Proceedings of the 18th National Convention
Conference of Interpreter Trainers

Connecting Our World:
Expanding Our Horizon

Len Roberson and Sherry Shaw, Editors

October 27-30, 2010
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The Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) is a professional association of interpreter educators. http://www.cit-asl.org

Conference of Interpreter Trainers

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Mission Statement

The Conference of Interpreter Trainers, Inc. (CIT) recognizes the minority status of D/deaf people and the long history of linguistic and cultural oppression that they have endured. We therefore publicly proclaim our respect and support for D/deaf people's right to self-determination and true communication access.

The mission of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers is to encourage interpreter educators, which includes American Sign Language and interpreting instructors, mentors, and presenters, to provide the highest quality instruction possible in ASL and interpreting courses, with the recognition that fluency in ASL is a critical precursor to interpreting education.

The CIT promotes quality instruction by providing its membership with:

- Standards for interpreting programs and curricula
- Standards for interpreter educators
- Opportunities for professional development and mentoring
- Support for research relevant to the practice and instruction of interpretation and mentoring
- A mechanism for sharing information among interpreter educators
- Support of high quality sign language education
- Development and support of collegial relationships with professionals in other related disciplines and organizations

Adopted 1990, Revised 2004

Acknowledgements

The process of editing is both rewarding and challenging. It is an opportunity to work with authors to refine their excellent work into a form to share the richness of what they've done with others. Helen Keller said that "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." and it is this sentiment we share. Thank you to the authors for your diligence in writing and revising. Thank you for allowing us to join you in doing so much!

Len Roberson and Sherry Shaw, Editors
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Principles and Practice: Teaching Team Interpreting as Collaboration and Interdependence[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores new theoretical constructs that can be used to teach and explore the team interpreting process as one of shared cooperation (collaboration) and reliance on each other (interdependence). The constructs are based on the findings of two studies on team interpreting that appear in the author's new book on team interpreting: *Team Interpreting as Collaboration and Interdependence*, and provide ways to frame how teams can most effectively approach their work together before, during, and after an interpreting assignment. The primary focus of the paper is on how to use these theoretical constructs as part of a process of mediated activities to teach and explore team interpreting as a collaborative and interdependent endeavor that involves all aspects of the interpreting assignment, rather than merely feeding information as needed during the actual interpretation.

Introduction

The fields of ASL/English interpretation and interpreter education have come a long way since the establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1965 and the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) in 1979. Our focus has changed greatly over the years. In the early days of these fields, we were focused on what was observable, i.e., we primarily attended to the

[1] All figures in this paper are from the following book and are used with the permission of the publisher: Hoza, J. (2010). *Team interpreting as collaboration and interdependence*. Alexandria, VA: RID Press.

source language (SL) and target language (TL) because these were aspects of the work we could see. As educators, we focused on increasing students' sign vocabulary and, to some extent, ASL grammatical competence, and we typically used ASL dictionaries and a few texts that were available on interpretation. With the publication of the "green book" in particular (a book on the grammatical structure of ASL for teachers by Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980), we switched our focus more to students' ASL grammatical competence, but we continued to work under the assumption that if interpreting students knew "how to sign" certain concepts (in terms of ASL lexicon and syntax), then they would be able to interpret appropriately (we assumed they knew English and needed to learn ASL in order to interpret). Interpreters worked under this same assumption and interpreters (and students) who created equivalent and eloquent interpretations were considered quite talented, although we usually didn't understand how they achieved this task.

The introduction of interpreting process models, such as those by Seleskovitch, Cokely, and Colonomos, which became widely used in the field about twenty years after RID was established, began to tease apart the process by which interpreters achieved successful interpretations (Cokely, 1992; Colonomos, 1992, 1996; Seleskovitch, 1978). The cognitive steps involved in the interpreting process were outlined and began to define our view of interpreting. These models include understanding, dropping form, mental representation, and planning, as well as issues of meaning, context, cultural mediation, and discourse. Along with these models were contributions by others such as Isham (1986) who helped clarify areas such as the importance of context, content, register, function (speaker's goal), affect, contextual force (relative impact of the message), and metanotative qualities (overall impressions of the speaker; see, e.g., Cokely, 2007). These approaches to interpreting began to frame how interpreters understood and discussed the process of interpretation. Other advances include further exploration of discourse analysis, the nature of interaction, and the interpreter's place and involvement in that interaction (see, e.g., Angelelli, 2003; Gish, 1987; Metzger, 1999; Roy, 2000; Wadenjö, 1998; Winston & Monikowski, 2000).

Having ways of talking about the work has become the foundation of the interpreting profession and has provided the field with the following benefits:

1) a better awareness and understanding of the interpreting process and the components of meaning that result in dynamic equivalence in the interpreted message,
2) a common language (metalanguage) for processing the interpreting task with others, which has increased the potential for educational and professional development, and
3) a better assessment of interpretation and more consistent interpreting standards.

Professional jargon that is unique to the field (along with a literature of research to support and further professional understanding) is one of the features of a profession (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004).

Team interpreting, in which interpreters work in concert, began around 1980 (Cokely & Hawkins, 2003; Hoza, 2010; Jones, 2007, citing Sanderson (personal communication)). Team interpreting at that time seemed to be a rather mysterious task as well. Since the introduction of team interpreting, there has been little research on teaming until more recently (Cokely & Hawkins, 2003; Hoza, 2010). Interpreters have had ways of talking about the work, but it has been overly focused on the product and the observable interaction between team members (such as how team members can "feed" information to each other during the interpretation). This is much like the early views of interpretation. The theoretical underpinnings and strategies of teaming have been little explored until more recently.

This paper discusses how educators and mentors can use the theoretical constructs developed and found in the author's new book on team interpreting, *Team Interpreting as Collaboration and Interdependence*. These constructs have the potential to do for team interpreting what models of interpretation have done for our understanding of the interpreting process. They can provide students, protégés, and practitioners ways of framing how teams can most effectively approach their work together before, during, and after an interpreting assignment. The paper seeks to provide ways to increase both the underlying philosophical understanding (schema) of teaming as well as provide practical applications for interpreter education and professional development.

The benefits of having a way to talk about *team interpreting* can provide similar benefits to those mentioned above for interpretation:

1) a better awareness and understanding of the *team interpreting* process and the components of teaming that allow for a team to work together to arrive at a dynamically equivalent interpreted message,
2) a common language (metalanguage) for processing the *team interpreting* task with others, which can increase the potential for educational and professional development, and
3) a better assessment of team interpreting and more consistent standards regarding *team interpreting*.

Having a common way of discussing the team interpreting task has many benefits and, in many ways, this analysis is long overdue.

The theoretical constructs and findings of the book are based on two studies: (1) a study that involved videotaping three teams of interpreters interpreting the same stimulus material (which was a videotaped panel discussion in ASL they interpreted into English) and interviewing the individual interpreters afterwards, and (2) a national survey of certified interpreters (see Hoza, 2010 [Chapter 2]). For the videotape study, three teams of interpreters were selected by getting recommendations of team interpreters from Deaf people who often work with teams and by having the top-recommended interpreters select preferred team interpreters. The survey was a national survey of certified interpreters in the United States. Two hundred certified interpreters were contacted to participate in the online survey. There were 46 respondents, which represented a 23% response rate.

Teaching, scaffolding, and mediated activities

The theoretical constructs presented in this paper are not intended to be "taught" as much as they are intended to provide a framework for the exploration of team interpreting, especially in one-on-one and small group discussions. There is always the danger that students would be taught such constructs out of context and be expected to indicate their "learning" without application. These constructs are intended to frame particular concepts and subsequent discussions/processing. When it comes to such constructs, or models, it is tempting to teach

them as entities to themselves, but to do so would do a disservice to the development of mastery on the part of students and protégés.

The goal of this paper is to provide the educator with these constructs to use as part of a well-rounded approach to student learning and exploration of the team interpreting process. Focusing on interpreting and team interpreting as though they are concrete trained behaviors presents a danger in the one extreme, because critical thinking and processing of the work with others are needed to grow as an interpreter. Likewise, teaching abstract theory without application and analysis presents a danger in the other extreme, in that one can only grow in one's cognitive processing by directly exploring specific instances, noting patterns, making decisions, and testing one's own strategies within the new theoretical understanding. Learning teaming (like learning interpreting) involves high cognitive functions, such as decision-making and management of the process, and the development of such higher cognitive functions require experience, thinking, and discussion with others. As always with education, the question of *how* to do this becomes the crucial question, and that will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

There are many different approaches to education and many different teaching strategies that can be employed to explore teaming with interpreting students and interpreters. It is assumed that the educator -- whether a classroom instructor, workshop presenter, or mentor -- uses a mixture of teaching strategies to achieve growth and development on the part of the student (or protégé or colleague). Primarily, however, the assumption is that there is on-going dialogue between instructor and student about both the theory and practice of team interpreting by exploring specific instances of the students' own team interpreting work and observing others' teaming work. This approach is in direct contrast to the "banking" approach to teaching, in which the teacher is assumed to be all-knowing, and imparts knowledge in the form of content and theory to students who are seen as objects who are to listen patiently (Freire, 1970).

Noted psychologist L. S. Vygotsky has argued that higher functions develop in such a way that interpersonal processes transform into intrapersonal processes, by which he means that such development "appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). All the

higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978, p. 57). This learning occurs through social interaction, i.e., dialogue, and "teachers who want to give their students authentic experiences in the disciplines they study... help them... become socialized into the talk and practices of different disciplines through interaction with more skilled members of the discipline -- i.e., the teacher" (Hogan, 1997, p. 1).

The teacher (or mentor) plays an important role in a student's (protégé's) development. By asking questions and listening, and then scaffolding the student's (or team's) thought process, the student can achieve a greater understanding of the teaming process. Scaffolding begins by asking questions and listening. When the teacher uses "questions to determine [the student's] progress, and then provides hints, subtle suggestions, and guidance to move the student along, [the teacher] is using instructional scaffolding. Scaffolding means providing support to allow a [student]... to think for him or herself. The more advanced partner, or scaffolder, is supportive without being overly directive. A good scaffolder looks for the point where a student can go it alone, and allows the individual to proceed on his or her own initiative" (Hogan & Pressley, 1997, p. 2). "Instructional scaffolding lies at the heart of the verbal interactions that induct students into the practices of an academic discipline" (Hogan & Pressley, 1997, p. 1).

By engaging in dialogue and "thinking out loud," the student can receive guidance in the important aspects of interpreting and team interpreting work: guidance in how we *think* about the process, make decisions, and manage the process. I am reminded of what an instructor of mine said in an education class I took many years ago: "The person who is doing the most talking is doing most of the thinking." Our goal as instructors is not to do most of the thinking; our goal is to support the students' thinking and to provide supports, nudges, ideas, and challenges that help them move forward.

Our two primary goals as educators are to engage students in thinking and to scaffold their understanding and thinking. An instructor has many options when scaffolding a student's learning, e.g., the instructor can:

- frame a problem or articulate a goal
- encourage attention to conflicts and differences of opinion
- refocus the discussion
- invite interaction of ideas
- prompt refinement of language
- turn a question back to its owner
- communicate standards for explanations
- ask for elaboration
- ask for clarification
- restate or summarize student statements (Hogan & Pressley, 1997, p. 90).

Students of team interpreting (and interpretation as well) need experiences or examples to analyze, experts who know how to listen to them and scaffold their learning, and ways of stepping back from the process in order to make generalizations and gain new insights.

Vogytsky distinguishes between a *sign* (a conception or idea, which has to do with *internal* perception and understanding of some aspect of the world) and a *tool* (i.e., a function, which has to do with an operation or change in the external world), and has proposed that neither of these emerges out of nothing; they are developed and enhanced through social interactions he calls mediated activities (Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978). A mediated activity involves interaction with others in an activity for which the learner has some mastery, but does not yet have the competencies or understanding to manage fully. The interaction provides a way for learners to move from their comfort zone into areas just beyond their comfort zone, which is called the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The goal of the educator is to provide experiences that are just beyond a student's cognitive capabilities and to work with the student to explore those areas that are just out of reach, i.e., in the student's ZPD.

What the teacher may assume is an issue may not be an issue for a particular interpreting student, or may be out of the student's zone and not be of benefit to the student.

> [Understanding the difference between the teacher's and the student's] definition of situation is vital to an understanding of the teacher-student feedback interaction. Feedback must be based upon the student's perceptions rather than upon teacher-

> determined criteria. It is upon the student's perception that effective scaffolding will take place, and any feedback session that is initiated from the teacher's definition of situation may be ultimately unintelligible to the very student for whom the benefits of this interaction are designed.... Teachers must ask their students what they see in their performances, and then use that information to extend the student's knowledge. (Gish, 1993, p. 33)

To best make use of these theoretical constructs, interpreter educators are encouraged to keep in mind the comments above regarding Vygotsky's notions of social interaction (dialogue) and mediated activities, as well as the process of scaffolding. Students benefit most from (1) experiencing a challenging external activity that they construct internally, and (2) engaging with others as described above, so that this interpersonal/social process becomes part of their internal (intrapersonal) process, i.e., results in an increased ability to understand and approach a complex task. Such external events and interactions push one's zone, allow true learning to take place, and enable students to achieve greater mastery over complex cognitive tasks (for further discussion of this approach as it applies to interpreter education, see Bentley-Sussaman, 2009; Colonomos, 2001; Gish, 1993; Shaw, 1989). These theoretical constructs have a special place in this process, as these constructs help frame and provide a means for expanding one's understanding of specific signs and tools through mediated activities.

Views of team interpreting

One of the first steps toward understanding team interpreting is to describe what team interpreting is and how it works. There are several mediated activities that can be used to explore this initial step. One approach is to have students try out teaming using a stimulus text that is just outside their comfort zone and that will require them to work as a team, and then afterwards having them, as a group, define team interpreting and how it works. Another approach is to have them write their own definitions of team interpreting (based on their readings (e.g., Chapter 1 of the *Team Interpreting* book), past discussions, and/or observations of interpreters), as well as writing "what makes teaming work" and "what impedes teaming," and then discussing their responses. A third approach is to start by talking about other examples of

situations in which students have collaborated as teams in the past on projects that did not involve interpreting, e.g., in a class, at home, or at work. This third approach allows students to define "teamwork" more generally and to pinpoint what contributes to a team approach and what impedes a team's work. This discussion can then lead to a discussion of team interpreting specifically, where teamwork in its general sense and interpreting as a team can be compared and contrasted. As with all mediated activities, the focus of these activities is to discover what is in the students' zone, where their ZPD lies, and to provide scaffolding to help them move forward in their understanding and thinking. The focus is on students' understanding, analysis, synthesis, and discovery.

