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Conference of Interpreter Trainers

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# Editorial: Interpreter Education Within and Outside of the Classroom

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Interpreting is "a living, evolving, and changing entity" which does not take place in a vacuum (Napier, 2005, p. 135). As interpreter educators, we should constantly be seeking new and innovative ways to expose students to situations that are as close as possible to real-life interpreting scenarios, with all of the contextual and discursive challenges that entails. In this second issue of Volume 9 of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, we explore the theme of situated learning, with a focus on the interpreting classroom.

Researchers across the education sector have been calling for less reliance on content transmission from lecturer to student, and more student-led learning opportunities that replicate real-life scenarios both within and outside of the classroom (Metzger, 2000; Roberts & Sayer 2017). Interpreters in their everyday work are akin to discourse analysts, who need sophisticated skills to assess context (language, participants, relationships, etc.) in order to guide their decision-making process (Major, Napier, & Stubbe, 2012).

In their 2016 specially themed issue of the *Interpreter and Translator Trainer* dedicated to situated learning approaches, María González Davies and Vanessa Enríquez Raído write: "Situated learning is generally understood as a context-dependent approach to translator and interpreter training under which learners are exposed to real-life and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 1). Similarly, Sawyer (2004, p. 60) includes "knowledge of the profession/professional identity" among four basic categories of skills to be included in interpreter education curricula. This fits the framework of situated cognition (Sawyer, 2004), which reflects the view that "all knowledge is fundamentally situated in the environment in which it was acquired" (Derry & Lesgold, 1996, p. 791). Arjona (1984, p. 4, as cited in Sawyer, 2004, p. 57) agrees and includes an "understanding by the student of issues and problems he/she is called upon to address in real life situations" as the first of four professional objectives of a course of study.

In our experience, many interpreter education programs already value learning in the community, for example through participation in community events, and practicum placements where student interpreters learn alongside professional interpreters, using and reflecting on their skills in a new environment. González Davies (2004) has long been a strong advocate of situated learning approaches in translator education, with students working on real life projects. Chouc and Conde (2016) reported on students responding to the experience of being placed in the interpreting booth during a live session of the Scottish parliament. Metzger (2000) outlines the use of role-plays in the interpreting classroom as a valuable approach to learning dynamic aspects of interpreter role, such as interactional management. Replicating real-life interactional and interpreting demands for student learning

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is not exactly a new idea, but interpreter education researchers (such as those with contributions in this volume) certainly suggest it could be explored more, and in new creative ways.

This issue contains several contributions describing a form of situated learning. We begin with articles describing opportunities for interpreting students to experience placements in the community, and to reflect on their role as future practitioners.

In our first research article, Carmen Valero-Garcés presents a case study on the internships undertaken by translation and interpreting students in the office of the Oficina de Asilo y Refugio (OAR) or Asylum and Refugee Office in Spain. She describes 125-hour internships completed by students in the OAR supervised by an academic and an institutional adviser. This form of situated learning allows students to gain first-hand experience of the type of professional activities and tasks translators and interpreters working at the OAR are involved in. Such internships may be organized in a range of work settings for interpreting students, such as educational settings, social work settings or specialized health settings, for example, with speech pathologists (cf. Crezee, 2015).

In the second research article, "Conquering the Interpreter's Operational Space: Sign Language Interpreting Students and their Acculturation to Deafblind Clients," Gro Hege Saltnes Urdal describes a form of situated learning involving undergraduate signed language interpreting students in Norway. Her artcle outlines focus group discussions during which students discussed how they felt working with deafblind clients influenced their evidence-based practice. This article supports the importance of reflective practice as discussed by Schön (1987), Dangerfield and Napier (2015), and Crezee and Burn (forthcoming). Placements of this nature, which combine situated cognition and reflective practice, require thorough preparation, university ethics committee and institutional review board approval, and consultation and collaboration with all concerned, but students benefit enormously from such approaches.

The Open Forum section contains two interviews and a book review. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox, professor emerita at the University of New Mexico (UNM), was instrumental in establishing a Baccalaureate degree program in signed language interpreting at UNM. In an interview with Anita Nelson-Julander, she describes her experiences in seeking to attain Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) accreditation for the program at UNM, the impact of accreditation, and advice she has for other interpreter educators who may be considering this goal. Our second interview in this issue focuses on the work of experienced conference interpreter and interpreter trainer Maya de Wit, particularly at an international level. Maya is based in the Netherlands and was interviewed by Esther de Boe. Maya shares her journey to becoming an interpreter and interpreter trainer, as well as her experience working in international sign and her role in curriculum development in Europe.

Debra Russell presents a review of the book *Consecutive Notetaking and Interpreter Training,* edited by Yasumasa Someya and published by Routledge. The book collects papers from a 2015 symposium dedicated to the theory and pedagogy of note-taking. The book includes Michaela Albl-Mikasa's cognitive-linguistic model of consecutive interpreting, which was previously published only in German and is now accessible to a more international audience.

The Dissertation Abstracts section includes summaries of theses on topics of interest to both signed and spoken language interpreters/translators and educators. Marina Sánchez-Torrón's PhD thesis reports on two empirical studies involving professional English to Spanish translators. Rachel Mapson's PhD thesis explores the way in which im/politeness is interpreted from British Sign Language into spoken English, and how contextual considerations influence interpreters' decision making. Finally, Delys Magill's MA thesis examines New Zealand Sign Language interpreters' perspectives on the challenges of healthcare interpreting.

This issue of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education* brings together the work of interpreter educators, scholars, and practitioners, with a focus on exploring new ways for situated learning in interpreter education and furthering "learners' capacity to think and act like professionals" (González Davies & Enríquez Raído, 2016, p. 1).

Thinking ahead to our two volumes planned for 2018, we would like to remind our readers that IJIE has a rolling call for manuscripts. We welcome contributions any theme relevant to interpreter education, so the journal can continue to provide a platform for sharing insights with colleagues globally. We invite a range of contributions for research articles and commentary, dissertation abstracts, book reviews, interviews, and teaching reflections. Please also alert your research students to the possibility of submitting a manuscript to the student work section of *IJIE*.

Emma Roberts and Karen Sayer (2017) encourage us to rethink our approaches to university teaching, so as to enable students to develop the skills to resolve new problems in an increasingly unpredictable world, while at the

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same time allowing them to be in greater control of their own learning. While their comments apply to education in general, we feel they are extremely relevant to interpreting students' preparation for the dynamic realities of professional interpreting practice:

> Higher education in the 21st century needs to prepare students for solving new problems in an unpredictable world rather than simply acquiring knowledge" (Roberts & Sayer, 2017, p. 298).

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# Training Interpreters and Translators in Spain's Asylum and Refugee Office (OAR): A Case Study

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**Abstract**

**The process of applying for asylum has been the primary focus of various legal studies and research programs. Numerous articles dealing with language and communication problems have recently emerged, revealing some of the adversities that interpreters and translators face when working in asylum and refugee settings. This study explores some of the issues and complexities surrounding the interpreting and translation services provided by the Spanish Asylum and Refugee Office (OAR). It also analyzes the experiences of several graduate students—and their respective mentors—during their time spent interning at the OAR. The conclusions drawn based on these experiences can act as a foundation for creating programs and activities geared toward training interpreters and translators to work with refugees and asylum seekers.**

Keywords: interpreting, asylum seekers, training, internships

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# Training Interpreters and Translators in Spain's Asylum and Refugee Office (OAR): A Case Study

## 1.    Introduction and Background

The process of applying for asylum has been the primary focus of numerous studies and research programs with various objectives. According to Las Heras Navarro (2010) and Berry (1990), asylum seekers are oftentimes overlooked and face countless disadvantages within the realm of human migration. Nonetheless, this may be changing due to the strong impact that the so-called "refugee crisis"[1] is having on Europe and other countries worldwide, a crisis which started in 2015 and has led to a growing interest in research surrounding asylum issues (BBC, 2016).

   Some studies focus on the language and communication problems that arise when refugees seek asylum, such as pioneering research conducted by Barsky (1993, 1996), which identifies the different roles that Canadian interpreters assume when dealing with asylum seekers. Watson (1998) analyzes these same topics as they pertain to Australian interpreters. Burnet and Peel (2001) explore the issues of interpreting for refugees in healthcare settings within the United Kingdom, and Pöllabauer (2004; 2005; 2006) analyzes matters of power and liability surrounding the roles of an interpreter. Inghilleri (2005) talks about the notion of the "habitus of interpreting" and its possible influence on asylum adjudication procedures. Maryns (2006) researches language issues that arise when interviewing refugees in Belgium. Benhaddou Handi (2003, 2006) explores culture clashes when interpreting for refugees who share the same language—in this case, Arabic—but come from completely different backgrounds. Pöchhacker and Kolb (2009) investigate the issues surrounding the accuracy of written and transcribed interview records. Crezee, Hayward, and Jülich (2013) examine the impactful experiences that interpreters may endure, emphasizing the need for providing interpreters with emotional support through debriefing sessions and post-interview counseling. Lastly, Tryuk (2014) explores ethical issues that are evident in the Asylum and Refugee Office in Warsaw, Poland. Many of these studies focus on asylum proceedings in which interpreters act as intermediaries. It is also worth noting that there has been a growing interest in analyzing psychotherapeutic treatments offered to refugees with the assistance of an interpreter (D'Ardenne, Ruaro, Cestari, Fakhoury, & Priebe, 2007; Miller, Martell, Pazdirek, Caruth, & Lopez, 2005; Tribe, 2002; Tribe & Keefe, 2009; Tribe & Lane, 2009; Tribe & Morrissey, 2004; Tribe, 2009).

   In Spain, where the current study took place, research focusing on interpreting during asylum hearings is lacking. Nonetheless, a handful of concise studies focus on translation and interpreting for refugees in a general sense (Las Heras Navarro, 2010, 2012). Valero-Garcés and Cata (2006) discuss the Translation and Interpreting Services (in Spanish, *Servicio de Traductores e Intérpretes* [SETI]) offered by the Committee for the Defense of Refugees, Immigrants, and Those Granted Asylum in Spain (*Comité de Defensa de los Refugiados, Asilados e*

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[1] See "Refugee Crisis in Europe" available at http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en.

*Inmigrantes en el Estado Español*). A doctoral dissertation has recently been completed regarding the role interpreting plays in the reception of immigrants and refugees in Spain (Adam, 2016).

The current study contributes to this literature by illuminating issues and complexities faced by interpreters who provide interpreting and translation services at the the Spanish Asylum and Refugee Office (Oficina de Asilo y Refugio [hereinafter referred to as the "OAR"]). The study gathered feedback from professional interpreters as well as graduate students fulfilling internship requirements, and their mentors on their experience, in the interest of using this feedback to improve the situated learning aspects of interpreting and translation training programs.

## 2. The Spanish Asylum and Refugee Office

The Spanish Asylum and Refugee Office (OAR) is an administrative unit that is affiliated with the Directorate-General for Internal Policies and the Spanish Ministry of the Interior. Among other responsibilities, the OARassists asylum seekers in the process of applying for international protection. *International protection* is understood to be protection granted by a certain state or nation to refugees or other individuals in need, protecting them from their own national authorities. These individuals include refugees, any beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, displaced persons, and those who are stateless. The very nature of international protection requires the intervention of different professionals and bodies (interviewers, instructors, lawyers, police officers, social workers, interpreters, etc.), who usually use interpreting services in order to fulfill any assigned professional duties, which, according to current asylum regulations, include the following (Oficina de Asilo y Refugio, 2012):

- Carrying out procedures involving the granting of asylum;
- Supporting the Asylum and Refugee Interministerial Commission Secretariat (hereinafter the "CIAR");
- Notifying all individuals in question of the decisions regarding their applications;
- Informing and giving advice to asylum seekers regarding any available social services;
- Discussing rejected applications with the Ministry of the Interior;
- Periodically reporting any rejected applications (and the criteria applied therein) to the CIAR;
- Informing the CIAR of any possible consequences that may arise due to a rejected application; and
- Providing the Spanish representative of the UN Refugee Agency with some statistics regarding asylum applications and refugees in Spain.

