriers for interpreters, both deaf and non-deaf, to surmount in providing quality legal interpreting services.

The legal system uses the language of the majority—whether written or oral—to conduct business. Authors have suggested that those who lack a strong and studied basis in legal English will struggle (Ainsworth, 2008). Interpreters with little exposure to court interpreting and the deaf population can be considered legally naïve speakers who are unfamiliar with the scripts necessary to obtain certain objectives in the legal system (Ainsworth, cited in Mathers, 2009, p. 2). For one to become comfortable with the majority language, as used in the legal system, takes years of intensive study. Once fluent in the spoken language used in court and legal settings, the interpreter is only marginally prepared to actually interpret. As has been discussed, many interpreters are not fluent in sign language, and are not likely to be able to produce sign language in a manner that would be semantically and pragmatically equivalent to the language as used in legal settings. Deaf interpreters can remedy this problem.

### 1.2.2 A proposed division of duties

Legal interpreting blends a number of high-level skills that apply equally to deaf and hearing interpreters. The problem is that becoming proficient in each area requires years of intensive work. When a deaf-hearing interpreting team is used, each interpreter may not be at the same developmental level in the various competency areas. The deaf interpreter may have more skill in language and cultural knowledge, whereas the non-deaf interpreter may have a more thorough understanding of the language of the court and its culture, politics and protocol. For some areas, such as knowledge and understanding of the standards of professional conduct and court interpreter ethics, it is reasonable to expect that both interpreters have the same level of proficiency prior to interpreting in a legal setting. For other areas, however, the various tasks required of the “complete” legal interpreter can be apportioned to the interpreter in the best position to be able to master the task in the most efficient manner. During the interpreting process, the non-deaf interpreter can attune to the spoken language, their primary language, while the deaf interpreter can focus on where their skills lie—in performing the actual and paramount interpretation to and from the deaf participant. In this way, deaf individuals can be ensured they are provided all the process that is due through the provision of a two-person interpreting team, with each individual having specialized skills. Ideally, the two interpreters would be equally fluent in all skill areas; however, as a practical matter, this division of duties provides a mechanism to permit the services to be delivered in the interim. Obviously, this suggestion has application outside of the legal setting to any setting in which there is a need for a more fluent interpreting team. It may also prove to be true that even when both interpreters are fully trained and experienced, this division of duties remains as a guide to each part of the team’s work.

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### **1.2.3 A look at the population**

Abundant evidence from the fields of social science and law suggests that a large number of deaf individuals can benefit from the use of a deaf-hearing interpreting team accommodation (Mathers, 2009). The research is not limited by the setting; in other words, deaf individuals may benefit from the deaf-hearing interpreting team approach in any setting in which they interact with individuals who can hear. The National Association of the Deaf (NAD), in an effort funded by the United States government, has issued a white paper (the NAD-RSA Report), describing the characteristics of a significant group of deaf people who have difficulty functioning in the mainstream. The NAD-RSA Report's conclusions are supported by the results of a survey conducted by the Deaf Interpreters Work Team of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)<sup>3</sup>, setting forth characteristics of individuals who could benefit from the use of a deaf-hearing interpreting team. The conclusions set forth by the NAD and the NCIEC are reflected in recommendations made by the Language Services Section of the New Jersey court administrator's office in its series of guidelines (Language Services Section [LSS], 2004) advising the judiciary on the mechanics of working with deaf interpreters (Mathers, 2009). These three sources support the notion that a broader group of deaf people could benefit from the provision of a deaf interpreter than has traditionally been thought to be the case.

In addition to the presence of secondary cognitive disabilities that impair language skills, the reports suggest that characteristics such as being foreign born, lack of family support, substance abuse, discrimination, inappropriate education, residence in a rural or low-income urban area, limited socialization, or a bilingual home environment (without signing) are characteristics that indicate the need for a deaf interpreting team. This significantly expands the pool of individuals for whom a deaf-hearing interpreting team would be an appropriate accommodation. The expanded group consists not only of those with unique linguistic needs, but also those presenting complex social and experiential combinations, regional or dialectical variations, and weak majority language skills. Further, these reports were not limited to legal settings,<sup>4</sup> rather, they suggest that a deaf interpreter would benefit individuals exhibiting these characteristics in any setting in which they interact with majority group members.

Nevertheless, the legal setting is the venue in which the legal justification for providing deaf interpreters is strongest. It is the legal system in which deaf interpreters are retained most often and provides the most viable job market for deaf interpreters who graduate from preparation programs. It is worth taking a look, then, at the statutory system in place in the United States for arguing that this wider population should be provided with a deaf-hearing interpreting team accommodation in legal settings.

## **2. The United States' statutory and common law provides a model**

In the United States, individual states have recognized the need for deaf interpreters and have drafted statutes that include standards for determining when a deaf interpreter is indicated; individual courts have interpreted the statutory provisions on the use of a deaf-hearing interpreting team to provide guidance regarding the mechanics of using deaf interpreters. This commentary next examines the structure of the statutory provisions justifying deaf interpreters and concludes with recommendations for interpreter education programs to modify their approaches to provide more than cursory reference to the fact that deaf people can have a viable career as an interpreter..

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.asl.neu.edu/riecc/projects\\_activities/national\\_projects/deaf\\_interpreting/documents/DI\\_Presentation RID07.pdf](http://www.asl.neu.edu/riecc/projects_activities/national_projects/deaf_interpreting/documents/DI_Presentation RID07.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> The New Jersey Guidelines are authored by a division of the New Jersey judiciary and designed as a tool to be used by courts in working with deaf interpreters. The other two documents are not targeted solely to the legal system.

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### 2.1. Statutory schemes provide support for hiring deaf interpreters

In the United States, deaf interpreters have been retained primarily in legal settings and, to a lesser extent, in medical and mental health settings. An in-depth analysis of the United States' individual state laws, federal law, case law, court rules and evidentiary rules demonstrates compelling justification for the provision of deaf interpreters in legal settings. It also presents a guideline for interpreter educators in instructing students on the protocols to use when a deaf interpreter is indicated.

Federal and state legal interpreting statutes and cases interpreting those statutes can be divided structurally into the following classifications (defined below): (a) traditional legal interpreting statutes, (b) deferral statutes, (c) credential-based statutes, (d) licensing statutes and (e) hybrid licensing statutes. Each type can be used to support the argument that deaf interpreters are reasonable and viable accommodations, whether explicitly or implicitly. The statutes commonly include components such as (a) a listing of the settings and functions in which qualified interpreters are required, (b) a definition of the term *qualified* in respect to interpreting in legal settings, (c) a requirement that interpreters testify to explain their credentials, (d) a requirement that the interpreter be placed under oath to interpret accurately, and (e) a requirement that the court interview the deaf participant to determine, on the record, that the interpretation is satisfactory.

Some newer statutes require that qualified interpreters register with the state in order to practice in any setting, including legal settings. These licensing statutes tend to expressly include the Registered Interpreter for the Deaf's (RID) Certificate of Interpreting for Deaf Interpreters (CDI) as the credential for interpreters. *Traditional* legal interpreting statutes tend to be older, and when they include credential-based terms, they use language such as "intermediary interpreter," reflecting the language of the time the statute was written. Either in the section defining a qualified interpreter, or in a separate section defining a qualified deaf interpreter, traditional legal interpreting statutes typically provide a standard that tells the court when a deaf interpreter should be retained. *Deferral* statutes refer the decision regarding a qualified interpreter to an executive or administrative agency with specialization in deaf issues. A *credential-based* legal interpreting statute, indicating that a certified or qualified deaf interpreter is required when indicated by the interpreter who can hear, presents the strongest legal authority for an interpreter to rely upon in requesting that a legal matter be staffed by a deaf-hearing interpreting team.

A review of the state and federal statutory bases for retaining deaf interpreters in legal settings shows that there are six common standards or tests that, if met by the facts of a case, indicate that a deaf interpreter should be retained (Mathers, 2009). Those standards indicate that a deaf interpreter should be assigned to a case (a) when the deaf interpreter will be able to assist, improve or enhance the interpretation; (b) when the working interpreter is unable to produce a satisfactory interpretation; (c) when the working interpreter is unable to abide by the oath to interpret in an understandable language; (d) when a deaf interpreter by intimate association is able to communicate with the deaf participant; (e) when the deaf participant asks for a deaf interpreter; and (f) due to communication difficulties labeled "prelingual" deafness by testifying experts. The standards should be used to demonstrate the language to interpreting students, both deaf and non-deaf, to incorporate when advocating for the use of a deaf interpreter.

In addition to listing the standards, the statutes generally provide for the order of events which should be undertaken when the need for a deaf interpreter arises. There are three stages that need to be undertaken. First, the interpreter undertakes a self-assessment to determine if the interpretation is unsatisfactory and if a deaf interpreter would be able to assist, improve or enhance the interpretation. Next, the court must engage the deaf participant, interpreter, and attorneys in a discussion of whether the interpreter's assessment is correct. Finally, the court must place its ruling and the factual bases for the determination on the record, which preserves the issue for appeal should an attorney object to the court's decision.

The cases interpreting the statutes address the interpreter's obligation to undertake an analysis of the need for a deaf interpreter. The cases inform interpreters that as soon as practicable, the court must be made aware of any language difficulties. Interpreters are required to undertake the analysis and make a clear record of their professional guidance on the issue of staffing. As noted by the NCIEC brief regarding deaf interpreters, "while it may be unrealistic to expect Deaf litigants to know the scripts necessary to trigger the duty to provide a Deaf interpreter, it is entirely reasonable to expect court interpreters to know the standards existing in the states in which they practice" (Mathers, 2009, p. 87).

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When deaf interpreters are used, appeals should be anticipated. There are two common legal challenges to the use of deaf interpreters that can be differentiated between: challenges raised by defendants who can hear to the use of a deaf interpreter for deaf witnesses and challenges raised by deaf defendants to the use of a deaf interpreter either for themselves or for a deaf witness. While challenges to the use of deaf interpreters in court generally fail, the cases present a road map for interpreter educators to incorporate when instructing their students on the use of deaf interpreters in court. For example, a common theme in the challenges to deaf interpreters made by deaf defendants focuses on the deaf-hearing interpreting team being available for only part of the proceeding. As a result, interpreters must take care to both inform the court of the need at the earliest possible moment and ensure that a deaf interpreter is available for the duration of the proceedings. These suggestions have already received a stamp of approval by being published in court opinions and offer practical recommendations for the non-deaf interpreter working with a deaf interpreter in a legal setting.

Challenges to the use of deaf interpreters are also made on grounds of the private negotiations that, at times, occur between the deaf interpreter and the deaf witness or between the interpreting team members for clarification or negotiation of meaning. Termed “collective interpreting,” this process tries the patience of the court (Mathers, 2009). While collaborative interpreting can be successful at times, it must be undertaken carefully, conscientiously and always with the court’s permission and cognizance.

Finally, there is research and case law tying the field of deaf interpreting to the field of spoken language interpreting. The commonalities remind us that the issue of linguistic intermediaries is becoming increasingly more common with the globalization of the economy. For example, in a recent California case the defendant spoke a variant of Mixe, which is spoken by only a few people in the Southern Mexican state Oaxaca (Mathers, 2009). After three months and two failed attempts using interpreters who spoke different variants of Mixe, the court finally located a Mixe-Spanish interpreter who was teleconferenced in to a preliminary hearing in California where a Spanish-English court interpreter provided relay interpreting services to the court. As has been noted, “knowing the area one comes from in a region where Spanish is the dominant spoken language will not guarantee that a Spanish speaking interpreter will be able to effectively interpret for the litigant. Just like knowing that one is Deaf and uses sign language will not guarantee that a single interpreter who can hear will be an effective accommodation” (pp.100\_101). Given that the legal system has far more experience with spoken language interpreting, analogies like these are useful in discussing the need for a deaf interpreter with the court.

### **3. Implications for interpreter education**

The concurring opinion in *State v. Linton* rightly concluded that “a need for intermediary interpretation is not common, but when it exists, it is a necessity, not an option” (*Linton v State*, Johnson, J. concurring p. 2, 2009). This commentary has suggested that the need for deaf interpreters is more common than previously thought due to several factors, including an expanded population of deaf individuals and the inadequate number of highly skilled legal interpreters. To remedy this, interpreter education programs must modify their curricula on a number of levels to ensure that deaf interpreters are trained in the mechanics of interpreting; that interpreters who can hear are taught how to recognize, advocate and negotiate for deaf interpreters; and that the community of stakeholders is prepared for and welcomes deaf interpreters as a viable communication option.

Hence, providing information to interpreting students regarding how the legal system already works with deaf interpreters is a valuable part of the interpreter preparation curriculum. Curricula should include instruction on the legal interpretation of statutes and of the cases interpreting those statutes. Instruction should include a discussion of how the language of the statutes and guidelines can be used to negotiate for retaining deaf interpreters. The language and terminology grounded in legal precedent for working with deaf interpreters is an important knowledge area in which both deaf and hearing interpreters should demonstrate competence.

In negotiations for hiring deaf interpreters, students should demonstrate the ability to incorporate the language that courts and attorneys already know and use. The rhetoric of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a good example from United States law. The U.S. legal system is accustomed to the language of accommodations. Describing deaf interpreters as a *reasonable accommodation* fits into a pre-existing mental framework understood

## The Deaf Interpreting Model

by many courts and attorneys. In other countries, interpreter educators can review their legislative acts for language to use in support of including deaf interpreters as well.

Language borrowed from cases adjudicated with deaf litigants is also helpful in discussing specific ways that the deaf person communicates, which can indicate the need for a deaf interpreter. For example, cases have described the characteristics of deaf litigants for whom deaf interpreters may be a reasonable accommodation with terms such as a “limited fund of knowledge” or difficulty “sequencing events … presenting in a disjointed style” (*Stanley v. Lazaroff*, 2003, p. 416) to describe deaf litigants presenting communication issues.<sup>5</sup> The same case law suggests that the benefit of using deaf interpreters is to “enable [the defendant] to understand the proceedings, consult with counsel and to assist in [the] defense” (p. 417) and should be included in instructions to give interpreters proven methods of talking about the benefits with courts and other hiring parties. Likewise, the characteristics of deaf people who could benefit from a deaf interpreter, as described in the social science research, should be incorporated into the curricula for interpreters to be able to describe the reasons why deaf interpreters should be retained. In preparing interpreters to justify a deaf interpreter, these constructs are useful.

In the United States, the legal system has long recognized the validity and necessity of working with deaf interpreters. Many legal interpreting statutes include provisions defining the qualifications of deaf interpreters and setting forth the standard for courts to determine when a deaf interpreter should be retained. The U.S. legal system then presents a model which can be replicated by other countries and in other settings to increase the use and number of trained, highly qualified deaf practitioners to meet the needs of the deaf community and those with whom they interact. In addition, the statutory language is broad enough to justify the use of deaf interpreters in a wider array of settings than traditionally has been thought.

This commentary has presented a discussion regarding the current state of legal interpreting in the United States as it relates to deaf interpreters. It has suggested a number of areas which can be included in a curriculum geared towards full inclusion of deaf students as interpreting students. The following summarizes items that should be incorporated into the curricula.

- Specific practicum and supervision opportunities for deaf interpreters should be devised, potentially on the model presented by Keller (2008) using Demand-Control Schema.
- Legal interpreting coursework should be implemented that is geared to the various competencies brought to an assignment by the deaf interpreter, such as the frame of consumer and the concept of deaf interpreter as lead and non-deaf interpreter as adjunct.
- Coursework on those task areas identified as unique to deaf interpreters should be developed and conducted apart from instruction with non-deaf interpreters.
- Instruction should be provided regarding the types of statutes, standards for retaining deaf interpreters, order of events, timing of the request for a deaf interpreter, and the implications for appeal.
- The limitations and benefits of collaborative interpreting should be included and students should be given opportunities to use the collaborative interpreting process.
- Interpreting students should be provided with concrete examples of spoken language interpreter cases using relay interpreting, which they can use in discussions with those involved in the legal system.
- Interpreters should know those legal proceedings that should only be staffed with deaf interpreters, such as competency hearings.

In summary, trained and qualified deaf interpreters compensate not only for the skills of non-deaf interpreters but also for the shortage of qualified legal non-deaf interpreters. When the interpreting team consists of a deaf interpreter paired with a hearing interpreter, the deaf interpreter’s generally superior linguistic skills raise the quality of the interpretation to a level consistent with the oath to interpret accurately in legal settings. A team comprised of a lead deaf interpreter and an adjunct non-deaf interpreter increases the number of qualified

<sup>5</sup> Not all language describing deaf individuals and used in law cases should be incorporated by educators as a standard. Depending on who is advising the court and the age of the opinion, some terminology is outdated and offensive. Interpreter educators are aware of these issues and will advise accordingly.

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interpreter teams available to the legal system and to the community at large. While the suggestion is that deaf students have not been fully integrated into interpreter preparation programs, there is evidence that if curriculum and practicum opportunities materialize, there is a viable career path available to deaf interpreters, particularly in countries with statutory enactments defining a qualified deaf interpreter and setting forth a standard for when a deaf interpreter should be retained.