The *Team Interpreting* book reports on three views of team interpreting based on a literature review and the two studies that form the foundation of the book, and the book reveals that the view of team interpreting has changed dramatically since teaming first began in the latter part of the twentieth century (Hoza, 2010). The first view is that of two independent practitioners taking turns doing the work in order to avoid fatigue that can harm the interpreters' health, as well as to avoid the effects of fatigue on the accuracy of the interpreted message. In this early view, one interpreter is the "on" interpreter who is producing the interpretation and the other interpreter is the "off" interpreter who is resting. It is also under this view that the practice of switching roles every 20 to 30 minutes began.

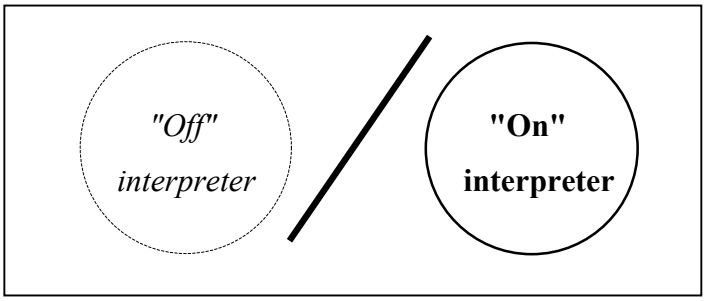

Figure 1. Team interpreting as an *independent* process: Interpreters take turns being the "on" interpreter who is interpreting and the "off" interpreter who is not

The next view that emerged is a monitoring view, which is still a prevalent view in the field (Hoza, 2010). In this view, the interpreters also maintain distinct roles and switch roles every 20 to 30 minutes. However, under the monitoring view, while one interpreter is the "on" interpreter

and produces the interpretation, the other interpreter -- the "monitor" interpreter -- monitors the "on" interpreter's output for accuracy and feeds information or makes corrections, as needed. In addition, the monitor interpreter often provides feedback to the other interpreter after the interpretation.

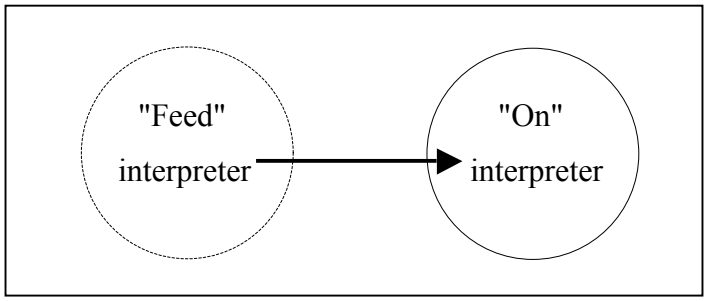

Figure 2. Team interpreting as a *monitoring* process: The "feed" interpreter monitors and corrects the "on" interpreter's interpretation

The third view, based on collaboration and interdependence, is explored at length in the book. It is a more current view and one that is replacing, or at least building upon, the monitoring view. Under this view, interpreters "assume that they are collaborating to jointly create the interpretation and have obligations to each other for every aspect of the interpreting process and managing the setting and interaction" (Hoza, 2010, p. 8).

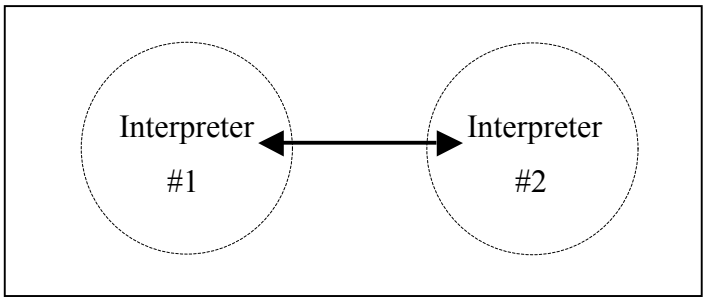

Figure 3. Team interpreting as a *collaborative and interdependent* process: Both interpreters work in partnership on *their joint work*

Under this view, interpreters collaborate before the assignment by discussing issues of meaning, cultural mediation, interaction, speakers' goals, and how they can work together; they collaborate and work interdependently during the interpretation by discussing issues that emerge and by depending on each other or assisting each other as needed; and they process afterwards by sharing their thoughts on not only the teaming work, but the interpretation and other factors that

arise. That is, "team interpreting is not just about what is produced as the product (the target language), even though a dynamically equivalent TL rendition is the goal of the team. Rather, team interpreting is centered on the *process* of working together, and this process can occur at three main times: during the pre-session, during the interpretation, and during the post-session" (Hoza, 2010, p. 161).

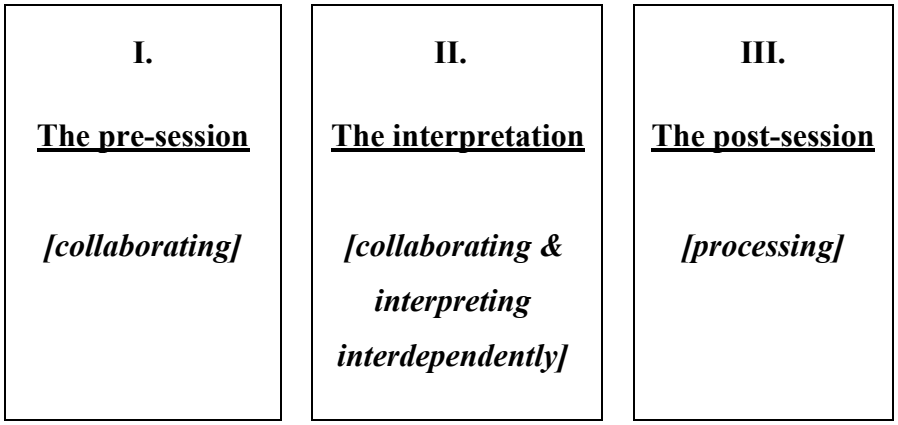

Figure 4. The three types of interactions that teams have when working together

These three views of teaming -- as an independent process, a monitoring process, and a collaborative and interdependent process -- can contribute to the discussion of team interpreting and how it works. In addition, teachers can use these three views to enhance the discussion of the team interpreting process in four more ways. First, they can discuss with students the historical factors that contributed to these changing views in the field's understanding and assumptions about team interpreting. Second, they can review differences in expectations that are associated with the three views and talk with students about students' own assumptions and expectations. The discussion can also focus on the pros and cons of each of these views. Furthermore, students can begin to discuss issues that arise when members of the team differ in their assumptions (views) about the task, and how teams can work out such differences, if possible. Third, students can explore the three interactions involved in teaming: the pre-session, the interpretation, and the post-session.[2] By observing, practicing, and discussing these

[2] For further discussion of the pre-session, the interpretation, and the post-session, see Hoza (2010). In particular, Chapter 4 "The Pre-session" explores the pre-session, Chapter 9 "Achieving and Maintaining Collaboration and Interdependence" explores how teams can talk about the work, and Chapter 10, "A Team Interpreting Model:

interactions, students can better appreciate how each of these is unique and functions in much different ways and has different benefits for the team and the interpretation. Fourth, teachers and students can discuss the nature of teaming and how the particular approach may vary due to the situation itself. For example, there may be some settings in which working independently or working under the monitoring view is preferable to working collaboratively and interdependently. For instance, the team may determine that it is best in a particular situation to divide up the task by having each interpreter interpreting for different participants (independently) rather than working together on the interpretation. In this case, the team would be working as a compromised team, but this set-up may be the most effective way to meet the needs of the team interpreting assignment in that situation.

Teaming is more than just relieving another interpreter's fatigue, and it is more than monitoring and ensuring accuracy of another interpreter's interpretation. Team interpreting involves working together for a successful interpreted event. It involves switching with each other to relieve fatigue and it involves monitoring; however, it has the potential to involve much more. These three views of teaming can enrich the discussion of teaming by having students explore the potential for teams to work together before, during, and after the interpreting assignment on all aspects of the interpreting assignment. Having this kind of discussion with students and making use of these three views of team interpreting can promote students' understanding of team interpreting and provide them with different conceptualizations of the team interpreting process to examine further.

Features of an effective interpreting team

Once students have a good sense of how they would define team interpreting and describe the teaming process, they can begin to look at what makes for an effective interpreting team. Similar mediated activities can be used to explore effective teaming. One approach is to have students break into small groups and write what features make for effective team interpreting, then sharing their ideas with the group for further discussion. Students should list specific examples

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Collaboration and Interdependence at Work," identifies specific features of each of these interactions and provides a detailed model of team interpreting.

of what they have seen or would imagine are effective practices of teams, as well as specific examples of what could work against the team. From there, the class can further explore specifics in order to expand their understanding of effective teaming. Another approach is to again discuss teamwork more globally or in another context (e.g., perhaps a project that students have done together) and to discuss what made the teamwork successful. This discussion can then be extended to team interpreters who are working together to accomplish a successful interpretation. A third approach is to have students read about effective interpreting teams in the *Team Interpreting* book (Chapter 3) and/or to present the figure discussed below (Figure 5), and have students identify and further discuss the four features identified. Thought Questions appear throughout the book, and these can be used as stimulus questions for discussion. For example, in this section of the book, some of the questions ask the reader to identify which features of an effective team are most important and which features are least important. There are also questions related to other issues related to effective teams, such as the team's relationship, their communication with each other, and the personal characteristics or skills of the interpreters. A fourth approach is to have students role-play and review certain behaviors that contribute to, or impede, a team's work.

Teaming involves much more than assigning two interpreters to work together. Both the interviews with the interpreters in the videotape study and the responses to the survey indicate that there are four main features of an effective interpreting team. Both the product of the joint effort and the effectiveness of the team depend on (1) the individual characteristics and skills of the team members, (2) the philosophy or schema the team interpreters have regarding interpreting and how the team can work together, (3) the team's interpersonal relationship and communication with each other, and (4) the team's commitment and trust to their work together and to a successful interpretation.

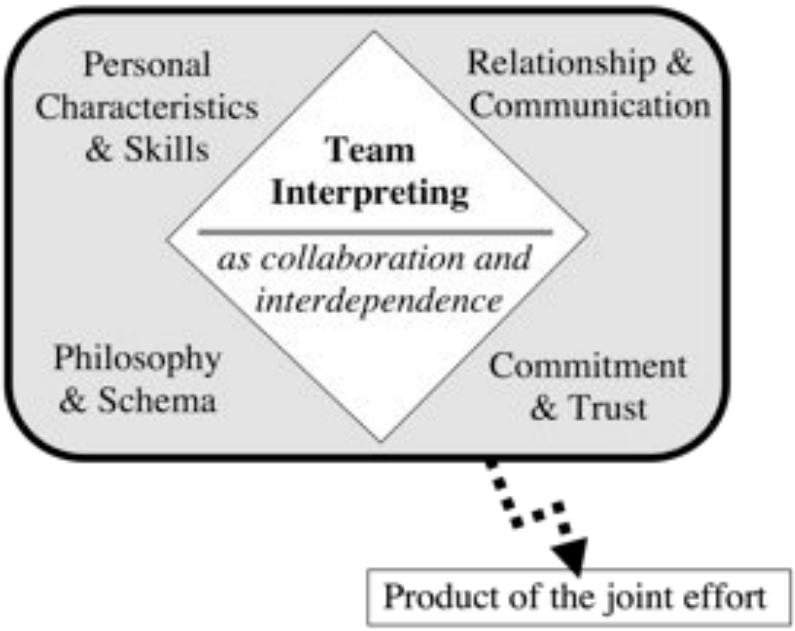

Figure 5. Features of collaboration and interdependence in team interpreting. The product of the joint effort of the interpreting team is dependent on the personal characteristics and skills of team members, the philosophy and schema of the team members, the interpersonal relationship and communication between them, and their commitment to the success of the team and trust in each other.

As with all of these mediated activities, the movement should be from "what is known/understood" to "what is not known/not understood". When possible, activities can be used to stimulate discussion. These exercises can involve teaming or team-like activities, or discussions about their experience with specific instances of teaming either as a participant or as an observer. The discussion at this level centers on the requisites for an effective team of interpreters.

Teaming strategies

Interpreting teams can use a variety of strategies to accomplish their joint work. As with the other topics discussed thus far, there are a few primary approaches, or mediated activities, that can be used when it comes to exploring teaming strategies. First, students can engage in team interpreting and discuss the kinds of strategies that they used. Students may not have terms for the strategies they use, so they should be encouraged to discuss examples of the kinds of

information that they fed each other and other ways in which they interacted during the interpretation in order to ensure that the team's work was the best that it could be. Second, students can discuss observations of strategies that teams use in their interpreting work -- either live or on video -- to analyze the teaming strategies used. Third, students could read the relevant chapters in the book (Chapters 5 and 6) and/or interview interpreters, and discuss the strategies employed by a team.

Much of the attention on team interpreting in the literature has been on how to feed information; however, there are other strategies that teams use. We will first review strategies used for feeding information, then discuss other teaming strategies. The two studies reveal three types of feed strategies: target language (TL) feeds, confirmations, and process feeds. These vary in terms of their functions and when they occur. A TL feed involves the interpreter in the monitor role feeding information to the interpreter in the lead role in order to alter or correct an interpretation that has already been produced, and a confirmation involves the interpreter in the monitor role confirming for the interpreter in the lead role that the interpretation is accurate. TL feeds allow the team to make corrections in the interpretation or to include information that was deleted in the TL rendition, and confirmations help the lead interpreter know that the interpretation is on the right track, which is especially important when the lead interpreter has doubts about message equivalence in the TL. A key characteristic of TL feeds and confirmations is that they occur after at least part of the TL rendition has been conveyed, i.e., after the interpreter has completed the interpreting process -- concentrating (C), representing, (R), and planning (P) (Colonomos, 1996) -- and has produced the interpretation, as shown in Figure 6 (also see Cokely, 1992; Colonomos, 1992, for more complex models of the interpreting process).

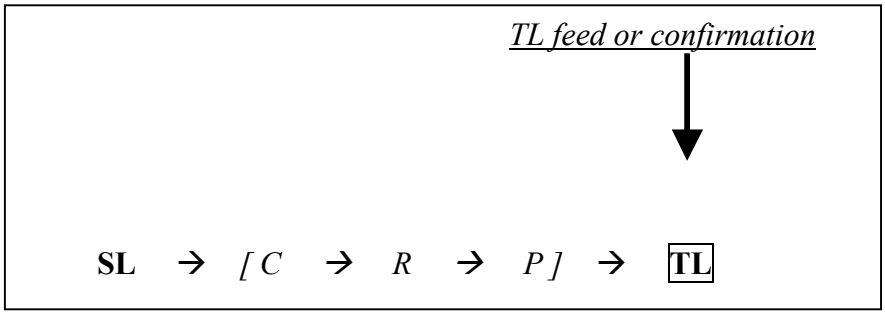

Figure 6. TL feeds and confirmations occur after TL has been produced

Process feeds are like TL feeds in that the goal is to supply the lead interpreter with needed information. However, unlike TL feeds and confirmations, a process feed occurs before the TL rendition has been conveyed, i.e., during the interpreting (concentrating - representing - planning) process, as shown in Figure 7. The monitor interpreter may feed information when the interpreter is taking in the SL and determining the meaning and intent of the SL during C, when the interpreter is striving to develop a mental representation during R (which is mostly devoid of form/language), or when trying to determine how to express the TL rendition during P.