As set forth in Spanish Asylum Law 12/2009, dated 30 October (*Ley de Asilo 12/2009 de 30 de octubre)*, some of the other responsibilities of the OAR include:

- Processing applications regarding family outreach protection;
- Initiating proceedings to stop or revoke any previously granted international protection;
- Starting the processing of applications for stateless individuals, managing the cases in question, and presenting the Ministry of the Interior with any motions for resolutions that have been duly substantiated and personalized through the General Directorate of Foreign Nationals and Immigration;
- Monitoring and ensuring that the appropriate bodies issue any documents and certificates to the stateless individuals that would otherwise be issued to them by or through their corresponding national authorities; and
- Initiating the appropriate steps that should be taken were the "stateless" status to be revoked or terminated.

The aforementioned responsibilities provide a general idea of the knowledge that is required of interpreters and translators—mainly, legal and terminological understanding—as well as the key roles they play when it comes to asylum applications. With regard to the application process, the following excerpt, which was taken

from the official asylum application brochure, provides a snapshot of some of the complexities that interpreters face when interpreting in these contexts, given the varying applicant profiles, the complexity of the interviews, and the lack of background information:

> You (the applicant) must submit an application in person.[2] If you cannot do this for physical or legal reasons, you may authorize another person do so on your behalf. You will have to attend an interview in which you must answer a set of questions regarding your personal information, and in which you explain all the reasons for which you are applying for international protection and how you arrived in Spain. The interview will be conducted by a manager who will tell you what to do and help you to complete it in order to establish all the relevant facts.

Translators and interpreters in Spain face circumstances that in addition heavy workloads, include limited possibilities of becoming permanent members of staff. Agreements regarding the official positions or titles of these professions are nonexistent, and there are translators who have had to work for several years before finally being hired permanently. Others, however, continue to be hired temporarily for small amounts of time through agreements with NGOs. Some of these NGOs provide interpreters who oftentimes have no formal training and who have learned Spanish as a second—or even third—language. In addition to translation agency staff, there are currently translators who are subcontracted by the government. Benhaddou Handi (2006) describes these types of workers below:

> Every now and then, the people in charge of coordinating and managing translators are unfamiliar with the world of translation and the specificities surrounding the profession. The professional prerequisites that are implemented when selecting said translators are either nonexistent or insufficient. What matters is that the interpreter is able to speak several languages, available at any time, and satisfied with the agreed-upon payment with the company. (p. 33)

As Benhaddou Handi (2006) states, "Speaking two languages is not enough to work as an interpreter, just as much as owning a certain uniform or carrying around a weapon does not make one a police officer" (p. 33). However, some progress concerning the recognition of the importance of the work of translators and interpreters has been made, following the implementation of Directive 2010/64/EU (dated 20 October) on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings and the need to create a registry, which was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The discussion under the title 'Training and testing in PSIT' which took place during the conference Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT): Training, Testing and Accreditation/ Traducción E Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos (TISP): Formación, Evaluación y Acreditación at the University of Alcalá (Valero-Garcés, 2016) provides evidence regarding this.

## 3.   The Study: Participants, Method and Data

A combination of an ethnographic approach and discourse analysis was adopted in this study (see Hale & Napier, 2013, on methods in interpreting research). All collected data came from interviews conducted with professional interpreters and trainers ($n$ = 4) at the OAR, as well as from reports written by graduate student in the MA program in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation ($n$ = 8) at the University of Alcalá, who were interns at the OAR during the 2012–2013 and 2013–2014 academic years. Students begin the internship part of their program, which consists of 150 hours, after having completed approximately 400 classroom hours. Two mentors, an academic and an institutional adviser, monitor their progress. The mentors

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[4]  See http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/extranjeria/asilo-y-refugio/presentacion-de-la-solicitud for more information.

work together when carrying out their duties and each submits a report about the student according to the established protocol. The internship is worth 5 ECTS  (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) out of a total of 60 ECTS credits and is currently equivalent to 100-125 working hours for the student. (See Valero-Garcés, 2010, for more information on interpreting internship development.)

The professional interpreters interviewed—who were also the students' mentors—were in-house interpreters and translators that the Spanish Ministry of the Interior provides to asylum seekers. Their language pairs were English, French, Arabic, and Russian. All of them had a higher education degree and/or had received training in translation and interpreting. They also had experience (3–4 years) and were familiar with the varying responsibilities of the OAR and the main aspects of international protection. They were presented with open-ended questions based on the key features surrounding interpreting and translation (I&T) as a profession. Students' language combinations with Spanish were three with Arabic, three with English, and two with French. The students' internship reports and responses were based on a standard template.

## 4.    The Voice of Professional Interpreters: Training Requirements

The interviews used for this study were conducted in person and contained open-ended questions regarding the key features surrounding I&T at the OAR, the roles assumed by interpreters and translators who assist asylum seekers, and the type of training that these professionals should receive in order to efficiently render their services. The duration of interviews ranged between 30 and 45 minutes and they were conducted one to one. Because participants gave similar answers, the following comments focus mainly on those aspects they deemed most crucial when training for their profession and exercising their duties.

The first key point they emphasized was the level of precision for translating and interpreting required by the OAR. According to the professionals who were interviewed, a high command of the working languages is imperative, including knowledge of varying dialects, registers, and specialized and colloquial vocabulary. One of these professional interpreters states the following:[3]

> The Asylum and Refugee Office is more than my workplace; it is my university and training center. In my opinion, a great interpreter is made through work experience and not just through diplomas or degrees. … University graduates are qualified to exercise their acquired abilities, but it is impossible to wait for there to be academic degrees in every single language and dialect. (Professional Comment 1)

This comment brings to the fore the neverending debate about the distance between academia, society and the real market (Krause, 2017).

The second key point the OAR interpreters emphasized was that interpreters and translators should be prepared to deal with a variety documents and texts types. According to statistics gathered in 2009, more than 61% of asylum and refugee applicants were unable to provide documentation proving their nationality or supporting their claims (Handi & Ortigosa, 2011). The interviewees also emphasized that those seeking international protection must undergo different interviews in which they carefully describe their own accounts leading up to the situation in which they currently find themselves. The applicants must also provide any personal information and travel plans, in addition to responding to questionnaires regarding their nationality and the motives for leaving their country.

The third significant point that was mentioned was the role of the interpreter or translator when forming part of a team that handles asylum seekers. Generally, a group of professionals takes part in the proceedings dealing with foreigners: civil servants, police officers, judges, lawyers, NGO members, healthcare professionals, and social

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[3] All respondents answered in Spanish and the answers have been translated into English literally and in a simple manner, omitting transcription symbols.

workers. Professional interpreters and translators play significant roles in conveying messages that make communication possible, allowing foreign nationals and all other parties involved to understand one another.

The fourth noteworthy point mentioned was the interviews and the manner in which they were conducted. Interviews constitute the backbone of the asylum application process, and the interpreter's role is of the utmost importance in cases in which the foreign national does not speak Spanish. Nonetheless, there is no particular type of interview or interviewee. Every individual has their own story, and they may belong to a different cultural group—even within the same language community (Robles Peña, & Russell, 2016). This demonstrates the importance of cultural nuances and the need for occasional interventions in order to facilitate communication (Maryns, 2006). If there is one thing that those being interviewed have in common, however, it is the adversities they have faced and their desire to find some type of resolution. This requires the interpreter to be psychologically prepared in order to render their services in an unbiased manner.

The fifth point highlighted was the need for both translation and interpreting services. Both professions are of paramount importance to the asylum process and require extensive training and experience. In addition to dealing with a wide range of proceedings throughout the asylum and refugee-seeking processes, translators and interpreters must be able to adapt to the workplace. Aside from interpreting, other responsibilities include the following:

- Formalizing asylum applications during the initial interviews with social workers;
- Participating with trainers in in-depth interviews that vary according to geographic location;
- Issuing and renewing documents, in addition to answering questions that arise regarding the verification of any records;
- Providing customer service and public information;
- Registering incoming and outgoing documents;
- Informing applicants of any social benefits or aid, in addition to referring them to reception centers;
- Acting as a liaison over the telephone (when contact is made with applicants or other fellow professionals);
- Assisting in fingerprinting processes and police station referrals; and
- Translating a range of documents (criminal background checks, identity cards and documents, birth and wedding certificates, medical reports, court rulings, legal notices, police reports, press releases [that relate to the applicant], and informational brochures published by the OAR). The types of documents that are translated vary in nature and include original texts, copies, faxed documents, handwritten or typed copies, and documents that are both legible and illegible.

Last, the professionals that were interviewed emphasized the need for continuous and interdisciplinary training. This is paramount in and interpreters' ability to adequately assist asylum seekers and staff members, given that this profession deals with a wide range of matters and various fields including linguistics, sociology, psychology, and humanities. Interpreters are constantly faced with new challenges and must actively train, in addition to being aware of current events.

## 5.   The Voice of Future Translators and Interpreters

All feedback from the eight student interns at the OAR was gathered from the reports the students wrote. The reports were divided into two parts and based on a standard template that was created by the university, subsequently adapted to each degree of study (Appendix 1). The first part of the report dealt with academic matters, whereas the second part focused on the development of professional skills needed for the job market. Students were required to finish the report and turn it in upon successful completion of their internship program. Ethical approval was mandatory for the students and the institutions in which they interned.

The academic portion of the report focused on the assignments that interns were given, in addition to their corresponding levels of satisfaction. According to students' responses, they were asked to undertake the following types of assignments:

- Translations and back-translations of various documents (asylum requests, letters of allegation, forms, etc.);
- Bilateral interpreting while providing customer service and assisting the police during formalized interviews and interviews with trainers; and
- Providing support to OAR users and staff members.

These assignments coincided with the comments made by professionals regarding the need for translators and interpreters to deal with a variety of documents and text types and assisting with paperwork. The following comments demonstrate the students' levels of satisfaction not only academically, but also on a personal level:[4]

> Despite certain drawbacks, I must say that I loved the experience. The work that is done in this office is impressive, and we should never forget that we are dealing with people who find themselves in difficult situations and, in some cases, have physical and/or psychological problems. We also have to take into account the fact that these people do not speak the official language of the receiving country and, in many cases, do not have the financial means to support themselves within the country. (Student Comment 1)

> This internship experience allowed me to gain confidence in myself and in my work. In effect, we had to complete various assignments, and the staff members who assigned us these tasks trusted us completely, giving us more confidence in ourselves. This internship has also helped me feel more comfortable when interpreting, being that I had no prior experience (most of my classmates studied translation and interpreting and already had some type of foundation). (Student Comment 2)

> Interpreting is no longer a challenge for me, but rather a task that I feel I am able to carry out just as well as translation. The internship experience at the Asylum and Refugee Office has helped me, above all, to gain firsthand experience as to how working in a field that deals with refugees operates. (Student Comment 3)

The above comments also coincide with the voice of the professional interpreters' about the need for experience outside the classroom. The first student talks about people coming from different places; the second student talks about gaining confidence in herself through the difficult task she had to perform – including both translating and interpreting. The third student expresses satisfaction at having the chance to gain initial experience in a specific context. All these comments suggest that prospective translators and interpreters must also be trained in areas that go beyond simply conveying information between service providers and users, as some training programs might do.

The second part of the students' reports regarding their professional experience brought to light several challenges. Due to the limited scope of this article, only the most pertinent challenges have been analyzed, followed by different student responses:

Students highlighted the importance of being aware of cultural nuances when working in the OAR:

> I have learned a lot of things, one of the most important being vocabulary and how to document translations. In order to be an interpreter in this type of place or situation, simply knowing another language is not enough. The interpreter must act as a mediator and truly learn the manner in which the applicant speaks and expresses themselves in accordance with their culture. (Student Comment 4)

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[4] Students' names have been omitted for confidentiality purposes. The answers were in Spanish, and they have been translated into English as accurately as possible.

Based on this student's experience, the conclusion that can be drawn is that interpreters must take on the roles of mediators in certain situations.

Student comments included the need to develop communication skills:

> Customer service is a daily responsibility at the Asylum and Refugee Office that requires high levels of communication skills including providing service to the general public, adapting to the social and cultural level of the people involved, and having patience. (Student Comment 5)

This clearly demonstrates that interpreters must hone their communication skills in order to interact and work well with different groups and users.

