Interpreting Culturally Rich Realities:
Research Implications for Successful Interpretations

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"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone,
"it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

<div align="right">(Carroll, 1981)</div>

Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the use of multiple meaning English words in interpretations specifically focusing on English words that have taken on "Deaf-centered" meanings for interpreters. The article discusses the semantic sense of lexical items and then distinguishes between culturally neutral and culturally rich realities.

The article focuses on certain realities that are unique to the Deaf Community and the challenges that interpreters face in conveying those realities in their spoken English interpretations. Specifically, this article presents results of a survey of 190 members of the English-speaking community that has implications for how interpreters should craft their interpretations. The survey took place in Boston, Massachusetts and asked those surveyed what they thought of when they heard each of eight English lexical items. The results provide evidence of the semantic senses of the ASL lexical item interpreters usually pair with the English lexical item. This survey documents what Deaf people and interpreters have known for quite a while—not only does society in general remain quite ignorant about the Deaf Community, but the prevailing view continues to be quite pathological. That this survey provides documentation of these realities is not, in and of itself, particularly significant. What is significant are the implications if these data for interpreters and their interpretations of culturally rich realities.

The article discusses five specific observations based on results of the observations deal with the frames of reference that the English-speaking community has for understanding Deaf people. Those frames, as reflected by this survey, appear to be ignorance, pathology and deficiency. The next observation is that for interpreters certain English words have acquired new "Deaf-centered" meanings. However the majority of English-speaking community has not acquired these new meanings. Thus when interpreters use these lexical items the "Deaf-centered" meanings are not successfully conveyed. The final observation is that as interpreters our failure to convey accurately and successfully culturally rich realities in our interpretations contributes to the continued oppression of the Deaf Community. The article concludes that there is an inverse relation between the surface form of our interpretations and the "knowledge of the other" possessed by those for whom we interpret. That is, the greater the levels of ignorance about culturally rich realities of the Deaf Community, the more robust our spoken English interpretations must be. Conversely, the greater the levels of awareness about the Deaf Community, the more succinct our spoken English interpretations can be.

Interpreters must be bilingual and bicultural in order to function successfully. This means they occupy a unique position at the intersection of at least two linguistic communities.[1] They are privileged to have acquired at least two languages and cultures. The process of becoming bilingual and bicultural means that one acquires a different way of looking at the world, i.e. a different world-view. However, because no two linguistic or cultural groups hold precisely the same world-view, interpreters face special challenges when interpreting a reality that is viewed differently by the two communities or when interpreting a reality that exists for one community but not for the other community. Indeed, one could rather easily make a convincing case that the very search for equivalence ("How can I convey this meaning in the other language and culture") is central to any definition of interpretation.

Certainly interpreters and those familiar with Deaf people have a different world-view than those who are not Deaf. Those who are so informed know that there are certain realities that are viewed differently by Deaf people than by those who are not Deaf and there are realities that exist for Deaf people that do not exist for those who are not Deaf. It is precisely the interpretation of such realities that poses a significant challenge for interpreters. However, the issue of interpreting such realities has received little attention in the literature on ASL/English interpreting. This article examines one aspect of the interpretation of differing realities—specifically the article examines whether English words often used by interpreters to convey these different realities successfully convey the meaning of those realities to most members of the English-speaking community. Before discussing the pilot study that forms the basis for this article, however, it is important to examine various aspects of meaning and semantic sense as they pertain to interpretation.

The Interpretation of Meaning
For the past four decades the accepted practice for ASL/English interpreters, in the United States at least, has been that they have a responsibility to render the *meaning* of those messages they are asked to interpret. This expectation dates to at least the RID Convention of 1980 when the organization began to publish and make use of distinct definitions for interpreting and transliterating. A case could also be made that the importance of meaning in interpretation actually dates from the organization's first publication in 1965 in which a distinction was made between "interpreting" and "translating" (Quigley and Youngs, 1965). This focus on meaning and not form can easily be illustrated by asking interpreters to interpret into ASL (or any other indigenous sign language for that matter) the following pairs if English sentences with particular attention given to the signs that would be used to render the target English lexical items.[2]

    1) 'leave'
        Pat asked me to leave the party early.
        Pat asked me to leave the car home.

    2) 'made'
        Lee made the dog roll over and play dead.
        Lee's mother made her first million at thirty.

    3) 'book'
        Pat tried to write another book.
        Pat tried to book the flight early.

The signs that an interpreter would use to render the target English lexical item in the first sentence of each pair are clearly quite different than those that would be used to render the target English lexical item in the second member of each pair. In simplest terms, an interpretation of each pair of sentences requires the use of different signs for the targeted English lexical items precisely because the meaning (i.e., the semantic sense) conveyed by the targeted English form in each English sentence is different.

We could also demonstrate this focus on meanings by posing two different tasks to interpreters.
    A "constrained lexical choice task":
        Render an interpretation of the second sentence in each pair above, but in rendering the target English lexical item in the second sentence you must use the same signs as you used to render the target English lexical items in the first sentence of each pair.
    A "citation from inquiry task":
        Answer the following questions: "What's the sign for the word 'leave'?" "What's the sign for the word 'made?" "What's the sign for the word 'book?"

It is not difficult to guess the reactions of experienced, competent interpreters. For the first task their responses would likely include "I can't because that's not what it means!" "OK, if you force me to, but that's not what it means." "If I have to, but that's not ASL!" and "Alright if you make me, but no one will understand." Responses to the second task might include: "It depends on the context." "It depends on what you mean." and "You have to use it in a sentence."

Still further evidence of the fact that interpreters do focus on meaning in crafting their interpretations can be provided by repeating these two tasks using the following pairs of English sentences:

    4) 'take my hat off
        I have to take my hat off at the table.
        I have to take my hat off to John for what he did.
    5) 'threw the book'
        The boy was so mad he banged his fist and then threw the book at the teacher.
        The judge was so mad she banged her gravel and then she threw the book at the teacher.

These sentence pairs contain one member in which the English target item is used literally and one in which the target item is used idiomatically. Experienced, competent interpreters realize that idioms are a situation in which there is no disputing the fact that the surface form must be discarded in favor of the meaning of the idiom.[3]

These sentence pairs and hypothetical tasks make it clear that, although the surface form of English lexical items may be identical (or quite similar), interpreters decide how to formulate their interpretations based on what can be called an "Equivalence of Meaning Test" (EMT). The EMT is minimally a tripartite process calls for the interpreter to understand the original meaning to be conveyed, to be aware of whether and how that particular meaning is conveyed in the Target Language and Target Culture and to make a judgment that the interpretation about to be produced will convey a meaning that is equivalent to or nearly equivalent to that of the original. I suggest that a significant aspect of what has been called 'the monitor'[4] actually consists of interpreters subjecting their about-to-be-produced and/or most-recently-

produced interpretations to an "Equivalence of Meaning Test." Subjecting a proposed or realized interpretation to an EMT yields an outcome that forms the basis for altering an interpretation or allowing the interpretation to stand.[5] Such alterations are made because interpreters recognize that in order for interpretations to be successful they must minimally convey the meaning and intent of the original.

Of course determining whether an interpretation is likely to be successful or not is much more complex than simply ensuring that individual lexical items in the interpretation pass the EMT. I have, over the past five years in various seminars and workshops, developed and refined an operational definition of interpretation that I believe can serve as one means of addressing the various facets of interpretation and the complex array of factors involved in determining whether an interpretation is successful or not.

> Interpretation is
>> the competent and coherent use of one naturally evolved language to express the meanings and intentions conveyed in another naturally evolved language for the purpose of negotiating an opportunity for a successful communicative interaction in real time within a triad involving two principal individuals or groups who are incapable of using, or who prefer not to use, the language of the other individual or group.[6]

For purposes of the present discussion the crucial and central aspect of this operational definition is that the ultimate aim of an interpretation is "…to express the meanings and intentions…."[7] It should be noted that the centrality of meaning in interpretation (and fortunately to a much lesser degree the notion of intention) has been articulated in the literature and has been incorporated into assessment instruments of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.[8]

The centrality of meaning and intention in interpreted interactions can perhaps be seen most clearly if we examine the question from the perspective of participants in an interpreted interaction. In general participants in any interpreted interaction expect that nay interpretation will be rendered such that it will make it possible for the receiving participants to understand or refer to the same realities[9] as originally intended by the expressing participant.[10] The following decontextualized, admittedly overly simplistic lexical example will help to illustrate the point:

> 6) 'egg'
>> Suppose you are interpreting for a Deaf member of the ASL/signing Community. She has in her mind the following reality that she wishes to convey to a member of the English-speaking community who does not know ASL:

>> The Deaf person chooses to express this reality by using the following sign:[11]

In formulating your interpretation you choose the English word 'egg'. Upon hearing this word the English-speaking person is lead to, or is able to envisage, the following reality:

Because the realities indicated by the sign and the word are similar we can safely say, in the absence of further complicating information/factors,[12] that this interpretation was successful, i.e. the interpretation passes the "Equivalence of Meaning Test" (EMT). In other words the interpretation "points to" or refers to the same reality that is "pointed to" by the original message to be interpreted.

On the other hand suppose that in rendering your interpretation you utter the English word 'tree' instead of the English word 'egg'. In the case there would be unanimous agreement among interpreters and participants that the interpretation would be unsuccessful.[13] The reason 'tree' would be an unsuccessful interpretation is quite clear—the interpretation has violated participants' expectations of interpretation fidelity and leads the recipient of the message (the English-speaking person) to a different reality than was intended by the original message produced by the Deaf person. In short, the meaning of the interpretation is different than that of the original. In this instance it is clear that the interpretation would not pass the Equivalence of Meaning Test (EMT).

Further discussion of the centrality of meaning and intention in interpretation seems, at this point, unnecessary. It should, however, be clear that the impetus for interpreters to focus on meaning and intention arises not only from their own bilingual/bicultural knowledge and intuitions and an interpreter's obligation to the interaction, but also from the expectations that participants have of the interpretations that they receive.

The Semantic Sense of Lexical Items
Although the discussion thus far has used the term 'meaning' of lexical items, it is more helpful for us to think in terms of the semantic sense(s) of lexical items. The semantic sense of a lexical item is that reality or idea that a community of users generally associate with or wish to refer to when they use that lexical item. In any language some lexical items are what can be called single sense lexical items. That is, these items refer to only one specific reality and, as such, have only one semantic sense. Consequently there is little or no room for ambiguity when that lexical item is used. In English for example, the following two

words refer to specific, single sense realities that are not currently found on any list of multiple meaning words in English.

> 7) 'iMac'
>> The zoo got a new iMac yesterday. It's awesome!

> 8) 'emu'
>> The zoo got a new emu yesterday. It's awesome!

If you know each of the real-world realities and the lexical item that the English-speaking communities uses to refer to each reality, then when someone produces either of these sentences there is little or no ambiguity. The semantic sense you attach to the lexical items is the same sense realized by other members of the English-speaking community, also infer from your knowledge of these real-world realities that the 'iMac' is most likely kept in an office while the 'emu' is most likely kept in a fenced enclosure. Of course if you do not know the real world realities or how the English-speaking community refers to them, then there is no only one of these realities, you might, for example, assure that the 'iMac' is kept in the enclosure adjacent to the fenced enclosure that contains the 'emu' or perhaps you assume that the 'emu' is kept on a desk next to the 'iMac' (and its mouse). Single sense lexical items also occur in ASL in much the same way. Consider the following signs:

> 9) SPAGHETTI
>> Translated sentence: "Yesterday at the store my brother bought spaghetti."

> 10) BASKETBALL
>> Translated sentence: "Yesterday at the store my brother bought a basketball."

If you know each of the realities and how the ASL/signing community refers to them then when someone produces the ASL original of either of these translated sentences there is little or no ambiguity. The semantic sense you attach to the lexical items is the same sense attached by the other members of the ASL/signing community. You, like all other members of the ASL/signing community, also infer from your knowledge of these real-world realities that the SPAGHETTI was eaten or will ultimately be eaten while BASKETBALL will be used to play a game. Of course if you do not know the real-world realities or how the ASL/signing community refers to them, then there is no possibility that use of either sign will result in clear and accurate communication. If you know only one of these realities, you might, for instance, assume that BASKETBALL is eaten with marinara sauce or that one can dribble and shoot SPAGHETTI.

