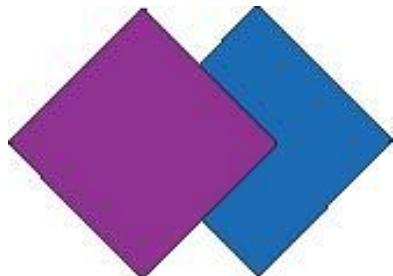


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# **Editorial: And so it goes...**

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

*Macquarie University*

Welcome to the second volume of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education*. You will see that we have a bumper crop edition that is balanced with contributions from both spoken and signed language interpreter educators from six countries (the U.S., Malaysia, Australia, Ireland, Canada, and France) and a healthy selection of papers in both the Research Article and Commentary sections. After publication of the first volume, I have been promoting the journal as an appropriate vehicle for cross-modality discussion, so it is heartening and exciting to see that promotion come to fruition.

This volume features reports from research that explore varying aspects of interpreter education through different lenses, including: mental health interpreter training (Zimanyi), a survey of teaching goals for interpreter educators (Fitzmaurice), analysis of universal design concepts in relation to the use of technology in interpreter education (Roush), a competency model for training interpreters working in video relay services (Oldfield), an action research project to evaluate a mentoring program (Pearce & Napier), and a qualitative study of the perceptions of deaf interpreters as a means to informing deaf interpreter education (McDermid). Although the majority of these pieces are from signed language interpreter educators, much of the discussion should be of interest to spoken language interpreter educators and applicable in classrooms teaching any language pairs.

Compared with Volume 1, this volume includes several more commentary papers which focus on actual teaching activities, program overviews, or theoretical discussions of interpreter education. Although these papers do not report on evidence-based research, they draw on the wealth of experience of interpreter educators from both spoken and signed languages, sharing effective teaching practices and highlighting issues of concern. These papers are deliberately included to provoke debate among teacher-researchers, and to inform our discipline of current reflections and achievements. Papers that raise issues for consideration include an overview of interpreting pedagogy issues in Malaysia (Ayob), tensions between educating for best practice and teaching to pass a test (Zong), and the need to provide specialization options in interpreter education (Witter-Merithew and Nicodemus). Two of the papers feature descriptions of interpreter education and training programs, in the form of the new master's degree in French Sign Language interpreting (Sero-Guillaume) and distance learning for Spanish-English medical interpreter training (Gonzalez and Gany). Finally, two articles provide detailed outlines of effective pedagogical techniques for teaching consecutive interpreting (Russell, Shaw, and Malcolm) and using sight translation to develop simultaneous interpreting skills (Song)

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

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## Napier

A new feature of this volume is the section that includes the work of aspiring interpreter education scholars—graduate students who have completed research projects related to interpreter education and who are experienced interpreter educators but may not have the experience of writing for publication. This section has been specifically introduced to encourage more interpreter educators who are studying in Master's or PhD programs to share their work alongside established scholars in the field. I welcome Dr Elizabeth Winston to the editorial board of the journal in her capacity as sub-editor for the Student Work Section. The first contributor to this section discusses the application of cooperative learning in interpreter education (Krouse).

Once again, this journal highlights how the diverse expertise across the world can be harnessed to expand our understanding of interpreter education and training globally and across modalities. I have recently attended the Critical Link: Interpreters in the Community conference at Aston University in Birmingham, UK, and was pleasantly surprised to see a large selection of papers that concentrated on the training and education of interpreters of both spoken and signed languages. Over 300 conference delegates consisted of academics, practitioners, service providers, practitioner-researchers, and educators. What I found interesting was that in discussing issues in relation to working more broadly in the community, the themes were relevant to interpreters of all languages and always had implications for education and training. I have come away from the conference with more ideas, not only about community interpreting research, but also about interpreting education and interpreting education research. Thus, in embracing the diversity in our discipline and sharing our experience and knowledge in conferences or through publication, we can learn from one another and focus on our commitment to teaching in order to achieve best practices in interpreting.

I often like to finish a piece of writing with at least one quote that I feel encapsulates the rhetoric of that piece. This time I have found two quotes from the author Richard David Bach, who is not an interpreter or a teacher, but what he has to say resonates with me as a reflective interpreter, educator, and researcher, and I think his words promote the goals of IJIE.

*Learning is finding out what you already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it; teaching is reminding others that they know it as well as you do. We are all learners, doers, and teachers.*

*You teach best what you most need to learn.*

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# Training for Interpreting in Mental Healthcare in Ireland

Krisztina Zimányi<sup>1</sup>

Dublin City University

## Abstract

Interpreting in mental healthcare is a very specialized activity, and given the comparatively low demand, few interpreters receive full-time, area-specific training. As part of a larger research project completed in Ireland, mental health professionals who have worked with interpreters as well as interpreters with experience in working in mental health care shared their views on the subject. The interviews reveal what is available as well as what is lacking in terms of training for this specialised sub-domain of community interpreting. The findings, in general, suggest that there is room for improvement. In addition, there appears to be a difference between various types of services, both as regards to their attitude toward training needs and their awareness of such issues. The division lines seem to form between mainstream mental health services and those specializing in working with immigrants and/or refugees and asylum seekers on the one hand, and therapeutic services and those of a more logistical nature on the other.