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# **Accessibility to Theater for Deaf and Deaf-Blind People: Legal, Language and Artistic Considerations**

**Brian R. Kilpatrick<sup>1</sup>**

*Lone Star College System, North Harris, United States*

**Jean Andrews<sup>2</sup>**

*Lamar University, United States*

## **Abstract**

Without accessibility, theater can be meaningless to the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind consumers. As part of a larger study conducted by B. Kilpatrick (2007), the authors interviewed 38 participants who have been professionally involved in deaf children's theater as to their opinions related to theater accessibility options. Their responses bring forward for discussion options ranging from English text-based accessibility, the closest to the English language, to shadow interpreting, which provides accessibility closest to the play being delivered in full in American Sign Language. Using historical research methods, semi-structured and structured interviews, open-ended questions, archival materials, and published documents on theater interpreting, the authors provide a descriptive commentary about accessibility options based on legal, language and artistic considerations. Following these descriptions, the authors recommend that interpreter training programs include theater interpretation techniques.

Keywords: theatrical interpreting; script translation; interpreter training; interpreter certification; deaf studies; accessibility; theater; sign language; deaf theater; deaf-blind.

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: Brian.R.Kilpatrick@lonestar.edu; brkilp7@aol.com

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# **Accessibility to Theater for Deaf and Deaf-Blind People: Legal, Language and Artistic Considerations**

## **1. Introduction**

Many deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind people do not attend live theater performances because they do not find them accessible. We use the term *deaf audiences* to signify these diverse groups: culturally deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind audiences. Even with sign language or English accessibility, oftentimes the entire artistic meaning of the dramatic performance is not conveyed. In this paper, the authors utilize 38 interviews conducted by Kilpatrick (2007). All participants were professionally involved in deaf children's theater in the United States. They commented on the theater accessibility issue for diverse deaf audiences. We have also integrated selected published materials on theater interpreting into our commentary. We have organized our paper around the legal, language and artistic considerations for providing full theater accessibility to deaf audiences. Although discussion focuses on theater interpreting with American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters, the issues are pertinent to signed language interpreters worldwide.

## **2. Legal considerations**

In the United States (US), every deaf citizen has the right to accessible theater through the protection of five laws. The following is a review of these laws that are pertinent to our paper.

*Public Law 85-905*, enacted in 1958, is the act providing for a loan service of films that have been captioned for the deaf. Captioned Films for the Deaf opened its doors to the public one year later.

*Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*, enacted in 1973, prohibits discrimination against, and mandates accessibility for, disabled people in employment, education, and in other health, welfare, or social-service programs. The 1978 amendments to this act clarify that for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons accessibility means the removal of communication barriers.

*The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* of 1990 mandates equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. Title III of the ADA applies to public accommodations for private entities that are open to the public. These private entities included theaters and cinemas. All theaters are required to provide *effective communication* to patrons who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind.

*The Television Decoder Circuitry Act*, enacted in 1990, provides government funding for the captioning of public-service announcements. Increasing the audience that was served has led to market expansion, thus increasing the incentive to provide captioning. As a result, captioning became more readily available.

## Accessibility to theater

The Telecommunications Act of 1996, directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to implement rules mandating captioning. Whereas captioning can be used by all people, the deaf and hard-of-hearing community is its primary beneficiary.

These laws provide the legal mandates and protections for providing accessible theater. We next discuss language and artistic considerations.

### 3. Language considerations

As part of a larger study conducted by Kilpatrick (2007), 38 participants who had been professionally involved in deaf children's theater were interviewed as to their opinions related to the various options for theater accessibility. Based on these interviews, which were gathered using historical research methods, semi-structured and structured interviews, open-ended questions, archival materials and published documents, the authors provide a descriptive commentary about theater accessibility.

First, we considered language issues. In theater interpreting for deaf audiences in the US, two languages are used: ASL, either through interpretation or through the deaf actors themselves, or English\_spoken (amplified), captioned (English print) or Braille (Grojean, 1998; Ingraham, 2008). Typically, the languages are separated, but they can occur simultaneously, as in the case of hearing actors using spoken English and deaf actors using ASL for shadowing interpretation, a unique artistic theatrical performance. How the languages fit into six accessibility options are described in the following figure.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 illustrates graphics for the accessibility options.

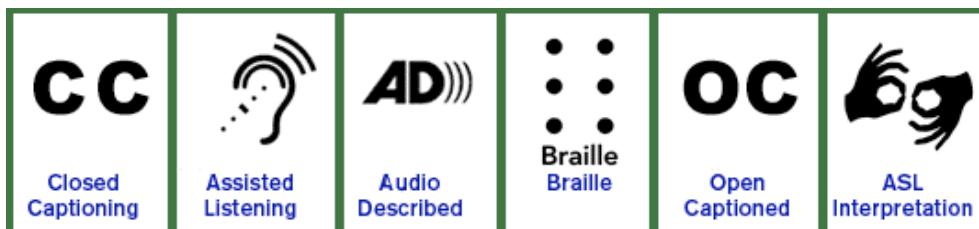


Figure 1. Access symbols and terminology (Cultural Access Consortium, 2006)

#### 3.1. Communication Access Real Time Translation (CART)

One form of English text-based interpreting is through CART, or Communication Access Real Time Translation. This involves a stenographer keying into a machine while listening to a performance. It is similar to court reporting systems.

<sup>3</sup> See Kilpatrick (2007) for a full description.



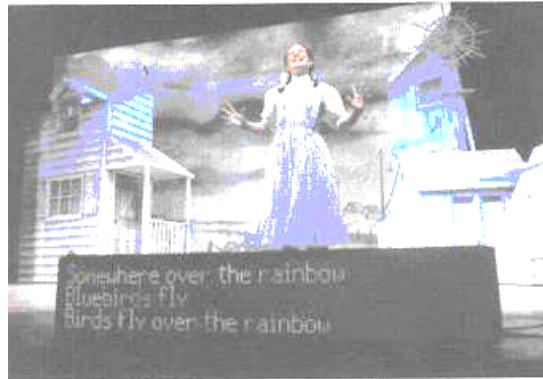
Figure 2. Speaker identification in CART open captioning (Hospital Audiences, 2007)

The CART transcription can be *unscripted*, in which case the English print appears on the screen with a slight delay after the actors have started speaking. Alternatively, it can be *scripted*, in which case the English print is formatted and metered in synchronization with the actors' dialogue (Hospital Audiences, 2007).

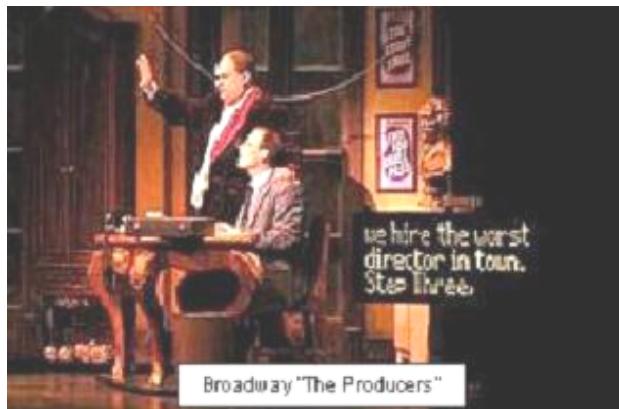
Our participants reported that with any text-based option, including CART, drawbacks will occur. While instrumental music can add to the excitement of theater, it can result in inaccuracies in the captioning process. Because of the resonating open space in a theater, the quality, precision, and exactitude of the language may suffer. Another barrier is that the audience itself can block the visibility of the CART display. In addition, voices overlap, making it difficult for the CART operator to provide a literal text. Another problem with captioning is that in order to read the screen, the individual has to constantly shift his/her eye gaze from the stage to the monitor. This creates a "ping pong" effect in that the viewer is forced to switch constantly from one focus to another (Hospital Audiences, 2007).

Another problem reported by our participants is that CART and other text-based options fail to relay emotion the way an actor can. For example, simply typing the words "with anger" does not convey the feeling of the message. The reason we go to the theater is to watch how an actor portrays a character and takes on the emotions of that character. We are not there to read about it on an English caption display. Thus, in some ways, captioning turns the theater experience into a reading experience. Its success depends upon the reading level of the audience. Nationwide, the average reading level of the majority of deaf high-school graduates is fourth grade (Traxler, 2000). Thus, captioning is not appropriate for illiterate or low-functioning deaf persons with low English reading abilities. English captioning also has other obstacles. For example, it is often difficult to understand which character has just given the line or dialogue. In addition, certain characters' emotional display can be very difficult or even impossible to grasp during the performance using an English print display. Furthermore, some hearing persons find open captioning annoying and distracting.

## Accessibility to theater



**Wizard of Oz**  
- Signed Performance in Theaters



*Figure 3. Open captioning scenes (Hospital Audiences, 2007)*

The *open captioning* option places the text on screen in a black reader box at all times. It is available to the entire audience. The advantage of open captioning is that it is relatively inexpensive and it does raise awareness to the public about hearing loss. It also allows the deaf audience to sit at any location in the theater.

*Closed captioning* superimposes English text captions over video. Closed captions are hidden (i.e., encoded) as numerical data within the video signal emitted by the broadcasting stations and sent to the receivers. This numerical data must then be decoded to be visible as captioning on the screen. Our participants reported that for hearing persons, closed captioning is often preferred because it is less distracting than open captioning. Some view this option as less limiting as it does not relegate deaf viewers to sitting only in designated spots to view the interpreter. Further empirical studies are needed to substantiate the preliminary observations made by the initial respondents to Kilpatrick's (2007) study.

### 3.2. Amplification systems

Some people with hearing loss may have the ability to hear more effectively when provided with sound amplification devices, such as hearing aids, FM systems and/or infrared systems. These individuals often refer to themselves as being "hard-of-hearing" or "hearing impaired" and many do not use ASL. Theaters typically

accommodate these users by providing FM or infrared amplification devices that help channel the sound from the theater's sound system directly into the patron's personal hearing aid (McDougall, 2004).

*FM systems* are portable and have a large coverage and transmission range. They function in the same way as radios, capturing radio waves characterized by certain wavelengths.



Figure 4. FM assistive device (Centrum Sound Systems, 2007)

*Infrared amplification systems* are also portable. They are based on infrared light transmission technology, and they offer certain advantages compared to FM systems. The infrared signal does not penetrate through walls, thus offering security for sensitive transmissions. This advantage is particularly valuable in courthouses but also in other multiplex facilities such as movie houses. All receivers can operate on one identical system and can be used in any one auditorium without interference or signal pickup from adjacent rooms.



Figure 5. Infrared hearing enhancement system by Phonic Ear (Centrum Sound Systems, 2007)



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## Accessibility to theater

Figure 6. Lightweight infrared earphone (The National Theater, 2007)

The authors found little information about how individuals who use assistive devices perceive the theatrical experience. Anecdotal evidence collected by the senior author, who has had more than 30 years experience with deaf theater, suggests that some deaf theater-goers complain the systems are not always functioning. However, as with any engineering problem, this issue can be solved if the theater makes sure to check the functionality of its equipment before each performance. More studies are needed to survey the use of these amplification devices for hard-of-hearing theater patrons, especially in light of the growing numbers of baby-boomers who are losing their hearing in their later years.

### 3.3. Theatrical arts interpreting

There are two types of signed-access performances for theatrical arts interpreting: sign-language performance and sign-interpreted performances, both of which affect theater appreciation for deaf audiences.

The first, *sign-language performances*, are those in which all the characters, whether played by deaf or hearing actors, use sign exclusively, without voice. Any voicing is performed offstage by a performance-art interpreter who voices for the signing that is occurring on the stage.

Some deaf people will support theater arts by attending interpreted “hearing” plays, even if they do not agree entirely with this idea. Written by hearing playwrights, these plays do not use deaf culture or ASL as themes and are simply English presentations that are interpreted into sign language. Many deaf people may not enjoy such a play as much as they would a deaf theater performance or just reading the script before/during the performance and watching the actors. This may detract from their enjoyment. They may continue to attend interpreted plays and may miss out on the experience of deaf theater created for and by deaf people.

The second signed-access performances are *signed-interpreted performances*. A relatively new art form, this involves more than simply translating words; it is creating a work of art. The goal is to re-interpret the director’s vision. In the process, it creates a different, more pictorial, staging of that vision. It implies a realization that while there are many ways interpreters can physically relate to the stage, they all require acting. It involves acting, but it uses a different language and style to communicate the story (Gebron, 2000).

Many theater producers are not aware that providing quality theatrical interpreting requires additional linguistic preparation and rehearsal time with the actors. For many interpreters who accept a theatrical interpreting assignment, usually as a last-minute request, the job is frantic because they lack the necessary preparation time. Moreover, community interpreters of a more general professional orientation are called on occasionally to interpret performances, as there is no specific theatrical interpreting specialization. Consequently, a theatrical performance can run the risk of being interpreted inaccurately and being aesthetically unpleasing, ultimately detracting from its artistic quality.

Our participants reiterated that one of the main issues in sign-language performances is the sign-language comprehension level of the audience. A minimal-language member of the audience may not comprehend some of the more advanced concepts presented in a performance. ASL is a complex natural language that has all the linguistic properties of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Valli & Lucas, 1995). Some deaf people acquire it late in life and others have minimal language skills (Newport, 1990). Even fluent users of ASL may have difficulty following a theater performance because actors may take artistic license in creating or translating a sign message and may use a different sign lexicon. Thus, it is an issue of ASL competency, as well as the medium and the translation process itself, that is critical for comprehension.

*Shadowing* is a style of theatrical interpreting that places the interpreter directly on stage, near the actors. When done well, this can be a linguistically rich and artistically enjoyable experience for the deaf community. But shadowing is costly and can be a complex process to execute. To maximize the deaf viewers’ visual sensations, the shadowed style of interpreting allows them to avoid the placed and zoned style of interpretation (McDougall, 2004).

## Kilpatrick and Andrews

Shadowing was first developed by Debra Brenner, a certified performance arts signed language interpreter and teacher of the deaf, as a technique in which the signing actors follow the blocking of the speaking actors to maintain as close a proximity to them as possible during the signed performance. They act as “twin” actors, in which both actors represent the same character (Morris, 1983). This eliminates the ping-pong effect. Often the interpreters have to become involved to the point where they must take on the same physical characteristics and enthusiasm as the actors. The interpreters actually echo or *shadow* the actors’ every line, movement, and even their emotions. Of all the accessibility options, shadowing requires the most effort from the entire cast. However, it also allows the most visually enjoyable experience for the deaf viewer (McDougall, 2004).

Shadowing interpreters must be skilled at characterization, movement, and all other skills belonging to actors. This makes them, in essence, “sign language actors or performers.” Shadowing is not just one person translating for an actor. It is creating a double image in which two different mediums convey the same message. Good shadowing interpreters don’t crowd the stage; they bring it to life (Jackson, 1986).



Figure 7. Shadow interpreting scenes (Kilpatrick, 2007)

From the perspective of deaf actors, theater teachers, and members of the deaf community, another critical issue is theater appreciation by the deaf community. Neither theater producers and interpreters nor the deaf community

## Accessibility to theater

itself has a clear perspective on theatrical education. The theater profession simply lacks knowledge of how to provide theatrical experiences where deaf people can participate, exchange ideas, and enrich themselves without feeling isolated, even looked down upon, as disabled people.

In general, a theatrical interpreter's job is to provide access. Training an interpreter to become a qualified theatrical interpreter includes a combination of translation and performance instruction (Gebron, 2000). Rico Peterson, an experienced performing arts interpreter, states that theatrical interpreting involves performing as well as interpreting (cited in Timm, 2001).

### 3.4. Interpreters' placement

Interpreter placement is important for one obvious reason: the interpreter must be visible to the deaf audience. Commonly, theatrical interpreting uses either the zoned style on stage or the platform stage, placing the interpreter outside the acting space (see *Figure 10*).

With *platform placement*, theater interpreters hold one stationary position during the performance, often to the side of the stage or below the apron. One of the drawbacks of this form is the previously mentioned ping-pong effect. This leads the deaf audience to shift focus between the interpreters' signing and the action on stage rather than concentrating on the content of the play itself.

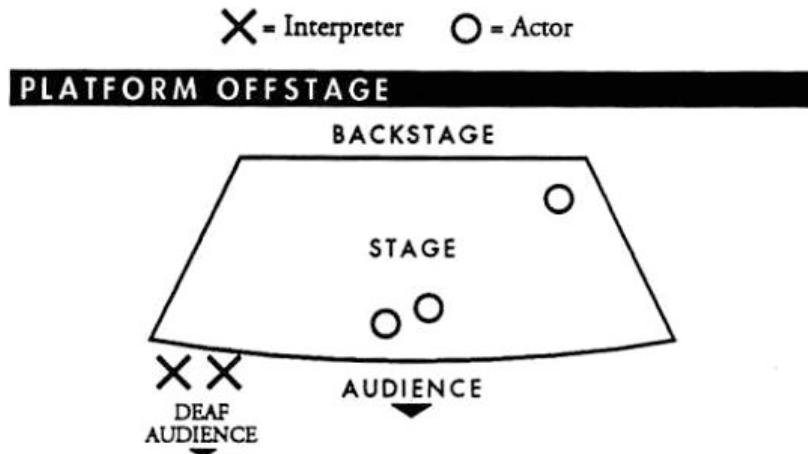


Figure 8. Platform interpreter placement (Gebron, 2000)

Brenda Schertz, a deaf professor of ASL and Deaf Studies at the University of Southern Maine, considers that a better interpreter placement is for the interpreter to stand partway up in the main aisle or on a raised platform above the stage (Inglis, 2003). In both situations, the interpreters are placed out of the actors' space. This placement allows the deaf audience to watch both the play and the interpretation at the same time.