Although single sense lexical items exist in English and ASL, the norm for most languages is that lexical items have more than a single semantic sense. This makes sense simply from the perspective of cognitive and linguistic efficiency.[14] Lexical items that have more than one semantic sense refer to more than one reality. Linguistics call such lexical items polysemous lexical items, although in English they are commonly referred to as "multiple meaning" words[15] (Lyons, 1995). Often, but not always, multiple semantic senses are attached to a lexical item because there is a physical resemblance between two realities or a metaphorical link between the original semantic sense of an item and a novel semantic sense.

Consider, for example, the different semantic senses of the following English words:

11) 'mouth'
>   the office through which food is ingested; an opening to a cave; the open end of a jar; the point at which a river or stream empties into a larger body of water.

12) 'fork'
>   a tined eating utensil; the point at which two pathways or tree limbs diverge.

Polysemous lexical items also occur in ASL. Consider the following signs:

13) ORANGE

Meaning #1
The hue of that portion of the visible spectrum lying between red and yellow, evoked in the human observer by radiant energy with wavelengths of approximately 590 to 630 nanometers; any of a group of colors between red and yellow in hue, of medium lightness and moderate saturation (in English 'orange')

Meaning #2
Any of several southeast Asian evergreen trees of the genus Citrus, widely cultivated in warm regions and having fragrant white flowers and round fruit with a yellowish or reddish rind and a sectioned, pulpy interior or the fruit of such trees (in English 'orange')

14) COMPS/CARBURETOR

Meaning #1
A series of examinations, usually
written, that are taken at the conclusion
of graduate work and which generally
are used in a summative fashion and
that in large measure determine whether
a candidate will be awarded a graduate
degree (in English 'comprehensive exams')

Meaning #2
A device used in internal-combustion
engines to produce an explosive
mixture of vaporized fuel and air that
is used to power an engine
(in English 'carburetor')

These two ASL signs and the English words commonly used to represent their semantic senses rather precisely illustrate one complexity of interpreting polysemous lexical items between the two languages. First it seems indisputable that the various semantic senses of the signed lexical items are not unique to the ASL/signing community, but are shared with the English-speaking community. In the first instance, example (13), both the ASL/signing community and the English-speaking community eat the fruit of orange citrus fruit trees and the distinctive color orange bears no unique or specific cultural significance to either community. In the second instance, example (14), both communities use motorized vehicles that have carburetors, both have members who repair them and most members of each community, it would be safe to say, are largely ignorant of what a carburetor actually does and how it actually works. Both communities also have members who pursue and receive graduates degrees and who have to take comprehensive exams (although one might easily make a compelling case that taking comprehensive exams is one's second language might be valued and viewed differently). Because these real-world realities are common to both communities and are similarly perceived by both communities, we can conclude that the four realities referred to by the two ASL signs and the two English words are essentially the same for each community.

In the case of example (13) not only is the ASL sign polysemous, but the English lexical item that would commonly be used to interpret either semantic sense, 'orange', is identically polysemous,, i.e. the multiple semantic senses of the sign and the multiple semantic senses of the English word are co-terminus. The sign and the word for each refer to a particular type of citrus fruit and each refer to the same color.

The use of the English word 'orange' when either semantic sense of the sign above is intended, would result in a successful interpretation, i.e. it would pass the EMT. Items of this type can be called paired polysemous lexical items.

However, the case of example (14) is quite different (and, I suggest, much more typical of what interpreters encounter). In this case the interpreter must decide (on the basis of situational context, knowledge of the goals of participants and recognition of the specific textual environment within the discourse) which semantic sense of the sign is intended, either an exam or a mechanical device. Having identified the intended semantic sense of the sign, the interpreter must then select the specific English lexical item, either 'comps' or 'carburetor', which will convey the intended sense. Only if the English interpretation accurately conveys the meaning and intent of the original will it pass the EMT and can it be called successful.[16] In the case of example (10) we have a polysemous lexical item in ASL that has no direct symmetrical counterpart in English. Items of this type can be called unpaired polysemous lexical items.

Lexical items do not begin their linguistic life as polysemous items either in the life of the community or the life of an individual member of the community. Rather, the various senses of polysemous lexical items are added incrementally over time—both the time of an individual's life and the time of a language's life. For individuals the acquisition of additional and varied semantic senses of lexical items is a function of exposure to novel experiences or domains of knowledge and a number of sociolinguistic factors (e.g. age, gender, and education). As we seek to, or have occasion to, interact with a particular segment of a linguistic community, we learn how that segment of the community communicates about those real-world realities that are important to it and its world-view. In order to communicate about these new realities we learn completely new lexical items and we learn to attach new semantic senses to lexical items already in our lexicon.

Consider the experience of an individual who has never sailed before. The individual may learn new lexical items such as the name of the particular sail ('jib' or 'spinnaker') and the names for particular maneuvers used to turn the sailboat around ('to jibe' or 'to come about'). The individual also learns that the familiar English word 'port' no longer only means a particular kind of wine or a harbor in which one rest, it also has a directional sense ('left as one faces the bow of the boat'). Likewise the individual also learns that the English word 'sheet' no longer simply means a thin piece of material (such as one might use to cover a bed), but to a sailors it also means a rope or chain that is attached to one or both of the lower corners of a sail that is used to move or extend the sail. Over time our novice sailor will also learn to attach new semantic senses to existing words such as 'reach', 'tack', 'bow', and 'stern'. If, prior to learning how to sail, some of these lexical items have existed only as single sense lexical items for our novice sailor, they now acquire additional semantic senses and become polysemous lexical items. In short, just as happens with novice sailors, we each constantly acquire new lexical items and we acquire novel semantic senses for existing lexical items based on our experience.

As mentioned above, we realize which sense of polysemous lexical item a conversational partner intends based on our awareness of a number of factors, including our understanding of the linguistic text as well as various situational and interactional factors.[17] For example, suppose you have majored in ASL Linguistics and have read extensively in Astronomy. When you attend a lecture on ASL Linguistics and the speaker uses English words such as 'space' and 'direction' you will activate those specific semantic senses

of the English words that are consistent with the topic and the situation. If, later in the day, you attend a lecture on Astronomy, you will activate different semantic senses for the same English lexical items. Those lexical items are, for you, polysemous lexical items. Suppose, however, that you attend both of these lectures with a friend who is quite knowledgeable about astronomy but knows nothing about American Sign Language. For your friend those lexical items are not polysemous and the only semantic senses she is able to attach to those items have to do with Astronomy. What are polysemous lexical items for you are single sense lexical items for your friend. For you to communicate clearly and accurately with your friend about ASL Linguistics you must make clear your intended meanings. Knowing that your friend is uninformed about ASL Linguistics, you would not deliberately use a polysemous lexical item without making clear your intended semantic sense. In short, you would not assume that a lexical item that is polysemous for you is equally polysemous for your friend.

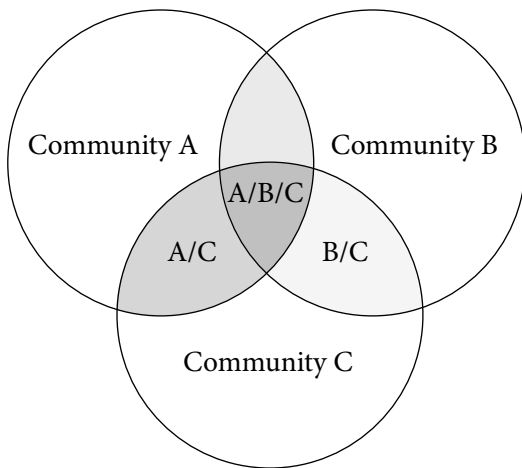**Culturally Rich and Culturally Neutral Realities**
While there are numerous anthropological, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociological definitions of linguistic communities and cultural groups, what is generally accepted is that linguistic communities exist (and persist) because their members have shared world-view, have shared social experiences and have a common means of exchanging perspectives about their world-view and their experiences.[18] Linguistic communities, however, do not generally exist in geographic and interactional proximity, they may share certain experiences and may partially or fully share similar views toward other realities and having a unique set of unshared experiences. In other words increased contact may result in two communities holding the same values, beliefs and norms in other areas. The fact that linguistic communities in contact have variably overlapping world-views allows us to differentiate between what we can be called culturally neutral and culturally rich realities. Culturally neutral realities are those realities that are unique to (i.e. viewed differently by) each of the communities in contact. In simplest terms, culturally neutral realities are shared; culturally rich realities are not. The following table delineates some of the differences between culturally neutral and culturally rich realities.

Culturally Neutral	Culturally Rich
Societal or species views	Community specific views
Broad-based norms	Confined norms
Pan-cultural values	Specific values
Shared world-view	Unique world-view

Depending upon the degree of proximity (geographic, social, linguistic, and political) between two communities, the degree to which they experience the world similarly may vary and, as a result, the scope of culturally neutral realities for the communities may vary. This can be illustrated in the following diagrams. The diagrams on the left illustrates two communities-in-contact whose realities are maximally similar (and thus whose unique realities are limited); the diagram on the right represents two communities-in-contact whose realities are maximally unique (and thus whose shared realities are limited).
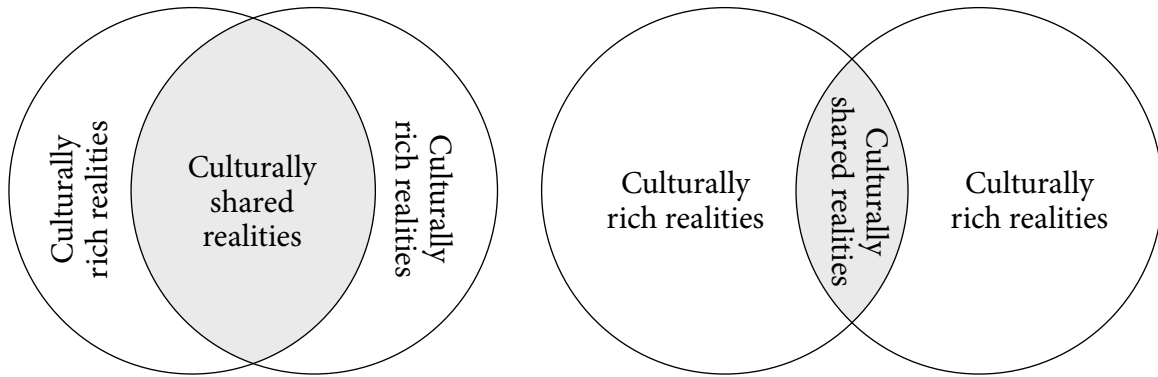
Of course when more than two linguistic communities are in contact, then the interactive possibilities become much more complex as the following diagram illustrates.

These diagrams illustrate the fact that for any two communities in contact not all realities are culturally neutral nor are they all culturally rich. If, for two communities, all realities were culturally neutral (if both communities viewed the world and communicated that world-view in the same way) then by definition we could not have two separate and unique communities. It is precisely because there is a difference in world-views and a difference in symbol system (i.e. languages) used to reflect upon and transmit those world-views that two communities can be said to be separate and unique.

To further examine this point we can return to example (6) and ask whether the semantic senses pointed to by the sign and the semantic senses pointed to by the English word 'egg' are culturally rich or culturally neutral for the American English-speaking community and for the ASL/signing community. In the United States we know that for both of these communities the semantic senses of both the lexical items can be listed as follows:

- a roundish reproductive cell
- usually associated with birds and some reptiles
- usually thought of as food, typically breakfast food

Because both communities have this reality in common and, because it is not viewed differently, we can say that it is a culturally neutral reality. Because the sign and the word refer to the same reality (i.e. the sign and the word have the same semantic senses[19]), interpreters can feel confident using the word 'egg' to convey the semantic senses of the sign and using the sign to convey the semantic senses of the sign and using the sign to convey the semantic senses of the word 'egg'. Of course the culturally shared status of this reality could change if, for example, either community were to attach unique and culturally rooted positive or negative value to the reproductive cell of birds and some reptiles.

A crucial fact that must be borne in mind is that a community's language is its unique way of transmitting and referring to the world-view and the realities of that particular community. A community's language is not merely a system for referring to the language of another community. Thus ASL sign in example (6) does not refer directly to the English lexical item 'egg'; the ASL sign and the English word are simply different ways of referring to the same reality. This fact is frequently forgotten by ASL students and interpreters who fall prey to what can be called "glossism." Glossism can be defined as linking an ASL sign and English word such that the semantic autonomy of the sign is ignored and the sign's meaning is taken to be co-terminus with the semantic senses of the English word with which it has been linked.[20] Glossism is frequently seen when someone asks, "What's the sign for _____?" and, in response, someone unhesitatingly demonstrates a sign. Experienced interpreters do seem to be well aware of a set of multiple meaning English words (i.e. English words each of which has several semantic senses) and if asked "the sign" for any of those words they would respond to such a query by unhesitatingly producing "the sign", we are guilty of glossism. We are also guilty of glossism whenever we respond to the question "what does the sign mean? By providing an English word that we link with the sign instead of asking for use in a sentence or by providing the various semantic senses of the sign.