Keywords: community interpreting; mental healthcare; Ireland; training; interview data

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [krisztina.zimanyi2@mail.dcu.ie](mailto:krisztina.zimanyi2@mail.dcu.ie)

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# **Training for Interpreting in Mental Healthcare in Ireland**

## **1. Introduction**

Mental health interpreting (MHI) is a highly specialized subfield of community interpreting, which, as the name suggests, takes place in mental healthcare (MHC) settings. Here diagnosis is mostly possible through means of verbal communication, and the mutual comprehension of the linguistic utterances is salient to prognosis. As a consequence, most of the technical and ethical premises underlying community interpreting also apply to MHI. In addition, due to the sensitive nature of the environment, further consideration needs to be given to the mental, psychological, and physical well-being of all participants. The question is how interpreters can be prepared for such an environment—what level of training is necessary or desirable. This article aims to provide an insight into the state of available training for community interpreters working in MHC in Ireland by sharing results of a qualitative study.

## **2. Methodology**

The findings presented in the article are based on a larger body of research<sup>2</sup> work and data collected through conducting semi-structured interviews with a similar number of mental health professionals (MHP) who have worked with interpreters and interpreters (INT)<sup>3</sup> who have experience in MHC settings. For ease of reference and for reasons of confidentiality, all respondents received a three-letter abbreviation signifying their profession and a sequential number corresponding to the chronology of their contribution. All the interviews were conducted in and transcribed into English and subsequently underwent a thematic coding process. The results published here constitute the sections concerning training issues discussed by the respondents.

The investigation mainly concentrated on the Dublin area in Ireland, which was considered to be representative of the state of MHI provision countrywide. A total of eleven MHPs were interviewed, including four mental health nurses (MHNs), one occupational therapist (OT), two psychologists (PSY), and four therapists/psychotherapists (THER). Some of the MHPs interviewed work in mainstream services, or services run by the state. Other MHP respondents work in what is referred to as “specialized services” in the article, that is, either state-run or non-governmental services specializing in services for refugees and asylum seekers or immigrants in general.

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social sciences and would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Jenny Williams and Ms. Mary Phelan for their encouragement throughout my studies.

<sup>3</sup> All of these abbreviations are used throughout the article to differentiate the respondent INTs and MHPs from interpreters and mental health professionals in general. All respondents received a sequential number depending on the chronology interviews, thus INT9 is the ninth respondent interpreter interviewed for the project.

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## **Interpreter training for mental health interpreting in Ireland**

With regard to INTs, twelve practitioners of a variety of languages spoken by the immigrant population in Ireland were interviewed; they came from diverse backgrounds and had very different experiences with regard to their training or introduction to MHC services and MHI. Some of the interviewed INTs are in full-time employment outside the field and only take on occasional interpreting assignments; some are practicing interpreters who take on MHI jobs but mostly work in other community interpreting settings; others work for centers or clinics that provide a basic introduction to MHC; and there are also some who work for specific MHC services that offer additional counseling, debriefing, or support to interpreters, if required. However, as most of the interpreters work on a freelance basis, they have to divide their time between various types of assignments, only one of which is MHI. Among the INTs, there were one Bosnian, one Chinese, one Czech, one Irish, one Italian, two Polish, two Romanian, two Spanish, and one Sudanese interpreter. Ten of the INTs were female, which perhaps is indicative of the gender representation among community interpreters in Ireland. This particular project did not involve sign language interpreters, whose training and professional support is far more advanced than that of spoken language interpreters.

As regards to the interpreters' training background, Table 1 shows that two of the INTs interviewed had undergraduate degrees in translation and interpreting from institutions outside of Ireland. One of these INTs and another two of the INTs that were interviewed had completed the Graduate Certificate in Community Interpreting (GCC) at Dublin City University (n.d.), the only university level course in community interpreting in Ireland. One of the INTs reported having studied interpreting at a six-month training course conducted by an EU organization. Eight INTs had been involved in one- or two-day training courses run by interpreting agencies in Ireland. Eight of the twelve is a quite high proportion among the participating INTs; most of them stated that such short training is insufficient, even within the area of specialization that the course addressed. Most INTs had never received any specialized training in the area of MHI. The three who attended the GCC course had been introduced to the subject. Some of the INTs had taken part in introductory courses organized by particular MHC services. Four of those interviewed had taken part in a training session for interpreting in rape cases that was organized by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (n.d.); three of the INT respondents had attended sessions on interpreting for victims of torture run by Spirasi (n.d.), a non-government organization working with refugees and asylum seekers.

The following sections discuss the contributions by the MHPs and the INTs to the understanding of training needs for interpreting in MHC in Ireland.

### **3. The respondents' views on training**

Issues concerning training interpreters, as well as interpreter users, or the lack of training for both groups, received considerable interest throughout the interviews, which shows the respondents' preoccupation with the subject. While the total number of references on training interpreters is significantly higher than those for training professionals, this difference is probably due to the main focus of research, that of interpreting, and perhaps also the fact that most of the MHPs have received no training on how to work with interpreters.

#### *3.1. INTs' views on training issues*

##### **3.1.1 INTs on the lack of training**

Most important, it transpired that trained interpreters are acutely aware of the lack of training. One of the respondent INTs comprehensively touched on all the aspects of training that were discussed across the interviews. This includes continuous professional development, paid for by the employer or contractor, as seen in the following extract. In the middle of the passage the INT refers to Lionbridge, a multi-national localization company whose main profile comprises software localization, but whose European headquarters in Dublin has been a significant player in community interpreting provision in Ireland trading under Berlitz, Bowne Global Solutions, and Lionbridge over the years.