## Kilpatrick and Andrews

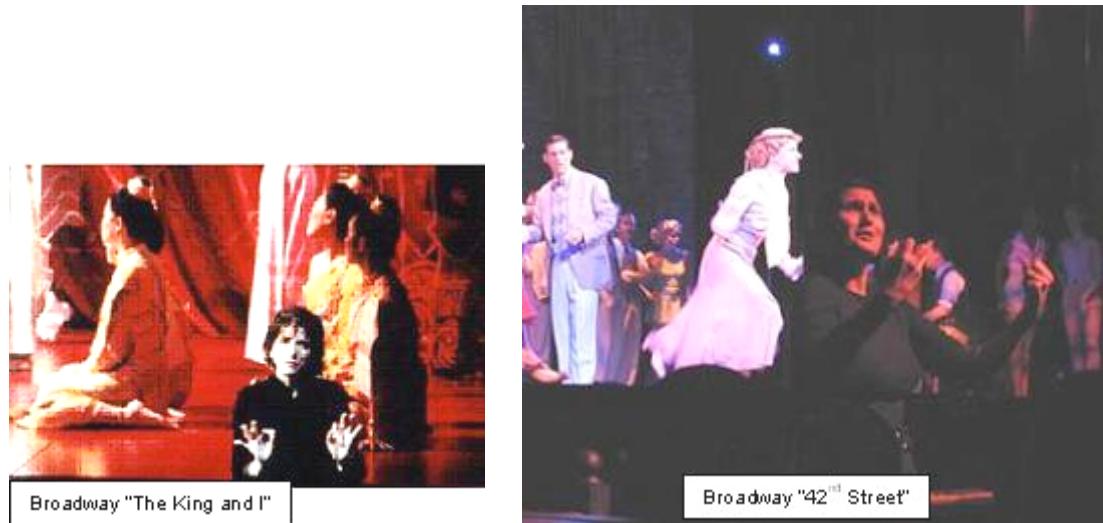


Figure 9. Platform interpreting scenes (McDougall, 2004)

*Sightline interpreting* is basically platform interpreting; the only difference is that interpreters are placed on the stage, or near the stage, to bring together the visual foci of the stage action and of the interpreters' rendition. Their position remains stationary throughout the performance. The best position for the deaf audience is four or five rows away from the stage, on the side of the auditorium closest to the position of the interpreters. Another sightline placement, used for amphitheaters in which the seating is raised from the level of the stage, is for the interpreters to stand on the stage or on a platform at the back of the stage. In this case, the best position for the deaf audience is in the back rows, well above the stage (Gebron, 2000).

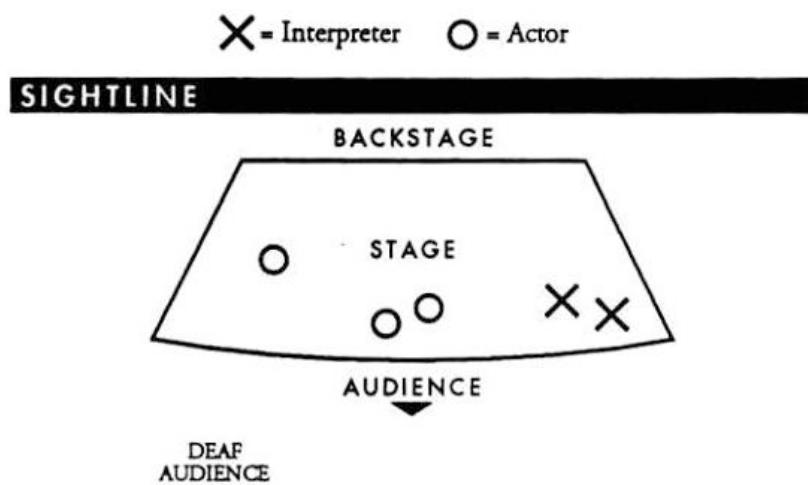


Figure 10. Sightline interpreter placement (Gebron, 2000)

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## Accessibility to theater

The *zoned style of interpreting* brings the interpreters' placement even closer to the stage focal point. The interpreters are assigned zones in which they can move, and they interpret for whichever character happens to approach their part of the stage. The interpreters are often placed in stage-left and stage-right areas (Gebron, 2000).

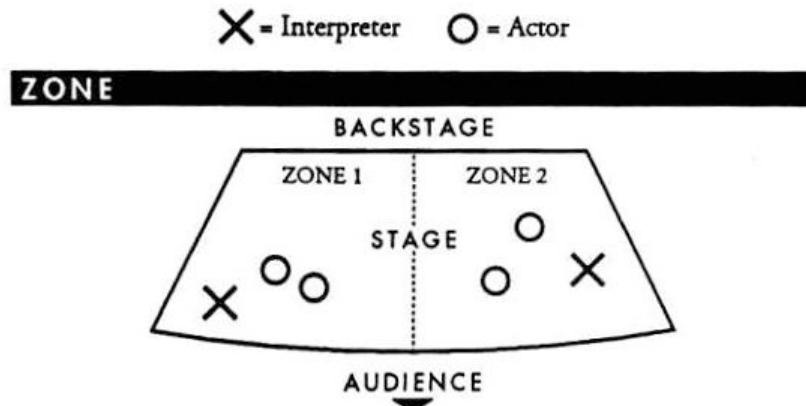


Figure 11. Zoned interpreter placement (Gebron, 2000)

Although this arrangement assures the best placement of the interpreters, in the deaf audience's direct sightline toward the action on stage, it loses accuracy in interpretation. The deaf audience has to mentally infer which character is given the line in the rendition of each interpreter, according to the position of the character on stage. Also, when there are more than two characters on stage, the two interpreters can alternate between characters and their interactions, which subjects the audience to a "ping-pong" effect (Gebron, 2000). In addition, the difference in the time span between the English spoken line and the ASL interpreted line usually implies a non-concordance of the interpretation with the movement of the actors on stage.



Figure 12. Zoned Interpreting Scene (McDougall, 2004)

### 3.5. Interpreting for people who are deaf-blind

The language backgrounds of people who are deaf-blind may vary considerably. Some deaf-blind persons are hard-of-hearing and partially sighted. Others live in total deafness and blindness. Some experience tunnel vision. Some have poor night vision only. Some are born only deaf or hard-of-hearing and experience a progressive loss of sight throughout their lives. A smaller minority are born deaf and blind. Some people with limited vision may be able to see ASL at a close range (Gebron, 2000; Ingraham, 2008).

A satisfying theatrical experience is available for deaf-blind people. However, they must be provided with specially trained interpreters, close-up seating, and an opportunity to experience sets, costumes, and props through touch prior to opening night (Gebron, 2000).

Interpreters for deaf-blind audience members are often deaf themselves and rely on ASL as their source language. They craft their tactile or close-vision<sup>4</sup> translation of the performance. The interpreters also assist the production department in determining the need for any arrangement of auxiliary lighting. Their job does not consist only of interpreting the performance but also preparing for the pre-show tour when audience members who are deaf-blind have the opportunity to walk around the stage and feel the props and costumes. It is important that

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<sup>4</sup> Tactile signing is a method of communication through which the interpreter uses ASL signs or fingerspelling on the hand or hands of the deaf-blind person. Close-vision interpreting can be used when the client still has some sight. The interpreter signs in a very close proximity to the client, uses smaller, more compact gestures and any other accommodations (clothing, lighting, etc.) to maximize the ability of the client to see the interpreter as clearly as possible (Dynamic Language, 2008).

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the interpreters obtain copies of the script approximately one month prior to the performance so that they can practice for the performance. Interpreters should be allowed to view as many rehearsals as possible (Gebron, 2000).

The Deaf-Blind Theater Access Project created guidelines for theater staff, production departments, box-office staff, stage managers, front-of-the-house managers, and marketing teams to follow in providing access to deaf-blind patrons (Deaf Equal Access Foundation, 2007). This project advises theaters to hire ASL consultants who can (a) assist with the coordination of the interpreters, (b) provide cultural information to the actors about the deaf and deaf-blind communities, (c) give linguistic feedback to the other interpreters during the rehearsals, and (d) act as liaison to the deaf-blind patrons, introducing them to the script and the name-signs used for the characters (Berk & Cogen, 1999).

Interpreters for a deaf-blind patron can sit in the aisles on folding chairs placed across from or next to the patron. Or, the two interpreters can sit on either side of the deaf-blind patron. The deaf-blind patron should be consulted on where s/he would like the interpreters to sit.

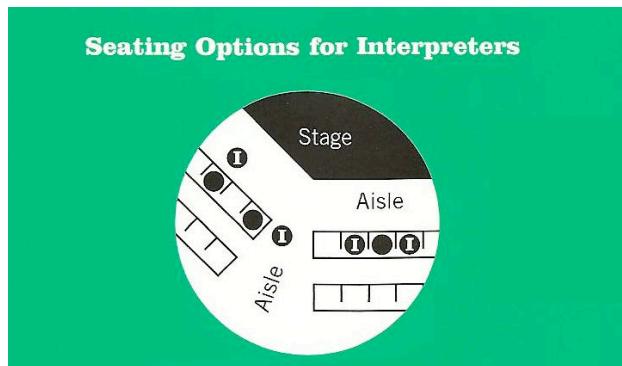


Figure 13. Seating options for interpreters for deaf-blind people (Berk & Cogen, 1999)

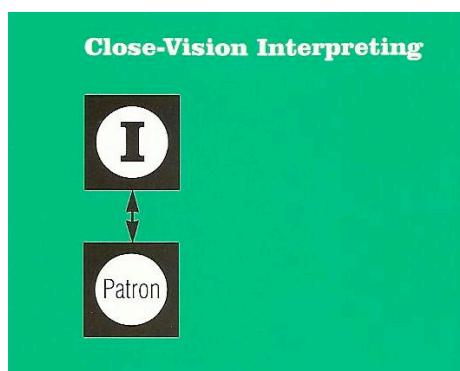


Figure 14. Interpreter placement for deaf-blind people with close-vision (Berk & Cogen, 1999)

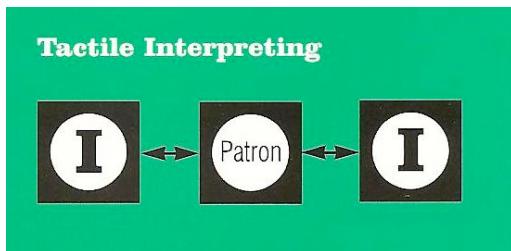


Figure 15. Interpreter placement for deaf-blind people using tactile signing (Berk & Cogen, 1999)

## 4. Artistic considerations

Accessibility, as discussed above, does not mean providing only some sort of written English script or simply providing interpreters. But when the latter is chosen, the interpretation can itself become a rendition of the work of art if ASL consultants are hired to bridge the two performances (i.e., the actors on stage and the interpreters) from both linguistic and cultural standpoints. Furthermore, through the rendition-interpretation, the vision of the work of art has to be preserved, and, as in any art field, the audience plays an important role in deciding how this vision will be communicated (Kilpatrick, 2007).

### 4.1. ASL Interpretation

ASL interpreted performances are designated performances during which ASL interpretation is offered for deaf and hard-of-hearing audience members. Seating for these patrons at each ASL interpreted performance is typically located in the orchestra, house left. Some theater companies provide their deaf patrons with the script of the performance. But even when knowing or having read the script of the play, deaf people find it difficult during the performance to follow simultaneously the actors' performance on stage and the interpreters' renditions.

Typically, interpreted plays are far from being the perfect way to accommodate the deaf audience, keeping in mind that most plays do not incorporate deaf cultural themes or ASL into the performance. They are a window into the hearing culture because they concentrate on the mainstream focal points, ranging from political views to simple humor, and they do not include the focal points of deaf culture. Deaf theater is based on situations unique to deaf people, expressing deaf values and norms or illustrating oppression of the deaf minority by the hearing majority. Deaf theater is generally performed in a realistic or naturalistic style, using ASL in a visually creative manner, sometimes without voice narration (Bangs, 1994).

### 4.2. Theater interpreting for children versus adults

Interpreting theater performances for children is fundamentally different than interpreting for adults. For one, the language level of the interpretation has to correspond with the language levels of the children in the audience. In addition, theatrical performances should have more dramatic action in order to keep the children focused and interested. Third, the story plots have to be explicit in order for children to be able to comprehend them. Young children may not be able to understand ironies or subtleties (Gebron, 2000; Kilpatrick, 2007).

If the audience is composed of children under the age of seven, their writing and reading skills are minimal. Therefore they may not have had an opportunity to read the story that they will be viewing in a theatrical setting. (Kilpatrick, 2007).

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## Accessibility to theater

For children ages eight through twelve, it is more likely that they will be viewing a classic story that has been adapted for the stage. In this case, there are usually plenty of materials available for the teachers and parents to share with the children before they attend the show (Gebron, 2000).

Children have a difficult time attending to the interpreter. They would prefer to watch the actors engaged in action on the stage. Many young deaf children do not have either the attention span or the proficiency in ASL to use the interpreter sufficiently to get all the information from the interpreted play (Kilpatrick, 2007).

In his dissertation, Kilpatrick interviewed directors, actors and staff from six deaf children's theaters. He found that deaf children prefer deaf theater to interpreted theater from an entertainment perspective, and that deaf theater, together with full ASL plays, better support the development of their first language. In turn, their first language constitutes a more solid foundation for the acquisition of their second language, English. Also, deaf theater provides social and psychological support for deaf children from a cultural perspective (Kilpatrick, 2007).

### *4.3. The role of the ASL consultant*

Creating a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural translation of an artistic performance requires the time, dedication, and talent of a team of interpreters, both deaf and hearing. They must have an understanding of the different languages and cultures and also a personal awareness of artistic expression. It is this combination of talent and skill that makes an interpreted theatrical production successful and meaningful to the targeted audience (Timm, 2001).

Adapting a play for ASL is a challenge beyond merely translation. This is especially the case for plays written in, or about, a historical time period. For example, concepts need to be adapted visually to the way objects looked during the period concerned. Bove, a nationally known deaf actress on stage and on TV has given the example of not using the current ASL sign for "time," as the reference is to a wristwatch, which is not relevant prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (cited in Cheak, 1997).

ASL consultants are an important part of the performance. They are able to analyze critically both the English and the ASL renditions of the artistic performance and, based on knowledge of the specific work of art, decide which translation would be most appropriate, while providing a similar cultural, character and performing arts choice (Gebron, 2000).

Whether it is a children's show, a musical, or a play by Shakespeare, a script needs to be translated into a signed form of communication. Most often, the theatrical translations lean towards Pidgin Signed English (PSE).<sup>5</sup>

ASL lends itself beautifully to any production, especially to scripts that include a lot of imagery and poetry. It takes more time to translate a script into ASL than into Signed English and the translation often benefits from the assistance of a sign-language consultant or coach (Gebron, 2000; Ingraham, 2008).

### *4.4. Deaf audience preference*

Considering interpreted, shadowed, and full ASL plays, according to interviews and anecdotal reports gathered from deaf people (Kilpatrick, 2007), most prefer plays performed fully in ASL (i.e., deaf theater), as they are a fully visual work of art, created by and for deaf people. More studies are needed to substantiate this claim.

Our participants commented that deaf actors in a theatrical production, either in an ASL play as independent performers, or in a shadowed performance as shadows of hearing actors, bring to the audience a more artistic and live theatrical experience. They are also representatives of deaf culture and are able to naturally and artistically portray the theme of the production in an appropriate linguistic manner, while adapting the underlying cultural

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<sup>5</sup> When two languages meet, occurs the contact phenomenon: lexical borrowing, interference, code switching, pidgins, creoles, and mixed systems (Valli, 1995). PSE (Pidgin Signed English) is the result of the contact phenomenon between ASL and English and can range from being more ASL based to being more English based depending on what the client is more comfortable using (Dynamic Language, 2008).

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## Kilpatrick and Andrews

concepts to the deaf perspective. In an ASL play, this adaptation is only necessary if the script of the production belongs to the hearing culture.

In the case of shadowed performances, this adaptation is critical to achieving the dynamic equivalence of the theatrical experience for the deaf audience. The deaf audience feels more immersed in the theatrical experience of a shadowed play than that of an interpreted play. The facial expressions and body language of the shadowing actors are the connection to the world of ideas conveyed in the play. But this artistic expression and visual imaginary world is brought from behind the hearing actors. Hence, the deaf audience has the feeling that the stage is crowded and that the hearing actors are a sort of visual noise that interferes in the process of connecting with the acting on stage.