To return to the ASL sign in example (6), interpreters are rightfully quite confident that if an English speaker's intended meaning is "a roundish reproductive cell of birds usually thought of as food" they can use the sign in example (6) to convey accurately the same meaning in ASL. Likewise if an ASL signer's intended meaning is a "roundish reproductive cell of birds usually thought of as food" interpreters can use the English word 'egg' to convey accurately the same meaning in English. The reason for such confidence is that the set of semantic senses of the English word. Because both communities have the same set of semantic senses for this reality (although each community uses a unique linguistic way of referring to the semantic senses) it is a culturally neutral reality. This culturally neutral reality (and the two linguistic symbols used to refer to it) is graphically illustrated as follows:
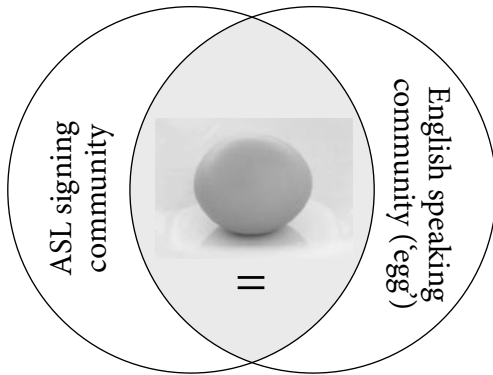
However not all realities are culturally neutral. No two linguistic communities view the world in precisely the same way nor do they attach the same semantic senses or values to similar or common experiences. There will always be some realities or semantic senses that exist differently or not at all for one of the communities. In other words precisely because the communities are different, not all realities or semantic senses can be culturally neutral or culturally shared. Those realities or semantic senses that are not shared or are viewed differently we can call culturally rich. It is these culturally rich realities that pose the greatest challenge and offer the greatest intellectual rewards for interpreters. I initially raised this point almost twenty years ago[21] using an example that is appropriate for present discussion.

(15) INSTITUTION

> Suppose you are interpreting for a member of the American Deaf Community who is addressing the local Lion's Club and who, in introducing herself, uses the following sign in discussing her pre-collegiate educational experiences:

> In formulating your interpretation, you choose to use the English word 'institution.'

Despite the rather decontextualized nature of this illustration, we can nevertheless ask whether an interpretation incorporating the English lexical item 'institution' would be likely to be successful or what conditions would have to obtain in order for such an interpretation to be successful. In short, we can ask whether the use of the lexical item 'institution' would be likely to be successful or what conditions would have to obtain in order for such an interpretation to be successful. In short, we ask whether the use of the lexical item 'institution' in an English interpretation passes the EMT (i.e. are the semantic senses pointed to by the English word 'institution' the same as the semantic senses pointed to by the ASL sign?)

Even a cursory analysis of the semantic senses of the sign and of the word reveals that there are substantive differences between the two. The following summarizes the realities or semantic senses pointed to by the sign and by the word.

Semantic Senses of the ASL Lexical Item	Semantic Senses of the English Lexical Item
Locus of daily exposure to a visual language and cultures	"Unhealthy" experience of being removed from one's family
Sense of belonging, community, and family	Place for those who need help
Sense of being in the majority	Place for those who are different or are disabled
Looked down on by those who don't understand	Evokes a sense of pity and sympathy
Usually positive memories	Usually negative connotations

If this analysis is accurate we can only conclude that use of the English word 'institution' to render the meaning and intent of (i.e. interpret) the sign in example (15) would not pass the EMT and thus such an interpretation would be unsuccessful. The reason the interpretation would be unsuccessful is quite clear—the interpretation will lead the recipient of the message (the English-speaking participant) to a different reality or set of semantic senses than was intended by the original message produced by the Deaf person. Note also that the interpretation would not change significantly and would remain unsuccessful even if we were to examine some of the other English expressions commonly used when interpreting discourse in which this sign is used:

> 'State-school'—has no specific meaning to most members of the American English-speaking community except by analogy with entities such as 'state prison' or 'state hospital'

> 'School for the Deaf'—for most members of the American English-speaking community this has meaning only by analogy with other "for the _____" realities such as programs or places 'for the criminally insane,' 'for the mentally retarded,' 'for the blind,' 'for the elderly,' etc.

It seems even clearer now than it was twenty years ago that this sign refers to a culturally rich reality—a reality and set of semantic senses distinctly outside the experience and world-view of the English-speaking community. It is also clear that using the English word 'institutions' to try to convey the reality or semantic senses indicated by the sign is an obvious instance of glossism and result in an interpretation that will most often be unsuccessful. Not only is the reality referred to by the sign foreign to or outside the 'normal' experience of most members of the English-speaking community, but the English word 'institution' leads to a completely different reality and set of semantic senses than is conveyed by the ASL sign. This culturally rich reality is graphically represented in the following illustration.
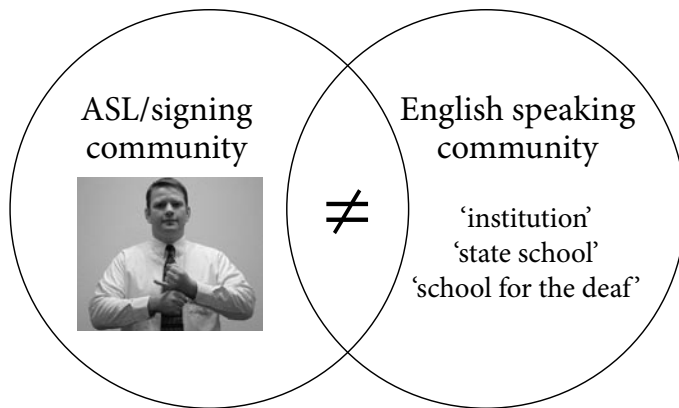
The discussion so far has established a binary categorization of realities-culturally neutral or culturally rich. Culturally neutral realities are those that are shared by or viewed similarly by two or more linguistic communities in contact. Culturally rich realities, however, not only represent the defining characteristics of a unique community and its culture but also represent occasions for values, norms, beliefs, and traditions to come into conflict with those if other communities. Culturally rich realities also pose the greatest challenge (and arguably the greatest source of intellectual and cross-cultural satisfaction) for interpreters and translators.

The remainder of this article will address the question of what semantic senses are conveyed by English lexical items that we, as interpreters, often use to render our interpretations of culturally rich ASL realities. The implications of this question should be clear. If, based on our interactions with the Deaf Community, certain English lexical items have become polysemous for us, but remain single sense lexical items for the majority of the English-speaking community, then our use of such lexical items in interpretations will produce interpretations that will not pass the EMT and will be unsuccessful.

The Data
This study was conducted in 1999 with the assistance of students in Northeastern University's interpreter Education Program.[22] One of the assignments in their first interpreting course was to interview English-speaking subjects in a variety of settings in and around metropolitan Boston. The aim of the survey was that student interview a random sample of the general English-speaking population. They were specifically instructed that they should not interview students or faculty at Northeastern University, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing or at any other setting where there might be a heightened level of awareness of the Deaf Community. Thus the interview settings included various 'T' (subway) stops, Logan airport, shopping malls, stores, downtown sidewalks, restaurants, and hospitals.

Each student was given the same list of eight English words. The eight words were chosen based on a rank ordering by six RID certified interpreters and two Massachusetts state screened interpreters using a list of approximately 50 English lexical items. These interpreters were asked to rank order the list of words based on the frequency with which they use each lexical item in their interpretations. Eight words were chosen because, after pilot testing the interview protocol, it was felt that this was the maximum number of words strangers would be willing to respond to validly and also represented the maximum length of time that strangers would comfortably be willing to devote to the task.[23]

Each student was required to ask nine people what they associate with each of the English words. Specifically each person was asked what they thought of when they heard the word.[24] Each student was given a standardized reporting form to be complete for each person interviewed. The form specified demographic data to be collected,[25] the order of items, the subject's responses, and interviewer's notes and comments. Students were instructed to ask people if they would assist in helping the students complete an assignment for a course that the student was taking, because it was felt that those being interviewed would seek to please the interviewer by asking for immediate confirmation in an effort to give the "right" answer, students were instructed to remain as neutral as possible and not to provide specific feedback after each response. Only after each interview was completed did the students provide information about a "Deaf Community semantic sense" for each of the items if requested by the subject. For purposes if this study only those interviews for which a subject answered all eight items were analyzed, yielding a total of 190 responses for each item.

Item #1: 'mainstreaming'

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- being in the minority, often being a minority of one
- being in a public elementary or high school classroom with a teacher and classmates who do not sign
- being in an environment that is auditorily-attuned, not visually-attuned
- being in an environment in which communication is mediated by an interpreter
- being in an environment in which the d/Deaf student is clearly marked as being different
- being in an environment in which opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities are limited or non-existent

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'mainstreaming' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what semantic senses are conveyed to the English-speaking community by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the senses indicated above. Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do with education, those having to do with integration, those specifically mentioning d/Deaf students, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In categorizing the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the

last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses the maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

'mainstreaming'	Education 11	Integration 30	Deaf people 0	Miscell. 121	No idea 14
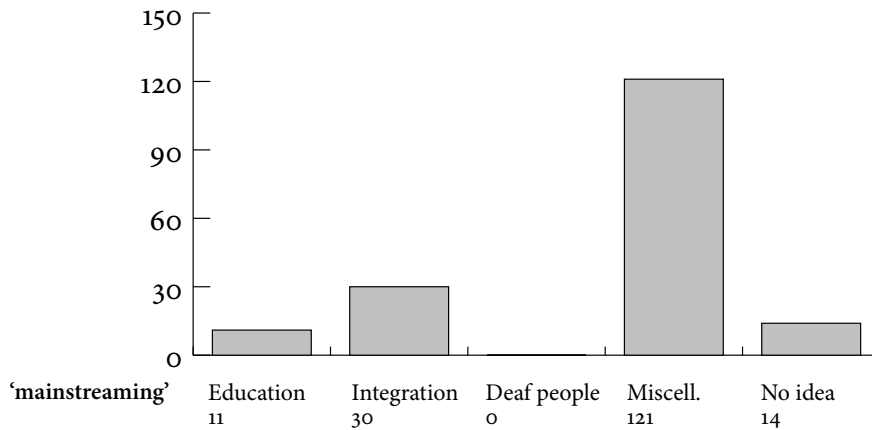
The most generous interpretation of these data is that only 21.6% of those interviewed associated this English word with education and integration (arrived at by collapsing the first three response categories). None of the responses specifically mentioned d/Deaf students nor did they allude to any of the culturally rich semantic senses indicated above. Conversely, 78.4% of respondents either did not understand the term or did not readily associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English word 'mainstreaming'.

Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses from those interviewed:

|		
Grouping together	Getting straight to the point	Downtown; inner city kids
Conforming	Living a straight life	Doing whatever you feel like
Politically correct term	Going with the crowd	Selling out
Drugs, shooting up!	Networking	Something with swimming
Daydreaming	A river	Like free-basing
Brainstorming	Nirvana	Stripping
Something to do w/ business	Something small into big	Fish swimming up stream
Open-minded	Grouped with normal people	Streamlining

Item #2: 'cochlear implant'

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- an oppressive effort to eradicate the cultures of Deaf people
- the destruction of personal identity (particularly of d/Deaf children)
- an(other) attempt to 'fix' or 'cure' the condition/state of deafness
- initiated by "others" who do not understand the language and culture of Deaf people
- symbolized a view of d/Deaf people as "defective hearing people"

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'cochlear implant' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do with acoustic or auditory awareness, those having to do with acoustic or unspecified surgery (if the type of surgery was clearly inaccurate the response was categorized as miscellaneous), those specifically mentioning d/Deaf people, miscellaneous responses, and response of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the response maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

| 'cochlear implant' | Acoustic 3 | Surgery 45 | Deaf people 1 | Miscell. 112 | No idea 29 |
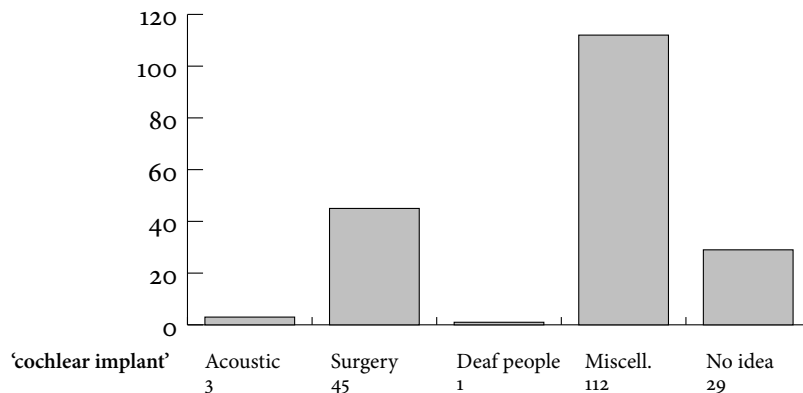
The most generous interpretation of these data is that only 25.8% of those interviewed associated this English word with a form of acoustically-related surgery (arrived at by collapsing the first three response categories). Only one of the responses (.005% of the total) specifically mentioned d/Deaf people and none of them alluded to any of the culturally rich senses indicated above. Conversely, 74.2% of respondents either did not understand the term or did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English word 'cochlear implant.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

Voice implant in your body	Wildlife	General electric
Part of a plant	Respiratory system	Chocolate breast implant
A medical thing	Drugs	Stomach surgery
Something with a skeleton	Therapy	Cocoa Beach, Florida

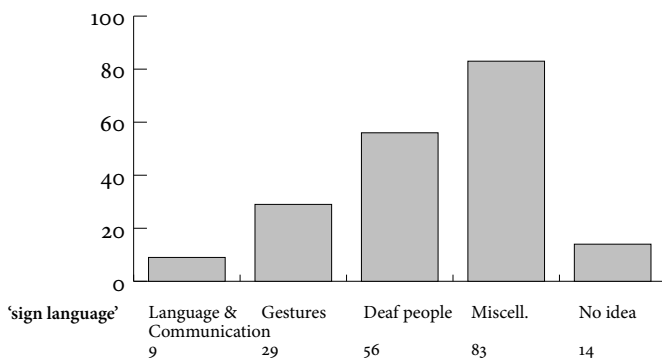| A male operation | Coconuts | Nuclear breast implants |
| Coca-Cola put in something | Carpal Tunnel disease | Vocal tube in the throat |
| Insurance fraud | For near-sightedness | Brain operation |

Item #3: 'sign language'

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- visually accessible communication
- the type of signing most typically done while people are trying to sign and speak or mouth English at the same time
- a symbol of communicative access and accommodation
- although not necessarily ASL, a much more intelligible means of communication than relying solely on lipreading or written communication

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'sign language' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do with communication and language, those having to do with gestures, those specifically mentioning d/Deaf people, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

'sign language'

| Language & Communication | Gestures | Deaf people | Miscell. | No idea |
| 9 | 29 | 56 | 83 | 14 |

The most generous interpretation of these data is that 48.9% of those interviewed associated this English word with a form of gesturally produced and visually received communication (arrived at by collapsing the first three response categories). Of that number 60% (or 29.5% of the total) specifically mentioned d/Deaf people. Conversely, 51.1% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English term 'sign language.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

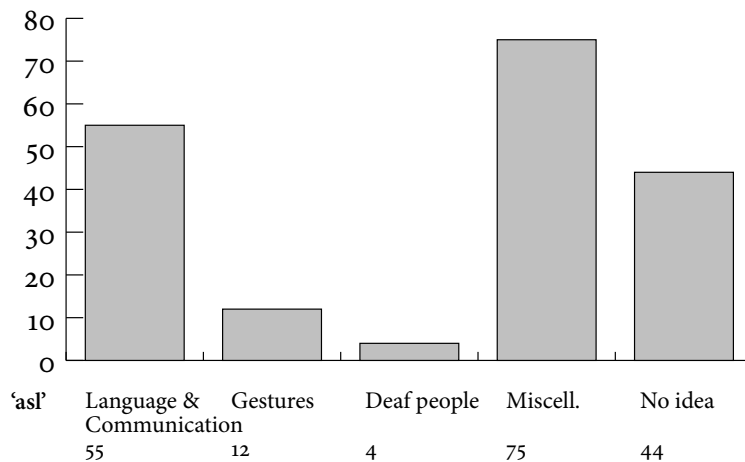|		
Hands; impaired	Challenging	Mute-deaf
Tool in communicating	Moving hands	Grade school language
Alternate communication	Sesame Street	Deaf and dumb
Hearing/Speech impaired	Can't talk	Native Americans made it up
My daughter knows some	Guess work	That woman on the news
Language for the blind	Hands in front of your face	Linda Bove in a pink sweater
International language form	Politically correct for "gestures"	Advertising tool
A baseball code		

Item #4: "asl"

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- the indigenous language of the American Deaf Community
- comfortable and accessible means of communication
- visually received means of communication
- a language that is linguistically different from English

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English acronym 'ASL' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do with communication and language, those having to do with gestures, those specifically mentioning d/Deaf people, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

'asl'	Language & Communication	Gestures	Deaf people	Miscell.	No idea
	55	12	4	75	44

The most generous interpretation of these data is that 37.4% of those interviewed associated this English word with a form of gesturally produced and visually received communication (arrived at by collapsing the first three response categories). Of that number 5% (or .02% of the total) specifically mentioned d/Deaf people. Conversely, 62.6% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English acronym 'ASL.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

|		
American Student League	Something about a computer	Testing standard
A kind of second language	Astrology's Science Literature	ESL
Computer programming	Anti-system lock	Debilitating disease
A league or something	American Soccer League	Hockey league
Second language acquisition	Autism—disease	American Society for Lunatics
Academic society	Learning disorder	American Something League
American Software League	Assisted sign language	Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS)
America OnLine	Audio sensory language	Accelerate Speed Level

Item #5: 'gallaudet'

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated bellow, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- a college/university for d/Deaf students located in Washington, DC
- a collegiate environment in which d/Deaf people are in the majority
- a college/university where visually accessible communication is valued
- a college/university in which the norm is that professors communicate directly with d/Deaf students using ASL or some form of sign language
- a college/university in which administrators and decision-makers are d/Deaf
- the site of the Deaf President Now protest

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'Gallaudet' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses given an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the semantic senses above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those that were completely accurate, those that were reasonably close, those specifically mentioning d/Deaf people, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

| 'gallaudet' | Accurate 23 | Close 9 | Deaf people 13 | Miscell. 67 | No idea 78 |
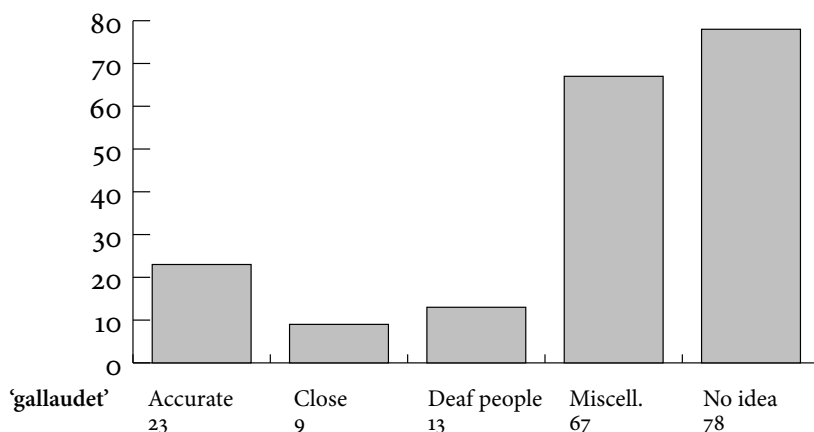
The most generous interpretation of these data is that 23.7% of those interviewed associated this English word with post-secondary education for d/Deaf students (arrived at by collapsing the first three response categories). Of that number only 28.8% (or .06% of the total) specifically mentioned d/Deaf people. Conversely, 76.3% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English term 'Gallaudet.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

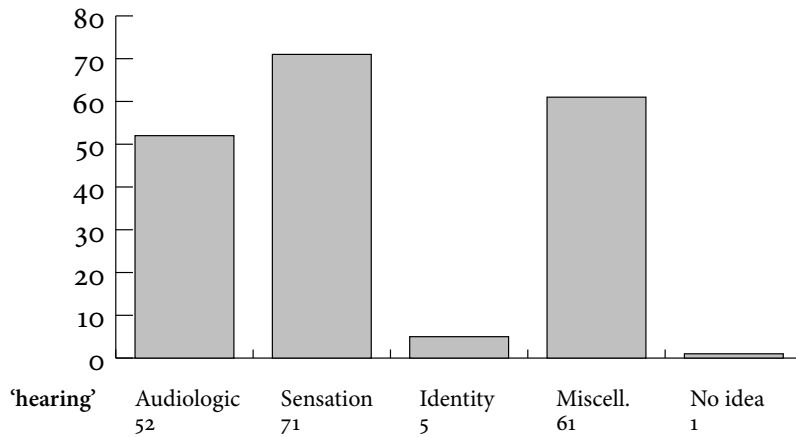|		
A fishing utensil	Frenchman who owes money	Maybe a soldier
Another name for garlic	A girl's book	A dance step
A disease	A book title	A flower
An ogre	Guy my grandmother knew	Gallbladder; part of the body
A place in Ireland	A body part or something	A doll with curly hair
A form of ballet	Medieval times	Crystal glassware
Horse	Galileo	An old ghost town
An artist's name	Fast galloping	A debutante going to a gala

Item #6: "hearing"

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- those who use a vocally produced and auditorily received means of communication
- someone who is not "one of us"
- someone who is a member of the majority
- those who do not or may not understand us
- someone whose community has oppressed us

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English word 'hearing' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this word conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do specifically with audiological capability, those specifically mentioning senses or sensation, those referring to socio-cultural group identity, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

'hearing'	Audiologic	Sensation	Identity	Miscell.	No idea
	52	71	5	61	1

The most generous interpretation of these data is that 64.7% of those interviewed associated this English word with audiological capabilities (arrived at by collapsing the first to categories). Only five respondents (or .02% of the total sample) specifically associated the term as a socio-cultural label for group identity. Conversely, 32.7% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English lexical item 'hearing.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

|		
Advantage and privilege	Essential to being human	Blessed; a blessing
Smart	A gift	No sign language
Vital	Lucky	Essential to comprehension
Glad I have it	Where you go before a trial	A luxury needed to succeed
Never want to be deaf	Feed bad for those who can't	Ears that work
Normal, like me	No problems at all	Same as paying attention

Item #7: 'hard of hearing'

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- someone who may not be "one of us"
- someone who may be able to "pass" for "one of them"
- someone whose group may have oppressed us
- those whose group may be ambivalent about their identity
- those whose group we may have oppressed

When presented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'hard of hearing' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English phrase as well as the extent to which this phrase conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do specifically with audiological capability, those specifically mentioning senses or sensation, those referring to socio-cultural group identity, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "Nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

| 'hard of hearing' | Audiologic 25 | Sensation 57 | Identity 5 | Miscell. 103 | No idea 2 |
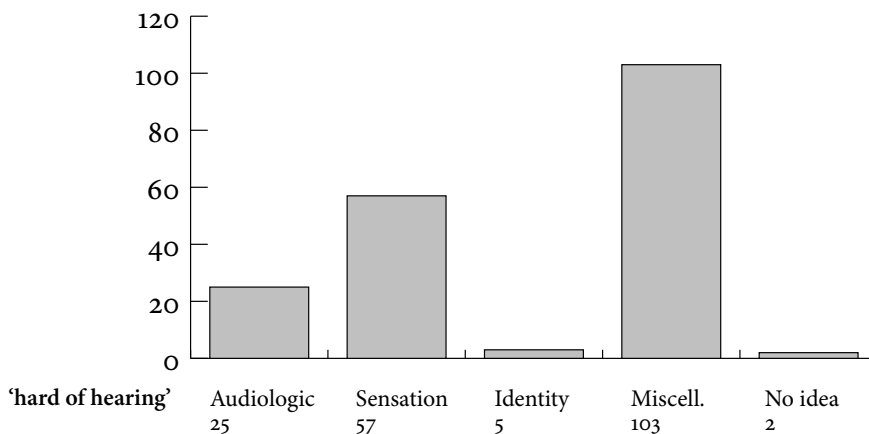
The most generous interpretation of these data is that 43.2% of those interviewed associated this English word with audiological capabilities (arrived at by collapsing the first two categories). Only three respondents (or .015% of the total) specifically associated the term as a socio-cultural label for group identity. Conversely, 55.5% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters presumably think they are communicating when they use the English lexical item 'hard of hearing.' Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