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## Zimanyi

Well... you see that's... I think that's the problem. That many people think if you require training, it's perhaps a weakness. If a person says, I need more training, it's kind of feels if you do it, it's up to you.

Ehm... I really think that training should be ongoing. In every job. And just because you had training before, even if it was a thorough one, it doesn't mean that you... that you're not gonna be training again. Because you should really update it. And methods change. And you might forget something. Policies change. So I really believe that training should be ongoing. And that it should be paid for. By your employer, or by the service provider.

See, for example, when I said, eh, we had a one-day training at Lionbridge, and I didn't learn anything there. And I asked will there be any further training? And they said, No, what for? You had your training already. Well, a one-day training is not a suitable training. Ehm... Well, I just said that every... body was looking at me... eh, eh. What does she mean, like, we, we just finished our training? And how can a person... Like I actually had vast experience compared to some interpreters, how can somebody that like that request some additional training?

But I really think you should, you know. It's like doctors, it's like lawyers. They all have ongoing training. I think it's very, very important. Because you can get stuck in a rut as well. Or you can make some minor mistakes... but they continue all the time. (INT9)

The same INT also elaborated on the necessary knowledge of vocabulary and environment-specific terminology in MHI, ethics and etiquette, and interpreting techniques, which she believed should be included in training.

And then training. So first of all... vocabulary. So you'd have to learn a lot about... emotions, different shades of... expressing emotions. For example... what is... rage... as opposed to... as opposed to fear. What is being upset as opposed to be anxious or nervous. All the different shades. Otherwise you just translate very general [sic]. Like, I felt bad, or something. Kind of generalistic. And that's not good. 'Cause you have to be precise.

Ehm... So you have to... know... You have to have this vocabulary in both languages. In the source and target language. Then, second... you have to know some medical vocabulary. Some specialist vocabulary. Like you have to know what is... ju', just different things, like what is... PTSD is post-traumatic stress disorder. Say, things like that.

So ehm... I'm not going to have to have the background in medicine or psychology, but you should have, let's say... a few hours or few weeks training... so that you know the basic... sometimes the basic diseases you might be dealing with.

Ehm... Then you should have, ehm... training in etiquette. So you should know... that you... should introduce yourself first. Explain your policy about confidentiality. And... objectivity and so on.

And then just... general interpreting techniques. Such as taking notes... memory technique and so on. It's very important. (INT9)

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*Table 1. The Respondent Interpreters' Training Background*

Interpreter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Language related studies</b>												
Bachelor's degree in languages	X		X					X				
<b>T/IS – courses run by agencies</b>												
1-day introduction (refugee settings)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		
1-day introduction (court settings)	X	X	X			X					X	
<b>T/IS – tertiary education</b>												
1 T/IS module in bachelor's degree	X											
Bachelor's degree in T/IS											X	
Bachelor's degree in T/IS in Ireland												
Master's degree in T/IS												
Master's degree in T/IS in Ireland												
<b>T/IS – specific community interpreting training</b>												
Grad Cert in community interpreting, DCU, Ireland			X					X			X	
<b>Non-Academic T/IS training</b>												
6-month European Commission T/IS									X			
<b>T/IS – MHC related training</b>												
DRCC 1- day course on rape victims	X		X			X		X	X		X	
Spirasi – torture and trauma victims	X					X				X		X
<b>Background in MHC</b>												
Some studies in psychology					X							
Bachelor's degree in psychology									X			
<b>Other relevant training</b>												
Working with refugees							X	X				

## Zimanyi

In addition, INT9 drew attention to the pre-requisites of training that should include the knowledge of both (or all) working languages at an excellent level. She also commented on the dangers regarding the lack of training, such as possible misdiagnosis. Finally, the INT said that supervision and quality assurance should go hand-in-hand with training.

These findings are in line with the general community interpreting literature (see, for example, Bell, 1997; Bendalozzi, 2007; Gamal, 1998; Hamerik and Martensen, 1998; Vonk, 2003). Valéro-Garcés and Taibi (2004) propose that professionalization of community interpreting necessitates the development of a training program for interpreters and an increased awareness among service providers. Villareal (2001) also highlights the significance of training and certification procedures when discussing the professionalization of Chicago area court interpreters. She describes their training, which includes an assessment process, a 36-hour orientation, shadowing, the development of listening skills and memory exercises, a mock trial, and a follow-up mentoring program consisting of an observation phase and a supervised performance phase. It is also worthy of note that training and accuracy issues are aligned in the community interpreting literature. Articles on quality or various levels of equivalence often feature training aspects (Cambridge, 1999; Meyer, 2001; Napier, 2004; Pöchhacker and Kadric, 1999); studies on training frequently discuss the problems surrounding accuracy (Cambridge, 2004; Fowler, 2007; Niska, 2007; Roy et al., 1998; Russo, 2004).