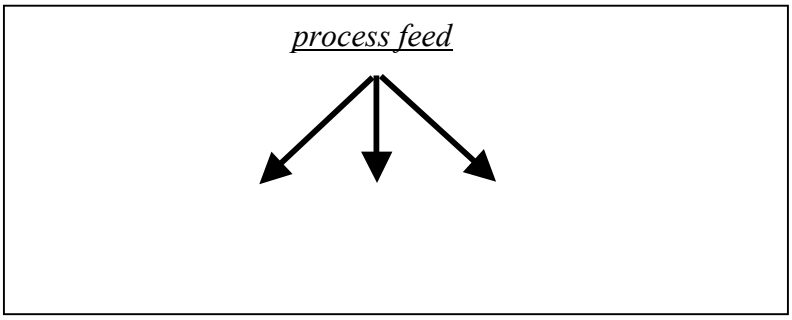

Figure 7. Process feeds occur during the interpreting/CRP process before the TL has been produced

The interpreting (CRP) process of the interpreter in the lead role and the interpreter in the monitor role differs, and this can be explored -- and applied -- by students as well. The lead interpreter completes the entire CRP process and produces the TL rendition, as illustrated in Figure 8.

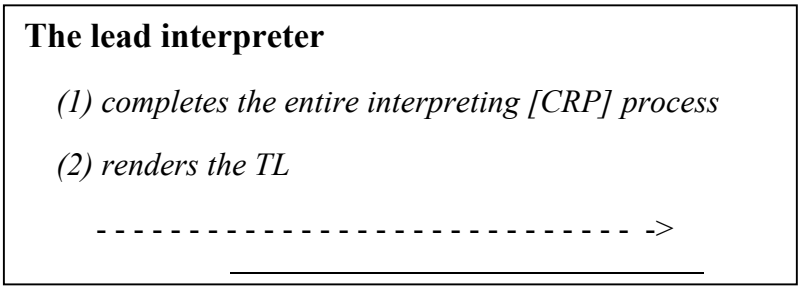

Figure 8. The lead interpreter's processing includes completing C, R, & P and producing the target language (TL)

The monitor interpreter does not complete the entire CRP process. Rather, this interpreter completes C and R, and uses his/her R (mental representation) to monitor the interpreting work of the lead interpreter. In this way, the monitor interpreter is not overloaded with trying to complete the whole interpreting (CRP) process and can provide information feeds and use other teaming strategies (which we discuss below), or make adjustments to the room or offer other kinds of support.

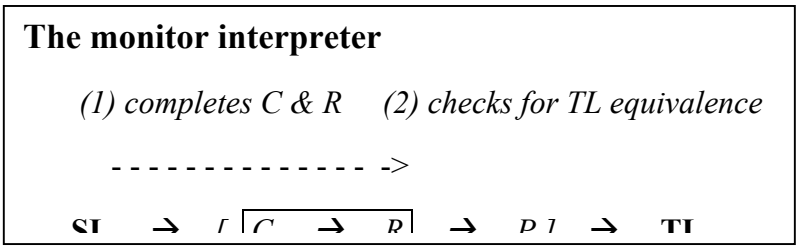

Figure 9. The monitor interpreter's processing involves (1) completing C and maintaining a mental representation of meaning (R), and (2) checking that the lead interpreter's TL rendition is dynamically equivalent to the SL (based on the monitor's R)

Being aware of these different ways in which the monitor interpreter and lead interpreter process information can help students learn to manage each role and to better coordinate their efforts as a team.

In addition to examining feed strategies by reviewing the kinds of information that tends to be fed, educators and students can explore when such information is fed and why. Also, they can explore with students how team interpreters know when to provide feeds, especially process feeds, in that these occur before the TL rendition has been conveyed. In addition, they can explore when a confirmation is to be used. Sometimes the lead interpreter requests a TL feed, a confirmation, or a process feed, but sometimes the lead interpreter does not make such a request and may not even be aware that there is a need for a feed. Students can discuss how the monitor interpreter decides when to provide such feeds and how this is accomplished.

Two other teaming strategies that do not involve feeding information were identified in the studies. First, teams sometimes switch roles, which involves the monitor interpreter taking on

the lead interpreter role for either a segment of discourse or for the remainder of the interpretation. This strategy is commonly referred to as "taking it," and it entails producing the interpretation rather than feeding any information. Second, teams sometimes collaborate by discussing their work while they are interpreting. Collaboration can relate to who is going to take the lead interpreting role at any given time, or can relate to negotiations about the logistics in the situation, as well as to other aspects of the team's work together. Switching roles and collaborating are important features of team interpreting as a collaborative and interdependent process, and these teaming strategies provide evidence that team interpreters do much more than provide information feeds to each other during the interpretation.

Practice with these strategies, and discussion of when and how they are used, can enhance students' ability to work in teams. As with any label, the first step is to define the labels for teaming strategies so that there is a consensus on what those labels mean (note Vygotsky's notion of *signs*). The second step is to be able to identify such strategies (signs) when they occur when observing models of the strategies at work or when using the strategies. The third step is to explore both the principles and practice of these strategies, i.e., how, when, and why each may be used (i.e., as *tools*). This third step is best accomplished by engaging in team interpreting work and processing (discussing) the strategies afterwards. In this way, the mediated activity can help students advance their cognitive processing and critical thinking skills in context, both of which are so important for interpreters working in teams. In addition to the types of areas mentioned above, students can also process how to determine how comfortable the team is about switching roles and how the decision to switch roles is made, and the types of topics and issues that can be handled by collaborating during the interpretation.

Determining modality and language usage

There are five senses that human beings can use to interact in the world: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. The first three -- sight, hearing, and touch -- provide a possible means for teams to communicate with each other during team interpreting. In terms of language usage, ASL/English interpreters can make use of ASL as a visual language or the English language in

either its visual/written form or its spoken form to communicate with each other during the interpretation.

The question concerning what modality (sight, hearing, or touch) and language (ASL, spoken [whispered] English, or written English) to use is a complex one, and one that can greatly affect the team's ability to work together, as well as its relationship with participants. The results of the survey indicate that interpreters vary greatly in their responses when asked about their preferred modality and language usage when collaborating with a team interpreter during the interpretation (Hoza, 2010 [Chapter 7]). About one-third of the survey respondents state that they prefer to use ASL, which is about the same number that report that it "depends on the situation." Additionally, about the same number (a bit less than one-third) report a preference for using English (and about half of these prefer the spoken form and about half prefer the written form). The findings in the book indicate that the decision regarding modality and language usage needs to be further explored in the field, and this means that students need to explore it more as well.

A few different mediated activities can be used to facilitate students' exploration of this topic. First, students can try different approaches in their teaming practice, e.g., they can try to stick to one primary approach: written English, spoken English, ASL, or nonverbal communication/signals. However, it is unlikely that they will actually stay with one modality and language, but having this experience can enrich their discussion of what seems to be most efficient and why. Second, the Open Process Model of team interpreting proposed by Molly Wilson has received a lot of attention and has been favored by many Deaf people and interpreters (Richards, 2008; M. Wilson, personal communication, January 14, 2008). In this approach, all communication between the interpreters occurs in ASL, so that it is accessible to Deaf participants rather than being closed off to them, which is the case with written or spoken/whispered English. The Open Process Model represents a more collectivistic approach to teaming, which is more in line with Deaf culture (compare Figure 10 and Figure 11). Students can discuss the Open Process Model with interpreters and with members of the Deaf community to determine when and why this may be used. They should also practice using the Open Process model to explore how it works.

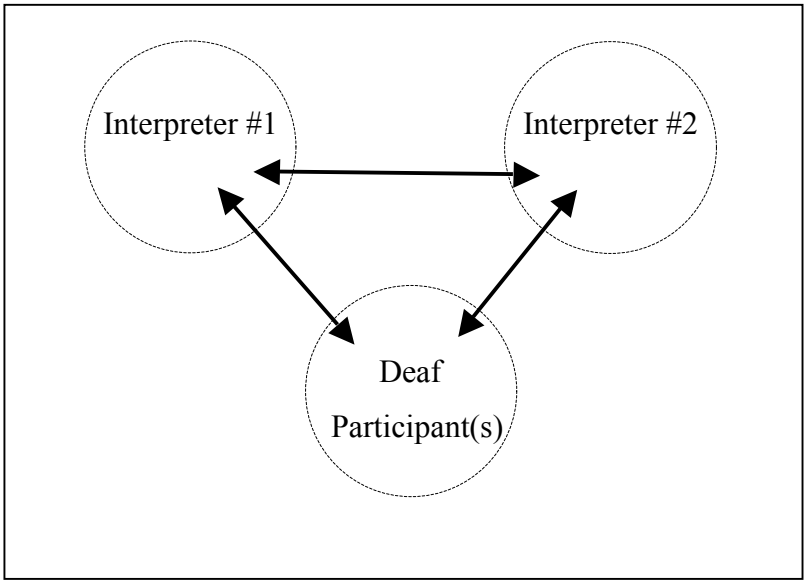

Figure 10. Using ASL as the language of support and collaboration includes the Deaf participant(s)

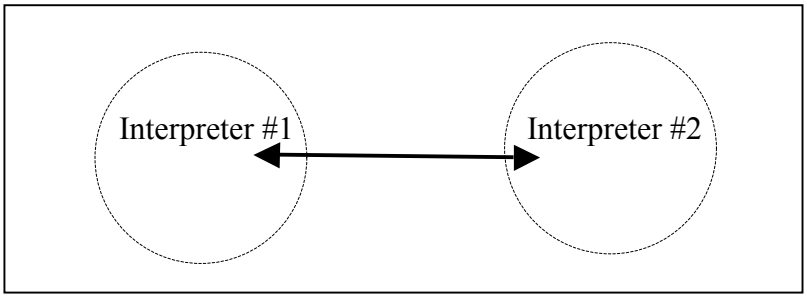

Figure 11. Using written or verbal communication (English) as the language of support and collaboration excludes the Deaf participant(s)

Based on the survey, there appears to be a great difference of opinion in the field regarding which modality and language teams should use when communicating with each other during the interpretation, and many respondents expressed the view that these choices are dependent on the situation. Some respondents stated that some of these communication options could be considered obtrusive or rude in certain contexts, although there is not a consensus on which modality/language usage is the rudest. For example, many interpreters stated in the survey that it

is rude to use whispered English in front of ASL signers (Deaf people), but some interpreters also state that it is rude to sign in front of English speakers (hearing people). Students could discuss the pros and cons, the inclusiveness or exclusiveness, and the relative "rudeness" of whispered English, written English, ASL, and nonverbal communication. Students could also interview Deaf and hearing people about these issues to gain greater insight into their perceptions. The primary goal of this exploration of modality and language usage is to determine what may be most effective in most settings, and what may be most effective in particular settings. This analysis can help teams communicate more efficiently and it is also important to consider the impact of their mode of communication on participants in the interpreted event.

Achieving and maintaining collaboration and interdependence

One of the theoretical constructs in the *Team Interpreting* book explores three levels of the team's relationship and teaming work that are important for the team to explore in order to achieve and maintain collaboration and interdependence (see Chapter 9). These three components -- which are like links to a chain -- are the personal level, the discussion level, and the abstract/framing level. The personal level has to do with each individual interpreter's beliefs, emotions, perceptions, and experiences; the discussion level involves the assumptions and understanding the team has about its work, and how the team talks about the work; and the abstract/framing level has to do with the theoretical constructs that the team uses to process and better understand its work. This third level includes theoretical constructs/models, metaphors, terminology, and the like.

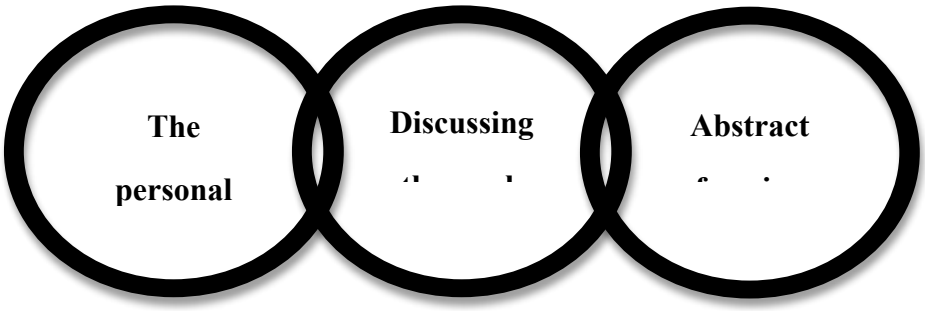

Figure 12. Three links of the chain: Achieving and maintaining collaboration and interdependence

This construct is useful for teachers or mentors in several ways. It is important that teachers are aware of, and concentrate on, these three levels when working with students and protégés. The theoretical constructs presented in the book and in this paper concentrate on the abstract level of the teaming process (the third link of the chain); however, all three levels -- personal, discussion, and abstract -- need to be processed with students and protégés. Dialoguing about these three levels model to students and protégés how they can think about the work, and can help them internalize processes for managing the team interpreting process.

There are many topics related to these three levels that can be discussed with students. At the personal level, students may be struggling with their own emotions, insecurities, or frustrations relative to the challenge of teaming (perhaps for the first time), or they may have notions of teaming or interpreting that are interfering with their advancement, and these need to be explored with students. At the discussion level, the teacher can model by example how issues of teaming, conflict resolution, and interpretation are managed. The use of active listening, mediated activities, scaffolding, and these theoretical constructs are especially important at the discussion level. At the abstract/framing level, not only can teachers use these constructs to frame discussions with students, they can discuss with students how interpreters may have different conceptualizations of various aspects of the teaming process, and these conceptualizations can be explored further. Primarily, however, the teacher is working with students to draw connections between these constructs and their thought processes during teaming, so that they can better understand these higher functions (managing the teaming process, making decisions, etc.). When these three levels are explored openly, they can facilitate the achievement and maintenance of collaboration and interdependence as teams.

Conclusion

The dialogues that occur between the teacher and the student can be powerful experiences, and can greatly enhance student learning. Students benefit from being able to process the personal level, the discussion level, and the abstract/faming level of interpreting and teaming. The constructs presented here can provide teachers and mentors frameworks for exploring team interpreting in one-on-one and small group discussions. In contrast to the "banking" approach to

teaching, on-going dialogue grounded in mediated activities is key to enhancing the ability of students to develop higher functions. These interpersonal processes transform into intrapersonal processes, and help students develop ways of thinking about and talking about the teaming work.