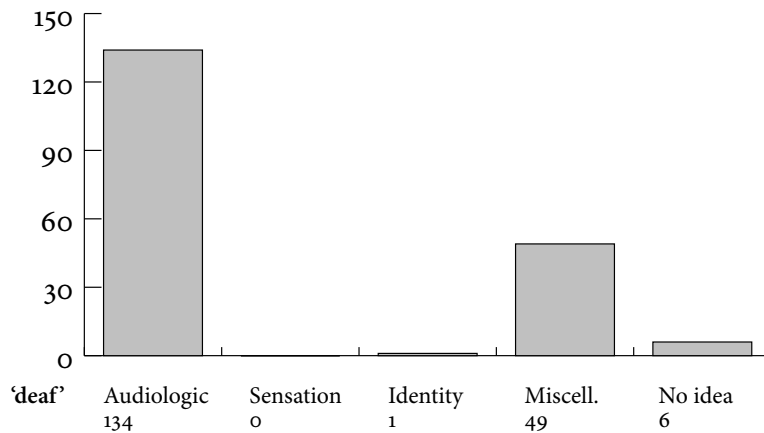|		
Unfortunate	Limited	Sometimes retarded
Impaired; can't function	Somebody stupid	Handicapped
Terrible misfortune	Older people; old age	My mother; my father
Silence	Deficit	Anxiety
Disabled; not normal	Limited abilities	Not one hundred percent
Needs assistance	An annoyance	Embarrassed
Deaf	Can't hear	Reduced ability
Injury to the ears	Mumbling and fumbling	Needs help

Item #8: "deaf"

If we observe the way in which Deaf people use the sign illustrated above, it is clear that the semantic senses conveyed often include the following:

- someone who is "one of us"
- someone who uses language that is gesturally produced and visually received
- someone who is a member of a linguistic and cultural minority
- someone who has experienced oppression as a member of a minority

When represented with the sign above, interpreters routinely use the English lexical item 'deaf' in formulating their interpretations. Analyzing the 190 responses gives an indication of what senses are conveyed by this English word as well as the extent to which this phrase conveys any of the semantic senses indicated above.

Responses to this item were divided into five categories: those having to do specifically with audiological capability, those specifically mentioning senses or sensation, those referring to socio-cultural group

identity, miscellaneous responses, and responses of the type "I don't know" or "nothing comes to mind." In cataloging the responses, every effort was made to avoid placing a response in the last two categories, thus attempting to give the responses maximum benefit of informedness and awareness. The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses:

The most generous interpretation of these data is that 70.5% of those interviewed associated this English word with audiological capabilities (arrived at by collapsing the first two categories). Only one respondent (or .005% of the total) specifically associated the term as a socio-cultural label for group identity. Conversely, 29% gave responses that indicated that they did not immediately associate the term with any semantic sense that resembles what interpreters think they are communicating when they use the English lexical item 'deaf'. Perhaps most revealing is the following list of some of the miscellaneous responses:

Need help and understanding	Oblivion	Retardation
Dumb; stupid	Dad	Handicapped
Unconsciousness	Disability	Sympathy for deaf people
Helen Keller	Bewildered	Unfortunate; unlucky
Mute	Politically correct term for hearing impaired	Not normal
Braille	A mime; they can't speak	Functional limitations

Analysis and Discussion

Before discussing possible implications of these data for interpreters, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of these data. First the sample size (n=190) is a relatively small sample and reasonable caution must be exercised in using this sample to represent the English-speaking community as a whole. It might be argued, for example, that those interviewed represent a negatively skewed sample in terms of awareness of the Deaf Community and that the English-speaking community as a whole. It might be argued, for example, that those interviewed represent a negatively skewed sample in terms of awareness of the Deaf Community and that the English-speaking community in general is much more aware that the results of this study indicate. In which case the following observations need to be tempered accordingly. It is just as possible, however, that those interviewed are positively skewed in terms of awareness and, as a group, are more aware of the Deaf Community than the English-speaking community in general.[26] If the individuals in this sample are more aware than the general population, then the following observations might not be stated strongly enough.

The second cautionary note concerns the limited number of specific lexical items in this survey (n=8). Although a more comprehensive survey certainly would be highly instructive for interpreters, the limited number of lexical items in the survey provides sufficient evidence to support the observations that follow and to stimulate discussion among interpreters and members of the Deaf Community. Also, it must be recognized that while asking a stranger what a lexical item means out of context might be in keeping with the tradition of what has been termed "folk linguistics" (c.f. Niedzielski and Preston, 1999; Silverstein, 1981), it does not provide direct evidence of all the semantic senses that an individual might attach to the lexical item. It is conceivable that in a given situation or when situated within a specific discourse different semantic senses would be activated for an individual. Therefore these data are presented here as indications of the strength or presence of a semantic sense within the group and not as an indication of the range of semantic senses an individual might possess for a lexical item. Finally, although this survey was conducted among members of the English-speaking community, it is quite likely that similar results of uninformedness would be obtained were one to construct a survey among members of the Deaf Community.[27] Thus although the evidence for the following observations is based in a survey of the English-speaking population, and interpretations directed toward that population, the reader could extrapolate and apply the following observations, *mutatis mutandis,* to the Deaf Community and interpretations directed toward that population.

The data presented above lead to several observations that have direct bearing on decisions that interpreters make during the interpreting process. The observations are largely rooted in the cultural naïveté of the English-speaking community regarding the Deaf Community, the status of interpreters as bilingual/bicultural individuals and the response of interpreters to the naïveté of the English-speaking community. Some of these observations merely restate what Deaf people have known and experienced for decades and what interpreters have largely come to know only second-hand through their association with Deaf people. Other observations raise questions for us as interpreters about the extent to which our interpretations have represented culturally rich realities and the unique world-view of the Deaf Community. The issues that arise from these observations have significant impact on our responsibility as interpreters to convey meaning and intent and role interpreters play in society's continued oppression of the Deaf Community.

Observation #1: continued ignorance of the English-speaking community
From the perspective of the Deaf Community, the past two decades have seen a number of positive events and trends including increase acceptance of ASL, increased number of ASL Programs at the post-secondary level, and the Deaf President Now movement. The collective impact of these events and trends might lead one to believe that the English-speaking community should be aware of the Deaf Community, its language and its culture. However, it seems clear that despite indications of positive activity during the past two decades the majority of the English-speaking community, at least as represented by this survey, remains largely ignorant of various facets of the American Deaf Community.

To illustrate this observation, consider the response pattern for Item #5 'Gallaudet' reported above. Even the most generous analysis of the data indicates that more that three-quarters of those interviewed gave responses that revealed they either did not associate this lexical item with any of the semantic senses that the Deaf Community associates with this reality or they simply did not understand the lexical item. For members of the Deaf Community and those associated with it, the Deaf President Now phenomenon

was, we thought, a watershed event. The weeklong national and international media prominently featured the name of, and video footage of, Gallaudet University daily in prime-time news coverage. The internationally heralded protest, we believed, surely established not only the existence of the American Deaf Community but also the right of Deaf Communities everywhere to self-determination. It would seem that such an interpretation of the significance of those events was, at best, premature and at worst vastly overstated. Those events do not hold the milestone significance for the general population that slightly more than a decade later over seventy-five percent of the English-speaking community, as represented by these data, have no idea that 'Gallaudet' is even a post-secondary institution.

However, as a group, interpreters have been privileged to interact with and learn from members of the Deaf Community. Because of this experience interpreters, as a group, represent the exception not the norm, in terms of informedness about the Deaf Community when compared with the English-speaking community in general. Were we to survey a group of interpreters and ask what they thought the English word 'Gallaudet' means, it is inconceivable that the response pattern would remotely resemble that reported for the English-speaking community in this study. The reason is obvious: as interpreters our interactions with the Deaf Community have enabled us to learn about real-world realities that are unique to the Deaf Community. However, those who lack opportunities to (or motivation to) interact with the Deaf Community have not learned about interaction with the Deaf Community, the knowledge and level of awareness about Deaf people that becomes second nature for interpreters is largely unknown and unavailable to the general English-speaking community.

Observation #2: continued pathological perspective of the English-speaking community
From the perspective of the Deaf Community, many of the events and trends of the past two decades (e.g. the Deaf President Now movement, the emergence of "Bi-Bi" programs) have been predicated on the notion that Deaf people should not be viewed from a pathological perspective which see Deaf people as deficient human beings. In keeping with terms for other forms of oppression (e.g. racism, sexism) this centuries old pathological view has been termed audism (Padden and Humphries, 1988; Lane, 1999). However, despite indications of positive activity during the past two decades it seems clear that the majority of the English-speaking community, as represented by this survey, remains naively pathological in its view of the American Deaf Community.

To illustrate this observation, consider the pathological focus evidenced by the responses to Items #6, #7, and #8 ('hearing', 'hard of hearing' and 'deaf', respectively). Virtually none of the respondents viewed these lexical items as anything other than as descriptors of normality (#6) and degrees of abnormality (#6, #8). The prevailing view is that Deaf people are viewed as deficient beings, not different beings. Certainly acknowledgment of a different way of being (much less acceptance of that different way of being) is virtually impossible given the data reported above. Consider the response pattern for Item #1 'mainstreaming.' Even the most generous analysis of the data indicates that more than four-fifths of the respondents either did not associate this lexical item with any of the semantic senses that the Deaf Community associates with this reality or they simply did not understand the lexical item. Clearly the respondents did not acknowledge the fact that the integration of d/Deaf students into the public school system is not simply a matter of providing physical placement in a classroom but instead a question of communicative (i.e. linguistic and cultural) access. Nor did respondents acknowledge that, in the United States, at least, the prevailing educational environment (in all its facets from the physical arrangement of classroom

to instructional methodology) is auditorily, not visually, controlled and conditioned. Even court decisions and state "inclusion" guidelines have failed to grasp what the Deaf Community and those associated with it consider the fundamental reality of most "mainstream" educational" situations for d/Deaf children—communication isolation and the lack of exposure to adult Deaf role models. This failure to acknowledge a different way of being d/Deaf people want to be "cured" and that d/Deaf children can best be educated by integrating them in public school classrooms.

To be sure there are members of the English-speaking community who are somewhat informed about the Deaf Community and who, despite being informed, remain intentionally, not naively, pathological in their view of d/Deaf people. Such individuals deliberately and purposefully discount all efforts by the Community to claim the right of self-determination. Evidence of this intentional pathological view can be seen in the increased attempts to use technology to "normalize" d/Deaf people as exemplified by the debate surrounding cochlear implants (e.g. Belkany, et al., 1996; Lane, 1993). Further evidence of this intentional pathological view can be found in the resistance to bilingual education for d/Deaf children and, perhaps most importantly, the alarming and depressing rate at which schools for d/Deaf students are being closed nationwide.

As a group interpreters have been privileged to interact with and learn from members of the Deaf Community. Because of this, interpreters have been able to adopt a new framework within which to view and interact with Deaf people as a linguistic and cultural minority. Thus interpreters are able to see the Deaf Community as different, not deviant or deficient, and are able to accept, appreciate and respect an "insider's" view of the community. As a group, then, interpreters represent the exception, not the norm, in terms of attitudes towards the Deaf Community when compared with the English-speaking community in general. Those who lack opportunities to interact with the Deaf Community have only their own "common-sense" frame of reference to use when thinking about the d/Deaf people, a frame of reference that can only be described as pathological.

Observation #3: continued resistance to a linguistic and cultural perspective of Deaf people
From the perspective of the Deaf Community, many of the events and trends of the past two decades (e.g. establishment of Deaf Studies programs, the Deaf Way, increased acceptance of ASL, increased number of ASL programs at the post-secondary level, the Deaf President Now movement) have been predicated in the notion that Deaf people should be viewed as a linguistic and cultural minority. It seems clear that despite this positive activity the majority of the English-speaking community does not immediately recognize the American Deaf Community as a linguistic and cultural community.

To illustrate this observation, consider the response pattern for Item #8 'Deaf' reported above. Even the most generous analysis of the data indicates that 99.5% of the respondents either did not associate this term with any of the semantic senses that the Deaf Community associates with this reality or simply understood the term pathologically. Certainly the respondents did not acknowledge the fact that a common means of relating to the world and a common symbol system for communicating that world-view is what unites the American Deaf Community.