Student comments also reflected the diverse profile of applicants:

> Contact is made with people who are very different. Interpreters must learn how to familiarize themselves with—and adapt to—the manner in which users express themselves according to their cultures. For example, I had to act as an interpreter for an Iranian refugee in the United Kingdom who was asking about humanitarian relief in Spain. I also interpreted for another man from Tehran and three Nigerian applicants. (Student Comment 6)

Comment 7 ties in with Comment 6 in that they both emphasize the need for developing the skills that allow interpreters to communicate in multilingual settings. The professional interpreters who were interviewed also considered this of paramount importance.

Students also commented on the need for knowledge of asylum, procedures, protocols, and reports required by law:

> The subject that has helped me the most in undertaking this internship has been the interpreting course, within both the medical and legal fields. Acting as an interpreter for refugees requires insight into different laws. In other words, having overall knowledge regarding the legal framework concerning asylum, statelessness, and the manners in which to seek international protection in Spain is imperative. (Student Comment 7)

This student's comment highlights the need for some type of legal background work and knowledge of protocols, coinciding with statements made by the professionals during the interviews.

Students commented on the importance of translation as a common task in the OAR setting:

> Translating was a common task and included a variety of texts. One such example was a text titled "A Ruling Made by the Court of Peace of the Democratic Republic of Congo." This was not very difficult, as we had seen very similar texts in class. Other types of documents included user guides, e-mails, UN Refugee Agency surveys, and personal accounts given by asylum seekers. The most difficult thing was that a few handwritten words were illegible. (Student Comment 8)

As the student claims, translating tasks were frequently assigned, including a variety of texts and modes such as back-translations, revisions, editing, and sight translations. These comments are useful to interpreter educators and may serve as a reminder to implement components of translation into the curriculum of programs that prepare students to work as interpreters in asylum and refugee settings.

The importance of multidisciplinarity and teamwork were highlighted as essential skills:

> The interviews with social workers are much calmer and less stressful than interpreting, both within the booths and during legal proceedings. Being aware of the characteristics and intricacies of each type of situation when it comes to interpreting for asylum seekers is imperative; over-the-counter

>	interpreting should not be conducted in the same manner as interpreting during a pretrial interview, and it is important to take this distinction well into consideration. (Student Comment 9)

This demonstrates the importance of teamwork and the ability to work with different professionals forming part of a group, including interviewers, instructors, lawyers, police officers, social workers, and other interpreters. This is essential in order to complete any assigned tasks and be aware of the differences among the various roles and responsibilities that these professionals assume. Students also commented on the importance of adhering to the Code of Ethics of the *Libro Blanco de la traducción y la interpretación institucional* (White Paper on Institutional Translation and Interpreting; Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 2012).

The following comments highlight different situations in which students recognize the importance of abiding by a code of ethics and good practice, an example of which is in the *Libro Blanco de la traducción y la interpretación institucional*):

>	Maintaining one's composure is paramount in order to listen to and respect all of the personal accounts that are being told without any parallel trials, regardless of whether or not these stories are true, consistent, or quite the contrary. (Student Comment 10)

>	It is surprising to observe the level of confidence and stability that the presence of an interpreter represents for applicants, although I feel it necessary to note that not all of these applicants are completely trusting and sometimes blame the interpreter if they are not granted asylum. (Student Comment 11)

These comments demonstrate the students' awareness of the principles of impartiality and confidentiality. The following comment mentions the mandatory agreement that is signed by the institution and the university, which ensures professional secrecy and confidentiality with regard to any events that occur in the workplace:

>	As I was required to sign a confidentiality agreement in order to intern, the documents that needed to be translated were not allowed to be taken out of the office. As a result, I had to manage my time in order to translate all of the pages within the number of days that the internship lasted. (Student Comment 12)

In line with previous studies such as those of Lai, Heydon, and Mulayim, (2015); Crezee, Crezee, Hayward, and Jülich (2013; and Valero-Garcés (2005), students commented on the need for psychological support*:*

>	Working at the OAR can be psychologically difficult. The people who seek asylum and international protection have usually experienced very moving situations that they describe in some of the texts that we are required to translate. Because of this, I think that some support options should be included in the training if the interpreter is required to work in traumatic settings. (Student Comment 13)

Overall, students felt that there was a need for training to help them handle the stories that are told by asylum seekers. Students requested that certain strategies geared toward coping with the psychological impacts of interpreting be included in the academic curriculum or as part of the training sessions. As one student states, "It would be interesting to learn relaxation techniques in order to unwind from work once the interpretation has concluded," which was an aspect that was also mentioned by Crezee et al. (2013).

Another recurring topic within the realm of public service interpreting and translation literature worth mentioning is that of an overall lack of appreciation and recognition of the role of an interpreter—as evidenced in the following comments:

>	Very little attention was received from staff members, other than the mentor and the police officer. (Student Comment 14)

> I must mention that there were several unproductive days due to the office employees claiming that there was very little to do or that they simply "had not remembered" to call us in. (Student Comment 15)

> Due to several of the office workers' lack of interest, many interviewers did not call us in to participate in the interviews, and neither did the instructors. (Student Comment 16)

As the above comments show, overall, OAR employees demonstrated a general lack of interest in—or complete unawareness of—the presence and needs of the interpreters. This was a missed opportunity for both students and employees, as they were unable to take full advantage of what the other had to offer. Ultimately, training OAR staff members to work with interpreters and translators is a task that has yet to be undertaken.

## 6. Conclusion: Lessons from the Field

This study has outlined the experiences of student interns—and their respective mentors—while interning at the OAR. The OAR's main responsibilities are also described in order to contextualize the analysis. Some of the issues that interpreters and translators encounter in asylum and refugee settings were revealed in the overall feedback that was received.

Most students agreed that the internships allowed them to gain firsthand experience in dealing with foreign nationals. Nonetheless, students must be aware of cultural nuances, varying applicant profiles, and different language accents. Some of the challenges that students mentioned included becoming familiar with the specific asylum procedures and protocols pursuant to the law, in addition to learning of the significant role that an interpreter assumes during an interview. Other obstacles included having to adhere to a code of ethics, remaining unbiased, and seeking psychological support after hearing the details of different applicants' traumatic experiences.

Aside from such difficulties, students highlighted the fact that they were able to gain experience while working as an interpreter and translator in a professional setting. Although they did simulations in class, students mentioned that role-playing with their classmates was not the same as interpreting for someone who actually depended on them to make steadfast decisions and communicate in an accurate manner. Students saw the translation work assigned by the institutions as a perfect way to exercise the skills they acquired during their studies. In turn, they were able to develop their organizational skills when faced with lengthy translations and more specialized topics than those dealt with in class.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the internship program, and the feedback that was received will be used to make improvements to it. Some of the suggestions made by both students and mentors will be put into effect and incorporated into future courses of study, including role-plays based on true events, translations of texts similar to those received at the OAR, and an introduction to relaxation techniques that help reduce work-induced stress.

Although this study is based on a relatively small sample of respondents, the responses provide firsthand accounts of what transpires in situated learning settings outside of the classroom from the perspectives of PSIT students, internship mentors, and OAR staff members. Furthermore, the findings may be of use to educators in other countries who are involved in interpreting programs that aim to prepare students to work in asylum and refugee settings.

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## Appendix 1

## Memoria Final de las Prácticas del Estudiante

1) Informe general

1. DATOS PERSONALES DEL ALUMNO

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Apellidos: | | |
| Nombre: | e-mail: | |
| D.N.I.: | Teléfono: | Fecha de Nacimiento: |
| ☐ Titulación en curso: | | |

2. DATOS DE LA ENTIDAD COLABORADORA

| | |
|---|---|
| Entidad colaboradora (empresa, institución, etc.): | |
| Departamento/ Área: | |
| Fecha Inicio: | Fecha Fin: |
| Días a la semana: | Horas al día: |

| |
|---|
| Dirección de la empresa donde realizas las prácticas: |
| Responsable directo en la empresa: |

3. DESCRIPCIÓN CONCRETA DE LAS TAREAS DE LA PRÁCTICA

3.1 (a) Marca en la lista de abajo las funciones y tareas generales realizadas:

| | |
|---|---|
| Análisis de documentos | |

| Elaboración de glosarios | |
|---|---|
| Interpretación y/o Mediación | |
| Investigación | |
| Redacción de documentos | |
| Tareas formativas | |
| Traducción | |
| Otras (especificar):_____ | |

3.1 (b) Marca en la lista de abajo el ámbito de las tareas realizadas:

| Sanitario | |
|---|---|
| Educativo | |
| Jurídico-administrativo | |
| Social | |
| Cultural | |
| Empresa de traducción | |
| Asociación relacionada con la traducción | |
| Otro (especificar):_____ | |

3.1 (c) Descripción concreta y detallada de las tareas desarrolladas y de los departamentos en los que has estado asignado:

3.2. Valoración de las tareas desarrolladas con los conocimientos y competencias adquiridos en relación con los estudios universitarios:

4. Relación de problemas planteados y el procedimiento seguido para su resolución:

5. Identificación de las aportaciones que en materia de aprendizaje, han supuesto las prácticas:

6. Aportación de las prácticas a la sociedad e identificación de aprendizajes relacionados con el papel del puesto desempeñado en la misma:

7. De las principales competencias para el empleo que solicitan las empresas a la hora de contratar a los titulados universitarios se encuentran las siguientes. Señala y argumenta aquellas que hayas desarrollado en el transcurso de tu práctica de 1 a 5:

| COMPETENCIA/ CAPACIDAD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CAPACIDAD TÉCNICA | | | | | |
| CAPACIDAD DE APRENDIZAJE | | | | | |
| ADMINISTRACIÓN DE TRABAJOS | | | | | |
| HABILIDADES DE COMUNICACIÓN ORAL | | | | | |
| HABILIDADES DE COMUNICACIÓN ESCRITA | | | | | |
| SENTIDO DE LA RESPONSABILIDAD | | | | | |
| FACILIDAD DE ADAPTACIÓN | | | | | |
| CREATIVIDAD E INICIATIVA | | | | | |
| IMPLICACIÓN PERSONAL | | | | | |
| MOTIVACIÓN | | | | | |
| RECEPTIVIDAD A LAS CRÍTICAS | | | | | |
| PUNTUALIDAD | | | | | |
| RELACIONES CON SU ENTORNO LABORAL | | | | | |
| CAPACIDAD DE TRABAJO EN EQUIPO | | | | | |
| NIVEL DE IDIOMA (Indique cual) | | | | | |
| CONOCIMIENTO DE LA CULTURA DE OTROS PAÍSES | | | | | |
| OTRA: | | | | | |
| OTRA: | | | | | |
| OTRA: | | | | | |

# Conquering the Interpreter's Operational Space: Sign Language Interpreting Students and their Acculturation to Deafblind Clients

**Gro Hege Saltnes Urdal**[1]

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**Abstract**

**The author reports on how interpreting students developed their evidence-based practice while becoming interpreters for deafblind people. Focus group discussions were conducted with students to explore their thoughts about interacting with deafblind people, and their experiences after such interactions. Data from the focus groups were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), with the aim of investigating how the mix of classroom instruction, preparatory role-play and practice placements influenced students' evidence-based practice. The findings show that teachers contributing with their own evidence-based practice prior to the practice placements helped students develop the initial basis for their evidence-based practice. The opportunity to act as interpreters for deafblind people developed their evidence-based practice. In other words, students brought learning experiences from one arena and used them as a platform for further learning in a different arena. Students developed their evidence-based practice and conquered their *operational space* as interpreters through this combination of learning processes.**

Keywords: evidence-based practice, role-play, practice placement, interpreter students, deafblind people, conquering operational space

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# Conquering the Interpreter's Operational Space: Sign Language Interpreting Students and their Acculturation to Deafblind Clients

According to Hatlevik (2014), professional education is about giving students the tools and techniques they need to function as qualified professionals. Hatlevik (2014) argues that programs aiming to prepare students for professional practice should be organized in a way that makes it possible to develop practical skills and competence to act, in addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge and reflection skills. Students develop their evidence-based practice during a training program. In most cases, students do not know the whole field of the profession that they aim to become a part of, so an important goal of teaching is to enable students to become familiar with the unknown.