These constructs provide ways of talking about team interpreting, and they should not be considered entities to themselves. Through active listening and scaffolding, these constructs can provide teachers and mentors ways of helping students and protégés frame and discuss team interpreting. They can be used to help students move out of their comfort zone when they are processed in the students' zone of proximal development. Students can greatly benefit from these dialogues when the students are doing much of the talking and thinking, and the teacher is listening, identifying signs of struggle or uncertainty (which are indications of students' ZPD), and scaffolding the students' learning. The students' perceptions and thinking processes (definition of the situation) are the focus during these sessions, and the teacher needs to take the students' lead for these sessions to be successful. This approach promotes the teaching of team interpreting as collaboration and interdependence. In essence, the teacher is working collaboratively and interdependently with students as they strive toward greater mastery in their team interpreting work.

About the Author

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Teaching Students to Decipher Fingerspelling through Context: A New Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract

ASL and Interpreter Education students are often told to "use context" to figure out fingerspelled words. While there is anecdotal evidence and pedagogical advice regarding the use of context to improve fingerspelling comprehension, there has never been a controlled study to test the effectiveness of context in decoding fingerspelled words. This paper reports recent research on whether an ASL student's ability to comprehend fingerspelled words increases if the words are viewed with context. The results of the study paralleled research that shows that novice readers of written English use context to decode unfamiliar words. Drawing on researchers' experience with novice readers, this paper introduces categories of contextual cues in ASL that can be utilized by novice signers when attempting to comprehend a fingerspelled word. The findings have strong pedagogical implications, and this paper offers innovative approaches for incorporating the teaching of contextual cues into ASL and Interpreter Education courses.

Background

The pedagogical literature for teaching American Sign Language (ASL) and ASL interpreting often contains the advice that a novice signer should use the context surrounding a fingerspelled word to help grasp the fingerspelled word. Yet, is this good advice? Does the use of contextual cues in fact raise a signer's ability to understand a fingerspelled word? And if it does, can the

ability to use context to improve fingerspelled word recognition skills be taught to novice signers and interpreters?

Fingerspelling is an integral part of ASL and is a necessary skill for complete communication in sign (Battison, 1978). Padden (1991) found that on average, fingerspelling makes up approximately 6 percent of the signs produced in everyday ASL conversations, but that in certain contexts, fingerspelling comprised as much as 12 percent of signs used. It is crucial that interpreters who work between ASL and another language understand a fingerspelled message, for as Taylor (2002) notes "the interpreter's ability to comprehend fingerspelling has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the interpretation" (p. 34).

For second language learners, acquisition of fingerspelling recognition skills typically lags far behind other sign language skills (Grushkin, 1998; Schleper, 2003). Patrie (2007) notes that "hearing people who are learning ASL as adults tend to have great difficulty in correctly recognizing fingerspelled words" (p. 19). Wilcox (1992) surveyed sign language students who reported that recognizing fingerspelled words was the toughest part of learning ASL. Because fingerspelling can make up such a large amount of ASL discourse, the ability to read the fingerspelling is vital.

Students often practice reading fingerspelled words through drill work (Guillory, 1967) or Patrie's (1997) *Fingerspelled Names and Introductions: A Template Building Approach.* However, students' fears of fingerspelling often block their ability to even see a fingerspelled word, let alone be able to comprehend the fingerspelled word. Therefore, students of ASL are often told to use the context surrounding the fingerspelled word to aid in deciphering the fingerspelling. Mendoza (2007) suggests that there are two different kinds of context available for interpreters to utilize to comprehend a fingerspelled word: prior knowledge of the subject discussed, and categorical knowledge. Mendoza posits that "these metacognitive strategies of categorizing, using background knowledge, and prediction are extremely helpful when learning how to understand fingerspelling" (p. ix). Likewise Cartwright and Bahleda (2002) state "if the context is a subject with which students are familiar, chances are they will be able to successfully decode the fingerspelled content based on knowledge of the subject" (p. 34). While this advice

has not been tested by a scientific study before now, the workbooks by Mendoza (2007) and Cartwright and Bahleda (2002) offer activities to build fingerspelled word recognition through contextual clues. Additionally, Patrie (2007) notes that strategies for improving fingerspelled word recognition can include, "practicing with fingerspelled words in context" (p. 20). Context is one of Groode's (1992) "three C's" for fingerspelled word recognition. Groode suggests that novice signers use categories to limit the options that a fingerspelled word could be.

Although these texts mention using context to discern a fingerspelled word, the drills in the texts provide the context for the person reading the fingerspelling. That is, these texts specifically give a context to use in the form of a superordinate category – the person reading the fingerspelling does not have to decipher both the context and the fingerspelled word. This is not what happens in the flow of discourse. In most situations, a signer will not say, "The context for the fingerspelling is…" before continuing the discourse. A person must first recognize that a contextual cue is just that, and then be able to use that cue to figure out the fingerspelled word. While ASL and fingerspelling text books tell students to use context to decipher fingerspelled words, specific instructions on how students should learn to see both the fingerspelled word and whatever contextual cue is offered in the text is not given (Cartwright & Bahleda 2002; Groode 1992; Mendoza 2007).

Unlike the lack of research related to the use of contextual cues to decipher fingerspelling, there is a great deal of research on the role of context in comprehension; however, it focuses on young students learning to read written English. The literature supports the idea that novice readers use contextual cues to comprehend individual printed words. Studies by Stanovich (1980), Perfetti and Roth (1981), and Stanovich, West, and Feeman (1981) all concur that less experienced readers recognized difficult words more easily when the words were presented within a defined context. A study by West, Stanovich, Feeman, and Cunningham (1993) found that the length of the context was unimportant. This study compared context effects between second graders and sixth graders, and found that the second graders relied more on sentence context in decoding difficult words than the sixth graders, regardless if they were presented with contexts of one, two, or three sentences in length.

The literature of reading comprehension also offers clues for how to teach students to recognize and utilize context in comprehending fingerspelled words. Graves (2006) suggests that teaching students how to use context is in fact a difficult task. It appears not to be enough to simply tell students to use context – the skill of recognizing contextual cues needs to be taught. In order to teach students to use cues, we first must teach them to recognize the cues that exist around a fingerspelled word.

Sternberg and Powell (1983) define two types of cues that novice readers of English utilize in order to decipher unknown written English words. They identify internal cues, that is, the morphemic cues within the word itself that provide insights on the word's meaning. External cues are those that are outside the word itself. These are cues that are contained in the text surrounding the unknown word. Sternberg and Powell go on to define eight categories of contextual cues that, when recognized as context, can enable a beginning reader to decipher an unknown word. Graves, Watts, and Graves (1994) and Graves (2006) developed an instructional unit on teaching beginning readers to figure out unknown words through context. As many of these eight types of contextual cues have direct parallels in ASL discourse, the cues and instruction type will be discussed in detail in the *Pedagogical Implications and Strategies* section that follows.

Before making the leap to advise that students be taught to read fingerspelling in part by seeing the contextual cues that surround the word, we wanted to evaluate whether or not the presence of a contextual cue would in fact help a student comprehend the fingerspelling. While there is literature that supports the idea that beginner readers of English use contextual cues to comprehend individual printed words, there are no previous studies that support this idea as applied to comprehending fingerspelled words. For this reason, the authors investigated the question, "Does a student's ability to comprehend a fingerspelled word increase if the fingerspelled word is viewed with context?" Such a study is a necessary first step to developing future pedagogical strategies for teaching novice signers and interpreters to comprehend fingerspelled words.

Method

The following section describes a controlled study that explored the effect of contextual cues on fingerspelled word recognition. The independent variable was the presence or absence of context when viewing a fingerspelled word, and the dependent variable was the number of correctly identified words. The study controlled for word length, order of presentation, fingerspelling speed, and participant knowledge of ASL.

Participants

The test participants were hearing students majoring in ASL/English Interpretation at Columbia College Chicago. Twenty-five participants were recruited through posted announcements, and each participated in the study voluntarily. All participants were students who were taking or had just completed ASL IV.

Procedure

After the test facilitator obtained informed consent, each participant filled out a short, anonymous questionnaire about personal background and experience using ASL and fingerspelling. The participants then began the test procedure, which had two parts. In one part, a participant viewed fingerspelled words with a context; in the other part, the participant viewed fingerspelled words with no context. For the part with a context, the participant was informed that the words belonged to a category, such as “animals”, “celebrations”, etc.

After viewing a fingerspelled word, a test participant responded by saying the word, and by typing it on a computer keyboard. Participants had 20 seconds to respond, and could request that the fingerspelled word be repeated once. After every six words there was a thirty-second break. At the end of the test process, each participant filled out a debriefing questionnaire, and received a small honorarium. Half of the test participants (13 of 25) first saw the series of words that had no context, followed by the words presented with context. The remainder (12 of 25) saw the words with context first, followed by the words without context.

Test stimuli

Each participant saw 60 words. Thirty of the words were drawn at random from the test bank of 98 words organized into 14 categories. These words were presented to the participant as a list of "general vocabulary", so the participant had no context for these words. The remaining 30 words were drawn from five randomly selected categories in the test bank. The test participant was informed of the category, before seeing each of the six fingerspelled words in that category. The category name provided the context to the test participant. This type of cue parallels Sternberg and Powell's "class membership cues", which specify the category to which the unknown word belongs (Sternberg, 1987, p.92).

The study controlled for average word length (8 letters per word) and the speed of presentation (4.2 letters per second). Controlling for these two considerations was essential so that each participant encountered the same level of challenge during a test, and any possibility for bias due to variability in the difficulty of the test stimuli was removed.

To avoid the complexity and cost involved in controlling for speed using videotape, the authors used a computer program, "Fingerspelling Tutor," which displays animations of fingerspelled words (Fingerspelling Tutor, 2010). Figure 1 (reprinted with permission) shows a screen capture from the software. Fingerspelling Tutor creates realistic 3D animations of fingerspelling, and unlike other Web-based or CD-based software, fully portrays the transitions (movements) between each letter in a fingerspelled word.

Figure 1: Fingerspelling Tutor

Results

The authors investigated the question, "Does a student's ability to comprehend a fingerspelled word increase if the fingerspelled word is viewed with context?" As Table 1 attests, the average number of words successfully recognized without a context was 17.4 out of a total of 30 possible. With context, participants correctly recognized an average of 25.72 out of 30. This is a 48% improvement. In addition, the standard deviation of 3.6 was much lower. Not only did the test participants recognize more fingerspelling words when they were presented with a context, the test participants were more consistent in their recognition. Further, the lowest score for words with context, 15 out of 30, was more than twice the minimum score for words without context, which was only 7 out of 30.

Table 1 also shows the results of computing a paired t-test on the performance scores. The difference between recognizing words present without a context and recognizing words that were presented with a context is statistically significant ($t=-8.6$; $P<.00001$) and we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 1:

Comparing recognition of words without context and words with context.

	No context	*Context*	*Improvement*
Mean	17.4	25.72	48%
Variance	42.33	13.04	
Observations	25	25	

Pearson Correlation	0.681
df	24

The order of presentation had little effect on the recognition scores for the words without context. Those who saw words without context after the words with context performed slightly better, but not significantly so (62.5% vs 54%). Also, there was no significant difference when viewing the word with context after seeing the words without context (89% vs. 83%),

Table 2 examines the performance of the highest-scoring and lowest-scoring participants. The high-scoring participants all scored 80% or above on the non-context portion of the test and the low-scoring participants all scored 50% or less. There was a dramatic difference in the performance on the context and non-context portion of the test for low-scoring participants. Without a contextual cue, this group of participants recognized an average of 9 of 30 words, which is 30 percent correct. With a contextual cue, they recognized an average of 22.4 of 30 words, which is 75 percent correct. On average, this group more than doubled their scores when the contextual cue was present.

Table 2:

Performance of top-scoring and low-scoring participants

	No context	Context	Improvement
Top-scoring participants	27.25 out of 30 (90.8% correct)	28.50 out of 30 (95% correct)	3 %
Low-scoring participants	9 out of 30 (30% correct)	22.4 out of 30 (75% correct)	149%

Discussion

The data clearly show that an ASL student's ability to comprehend a fingerspelled word increases if the fingerspelled word is viewed with context. The participants who scored less than 50 % correct on the non-context portion of the text showed an even greater improvement in scores when presented words with context (see Table 9). Without a context, this group of participants recognized only approximately 30%of the words presented. With a context, their scores improved dramatically to an average of 75%. As noted, ASL pedagogical literature often advises students to use context as a strategy for decoding fingerspelled words. This study offers strong empirical evidence to support this claim, especially for novice ASL users.

Students who had the highest scores for fingerspelled word recognition with context also had the highest scores of recognizing words without context. While we did not test experienced users of ASL, our findings show that those ASL IV students with the highest scores seemed not to rely on context as much for comprehension cues. This is in line with past studies of both fingerspelled word recognition and written English comprehension. Patrie (2007) cites a forthcoming work by Patrie and Johnson in which they studied novice and experienced interpreters' fingerspelled word recognition skills. Patrie (2007) states, "in every comparison, the experienced interpreters performed better than the novice interpreters" (p.20). Additionally, in a study of written English comprehension, Perfetti, Goldman, and Hogaboam (1979) find that more experienced readers, while possibly having advanced skills in using context to decode a word, were so proficient at recognizing words without context that the use of context became less important, which is parallel to what Patrie found with experienced interpreters and fingerspelled word recognition.

While Patrie (2007) lists several strategies used by experienced interpreters for decoding fingerspelled words, further research is needed to determine at what stage these skills are being formed, and when the best time to implement them in an ASL curriculum could be.

Pedagogical Implications and Strategies

The empirical data found in this study clearly uphold the advice prevalent in ASL literature that students should utilize context to help comprehend fingerspelled words. However, contextual cues will not always be supplied to students or interpreters as they were in this study; in fact, in most interpreting situations, interpreters will need to identify the context through their own devices. In teaching second language learners of ASL to read fingerspelling, it is necessary to teach students to recognize contextual cues.

As mentioned previously, Sternberg and Powell define eight different types of contextual cues that novice readers of English use to decipher unknown words. These cues include "class membership cues", which specify the category to which the unknown word belongs, and "equivalence cues", which supply either a synonym or antonym to the unknown word (Sternberg, 1987, p. 92). These cues are directly parallel to some of the common uses for fingerspelling in ASL. Cartwright and Bahleda (2007) state that fingerspelling can often be used to specify a member of a class, or is used along with an equivalent sign (p.18). Likewise, Sternberg and Powell's "functional descriptive cues", which explain the purpose of the unknown word, and "stative descriptive cues", which describe the unknown word's "size, shape, color, odor, feel, etc.," (p. 92) have parallels to ASL classifiers, especially the stative descriptive movement roots as described in Valli, Lucas, and Mulrooney (2005). Sternberg and Powell's final three cues, "temporal cues", "value cues" and "causal/ enablement cues" can also offer information for deciphering a fingerspelled word. While learning the cue types, students become aware of the idea that what occurs around the fingerspelled word can be important to help decipher that word. Classifiers, the use of space, synonyms or categories, can aid novice signers and interpreters in their attempts to comprehend fingerspelled words.