Further evidence of this can be seen in the decades-long struggle to having American Sign Language officially recognized by the Department of Education. Evidence of this resistance also exists at the post-secondary level when we consider that the institutional home given to sign language problems has often been in departments of Communication Disorders, Speech Pathology or Special Education. Rarely are ASL classes or programs housed within departments of Modern Languages or even rarer established as a freestanding department.

The hegemony that results in resistance to federal recognition of ASL and that dictates the academic placement of ASL stems from a circular reasoning about where d/Deaf people possibly fit into society. That reasoning can be summarized as follows:

> "d/Deaf people simply cannot be a linguistic and cultural minority because none of the other groups with which d/Deaf people are classified is a linguistic and cultural minority. And we, the non-Deaf English-speaking community, know this classification is true because we have established the system that tells us how to classify d/Deaf people."

In the United States, at least, d/Deaf people are almost universally classified by governmental and social service agencies with other groups that do not have a unique world-view and language and these groups make no claims that they do. These groups do not seek official recognition as linguistic and cultural minorities although, like d/Deaf people, they do seek the right of self-determination. Unfortunately it is routine for d/Deaf people to be viewed by society at large as "handicapped" and grouped as a matter of course not with those who are linguistically different, but with those who "suffer from" conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder, cerebral palsy, or blindness.

As a group interpreters have been privileged to interact with members of the Deaf Community and learn the language, traditions, and values of the Deaf Community from members of the Deaf Community. Interactions with the Deaf Community have enabled interpreters to acquire and appreciate some of the different real-world realities and world-views that make the Deaf Community a unique community. Because of this interpreters, as a group, represent the exception, not the norm, in terms of recognition and acceptance of the Deaf Community as a linguistic and cultural community when compared with the English-speaking community in general. However, those who have not had opportunities to interact with the Deaf Community not only fail to recognize the Deaf Community as a linguistic community, but they unhesitatingly categorized d/Deaf people with other groups they view as "deficient" members of society.

Observation #4: acquisition of polysemous lexical items by interpreters
It seems clear that because of long-standing interactions with the Deaf Community a number of English lexical items have become polysemous for interpreters while those same English lexical items remain single sense lexical items for the vast majority of the English-speaking community. Interpreters have attached new meaning to English lexical items, some of which have established pathological semantic senses, in an attempt to convey culturally rich realities of the ASL/signing Community.

Evidence of this can be seen if we analyze English interpretations of ASL discourse with particular atten-tion to the interpretation of culturally rich realities.[28] Such an analysis reveals that interpretations of culturally rich realities are often formulated using lexical items that can only be successful (i.e. pass the

EMT) if no one assumes that the English-speaking community is bilingually and biculturally aware (an assumption which the data reported here indicates is untenable). Ironically interpreters are reinforced in this flawed assumption by their interactions with other interpreters. That is, interpreters, when interacting in spoken English with other interpreters, generally do not feel compelled to indicate precisely the specific intended semantic senses of realities that are culturally rich for the Deaf Community. The reason is that interpreters trust that their colleagues will "know what I mean" (at least they will if they are bilingual and bicultural individuals). Thus, for example, interpreters routinely use polysemous English lexical items such as 'deaf' and 'hearing' confident that fellow interpreters have acquired the additional semantic senses necessary to comprehend these as a community identity labels and not indicants of audiological abilities. Interpreters also frequently speak to each other in ways that mimic written glosses used to transcribe ASL signs (e.g. spoken glosses such as CHA or PAH) or ways that imitate Deaf people when they attempt to speak English (e.g. FISH). One can also hear interpreters speaking written conversations that are used to indicate certain cultural realities (e.g. "capital 'D' deaf"). Finally, one can hear interpreters using rather novel English lexical items in an attempt to capture realities that are culturally rich for the Deaf Community (e.g., "deafie", "hearie" or "think like a hearing person"). That their colleagues successfully comprehend merely reinforces for interpreters the continued use of these polysemous and novel lexical items. Were interpreters to confine their use of such lexical items to interactions with other interpreters, perhaps the use of such items would be non-problematic. However, regularly reinforced in the use of such English lexical items, it becomes quite easy to forget the experimental and cultural foundation necessary to acquire the semantic senses that the Deaf Community associate with these culturally rich realities. Unfortunately, these lexical items find their way rather effortlessly into interpretations crafted for those who lack the awareness needed to comprehend them successfully. In short, we forget that not everyone knows what we know and not everyone has experienced what we have experienced.

To further illustrate this observation, let us begin by analyzing more closely the ASL signs DEAF (Item #8 above) and HEARING (Item #6 above). It seems quite clear that for the Deaf Community the semantic senses of these signs have to do with insider/outsider labeling (largely on the basis of whether one relates to the world visually or not). These signs indicate a person's positionality with regard to the Deaf Community. That it, the first sign is used to identify someone as a member of a Deaf Community while the second is used to indicate that someone is not a member of the community. In other words, the community is uses the sign DEAF to indicate someone who is "one of us" and the sign HEARING to indicate that someone who is "one of them." Consider the following evidence that indicates quite clearly that these are indeed identity and personality labels:

- When someone is being introduced by a member of the Deaf community, the expectation is that the person doing the introduction will indicate whether the new person is "one of us" (i.e. DEAF) or "one of them" (i.e. HEARING)
- Deaf people recognize that Deaf people from other countries are "one of us" (i.e. DEAF) even thought Deaf people from other countries use different indigenous and naturally evolved sign language
- If a Deaf person sees someone they do not know who is signing rather fluently, the Deaf person is likely to ask whether the person is "one of us" (i.e. DEAF). If, however, the person is not signing fluently, the Deaf person is likely to assume that person is not "one of us" (i.e. HEARING) and may well ask where/how the person is learning signs before

asking whether the person is "One of us" (i.e. DEAF).
- Someone who is not Deaf but has some familial connection to the Community or someone who is not Deaf but who can sign is introduced with appropriate positional qualifications:

> HEARING #BUT MOTHER-FATHER DEAF
>
> HEARING #BUT SKILL USE-ASL
>
> HEARING #BUT SKILL INTERPRET
>
> HEARING #BUT NOW LEARN ASL

A final indication that these two signs (DEAF and HEARING) are used by the Community as identity and positionality labels and not indicants of acoustic ability can be seen by examining the signs Deaf people actually do use when they do wish to talk about the fact that they do not relate to the world acoustically. If Deaf people ever do wish to indicate that they do not hear, they quite often do not sign DEAF. Rather they are likely to use one of the following:

> 1) point to their ear and shake their head
>
> 2) point to their ear, shake their head and shrug their shoulders
>
> 3) sign HEAR CAN'T
>
> 3) sing HEAR NOTHING
>
> 4) sign HEAR ROCK
>
> 5) sign HEAR ZERO
>
> 6) sign HEAR INEPT
>
> 7) sign INEPT-EAR.

If we accept this analysis of these signs as identity and positionality indicants, we can now examine the English lexical items 'deaf' and 'hearing' and ask whether, when used in interpretations, these lexical items convey the semantic senses of identity and positionality. Consider the following:

(16) You have been asked to interpret for Pat, a Deaf man whose parents are Deaf. Pat has appeared before a state legislative committee to testify on employment discrimination issues that effect d/Deaf people. Pat introduces himself before describing his employment experiences. A verbatim transcript of the English interpretation of Pat's introduction might be as follows:

"Hello. Thank you for inviting me here. Let me tell you a bit about myself. My name is Pat. I'm deaf and my parents are deaf. I have one brother and he is hearing. I spent two years at Gallaudet and then left to work with my father."

Most interpreters, upon reading the transcript or hearing such an interpretation readily understand that Pat is a member of the Deaf Community. This is because the culturally rich realities in the introduction are conveyed using English lexical items that have become polysemous for interpreters (e.g., 'deaf', 'deaf parents', 'hearing') or are unique culturally-rich single sense lexical items (e.g., 'Gallaudet') that interpreters readily comprehend. The intended culturally rich semantic senses are quite apparent to those privileged to interact with members of the Deaf Community and who learn the language, traditions, and values of

the Deaf Community from members of the Deaf Community. However, as the survey data reported above makes clear, culturally rich semantic senses that are apparent to intepreters remain quite opaque to the English-speaking community in general. Given the survey data presented above we can speculate that a member of the English-speaking community would have heard the original interpretation or would read the message as follows:

> *"Hello. Thank you for inviting me here. Let me tell you a bit about myself. My name is Pat. **I can't hear** and my parents **can't hear**. I have one brother and he **can hear**. I spent two years at **Gallaudet (??)** and then left to work with my father."*

Most members of the English-speaking community, as represented by the survey sample, would take Pat's introduction as a clear, direct and intelligible statement about his audiological condition and an admission of "abnormality." They would not understand this as a statement of identity, community membership and/or community positionality. It also might be taken as a statement that evokes unintended emotional reactions (e.g., "That's so sad—a whole family that can't hear" or "at least his brother is lucky to be able to hear"). By almost any measure we can only conclude that this interpretation is not sufficiently precise or robust to be successful (i.e. it would not pass the EMT). The English-speaking receiver (or reader) is lead to a different reality and set of semantic senses than was intended by the signer. The English-speaker hears this as a statement about condition and abnormality, not the culturally rich reality of membership in or positionality with regard to the Deaf Community.

This example provides perhaps the most concrete piece of evidence that certain English lexical items have become polysemous for interpreters—no experienced, competent interpreter when asked to interpret Pat's introduction would simply say "My name is Pat. *I can't hear* and my parents *can't hear.*" Experienced, competent interpreters know from their interactions with the Deaf Community that the meaning and semantic senses of the sign Deaf would not be rendered successfully by the English phrase "can't hear." Nevertheless, many interpreters unhesitatingly use the English lexical item "deaf" as an interpretation of the ASL sign DEAF. Given that interpreters do not deliberately wish their interpretations to mislead, we can only conclude that one of the following options must be at work:

1) They do not understand the semantic senses of the English lexical item 'deaf' for the general English-speaking population, or
2) They do not understand the semantic senses of the ASL sign DEAF for the ASL/signing community, or
3) They fully believe that they are successfully rendering the semantic senses of DEAF because the English lexical item has acquired additional semantic senses for them, or
4) They understand the semantic senses of the ASL sign DEAF but have no strategies for rendering the meaning of the culturally rich realities expressed by the sign, or
5) They understand the semantic senses of the ASL sign DEAF but decide that the culturally rich reality is too complex to express in the interpretation, or
6) They understand the semantic senses of the ASL sign DEAF but are afraid of what other interpreters might think if they say something other than 'deaf.'

The first two options would seem to indicate a basic lack if linguistic and cultural readiness and awareness. Either of these options, if true, would seem to indicate that the individual does not possess the level of bilingual and bicultural awareness and competence necessary to be an interpreter. The third option may be the most likely because this option most closely reflects the behavior of interpreters in general and represents the type of glossism that has come to be commonplace and apparently accepted within the field. The fourth option would seem to reflect those interpreters who are aware that there is a semantic mismatch between culturally rich signs and the English words commonly used in interpretations to render the meaning of those signs. This level of awareness (and frustration) is the first step in developing strategies that will more accurately reflect the meaning of culturally rich realities.

The fifth option, on its face seems quite troubling. That interpreters might allow their interpretations to be skewed and thus knowingly produce an unsuccessful interpretation because the task is too complex is contrary to the very act of interpretation. Interpretation is inherently complex and the presence of culturally rich realities certainly does increase the complexity. But an increase in complexity seems inappropriate justification to abandon one's obligations. Even in the most simultaneous of situations the right if the participants and the current Code of Ethics demand an interpreter's best efforts to produce an interpretation that is faithful to the meaning and intent of the original message. The final option, if valid, should be the most disturbing to Deaf people and to the profession of interpreting. That an interpreter would knowingly and willfully allow the presence of other interpreters to cause the interpreter to produce an interpretation that lacks fidelity to the original and thus is unsuccessful runs completely counter to the rights of participants, i.e. those who need the services of the interpreter. The options of colleagues are and should be I believe, important before both and after my interpretations. They certainly help to develop an interpreter's competence and they are vital in order to analyze and assess an interpreter's work. But I suggest that during the interpretation the interpreter's focus must be steadfastly on the purpose and goals of the interaction and, following the definition of interpretation given above, the interpreter must focus on "...the meanings and intentions conveyed in another naturally evolved language for the purpose of negotiating an opportunity for a successful communicative interaction in real time...." As professionals we simply cannot adopt a double standard for our work, one that we apply when our colleagues are present and another we apply when they are not.