Full ASL productions are the most natural way for the deaf audience to dive into the theatrical experience. In these performances, the deaf actors choose the linguistic level of the play that is best suited for their audience. In addition, deaf actors are proof of professional excellence, thus being considered role models by the deaf community. If the play is addressed to an adult audience, then the linguistic level will be adapted as a function of the characters and ideas contained in the play. In contrast, if the play is a children's play, then the linguistic level of the play will be brought to match the linguistic level of the young deaf audience. This is the main reason why deaf children prefer full ASL plays. Shadowed plays based on children's stories usually employ a higher linguistic level than that of the young deaf audience because, often times, for the translation of the script, being precise is more important than achieving dynamic equivalence. Therefore, the young deaf audience may miss the actual world of concepts conveyed by the play and only enjoy the movement and facial expressions that appear on stage.

### *4.5. Recommended additional training and the Performing Arts Interpreter Certification*

Scant evidence exists on deaf persons' preferences for theater interpretation. Our commentary only touches on the complexity of deaf access to the theater. It skims the surface of the real need for specialized performing arts training in the interpreting profession.

In 1979, there were fifteen interpreters attending the five-day training held at Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut, by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). The program was a joint effort between the National Theater of the Deaf and RID and was supported by a grant from the National Endowments for the Arts. The interpreters all had extensive training in translation to thoroughly understand the script and match the translation to the actors' interpretation. In addition, they participated in many rehearsals. They learned to include the interpretation in the whole theatrical experience by shifting the focus of the audience, as needed, from the stage to the interpreter and from the interpreter to the stage. At the end of the program, ten of the fifteen interpreters were granted the Performing Arts Specialist certification.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has forced the performing arts to open up more for deaf people, and this category includes concert halls. More interpreters are concentrating in this area, audiences are increasing, and training opportunities abound. There are only ten interpreters who have held the specialist certificate since 1980, as that certification process was offered only one time (Bailey, 1998). Although RID was queried about this certification, the authors could find little information on this certification process except that RID theater interpretation certification lasted only one year and was discontinued, most likely due to lack of funding.

Funding reductions nationwide for the theater arts is a reality. The total government funding has declined at the Federal level because of other social needs such as healthcare. Financial resources have been felt principally by mid-sized non-profit organizations so now the performing arts must utilize multiple strategies to deal with financial demands (McCarthy, Brooks, Lowell & Zakaras, 2001).

Universities can play a role in providing of training for deaf theater arts. Kilpatrick (2007) outlines how interpreter training programs can provide coursework or continuing education workshops on how to make of theater arts accessible to the Deaf and deaf-blind communities, especially for children and youth. A selection of topics and skills for such a course are not limited to but may contain the following (Kilpatrick, 2007): 1) translating English scripts for young deaf and hard of hearing audiences with different levels of English and ASL abilities; 2) teaching the signs for theater terminology such as *stage, director, script* and so on; 3) reading biographies of famous deaf actors such as Bernard Bragg, Linda Bove, and Adrian Blue, the deaf playwright and

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director; 4) positioning the interpreter on the stage; 5) analyzing scripts and translating them from English to ASL; 6) understanding the difference between stage interpreting and shadow interpreting. Informed on these issues, theatre interpreter may know more information, resources, and referrals to provide his hearing, deaf, and deaf-blind consumers in case the need arises. Also, the educational interpreters would be prepared in case theatre arts become integral part of deaf children education. (Kilpatrick, 2007).

## 5. Conclusion

Steps towards acknowledging the complex, difficult, and unique nature of signed language interpreted play productions have already been undertaken by interpreting agencies, freelance interpreters who have theater arts experience, and some deaf theaters. Their purpose is to provide quality services and the necessary access, in view of the issues faced in the performing arts interpreting field.

Drawing on data from interviews with 38 participants and existing research, the authors have provided a descriptive commentary on providing access to live theater for deaf audiences. More studies are needed: (a) to identify a national list of skilled theatrical sign interpreters, (b) to identify theatrical interpreting skills needed to be acquire by interpreters in training and embed the competencies into interpreter training curricula, and (c) to poll larger and more diverse groups of deaf theater-goers to determine what access form they prefer in order to increase their theater enjoyment experiences. Further discussion of theater interpreting is needed on an international level to determine principles, practice standards, and implementation into signed language interpreter education and professional development.

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# Sign Language Interpreting: A Human Rights Issue

Hilde Haualand<sup>1</sup>

*Fafo of Labor and Social Research, Norway*

*World Federation of Institute the Deaf and the Swedish National Association of the Deaf*

## Abstract

Viewed as isolated cases, sign language interpreters facilitate communication between 1 or more people. Viewed broadly, sign language interpreting may be seen as a tool to secure the human rights of sign language using deaf people. To fulfill this goal, interpreters must be provided with proper training and work according to a code of ethics. A recent international survey of 93 countries, mostly in the developing world (H. Haualand & C. Allen, 2009), found that very few respondents had an established sign language interpreter service, formal education and training opportunities for interpreters, or an endorsed code of ethics to regulate the practice of interpreters in their country. As a consequence of these limitations in the interpreting field around the world, there is potential for deaf people's human rights to be violated. In this article, the accessibility and training of sign language interpreters are discussed from a human rights point of view within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and a snapshot of the previously unexplored interpreting scene in various countries around the world is given.

Keywords: human rights; Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities; accessibility; interpreter education; code of ethics; developing countries

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [hilde.haualand@fafo.no](mailto:hilde.haualand@fafo.no).

# Sign Language Interpreting: A Human Rights Issue

## 1. The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities: A paradigm shift

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>2</sup> indicates a paradigm shift from a medical focus to a political and social focus in the work to secure the freedom and dignity of people with disabilities. Attitudinal and environmental barriers, not the physical impairment, prevent people with disabilities from enjoying full human rights. For sign language using deaf people, major barriers include a lack of recognition, acceptance, and use of a sign<sup>3</sup> language in all areas of life, as well as a lack of respect for deaf people's cultural and linguistic identity.

### 1.1. *A World Federation of the Deaf report: Deaf people and human rights*

The information provided in this commentary article is based on the report titled *Deaf People and Human Rights*<sup>4</sup> (Haualand & Allen, 2009) and data collected from the survey conducted as a part of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Global Education Pre-Planning Project on the Human Rights of Deaf People. Topics discussed include the legal status of national sign languages; access to sign language interpreters, including the existence of a sign language interpreting service; training for sign language interpreters; and whether there is a code of ethics for sign language interpreters in the various countries surveyed.

### 1.2. *Deaf people and sign language in the CRPD*

In the CRPD, sign language interpreting is highlighted as a core tool for ensuring the human rights of deaf people. The CRPD mentions sign language in the following five articles:

- Article 2 – Definitions;
- Article 9 – Accessibility;
- Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information;

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<sup>2</sup>The full text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be found at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259>

<sup>3</sup> Editorial note: The author has requested the use of the term 'sign language' rather than 'signed language' be used throughout the article in reference to languages that are signed in general, in order to adhere to World Federation of the Deaf policy.

<sup>4</sup>The reports from the Global Education Pre-Planning Project and the Deaf People and Human Rights Report can be downloaded from <http://www.wfdeaf.org/projects.html>

## Sign language interpreting and human rights

- Article 24 – Education; and
- Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports.

The definition of language in the CRPD includes “spoken and signed languages and other forms of non-spoken languages” (Article 2)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, sign languages are implicitly included in all articles that mention “communication” or “language.” The CRPD provides a powerful tool for enhancing the human rights of people with disabilities, and the afore-mentioned articles highlight the basic factors for protecting the human rights of deaf people.

However, simply having access to qualified sign language interpreters is not sufficient to ensure that deaf people can enjoy their human rights. The implementation of four basic, and closely intertwined, factors is tantamount to the protection of the human rights of deaf people:

- Recognition and use of sign language(s), including recognition of and respect for deaf culture and identity.
- Bilingual education in sign language(s) and the national language(s).
- Accessibility to all areas of society and life, including legislation to secure equal citizenship for all and prevent discrimination.
- Signed language interpretation.

Full enjoyment of human rights for deaf people can be found in the core of this model, in which sign language (including recognition of and respect for deaf culture and identity) is the central factor. The sign language interpretation and accessibility circles share more space than the other circle because accessibility often rests upon the availability of sign language interpreters. Sign language is at the core of deaf people’s lives and makes accessibility for deaf people possible; without accessibility, deaf people are isolated.

A key factor for access to government services (and any other service run by institutions and businesses in which the personnel do not use sign language) for deaf people is provision of, and access to, sign language interpreters, as is highlighted in Article 9 (accessibility) of the CRPD which states that in order to

enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. (p. XX)

The article further declares that States Parties, among others, shall take appropriate measures to “provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and *professional sign language interpreters*, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public” (CRPD, YEAR, Article 9.2 (e), p. XX; [author’s emphasis]). In WFD’s view, sufficient availability and qualification of sign language interpreters is a human rights issue, and education and training of interpreters is also regarded in this light. To safeguard a deaf person’s independence and autonomy (CRPD Preamble [n]), the provision of trained sign language interpreters, with a true commitment to provide their services according to the code of ethics for sign language interpreters, is a prerequisite.

The survey revealed that of the 93 respondent countries, only 18 have a service for providing sign language interpreters, training for sign language interpreters, a code of ethics that they are obliged to follow, and a government that is prepared to pay for the interpreters’ salaries. However, in most of those countries in which the formal requisites are established, the number of qualified interpreters is too low to meet the actual demand. The lack of qualified interpreters, service providers, and training curricula and institutions, as well as the absence of a code of practice to encourage the professionalization of the interpreting field in many countries in the world reflect the potential for deaf people to experience a violation of their human rights on a daily basis.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=262>

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## Haualand

### 2. The deaf people and human rights report: Data collection

As part of the WFD Global Education Pre-Planning Project, a questionnaire was sent to organizations and/or associations in 123 countries, and 93 responded. The goal was to collect deaf people's experiences and views on the above mentioned topics, and as far as possible, the questionnaire was sent to the WFD Ordinary Members in the seven WFD regions.<sup>6</sup> WFD membership was used as an indicator of the nature of the respondents because only national associations of deaf people with (a) a clear majority of deaf voting members, (b) a governing board with a majority of deaf persons, and (c) goals similar to WFD can become Ordinary Members. In countries that did not have any registered Ordinary Members of WFD, the questionnaire was sent to other organizations or associations that were assumed to represent, or have extensive knowledge about, the lives of deaf people. Sixty-eight of the respondents were Ordinary Members of the WFD, which indicate that they were run and led by deaf people, whereas 25 respondents were organizations, institutions, or associations mainly led by hearing people, working *for* deaf people, and not ordinary members of WFD.

The questionnaire was available in English, Russian, Spanish, French, Arabic, and International Sign. In each of the seven regions, a deaf regional co-coordinator was appointed and a regional working group was established. The regional co-coordinators were responsible for establishing a communication network with the regional members as well as co-coordinating the meeting for the regional working group. The deaf members of the regional working groups were also responsible for acknowledging the survey results as they were received from the country respondents. In the cases in which it was suspected that not all respondents truly understood the questions, the regional working groups were also sometimes able to correct the received answers. It is still likely that some of the responses do not really reflect the situation, so the numbers given in the report and in this article may not be entirely accurate. However, the overall tendency in the responses is clear: deaf people experience violation of their human rights on a daily basis.

### 3. Status of sign languages

If a sign language is not even recognized as a language in its own right in a particular country, it will be a challenge to present a persuasive argument to the government that the training of interpreters is a necessity. Therefore, the legal status of sign languages is relevant to the question of access to, and training of, sign language interpreters.

#### 3.1. Recognition of sign languages: An aspect of freedom of expression and opinion

The CRPD notes that full citizenship includes "freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice" (Article 21). Deaf people cannot access enough information to make informed choices, form independent opinions, and express themselves adequately without sign language. Spoken languages are

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<sup>6</sup> The seven WFD regions include the following:

WFD Eastern Europe and Middle Asia Regional Secretariat (WFD EEMARS)  
WFD Regional Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific (WFD RSA/P)  
WFD Regional Secretariat for South America (WFD RSSA)  
WFD Regional Secretariat for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean (WFD MCAC)  
WFD Regional Secretariat for Eastern and Southern Africa (WFD RSESA)  
WFD Interim Regional Secretariat for Western and Central Africa Region (WFD WCAR)  
WFD Interim Regional Secretariat for the Arab Region (WFD RSAR)

## Sign language interpreting and human rights

inaccessible to people with no hearing or limited hearing, and the written form of a spoken language in a particular country will only be accessible to people who are literate. Acquiring literacy is largely dependent on formal educational experience, and many deaf people in various countries around the world experience a sub-standard education or no formal education at all. It is not possible for people to express their opinions and thoughts without a language that they have the predisposition to learn and master effectively and naturally—and to deaf people, the naturally accessible language is sign language. The measures that ensure the right to freedom of expression for deaf people are not only accepting and facilitating, but also recognizing and promoting, the use of sign languages (Article 21[b and e]). Accepting sign language is indicating acceptance of deaf people; whereas denying sign language is equivalent to denying deaf people their opportunity to enjoy equal citizenship in society. Recognition of sign languages also implies acceptance of the linguistic and cultural identity of deaf communities, as culture and language are inextricably related.

### 3.2. Sign language dictionaries

A sign language dictionary is a fundamental tool to promote the status of and enhance the use of sign language, and it is a necessity in the education of sign language interpreters. Deaf people, teachers of the deaf, sign language interpreters, hearing parents of deaf children, and other people with a need to communicate with deaf people benefit from sign language dictionaries. A dictionary makes many of the signs of a particular sign language accessible to more people than those who already know it and also serves as documentation of the existence of a sign language. Legal recognition is not necessary for sign language dictionaries to be developed, but the dictionaries can then be used as a tool to show the existence of a (sign) language that needs legal recognition and protection.

### 3.3. Recognition of sign language in legislation

Whereas 74 respondent countries say that the government recognizes deaf people as citizens on an equal basis, only 44 countries have any kind of formal recognition of the country's sign language(s), as shown in Table 1. The level of legislation varies from sign language being mentioned in official guidelines to having constitutional status. In some countries, the national sign language is recognized at more than one level.

Region	Constitution	Legislation	Policy	Guideline	Other
Eastern Europe and Middle Asia		5			
Asia and the Pacific	1	3	5		
South America	3	2	1		
Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean		2	4		
Southern and Eastern Africa	3	3	9	2	
Western and Central Africa		1			
Arab Region	3	3		5	1
Total	10	19	19	7	1

Table 1: Recognition of sign languages in different legislations

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In 10 countries, sign language is mentioned in the constitution; in 19 countries, it is mentioned in one or more laws. Nineteen countries mention sign language in policy, and seven countries mention sign language in guidelines. Among those who have given detailed information on where and how sign language is formally recognized, most refer to educational laws/policies or laws/policies regulating social and/or welfare services. The survey revealed that in only 30 of the 93 respondent countries (a) are deaf people recognized as equal citizens, (b) is sign language mentioned in legislation, and (c) has a sign language dictionary been developed.

In 15 countries, deaf people are recognized as being equal citizens and have a dictionary, but sign language is not mentioned in legislation. In 10 countries, respondents say deaf people are not recognized as equal citizens, sign language is not mentioned in any legislation, and they have no sign language dictionary; or they simply did not answer the questions. It appears from the data that only in very few countries around the world are sign languages formally recognized in such a way that users of the language have the right to use it for communication in all activities of society and in all aspects of life. Although many countries have some kind of formal recognition, many deaf organizations reported dissatisfaction with the level or scope of this recognition and continue to lobby their government to enhance and improve the status of their sign language(s).

### *3.4. Sign languages: Part of the human heritage*

Some respondents, especially in Western and Central Africa and in the Arab region, said that sign languages other than those used by the indigenous deaf populations in their countries were taught in schools and were used by sign language interpreters. This situation, in which national sign languages are threatened by other sign systems (e.g., the Unified Arab Sign Language) or by the importation of foreign sign languages (most often, American Sign Language), is a reminder of the low status of national sign languages as used by deaf people.<sup>7</sup> Although the natural sign languages of indigenous deaf communities in various countries remain unrecognized and invalidated, others' attempts to change or mold them into artificial and less effective variants of the indigenous sign language are likely to continue. Each natural sign language used by the deaf people of a region or in a country represents the cultural, social, historical, and religious ideas of that region or country. Signed languages are carriers of regional and national cultures and heritages \_in the same way spoken languages are; they carry, as well, the culture and heritage of deaf people. Deaf people are not the only individuals who benefit from formal recognition of sign languages. Recognition of sign language is a way to enhance and give respect to the overall linguistic and cultural heritage and sociocultural human capital of each country. It also enriches the linguistic and cultural diversity of humankind. It is important that sign language interpreters and those who plan and provide training for interpreters respect and support the local or national sign language that deaf people use, in order to provide adequate sign language interpretation services.<sup>8</sup>

### *3.5. Access to services*

Article 21 (on freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information) in the CRPD says State Parties shall take appropriate measures to (a) provide "... information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost" (21a) and (b) accept and facilitate the "... use of sign languages (author's emphasis), 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" (21b).

<sup>7</sup> See Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and other resources provided at [www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org) for discussions on the relationship between language use and status.

<sup>8</sup> See also the WFD Policy "WFD Statement on the Unification of Sign Languages" at [http://www.wfdeaf.org/pdf/policy\\_statement\\_signlanguages.pdf](http://www.wfdeaf.org/pdf/policy_statement_signlanguages.pdf).