Sternberg and Powell (1983) suggest that a novice reader of English goes through three mental processes in using context to decipher unknown words. The first stage is the "selective encoding" stage (p. 888), in which decisions are made as to which information surrounding an unknown word is in fact relevant context. The second stage is the "selective combination" stage. This stage involves putting together the possible contextual cues in an attempt to predict what the unknown word could be. The final stage is the "selective comparison" (p. 888) stage, in which the information is analyzed and compared with information already known through long term memory and world knowledge.

Graves, Watts, and Graves (1994) took Sternberg and Powell's work and used it as a basis for developing a plan to teach beginning readers to use contextual cues to decode unknown words. They suggest a two to four day introduction to the idea of using context, in which students isolate an unknown word, list the words or phrases that hint at the word's meaning, list the contextual cues, and guess the meaning of the unknown words. They suggest that this process for ascertaining the meaning of unknown words be reinforced when needed. Graves (2006) expands the time needed for teaching context to beginning readers to a full ten-day unit.

Students need to be taught not only different cue types, but also how to make the mental connections between the cues and the fingerspelling. Sternberg and Powell's stages and Grave's pedagogical plan have been modified to teach beginning signers and interpreting students to use contextual cues to decode fingerspelled words. For those situations where context is available, the "Jamrozik 3 Step Plan" can teach signers to utilize contextual cues to read fingerspelled words. This approach can benefit students at all levels, as it will help to reduce the anxiety that novice signers experience when attempting to decipher fingerspelling, and it will help advanced interpreters learn to make the quick mental connections necessary to decode fingerspelled words in context. This type of instruction should not be used in isolation, but rather with other methods of fingerspelling recognition in order for students to utilize all the tools possible to read fingerspelling. The authors realize that not all fingerspelling comes with context, and in those situations, template building methods for seeing internal patterns of words, such as the one put forth by Patrie (1997), are essential.

The "Jamrozik 3 Step Plan" begins by introducing the specific contextual cues to the students during a classroom lecture, with examples of each type of cue both explained and shown with signed sentences. Then students watch an ASL text and figure out the fingerspelled words and their contextual cues, if present, and then name the cue type. During this process, student can use as much time as necessary, and can re-watch the text as often as needed. It is essential to begin the process this way, for if novice signers cannot find cues for themselves in a comfortable environment, then they will not be able to do so during the time constraints of simultaneous interpreting. This step addresses Sternberg and Powell's "selective encoding" stage, as students learn to distinguish relevant vs. irrelevant information to help decipher a fingerspelled word

The following is an example of a selective encoding exercise. Students receive the blank chart and view *Signing Naturally Level 3,* Unit 24: Marlon Kuntze (signer): "How One Breathes" (Mikos, & Smith, & Lentz, 2001). In groups, they then fill in the chart and discuss the types of contextual cues present in the videotext.

Fingerspelled word	Context Cues	Cue type

Part of a complete chart is as follows. As much discussion and viewing of the videotext as necessary can be done until the students are comfortable with the idea that context for many fingerspelled words can be discerned.

Fingerspelled word	Context Cues	Cue type
O-X-Y-G-E-N	BREATHE-in WHAT O_2 O	Spatial Causal/ enablement Class membership Synonym Synonym
C-A-R-B-O-N D-I-O-X-I-D-E	C O2 NEW DIFFERENT BREATHE-out	Synonym Synonym Antonym Spatial Causal/ enablement Class membership
T-R-U-N-K B-R-A-N-C-H-E-S	CL: 5 TREE CL: 5 (inverted tree on body)	Spatial Stative Descriptive Class membership Spatial Stative descriptive

Step 2 of the plan works through the "selective combination" process described by Sternberg and Powell. Students receive the topic of a videotext and a cue chart with the contextual cues already in place. Students are then asked to use these cues to predict what the fingerspelled words could be. When interpreters or signers use prediction skills, they are exercising the ability to look forward in a text and make educated guesses about what logically could come next. After predicting the possible fingerspelled words, the students either watch the text for comprehension or interpret it, depending on the level of the student. It is important, after the text is viewed, for the students to analyze their comprehension or interpretation to verify if their clozure skills were accurate. By "clozure skills" we mean the ability to look back during a text and make educated guesses about any missed information. Students should then work through the fingerspelled words in the text to see if their initial predictions were accurate and then analyze the fingerspelled words and contextual cues present. It is good to have the students reinterpret a text, as this can build confidence.

This is an example of a selective combination chart, using the fingerspelled words and contextual cues in the text *The Pursuit of ASL: Interesting Facts Using Classifiers* "Air Fresheners" (Stratiy, 1998). Students are given the top chart first and asked to predict the possible fingerspelled words. The completed chart follows.

Fingerspelled word	Context Cues	Cue Type
	Topic of the text SMELL NICE ROOM	Synonym Functional descriptive Class membership Value
	LIGHT CL: claw+++	Synonym Spatial Stative descriptive
	LIGHT L-A-M-P CL: B (shape of bulb)	Class membership Class membership Stative descriptive

Fingerspelled word	Context Cues	Cue Type
A-I-R F-R-E-S-H-E-N-E-R-S	Topic of the text SMELL NICE ROOM	Synonym Functional descriptive Class membership Value
L-A-M-P-S	LIGHT CL: claw+++	Synonym Spatial Stative descriptive
B-U-L-B	LIGHT L-A-M-P CL: B (shape of bulb)	Class membership Class membership Stative descriptive

In Step 3 of the plan the instructor gives students the topic of a text and asks them to use their prediction skills to brainstorm what fingerspelled words might accompany any contextual cues they might see. In doing this stage, the students fill out a blank chart, in which they make specific predictions about both the potential fingerspelled words, and the possible contextual cues that could appear with the words. They then identify the types of cues based on Sternberg and Powell's model.

The following is one possible prediction chart in preparing to interpret the text, *ADA and Interpreters* by Sign Media (signed by Brigitta Bourne-Firl) (2007)

Predicted fingerspelled words	Predicted contextual cues/ cue type

• Americans • Disabilities • Act • Bush • Title • Employment • Telecommunications • Relay	• AMERICA AGENT/ equivalence • #DA/ equivalence • LAW/ equivalence • PRESIDENT/ class membership • TITLE/ equivalence • WORK/ equivalence • PHONE/ class membership • RELAY/ equivalence

It is important that all three predictions take place during Step 3, as students need to be aware that they are not only looking for a fingerspelled word, but also a type of informative cue that appears near it – possibly a classifier, or an equivalent synonymous sign. If the text is particularly difficult, students can do research as if they are prepping for an interpreting assignment in order to predict other possible fingerspelled words. After the students make their predictions, they interpret the text, and then do an immediate self-analysis for their use of clozure skills and thought processing during the interpretation. The students then compare their predictions with the actual fingerspelled words that occurred in the text. In this way, students can do the "selective comparison" process while interpreting, as they are using their background knowledge to make educated guesses about the text. Again, it is beneficial to ask the students to reinterpret the text to develop self-confidence.

Conclusion

As Graves (2006) notes, this type of work requires a substantial amount of preparation by the instructor, as well as reinforcement throughout the curriculum. However, in addition to teaching students to use contextual cues to aid in deciphering fingerspelled words, this technique teaches students to discern signs, use prediction skills, and trust their ability to use clozure skills to understand a message. Students' fears begin to subside as they become more confident in seeing not only the fingerspelled word, but the cues around the word. This technique works well for introducing new vocabulary (non-fingerspelled) words, as well as teaching students how to use context to figure out an unknown sign in context. In addition to being used by interpreter education students, these techniques also have been used by professional interpreters to improve their fingerspelling recognition skills and to earn continuing education units (CEUs) through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Independent Study Program.

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Relational Autonomy and Decision Latitude of ASL-English Interpreters: Implications for Interpreter Education

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Abstract

Relational autonomy is a paradigm with implications for interpreter educators to guide the decision-making of student-interpreters. In this paper, we assert that developing awareness of the various manifestations of autonomous decision-making can impact the way novice interpreters view and analyze their professional decisions. This paper introduces a conceptual framework for relational autonomy and provides an associated set of curricular considerations.

Introduction to Relational Autonomy

Professional maturity involves the ability to work autonomously and collaboratively within a well-defined framework of ethical standards. *Professional autonomy* is a condition that results from a deep conceptualization of the professional acts and practices of practitioners and the agreement of a profession's members to behave and act in a manner that is similar to each other (Kasher, 2005). However, adhering to such a paradigm has proved challenging in the field of ASL-English interpreting. At present, many interpreters equate professional autonomy as with the freedom to behave as a 'free agent', making decisions without consideration of the systems and people in the environment. Interpreter autonomy is in reality *relational* as a result of the inherent social structures upon which it depends for its existence, including a unique bond to the Deaf Community, patterns of practice evolving out of collective work experiences, legislative mandates that create the demand for and requirement to provide interpreting services, and the systems that generate payment for interpreting services. This concept, known as *relational autonomy*, is an authentic response to the power imbalances and importance of the relationships

that exist within professional interactions (Lee, 2007; Sandstrom, 2007; Seago, 2006; MacDonald, 2002).

When professional maturity is viewed through the lens of relational autonomy there is recognition that

> …autonomy is socially constructed; that is, the capacity and opportunity for autonomous action is dependent upon our particular social relationships and power structures in which professional practice is embedded. It requires that one's professional relationships with particular individuals and institutions be constituted in such a way as to give one genuine opportunities for informed and transparent decision-making (MacDonald, 2002, 197).

In this view, effective autonomy is achieved when the social conditions that support it are in place and give the practitioner—and consumers—the confidence to take charge of choices. This perspective of autonomy is consistent with a schema of work analysis that examines the demands that are present in an interpreted event and the controls that can be employed by an interpreter as part of their decision latitude (Dean and Pollard, 2004; 2006). Such a schema includes more than just linguistic and cultural considerations—it also addresses system-based considerations such as environment, as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal factors.

Decision Latitude and Relational Autonomy

Appreciating relational autonomy requires an understanding of the conditions that foster informed and transparent decision-making by interpreters and the other individuals involved in the communication interaction—as well as those conditions that restrict it. In this respect, relational autonomy has both *internal* elements (i.e., how the interpreter perceives his/her role and work; how the participants views themselves), and *external* elements (i.e., how the work of interpreters is perceived by others; how each participant is perceived by others).

As an illustration of an external element, interpreters in court proceedings are perceived as officers of the court and therefore have a great deal of decision latitude in working within the system, as well as the accompanying duty to serve the interests of the court. Interpreters can request to approach the bench to discuss issues impacting the interpretation, request correction to

the court record, seek assistance of other practitioners and/or experts, and perform a variety of other practices that constitute the unique patterns of practice of legal interpreters. The court considers these practitioners experts and expects them to possess a thorough knowledge of the legal system, legal procedure, legal terminology, standards of practice, and a high degree of competence and reliability in their interpreting performance. Further, the court expects interpreters to report any barriers to effective performance or consumer understanding, and to collaborate with judiciary officials in resolving issues that may arise. These expectations and procedures create the social conditions that support the internal elements associated with a practitioner's application of decision latitude and represent an example of effective relational autonomy.

These same social conditions do not exist in all settings in which signed language interpreters perform service. Take for example providing interpreting in the Video Relay Services (VRS) industry. VRS is a video telecommunication service that allows Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to communicate with hearing people via a signed language interpreter using video telephones in real-time. This service is heavily regulated by both the U.S. Federal Communications Commission and company polices. Interpreters are expected to maintain a high level of call volume and to connect callers with limited or no inquiry as to the nature or purpose of the call, or to introduce the premise of an interpreted call to those unfamiliar with the service or interpreted interactions. These conditions restrict the decision latitude of interpreters and can leave practitioners deeply conflicted as they work outside of traditional professional norms. We argue that this variation in professional standing and the degree of freedom to exercise decision latitude has significant implications for the work of interpreters, how they are trained, and their readiness to function autonomously (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004; Dean & Pollard, 2004; 2006; Brunson, 2008).

It is important to emphasize the difference between functional autonomy (the work) and relational autonomy (decision latitude within the context of professional relationships). In an interpreter-centric approach, the interpreter is at the center of the interaction and acts and behaves according to individual needs. This is reflective of *functional autonomy* where the work is central in the mind of the interpreter. Conversely, in a system-centric approach, the interpreter recognizes the importance of the expectations of the system and achieving the goals of the participants within

that system. This is achieved by having the ability to understand and appreciate the interaction from the world-view of the participants engaged in the system and to apply decision latitude accordingly. This is reflective of *relational autonomy* where the work is seen as a collaborative process between all the individuals within the communication event.

Professional Interactions: High Autonomy versus Low Autonomy Characteristics

How does the manner in which a practitioner expresses their autonomy contribute to the development of professional relationships and autonomy? To address this we consider the concept of Low Autonomous Professions (LAP) and High Autonomous Professions (HAP) characterized by Schleppegrell (2004). In this paradigm, LAP behaviors within a professional interaction are characterized by a sense of powerlessness, navigating based on self (i.e., what is my goal in this interaction?), and an inability to understand why and how things are happening (i.e., can only recognize what is happening from an interpreter-centric view). In contrast, HAP behaviors within an interaction are characterized by recognizing what is occurring on multiple levels—what, why, and how—and asserting the power to make appropriate decisions that will benefit the interaction (i.e., considering the goals of the participants using a system-centric view).

Several authors have discussed the consequences associated with LAP behaviors evidenced in the work of ASL-English interpreters (Kanda, 1988; Witter-Merithew, 1996; Cokely, 2000; Dean & Pollard, 2004; 2006; Stewart & Witter-Merithew, 2006). Although there are unquestionably individual interpreters who function with HAP behaviors, particularly in settings where the system-based professionals are members of High Autonomous Professions (e.g., lawyers, doctors, therapists), we assert that the demonstration of HAP behaviors is not the norm among interpreters. This is particularly evident when practitioners work within systems where the system-based professionals have LAP status (e.g., public school teachers).

The interplay between the standing of the system-based professionals with whom interpreters work, and the standing of interpreters in society-at-large, creates a unique condition for how interpreter autonomy is expressed. The lack of academic standards and requirements for ASL-English interpreters entering the profession prior to 2008 further contribute to LAP. Generally, the broader base of literature about professions indicates that specialists are expected to apply

HAP actions and behaviors, thus demonstrating high degrees of relational autonomy (Lee, 2007; Seago, 2006; Kasher, 2005).