The 3-year program of studies in sign language interpreting (SLI) at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL)[2] is one such professional educational program. One of the aims of the program is to help students develop the skill to interpret for deafblind people, which means that students must learn to not only convey certain messages, but also to guide deafblind individuals wherever they want to go, and describe the surrounding world in an efficient manner. In this article, I report on a study of evidence-based practice conducted with second-year interpreting students as they prepared to interpret for deafblind clients for the first time and then evaluated their experiences. Evidence-based practice has been well researched (Hole, 2008; Klee, Stringer, & Howard, 2009; Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996). One recent indication of emerging interest in evidence-based pedagogy within interpreter educational research is an editorial (Napier, 2013) which appeared in the *International Journal of Interpreter Education*. As far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no previous research on the development of evidence-based practice by students interpreting for deafblind individuals. The only other existing work in this area comes from Shaw and Jolley (2007). Their project focused on assessing service-learning in the deafblind community—which prepares students in a postsecondary interpreter education program to work with deafblind people—shows that students' involvement in a deafblind community is critical to the information and skill synthesis that contributes to positive student outcomes. However, these students were not expected to have interpreting competence or to practice as interpreters at that point in their education, but rather to assist the community as support service providers.

## 1.    The Research tradition and the Current Case

### 1.1    Evidence-Based Practice

[2] Until the 31st of December 2016, HVL was named Bergen University College.

Professional competence and learning outcomes in professional education can be described as the acquisition of theoretical knowledge together with practical skills, as well as the ability to manage and assess various scenarios that may occur in practice. Where such learning occurs in both the tertiary classroom and in practice (Hatlevik, 2014), students will start to develop their evidence-based practice.

Evidence-based practice was first acknowledged in the medical and allied health professions in the 1990s and is now increasingly implemented in other professions as well (Hole, 2008). In the field of medicine, evidence-based practice involves integrating individual expertise and the best external evidence from systematic research (Sackett et al., 1996). Evidence-based practice should enable the practitioner to make professional decisions based on empirical knowledge and scientific knowledge, as well as patients or clients' needs and wishes in any given situation (Bergen University College, 2012). Contrary to some critics' claims, the evidence-based movement is not trying to develop a "cookbook" with recipes for practice (Sackett et al., 1996). Indeed, professional practice could never be based on a rigid "recipe" (cf. Sackett et al., 1996). The diverse circumstances that arise during practice necessarily contribute to the wide range of external expertise practitioners utilize.

Teaching with student's evidence-based practice in mind means providing students with the best and most up-to-date knowledge in the field (cf.Ogden, 2008; Sackett et al., 1996). Classroom teaching is evidence-based, conveying the best research-based evidence relevant to the topic, together with the teachers' evidence-based practice and the client's knowledge. This way, students are provided with the best possible conditions for creating their own understanding of different practical situations and how to handle them.

## 1.2   Practice Placement

On-site practice provides students with the unique opportunity to develop skills and develop their own experience-based knowledge or evidence and has been documented as an important aspect of interpreter education (Godfrey, 2010). Through practice placements, which require navigating complex cognitive and social experiences (Cope, Cuthbertson, & Stoddart, 2000), students can try out different options of action in different situations and learn from them. Or as King (1993, p. 30) puts it "When students are engaged in actively processing information by reconstructing that information in such new and personally meaningful ways, they are far more likely to remember it and apply it in new situations." Neary (2010) adds that students become producers of knowledge rather than consumers of content when processing information in ways that are meaningful to them.

In order for a practice placement to be a safe learning environment, a mentor observes and supervises the students. The mentor, a skilled facilitator, guides students through a reflective process. Deeny, Johnson, Boore, Leyden, & McCaughan (2010) explain that this can help students to improve their ability to learn and internalize knowledge. Hatlevik (2014) holds that if students can process their recent experiences by reflecting on what they have seen and done, the learning process is enhanced.

As practice placements constitute an integrated part of professional education (Hatlevik, 2014), a body of research on how learning is connected to working life has developed. In her study, Hatlevik focused on students' development of skills in the fields of teaching, nursing and social work. She studied the factors affecting students' learning and the relationship between practice and theory. One of the most important factors identified was the potential links among learning in different arenas (classroom, practice placement and working in the field). In her research on nursing students, Hjälmhult (2007) recounts how nursing students' main concern was "how to obtain learning experiences to become a public health nurse" (p. 7). The students resolved that concern by conquering their operational space. Hjälmhult (2007, p. 7) defines 'conquering operational space' as a "basic social process with three identified phases". Each phase has its concepts, dimensions and properties that involve the *student role*, *student activity* and *relations with a supervisor*. The phases are, (a) *positioning*: searching for the role of "real public health nurse", occasionally participating in the activities and dialogue seeking; (b), *involvement,* working with the challenges of the role, selective participation and supervision seeking; and (c), *integration:* role integration, with increased cognitive control in students' actions and seeking of acknowledgement (Hjälmhult, 2007). The students she observed worked towards "obtaining independence, working against the system and [learning] to handle the suspense by daring to engage" (Hjälmhult, 2007, p. 8). Students' conquering of operational space went from glimpsing the operational space to adjusting to it, and finally realizing their potential

in the operational space. In my study, I explored how sign language interpreters in training seek to conquer their operational space when working with deafblind people.

## 1.3    Evidence-Based Practice – The Case

In Norway, three educational institutions offer a bachelor's program in SLI: Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (2015a), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (2016a) and HVL (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2017a).

Students in the SLI program at HVL learn Norwegian Sign Language during the first year; in the second year, students gain more insight into interpreting practice and the professional requirements for interpreters (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2017b). They also learn about the interpreting profession and begin their own professional development process. Early in the first semester of the second year, students are introduced to different groups of people who use interpreters, including deafblind individuals and their organizations.

*Deafblindness* is defined in literature as a combination of visual and hearing impairment, a specific disability which limits the person's activities and prevents full participation in society (Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues, 2015). Deafblind people have different degrees of impairment requiring various communication methods; tactile signing, sign language in an adjusted sign space, fingerspelling (hand alphabet), spoken language, written language (Berge & Raanes, 2011), social haptic[3] (Lahtinen, 2007), or a combination of these. They require individually adapted activities, which implies planning every form of communication, social interaction and communication with others, as well as orientation and moving around. An interpreter must therefore both interpret between deafblind people and the people they are communicating with, as well as describe the surroundings and what is happening around them. Interpreters also have to accompany the deafblind client wherever s/he wants to go.

Students are taught about deafblindness and the challenges it involves and are trained in various techniques used when interpreting for deafblind people (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2017e) over 4 weeks during the second year and 3 weeks during the third year. This gives the students the opportunity to start to develop their own evidence-based practice. In this way, students acquire both research-based and experienced-based knowledge about deafblindness. Teachers also use their own evidence-based practice, based on what they have either experienced themselves or learned in discussion with peers, to create a platform for learning. In addition, students have 1 week of practice placement during their second year, and 1 week during their third year.

After the second-year students have gained some initial knowledge about deafblindness, they start learning about guidance, description and interpreting for deafblind people. Instructors use role-play in various scenarios to provide students with simulated real life experiences; for example, boarding a bus, with one student playing the role of the deafblind person while another plays the role of interpreter. Through such work, and the reflections and discussions that follow, students practice their skills in interpreting for deafblind people. Classroom instruction helps trainee interpreters learn about deafblind people, helping them to develop the basis for their evidence-based practice, which in turn allows training interpreters to gain experience from role-play. Similar pedagogical approaches are also used in other fields of teaching such as history (Stevens, 2015) and nursing (Deeny et al., 2010).

However, classroom learning is not enough to prepare students for real life (Deeny et al., 2010). Interpreting students may have to overcome a lack of confidence when beginning interpreting work with deafblind people, and inadequacy or fear of mistakes may cause stress among students (Swatzky, 1998). Knowing what their deafblind clients may be like as individuals will help students provide the most appropriate interpreting service. Kiger (1993, p. 315) has stated that there is a difference between "knowing about" and "knowing". Students cannot really know what it means to be an interpreter for deafblind people until they have experienced it. Moreover, adapting to the needs of individual deafblind people is a part of a sign language interpreter's responsibility, and is a skill that it is difficult to gain without the practice experience (Shaw & Jolley, 2007).

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[3] Social haptic is a system of tactile signs and touch messages used to provide information (Lahtinen, 2007, p. 7).

## 1.4 Practice Placement – The Case

The second part of the students' learning process is the practice placement. Interpreting students at HVL (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, 2017c; 2017d), as well as at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (2015b) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (2016b) have two practice placements in interpreting for deafblind people during their training program.

At our university, SLI students have two 1-week practice placements with deafblind people, once in their second year and once in their third year. Prior to their first placement, they have 2 weeks in class learning about deafblindness where teachers share their own evidence-based practice. Next, they have 2 weeks of role-play where they interpret to each other in various scenarios. Following this, they have 1 week of practice placement in interpreting for deafblind people. During their third year of study, students have 1 week of role-play before they have a one-week practicum at Eikholt, a national resource center for deafblind people. Before their exams, students have an additional 2 weeks of role-play.

At HVL students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning by planning some of the role-play scenarios and the activities for their practice placement during the second year. Through developing their own practice, students have the opportunity to create a framework for different situations, which they believe they can learn from. Students learn the necessary tools to create successful interactions with deafblind people, as part of the acculturation to the deafblind group (cf. Sam & Berry, 2006). In addition, and even though students only get to know a small number of deafblind people, the practice placement provides them with an opportunity to get to know the unknown, that is, the individuals behind the disability. This knowledge becomes part of their reflective practice (cf. Schön, 1983).

## 1.5 The Synthesis: Developing Evidence-Based Practice Through Practice Placement

Students in the SLI program (ranging between 10 and 24 students per year) have the 2 weeks of practice placement in interpreting for deafblind people as described above. During their second year, students plan activities such as using public transport, visiting a museum, eating in a restaurant, and going for short walks and guided tours around the city or other places. Students invite three to five deafblind people from the local community to participate in these activities, and this provides the students with the opportunity to practice acting as interpreters. The students guide, interpret and describe the environment to the deafblind participants, using spoken language, some tactile signing, and haptic communication. In their third year, students interpret at Eikholt, where both students and deafblind people stay for a week. While there, students from all three Norwegian interpreter educational institutions meet eight to 10 different deafblind people from all over the country, who may require different communication methods including tactile signing, sign language in an adjusted sign space, fingerspelling, spoken language,[4] written language and/or social haptic. The students interpret during a variety of different activities: lectures, workouts, hiking, canoeing, shopping, handicraft activities, and others.

Following their first week of practice placement, students reflect in writing on their experience, guided by five open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). Because responses are anonymous, students can answer honestly without fear of consequences for their grades. The questions help to raise student's awareness of the learning outcomes of their placement and give them experience in reflective practice. Instructors also use student feedback to improve the practice placement as an opportunity for learning.

Student feedback on both the planning and execution of the practice placement has been favourable, students believe the experience of meeting and interacting with deafblind people to be instructive and exciting. Following is a sample student comment:

> Very positive to finally be allowed interpret for "real" clients! We have interpreted and dealt with many different situations and have learned a lot from them. Especially to meet different deafblind people and making agreements with them and being able to adapt to their level.

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[4] Some deafblind individuals have residual hearing, which means they can perceive spoken language.

Students point to the broader base of their experience, that is, their evidence-based practice: "Positive in the sense that we have learned so much in the past week that would have been difficult to learn in a classroom."

Students also find the pedagogical combination of classroom teaching and the practice placement to be successful pedagogical combination. They write that experience of role-play in the classroom provides them with useful tools which they can put to use during their practice placement. The present study provides an empirically informed picture of how this combination of initial classroom instruction, role-play and practice placement influences students' evidence-based practice as interpreters for deafblind people.

## 2. Methodology and Analysis

A qualitative, descriptive research design that uses focus discussion group interview was chosen, since the research question is primarily aimed to explore student experiences. In a focus group, participants get the opportunity to "explore issues relevant to the person-in-context" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 112). Halkier (2002) writes that focus groups produce "accounts in action," meaning that the participants exchange accounts of actions and understandings as a part of an interaction in a social, familiar, everyday context around the researcher. By engaging in conversations about a certain topic, participants develop a metalanguage, they may also become more aware of their tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). Participation in focus groups also gives students the opportunity to exchange accounts of actions and experiences interpreting for deafblind people, and thus learn from each other.