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## **Sign language interpreting and human rights**

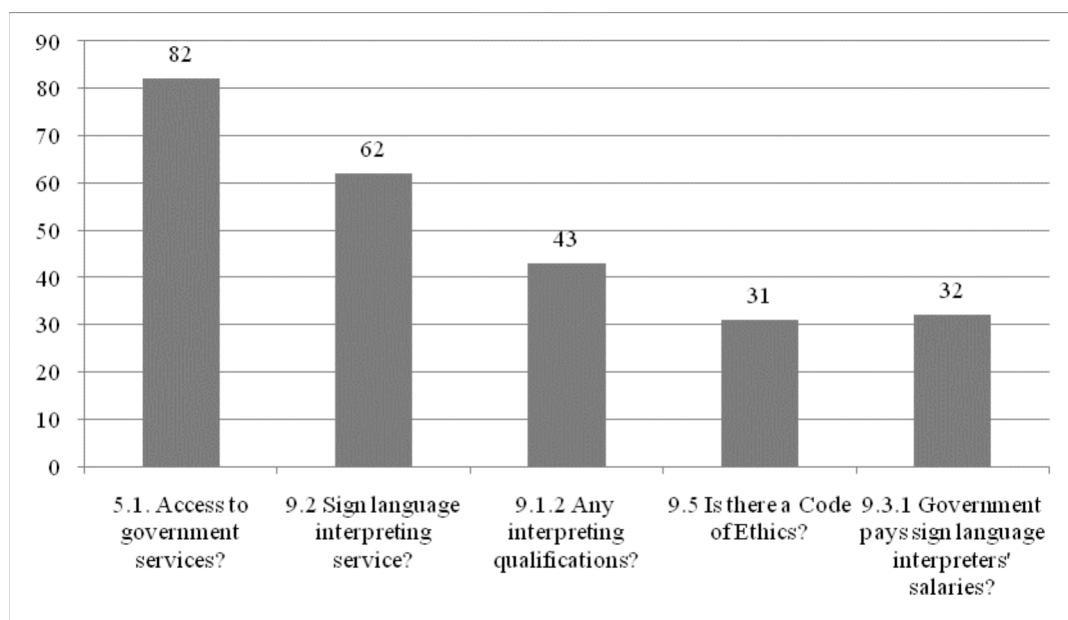
Eleven countries reported that deaf people did not have access to government services, such as education, health care, employment, and social welfare. Of the countries that indicated that deaf people did have access to such services, when asked how these services were accessed, about half of the respondents said that deaf people use services in the same way as do hearing people. The regional overviews (Figures 2\_8) show, however, that there are severe limits on deaf people's opportunities to benefit from, or fully access, government services in all the countries that responded. Although very few countries deny deaf people formal rights to government services outright, and the number of countries who provide sign language interpreters has grown since 1992 (Joutselainen, 1992), the responses to the 2008 survey indicate that few, if any, deaf people have access to government services that equals that of hearing people. The reported existence of one or more sign language interpreters in a particular country cannot be taken as a sign that deaf people have equal access to various services, for several reasons, as outlined below.

### **4. Sign language interpreting services, training and codes of ethics**

First, there must be a system for provision of, and equal access to, sign language interpreters for all situations when they are requested, and the deaf person or associations of deaf people should not be solely responsible for paying the interpreters' salaries. Sixty-one country respondents indicated that their government takes no responsibility for paying for sign language interpreters' salaries. Second, sign language interpreting is a profession that serves both deaf and hearing people, and the profession requires training. A professional sign language interpreter is fluent in both the sign and spoken languages of the country and has specialized knowledge in interpreting between two (or more) languages. Knowing some sign language, and having a commitment to "help" deaf and hearing people to communicate are not qualifications to serve as a sign language interpreter. The survey showed that the length and quality of training varies greatly among the respondents, from courses lasting for a few days to education at university level over several years. Third, professional confidentiality and awareness of a signed language interpreter's duties and roles are fundamental to (a) ensure equal status between the parties in a communication situation that involves interpreting, and (b) safeguard a deaf person's right to independence and autonomy. Signed language interpreters must be trained in the languages that they are to translate between (most often, one or more of the spoken languages in the country where he/she is working and one or more of the sign languages that are used by deaf people in the same country). Signed language interpreters also must learn about, understand, and follow the code of ethics for sign language interpreters in that country. A code of ethics (also known as an ethical code or code of professional conduct) for sign language interpreters gives direction on how sign language interpreters shall conduct themselves during the course of their work.

#### *4.1. A global overview*

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked if their country has a sign language interpreting service, if there is any training for sign language interpreters, if there is a national code of ethics for sign language interpreters, how many sign language interpreters are recognized, and their general opinion of the sign language interpreting provision.



*Figure 1. Total overview: Services, training, code of ethics and payment*

Figure 1 shows that of the 93 country respondents, 62 reported that there is a sign language interpreting service in their country. Forty-three indicated that there was some kind of training for people who want to become qualified sign language interpreters. However, the question on training may have been interpreted differently by different countries, as some may have included general sign language classes or courses, whereas others may have understood the question to be focused on training in interpreting skills required after gaining fluency in sign language. Thirty-one countries said that there was some kind of national code of ethics for sign language interpreters. Thirty-two countries say that their government takes some responsibility in paying for the sign language interpreters' salaries. Only 18 reported that they had a sign language interpreter service, training provisions for sign language interpreters, a code of ethics *and* a government that is prepared to pay for the interpreters' salaries. These countries include Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, Nicaragua, Qatar, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. In all other countries, one or more of these factors were missing. Of those respondents reporting that they have a sign language interpreting service, training and code of ethics, only three (Australia, Bulgaria, and Japan) reported that the government paid for all sign language interpreter services. In all other countries, the government paid salaries to sign language interpreters in some or no cases and/or the deaf people themselves, an organization/association of or for deaf people, or other parties paid for interpreters' salaries—if the interpreters received any salary at all. Access to higher education illustrates the importance of paying attention to the issue of responsibility for covering the cost of interpreters. Among the 93 respondents, 50 said that there are no formal obstacles against deaf people entering a university, but only 18 countries actually provide interpreting services at the university level. Several of the countries' respondents reporting that deaf people do not have access to a university indicate the reason for this is no, or limited, access to interpreting services. The number of countries in which deaf people are not formally denied access to a university might thus be higher than reported, but the number of countries in which deaf people experience genuine access is much lower; the main reasons for this are a lack of qualified interpreters and a lack of commitment on behalf of the educational institution, government, or other party, to cover the interpreters' salaries.

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### *4.2. Increase in availability of sign language interpreters*

Since 1992 and the WFD survey titled *Deaf People in the Developing World* (Joutsainen, 1992), there has been considerable growth in the number of countries that say they have sign language interpreters available. In 1992, of the 65 respondents to the WFD survey, 29 indicated that they have sign language interpreters in their country. Of the 93 respondents to the 2008 survey, 80 countries reported that they have one or more sign language interpreters; however, the qualifications and the quality of sign language interpreting services varies greatly. The 13 countries that do not have any sign language interpreters at all include Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Myanmar, Seychelles, and Togo. In all other countries, the quality and the scope of the sign language interpreting varies greatly, and the variation is related to the availability of training, professional conduct, and how sign language interpreters are accessed by those who request their services.

## **5. Regional Overviews**

Figures 2\_8 show the overall access to government and interpreting services in the respondent countries, sorted by region. Each “yes” to the relevant questions has been given one point. All other answers (“no” and information that deaf people themselves and/or associations have to pay salaries, or no information was provided at all) have been given zero points. The higher the score, the better one can assume access to sign language interpreters is and thus access to government services. The countries receiving one point offer only formal access to government services but have none of the basic requirements for a sign language interpreting service; therefore, in these countries deaf people have only partial, if any, access to services. The maximum score for any country is five. However, a maximum score does not mean that one can conclude that deaf people have full access to various services and a well-functioning sign language interpreting service. The highest score indicates only that a sign language interpreting system exists with minimum basic elements (an organized service, some training, a code of ethics, and government recognition that sign language interpreters are entitled to a salary for the service they provide). Also, the number of available sign language interpreters in each country, although a critical factor, is not included in the figures. Those countries receiving fewer than five points cannot be said to have even a basic, functional sign language interpreting system. The regional survey reports that were provided detailed information about the situation in each country. The numbers before the questions at the right side of each figure refer to the question number in the questionnaire, which is available in the full report.<sup>9</sup>

### 5.1. Eastern Europe and Middle Asia

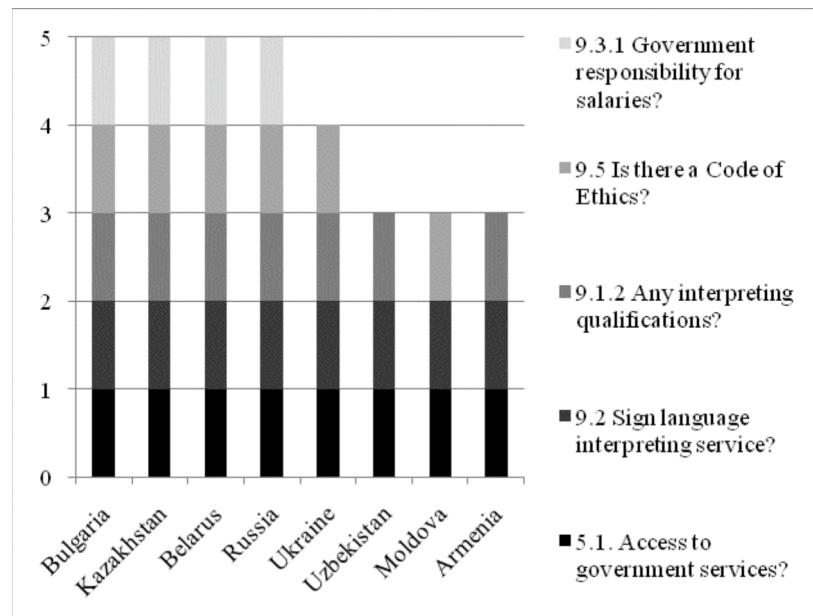


Figure 2: Eastern Europe and Middle Asia

Figure 2 reveals that Moldova has no training for sign language interpreters, and Uzbekistan and Armenia lack a code of ethics for sign language interpreters. The Bulgarian government pays only up to 10 hours of interpreting service per year for each deaf person, so access to services is severely limited in this country, too. In four countries, the government does not pay or contribute to the payment of interpreters' salaries at all. The message from the other countries is that there are few sign language interpreters available. The numbers ranged from five sign language interpreters in Armenia to 800 interpreters in Russia.

### 5.2. Asia and the Pacific

Figure 3 shows the situation in 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Only Nepal revealed that deaf people do not have access to government services, but they do have a sign language interpreting service. Bhutan, Laos and Myanmar offer formal access but have no sign language interpreting service, training, or code of ethics for sign language interpreters. The government pays for some of the interpreting costs in only four countries. Australia, Japan, and Malaysia received the maximum score in the Asia-Pacific region. Those countries, however, reported that there are large differences in the qualifications of sign language interpreters and that the services are still inconsistent. The broad opinion regarding sign language interpreting services in the region is that there is a lack of quality in formal training or qualifications; interpreting services themselves are weak; the number of sign language interpreters is not enough, and supply cannot meet demand; and the general community has limited awareness about available services. The number of sign language interpreters ranges from three in Laos and Sri Lanka to 20,000 in Japan. However, fewer than 1,800 of the interpreters in Japan are qualified, and their status and salaries are low.

## Sign language interpreting and human rights

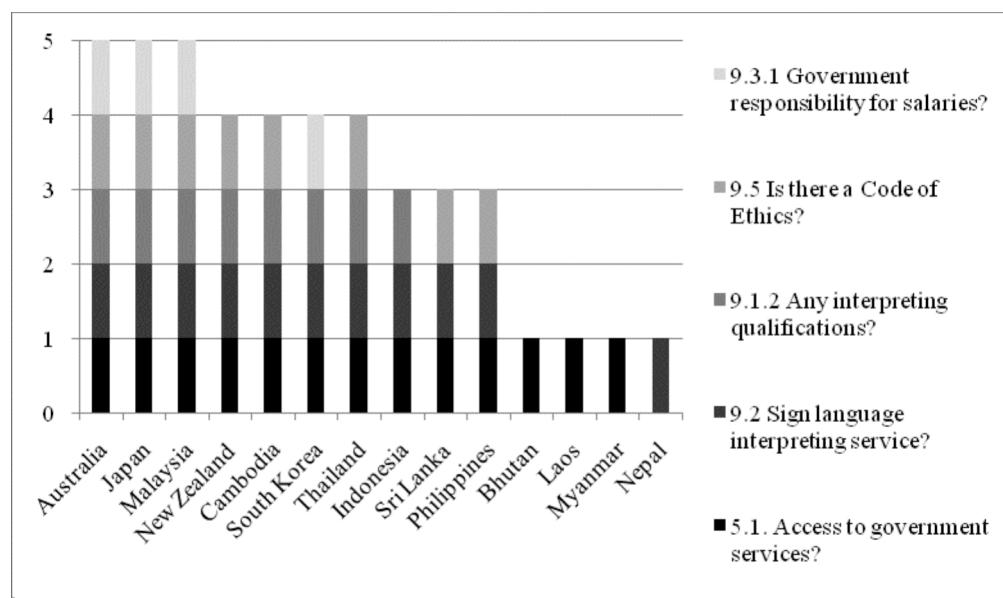


Figure 3: Asia and the Pacific

### 5.3. South America

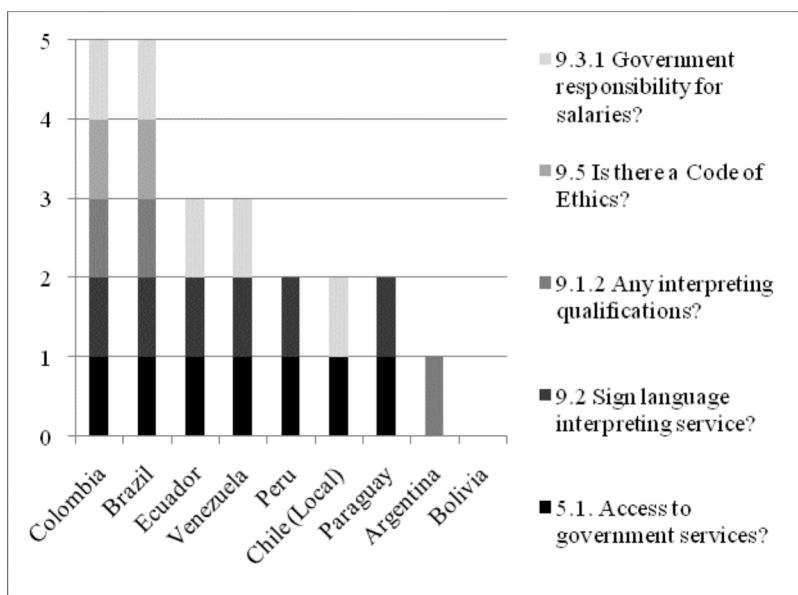


Figure 4: South America

Argentina and Bolivia reported that deaf people do not have access to government services, as can be seen in Figure 4, which illustrates the situation in nine countries in South America. Only three countries have any training for sign language interpreters and only two countries have a national code of ethics. Most respondents in the South American region stated that sign language interpreting services are accessed through a national or local deaf

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association, religious groups, or through hearing family members or acquaintances. The regional working group in South America also expressed the concern that deaf people had to register as members of particular groups (e.g., religious organizations) in order to receive sign language interpreting services at no charge. The number of sign language interpreters ranges from approximately 10 in Bolivia to 1,500 in Brazil. Peru and Argentina did not provide the number of interpreters in their countries.

### 5.4. Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean

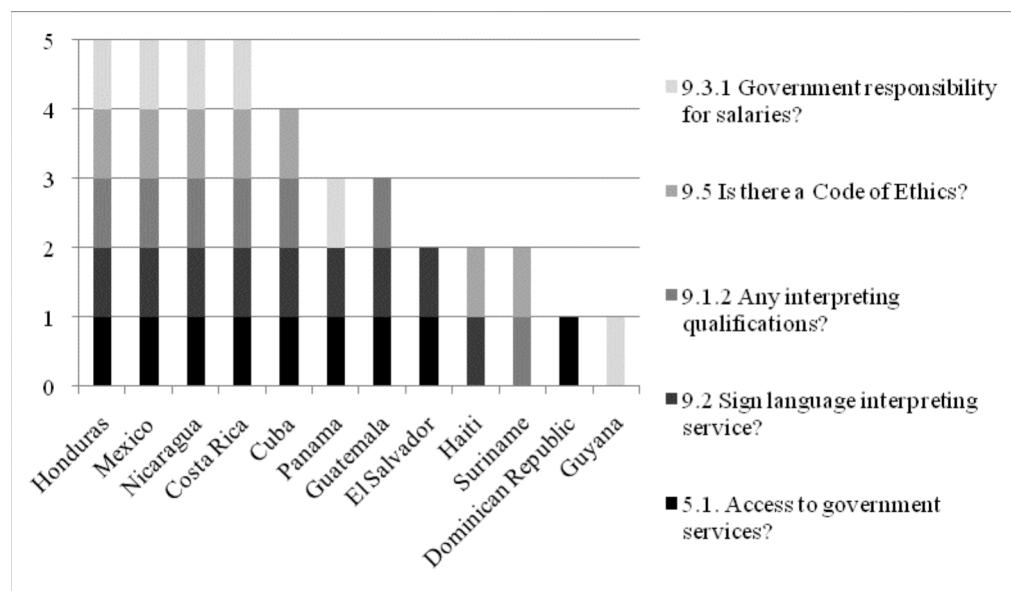


Figure 5: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean

Figure 5 shows that three countries indicated deaf people do not have formal access to government services; however one of these (Guyana) reported the government sometimes pays for sign language interpreters. Three countries lack a sign language interpreting service; there is training for sign language interpreters in seven countries, and seven countries have a national code of ethics. The major complaint in the Middle and Central American region is the lack of, and the low quality of, training for sign language interpreters. Also, the low number of sign language interpreters is a constant concern. Suriname reported that they have two sign language interpreters, whereas there are 434 in Cuba.