### 3.1.2 INTs on their own limitations due to lack of training

With regard to their own limitations, INTs with at least a degree in languages or translation/interpreting studies (T/IS) qualifications were more vocal about training issues that can ensure accurate, impartial, confidential, and professional interpreting as prescribed by professional codes of conduct.<sup>4</sup> However, a simple recital of the code of ethics is not sufficient to work well as an interpreter. A thoughtful application of the guidelines would be desirable, and, as Hale (2007) suggests, it is only through appropriate training that a full comprehension of community interpreting issues can be attained. In relation to the usefulness of codes of conduct Hale writes:

An understanding can only be achieved through careful study and debate on what each principle means in practice, the reason for upholding each of the guidelines, and the consequences of not doing so. However, an academic debate of the issues must be accompanied by practical training to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Much more than the mere existence of a code of ethics is needed in order to ensure quality of interpreting services. There is large contradiction between the high standards expected of interpreters, as outlined in the code of ethics on the one hand, and the total absence of any compulsory pre-service training, low institutional support and poor working conditions to allow interpreters to meet those standards on the other. ( p. 105)

Ozolins (2007) concurs and draws attention to the fact that the “majority of interpreters in community settings may have received *no* training for their work” (p. 123). This is true in the case of Ireland, where only three of the interviewed INTs have specialized third-level training in community interpreting. Once again, it needs to be emphasized that all the INTs interviewed work as spoken language interpreters between the service provider and the non-English speaking immigrant and that sign language interpreters can avail themselves of appropriate training at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (Centre for Deaf Studies, 2010). It also appears that untrained sign language interpreters would find it much more difficult to find work in Ireland than their spoken language counterparts. Nevertheless, under the circumstances, it is reassuring to note that one untrained INT clearly

<sup>4</sup> Examples include: the Association of Visual Interpreters of Canada (n.d.), the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (n.d.), the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (n.d.), the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (n.d.), the Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association (2009), and especially legal interpreters' associations, such as court interpreters in Finland (The Finnish Association of Translators, n.d.) or the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators in the US (n.d.).

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## **Interpreter training for mental health interpreting in Ireland**

expressed awareness of her own limitations caused by the lack of appropriate training. This admission came about when discussing modes of interpreting used in MHI.

I mean I don't know what would you need for simultaneous? I need flippin'... I don't know, ehm... earphones, and... Well, you'd need much, much, much more skilled interpreters than me, anyway. You wouldn't be dealing with the likes of me. You'd be in a different, you're into a different ball game. You're into people who're correctly trained. (INT12)

### **3.1.3 INTs on training MHPs**

Based on the interviews, it appears that the INTs were not only aware of the lack of training and their own limitations, but that they were also cognizant of the apparent differences between MHPs who have been trained to work with interpreters and those who have not received such instruction. According to the INTs interviewed, mental health professionals should have at least some basic information on the cultural background of their client (INT5, INT10), as suggested in the following extract.

But you see, the Irish people, they cannot relate at the beginning. And I find it very ehm... very difficult when I'm doing interviews. That the interviewer has no experience, and they're not prepared. And they haven't been... doing any homework. You know what I mean. It's a job for them. And that's very bad. Because, you have to know... what the country is a background. The people. An' everything. (INT10)

This information should come from training rather than individual “on-site” education by the interpreter colleague. Furmanek (2004) reports how her students developed guidelines for the particular services they had worked for during their professional internship as interpreters. The exercise proved successful, not only in educating interpreter users, but also in raising awareness of professional collaboration with their colleagues among the interpreter trainees. Such practices could possibly be followed in Ireland, but only if internships were available for trainee interpreters.

## **3.2. MHPs’ views on training issues**

In reviewing the comments from MHPs on training issues, the topics can be divided into those concerning the training of interpreters, and those that relate to the training of MHPs.

### **3.2.1 MHPs on training interpreters**

A close inspection of the MHPs’ responses opens up trends comparable to the INTs’ views on training. While MHPs acknowledged the interpreters’ contribution to their work, they emphasized that training, or the lack thereof, is “noticeable” when working with interpreters (MHN5, PSY2). In addition, PSY2 commented on how the interpreters’ training affected their work.

And you notice. When, when, when we work... or I work. I notice the difference straight away who's trained and who isn't. It's the posture, the listening. They don't make eye-contact with the interpre... eh, with the client. All these things. It's very, very noticeable. And, and that, you know... they know what they're doing. And eh... It makes a difference to my work. (PSY2)

THER3 also remarked that training could improve the professional co-operation between the service provider (i.e., the mental health professional) and the interpreter. It is interesting to observe that MHPs working in specialized (i.e., non-mainstream) services seem to have more experience, thus they seem to be more aware of

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## Zimanyi

problems surrounding interpreting or have more opportunities and time to consider such issues than their colleagues working in mainstream services.

Unsurprisingly, those MHPs who can see how significantly the lack of training affects interpreting, also advocate training interpreters on mental health issues. A training program developed by Pollard (1998) explicitly deals with such matters and includes confidentiality, boundaries, secondary traumatization, and co-operation with the mental health professional; these issues are all mentioned by PSY1 in relation to training.

I suppose, ehm. First of all the issues that, ehm... we're, we're in the process now of drawing up some of, of what we would require for, for this small service. And they'd be issues that we've mentioned: confidentiality, eh... ehm... boundaries, say, say, working within the service. That, that, ehm... respect for the... the difference... Ehm... So they're, I think they're the really, the issues that need to be addressed, ehm, in training. And also an awareness for the interpreter of the issues of vicarious traumatisation. Ehm... And the need, ehm... for the health professional to, to, eh, work with, with the interpreter, an', and that area.