The degree of autonomy exercised by the other participants involved in an interpreted interaction can further contribute to the decision latitude of interpreters. This is a key contribution to the social conditions under which the interpreter works and makes decisions. Westlund (2009) emphasizes that to be autonomous, "a person must have a significant range of viable options and retain authority over her social circumstances" (p. 29)—a condition that is elusive for many Deaf people. For example, a Deaf person with linguistic, social, academic, and/or cognitive deficits is likely to exercise low autonomy, while the professional providing service to the Deaf person (e.g., doctor, therapist, social worker) may exercise a high level of autonomy. This may result in the interpreter feeling compelled to assert a greater degree of involvement in the interaction to balance the power differential.

Ideally, the more balanced the autonomy expressed by participants, the more likely the interpreter is to exercise conservative choices in her decision latitude. Conversely, the less balanced the autonomy expressed by participants, particularly by Deaf consumers, the more likely the interpreter is to exercise liberal choices in her decision latitude. In order for an interpreter to effectively monitor and apply decision latitude, she too must have a significant range of viable options and be able to retain authority over her work. When the range of viable options diminishes due to insufficient training, lack of experience, or reduced authority over one's work as a result of system-bound barriers, the quality of decision latitude suffers. Further, if the interpreter doesn't possess a sufficient degree of personal autonomy, she will fail to act ethically in the face of professional demands that require application of HAP behaviors.

The practice of relational autonomy requires a high degree of professional maturity that develops over time under the guidance and supervision of master practitioners (Lee, 2007; Seago, 2006; MacDonald, 2002; Cheetham and Chivers, 2001). And, herein lies a key point—*if our factual understanding of the preconditions for autonomous action is flawed, so will be our ethical reaction to that autonomy* (MacDonald, 2002 emphasis added). Relational autonomy assumes the decision-making of professionals is in accordance with professional standards of practice. One of

the preconditions is professional maturity—which can only be forged over time and through supervised practice that fosters the development of discretion. Without this maturity, practitioners can fall into a state of default autonomy where they become isolated, make uninformed decisions, experience low job satisfaction and burnout, and cause harm. Or they may demonstrate antagonistic autonomy where a pattern of resistance and hostility in behavior and decision-making inhibits or reduces effective collaboration with others (Dean and Pollard, 2001, 2004; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). Until the field of interpreter education can create the appropriate pre-conditions that support autonomous practice—such as graduate outcomes that include mastery of entry-to-practice competencies (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005) and a system of supervised induction—it is unlikely newly entering practitioners will achieve a consistent standard of ethical practice.

Further, interpreters who are unable to foster and sustain the preconditions necessary for autonomous action—such as adopting a system-centric versus an interpreter-centric view of their work—will not be successful in forging the collaborative relationships needed with other participants in the interaction. As a result, they may quickly find themselves operating outside the boundaries of ethical standards. This is particularly true in high-risk settings when the work of interpreters is held to a higher standard of scrutiny and/or liability.

Curricular Assumptions that Foster HAP Behaviors and Relational Autonomy

Through the lens of relational autonomy, professional actions and behaviors, and the resulting patterns of practice, may be more fully understood and considered in defining curricular assumptions that impact the ability of educational programs to design and develop curricula that sufficiently prepares graduates for the workplace. Entering practitioners should possess the ability to function within a framework of relational autonomy, with an appreciation of a system-centric view of their work, and demonstrate professional maturity typically associated with HAP behaviors. To this end, the following curricular assumptions are offered.

- *Interpreting is a practice profession.* This term acknowledges that profession-based traditions and practices inform how interpreting work is performed. Practice and tradition

are linked to schools of thought or theories and are drawn from the scholarship of a field (Ayling & Constanzo, 1994). More specifically, professional practices are ways of structuring and organizing the things one must do as part of the work, or ways in which something is done as part of professional practice.

- *In practice professions, ways of doing things are conceived by practitioners over time through a process of application of theory drawn from the profession's scholarship.* As more scholarship and research emerge, practices evolve, improve, and change (Chong, et. al, 2000). This is how practices move from standard, to best and ultimately to defined effective practices.

- *When a practice profession approach is applied to the teaching and learning of practice-based competencies, it results in practice-based learning.* Practice-based learning involves understanding that arises out of, or is focused on, working practice in a chosen profession. Such learning would include courses and learning activities linked to formal work placements—those which require the application of academic ideas in an authentic work setting and which build on experience gained in a work setting (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003; Fabb & Marshall, 1994; Fleming, 1993).

- *Functioning as a practice professional requires a high level of critical thinking and the ability to effectively collaborate with others.* Critical thinking and opportunities for transparent and collaborated decision-making must be infused in the scope and sequence of interpreter education.

- *Functioning as a practice professional requires the application of High Autonomy Profession behaviors.* The behaviors are characterized by recognizing what is occurring on multiple levels—what, why and how—and the power to make appropriate decisions that will benefit the interaction (i.e., considering the goals of the participants using a system-centric view). Achieving this level of higher order thinking involves critical thinking, reflection and other elements of meta-cognition.

- *Functioning as a practice professional requires the ability to function within a system-centric view of the work.* A system-centric view of interpreting centers on an understanding of the social conditions—including the professional relationships forged with consumers—that will foster informed and transparent decision-making by interpreters (as well as those conditions which restrict it) and the capacity to adapt decision latitude accordingly.

- *The Demand Control Schema (DC-S) is a particularly useful tool in engaging practitioners in actively exploring the complexities of the work through a variety of lenses—including the thought-worlds of participants in the communication event.* The schema provides a framework for critical reasoning and decision-making, through the use of reflective and analytical approaches to practice. The DC-S also heightens meta-consciousness—guiding student-interpreters toward conscious awareness of the unconscious or sub-conscious abilities that influence their work. This meta-consciousness fosters adaptation and augmentation of interpreting performance (Fleming, 1993; Leung, 2002).

- *Reflection is about maximizing deep approaches to learning and minimizing surface ones* (Fleming, 1993). Reflection is the primary way of getting students to realize that learning is about drawing on life experiences, not just something that takes place in a classroom. It enables students to think about *what* and *how* they learn and to understand that this impacts how well they do in their field of study (Leung, 2002).

- *The entry-to-practice competencies form the graduate outcomes that should be achieved from an interpreter education program* (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Five domains and 34 competencies have been defined by a broad base of experts and stakeholders as the requisite foundation for competent generalist practice. Further, these competencies are recognized as the fundamentals that graduates need to be both work and certification-ready.

Curricular Elements that Promote Acquisition of HAP Behaviors

Sergiovanni (2001) emphasizes that professionals need to create "knowledge in use" as they practice—trying to follow established scripts doesn't promote the breadth and depth of discretion needed to be an effective and autonomous practitioner within a practice profession. This perspective effectively captures the essence of relational autonomy by encouraging a systems-based approach to informed, critical, and reflective decision-making as a mechanism for ongoing self-assessment and growth. However, student capacity for applying decision latitude effectively involves a range of skills—including 'finding voice', critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving. What follows are a selection of curricular elements that support the development of these skills and can lead to the development of HAP behaviors while fostering a deeper appreciation of relational autonomy.

- *Case Study Analysis.* The purpose of using case study analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of the specific issues and problems related to interpreting. According to Nieto (1992), effective case studies are characterized as *particularistic* (focusing on one person or social unit), *descriptive* (offering a rich description of context and factors impacting events), *heuristic* (illuminating understanding and facilitates the discovery of new meanings, and *inductive* (fostering generalizations and hypotheses from an examination of the data). These criterions make it evident that simple one or two line statements about a scenario are not sufficient to create dynamic exploration of issues or the development of discernment.

  If the cases represent actual or real-world situations interpreters confront, then each case increases a student's understanding of the issues, factors, and range of controls and solutions that impact day-to-day work of practitioners. To this end, students should be encouraged to harvest cases through discussion with working practitioners. Practicing interview techniques that support their ability to ask insightful questions when talking with practitioners will help students garner the quality of information necessary to gain the greatest benefit from these case studies. This approach has the added benefit of offering a springboard into fostering basic research skills in students.

Another source of case studies is a commercially available workbook, *The Dimensions of Ethical Decision-Making: a Guided Exploration for Interpreters* (Stewart &Witter-Merithew, 2006). This workbook contains 37 case studies that include general dilemmas facing society, cultural dilemmas that interpreters and consumers typically confront, and ethical dilemmas faced by practitioners. All case studies are developed in accordance with the criteria discussed by Nieto (1992) that are addressed above. As well, in several instances, case studies are examined in detail and possible decisions offered and assessed. The workbook uses a scaffolding approach to increase the complexity of case analysis, reducing the amount of guided support offered so that students incrementally develop the analytical skills necessary to think more critically.

Case study analysis fits well into many courses—particularly those that are focused on ethical decision-making and theory and practice of interpreting. They also fit well into classes that focus on specific settings or working with specific populations where students are examining the patterns of practice and the application of decision-making to specific interpreting contexts. The key is that cases are based in the real experiences of working practitioners and are sufficiently complex as to require deep thinking about issues, options and implications for practice.

- *Observation-Supervision.* The concepts of case conferencing and observation-supervision have been previously introduced in our field (Dean, Pollard & English, 2004; Knight & Wilford, 2005) and play an important role in fostering reflective practice and critical thinking and analysis. For the purpose of this article, these functions, among others, are grouped under the curricular element of observation-supervision, which is defined as the systematic monitoring and evaluation of student/novice performance in the actual world of work by a master practitioner and/or teacher. As well, it is envisioned as an element that extends beyond the program and is part of the entry-to-practice transitioning into part of the induction process.

  The supervisory function can occur in different formats (e.g., individual, triadic, group, or team supervision) and with different supervisors (e.g., faculty, site, or peer supervisors).

Across formats and supervisors, supervision is accomplished using one or more methods to access the content and process of interpreting. Among the most common methods are student self-report (e.g., verbal exchanges, written notes, and case presentations), observation (live or videotaped), team interpreting, role-playing and modeling. These strategies are common to the pedagogy of interpreting. It is their systematic incorporation as part of a comprehensive induction strategy that differs.

Ideally, supervised induction extends beyond program boundaries and provides for effective entry-into-practice for a minimum period of one year—possibly longer depending on the needs of the student. Supervised induction into the field of interpreting is based on the following four assumptions about interpreting.

1. Interpreting is a complex activity requiring decisions that need careful analysis.
2. Development of discretion needed for autonomous practice requires a period of supervised induction that typically extends beyond what transpires within an interpreter preparation program.
3. Interpreters are responsible and competent professionals who wish to improve if support is offered in a collegial way.
4. The purpose of supervised induction is to assist interpreters in deepening their understanding of patterns of practice associated with interpreting and the pre-conditions necessary for effective and transparent decision-making.

Supervised induction should be approached as a deliberate and thoughtful element of the instructional process and entry-into-practice in that it:

- Is goal-oriented.
- Assumes a long-term collaborative working relationship between teacher(s), students, and practicing peers.
- Requires a high degree of mutual trust, as reflected in understanding, support, and commitment to growth.
- Is systematic, although it requires a flexible and continuously changing methodology—particularly when it is no longer grade-based as is the case while students are enrolled in college coursework.

- Assumes the individual providing supervision and students/entering practitioners share a common framework for the analysis of the interpreting process, learning, and productive human interaction. The latter is essential to understanding the importance of collaboration for relational autonomy.

Infusion of supervised induction into curriculum and transition plans can be achieved through multiple strategies, including: a) the observation of professionals at work without the inclusion of interpreters, b) the observation of interpreters in action, c) supervision discussions about the observations, d) application of observation during field work with supervision discussions with peers and supervisors, e) the inclusion of observation-supervision principles in all skills and theory classes, and f) post-graduation supervision as part of a community of practice. The key is that all strategies are employed as part of a whole system of induction and there is collaboration with all stakeholders to create a sustainable infra-structure to support it.

- *Conflict-Resolution Activities.* Conflicts have considerable value when they are managed constructively (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1995a). Desirable outcomes of constructively managed conflict include:

    - greater quantity and quality of achievement, complex reasoning, and creative problem solving;
    - higher quality decision-making;
    - healthier cognitive, social, and psychological development by being better able to deal with stress and cope with unforeseen adversities;
    - increased motivation and energy to take action;
    - higher quality relationships with colleagues and co-workers (this can extend to work with consumers of interpreting services);
    - a greater sense of caring, commitment, joint identity, and cohesiveness with an emphasis on increased liking, respect, and trust;
    - heightened awareness that a problem exists that needs to be solved; and
    - increased incentive to change.

There are three particular strategies that can be employed to teach conflict resolution—each of which is very valuable for creating an appreciation of relational autonomy. Teachers can a) create a cooperative context, b) use academic controversy in the classroom, and c) teach students to be peacemakers. The constructive resolution of conflict requires those involved to recognize that the long-term relationship is more important than the result of any short-term conflict. In order for the long-term mutual interest to be recognized and valued, individuals have to perceive their interdependence and be invested in each other's well-being (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1993). Use of cooperative learning procedures both in the classroom and for assignments creates the cooperative context needed to learn the social interactions skills that contribute to resolving conflicts. This is an important skill for interpreters to master as part of the human relation skills necessary for effectiveness as a practitioner.

Further, Johnson & Johnson (1995c) discuss the use of academic controversy in the classroom. The procedure involves members of a cooperative group researching and preparing different positions, making a persuasive presentation of their researched position, refuting the opposing position while rebutting attacks on their own position, viewing the issue from a variety of perspectives, and synthesizing the opposing positions into one mutually agreed upon position. Doing this exercise maximizes perspective and complex reasoning—both of which are central to a systems-based orientation to interpreting. Performing the activity of academic controversy regularly allows students to practice conflict resolution skills daily.

Another activity described by Johnson and Johnson (1995b) is that of teaching students to be peacemakers. Through learning how to negotiate and mediate students gain experience in resolving interpersonal conflicts constructively and provides tools for regulating one's own behavior. In learning to negotiate, students must be able to communicate honestly what they want and how they feel, explain interests as well as positions, take the opposing perspective, create a number of possible agreements that maximize joint outcomes and work together to reach agreements on one of the options. This approach provides an excellent way to expand the range of controls available to a student, and these controls can quickly be expanded to application during interpreting.

Another specific activity is practicing mediation. In this learning activity, students create a mediation program—one that models the RID's Ethical Standards System mediation process to the greatest degree possible. Students rotate leadership roles and guide discussions about actual ethical dilemmas that surface among all students during practicum and internship events. These activities allow students to become familiar with the ethical standards which exist for the field of interpreting, the nuances involved in applying the standards to the daily work of interpreters, the criteria that is used for assessing the effectiveness in application of the standards (e.g., the NIC interview rubric and the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct guidelines), and the range of decisions that fall within ethical practice, including exploration of where decisions fall along a liberal to conservative continuum. Such processes also help to identify when decisions are not within the scope of professional practice and are therefore not acceptable, which forges discretion.