Interpreters have learned a unique set of culturally rich realities from the Deaf Community, including how the Deaf Community identifies itself and how it identifies other groups. This knowledge has allowed or led interpreters to attach unique semantic senses to existing English lexical items, semantic senses that are reinforced through interactions with other interpreters. Thus, these English lexical items have become polysemous for interpreters. However, because interpreters use these polysemous lexical items so frequently and unhesitatingly and are reinforced by other interpreters doing so, it is easy to forget that most members of the English-speaking community do not possess an interpreter's level of awareness and informedness about the Deaf Community. This is particularly problematic when younger, inexperienced interpreters are reinforced in this behavior and have this behavior modeled by more experienced interpreters to whom they might look as mentors.

In crafting interpretations interpreters must not forget that most members of the English-speaking community have not been privileged to interact with and learn from members of the Deaf Community. Most members of the English-speaking community do not know what interpreters know about the Deaf

Community. It is thus incumbent upon interpreters to make clear the specific intended semantic sense of messages and to exercise caution in using lexical items that may only convey culturally rich realities for those who are bilingually and biculturally aware.[29]

In crafting their interpretations, interpreters must constantly monitor the knowledge base and level of awareness required for their interpretations to be successful, i.e. they must constantly examine the conditions and assumptions needed for their interpretations (and the lexical items comprising them) to pass the EMT. Interpreters cannot use their own bilingual and bicultural awareness as the threshold for success; they cannot fall victim to thinking, "Since I know what it means and my interpreter colleagues know what it means, everyone else must know what it means." Although interpreters are bilinguals, they must not assume that everyone for whom they interpret is bilingually aware. Rather, interpreters should strive to remember (or discover) and acknowledge what I have called "the mindset of the monolingual" in their interpretations. In short, in absence of mitigating factors, an interpreter's initial threshold for success must be "What will this interpretation convey to an uniformed monolingual?"

The result of this survey suggest that interpreters should be alert to culturally rich realities in the messages that they are charged with interpreting. Further the survey suggests that interpreters should craft their interpretations of culturally rich realities based on an assumption of maximum ignorance and naïveté about the Deaf Community on the part of the English-speaking community not, as is often the case, based on an assumption of maximum awareness and informedness. To be sure there are situations in which participant's knowledge, experience or specific goals constrain or condition the manner in which an interpreter crafts an interpretation.[30] However, in the absence of such clearly indicated participant goals or clearly indicated knowledge and awareness of the Deaf Community, an interpretation default behavior when formulating interpretations must be to craft interpretations in such a way that they render the *meaning and intent* of interpreted messages to monolingual members if the English-speaking community.

Observation #5: interpretations contribute to the oppression of Deaf people
On the face of it, this may seem like a rather harsh indictment, and certainly not an indictment that will rest easily with most interpreters who, after all, generally see themselves as supportive of the Deaf Community. However, as long as successful comprehension of our interpretations of culturally rich realities requires bilingual competence, we have made it possible for the 'voice' of the Deaf Community to be heard. Interpreters' failure to convey the semantic sense of culturally rich realities prevents most members of the English-speaking community from beginning to understand, recognize and ultimately accept, Deaf people as a distinct linguistic and cultural community.

For years Deaf people have struggled for, and continue to struggle for, recognition and acceptance as a linguistic and cultural minority. The rhetoric among and by Deaf people, eloquently expressed in their own language, clearly articulates their desire to be accepted and viewed by American society as a linguistic and cultural minority. Community spokespersons and organizations of Deaf people have vigorously tried to oppose attempts to classify the Community as a subset of "disabled Americans." They have argued against and have tried to avoid having the community be categorized by society as "hearing impaired" according to some misguided common denominator principle. For years, when interacting with members of the English-speaking community Deaf people have expressed their position that the Deaf Community is, in fact, a cultural minority, bound by a common world-view and a common language. They

have done so in the language of the Deaf Community.**³¹** Not only have Deaf people struggled for such recognition, but using their language they also have tried to convey their unique values and world-view in an effort to justify that recognition. However, in their face-to-face interactions with members of the English-speaking community members of the Deaf Community most frequently rely upon interpreters to express in spoken English what they have clearly and articulately expressed in ASL. If the culturally rich realities that represent the Deaf people's unique world-view, then the Community continues to be viewed only as a subset of "disabled Americans." I suggest that it is precisely when faced with the challenge of interpreting culturally rich realities that interpreters' failures to convey the semantic senses of culturally rich realities negatively impacts the Deaf Community.

Recall that participants in any interpreted interaction expect that any interpretation will be rendered such that it will make it possible for the receiving participant(s) to understand or refer to the same realities as originally intended by the expressing participant. When individuals communicate with each other, directly or via an interpreter, they do so against the combined backdrop of their own prior knowledge, experience, generalizations and expectations. These factors serve as the frames within which individuals attempt to make sense out of discourse. Simply put, frames are a structure of expectation (Tannen, 1979, 1993) or frames can be thought of as the knowledge that one must call upon or the inferences one must make in order to understand an utterance (Levinson, 1983). When individuals communicate with each other they frequently check their comprehension of the discourse against their own expectations and the degree to which this discourse fits with other similar real-world and discourse experiences. In other words a person's comprehension of the discourse is framed by that person's specific life-experience. When things "make sense" within the frame of their expectations, people rarely see the need to question or seek further clarification.

When monolinguals attempt to understand another community's world-view they have only their own world-view to use as a frame of reference. Indeed any effort by a monolingual to deal with a culturally rich reality often results in a form if circular reasoning in which the receiver can only understand the reality in terms of his/her own world-view (e.g. Levinson, 2000; Katan, 1999) Deaf people and interpreters often remark that most people "just don't get it" when it comes to the Deaf Community, its culture and its language. One reason why "they" don't is because the frames within which "they" view Deaf people are handicap and disability; it is outside the experience and expectations of most people who are not Deaf to view Deaf people within the frame of linguistic and cultural minorities. The frame for most members of the English-speaking community dictates that "real languages are spoken, and linguistic and cultural minorities are people just like me except that they speak a different language." This is why most members of the English-speaking community upon hearing the interpretation of Pat's introductory remarks in example (16), believe that the only way these remarks make sense is if Pat means:

> "Hello. *Thank you for inviting me here. Let me tell you a bit about myself. My name is Pat.* **I can't hear** *and my parents* **can't hear***. I have one brother and he* **can hear***. I spent two years at* **Gallaudet (??)** *and then left to work with my father.*"

This understanding of the introduction makes sense because this is the frame that most members of the English-speaking community are led to by the interpretation. The reasoning goes as follows: "I heard the word "deaf" and the only way "deaf" makes sense in my experience is 'inability, disability, loss, and

handicap'. Therefore, since what I heard makes sense and since there is nothing else in what I heard to make me think otherwise, 'inability, disability, loss and handicap' must be what was intended."

Deaf people and interpreters wonder why members of the English-speaking community "just don't get it." Perhaps one reason why "they just don't get it" is because "there nothing else in what I heard to make me think otherwise." That is, our interpretations have not been successfully dealt with interpretations of culturally rich realities. Successful interpretation of culturally rich realities require that interpretations not only understand the frames within which culturally rich realities make sense, but also produce interpretations that enable the recipient to access similar, appropriate frames or at least to realize that a different frame is being employed.

In interpreting culturally rich realities it is essential to realize that there is an inverse relation between the surface formulation of the interpreted text and those frames necessary to comprehend the text successfully and accurately. When those frames are present to the recipient of our interpretations, the interpreted text can be quite succinct and presumptive because we are confident that the culturally rich reality will be understood as intended. However, when we suspect that those frames are not present, then the interpreted text must be more robust, i.e., it must provide a fuller sense of the frame(s) needed to understand the intended culturally rich reality. The results of this study seem to suggest quite strongly that interpreters may over-estimate the presence of, or may fail to comprehend, the frames needed to understand culturally rich realities of the Deaf Community among the English-speaking population.[32]

An interpreter's failure to remember that monolinguals posses "ignorance of the other" is guaranteed to result in unsuccessful interpretations of culturally rich realities. Unsuccessful interpretations of culturally rich realities have the potential for irreparably damaging the manner in which the Deaf Community is viewed by society at large because the unique world-view and identity of the community is not successfully represented. A community's ability to represent its unique world-view to others is essential if that community is to be accorded a level of recognition, respect and acceptance within society. A group of people remains oppressed as long as the dominant community is able to identify and define a difference and then to devalue that difference. When the dominant community believes that the oppressed group agrees with the devaluation of difference and sees the difference as "abnormal" then the dominant community continues to feel justified in its oppression. When an oppressed group is able to convince the dominant community that the difference is either fictitious or that the difference makes no substantive difference, then that oppressed group begins to claim for itself the status of a distinct community in the eyes of society at large. If the oppressed group is unable, through its encounters with members of the dominant group to change the way it is labeled by the dominant group, then it is unable to challenge the dominant group's perception of the oppressed group. If the dominant group feels that its labels for the oppressed group are not only accurate, but more importantly, agreed with by the oppressed group, then not only is there no reason to change the label, but more importantly there is no reason to change perceptions of the oppressed group.

This study suggests that as interpreters we must acknowledge the fact that historically our interpretations of culturally rich realities may have reinforced the oppressive frames within which the Deaf Community is viewed by society at large. We may have crafted interpretations that can only be understood within the frames of disability and deficiency and thus have not made it possible for the English-speaking community

to begin to comprehend that certain realities are culturally rich and culturally distinct. The irony is that while we accurately convey culturally neutral meanings and intentions expressed by the Deaf Community, if this study is accurate, we have failed to convey the very meanings and intentions that would help the wider society view Deaf people as other than handicapped or disabled—we have failed to convey the very meanings and intentions of culturally rich realities.

Conclusion
The purpose of this study was to determine the semantic senses conveyed by certain English lexical items commonly used by interpreters in their interpretations of culturally rich realities to the general English-speaking population. The survey reveals what Deaf people and interpreters have known for decades—that most members of the English-speaking community fail to view of Deaf people.

The primary contention of this article is that as interpreters, our status as bilingual/bicultural individuals has provided us with experience that have caused or enabled us to attach novel and/or additional semantic senses to English lexical items that for the most members of the English-speaking community are single sense lexical items. The use of such polysemous English lexical items in interpretations of culturally rich realities renders those interpretations unsuccessful for the majority of English speakers. Such interpretations are interpretations are unsuccessful because they assume a level of bicultural awareness, a frame, that given the results of this study, most members of the English-speaking community do not possess. In short, these interpretations employ what have become polysemous lexical items for interpreters but remain single sense lexical items (or in some cases unpaired polysemous lexical items) for most members of the English-speaking community. Such interpretations, because they cannot pass the Equivalence of Meaning Test, inherently cannot be successful.

Although this study has focused on polysemous English lexical items that interpreters apparently feel convey culturally rich realities of the Deaf Community, it also suggests a number of areas of fruitful research. Among the questions that suggest themselves are the following: Would similar results be found if this study were replicated in other regions of the country? Are there differences in dealing with culturally rich realities between interpreters who are graduates of interpreter education programs and those who are not? Are there differences in dealing with culturally rich realities between interpreters who are from Deaf families and those who are not? Would a larger scale study reveal differences among certain age, gender or ethnic populations? Would similar results be found if this study were replicated in other countries? If members of the Deaf Community were surveyed about culturally rich realities of the English-speaking community, would the results be similar? Are there polysemous ASL lexical items that interpreters routinely use that fail to covey culturally rich realities of the English-speaking community? Are there demonstrable, positive effects that would result from interpreters' attempt to more fully convey culturally rich realities? These questions, and others, must be addressed in order to help us as interpreters better respond to the challenges presented when we interpret culturally rich realities.

As interpreters it is incumbent upon us to remember that our responsibility is first and foremost to convey the meaning and intention of speakers and signers and their texts. In order to do so successfully we must focus on the semantic senses intended by speakers and signers. In rendering our interpretations, however, we can not and must not assume that because we have acquired additional semantic senses for lexical items that those for whom we interpret have also acquired those additional semantic senses. We

can not and must not assume that because we "get it" that those for whom we interpret also "get it." In short, as interpreters we must be ever mindful of the "ignorance of the other" that exists for those for whom we interpret and we must craft our interpretations accordingly.