Once again, the subject of secondary traumatization of interpreters ensuing from working in emotionally-charged situations and keeping boundaries, the treatment of which falls outside the scope of this article, were only mentioned by respondents who work in a therapeutic setting rather than in the logistical aspect of MHC provision, that is therapists, psychotherapists, and psychologists. Additionally, of the MHP respondents who commented on these issues all, bar one, work in specialized services rather than in mainstream services.

### 3.2.2 MHPs on training mental health professionals

Perhaps it is significant that, apart from Furmanek's (2004) report on her students trying to educate interpreter users while serving their interpreter traineeship, there is little published on this side of the equation. This is all the more surprising as Bischoff's (2006) findings in his project on medical interpreting in Switzerland reveal that "communication between primary care physicians and FLS [foreign language speaker] patients, as rated by the patients themselves, may be improved by specific training sessions delivered to physicians about how to deal with FSL patients" (p.183; see also Bischoff, Perneger, Bovier, Loutan, & Stadler, 2003).

With regard to their own training on how to work with interpreters, MHPs also commented on the lack of training possibilities in Ireland (PSY2). Most of the MHPs who have been trained to work with interpreters received their instruction elsewhere or are building on their own experience gained outside the geographical area under study. Seven of the eleven MHPs interviewed have experience working with interpreters overseas, a knowledge-base they could transfer to their practice in Ireland. Nevertheless, some MHPs pointed out that such training is now also becoming available.

I don't think... we, we weren't, I, I never trained, and I'm sure lot of the psychiatrist of my ilk and my age haven't trained in working through interpreters. It's, it's completely, obviously, coming in now, I s'pose, I mean, it's something that's paid attention to in training of, of, of undergraduates now. So, maybe, we would've thought it's only after you've done the first few cases. (THER 2)

The respondent may have been referring to elements of third-level educational courses that have now incorporated at least intercultural dimensions into their curriculum. Psychiatric nurses, for example, training at Dublin City University receive information on MHI as part of their intercultural awareness training (Dublin City University, 2008/09). Social workers studying at University College Dublin, another university in the Irish capital with a similar-sounding name but distinct from where community interpreting training takes place, have also been introduced to working with interpreters (PSY2). Spirasi has recently offered training to their new mental health professional staff (THER3), and in-house training sessions have been given at some mainstream hospitals, as one of the mental health nurses confirmed (MHN1). These initiatives, along with recently published guidelines for health professionals in general (Health Services Executive, 2007), based on best practices abroad (see, for

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## Interpreter training for mental health interpreting in Ireland

example, Miletic et al., 2006; Tribe and Thompson, 2008; Turner, 2008), are a step in the right direction and a concerted effort could even better results in the future.

### 4. Conclusion

The article has discussed views elicited from interpreters and mental health professionals regarding training issues in the area of mental health interpreting in Ireland. As regards to training mental health professionals, the respondents pointed to the desirability of raising awareness about, and accessing practical information on, how to work with interpreters. As the focus of the study is interpreting, comparatively more detailed discussions on interpreter training took place. Findings show that both MHP and INT respondents who commented on the subject agreed that training interpreters in specific situations is required. In the case of MHI, these comprise mental health problems, professional boundaries, and secondary traumatization, as suggested by both respondent MHPs and INTs, as well as in the relevant community interpreting literature.

As regards MHPs, two clearly identifiable tendencies evolved. On the one hand, there is an understandable distinction between therapeutic and logistical services with regard to their attitude to training. Respondents working in services where the emphasis is on therapy (i.e., therapists, psychotherapists, psychologists, or occupational therapists), displayed greater awareness of issues, not only related to their own profession, but also for interpreting training topics as well. Mental health nurses, on the other hand, who are in charge of duties of a more logistical nature (i.e., the daily hygiene or nutrition of the patients), have seemed to be less conscious of such matters. The other apparent fault line was formed between MHP respondents working in mainstream services and those working in what are referred to as specialized services within the framework of the current study. The difference is considerable between these two groups, in terms of understanding the processes of interpreting, or how to work with interpreters and interpreters' needs. While this may be due to the fact that they have more experience working with non-English speaking clients through an interpreter, and indeed are perhaps more predisposed to seek out such services, this result is worthy of note.

Consequently, it appears that there is greater effort needed in training mental health professionals working in mainstream services on how to work with interpreters. From the interpreter's point of view, these findings also mean that while the interpreter can expect a mental health professional working in a specialized service to have an understanding of the interpreting process and create a space for consensual co-construction of the communicative event, this is not the case in mainstream services. As a result, the interpreter may need an even higher level of alertness when interpreting in a mainstream setting than usual. As regards to INTs, those respondents who have training in community interpreting, or at least some third-level education in T/IS, showed far greater awareness of training than the interpreters who have very little or no training in the area. This outcome confirms the calls for appropriate training for community interpreters, which has been widely promoted in the community interpreting literature.