Findings were analyzed using content analysis, a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). Its aim is to provide new insights, informed practical actions and increase a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena (Krippendorff, 2013). While some critics in the quantitative field refer to content analysis as simplistic (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), the method is flexible in terms of research design (Harwood & Garry, 2003). It is also content sensitive (Krippendorff, 2013, p.46), in that it aims to "to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). Elo and Kyngäs distinguish the following three phases in the content analysis process: preparation, organization, and reporting. In the preparation phase the unit of analysis is selected (Cavanagh, 1997): this can be a theme or a word. Next, the data are organized in either an inductive or deductive way, depending on the purpose of the study. Finally, both the analysis process and the results are reported on by presenting a model, categories, and a conceptual system or conceptual map.

Inductive content analysis is recommended when research in a particular field is fragmented or when there is not enough knowledge about a given phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This is the method selected for this study. The analysis process starts with open coding, which involves the researcher writing headings and notes in the text while reading it. The researcher transfers these headings and notes to coding sheets, which can be used to generate categories (Dey, 1993) to describe the phenomenon in a way that may generate knowledge and increase understanding (Cavanagh, 1997).

For the purpose of this study, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted during the spring and autumn of 2012. The project specifically recruited students enrolled in interpreter training programs who had never worked or interacted with deafblind people. Four students from the second year were drafted (from 14 volunteers) and invited to participate in the project itself and the focus groups. The students were all women, aged 22–40, who had Norwegian as their first language. They signed an informed consent form, and the research was undertaken in accordance with national guidelines.

The four selected students were involved in this study in the planning, implementation, and analysis phases of the project, and were able to refer to their involvement in their bachelor's degree dissertations. All students explored different research question in their dissertations, and these questions were the topic in the third FGD meeting along with the project research question. This way, they did research on their own practice, which can be seen as a form of interactive action research (Postholm, 2007), in which participants conduct research on their

own activities and learn from them. In the course of the learning process, participating in research activity and developmental work helps students develop their own practice.

Students participated in three FGDs (using spoken Norwegian) at different stages during their training program. FGD 1 was held after 2 weeks of instructions and 2 weeks of role-play, but before their first practice placement (a 2-hour meeting in March 2012), FGD 2 after their first practice placement (also 2 hours, in April 2012), and FGD 3 after 1 week of role-play and the students' second practice placement (this meeting, in November 2012, lasted 4 hours). Students in placements wrote down their own observations and shared them with the other students in the FGDs. In addition, in reflection groups, students discussed the process of analysis, highlighting various recurrent themes and categories, together with the researcher, but in the end, the data analysis where done individually.

Aside from the researcher, another member of the teaching staff also participated in some of the research activity. This teacher and the research leader both facilitated the FGDs, aiming to create an open and welcoming atmosphere that would foster productive discussions among students. Teaching staff acted as facilitators rather than participants in order to allow students to feel they could speak freely without fearing they would be interrupted or assessed; ideally, with students' increased control over the discussion, the researcher's power and influence will be reduced (Wilkinson, 1998). The students' active involvement in the FGDs suggests that they participated without inhibition.

The FGDs were videotaped from several different perspectives, using multiple video cameras which had been placed at different locations in the room. In our experience, SLI students sometimes use signs to emphasize their points and the multicamera approach was used to capture this. The content was transcribed after every focus group (the work being divided among all those who had participated) and this included indicating the use of supporting signs, pauses, and the occurrence of smiles or laughter. All participants also checked the transcripts.

An inductive content analysis was conducted in view of the paucity of research in the area of students interpreting for deafblind individuals, and the dearth of studies on evidence-based practice within this specific field (cf. Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). For inductive content analysis, I noted observations and quotes in the text (using open coding). Citations included statements such as 'to me deafblind people are a group because I don't think of them as individuals' and 'it's hard to imagine them as different individuals, like us'. Notes were transferred to coding sheets, and similarities among statements were used to generate categories. For example, similarities in statements from the first FGD led to the category 'deafblind people considered as one homogeneous group'. Categories were condensed into three subthemes: (a) getting to know the person and the context, (b) moving from facing the unknown to coping with the unknown, and (c) setting boundaries. These subthemes were unified into one overarching theme: conquering the operational space as an interpreter. Figure 1 provides some examples to illustrate the process. Several other categories were generated, but only these three are essential to the main theme of the interpreter's 'operational space'.

*Figure 1. Examples of the analysis process*

| Statements made during the FGD | Coding sheet | Subtheme | Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'To me deafblind people are a group, because I don't think of them as individuals.' | Deafblind people are a homogenous group | Getting to know the person and the context | Conquering the operational space as an interpreter |
| 'Oh my God, they are just people.' | Deafblind people are just like you and me | | |
| 'So I was left with quite a few thoughts about the differences [relating to communication methods and personalities], which I did not think I should have.' | Overcoming insecurity | From facing the unknown to coping with the unknown | |
| 'We get to know the people we interpret for, some small talk is important for us to establish a relationship of trust, right?' | Establishing a relationship | | |
| 'Do deafblind people really know what | Understanding one's | | |

| they want to know?' | own role | Setting boundaries | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'Erm, in the end she [a deafblind woman] realized that I do not run around and serve dinner, this lady does not do that. Right, so then it felt very good in fact, that I managed to push back.' | Role-testing – on one's way to professional practice | | |

## 3.    Findings

The findings below are exclusively based on data from the three focus discussion group interviews with student interpreters. Students' voices are presented in quotes, translated into English by the author for this article in order to illustrate categories or phenomena, and students' metalanguage also appears here. The quotes equally represent all four students who participated both in the planning and execution for the study. Each subtheme is described under its own heading.

### 3.1    Subtheme 1: Getting to Know the Person and the Context

Before students met deafblind people for the first time, they spent much time in FGD 1 talking about these upcoming encounters. They felt they were facing unknown and unfamiliar people. They were to a lesser extent focused on how they should interpret for them. Although students thought about the fact that deafblind people are people in their own right, like everyone else, they still mostly saw them as a homogeneous group. Participant 2 stated, "To me deafblind people are a group, because I don't think of them as individuals". Participant 4 said, "At this point, I imagine them as a homogeneous group." At the first meeting, students were unable to see deafblind people as individuals, but rather as a group of people who are deaf and blind; they *are* their disability. In other words students could not see beyond the disability.

Students did feel respect for deafblind people and realized that they themselves were not fully able to comprehend what it is like to be deafblind. Participant 3 put it as follows: "That they [deafblind people] have gone through such a change (…) also in ways that we are unable to completely understand", while Participant 1 added; "and fully comprehend".

In FGD 2, following the first practice placement, students had gotten some sense of who deafblind people are: "Oh my God, they are just people" (Participant 3). Students discovered that deafblind people are different individuals with different personalities just like themselves, with different needs and wishes in terms of interpreting, description and guidance. In addition, students mentioned that deafblind people did not behave as "[we] have learned [in class] that deafblind people should behave" (Participant 3), so students could not just "do as they're told [in class]" (Participant 1). Students meant that deafblind people were not merely passive "recipients" of interpreter services, but occasionally went ahead before the interpreter or did not respond to what interpreters were doing. As Participant 4 said; "I had planned that he [the deafblind man] should walk behind me, but that was not his plan (…) so he said; "let's go", and I just had to follow!" This made students feel slightly insecure.

Students gained even more insight into the diversity of deafblind people during their second practice placement. From seeing deafblind people as a homogeneous group, to seeing them as individuals, they now saw them as individuals in a group. During FGD 3, Participant 2 said: "If you get a large enough group, you will get all kinds of people in it". Students saw that sometimes deafblindness may be the only thing deafblind people have in common. Students discovered that even if there is a group of deafblind people, not all of them may choose to interact with each other at all times. They, like others, choose their interlocutors on the basis of whom they feel comfortable with. As Participant 1 stated: "When we were at Eikholt, I thought, as we all did, that everyone was

there and everyone would interact with each other… they are all deafblind (…) I thought: 'This is going great, everyone chat with everyone' (…) but they don't!"

## 3.2    Subtheme 2: From Facing the Unknown to Coping With the Unknown

Since the students did not have any experience with deafblind people, their practice placement also involved them going 'from facing the unknown to coping with the unknown'. As stated in the previous section, students had talked about how they felt about meeting deafblind people, especially in the focus group meeting before their first practice placement. Students felt interpreting for deafblind people would be both scary and exciting and fun, but also a huge responsibility. Such energy-draining feelings preoccupied them in FGD 1: "I'm both excited and anxious about the practice placement. Mostly anxious about meeting deafblind people (…) I'm kind of afraid we won't understand each other or that I'm going to feel embarrassed by the whole thing." (Participant 4). Most of all, they were ready to meet deafblind people and "finally try out in real life what you have trained for" (Participant 1). Students also felt additionally stressed because their very first interactions with deafblind people were going to be observed by supervisors and other students in the group.

"I was left with quite a few thoughts about the differences [relating to communication methods and personalities], which I did not think I should have" (Participant 4, FGD 2, following the first practice placement). Even though students knew about the differences in deafblind peoples' communication methods, they were surprised when they met them. Still, most of the students had a good feeling after their first encounter with deafblind people. They thought they had established a good relationship with them. However, they became emotionally affected when deafblind people did not respond to their interpreting and/or descriptions. Participant 4 got "very stressed and frustrated," and others felt similarly anxious, frustrated and insecure, which caused them to doubt themselves. When deafblind people responded and 'did as they were supposed to do', students felt a great deal of satisfaction: "It all went as it should have, I have learned this in class and that is how I'm going to do it, and that was very positive" (Participant 3). This may indicate that students felt that everything should go according to a routine acquired in the classroom; it worked when students did as they had learned in class, but it may also show a lack of flexibility on the students' part. Students were dependent on a routine and expected that the interpreter service user would show a specific response to specific stimuli. In other words, students did not appear ready to face the unknown at that point in time.

Students' insecurity gradually disappeared. After the second practice placement, in FGD 3, they expressed that they felt more confident and dared to enter into a dialogue with deafblind people about the latters' expectations and needs. Students were better skilled at making decisions when required: "Since we are studying to be interpreters, we have to maintain a focus on what an interpreter should do. And carrying a suitcase is not among an interpreter's tasks", said Participant 4, smiling. This indicates that students had gone from focusing on themselves and their insecurity to focusing on their task and their required impartiality as interpreters, as outlined in the *Ethical Guidelines for Sign Language Interpreters in Norway* (Tolkeforbundet, 2015). Students emphasized the importance of creating a relationship of trust with the deafblind individuals for whom they interpreted. Participant 2 said: "We get to know the people we interpret for, [and] some small talk is important for us to establish a relationship of trust, right?" They felt that their knowledge of deafblindness, interpreting skills and being empathic were important elements to draw from when interpreting for deafblind people.

## 3.3    Subtheme 3: Setting Boundaries

Students thought it would be difficult to find their own role limitations, as they had little or no previous experience in interacting with deafblind people. Before the first practice placement they expected to meet deafblind people who shared their expectations and were clear about what they wanted from an interpreting student. Students believed deafblind people were experienced in how to express such needs, and they were ready to follow their wishes. Although students expected orders from the deafblind people and were ready to carry them out, they also expressed thoughts like: "Do deafblind people really know what they want to know?" (Participant 2,

in FGD 1), and have deafblind people received information about "the interpreters' tasks and the interpreters' ethical guidelines?" (Participant 4).

After the first practice placement, in FGD 2, students reported being delighted when deafblind people acted in line their expectations. When deafblind people expressed desires and expectations beyond the circumscribed role of the interpreter, students preferred to fulfil them rather than adhere to interpreter boundaries. As Participant 2 pointed out: "We have to be service-oriented, right". And Participant 3 said, "I feel that it is that little naive part of us that says that we need to take care of deafblind people". Deafblind people had the power. The students still reflected and asked questions: "Where do you set the boundaries?" (Participant 2), but they had neither the knowledge nor the experience required to make on-the-spot decisions regarding boundaries.