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Endnotes

1.   I would like to thank Lillian Garcia who appears in the photos depicting signs throughout this article. (**Reprint note: Ms. Garcia is the sign model in the original text; unfortunately, her signs could not be reproduced for this UVSC reprint/ recomposition. Instead, many thanks go to Keith Gamache, Jr. who was the sign model for this reprint.**) I also would like to thank Cathy Cogen, Harlan Lane, Sharon Neumann Solow, Ken Rust and a number of Northeastern students who reviewed earlier versions of this article. Their insightful suggestions were most welcomed.

2.   I am acutely aware that in most situations interpreters would have a wider context and a sharper awareness of the preferences and needs of the communicative participants with which to shape their interpretations. However for our purposes here a somewhat de-contextualized interpretation of the isolated sentences will suffice.

3.   Clearly there are specific settings (e.g. a high school or college English class) or specific types of text (e.g. the use of puns) in which interpreters may provide not only the meaning of an idiom, but a transliterated (i.e. English-like) version of the idiom. In such situations it is generally the case that the surface form of the message is the meaning that the speaker/signer intends to focus on or to convey. Although interpreters have developed some strategies for coping with such situations (e.g. the use of QUOTE/UNQUOTE) the effectiveness of these strategies and the use of what I have elsewhere referred to as spot transliterations has not, to my knowledge, been systematically studied or analyzed. Given the frequency of such strategies, their effectiveness should be examined systematically.

4.   Cf., for example, McIntire, CIT Proceedings (1984).

5.   Alterations made prior to actual production of an interpretation are termed re-formulations, while alterations made after an interpretation has been produced are called repairs.

6.   For a full discussion of the various aspects and implications of this operational definition see *Essays on the Art and Craft of Interpretation*, Cokely (in preparation).

7.   While the research reported here and much of the present discussion is potentially relevant for the transliteration of culturally rich realities, the primary focus of this paper and the research upon which it is based is implications for mediated communicative interaction between two communities each of which uses a different naturally evolved language. On a parenthetical note, it is an operational definition such as the one offered above that will enable the field to differentiate meaningfully between interpretation and transliteration and to understand them as different, but equally valuable, cognitive, linguistic and decision-making processes. It is, I believe, the absence of an operational definition of transliteration that has thwarted efforts to differentiate meaningfully between the two processes of interpretation and transliteration. It is also the absence of such a definition that has created a lack of terminological precision and contributes to the continued ambiguity surrounding transliteration. We might, for example, propose the following operational definition of transliteration:

> Transliteration is the fluent and consistent use of a gestural (or inaudible spoken) means of communication to represent, more or less accurately and completely, in real time the surface form of a message originally delivered in a spoken language or an alternate form of that spoken language for the purpose of making visually or tactilely accessible the form of the original message or an alternate surface form which nevertheless adheres, more or less accurately and completely, to the syntactic structures of the language in which the original message was presented.

8.   For example, on the RID certification exam raters use a Likert-type scale to score an individual's interpretation test performance on 13 items is "Vocabulary Choice" which is defined as "conceptually correct sign choices based on meaning rather than form." While there is no discussion of what "conceptually accurate" means, the way that the term has historically been used within the field is consistent with the discussion in this article.

9.   For purposes of this article realities refers not only to reality and experiences in the physical world but also to abstract and imaginary ideas in the metaphysical world.

10.   The question of participant expectations has most recently been addressed for spoken language interpreters by Moser (1996) in interviews of conference participants. The results of his research demonstrates that conference participants rank rendering messages accurately far above all other expectations they have of interpreters.

11.   Throughout this article signs will be depicted by using one photo to illustrate the initiation point and a second photo to illustrate the completion point of signs. Knowledgeable readers will use their linguistic competence to infer medial portions if depicted signs.

12.   A hypothetical complicating factor might be, for example, if the ASL lexical item EGG were used only to refer to brown eggs and if the English lexical item 'egg' were used to refer both brown and white eggs. In such a case the English lexical item would lack the precision needed to convey the equivalent meaning of the ASL sign.

13.   In conducting diagnostic assessments of interpreters and in training seminars for diagnosticians I have identified three different categories of unsuccessful interpretations based on their impacts on the receiving participant: a dysfunctional interpretation is unsuccessful because it makes no sense in the context; a deceptive interpretation is unsuccessful because, although it is quite plausible in the context, it conveys a different semantic sense; a deferred interpretation is unsuccessful because the form and only the form is transmitted with the expectation that the recipient will then undertake the task of interpretation.

14.   Imagine the number of English ASL lexical items that would be required if each reality who had to have a completely unique lexical item used to refer to it. The cognitive load would be untenable and would fly in the face of natural forces that move systems toward becoming efficient.

15.   Linguistics actually distinguish between two types of multiple meaning lexical items. The first category consists of items in which the meanings are unrelated, such as the English word 'bank' (of a river and the place where you put your money). Lexical items of this type, items with totally different semantic senses that happen to produce the same way, are instances of homonymy. The second category consists of lexical items with meanings that are related to each other in some manner. Lexical items of this type, items with a family of related semantic senses, are instances of true polysemy.

16.   It is possible to make the case that the English word 'comps' itself a polysemous lexical item. Among some groups, particularly younger people, one semantic sense of the lexical item 'comps' is to refer to tickets to an event that one would ordinarily expect to purchase but for which, through connections, one does not have to pay ("I'm gonna try to score some comps for the concert next week"). If one accepts this analysis then both the sign and the English word are polysemous. However, unlike the case of ORANGE and orange, example(13) which are identically polysemous, COMPS and comps would be independently polysemous. They would then be what we can call a non-symmetrical polysemous lexical pair.

17.   In many cases we are calculating the likelihood or probability that a given meaning is intended based on, for example, where we are, who the participants are and what they are discussing.

18.   For a graphic illustration of this refer to the discussion of the American Deaf Community in Baker-Shenk and Cokely, 1980.

19.   There are of course uses of the form of the word 'egg' in English such as to have "egg on one's face or "to egg someone on." These uses occur in idioms and, by definition, the meaning of an idiom cannot be derived from the simple addition of the meanings of the individual units comprising the idiom. As was illustrated in examples (4) and (5), the interpretation of idioms requires focusing on the meaning of the whole, not the independent meaning of each lexical item in the idiom. In short, for an interpreter an idiom must be treated as an intact unique lexical item.

20.   The notion of co-terminus meanings of lexical items can also be found in the category of lexical items called cognates in spoken languages. A key difference, of course, is that cognates are linked on the basis of formational similarity, i.e. because the words look alike in printed form or sound alike we assume they must have the same meaning. When, as frequently happens, we learn that the meanings of two formationally similar words are not co-terminus, we have discovered false cognates or, as translators refer to such pairs, "false friends" or *faux amis*.

21.   That discussion made the point that as interpreters we need to realize that often the words we choose in our English interpretations are inaccurately understood by most people. (Cokely 1982)

22.   The following students were enrolled in ASL 1505 as part of Northeastern's full time BS interpreting program which is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences: Deanna Ammon, Tanya Gilliam, Melanie Girshick, Greta Glielmi, Leigh Harkins, Kristal Haynes, Kayla Kirkpatrick, Bethany Long, Cory Meier, Melissa Pendergast, Kelly Phillips, Octavia Plesnick, Maranda Reynolds, Glen Sheprow, Colleen Streeter, Stacie Wein. The following students were enrolled in ASL 4601 as part of Northeastern's part-time certificate program in Interpreting offered through Northeastern's University College: Lynda Carmel, Nicole Crossman, Christina Fagerholm, Dion Russo, Adrienne Shine. I wish to thank all of these students for their energy and efforts working on this project and, most importantly, for their insights and fruitful post-interview discussions.

23.   The list of words and acronyms used for the rank ordering task is as follows:

AAAD	Gallaudet	Relay call
American Sign Language	Hard of hearing	Relay service
ASL	Hearing	Residential school
Bi-Bi	Hearing aids	RID
Bilingual education	Hearing impaired inclusion	SEE
CDI	Interpret	School for the Deaf
CI/CT	Interpreters	Sign Language
Cochlear Implant	Interpreting	Signed English
CSC	Lipreading	Sim-com
CSUN	Mainstreaming	Simultaneous communication
Deaf	MSAD	Speech reading
Deaf club	NAD	State school
Deaf community	National Association of the Deaf	TDD/TTY
Deaf culture	NTID	Total communication
Deaf education	Oralism	Translate
Deaf parents	PSE	Translation
English-like signing	Relay	Transliterators

24.   It is certainly recognized that asking someone what they think of when they hear a word out of context is by no means an exhaustive indicant of the inventory of semantic senses a person has acquired for that lexical item. However, it can reveal the relative strength or presence of a given semantic sense within a population. For instance, it is highly unlikely that the response patterns obtained in this study would be the same as the response pattern obtained were we to use the same lexical items and interview a group of 190 certified interpreters.

25.   Limited demographics information was collected on each person interviewed. There were roughly an equal number of males (52%) and females (48%) and none of the demographics data collected (e.g. age, gender, education) correlated positively or negatively with any of the results reported here. Thus for the purposes of this article that demographic data is not required.

26.   Among the many factors that one might use in arguing for a positive skew is the fact that metropolitan Boston is home to:

- One of the oldest and most active state Commissions for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing,
- One of the largest independent Deaf advocate agencies in the country (Deaf, Inc.),
- One of the nations oldest and largest ASL and Interpreter Education programs (Northeastern University),
- One of the ten federally funded interpreter education projects (at Northeastern University)
- One of the few graduate-level Deaf Education Programs with a Bi-Bi orientation (Boston University) the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf
- A very successful bilingual education program for d/Deaf students (The Learning Center for Deaf Children)
- A large public school program for d/Deaf students (Horace Mann School)
- Two mainstream public high school programs for d/Deaf students (Newton North High School and Boston Arts Academy)
- A nationally recognized, successful Deaf Children's Theater Group (the PAH! Deaf Youth Theater group)

27.   Such a survey would elicit the strength or presence of semantic senses of signs frequently used by interpreters. It is not difficult to predict that there might be a mismatch between what meanings interpreters think certain signs convey and what meanings members of the Deaf Community think those signs convey.

28.   During the past fifteen years I have conducted hundreds of diagnostic assessments of interpreters and have conducted numerous seminars for would-be diagnosticians. These endeavors involved analysis of interpretations of a culturally rich ASL monologue and a culturally rich English monologue. It is clear from these analyses that interpreters do not routinely differentiate between culturally neutral and culturally rich realities in their interpretations and have not evidenced strategies for handling culturally rich and culturally-shared realities.

29.   In a future article I intended to discuss strategies such as semantic bracketing, successive approximation, semantic chaining and semantic scaffolding that can guide interpreters in reading the semantic senses of culturally rich realities.

30.   For instance suppose that one of the primary conversational goals of a Deaf person in meeting with an English-speaking employer is to gauge the level of Deaf awareness of the place of employment. Knowing this in advance, the interpreter may craft interpretations such that the meanings of culturally rich signs are not made explicit to the English-speaking employer (i.e. the interpreter may choose to "spot transliterate"). This strategy might enable the Deaf person to use the responses of the English-speaking employer to ascertain the knowledge and attitudes of those in the workplace. However, if the primary goal is rather straight forward communication then the survey reported here would suggest that the semantic sense of culturally rich realities must be conveyed.

31.   To be sure some members of the Deaf Community have expressed this view in various texts and publications written in English and increasingly they present their views through videotapes. However, the readership and viewership for such material, one suspects, mainly consists of those members of the English-speaking community who already have a vested interest in and a connection with the Deaf Community—e.g. teachers, interpreters, and students. Thus the material reaffirms what the readers and viewers are already predisposed to believe rather than having a significant impact in altering the manner in which the remaining uninformed segments of society view Deaf people.

32.   This study has focused on the fact that the English-speaking population may lack the frames necessary to understand culturally rich realities of the ASL/signing community. However, it is quite likely that similar results would be found were one to conduct a study of the Deaf community's awareness of the frames needed to understand culturally rich realities of the English-speaking community. Thus one could hypothesize that members of the Deaf Community might not have the cultural frames necessary to accurately understand terms such as "the blues," "rap," "gangsta rap," "NPR," or "Whazzup." Of course one community's failure to understand the cultural frames of another community should in no way be taken as an indication of lack of intelligence of cognitive abilities. Rather it is simply the reality that exists when world-views are not fully shared by two communities or individuals.