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# Teaching Goals of Interpreter Educators

Steve Fitzmaurice<sup>1</sup>

*Clemson University*

## Abstract

Angelo & Cross (1993) found substantial differences in the teaching goals of faculty from different disciplines, yet they found no differences for educators based on their employment status or the type of institution in which they worked. The current quantitative study compared the teaching goals of interpreter educators with those of educators from other disciplines. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 52 goal statements from Angelo & Cross' Teaching Goal Inventory (TGI) in terms of what they aim to have students accomplish in their courses. The data suggest that interpreter education constitutes a separate discipline from the nine disciplines identified by Angelo & Cross. Interpreter educators place far more emphasis on the development of higher order thinking skills than do educators from most other disciplines. There appear to be no differences in the teaching goals of interpreter educators employed in a full-time or adjunct capacity, nor for interpreter educators employed at two-year and four-year institutions. In sum, there is consensus among interpreter educators that conveying higher order thinking skills is the most important teaching goal.

Keywords: interpreter educators; teaching goals; TGI; higher order thinking

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [sfitzma@clemson.edu](mailto:sfitzma@clemson.edu)

# **Teaching Goals of Interpreter Educators**

## **1. Introduction**

United States federal legislation regarding access to communication for deaf individuals created a demand for American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters in the early 1970s (Ball, 2007; Cokely, 2005; Frishberg, 1990; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Monikowski & Peterson, 2005; Monikowski & Winston, 2003; Pöchhacker, 2004; Winston, 2005; Winston & Schick, 2000). Demand, however, quickly exceeded the available supply of early “interpreters.” Consequently, ASL–English interpreter programs were instituted in the early 1970s with direct, continuing federal assistance to six institutions of higher education across the country (Frishberg, 1990; Winston, 2005; Witter-Merithew, 1980). This, in turn, created a need to locate interpreter educators for these programs.

The educators in most American interpreter programs were predominantly “highly skilled interpreters respected in their communities for their interpreting abilities...[who] often do not have any formal training as interpreters or as interpreter educators” (Winston & Schick, 2000, p. 117). Winston and Schick indicate that adjunct faculty did not differ from full-time interpreter educators in terms of education or experience. What is noteworthy about this group of interpreter educators is the lack of foundation in teaching or education. Winston (2005) wrote:

The great majority of faculty were, and continue to be, hired as part-time adjuncts because they are competent practitioners of interpreting. Their expertise as educators and as interpreting educators was not an essential qualification for hiring . . . Only the relatively few full-time faculty were required to demonstrate any expertise as educators. Most have learned to teach through experience, taking courses occasionally. Many earned degrees beyond high school and college, but few entered teaching as a profession to be mastered. (p. 209)

The US-based National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC, 2008) indicates that 32 interpreter programs opened between 1969 and 1979, and 39 more between 1980 and 1989 (p. 6). Winston (2005) estimates there are approximately 150 interpreter programs across the United States with one or two full-time educators in each program and some programs with as many as eight adjunct educators. The reliance on competent practitioners does not appear to have changed in the last 40 years.

The lack of a formal educational background might very well have created an interesting diversity in the teaching philosophies of these practitioners who have shifted roles to become interpreter educators. However, this does not appear to be the case. Winston (2005) investigated the teaching of ASL–English interpreting, focusing on the knowledge, attitudes, and philosophy of interpreter educators. Interpreter educators reported, in general, that “developing the higher order thinking and analysis skills that interpreters need to be competent practitioners” (p. 219) is vital. What is not clear from this report is whether interpreter educators see higher order thinking skills as a teaching goal.

### *1.1. Teaching goals*

Over the last decade, higher education has shifted from pedagogical approaches based on *teaching* to approaches focused on *student learning*. Incorporated within this change is the demand that educators

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assess student learning and critically reflect on their teaching—the nucleus of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

A key component to the assessment of learning is establishing goals that educators can use to gauge the effectiveness of teaching through the demonstrated learning of students. McKeachie and Svinicki (2006) wrote:

The first step in preparing . . . a course is working out course objectives [goals], because the choice of textbook, the selection of the type and order of assignments, the choice of teaching techniques, and all the decisions involved in course planning should derive from your objectives [goals]. (p. 10)

Other researchers stress that learning activities, course plans, program curricula, and assessment at all levels should follow from the established goals (Schwarz, 1996; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Angelo and Cross (1993) highlight that the establishment of teaching goals is fundamental:

Goals are ends we work toward, destinations we set out for, results we strive to achieve. But goals are far more than terminal points. They are also reference points that we use to measure our progress and to determine whether we are headed in the right direction. Without clear goals, we cannot readily assess the effectiveness of our efforts or realize when we are off course, how far off we are, and how to get back on the right track. (p. 13)

### *1.2. Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI)*

The exploration of an educator's goals is the crux of the Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI) developed by Angelo and Cross (1993). They administered the TGI to a large sample of full- and part-time faculty at two- and four-year institutions of higher learning. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 52 goal statements in terms of aims for students' accomplishment in their courses. In their study, Angelo and Cross categorized the 52 TGI goal statements into six goal clusters (1993, p. 16–18):

1. Higher order thinking skills
2. Basic academic success skills
3. Discipline-specific knowledge and skills
4. Liberal arts and academic values
5. Work and career preparation
6. Personal development

Angelo and Cross (1993) further analyzed differences in teaching goals across academic disciplines and across demographic variables of the educators themselves. They found substantial differences in the teaching goals of faculty from different disciplines. For example, humanities professors ranked (a) thinking for oneself, (b) valuing the subject, and (c) openness to new ideas as being most important; whereas medical faculty ranked (a) the ability to apply principles, (b) making wise decisions, and (c) being responsible for oneself as being most important. Teaching goals were not related to gender, experience, institutional setting or employment status.