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### 5.5. Eastern and Southern Africa

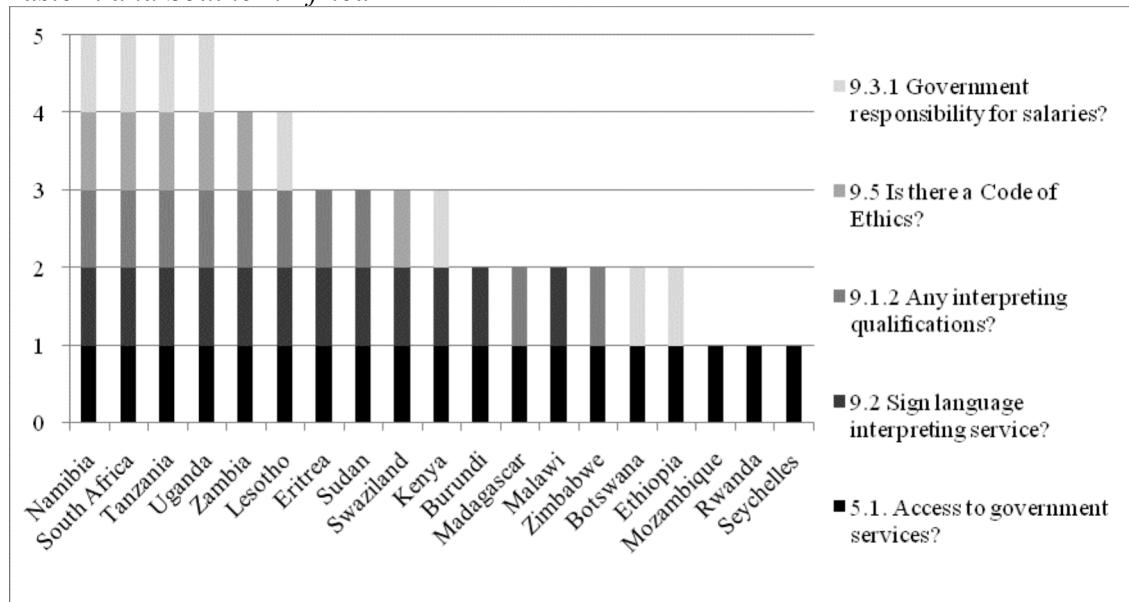


Figure 6: Eastern and Southern Africa

According to 12 of the 19 respondents in the Southern and Eastern African region, national or local deaf associations provide sign language interpreters. Figure 6 further shows that eight of the governments in this region pay for some sign language interpreting. There is a code of ethics in six of the countries. Seven countries have no sign language interpreting service. The broad opinion is that there is a lack of quality in formal training and qualifications; sign language interpreting services are not available all of the time; there are not enough sign language interpreters, so supply cannot meet demand; and there is a lack of funding for these services. In this region, the number of sign language interpreters ranged from three in Rwanda and three in Swaziland to 102 in Uganda. Seychelles respondents did not provide any information about sign language interpreting services but stated that they use hearing people who have signing skills to act as interpreters for deaf people.

### 5.6. Western and Central Africa

Figure 7 shows the replies from 16 countries in the Western and Central African region. Only in Cameroon does the government pay for sign language interpreters. Four countries have a sign language interpreting service, but governments run none of these. Only Ghana has recently started a sign language interpreter training program at the university level, and the Gambia is the only country with a code of ethics for sign language interpreters. The demand is far greater than the supply in most countries, so people who know sign language (often teachers and people with deaf parents) are asked to interpret without qualifications or payment. In Benin and Togo, staff members at the deaf schools function as interpreters. The number of sign language interpreters ranges from two in Cameroon and Senegal to 150 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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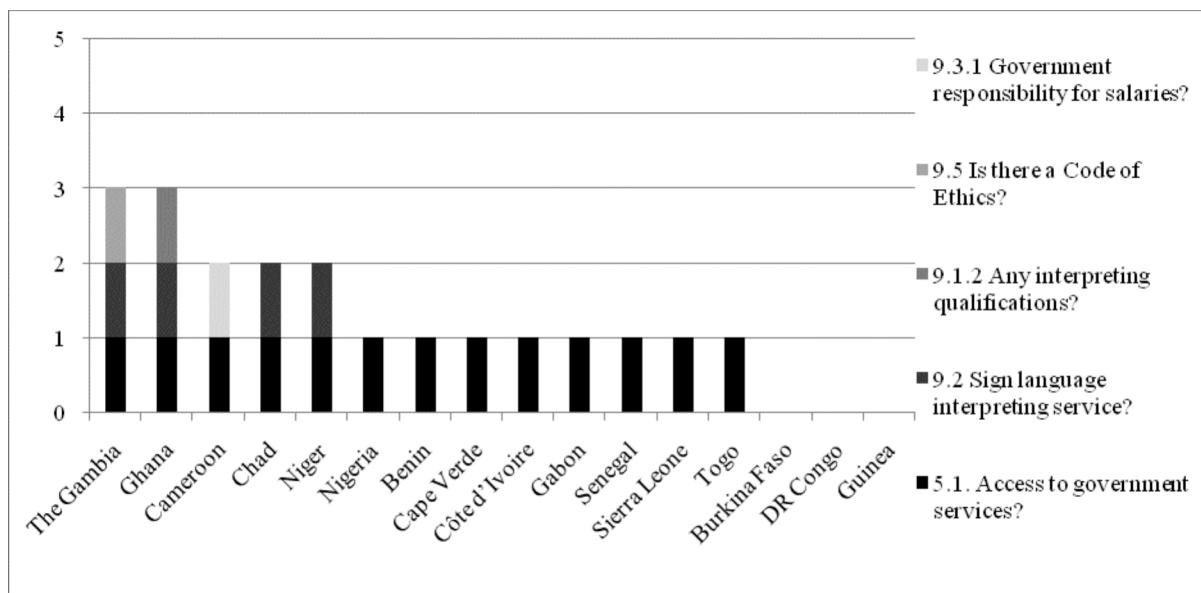


Figure 7: Western and Central Africa

### 5.7. The Middle East and North Africa Region

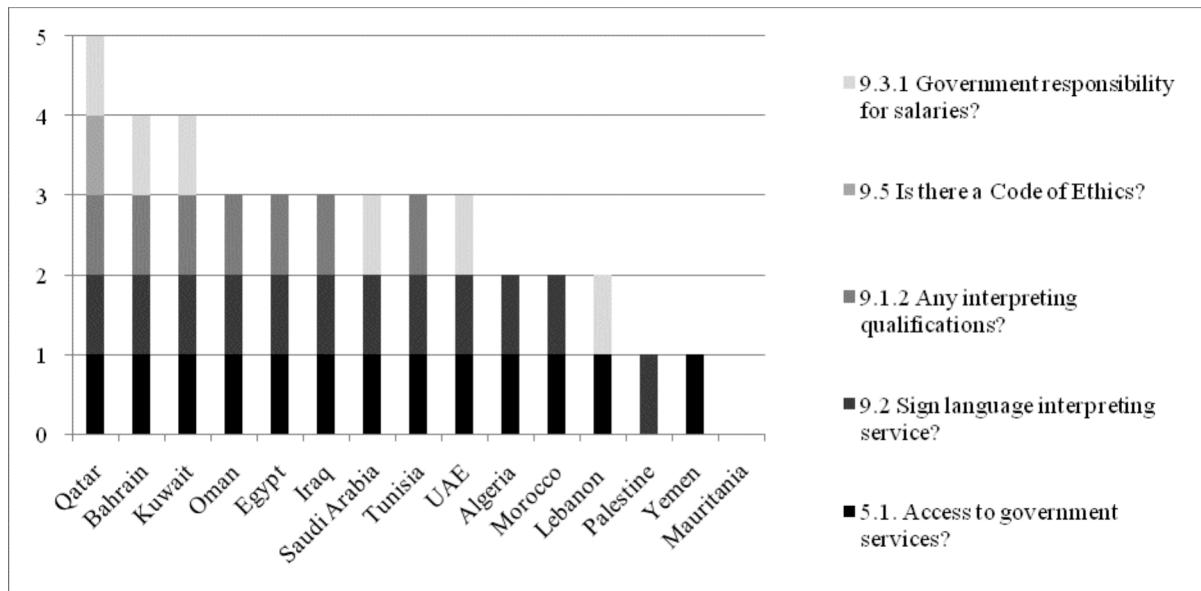


Figure 8: The Middle East and North Africa Region

In the Middle East and North Africa region (Figure 8), Mauritania and Palestine reported that deaf people do not have access to government services, but Palestine still has a sign language interpreting service. Lebanon and Yemen offer formal access but have no service, training or code of ethics for sign language interpreters. Qatar is the only country in the region that has a code of ethics. The regional working group for the Middle East and North

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## **Sign language interpreting and human rights**

Africa region commented that, in spite of some of the responses, there are no people who have received full training to become professional or qualified sign language interpreters. There is a training program on the Unification of Arabic Sign Languages<sup>10</sup> that both deaf and hearing people can attend for five or ten days. Hearing people who complete this training receive a sign language interpreter certificate. Deaf people generally do not understand or use the signs of the Unified Arabic Sign Language, and because the course gives no instruction on the process of interpreting, it must be questioned whether the sign language interpreting qualifications provided are of much worth. The number of interpreters ranges from five each in Bahrain, Morocco and Palestine to 300 in Algeria.

### **6. Low quality of training and low number of sign language interpreters**

The situation regarding the training of sign language interpreters in the Middle East and North Africa region is also illustrative of the situation as a whole. Although 40 of the respondent countries have some kind of interpreter training in place, the length, scope, and quality of this training varies greatly, from a 5-10 day course in learning some signs to a university diploma with courses running over several years. Thus, it is not possible to assume that the mere existence of training guarantees that the people who work as sign language interpreters have the necessary qualifications. Only 34 countries have both training for sign language interpreters *and* a code of ethics. If no formal guidelines or standards exist for sign language interpreters, the goal of a training or qualification program is bound to be imprecise; hence, it will be difficult to evaluate the qualifications that the training supposedly provides.

Of those countries answering the question about how many sign language interpreters in the country are qualified, 30 countries said they had 20 or fewer qualified sign language interpreters; seven countries had 21-100 qualified interpreters, whereas 12 had more than 100 qualified interpreters. Some of the countries that reported that they had 20 or fewer qualified/trained interpreters are populous countries such as Mexico (20 trained interpreters/approximately 108 million inhabitants), Thailand (20/65 million), Madagascar (4/20 million), Sudan (5/40 million), Tanzania (6/40 million) and Iraq (1/28 million). It is not clear whether these numbers are from official registries of sign language interpreters or if the person or group responsible for giving the answer based them on his or her assumptions and/or personal knowledge. There are no recommended ratios on the number of sign language interpreters required in a given population, as the demands/demographics of a local/national community drive the real need. But the low number of qualified sign language interpreters in most countries is alone a strong indicator that deaf people do not have de facto access to government services. Limited availability of qualified interpreters and widespread lack of awareness and knowledge about deaf people, as well as the role and expectations of a sign language interpreter, deprive most deaf people of access to large sections of society. If the education of sign language interpreters fails to recognize and respect the indigenous sign language(s) used by deaf people and/or lacks a goal to teach the professional ethics that will secure the independence, autonomy, and equality of all parties involved in the communication, interpreters may involuntarily contribute to the continued violation of deaf people's human rights. To avoid this, it is crucial that the training of interpreters includes a human rights perspective—from the planning of education programs, throughout the training period(s), to the final examination of sign language interpreters.

### **7. References**

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<sup>10</sup>See paragraph 5.4. in the Equality and Sign Language chapter in the *Deaf People and Human Rights Report* (Haualand & Allen, 2009).

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# Interview with a Scholar: In Conversation with Risa Shaw

**Debra L. Russell<sup>1</sup>**

*University of Alberta, Canada*

**Risa Shaw<sup>2</sup>**

*Gallaudet University, USA*

## Abstract

This open forum article consists of an interview with Risa Shaw, a signed language interpreter educator, in which she reviews her doctoral research. Her study examined narratives and retellings, in both English and American Sign Language, of disclosures to family members of sexual assault. The findings reveal the importance of context in creating meaning and in shaping narrative structure in discourse. In addition, the work highlights the manner in which interpreters must prepare for the work in order to effectively interpret in the diverse settings where narratives are retold. This interdisciplinary study has implications for interpreters and interpreter educators, across languages and cultures, in terms of how the task of interpreting is conceptualized and taught. Finally, the article draws attention to some of the crucial issues that researchers must attend to when conducting linguistic studies that draw on knowledge from non-dominant linguistic communities.

Keywords: interpreters and interpreter education; meaning-in-context; narratives and retellings; American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English; sibling sexual abuse

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [debra.russell@ualberta.ca](mailto:debra.russell@ualberta.ca)

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence to: [Risa.Shaw@Gallaudet.edu](mailto:Risa.Shaw@Gallaudet.edu)

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# **Interview with a Scholar: In Conversation with Risa Shaw**

*Welcome to the Open Forum section of this journal. The intent in this section is to be able to encourage opinion articles and to broaden the dialogue within our profession via interviews with interpreter educators.*

*To that end, we will kick off our first issue with an interview with Risa Shaw. Risa is an interpreter, interpreter educator, and researcher who received her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Sociolinguistics in 2007. She is an associate professor at Gallaudet University in the Department of Interpretation. Her work over the years in the field of interpreting has helped many of us to see interpreting from a social justice frame of reference and how the interpreter influences the interaction. Risa co-authored the bachelor of arts curriculum and the revised master of arts curriculum in interpretation at Gallaudet University. She also co-authored a curriculum on interpreting in legal settings (beginning in 1995) that continues to be used throughout the United States, including a fundamentals course and several specific focus courses (i.e., preparation, deaf-hearing interpreter teams, monitor role, law enforcement, role and ethics, jury duty, and mock deposition). Risa was in the first class of master's students to graduate from the Teaching Interpretation Program at Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College), building on her foundation of a bachelor of arts degree with a major in linguistics and an associate of arts degree in interpreting. Much of her career has focused on interpreting in legal settings, and she holds the CSC, CI and SC:L certifications from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in the United States. She has based her practice in and lived in the Washington, D.C., area since 1981. Risa is currently involved in conducting a study of interpreters working in legal settings with Dr. Len Roberson and myself, Dr. Debra Russell.*

*Risa is also the editor of (and contributor to) a powerful anthology of writings and art by women who have been sexually abused by their brothers. Not Child's Play: An Anthology on Brother-Sister Incest was published in 2000, and since that time Risa has been invited to speak on radio, television and at numerous conferences. Though this topic is a painful and very difficult one, her book and her dissertation research have shown that the act of speaking up and speaking out is transformative and life-giving. Her work has helped countless women and families find the courage to speak up and talk openly about this taboo subject. Risa's*

## Interview with a Scholar

seminal work also has shaped her dissertation work, which is the focus of the interview you are about to read. For more information on Not Child's Play see [Lunchboxpress.org](http://Lunchboxpress.org).

For her dissertation research, Risa undertook a very challenging study of childhood sexual assault victims/survivors,<sup>3</sup> examining how narrative retellings in American Sign Language (ASL) and English are shaped when presented in differing contexts. Her study has important implications for interpreters and interpreter educators, and we are fortunate to have Risa walk us through some of the key findings of her study. (Her study also has additional sociolinguistic and traumatology findings, and you can download her dissertation from the Gallaudet website: [http://interpretation.gallaudet.edu/Faculty-Staff/Interpretation/Shaw\\_Risa.html](http://interpretation.gallaudet.edu/Faculty-Staff/Interpretation/Shaw_Risa.html)). What you will read may challenge you to think about how we conceptualize the task of interpreting and how we then infuse that philosophy in our teaching and in the programs in which we work. The findings invite us to consider the critical concepts of linguicism and audism,<sup>4</sup> and how central those concepts are to the life experiences of deaf people and linguistic minority communities. Further, Risa encourages each of us to examine how we apply those concepts to our understanding of the work of teaching interpreting, to the personal narratives of deaf people, and to the interactions in which we interpret. Finally, the nature of contextual factors, such as shared experience and preparation, emerge as key findings that can help interpreters to determine where and how meaning is co-created in any given interaction.