Students gradually became more aware of the inadequate training deafblind people have in utilizing the services of interpreters and knowing what to expect from an interpreter—especially following their second practice placement. Students therefore began to take more control of the situation and interacted more with deafblind people where there were divergences between the individuals' wishes and what students perceived the role of the interpreter to be. Most students found that deafblind people were responsive to their opinions, although students found it difficult to assert themselves. If deafblind people had had previous experiences of interpreters making them cups of coffee, students felt it was difficult to decline such requests. Nevertheless, during their practice placement, students became more aware of both their own expectations and those of deafblind people in a given situation. As Participant 1 said in FGD 3, "Erm, in the end she [the deafblind woman] realized that I do not run around and serve dinner, this lady does not do that. Right, so then it felt very good in fact, that I managed to push back". Other students had similar experiences. Participant 2 said, "[When doing favors] you do not have the capacity to do what you are supposed to do [as an interpreter]." Experiences such as these gave students greater confidence in making decisions and standing by them, decisions that confirmed them in their role as interpreters rather than in the role of support person or friend, even if that was not what deafblind people wanted in a particular situation.

Through the practice placement experience, students' feelings about interacting with deafblind people evolved, from initially feeling tense and insecure about the unknown to feeling like they were on their way to developing into secure professionals. As they encountered challenges, they had to come to decisions about their professional boundaries and their role as an interpreter.

## 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to gain an empirically based, clearer view of how a combination of classroom instruction, role-play and practice placement influenced students' understanding of their evidence-based practice as interpreters for deafblind people. The importance of practice placement, in combination with classroom instruction, in SLI education, has previously been presented (Godfrey, 2010), but has so far not been fully described as essential for students developing as interpreters for deafblind people. In all three FGDs, the students had the opportunity to present, reflect on and share their thoughts and experiences about interpreting interactions with deafblind individuals.

The current study demonstrates that the combination of instruction, role-play and the two practice placements helped students develop a deeper understanding of interpreting for deafblind individuals. Basic education and authentic role-play situations presented students with the tools to fulfil their role as interpreters. Although students had expressed feeling anxious and insecure in the FGDs 1 and 2, especially when deafblind people had not behaved as students had expected they would, they were still confident that they knew how to perform various aspects of their role. Students' reflections on whether deafblind people know what an interpreter does suggests that instruction and role-play before practice placements is important.

This study also shows that role-play in this type of competency-based teaching is perhaps more important than it might be in an education based mainly on conveying theoretical content. In our case, theoretical teaching alone would be inadequate partly due to the limited empirical research in the area, but also because it would not give students sufficient preparation for their practical experience. Hatlevik (2014) points out that even though

theoretical knowledge (i.e. provided through instruction and role-play) gives students a valuable learning platform for further competence development, students must also learn how to carry out practical professional tasks. As Arrow (1962, p. 155) writes: 'Learning can only take place through the attempt to solve a problem and therefore only takes place during activity.'

It is essential that teachers have interpreting expertise and experience in order to give students a good starting point. The findings of this study show that students bring with them what they have learned in one arena, and use it as a platform for further learning in a different arena, namely in the setting of a practice placement, and the professional work setting after that; in other words, what Hatlevik (2014) refers to as transfer of learning.

In class, students reflect on and evaluate the ethical challenges they might encounter in different situations. It is clear from this study that only during the practice placement, when they establish a relationship with an interpreter client, can students exercise professional judgment, and reflect upon it. This is how students establish their professional identity. Hatlevik (2014) argues that if the students are experiencing the content of education as understandable, and if the content of education is relevant to the professional field, they will experience the connection between teaching and practice. The students in this study pointed out on several occasions that practice is about transforming classroom learning into their own practice. This aligns with what Shaw and Jolley (2007) found in their study on service-learning in the deafblind community. The study also confirms the suggestion by Higgs and Titchen (2001, p. 526) that "practice and knowledge are seen to occur in a dialectical relationship, which adds or synergizes the strengths of each to produce a combination that is essential to the professional role".

Students learning, mastering and acquiring confidence in practice can be compared with what Hjälmhult (2007) has described in her research on students in public health nursing education – that students conquer their operational space across three phases. The students in this study can be said to have undergone a similar development. Students went from being expectant, tense and insecure about meeting deafblind people to being more confident, and able to recognize the range of options of the interpreters' role. Thus, they were very insecure and tentative to start with, and the interpreter role was not a part of their actions. They were *positioning* themselves and starting to explore their role as interpreters. After the first practice placement, they still felt insecure, but were more reflective about their choice of actions. They started to realize the various challenge of the interpreter's role and began to ask questions as to "how to set the boundaries"; this was the *involvement* phase. During their last practice placement, students grew even more confident as they mastered various situations, and this can be seen as the *integration* phase. Students had gained an overview of the various activities they might be involved in when working with deafblind people, and felt a greater cognitive control over their tasks. In the course of their practice and learning processes, the students experienced, mastered and established their professional identity, conquering their operational space as an interpreter.

This study did not measure learning outcomes in terms of factual knowledge, which can be gauged before and after practice. Instead, students were invited to express their thoughts and experiences concerning the part of the teaching program that related to interpreting for deafblind people. Even so, all students in this study passed their practice placements and graduated as sign language interpreters upon completing their 3-year program of studies. Through their participation in this project, students became conscious of their practice as they developed it. In addition, documenting their experience in their bachelor's dissertations[5], helped to familiarize students with the research process. Over the course of the study, students and teaching staff developed an understanding of each other's practices, from which they will be able to draw in their future work (cf. Postholm & Moen 2009).

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[5] In addition, the students involved in this study used research material from this study when writing their bachelor's thesis. Thesis titles are as follows: "How Do Students Cooperate When Interpreting for Deafblind People?", "Am I Understood? – Interpreting for Deafblind People", "Interpreter – A Service-Supplier, But Then Again, Not" and "How Do Students Relate to the Professional Ethics When Interpreting for Deafblind People?".

## 5. Conclusion

This study explored how a combination of classroom instruction, preparatory role-play and practice placement influenced students' evidence-based practice. In the classroom, students were taught the best and most up-to-date research-based evidence relevant to working with deafblind individuals and the role of sign language interpreters in general. Students were prepared for their practical encounters with deafblind people by engaging in role-play, which involved simulated real life scenarios. During their practice placement, students had to face the 'unknown' and learn professional skills on the spot. This combination of pedagogical approaches allowed students to develop their evidence-based practice and to conquer their operational space as interpreters for deafblind people.

However, the study reported on here involved only a small sample of students, at one single educational institution in Norway. It would be interesting to investigate other interpreting programs, in other countries, to gain a broader perspective. This study did not present the views of deafblind people with regard to interacting with interpreting students in their practice placement. Therefore, future research could perhaps involve service users' perspectives as well, to further contribute to teaching practice.

Nonetheless, study findings may be of interest to other interpreter educators when planning spoken/sign language training programs, as well as those involved in teaching professional competencies in other fields, and which may entail similar educational challenges. Evidence-based practice may be implemented in other fields as well, in particular when teaching students about 'the unknown' are applicable to other fields. Finally, I hope that this study may contribute to a further development of students' evidence-based practice.

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## Appendix 1

Questions to students after their first practice placement

1. What was positive about this practice placement? Why?

2. What was challenging about this practice placement? Why? And what can be done to improve it?

3. How will you evaluate yourself during this practice placement (Scale 1–10)? Describe what, how and why.

4. How will you evaluate the supervision/supervisor during this practice placement (Scale 1–10)? Describe what, how and why.

5. How will you evaluate your group during this practice placement (Scale 1–10)? Describe what, how and why.

# Interview with Dr. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox: The Accreditation Process

**Dr. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox**[1]

*University of New Mexico*


**Anita Nelson-Julander**[2]

*VRS Interpreting Institute, University of North Florida graduate student*

**Abstract**

**Dr. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox, professor emerita, taught the first sign language class at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 1971, when eight students were enrolled in a one-credit class. Many years and many students later, the University of New Mexico offers a Bachelor of Science in Signed Language Interpreting (SLI), and Dr. Wilcox headed the faculty as they sought accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE; see http://ccie-accreditation.org/). In this interview, Dr. Wilcox, describes the experience of preparing for review and becoming accredited, as well as the impacts accreditation has had on the program. Her insights and advice will help support other SLI programs considering CCIE accreditation.**

**Anita Nelson-Julander, a graduate student in the Master's Interpreting Pedagogy program at the University of North Florida, who has worked at the Sorenson VRS Interpreting Institute for 7 years, interviewed Dr. Wilcox.**


Keywords: Signed language interpreter education, CCIE accreditation

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# Interview with Dr. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox

*Anita: Tell me about when your department decided to seek CCIE accreditation.*

Dr. Wilcox: I can honestly say that my desire to see our program accredited stems from the great respect I have for the CCIE as an organization and the work it is doing to set high standards for interpreter education. There have been many people over a span of many years that have worked to create an accrediting body, and they have all earned the respect of any institution applying for accreditation.

There were multiple efforts before CCIE was complete and running. I was involved with the Conference of Interpreter Trainers and the beginning efforts to establish CCIE. I recall someone describing that time as trying to change the tire on a car while it was going 60 mph. It was a lot of work, and many of the people involved with CCIE were there because they saw the value of accreditation for interpreter education programs. Those people respected the accreditation process and wanted to make sure their own programs as well as others across the country were of the highest caliber. Like them, I too wanted my program to be accredited. I have an enormous respect for the accreditation standards and process and I knew I wanted the UNM program to be among those that achieved accreditation.

When I proposed CCIE accreditation to my team in the SLI program, I had to sell some of them on the idea. It was not because they did not want to adhere to the high standards; rather, they knew that the process would be an enormous amount of work for everyone. We voted to begin the CCIE accreditation application process in August 2011, then began talking to the administration, the Department of Linguistics, and the College of Arts and Sciences, who committed their support. We received candidacy status from CCIE in May 2012 and determinedly began working on the self-study review (SSR) with the goal of accreditation.

*Anita: The accreditation process can seem daunting. How did your team begin it all?*

Dr. Wilcox: We were both excited and nervous to get started. We had a good program that I was very proud of but I was also a bit afraid that we were not at the level needed for accreditation. No one can truly know if their program is at the required level until the process starts—until you begin to look at your program through a magnifying glass. I knew of other programs that had already earned accreditation and I was a bit in awe of them. I wondered if we had it in us to do everything the accreditation process required, and there was a pretty big question mark at the end of that wondering. I'm sure that every program starting the SSR process has to make changes to satisfy accreditation standards. I also think every program believes themselves to be a good program. However, when you know a rater will look at every part of a program in comprehensive ways, you typically find things that need to be modified and cleaned up. We were proud of our program but we knew there were things that could be polished.

So, we dove right in! When we started and soon figured out how much work it was going to take, we became even more determined to complete it all. My team recognized that it would be worth the work—for our students, for our institution, and for our field. The SSR process gave us the chance to deeply reflect on our program values, our curriculum, what we were doing, and what we wanted to be doing. And although we did have improvements to make, we were proud of our program and excited to see the polishing improvements we could make to the outstanding parts we already had.

*Anita: Can you give me a picture of what it was like for your program to work toward accreditation?*

Dr. Wilcox: To start with, all faculty got involved, both full- and part-time faculty from our main campus as well as from the branch campuses. We divided the faculty into teams with each team responsible for giving evidence that the program adhered to their assigned CCIE standard. Additionally, one person was responsible for receiving the work from each team and modifying the language as needed to ensure the final documents were all written in the same voice. Another person managed due dates and follow-up with all the teams.

Being organized in our approach became an important part of successfully completing everything. In addition to faculty entering data on a shared Google Drive, we created a folder for each standard, and every supporting

document went into that folder. This made it easy for anyone to see what was either completed or missing for any given standard. The system also made everything readily accessible to the accreditation raters, allowing them to find what they needed, arranged according to the standards.

Another important part of the process for us was to make sure the faculty felt supported as they put so much work into this. Thus, team communication was significant. Additionally, effort was made to provide ongoing professional development opportunities that also supported the work we were doing for the SSR. For example, a large training event was organized that brought in a presenter who had expertise in Bloom's taxonomy. This person worked with us on our process for the accreditation SSR, our curriculum, and the program's mission. Another example of faculty professional development that also supported the SSR work was reading a book together that aimed at improving us as college teachers. We then took time at each faculty meeting to discuss the application of the reading to improve our teaching and ourselves.