The demographics of Angelo and Cross' sample is substantially different from the population demographics of interpreter educator faculty members. The NCIEC reports that 62% of signed language interpreter educators in the US are considered part-time (p. 13) and that 78% of signed language interpreter education programs are housed at technical, vocational, or community colleges that award a two-year associate's degree (p. 5). Given this skew within the interpreter educator population and the substantial differences with Angelo and Cross' sample, an investigation of the different teaching goals for part-time/full-time interpreter educators working at different types of educational institutions is warranted.

In brief, the current research inquiry aims to assess the teaching goals of interpreter educators by:

1. Comparing the teaching goals of interpreter educators with educators in other disciplines
2. Determining if there is any consensus among interpreter educators employed at two-year and four-year institutions
3. Determining if there is any consensus among interpreter educators employed full-time or part-time

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## Interpreter Educator Teaching Goals

### 2. Method

Participants were recruited via an e-mail invitation sent from the NCIEC to the electronic mailing list of the membership of the US-based (predominantly) signed language interpreter educator organization, the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT). If CIT members responded to the initial invitation, the NCIEC then e-mailed participants a second time, providing a link to an electronic survey. The larger three-part survey was designed to compile a national needs assessment on interpreter program faculty members and took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The questions pertaining to the current study were contained in the first section of the survey. Participants were asked to complete demographic questions and the Teaching Goals Inventory (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

Specifically, each participant was asked to select one course that they teach and answer 52 questions about their teaching goals for the course. For each goal statement, participants were asked to rate its importance using the following five-point scale:

1. *Not applicable*—a goal you never try to achieve
2. *Unimportant*—a goal you rarely try to achieve
3. *Important*—a goal you sometimes try to achieve
4. *Very important*—a goal you often try to achieve
5. *Essential*—a goal you always/nearly always try to achieve

Quantitative data were collected through Zoomerang, an online survey tool. The link to the survey was active for 68 days.

### 3. Findings

In all, 44 individuals responded to the survey. Six respondents did not complete all sections of the survey and were excluded from further analysis. The age range of respondents is summarized in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates the number of years of teaching experience reported by our sample. Sixty-two percent of the sample were employed as full-time faculty, whereas 35% were considered part-time or adjunct faculty. Four-year institutions represented 66% of respondents; 34% of respondents worked at two-year institutions.

#### 3.1. *Teaching goals of interpreter educators vs. other disciplines*

Table 1 contains the top three teaching goals by discipline, as reported by Angelo and Cross (1993, p. 368). Added to this table are the current data from interpreter educators. Interpreter educators have no goals in common with the disciplines of science and medicine and two goals in common with English and mathematics. Only one goal is shared by interpreter educators and faculty in the remaining five disciplines (i.e., arts, humanities, basic skills, social sciences, and business).

The similarity to the field of mathematics is perhaps not appropriate and may be explained by different interpretations of the phrase “problem solving.” It is likely that mathematics educators use the phrase “problem solving” (84%) to mean the solving of mathematical problems, in particular, solving equations and/or finding appropriate mathematical models which approximate reality, etc. Interpreter educators, however, may perceive problem solving (71%) as pertaining to solving problems of an environmental, situational, or communicative nature.

Suggesting that the goals of the interpreter educators are well matched to those of the English faculty is also problematic. English faculty most highly value writing skills (84%), whereas interpreter faculty most highly value problem solving (71%). Although English and interpreter educators hold languages at their core, the fundamental difference of faculty teaching goals limits the similarities of interpreter educators and English educators.

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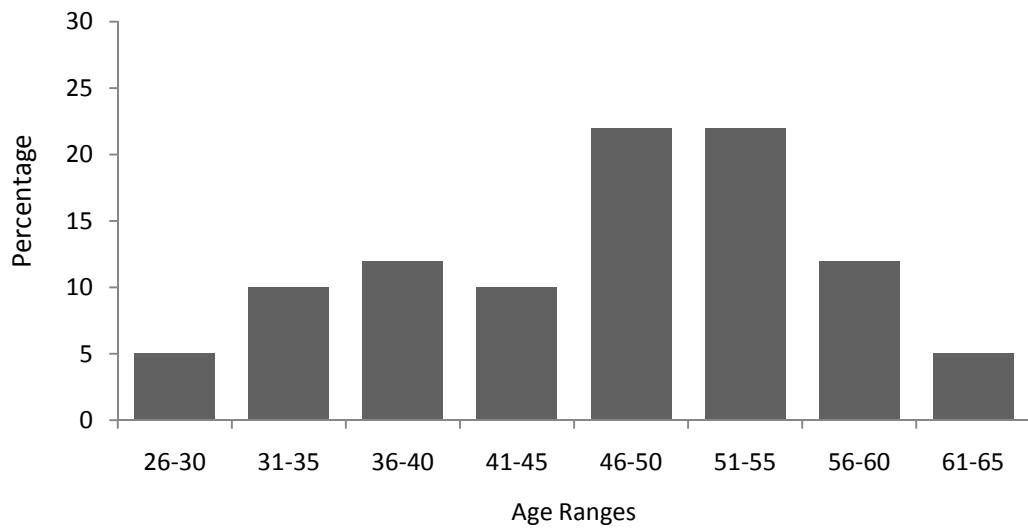