Conclusion

Relational autonomy is a paradigm with crucial implications for guiding the decision-making of interpreters. Activities associated with curricular assumptions foster the ability of programs to help students more deeply conceptualize the professional acts and practices associated with interpreting and to more effectively behave in a manner that is consistent with ethical standards of practice. Further the activities serve to forge reliable discretion, recognize the interdependence of individuals involved in an interpreted interaction, and promote high degrees of collaboration. In turn, these behaviors foster the social conditions that favor effective decision latitude of practitioners. These curricular standards center on the view of interpreting as a practice profession in which educators should promote a system-centric view of the work. This will require a shift from the prevailing interpreter-centric view of our work. This shift can be facilitated by the use of teaching practices that promote problem solving, reflection, expansion of world-view, encourage appreciation of differing perspectives, foster identification of issues, and increase the range of viable controls. Effective application of these teaching practices will contribute to the ability of practitioners to sustain their decision latitude through competent professional autonomy.

About the Authors

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Conceptualizing a Framework for Specialization in ASL-English Interpretation: Implications for Interpreter Education

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Abstract

This paper reports on a project that had as its goal the development of a conceptual framework for specialization in the field of ASL-English interpreting. Led by the Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center (MARIE), a group of interpreting and interpreter education experts from the United States and Canada worked collaboratively to formalize the propositions that underlie specialization. The resulting framework emerged from a review of the literature on specialization across a variety of disciplines, exploration of assumptions about specialization held by experts and/or expressed in the literature, and definition of principles that can guide the process of specialization within the fields of interpreting and interpreter education. This paper discusses various aspects of specialization as a general phenomenon of professions, as well as implications specific to interpreting practice. The conceptual framework is offered as a possible means to conduct a thoughtful and orderly development of specialization within the interpreting profession at large.

Introduction

Specialist competence in interpreting has been a topic of exploration by various workgroups within the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) during the 2005-2010 funding cycle. The exploration focused primarily on defining competencies of specialist practitioners and/or documenting best and effective practice in specialized settings such as legal, medical/healthcare, and substance abuse/mental health. One of the NCIEC regional

collaborators, the MARIE Center,[3] leads the initiative on interpreting in the legal and judicial setting. This project on specialization grew out of the need for a broader conceptual framework from which to consider specializations within the judicial setting, as well as other specific settings. The complete project report is available under the Legal Interpreting Workgroup project link at http://www.nciec.org/.

A factor contributing to the exploration of specialization is the recognition that the expectations for what constitutes competent practice continue to be raised (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). As Deaf people gain more access and inclusion within the broader society, the range of communication events in which they participate expands both in terms of frequency and complexity. As a result, an increased demand for competent signed language interpreters is seen in a wide range of settings. The breadth and depth of subject matter being addressed in many of these settings requires greater degrees of specialized competence on the part of interpreter practitioners—a level of competence that exceeds the grasp of generalists.

The increasing complexity of the interpreting task is also impacted by continuing issues related to the education of Deaf children, fraught with challenges that ultimately impact the linguistic performance and academic maturity of school graduates. Further, the influx of Deaf immigrants and refugees into the United States continues to increase, which creates a need for individuals who can manage the complex linguistic, cultural, and social challenges faced by these populations.

Specialization is also the natural result of a profession's growth in stature. The assumption is that because professions are ever changing in the face of new knowledge and technology, specialization offers the opportunity to gain the highest levels of competence possible in a

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[3] The Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center (MARIE) is a collaborative effort between the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and the University of Northern Colorado in Denver. Funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for 2005 - 2010, the MARIE Center serves as an interpreter educational center for eleven states: Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

specific area of practice. As they mature as professionals, practitioners come to realize that they cannot be highly skilled in all potential areas of practice or their patterns of work and interests naturally align with certain settings. Therefore, they tend to find one or two areas where they narrow their practice in an effort to gain greater competence.

Specialization develops for a number of reasons, driven not only by consumers and practitioners, but also by legislatives mandates and shifting economic resources. At its heart, however, protection of the public and identification of colleagues with the proficiency to serve specific consumer needs in areas beyond the reach of generalist competence is what specialization is all about (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989: MacDonald, 2002).

Defining Specialist and Specialization

A *specialist* is defined as a practitioner who through advanced training, acquisition of specialized skills and knowledge, and experience distinguishes her/himself as being uniquely qualified for the specialized work. *Specialization* is the intentional narrowing of practice requiring didactic and experiential preparation that provides the basis for competent service delivery with respect to distinctive patterns of practice in essential domains (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). The definition of the essential domains/competencies and distinctive patterns of practice are what the NCIEC workgroups have been defining during the 2005-2010 funding cycle[4].

Typically, specialists narrow practice towards the goal of working exclusively or semi-exclusively in 1) a particular setting, 2) with a specific population, or 3) within a unique function. *Setting* refers to the time, place and circumstance in which interpreting takes place and all the context that surrounds it including the backgrounds and characteristics of the consumers—a classroom, medical, or legal setting each involve a unique set of factors and considerations that impact the patterns of practice of interpreters. Certainly all involve unique systems/setting knowledge, subject matter knowledge, specialized terminology, and discourse

[4] The work products of these efforts are available under the various project links at http://www.nciec.org/.

patterns, among other factors. Interpreter educators have traditionally designed specialist training into their curricula around the notion of setting by offering courses with course titles such as Medical Interpreting, and Legal Interpreting, among others.

A specific population also serves as a designation for specialization. For our purposes, a *population* is a group of people who share common experiences, needs, traits, or goals. Examples of populations served by interpreting practitioners include inter alia Deaf-Blind individuals, senior citizens, and gay/lesbian/transgendered groups. Knowledge of the concerns, in-group jargon, acronyms, value systems, and other considerations comprise specialized knowledge for working within these populations.

A third force driving specialty practice is that of function. *Function*, in this context, refers to a unique action, task or role that an interpreter performs within the broader framework of interpreting. Examples of unique functions fulfilled by interpreting practitioners include using technology for transmission of interpreting as occurs when doing VRI or VRS interpreting, functioning as the table or monitoring interpreting in a court proceedings, serving as an escort interpreter during socio-cultural or political events, or working as an interpreter-tutor in a K-12 setting. Knowledge of the unique role, tasks and actions associated with the role are central to the skill and knowledge sets necessary for this classification of specialization.

It should be noted that there is a natural overlapping of boundaries within these classifications of setting, population, and function. This may be illustrated by the incorporation of Deaf interpreters into a schema of specialization classification that addresses both unique functions and populations served. Deaf interpreters are frequently used to interpret for Deaf-Blind individuals or Deaf individuals who are not fluent in American Sign Language. The work of Deaf interpreters typically involves more than one type of classification of specialization. For example, a Deaf interpreter might interpret for a foreign-born Deaf person (population) during a courtroom appearance (setting).

Similarly, the work of interpreters whose working conditions involve technology—such as Video Relay Services (VRS) or Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)—requires a broader view of

classification. Interpreting via VRS and VRI doesn't satisfy the definition of a setting per se, although the use of technology for transmission does certainly create unique conditions of work. As well, interpreting via VRS and VRI does require unique patterns of practice. However, the interactions that are interpreted center around any number of topics tied to a wide range of settings. So, a framework that includes specialization around unique functions—such as operation of computer and phone equipment during the interpreting process—is more descriptive of what actually transpires within the field of ASL-English interpreting. As well, interpreters using technology may also combine more than one area of specialization—interpreting via technology (function) for medical appointments (setting) as an example.

Specialization as a De Jure or De Facto Process

Although not as widely or formally structured as in other professions, specialization does exist within the interpreting profession through both de facto and de jure processes. In *de facto* processes, individuals self designate their area of specialization. For example, a large number of working interpreters have self-identified as being specialists in settings such as performing arts, K-12 education, healthcare, mental health, and legal. Other interpreters have self-designated as specialists working with specific populations such as Deaf-Blind individuals. In de facto processes, the interpreter narrows his/her work into specialized areas either by choice or demand and has developed some degree of public recognition as a specialist in that area.

Further evidence of de facto practice is the system of specialized member sections within the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in which individuals only need to self-identify to join. Ideally, this self-designation occurs as a result of concentrated practice within the setting, and the development of expertise over time and through additional training and/or mentoring specific to the setting.

Specialization that occurs under *de jure* process are the result of established standards—coursework, training, or credentialing—that are recognized as legitimate by the profession. As illustration of de jure processes, there are interpreter education programs that offer a sequence of study in an area of specialization—two examples are St. Catherine University that offers

emphasis in medical interpreting and University of Northern Colorado that offers emphasis in K-12, community, or legal interpreting. Both programs offer baccalaureate degrees. Additionally, the University of Northern Colorado offers a graduate certificate program in legal interpreting.

A further indication of a standards-oriented approach is the certification/credentialing of specialist practitioners by nationally recognized entities. For example, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has been awarding the Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC: L) since 1976, with a significant revision to the test in 1991[5]. Eligibility for this examination requires satisfaction of multiple criteria including possession of generalist certification, specialized training and supervised work experience. A minimum of three years of established practice as a generalist is also strongly recommended.

Specialized training programs also exist for public school interpreters. For example, the University of Arizona and University of Northern Colorado both have baccalaureate level pre-service programs with a public school emphasis. As well, the University of Northern Colorado has a thirty credit hour in-service certificate program distributed over three years for public school interpreters. These programs focus on the unique and specialized knowledge and skill sets needed by interpreters in this setting.

A second nationally recognized entity conducts a formal assessment process that is used to promulgate state education agency (SEA) standards regulating the work of public school interpreters. Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska has administered the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) since 1991. The EIPA approaches the work of public school interpreters as involving specialized competence—particularly relating to child development, language acquisition, and teaching-learning processes (Schick & Williams, 2004). This assessment process is recognized in the SEA standards of approximately 40 states, as well as by the RID. However, the EIPA credentialing system doesn't require demonstration of generalist competence prior to specialized assessment, as is the case with the RID system.

[5] The establishment of the SC:L occurred in cooperation with the Center for the Administration of Justice at Wayne State University Law School who had received a grant from the Office of Deafness and Communicative Disorders, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Consequences of Specialization

There are a number of consequences to be considered in the development of professional specialization. For example, administering a specialist credentialing system is a costly and labor-intensive process. As a result, it is important that a sufficient need and critical mass of interpreters to engage in specialized practice is evident. There is also merit in exploring more time and cost efficient ways of creating designation of specialist competence—such as completion of training, supervised induction, and portfolio assessment.

A possible negative consequence is that practitioners could make the necessary investment of time and fiscal resources to specialize only to find themselves in a market that cannot support their expertise. Clearly, in certain demographic areas specialization is not logical—there is not a sufficient population of Deaf individuals or demand to support specialized practice. This reality is not unique to interpreting—the same outcome is evidenced in other professions, particularly in rural areas. In such cases, when the need for a specialist arises, it may require that practitioners with specialized competence be brought in from another community.

The advent of Video Relay Services (VRS) provides a striking example of another real consequence associated with specialization, that is, a drop in availability of generalist practitioners in the community. The VRS industry grew rapidly, offering interpreting practitioners the chance to learn new skills applied in a new environment. The competition to capture the market as a provider of VRS services was also great and the early standard was to employee experienced/seasoned certified interpreters to boost consumer satisfaction. The result is that many seasoned certified interpreters left their community-based practice to become full or part time interpreters in the VRS industry. This continues to have challenging consequences in some communities—creating shortages in qualified personnel and the inability to fill some assignments. In some instances, communities use the services of less qualified practitioners on assignments previously filled by certified practitioners.

Now after more than a decade of VRS provision, the dust is beginning to settle and the consequences of this unplanned and rapid growth are understood at a deeper level. The

consequence of imposing a corporate model onto a publicly funded system of service delivery has yet to be studied. Further, the limitations to decision latitude imposed on interpreter practitioners by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and corporate policies and procedures leave interpreters feeling deeply conflicted as they continue to examine the implications of work in the VRS industry. It is only in hindsight that the field can speculate about what the outcome might have been if the profession had been in the forefront leading the effort to regulate this specialty and leading a more orderly development of the patterns of practice associated with it.

Another likely consequence of specialization is the increased cost associated with interpreting services. Typically, specialists charge more in recognition of the added investment in education, training, and certification necessary to achieve specialist standing. These increased costs can become a significant barrier to accessing the most appropriate and qualified services. Further, when factors impacting interpreting are complex and high-risk, it is common for interpreters to work in teams. As well, the potential for injury from inadequate rest breaks is a factor that contributes to the need for interpreting teams. Such patterns of practice drive the cost of services even higher, making ideal staffing configurations potentially cost-prohibitive.

However, given that one of the core values associated with interpreting is the right of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to communication access it is incumbent on the field to make sure its practices do not create unreasonable obstacles to achieving this core value. Therefore, it is in the best interest of consumers, practitioners, and the publicly funded systems in which interpreters sometimes perform their work, to explore cost effective approaches to service delivery that do not sacrifice quality or integrity.

Preparing and Governing Specialists

Although these and other potential negative consequences of specialization exist, it is unlikely that further specialization by practitioners will cease. Rather, we predict that the need specialization will only flourish in coming years. As previously mentioned, specialization is a natural result of new knowledge, technology and advancement in a profession, as well as shifting demands in the marketplace. The literature emphasizes the responsibility of the professions to

regulate their specialties as a means of recognizing and promoting advanced knowledge and skills and of ensuring orderly development of the field (Cesna and Mosier, 2005; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002; Sandstrom, 2007; Seago, 2006). Therefore, we argue that it is important for the fields of interpreting and interpreter education to have a conceptual framework from which to guide and facilitate the preparation and governance of specializations. Such a framework should be sensitive to the consequences that have been identified.

What follows is a two-fold conceptual framework organized around a set assumptions and core values and guiding principles around professional specialization. It is a framework that draws on a system designed for the field of psychology to manage the orderly development of its specializations (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). The first part of the framework is a set of assumptions and core values that represent a foundation upon which specialization has been and can continue to be built in the field of ASL-English interpreting. The assumptions define the beliefs and values that inform the guiding principles for specialization in the field of ASL-English interpreting. Set forth in the form of recommendations, the guiding principles are intended to advance coherence and clarity for the practice, education, recognition, and regulation of specialists and specialties in the field of ASL-English interpreting. In cooperation, these two elements form the conceptual framework that was defined through the MARIE project on specialization. These assumptions and principles are not intended to constrain further evolution of approaches to specialization, but rather to provide guidance for deliberation about such a process. In such, they are offered as a framework for interpreter educators to use as they develop and reconstitute the coursework within their programs.

Assumptions and Core Values Regarding Specialization

Shedding light on the assumptions that underlie any professional practice serves as a means to re-visit the core values that are held by its practitioners. We offer these assumptions regarding specialization as a guideline for policy makers as well as a set of critical discussion points for interpreter educators. The assumptions offer a checkpoint to measure the decisions and policies that are made. At the same time, they are not static in nature, rather their ideas need to be re-visited, re-worded, and when found to represent the collective view, reified in our policies about specialization.