*Anita: What was it like to have the raters visit UNM?*

Dr. Wilcox: Of course, it was pretty intense to have the raters come to campus. We were very prepared and excited to be nearing the end of the two-year's work. The raters met with several groups involving administrators, linguistics department faculty (which included members of the linguistics program, the Navajo program, and the SLI program), extended SLI faculty, the SLI majors, previous SLI graduates, and members of the deaf community in the area.

This final step of the accreditation process was inspiring to be a part of. It was amazing to see the CCIE accreditation process in action. We were awarded full accreditation, satisfying all 102 stipulations. It was wonderful to be told that not only did we satisfy all the stipulations, but that some of them were marked as strengths rather than merely being satisfactory. It felt validating for our efforts.

*Anita: What impacts did you see because of the accreditation process?*

Dr. Wilcox: Every faculty member can attest to the benefits to the program that came from the accreditation process. The SLI program is better, the curriculum is better, and I think the faculty grew as educators from the experience.

One example of an impact was the improvements to the SLI mission statement. Working on the mission statement was an endeavor we wanted everyone to be a part of. So, we held a faculty retreat to sincerely consider what we believed in and how we wanted it to be evident in a mission statement and philosophy. We were very proud of the resulting mission statement! We hung it on the wall for faculty and students to easily see and we talked with others about it to keep it in the forefront of our minds. Every line of the mission statement was consciously applied to our work. One way we did that was to incorporate the mission statement into the students' exit assessment. We asked each student to make a brief note about each point in the mission—how they had experienced that point or how they had seen the faculty apply the point. We saw students identify specific classes where they learned the points of the mission statement. It is rewarding to see students read through the SLI mission and realize that every part of the program is designed specifically to support their educational experience. We hope the students can look back and see how all the parts of the program and curriculum come together for their learning and growth.

Another impact from the accreditation process is that we became more visible in the eyes of the university. Our program's accreditation achievement became a proud topic for the linguistics department, where we are housed, as well as for the university. I appreciate that visibility. Prior to accreditation, I think the university saw us as a quaint little program without much draw compared to some of the larger programs on campus. But the provost at the time, who is now the university president, saw the potential in us to be a bright star for the university. He knows what it takes to become accredited and with our work, he became aware of the quality of our graduating students and the program faculty research. This visibility became helpful when we needed to hire faculty or staff. Like many other universities who face financial hardships, there are often hiring freezes and budget cuts that hurt smaller programs like the typical-sized SLI programs. But with accreditation, the university

administration saw us as more valuable than they had before, which helps when discussions of lower budgets pop up around campus.

*Anita: As you said, it was a lot of work to become accredited. Was it worth it?*

Dr. Wilcox: It was absolutely worth it! I knew it was going to be a tremendous amount of work but it wasn't until we started working on it in meaningful ways that I truly understood how much work it was going to take. But we did it! We started with a strong program that I was very proud of. All of the faculty united in the cause and worked hard to contribute, and everyone was proud of the result. We worked well as a team and, even with the stressful moments, everything came together nicely.

It was two years of continuous analysis of the program. We were exhausted from the process, but what we ended up with was a beautiful program and a team that was unified in ways we hadn't been before. It was worth it to have an opportunity to deeply examine the strengths and weaknesses of our program and create an SSR that shows how the program and the faculty shine.

When we got notification of accreditation results, we were thrilled. Because we knew the success of the program was due to many people's contributions in so many ways, we wanted to celebrate with everyone! We invited the faculty from the linguistics department, SLI faculty, current majors, past graduates, and people from the deaf community that supported the program. We wanted everyone to see that the work was worth it! Following local Native American tradition, we also had a Navajo blessing on the future of the program.

Another reason why it was worth all the work is the way the SLI program increased in value for the university. It's like before accreditation we were a little orphan program. As I mentioned before, after accreditation we were seen as equally important as the larger programs on campus. The SLI program is now respected on campus in ways we weren't before.

*Anita: What advice would you give to other SLI programs considering CCIE accreditation?*

Dr. Wilcox: The best advice I can think of is to expect the process to be very in depth. Everyone likes to believe their program is wonderful. But even the best programs can modify things to be better. Programs starting the SSR development should understand that preparing for accreditation is a rigorous process. It is important to respect the process and those who worked so hard to create it. I hope others approach the accreditation process with humility and respect for the accreditation standards and procedures.

The second piece of advice is to get everyone on board and just make it happen! Don't wait for the "perfect time" because it will never come. The work done toward accreditation is, of course, done during the same times that regular educator activities continue. Classes, finals, grading, entering-student screenings, family visits, and graduation do not pause for accreditation processes. Make a plan and stick with it! I believe faculty will never regret the work done to become an accredited program.

*Anita: Thank you for your time. It has been a pleasure talking with you.*

# Interview with sign language interpreter and trainer Maya de Wit

**Maya de Wit**[1]

**Esther de Boe**[2]

Maya de Wit studied in the United States and the Netherlands, and works internationally as a sign language interpreter in Dutch Sign language, American Sign Language and International Sign. She is involved in academic fields linked to SLI, with a strong interest in topics such as education, interpreting quality and technology. Maya de Wit has also been active in SLI policy making, by means of her membership to - among others - the Dutch Association of Sign Language Interpreters (NBTG), the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) and EULITA (European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association). She is an active member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), for which she helped to develop guidelines for spoken and sign language conference interpreters, and she currently coordinates AIIC Sign Language Network activities. Her publication *Sign Language Interpreting in Europe* is updated and republished every 4 years. Maya de Wit is also an SLI consultant and trainer.

Esther de Boe holds a MA in Liberal Arts, a MA in Translation and a European Master in Conference Interpreting (EMCI), and has worked since 2011 at the University of Antwerp (Belgium), teaching translation and interpreting at bachelor and master level. She is a sworn translator and interpreter and is currently working on a PhD on interpreting quality in remote interpreting (by telephone and videolink) in medical healthcare.

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# Interview with Maya de Wit

*Esther: Can you tell us something about your background: How did you first become interested in Dutch Sign Language and how did you learn American Sign Language?*

Maya: I always had an interest in sign language, but never thought of using it professionally. I was on a 1-year internship for a bachelor of arts in recreation at the Maryland School for the Blind in Baltimore, Maryland, and there were also deafblind children. They asked all the staff who would be willing to learn sign language, so the children who are deaf-blind would have a wider range of persons to speak to. I did so, and became so intrigued that I used every possible minute to learn more about sign language and how to sign. I went back to the Netherlands, finalized my BA in recreation, got married and we then moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. I there enrolled at St. Catherine's sign language interpreting program. So, my first sign language was really American Sign Language. At the end of my stay, I took the RID test and 3 months later, when we were back in the Netherlands, I received by fax the notification that I had passed.

For many years I have worked as an ASL interpreter across Europe. In 1998 I became the policy maker of the Dutch Association of Sign Language Interpreters (NBTG), a position which I held for 10 years. During these 10 years, one of my major ambitions was to establish a national register of sign language interpreters, which we managed. One of the prerequisites for interpreters to subscribe to the register is to have completed a BA in SLI. In 2000 I enrolled in the BA degree, which I completed in 3 years, instead of the usual 4 years. I graduated in 2003 and ever since have been working a lot with Dutch Sign Language, in combination with Dutch, but also with English and German.

Currently I combine different components in my day to day work: interpreting, research, training and consultancy. When I find challenges in my work as an interpreter, or when I am asked certain questions as to why there are no services or access for deaf sign language users, then I am triggered to study and compile this information and use these results in my training and consultancy. It is essential that we, as sign language interpreters, provide the best quality in interpretation, so that the deaf sign language users have the best possible equal access to society, for example, to education, employment and leisure. It is disheartening to see the lack of access to quality interpreting services for deaf sign language users, and this must change. What remains a struggle and a challenge is that even if there are rules, regulations or laws in place, these are no guarantee to access to interpreting services. We must continue to fight for an acceptable and broad implementation of these services. With my work I hope to contribute a little bit to this change.

*Esther: How and when did you acquire International Sign?*

Maya: In 2006 I was elected president of the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli). I held this position for the maximum of the 2 terms, until 2012. It was an amazing opportunity to meet interpreters and deaf persons across Europe. I also started to work closely with the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), which is based in Brussels. All these encounters helped me to understand how to communicate with deaf persons across Europe and the world. I was increasingly asked to give presentations in International Sign. One day, a deaf person whom I knew well asked me if could interpret International Sign. Although hesitant at first, I did it, and I then slowly got more and more involved in it. At this moment, I interpret mostly between International Sign and one of my spoken languages (English, Dutch, and German). I work at national and international conferences and meetings, and for EU institutions, the UN, and the Council of Europe. I have also been a member of the task force of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), with whom I worked to set up the accreditation process for International Sign interpreters. Currently, I am a member of the WFD Expert Group on Accessibility (Technology & Sign Language).

*Esther: How did you develop expertise in interpreting in international settings, working with English and spoken language interpreters in a team, and in team interpreting?*

## Interview with Maya de Wit

Maya: As I have so many working languages by practice, I often end up in settings which are multilingual. I have also encountered the many challenges that come with interpreting in these settings. By working with experienced and less experienced colleagues, I also found how little training and information there is on this topic. I also noticed that working in a good and balanced team makes an enormous difference in the quality of the final interpretation. So, the more we get out of the team by informing one other well, the better the result.

I also wanted to find out what it is that we do exactly in these international settings and have written several research papers on the topic. These results I then use again in my training and classes. Participants find it very helpful, as it is a combination of practice and research-based at the same time.

Additionally, I found that it's not only in sign language interpreting (SLI) that a team can improve its cooperation and interpretation, but that this is also true in mixed teams. There is very little awareness among spoken language interpreters of how SLI work and vice versa. By increasing this awareness, the interpreters will improve their cooperation and their final product, the interpretation. Therefore, as the AIIC Sign Language Network, we developed guidelines on how to work in mixed teams, but also information for sound engineers and conference organizers to know what is needed to work with SLI and SpLI in conference settings. As the current coordinator of the AIIC SLN, I also aim – together with the members of the network – for a greater visibility of SLI and to raise awareness of the fact that sign language interpreters are also conference interpreters and do not work solely within the community.

*Esther: I know you have networks across Europe and that you have expertise in reviewing interpreter education curricula. Can you tell us something about interpreter education across Europe, divergences, similarities? Do most European countries offer interpreter education, and if so, at what level (universities, community training)? Can you see any differences in sign language interpreter education in the U.S, and in Europe?*

Maya: When I was president of efsli, we often received requests on how to establish a sign language interpreter training program and also on best practices in the current programs. In order to have an overview, we organized three working seminars where trainers from the current programs and stakeholders and experts got together and analysed and shared knowledge and expertise. The result after these working seminars was a publication of a model curriculum for a 3-year BA degree in SLI.

There are now nearly 90 SLI programs in Europe. In many countries there is more than one program. The programs differ in length and credits, but throughout the years, we can identify that the overall length is increasing and the content is providing a more solid foundation. Most of the programs in Western and Northern Europe are now at BA level. In Eastern Europe, the majority of the countries do not have a formal recognized SLI program. The programs available are temporary or short courses.

The major difference between spoken and sign language interpreter programs is that the majority of the SLI programs do not require that students have knowledge of the language before entering the program. This means that the sign language is acquired during the education. It has been shown that those who acquire SL before the program or have an intensified SL teaching at the start of the program are more fluent and competent in interpreting at the end of the program.

I cannot really make a comparison between the U.S. and Europe, as even in Europe the diversity of the programs is quite large.

*Esther: What type of training are you most often asked to provide, and why do you think this is?*

Maya: I am asked a lot to provide presentations based on my research data on the status of the SLI profession. As I have conducted this research every 4 years since 2000, these data can provide a longitudinal insight into best practices. These best practices and also other findings can help other associations to identify what is applicable and useful to their national situation.