Risa's study also gives us much to consider as researchers, both from a design and from an interdisciplinary perspective. Her insight into constructing effective research in a field that is ripe for rigorous study is helpful to each of us, whether we are action researchers in our own classrooms or researchers within academic institutions. In this interview, we also touch on the changing nature of our international community of educators and interpreters and the ways in which our increased contact with each other is leading to new insights and discoveries. Risa is definitely on my list of "researchers to watch" and after reading this conversation, I think you will see why. I hope that you will enjoy the conversation with Risa and that her comments will stimulate further conversations among you and your colleagues.

Deb: Risa, tell us about yourself—how is it that you came to interpreting?

Risa: I graduated in 1983 from Gallaudet University (then Gallaudet College) with an associate of arts in interpreting. I'm originally from Kansas and Nebraska, and I entered Gallaudet with a limited knowledge of ASL. I lived in the dorm, and it was that immersion experience that taught me the language and culture. As I look back,

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<sup>3</sup> With regard to terminology Risa said: "I use the term victim/survivor simply because a term must be chosen. Neither I, nor the study participants, feel that any of the available terms (in either ASL or English) accurately captures the experience of having been sexually abused and living in its aftermath. This is true for the vocabulary available for us and the experience as a whole and applies equally to the terms I have chosen such as sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest, and so forth. See Shaw, Risa. 2007. *Meaning in Context: The Role of Context and Language in Narratives of Disclosure of Sibling Sexual Assault*. Unpublished dissertation. Union Institute & University.

<sup>4</sup> Audism is a term coined by Tom Humphries in 1977 that refers to "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears." (Shaw, 2007, p. 86).

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## Russell and Shaw

I know I was there at a really fabulous time. The ASL Language Research Laboratory was there \_as were Charlotte Baker Shenk, MJ Bienvenu, and Dennis Cokely (leading ASL research scholars), among others. I had ASL classes nearly every night of the week, and at the time, there was a small enough number of interpreters in the D.C. area that the interpreters all knew each other. I also had the great fortune of being introduced to interpreting as a meaning-based process of transferring meaning, coupled with putting that into the context of culture. My undergraduate work focused on linguistics and women's studies; then I did a master's in teaching interpreting. Again, I was fortunate to be able to participate in this program that included visiting students from several counties, all of whom brought their own context and perspectives. I was required to do research projects for both my bachelor's and master's programs (the first was on register and the second on team interpreting and the use of written notes), which gave me a taste for research.

*Deb: What did your career path look like after that?*

Risa: I started teaching and giving presentations in 1987\_I think that was too early in my career, as I had only four years of interpreting experience. However, in the master's program, which I began in 1986, I had a chance to teach with others. That was such a rich experience; I got the opportunity to work with other students who are now leading practitioners and educators in the signed language interpreting field, including Karen Malcolm, Sandra Gish, Carol Fay, Cindy Herbst and Robert Hahn. This helped build a more solid foundation for my interpreting and teaching practice, as did teaching consecutive interpreting. Consecutive interpreting offered me an opportunity to analyze the work in a deeper way\_a way that really allowed looking at what it is you're doing as an interpreter, how you are interpreting, and what that means in terms of how the message is being expressed.

It was, and continues to be, cyclical\_the more interpreting and the more teaching I did, the more knowledge and interest I developed for both. When I started interpreting, I interpreted a lot of music, which really meant that I did a great deal of translation. Because it was the early 1980s, there was a lot of opportunity to do interpreting with women's music. I would study the lyrics and then talk to the musicians about what the lyrics represented. I had the help of a brilliant and very skillful deaf ASL coach, Dr. MJ Bienvenu, and we would work with the translations and consecutive interpretations (even if we didn't call it that back then).

*Deb: Tell us about something that you are proud of in the early stages of your career?*

Risa: I co-authored a legal interpreting curriculum with Carla Mathers, which is still being used today, and delivered numerous intensive trainings for interpreters working in legal settings around the United States.

*Deb: What led you to the PhD that you completed in 2007?*

Risa: It was one of the conditions of employment at Gallaudet when I was hired in 2001, and though the logistics of being in school and working full time were tricky, I am very aware of how lucky I am to have had this

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opportunity, and I am delighted with what I got to do! I chose Union Institute & University, in part because of the knowledge of doctoral programs I had gained through interpreting in many of them.

*Deb: What excites you about your current work?*

Risa: The teaching and the research. Working with students, many of whom I get to be a part of ushering them into their careers, is very exciting. And in the end, the students we work with become our colleagues. One of the courses I usually teach is a foundations course for interpreting, and to see people get so excited about what it means to interpret...is the best. The research learning and opportunities I have had have been incredible. I'm looking forward to more opportunities, to writing up my research findings, and to teaching research courses.

*Deb: Anything else you want to say when you think back about your own experience as an interpreter and your journey?*

Risa: Now that I am done with my doctorate, I've begun to interpret more again. Whether we are interpreting, teaching, or conducting research, I think one of the most important and joyful experiences is finding the people who inspire, motivate, and guide us. I have been very fortunate in this area as well, and those who have taught, mentored, and guided me along the way have been such gifts to me.

*Deb: Let's talk a bit about international issues. What do you think are the current issues facing us as educators in North America and other countries, and are we developing international collaboration? What do you think we're learning from each other?*

Risa: I have not done a lot on an international level yet, but I think that work is essential in broadening our perspectives and improving our work. I think that there are some important events that are shaping us as an international community—for example the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) has done a lot to bring attention to signed language interpreting in an international context. I think the *International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE)* will also help to facilitate our conversations at the international level in the spoken and signed language interpreting professions. I am delighted with all of the journal sections that will allow for a deeper and broader way to talk about the work and that will encourage us, as an international community, to share perspectives. Conferences like *Critical Link: Interpreting in the Community* also help to broaden our thinking and allow us to share with each other. We need to always consider the dominant culture, the privilege that is attached to it and that informs much of what those of us in the dominant culture(s) do, and the ways in which the dominant culture/people impose our/their influence and power, and how that affects what we do and how we do it. This is not a stagnant or monolithic notion, and it requires us to continually be open to, and consider, our privilege and use of power, especially when it is “well intentioned” or unintentional. I think WASLI will help us with this, having had the first conference in South Africa and returning in 2011.

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I think we have a great deal to learn from one another, *because of* the different languages we work with and cultures in which they are embedded. When we place our work and ourselves in a wider context and are open to various cultures, our practice can blossom and change for the better.

I am fortunate to be at Gallaudet University where I've worked with a number of students (and have been their advisor) from various parts of the world. This has been fantastic in terms of increasing my understanding of global perspectives and decreasing my culture-bound attitudes. For example, I worked with a European, white, hearing woman living in an Arab culture who contributed perspectives and ideas that we never would have considered otherwise. This also applies because of the deaf Italian student who graduated from our program\_a student whose work between two signed languages opened many people's eyes and hearts. Another example is a student we had from Cameroon who arrived with several languages: his tribal language, French, English, Cameroon Sign Language, and some ASL. His presence fostered/forced a great deal of creativity from the faculty and other students as we approached the learning in a collaborative way. It became clear that our own limits and cultural barriers were the constraining factors in education and that the students' education and experience were the riches. I believe one way I can contribute to the international community is to encourage and help these students to retain their home languages, especially if they will return to their home countries.

*Deb: What do you think are the biggest issues facing all of us as educators?*

Risa: We need to create (or maybe simply own) and teach from coherent philosophies of how we view interpreting and how we teach interpreting. As well, I think we need to work towards understanding interpretation through a lens of discourse analysis and context. This would require that we move away from coding and looking for meaning on a lexical or phrasal level without considering the context. Unfortunately, I don't see enough of either of these happening in our field.

There is more and more research about interpreting and that which applies to interpreting, and this is wonderful. *And*, we need to develop a more critical analysis of the work. In order to make our research base stronger, we need to be able to reflect on the previous studies, learning from the strengths and also the weaknesses of those studies. I think we are shifting in a positive way towards critical analysis and discernment in research versus accepting all research as well done and methodologically sound. Doing this is an indication of maturation of the field. I also think that more cross-cultural and international research is needed with an eye to looking through the lens in a way that might stop the privilege of the dominant way of looking at things. Interdisciplinary studies and research that focus on non-dominant, non-majority issues and people is beneficial for everyone.

Another issue is that many programs do not screen for bilingual fluency prior to accepting students into interpreter education/training programs. This is something that would be helpful to us as a field, seeing language learning and interpreting learning as being separate, with language learning preceding interpreting skills. This could produce more competent interpreters, and in addition, it would stop sending the message (however unintentional) that the fluency required for signed languages is less than that for spoken language. As a field, we

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don't want to perpetuate the idea that proficiency in one of the two languages is any less necessary or less important.

*Deb: Tell us about your research—what did you study and how did you create the study?*

Risa: I studied language use and interaction in both ASL and English, separately. It was a sociolinguistic, interdisciplinary, multilayered study that was designed with a change in context (conversations vs. interviews, different participant backgrounds, and different purposes for the talk). I thought many of the findings were applicable to both the teaching and practice of interpreting and translating. The focus of discussion in contexts is women victims/survivors of sibling sexual abuse talking with each other (and later an interviewee about having disclosed to one or more of their family members. So, it explores how victims/survivors talk about revealing the fact of having been sexually assaulted by their brother to one or more family members.<sup>5</sup> The first context I looked at were conversations between two victims/survivors; there's a conversation in ASL and a separate conversation in American English and the participants knew those conversations would be held between the victims/survivors, who had both disclosed to their families.

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*Deb: And it didn't matter when they had told?*

Risa: Right. The study actually spans having disclosed about the abuse from the age of 12 to the age of 40-plus, and that span also extends from having told nearly 30 years prior to the study, to just several months prior to it.

The second context was interviews with interviewers who had not experienced sexual assault of any type. Each of the four participants, the two deaf participants and the two non-deaf participants, were interviewed in their native language by a research interviewer. The interviewers had training in the areas of sexual abuse, domestic violence, trauma, and research interviews. The study participants told the same disclosure stories in the interviews that were told in the conversations.

To summarize, I designed the study to see whether contextual factors (see below for more on context) did or did not emerge as salient features in the discourse and interactions by looking at direct discourse. What I mean by that, is discourse that was unmediated by an interpreter. Some people have asked why I didn't look at interpreted interactions, why I didn't have the non-deaf and deaf people talk to one another. This was because I wanted to look at the discourse and interaction in the two different languages in order to compare across

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<sup>5</sup> Though not the focus here, the study illuminates themes that emerged in the disclosure stories and the significance of disclosing and further telling one's stories. All of the study participants displayed a similar pattern and trajectory. First, their narratives demonstrated taking control and asserting their agency by disclosing in the first place. This was followed by a sense of diminished agency when dealing with family responses (retraumatization) to the fact of the incest. That was followed with more agency by integrating the abuse, disclosures, and family responses, and understanding the significance of disclosing. The data also showed that the participants experienced transformation by reclaiming their agency in disclosing, telling and retelling their trauma stories.

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languages. I chose un-interpreted interactions because the mere presence of an interpreter and the act of interpreting changes, to a greater or lesser degree, how people communicate and interact.

*Deb: Let's talk about your findings\_what stands out from the study?*

Risa: In general, the study highlights that meaning is dependent on contextual factors, and understanding those factors can provide a way to more fully understand the discourse. So, the study shows the importance of the interplay between contexts, which includes the setting and purpose of the interaction; who the interlocutors are and their relationships with one another; the expectations, goals, shared knowledge, and background knowledge that interlocutors bring to an interaction; and the actual discourse used by the participants. And I think that because meaning resides in context, interpreters must seek to learn and understand these contextual factors in order to interpret effectively.

*Deb: How might your study be applied to interpreting practice and the teaching of interpreting?*

### ***Finding #1: Conceptualization of the task of interpreting***

Risa: There were five areas in which I applied the findings to interpreting and teaching interpreting. The first area of application, *how we conceptualize the task of interpreting*, is of the utmost importance. This study corroborates the sociolinguistic notion that meaning is co-constructed, that meaning is dependent on and intertwined in its context. So, for interpreters and teachers there are two key issues or implications linked to how we conceptualize the task of interpreting. First, how we think about the task determines where we think we can *locate* meaning. And second, how we think about the task determines how we think we can *express* meaning. So if we conceptualize the task of interpreting as a more literal, a more “word equals word,” a more lexical level *location of meaning*, if you will, discovery of meaning, our focus of where meaning will be, is on the words and phrases because that is where we see the meaning residing. Inherent in this notion is that we don’t need to know a lot about context because context doesn’t play an important part in this way of thinking. What follows then, is that if you look for meaning on a word or phrase level, you will only be able to deliver it on a word or phrase level.

Now, if we look at the task of interpreting as locating and delivering meaning-in-context (following the sociolinguistic notion of meaning being co-constructed in any given interaction)\_and lots of people have talked about this over the years, you (Deb Russell) have talked about it, as have Anna Witter-Merithew, Betty Colonomos, Dennis Cokely, Danica Seleskovitch, and others\_in order to discern that meaning, then we must search out, understand, and take into account contextual information. If we say our job is to discern meaning on the level of who these people are; what their relationships with one another are, in this interaction, and may have been; what their goals are and, maybe, how those goals changed through the interactions; what the setting is; what the expectations are; what the norms are; and what the content is; then, we are looking at the task in a very different way than if we believe the meaning lies mostly/only in the words and phrases. If how I conceptualize the task means I have to know something about all those things *in order to* understand what those words mean. .that’s very different.

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If we conceptualize our job as figuring out meaning-in-context, then we can determine how the discourse may be expressed. We will be able to determine when discourse needs to be expressed on a more literal level, and this will be determined *because* of the context in which the interaction occurs.

*Deb: Do you have an example that might help people see that what you are saying?*

Risa: The one I often give to students is that my mom comes to town, and she wants to watch me teach. I teach in ASL, and she doesn't know the language, so I hire an interpreter. Part of what I tell the interpreter is that my mom is interested in seeing me teach; she's less interested in what I'm saying, less interested in the information. That may be a secondary interest to her, but she more wants to see how I interact with students... what I'm like in a classroom. My mom will be embarrassed if you draw much attention to her. I will introduce her to the class, but she is not going to want the interpreter to stop me for clarification on her behalf. She won't really want to participate; she'll just want to get an overall feel for things. My mom will talk with the interpreter before we start class. The students are very likely to want to say hi to her, they'll want to get to know her a little. They will all sign. So the interpreter will be interpreting between them and her, as well, because the language of the classroom is ASL. The interpreter is now going to think about what my mom wants to get out of this interaction and interpretation. The interpreter is going to know that my mom won't interrupt the class, and the interpreter may choose to interpret in a more narrative form at times. For example: "Right now they're talking about the lesson they did last week. I'm ("I" being the interpreter) not sure what the specifics were, but Risa is challenging them to think more deeply about what they wrote." Contrast this with the same setting when the dean has non-deaf guests visiting the university from other universities, and they've asked if they can observe my classroom. These people are watching how a teacher teaches and operates in a classroom, how I talk to the students, what information is being discussed, etc. The interpreter is going to focus on what the visitors, the dean, the university, and I want to get out of the interaction, which is different than what the interpreter would have focused on with my mom visiting my classroom. Unfortunately, these two very different situations are often cataloged as one and the same, simply a classroom visit by someone outside of the university.

*Deb: Tell us about your second research finding.*

**Finding #2: Shared experience and backchanneling (including linguicism and audism)**

Risa: The data showed that one contextual factor, shared experience, influences the way language is used by the interlocutors, and so this has implications for us. In the study, when the victims/survivors talk to one another, they use backchanneling (or watching/listening responses) to index their shared experience or identity. One of the study participants characterized this as communicating, "I *totally* get what you're saying/I *know* your pain/I'm in your shoes." This type of back-channeling appeared with two types of shared experience: having experienced sexual assault and having grown up deaf in a non-deaf world. The backchanneling came in the form of sentences, lexical items, gestures, paralinguistic devices, laughter, and non-verbal behaviors in both ASL and English, and often more than one form appeared at a time (for example, laughter and lexical items). The variety of

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forms and the meaning was relative to the interlocutors' change in language and/or interactive behaviors in their discourse.

For interpreting this means we must be able to identify and comprehend when and why this type of backchanneling is used and to be able to convey it. We have to understand the shared experiences and relationships between the people with whom we are working to be able to access this. That highlights two questions: whether the interpreter has the shared experience or not, will she or he be able to recognize, understand, and convey the information that is present; and is this something that can be taught? There is a logistical element connected to this as well; with some of the behaviors being gestural and non-verbal, interpreters must be able to see the non-deaf participants, as well as the deaf participants, so placement becomes that much more important. This also has implications related to preparation, which I will talk about later.