Assumption 1: Efforts to recognize and regulate specialties must be sensitive and responsive to the unique relationship between interpreters and the Deaf Community.

Core Values: The principles set forth in this document are for the purpose of recognizing and promoting advanced knowledge and skills of interpreting practitioners choosing to specialize and to ensure orderly development of specialized practice. The intention is to protect the interests of the Deaf Community and society from potential harm perpetuated through incompetent practice by unqualified individuals. These intentions must be carefully balanced against fiscal constraints associated with the cost of interpreting services and the potential of creating a system of service provision that further alienates interpreters from the communities they serve and/or diminishes the availability of competent generalist interpreters. To this end, specialists must remain deeply rooted in the Deaf Community and engage in on-going interaction within the community for the purpose of remaining attuned to changing needs and expectations and accessing the counsel of Deaf individuals as part of their ongoing practice (Cokely, 2005; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004, 2005).

Assumption 2: Recognizing the globalization of interpreting, specialists are judicious in recommending staffing patterns and setting fees for service in accordance with established ethical standards.

Core Values: The goal of specialization is to advance knowledge and competence in the interest of the public good. Recognizing that a significant amount of the cost for interpreting services is paid by public tax dollars, and that the unique and often ideal staffing patterns sometimes associated with specialty practice (e.g., multiple member teams) can be costly and therefore potentially prohibitive, specialists will consistently seek ways to creatively collaborate with other professionals and entities who are responsible to pay for interpreting services to ensure reasonable fees for appropriate services. The goal is balanced with the right of qualified practitioners to secure fair and equitable earnings.

Assumption 3: Recognition as a specialist is a voluntary decision for practitioners.

Core Values: The principles set forth in this document are not intended to prevent certified and licensed practitioners from practicing in areas for which they are appropriately qualified by education, training, experience and study. The public uses information about specialist recognition as a way to identify qualified practitioners. As well, colleagues use this recognition for referral, collaborative and collegial purposes.

Assumption 4: Generalist competence is the pre-requisite foundation for specialization.

Core Values: Mastery of generalist competencies, such as the Entry-to-Practice Competencies (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005), provides the requisite foundation in interpreting competence necessary to support working in a range of low-risk situations not requiring specialist competence. Low-risk situations are those involving routine and predictable activities and allowing sufficient time for the parties involved to negotiate meaning and understanding as necessary. Generalist interpreters are defined by professional certification, continuing education, adherence to a Code of Professional Conduct (CPC), and the minimum of a bachelor degree in interpreting and/or a related field. Alternative pathways for recognizing academic equivalence may be necessary when considering the readiness of long-established generalists who seek specialist designation.

Assumption 5: Established generalist practice is a pre-requisite for specialization.

Core Values: A well-rounded base of practical work experience takes approximately 3-5 years of fulltime work experience to accumulate. This is considered a sufficient amount of tenure to gain experience in a broad range of low-risk settings with a broad range of consumers and to develop a foundation of judgment upon which to recognize unique and complex demands requiring specialized competence.

Assumption 6: A period of supervised work experience is an essential aspect of induction into specialty practice.

Core Values: A period practice that is supervised by an experienced and recognized specialist is a long-standing element of specialization in the professions. This period allows for engagement in regular observation-supervision discussion that deepens critical thinking and reflection, enhancing the discretion necessary to work autonomously in specialized settings (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002). It also fosters collegial collaboration, which is central to effective and sustained specialized practice. It is recommended that this period of supervision continue for at least one year after completion of training and entry into specialized practice.

Assumption 7: Specialists regularly engage in collegial exchange and conversation with colleagues and peers for the purpose of ongoing performance reflection and evaluation.

Core Values: Reflective practice, peer review, self-awareness, and assessment are the cornerstones to advancing ethical practice (Stewart & Witter-Merithew, 2006). Mature practitioners actively seek feedback and interaction with peers and colleagues so their practices and actions are informed by the wisdom, insight and experiences. These practices are considered routine to specialists (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002).

Assumption 8: Specialists sometimes work in teams—one member of which may be Deaf.

Core Values: In some situations, due to combination of factors that increase the complexity of an interpreted interaction, there is a need for more than one interpreter. Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) are central and essential to the effectiveness of many interpreting teams, particularly when the linguistic and cultural demands require the competence of a native ASL user or specialist in the use of visual-gestural patterns of communication. The distinctive patterns of practice utilized by CDIs often exceed the competence of non-Deaf interpreters—even those with specialized knowledge and skills. The formative experiences of Deaf interpreters in using language with a wide range of Deaf and non-Deaf individuals, over long periods of time, and across many settings, provide them with unique formative experiences and foundation of competence to

contribute to interpreting teams (Stewart, Witter-Merithew & Cobb, 2009). It should be noted that there might be appropriate alternatives to a team of interpreters in some situations. For example, in the area of healthcare in Minnesota, Deaf individuals are gaining training and becoming Certified Healthcare Workers. In this capacity, these Deaf individuals can engage in advocacy and education, while working as members of the healthcare system. Typically, these individuals also possess distinctive patterns of communication that enable them to communicate directly with a wide range of Deaf and non-Deaf individuals to ensure interpreted information is being received and understood. When such non-interpreting specialists are available, it can result in a more effective and cost efficient approach to addressing unique communication demands.

Assumption 9: Specialists contribute to the body of knowledge about the specialty via research, writing, presenting, and participating in professional organization work.

Core Values: Specialists are mature practitioners with advanced education, significant formative experiences, and established careers (Kasher, 2005). They are leaders in the practice of interpreting. They are committed to advancement of the profession of interpreting and their specialization and to this end will engage in scholarly contribution and leadership to the field. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in communities of inquiry where scholarly reflection on patterns of practice occurs, participation in field-based research, presentation of scholarly work at peer attended conferences, publication of scholarly work in peer reviewed journals, and service to the field through leadership roles on committees and boards of practitioner and/or educator organizations (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004; 2005).

With these assumptions as the foundation, the next section will detail a series of guiding principles to apply in creating systems for training, regulating, and credentialing specialist practitioners. Essentially, the principles are organized around four themes: 1) principles that guide application for specialty designation, 2) principles that guide the entities that seek to regulate specialty practice, 3) principles that guide training institutions as they prepare specialist practitioners, and 4) principles that guide entities that credential and/or certify specialist practitioners. Although efforts have been made to anticipate each of the key elements associated

with a framework for training, regulation, and certification of specialists, it is likely that certain elements are missing and will benefit from contribution of a wider audience of stakeholders.

Guiding Principles for Specialization

Principles related to practitioners seeking specialty designation

Core Principle 1: Formally organized groups of practitioners seeking recognition of a specialty by the fields of interpreting and interpreter education provide documented need and evidence of a critical mass of interested practitioners to make specialization feasible and sustainable.

Commentary: Although a wide range of unique specializations in the area of interpreting may exist, there may not be a sufficient need or practitioner base to warrant formal recognition of all specialties. For example, there are several Deaf individuals who are chiropractors and hire interpreters to work within their practice. However, the number of Deaf chiropractors and the number of interpreters working in this specialized setting is small and does not constitute a sufficient mass as to require the establishment of formal training and education programs or systems of credentialing. In such cases, acquisition of competence likely comes through work experience, supervision/mentoring and individual study, including taking related courses from within the larger specialty discipline. In documenting need, the frequency of request for interpreting services in the setting should be sufficient to sustain regular and on-going employment of practitioners over the course of a career and the potential for earning a significant portion of their livelihood (at least 25%) so as to warrant the additional training and credentialing associated with specialized practice. Need also has been demonstrated through needs assessments—such as those already administered by the NCIEC and available at http://www.nciec.org or through other consumer and practitioner surveys.

Core Principle 2: Formally organized groups of practitioners seeking recognition of a specialty by the fields of interpreting and interpreter education recommend a mechanism to

facilitate the coordination of credentialing, educational policy development, continued recognition of their specialties on a continuing basis, and address fiscal issues arising from such a mechanism.

Commentary: Member Sections of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf or other similarly organized groups of practitioners may be the most likely group of specialist practitioners to initiate proposals. Within an organized group there should exist the leadership necessary to secure support and assistance from various stakeholders in the application process—such as professionals within the system for which interpreters seek specialized designation (e.g., medical, mental health, legal, or school personnel), as well as Deaf consumers. A template defining the elements of a model proposal can be developed and serve as a tool for guiding the development process.

Core Principle 3: At the time of their application for recognition of a specialty, the group of practitioners seeking designation submits a transition plan for credentialing of practitioners currently working in the specialty, but who entered practice before the development of current prescribed education and training sequence in that specialty.

Commentary: To the greatest extent possible, all practitioners seeking specialty recognition should conform to the prescribed standards. When the breadth and depth of experience, expertise and practice of a practitioner or group of practitioners warrant and can be validated, then a 'grandfathering' clause is defined and these individuals participate in the established continuing education system for that specialty classification.

Principles related to regulating specialists

Core Principle 4: Each specialty has its own review board or administrative structure that is responsible for defining and reviewing its specialty-specific guidelines for education and training programs, supervised experience requirements and continuing professional development beyond mastery of functional and specialty-distinctive competencies.

Commentary: The specialty review board/administrative structure identifies and modifies the education and supervised training experiences that are necessary for the preparation, practice, and continuing professional development of its specialists. The education and training guidelines will be validated consensually by specialists, educators, trainers and credentialing bodies in the specialty and informed by Deaf Community members and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., students). Existing entities, such as the Member Sections of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf or the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) may serve as a catalyst for the formation of review boards/administrative structures.

Core Principle 5: Recognized and established experts in distinct areas of specialization will promulgate the functional and specialty-distinctive competencies for their area of expertise, as well as the specific requirements associated with demonstration of mastery for specialty designation.

Commentary: Interpreting experts with specialized competence in a given area, as well as other system-based professionals and Deaf consumers with expertise in a given area, will define the skills, knowledge, attitudes, attributes and values that must be demonstrated by interpreting practitioners seeking designation as specialists in that area. As well, in recognition of a range of possible approaches to credentialing—such as certification or portfolio assessment—the experts from within that area of specialization will define the specifications for demonstration of mastery of competencies.

Core Principle 6: In defining standards and patterns of practice for a specialty, each review board or administrative structure will rely on evidenced-based effective and best practices, advances in technology, and demographic and social research in its mission to protect the interests of consumers.

Commentary: Standards require timely and thoughtful responsiveness to the evolving marketplace of interpreting. As well, scope of practice clarity and congruence with the changing/expanding needs of the Deaf Community and specialized settings are essential.

Principles related to the training of specialists

Core Principle 7: Specialty preparation extends beyond foundational preparation and the competency required of all generalist interpreter practitioners. It includes functional and specialty-distinctive competencies unique to the specialty (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). The scholarship and formative experiences of experts that is foundational to the specialty includes theoretical foundations and descriptions of specialty-relevant patterns of practice, and is based on effective and best practices.

Commentary: The specialty knowledge base must be distinguishable from that which characterizes the technical and professional foundations of generalist interpreting (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989). And while there may be overlap between recognized specialties in some elements of practice—such as the ability of specialists to engage in research, provide leadership and consultation —each specialty demonstrates distinct patterns of practice.

Core Principle 8: The functional and specialty-distinctive competencies of any specialty are acquired in an organized and integrated program (Kasher, 2005). They are built upon and integrated with the foundational competencies of generalist practitioners and are acquired through graduate level certificate or degree programs.

Commentary: Competencies for specialization should be acquired as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes and values (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989). An appropriate scope and sequence of learning will be defined at a graduate level and implementation managed within a formal academic structure. Currency in the specialization can be maintained through continuing education programs, but mastery of the functional and specialty-distinctive competencies should be acquired through an integrated, competency-based approach to teaching and learning—

pre-service versus in-service (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008).

Core Principle 9: Education and training requirements are reviewed periodically to assess their continuing effectiveness and relevance.

Commentary: New knowledge, scholarship, and technology continue to advance specialized practice of interpreters. A systematic process of review is essential for maintaining the most current and cutting edge curriculum and standards of practice. The review process should be defined by the review board/administrative structure for the specialty.

Core Principle 10: Professional education and training programs that prepare specialist interpreter practitioners seek accreditation for the benefit of their students and quality assurance for the public.

Commentary: Relevant accrediting bodies like the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) support the development and implementation of accreditation of interpreter education programs and can be encouraged to establish appropriate standards that pertain to the preparation of specialist practitioners.

Principles related to credentialing of specialists

Core Principle 11: Entities assuming authority and responsibility for credentialing specialty practice of interpreters implement systems that include an appropriate application with specified standards for education, training, verification of the same, professional peer review, recommendation by members of the professional and Deaf Communities, and a valid and reliable system of assessment/examination.

Commentary: This principle is consistent with the history of the ASL-English interpreting profession, including early requirements for Deaf Community recommendation and more recent academic requirements. Further, one way to ensure practitioner collaboration within the profession and Deaf Community is to have peers and

Deaf consumers provide recommendation of the practitioner for specialization designation.

Core Principle 12: Entities assuming authority and responsibility for credentialing specialty practice of interpreters have a clearly established system of dispute resolution that can be readily accessed by consumers and peers, and includes all necessary due process elements so as to protect the interest of practitioners from false accusation.

Commentary: This entity holds practitioners accountable for conduct based on ethical, legal, and professional standards and publishes infractions and associated discipline for the benefit of the field, consumers and society (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008).

Core Principle 13: Entities assuming authority and responsibility for credentialing specialty practice of interpreters are members of a multi-specialty oversight and coordinating organization that facilitates common procedural standards.

Commentary: Cross collaboration and coordination of credentialing entities is important for the efficient use of resources, avoiding duplication of efforts, sharing information and to ensure orderly development of the field (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). Further, credentialing and regulatory activities may impact other communities. Therefore, this body consults with education and training, practice and other groups as needed to fulfill its mission.

Core Principle 14: Interpreter practitioners intending to practice in one or more area(s) of specialization seek to obtain appropriate recognition of their competence to practice.

Commentary: It serves the profession and the public interest for interpreters to seek voluntary credentials in ways that accurately reflect their areas of specialty practice. In some instances this may involve compliance with state laws relating to scope of practice and/or licensure.

Conclusion

Specialization in ASL-English interpreting currently exists and has been the subject of growing inquiry. To date, specialization has occurred through both informal (de facto) and formal (de jure) processes, including the creation of special interest groups, advanced/specialized education programs, and certification. But specialization is not without consequence—such as shortages of generalist practitioners, increased costs of interpreting services, and self-designation by practitioners who may not possess adequate competence. The fields of interpreting and interpreter education have a responsibility to regulate their specialties as a means of recognizing and promoting advanced knowledge and skills and of ensuring orderly development of the fields. The conceptual framework offered in this article is a contribution towards fulfilling this responsibility. The translation of this framework into a practical system of governance is one of the next steps to be pursued.

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