The other topic I am most frequently asked about is interpreting in international settings and interpreting between my national sign language and English as a third language. The majority of sign language interpreters are not trained to work with English, as this is not one of their native or national languages. At the same time, the use

of English even in the national setting has increased, as there are more students attending higher education and we see a globalization of the deaf community. Deaf persons travel more and interact more with each other internationally. As a result, there is more use of English in international contexts.

*Esther: What advice would you have for other interpreter educators and why?*

Maya: I would advise looking into reviewing the curriculum of SLI training, creating first a solid foundation of the languages the students will work with prior to entering the interpreting program. A solution would be to first offer a language program, followed by an interpreting degree. Ideal would be if, next to the spoken foreign languages, sign language became one of the languages students can choose, which is only the case in very few programs at the moment. In this way, students would be trained as interpreters instead of learning languages and interpreting separately, which is often the case now.

*Esther: What advice would you have for interpreting students or new graduates?*

Maya: Next to being involved with the deaf community, become involved with your profession and its development, even during your studies. This will provide you valuable input and connections for your future career. As a new interpreter it will be challenging to start your career, but with the support of practising interpreters it can be a smoother ride. Find a buddy or mentor who is willing to work with you as a novice interpreter. This is a learning experience for both the interpreter and the novice interpreter.

# Book Review: Consecutive Notetaking and Interpreter Training

**Dr. Debra Russell**

*University of Alberta*

Someya, Y. (Ed). (2017). *Consecutive notetaking and interpreter training*. New York, NY: Routledge. (248 pages).

This book reports on papers presented at a 2015 one-day international symposium that focused specifically on the theory and pedagogy of consecutive notetaking. Yasumasa Someya brings together the work of four scholars, along with his own contributions, to address a topic that has direct relevance to both spoken and signed language interpreters and educators.

In the first chapter, Tassuya Komatsu shares his personal journey to becoming an interpreter, weaving that narrative into the history of interpreting and interpreting education in Japan. His account documents key developments from the early 1960s to today, and acknowledges Danica Seleskovitch's impact on Japanese training (which segues nicely into the second chapter). Komatsu provides a fascinating discussion of the role of interpreter agencies in training, pointing to the tension that can occur between academic and theoretical programs and shorter, employment-focused curricula, a tension evident in other countries across spoken language interpreter education, and to some extent, signed language interpreter education. He also draws attention to the trend of hiring in-house interpreters, which he author contends is reducing the status of the profession of interpreters. Komatsu's call for cooperation among universities and interpreter agencies is well placed and timely.

The second chapter, by Hiromi Ito, offers an overview of how students are training at ESIT (Ecole Superierure d'interpretes et de traducteures) in Paris. Ito describes in detail the theory and practice of notetaking, drawing on the early work of Seleskovitch and the Lederer model of Interpretive Theory of Translation (ITT). She also presents a review of the cognitive psychology literature relevant to interpreting and consecutive notetaking. While the review is interesting, the material on working memory does not appear to have been updated past 2003. Ito also reviews her 2006 study of students practicing notetaking while working from Japanese into French. She emphasizes one particular benefit of notetaking: that it heightens one's awareness of one's own capacity for analyzing speech, which supports speech comprehension and target-language speech preparation.

Chapter 3, "Notation Language and Notation Text: A Cognitive-Linguistic Model of Consecutive Interpreting," by Michaela Albl-Mikasa, is an English translation of Albl-Mikasa's book in German, and I am grateful to have this access to her work. She begins by presenting a thorough review of the previous ideologies that have shaped notetaking and how it has been traditionally taught in interpreter education programs, leading the reader to an understanding of the arguments for notation as an individualized language activity. She then reviews the cognitive and psycholinguistic research supporting a cognitive model of notetaking, and links that nicely to her empirical study that draws on relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995). Her study draws on five consecutive interpretations of students of differing levels of proficiency, acknowledging that student performance may differ from professional interpreters. Based on a cogent description of data, she leads the reader to discussion of teaching the ellipsis strategy, relying on dense notes based on the ST micropropositions, prior to explicit teaching of condensed and restructured notes. Albl-Mikasa offers an evidence-based argument for a shift in the field and in the approach to notetaking, and she encourages further research that applies her methodology with professional interpreters. I would recommend the purchase of this book based on this chapter alone.

In Chapter 4, Cheng-shu Yang reports an exploration into notetaking symbols in consecutive notetaking, with a focus on the relationship between the symbols and information and the interpreter's inner logic. She describes examples from a larger corpora, covering Chinese-Japanese, English-Chinese and English-Japanese. The literature review of notetaking approaches and the symbols used is well organized and clearly reported. Educators and practitioners may find the information useful when introducing notetaking to interpreting students, especially the three-stage dialogue structure (definition of scope of the talk, along with the blend of focus and presentation main points). Yang concludes that comparisons between the organized structure of notetaking symbols and recorded content demonstrates a clear correspondence between them, not only in terms of cognition of the semantic meaning, but also in terms of form. Observing the recorded process of the transmission of information between the consecutive notes and the source and target languages reveals that the interpreters in this study analyzed the source language, performing a compression of information and encoding on the information processing platform for "intermediary representation" composed of notes, and after decompression and decoding, produced the target language. The results presented in this chapter invite further study targeting more languages on a larger scale in order to see if the findings are supported across other languages.

The final two chapters of this volume are contributions from Yasumasa Someya. The first provides a theoretical model of consecutive notes and notetaking from a linguistic-cognitive lens. Someya contends that an interpreters' notes are a reflection of his/her understanding of the text, and that they can indicate the mental representation that an interpreter holds for a given text and how this is stored in memory. The chapter begins with

an examination of that is meant by "understanding" and what is stored in memory at the sentential level, and then the discourse level. The author then introduces his dynamic propositional network (DPN) model, describing a thematic P-A schema approach to the analysis of meaning. The discussion of the language choice is a very interesting section of this chapter, and Sameya builds on the early work of Alexieva (1993), who stated that linguistic decisions are based on the principle of maximum efficiency and maximum information load—offering an evaluation criteria for consecutive notes that includes propositional representation, textual representation, modality, notational/orthographic efficiency and information retrieval potential. I found this to be a very helpful chapter for educators and practitioners as it offers a thorough review of what is known about notetaking, and the theoretical base offers a way for students to practice text analysis and have a structure for their notes. The author has shared worksheets as a practice tool, a valuable resource educators and practitioners. As I finished the chapter, I wished that the theoretical frame had been better supported by research, and then I turned to Chapter Six, where I found Someya offering the results of a small-scale study on notetaking and consecutive interpreting.

The final chapter was challenging to read. The study described involved four professional interpreters, but data for only three of the interpreters are presented due to space constraints and to a suggestion that the subject's data doesn't contribute much to the study. Data are not reported for an additional ten students who participated in the study. While the author reports this as an experimental design there is no control group, making this likely much more of a case study approach to a 3-minute simulation experience. Based on three performances, Someya contents that the data show interpreters are motivated to extract the proposition embedded in the target utterance. Someya reports that a sight translation, as well as an eye-tracker component, were also included in the "experiment," however there is no information about how data from those aspects were analyzed nor any reporting of the findings. There are some confusing aspects to the chapter that could be addressed with greater detail on all of the research questions, and using time codes to compare data sets. The appendices include only some of the participant data, where it may have been easier to understand the findings with a summary of the data of all of the participants, and Someya does not critique the limitations of the study, of which there appear to be many, making this chapter a disappointing conclusion to the volume.

The content of the book is interesting, however there are a number of editing errors and writing challenges that affect the readability of some of the chapters. As an educator, I found value in most of the chapters, especially the work of Michaela Albl-Mikasa. With thematic papers on notetaking collected in one volume, an educator or practitioner can use this one resource to locate useful material for constructing learning activities.

# Dissertation Abstracts

## Interpreting Linguistic Politeness from British Sign Language to English

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This thesis explores the way im/politeness is interpreted from British Sign Language into spoken English. This aspect of interpreting may significantly impact the dynamics of interpreted interactions, due to differences in the way im/politeness is both produced and received in the varied situations in which interpreters work. The study draws on rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2005, 2008) and the concept of social networks (Watts, 2003) to frame the complex and multiple considerations involved.

Qualitative data were generated through a series of semi-structured group discussions centred on interpreting im/politeness, involving eight highly experienced professional BSL/English interpreters. Data were analysed thematically to identify how interpreters recognise im/politeness in BSL, the key influences on the way they interpret im/politeness and the interpreting strategies they might employ. To underpin this study, foundational research to explore how politeness is expressed in BSL was conducted, involving interviews with five Deaf participants.

Analysis reveals that interpreters' knowledge about politeness in BSL and interpreting politeness is generally tacit and hard to articulate, and suggest the benefits of explicit tuition on the subject. The multiple influences on interpreters' evaluations of im/politeness are dynamic, and coalesce differently in each interpreted interaction. Context emerges as a multi-layered influence that relates to not only the environment but also the characteristics, language use, goals and expectations of the people involved. Interpreters' strategies may involve smoothing their interpretation to better ensure that the interactional goals are met and to manage rapport between clients. Interpreters' familiarity with the context, and their clients, is a valuable resource that supports interpreters'

decision-making and strategy choices; a particular benefit given the temporal pressure of simultaneous interpreting.

The study contributes theoretically to im/politeness research and interpreting studies, and has practical value for interpreting professionals in both initial interpreter training programmes and continuing professional development.

Keywords: im/politeness, rapport management, interpreting, British Sign Language

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Spencer-Oatey, H. (Ed.) (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.).
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# Productivity in Post-Editing and in Neural Interactive Translation Prediction: A Study of English-to-Spanish translators

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Machine translation (MT) generally cannot produce high-quality texts, so humans often intervene in the translation process. One such intervention is post-editing (PE), in which a human translator corrects the errors in the MT output. In interactive translation prediction (ITP), a more recent process, an MT system presents a translator with translation suggestions they can accept or reject, actions that the MT system then uses to present them with new, corrected suggestions.

In this thesis I present two empirical studies with professional English/Spanish translators investigating a number of translation productivity aspects of two such types of translation scenarios. Both studies use qualitative data used, where possible, to interpret quantitative findings. I found that in the traditional PE setting, decreases in MT quality are associated with increases in technical effort and processing time; whereas using ITP with an underlying neural machine translation system may be a viable alternative to PE. A number of translation productivity indicators collected over time, as well as translators' qualitative feedback, validates these findings.

Key words: post-editing, neural machine translation, statistical machine translation, translation productivity

# Open Forum: Dissertation Abstracts

## Healthcare Interpreting From a New Zealand Sign Language Interpreters' Perspective

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This research[1] examines healthcare interpreting from the perspective of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters. Healthcare interpreting is a growing topic of research globally. However, little focus has been given to the interpreters' own perspectives. Interpreters who provide communication access to healthcare professionals and deaf clients encounter challenges ranging from interpersonal demands between the interpreter and the other participants to linguistic demands dealing with unfamiliar terminology. The aim of this study was to identify challenges encountered by NZSL interpreters working in healthcare settings and examine the coping strategies they employ. To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first of its kind in New Zealand.

The research was carried out using a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative online survey and qualitative interviews. A total of 28 NZSL interpreters responded to the survey and eight NZSL interpreters volunteered to be interviewed. The results indicated that the main challenges encountered in healthcare settings included a lack of understanding of the interpreter's role by healthcare professionals, difficulty in dealing with unfamiliar healthcare terminology and in some cases interpreters' belief that the deaf clients did not receive adequate access to full healthcare information. The participants shared coping strategies they use to deal with unfamiliar terminology. These strategies were discussed from a perspective of where the onus of decoding the message was placed.

The study suggests that NZSL interpreters working in healthcare situations should be more assertive in terms of their professional relationship building, give thought to moving the onus of providing clear information back to the healthcare professional and ensure that all participants are aware of the role of the interpreter. If consumers of healthcare interpreter services are educated on how to work effectively with interpreters, communication will be more effective and the risk to deaf clients will be reduced.

Keywords: Healthcare interpreting, NZSL, interpreter role

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[1] A ten-minute summary of Delys' study can also be accessed here, starting at 30:34: https://livestream.com/accounts/5183627/events/7944731/videos/166352481 (accessible in New Zealand Sign Language and English)

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