I want to focus, for a minute, on the shared experience of being deaf (being members of a linguistic and cultural minority and/or disability group) because the *content* of this is applicable for most deaf people and, therefore, it could appear in any deaf/non-deaf interaction. The back-channeling that occurred when the study participants and research interviewers (all deaf) discussed the topic of being deaf in a non-deaf society functioned as “I *totally* get what you’re saying/I *know* your pain/I’m in your shoes.” This arose when they participants discussed “communication issues” in their disclosure stories. (I put that in quotes because the term does not capture the gravity or depth of what that means for the participants.) Another way to say this is that they were referencing their shared experiences of *audism* and *linguicism*.<sup>6</sup>

This leads to several implications for interpreters. The first is our understanding of, and respect for, how the concepts and ramifications of audism and linguicism play a major role in the work we do. To take that a step further, we need to have the ability to recognize the ways that audism and linguicism appear in discourse and interactions. Second, is how we conceptualize the task of interpreting and where we believe the meaning lies. In this data, the participants’ meaning lies in their shared experience, not simply in their words. They never use the terms oppression or audism or linguicism, but they index these concepts in what they say and how they say it (their backchanneling signals). This raises the question of how interpreters can integrate this knowledge and these findings into one’s interpreting practice, especially if we have never shared that experience, that is, non-deaf interpreters.

The deaf people in my study talked about linguicism and audism happening to them within their families, incidentally to describing how their agency was stripped from them when some of the hearing people in their

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<sup>6</sup> The term linguicism was coined by Skutnabb-Kangas in 1988. Linguicism is defined as “the ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1990, p. 110). It is the belief in the inherent superiority of the ability to hear over those who do not and thereby the right to dominance and control of resources and power (Shaw, 2007, p. 84).

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families, immediately upon disclosure (in both of these victims/survivors' families), switched from using ASL to using spoken English. The deaf people were deprived of their agency because *someone else* decided to move into a language that is not and cannot be accessible to a deaf person.

I think that as interpreters and as teachers we, albeit sometimes unwittingly, perpetuate linguicism and audism in our interactions with and around deaf people. My choice to use ASL or to use spoken English can strip someone else of her or his agency. So, for non-deaf interpreters operating within this culture we have to strive to understand and empathize with a deaf person's experience because these are really fundamental cultural constructs for deaf people as they negotiate life in a dominant non-deaf world.

*Deb: Would you talk about your third research finding?*

### **Finding #3: Narratives\_background information leading up to the telling of a narrative**

Risa: I examined the amount of background information of participants prior to entry into the narratives and found a difference across languages. Entry into the narratives was marked by several features: the use of tense; naming of the person(s) the participant had disclosed to and was about to focus on in her disclosure statement that she told the named person; and a sustained explanation of what happened in the disclosure. The data showed that the amount of background given in ASL before launching a narrative was greater than in English; this occurred in both the conversations and the interviews. I measured the time and number of propositions in the background information. For the first narrative of each participant the amount was as follows:

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	ASL		English	
	Bettie	Pearl	Fran	Grace
Conversations				
Time elapsed:	1 min. 23 sec.	10 min. 58 sec.	13 sec.	38 sec.
Number of propositions:	11 propositions	107 propositions	3 propositions	8 propositions
Interviews				
Time elapsed:	2 min. 42 sec.	11 min. 50 sec	50 sec.	1 min. 5 sec.
Number of propositions:	16 propositions	91 propositions	8 propositions	10 propositions

*Table 1: Elapsed time and number of propositions providing background information preceding entry into first narrative (Shaw, 2007, p.144)*

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Whether this is a linguistic or a cultural phenomenon, or simply a tendency of these four participants, needs to be explored further. If it is not simply a tendency of these participants, it has implications for teaching the languages, as well as teaching interpreters strategies, such as understanding the linguistic structure, what function is being carried out, and how you then construct the language using the appropriate type of discourse in the target language. This information is specific to American English and American Sign, and it is the type of information needed in any language that interpreters are working.

*Deb: You had another finding about narratives, right?*

### ***Finding #4: Narratives\_coherence in first-time telling and first-time retelling***

Risa: I had the great fortune of gathering data that included a first-time ever telling of a narrative and a first-time ever retelling of that narrative. This was serendipitous and very wonderful data that showed me structural differences in the two tellings. In addition, when I asked the study participant about these two tellings, she said, and I'm paraphrasing here, that the second one (the retelling) was much more "smooth" (her word) because she had never told that story to anyone. She also said that because the retelling was her second-time telling of the story, she could judge more easily what she wanted to say and how she wanted to say it. These were ASL narratives, so the findings are language specific (I did not locate any other studies in the literature on this). Research in the field of trauma indicates that lack of coherence in first-time tellings is characteristic in other languages. An example of this is the work done by Mary Harvey and her colleagues.

In the first-time telling there is a lack of time markers, discourse framing, and relationship between ideas and causality; and there is vagueness and ambiguity. The narrator does not situate the story or events in the story in time and does not indicate how information or events are related chronologically. She does not employ framing devices to specify focus (implicitly or explicitly) and the recipient is left with a feeling that the narrator is rambling. The narrator presents and discusses numerous topics and individual pieces of information but does not link them to one another; she fails to elucidate the relationship between ideas. Her discourse is vague and ambiguous; it lacks clarity and purpose of what she mentions and why she mentions it. In the retelling, albeit the first time she has retold the story (as confirmed with the study participant), the discourse is framed in her opening statement (she says *that* she disclosed, *when* she disclosed and *why* she disclosed), she uses time markers throughout, she identifies and infers how and why topics and information are linked, and she specifies or provides enough information to permit the recipient to draw inferences about what she is talking about.

This provides linguistic structural information about ASL narratives and a lack of coherence in a first-time telling. We need to educate interpreters to recognize and convey coherent and non-coherent discourse and to understand the import of both types of discourse. Interpreters need to understand what a first-time telling might look like and how to determine the meaning of the structural form of the discourse in association with contextual factors. Do interpreters know what a narrative lacking coherence looks like? Again, context is so important; let's look at some specific settings where stories might be told for the first time. Think about police and other

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investigators interviewing witnesses and suspects or the disclosures that people make in mental health settings. And also think about teachers getting the story for the first time of what happened on the playground at lunch or what happened at home last night. First-time tellings can happen in any setting. Are interpreters able to intentionally be disjointed or ambiguous in their rendering of the interpretation when that is what is appropriate?

Also, and this is for the second language learner of any language, we have a knack of being non-cohesive and lacking coherence in our second language. We have to be able to control that and use it only when necessary and when guided by the discourse and interaction that we are interpreting.

*Deb: Tell us about your fifth research finding.*

### **Finding #5: Preparation**

Risa: This is a common thread in everything I've talked about so far. Depending on how we conceive of the task of interpreting, how we consider where meaning lies, and how we locate and express it... this will help determine how we consider preparation. On what level do you prepare; what groundwork needs to be completed for me to be effective as the interpreter in this situation, with these people? It's similar to what level you conceptualize the task of interpreting or find meaning. If I look at meaning and context, once I've concluded that the context is important, I will want to learn everything that I can about the contextual factors in order to then understand the actual interaction and the words/discourse that will be used. If I look at the task as a lexical or a literal translation, I probably will not go as far trying to find out about the context because I don't consider it an important factor, and I may well consider it a hindrance. I think that, often times, when we look at preparation, if we are thinking about doing things literally, we want mostly content information. How can we, in good conscience, accept an assignment without doing the groundwork and bringing to the job the appropriate background?

We also have this unfortunate habit of wanting to know what the deaf person's language is like, but not necessarily wanting to know what the non-deaf person's language is like. This is an example of linguicism in our field; we teach interpreters to "assess the deaf person's language, to make sure they can understand us and we can understand them." Why don't we assess our own capacity to understand the people with whom we are working and our own capacity to use the range of language that they will be using in the situation, in *their* interaction? This shift in our perspective also shifts the power dynamic; it is a recognition that this is about me as an interpreter, a language user, and as someone whose language range may or may not be suitable for any given situation. Ethically, we must ensure that our linguistic capacities match those of the people with whom we will work.

I hope it is clear, too, how preparation can affect our understanding of shared experience, linguicism and audism, and narrative structures. We too often think of preparation in limited ways—what is the topic, what will participants be talking about—when in fact, preparation means so much more. To me it includes our knowledge of, and adeptness with, the languages and cultures; our understanding of the structures and "cultures" of the settings (such as educational, legal, medical); and the particular activities that will take place (a lecture, a field trip, a test,

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a demonstration to show proficiency). It also includes the goals of the participants (to enjoy, to learn, to show off, to convince, to be accountable, to remove accountability), our knowledge of and experience with the participants in the interaction, and there is so much more. One example I give students is a meeting I was in once, it was the Council on Graduate Education, which meets every two weeks, has subcommittees, and is, like any other university committee/council, rife with politics among its members. A highly skilled interpreter was sent to interpret for the meeting *the second week she worked at Gallaudet*. She was fairly ineffective, and I imagine frustrated, due mostly to the fact that she did not understand the structures that guided our meeting and discussion; nor was she aware of the politics of the council and the people who sat on it. Had she been at the university longer and become acquainted with the structures, rules (spoken and unspoken), and the people, she would have been more effective and successful *because* of being better prepared. As it was, she didn't really stand a chance. We asked that she return as an observer (not as a working interpreter) and meet with the chair to get up to speed so that she could interpret for us in the future. My point here being, that time in an institution is part of preparation.

Interpreters have to be sensitive to the fact that we can't expect to know everything, so we have to hold plenty of humility that will allow us to discover meaning. If we think, "Well the meaning is in the words, and I'm just going to pay attention to the words/phrases," we will miss and lose so much. And if we think, "I've done my preparation; I know what these people plan to talk about," we don't allow ourselves to understand that there's so much we don't know. We are the outsiders, no matter how many times we've interpreted for the same people or meeting or classroom; we are never there as interpreters on our own behalf.

*Deb: I am so excited when I hear you describe your findings as they clearly have importance for our field and our practice. What do you think educators and researchers should focus on based on your results?*

Risa: The overarching conclusion of this study is that context has immense and profound effects on what people say, on how they say it, and on how it is understood; in essence, on how meaning is co-constructed. In looking at how discourse was affected, changed or not changed, across calibrated differences in contextual factors, this study illuminates both how exquisitely sensitive to context discourse is and how subtle the behaviors of interlocutors affected by contextual changes can be.

I think that for educators it is essential that we have an explicit, coherent, philosophical approach to our teaching; that we convey it; and that we incorporate it fully into our curriculum and program. I want to underscore two core principles that are central to the task of interpreting: interaction happens within a context and the notion that meaning is co-constructed. In building a curriculum that focuses on the significance of meaning-in-context, meaning that organically arises out of context, preparation has to be a significant component. I would submit that the effectiveness of our interpreting is compromised if performed without proper preparation.

Again, the notion of preparation is tied to how we conceptualize the task of interpreting. Then, in addition to having interpreters understand as much as possible about the context, we also have to teach interpreters that by definition we are walking into somebody else's business, we are walking into the lives of other people, that

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these interactions do not originate with us as interpreters, and that the interactions are not for the purpose of the interpreters—they are for the purpose of the participants of the interaction. That leads us to two things. One is to realize how crucial preparation is, because we *are* outsiders to the interaction. And second, to realize how much we do not know and probably cannot know. We have to recognize that, so we can be accountable for our own limits; so that we can get out of the way of the participants; so that they can conduct their business on their own behalf.

As educators, we want to remember that, in general, experienced interpreters will be able to take this information and use it more directly, whereas less experienced interpreters or new interpreters may require more guidance to understand the implications.

*Deb: Any advice for interpreter researchers?*

Risa: Yes, do not listen to the naysayers! I had people who said that I would never be able to get videotaped data about such a taboo subject, and yet I did (and I turned down many people who were interested in participating in my study). Other people told me that study participants are too self-conscious about one camera, let alone two or three, and said that taping with two or three cameras just isn't done. I did it. So, it *is* done. And I'm nothing special. I am delighted with the study that I got to do and the research learning that led up to it. I have to say that I love my design and methodology, and I love to talk about it.

I would also advise researchers to seek guidance from mentors on designing your study, mentors who will support what you want to do and help you figure out a way to do it. I used three cameras in each of my data sets. Had I not, I would not have captured the data on back-channeling in ASL and English that was one of my key findings. That information would have been lost had I used only one, or even two, cameras. Your design and methodology is the foundation of your study; don't compromise, and do be creative. Find what excites you about your (potential) research. It will lead you to other research questions and collaborations.

*Deb: Final thoughts?*

Risa: As interpreters and educators, we really need to understand and respect what it means to be in the lives of other people in order to grasp the sensibilities of the situation. We need to learn deeply about communities, cultures, and languages in order to understand the nature of interpreting, meaning, context and preparation. We need to put ourselves in other peoples' shoes.

And, I want to thank you for this wonderful opportunity to talk with you and talk about the work I've done.

*Deb: Many thanks, Risa, for being willing to share your work with us in the Open Forum. You are definitely on my "researchers to watch" list! Thank you again.*

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# Dissertation Abstracts

In order to inform our readers of current research on translator and interpreter education and training, we will regularly feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral theses in each issue. If you have recently finished a master's or PhD thesis in this field and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200-300 words, along with details of the institution where the thesis was completed, the year in which it was submitted, and a contact email address. Submissions should be sent to Dissertation Abstracts Section Editor, Carol Patrie, at [carol.patrie@gmail.com](mailto:carol.patrie@gmail.com).

## **The Use of Prosodic Markers to Indicate Utterance Boundaries in American Sign Language Interpretation**

**Brenda Nicodemus, PhD**

*San Diego State University, USA. Email: bnicodemus@projects.sdsu.edu*

Degree: PhD dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2007

This study examines the characteristics of prosodic markers used at phrasal and sentence boundaries in American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation. Five highly skilled interpreters were videotaped as they interpreted a spoken English lecture into ASL. Fifty deaf participants viewed one of the videotaped interpretations and indicated perceived boundaries in the interpreted discourse. These identified points were then examined for the presence of prosodic markers that might be responsible for the perception of a boundary. This dissertation reports on the characteristics of the markers including their frequency, number, duration, and timing. The examination suggests that the production of markers is limited to a specific inventory of behaviors that occur with varying degrees of frequency. The production of multiple prosodic markers at the boundary locations was the most common pattern and may occur in order to accommodate the perceptual needs of the viewer. Given that often seven or more markers were produced within a two-second interval and that the duration of each was approximately one-half to one second, it was anticipated that most of the markers would be produced in a simultaneous or overlapping manner. In fact, nearly one-third of the markers were produced sequentially, but the precise timing of the production of the markers enabled multiple markers to occur in a short space of time. The duration of the most frequent markers from each prosodic category was from approximately one-half to one full second. The duration may reflect the size of the musculature being used during production or the salience of each marker in cueing the viewer to the location of a boundary. This study provides further evidence that there are universals in prosodic systems across language modalities by demonstrating that chunking language into phrasal and sentence units occurs in a visual language modality, as it does in spoken languages. The "amodal" nature of boundaries across languages provides additional insights into language processing, memory, and the importance of prosodic structure.

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## Dissertation abstracts

### Sign Language Linguistic Proficiency Testing: The Possibilities for Libras Interpreters

Maria Cristina Pires Pereira

*Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brazil. Email: [pirespereiramc@gmail.com](mailto:pirespereiramc@gmail.com)*

Degree: Masters dissertation, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, 2008

This is a dissertation on language proficiency testing as applied to hearing, signed language interpreters at the beginning of their professional careers. Due to the diversity of instruments, proceedings, and conceptions of what must be assessed in signed language interpreters (SLI), an investigation of language proficiency testing and the distinction between translation proficiency and professional certification is needed, as well as when it is the most appropriate time to apply specific testing during the various phases of the interpreters' training and professional practice. The theoretical basis of this work includes (a) the distinction between language proficiency and language fluency, (b) the evolution of the proficiency concept, (c) language testing, and (d) a general view of signed language translation and interpreting. The signed language testing that is examined in this study comprises those explicitly labeled as "proficiency tests" and professional/selection tests that comprise signed language proficiency features, even if they are not named as such. With this in mind, two selection tests used in signed language interpreting training courses have been analyzed. These selection tests were administered in Rio Grande do Sul, and included the National Libras Proficiency Examination from the Education Ministry (Prolibras), and the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) from the United States of America. To investigate the competencies of signed language interpreters that would be evaluated, considering test raters points of view, a signed language selection simulation was done. That simulation pointed to the attributes that potential deaf and hearing raters considered to be relevant in signing as the best proficiency boundary for the beginning of signed language interpreters' professional careers, as well as the features that disqualify test takers based on language performance. Based on the data obtained, proposals are made for the improvements in current signed language testing.

### The History of American Sign Language Interpreting Education

Carolyn Ball

*William Woods University, USA. Email: [cball@williamwoods.edu](mailto:cball@williamwoods.edu)*

Degree: PhD dissertation, Capella University, 2007

The American Sign Language interpreter education field has a rich history that is largely undocumented. Although other educational programs, such as nursing and teaching, have recorded histories, American Sign Language interpreter education in the United States does not. This study provides a chronological history, drawn from the records of several organizations and dating back as far as the eighteenth century, as well as information obtained during interviews with key practitioners. It also provides the profession of interpreter education a full review of the key theories and practitioners, as well as the social, political, and legal perspectives that have influenced the development of the interpreter education field. Recommendations for changes in curricular design are included.