Figure 1: Respondent age ranges

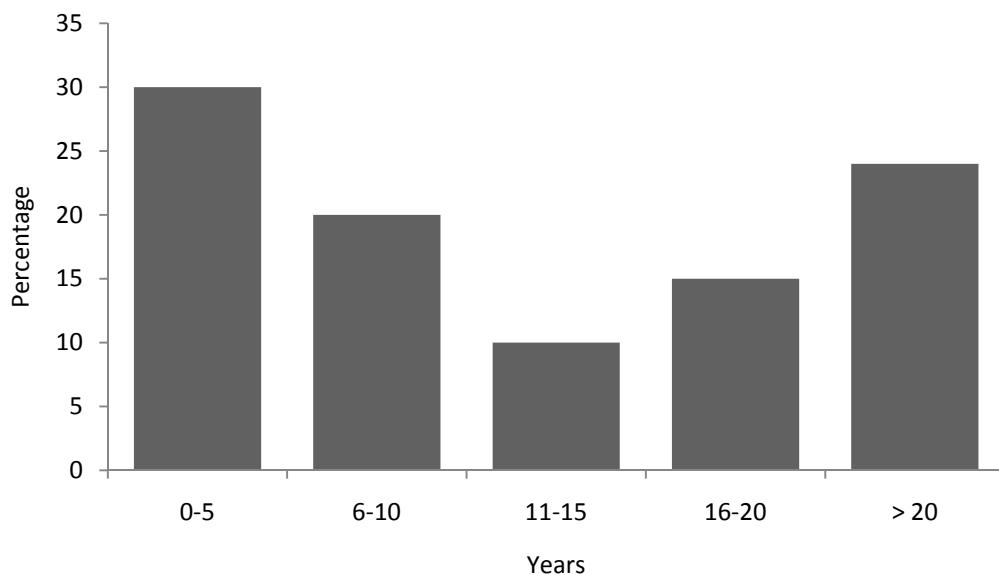


Figure 2: Years teaching in field

## Interpreter Educator Teaching Goals

*Table 1. Three Top-priority Teaching Goals by Discipline (Including Interpreter Educators)*

Goal #	Teaching Goal	Percent rating goal as being essential								
		Int. ed.	Arts	Hum.	Eng.	Basic skills	Soc. sci.	Bus.	Med.	Sci.
3	Problem solving	71					57			84
51	Think for self	68		59	75	65		50		
2	Analytic skills	67			66					73
1	Apply principles				59	57	69	73	61	
17	Math skills						61			84
18	Terms and facts							60		
52	Wise decisions					63		70		
45	Self-esteem								68	
44	Responsible for self					56				69
21	Value of subject					52				71
19	Concepts and theories									
7	Creativity					69				
15	Writing skills					84				
31	Aesthetic appreciation					78				
27	Openness to ideas					56				

Note: Data from columns 4-12 are from Angelo & Cross' Table 10.2 (1993, p. 368).

## Interpreter Educator Teaching Goals

### 3.2. *Teaching goals of full-time vs. adjunct faculty*

A comparison of full-time and adjunct interpreter educators indicates similar responses in terms of teaching goal clusters (Table 2). The most notable finding is that higher order thinking skills are very important to both groups. Overall, the two groups seem to agree on what clusters are important in their teaching. The only deviation from this similarity is that adjunct interpreter educators' responses indicated that the personal development cluster was more important than did the responses of full-time interpreter educators. A chi-square analysis indicates, however, that these subtle variations are not statistically significant. In short, there are no significant differences between the teaching goal clusters of interpreter educators working in a full-time or adjunct capacity.

*Table 2. Percentage of Faculty Rating Each Teaching Goal Cluster as Being Essential*

Teaching goal cluster	Full-time faculty	Adjunct faculty
Higher order thinking	48	55
Basic skills	26	19
Discipline specific knowledge	31	34
Liberal arts	27	25
Work and career preparation	34	33
Personal development	35	49

In order to examine differences within each discrete goal statement, each goal cluster was expanded to reveal the top three specific teaching goal statements for both full-time and part-time interpreter educators. Although the discrete ratings for teaching goal statements within each cluster do differ slightly (Table 3), a chi-square analysis found no statistical differences. In general, the employment status of interpreter educators also does not significantly alter specific teaching goals.

*Table 3. Mean Rated of Top Three Priority Teaching Goals by Employment Status*

Goal cluster	Goal #	Goal description	Employment status	
			Full-time faculty	Adjunct faculty
Higher order thinking skills	1	Apply principles	4.43	
	2	Analytic skills	4.50	
	3	Problem-solving		4.59
	6	Think holistically		4.82
Discipline specific knowledge	19	Concepts & theories	4.43	
Personal development	51	Think for self		4.85

### 3.3. *Teaching goals of two-year vs. four-year educators*

Inspection of Table 4 suggests no differences in the teaching goal clusters of interpreter educators at two-year and four-year colleges. Chi-square analyses confirms these findings. Clearly, developing higher order thinking skills is an essential teaching goal for educators in both two-year and four-year interpreter programs. Both groups rated higher order thinking skills over other goal clusters.

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Table 4. Percentage of Faculty Rating Each Teaching Goal Cluster as Being Essential

Teaching goal cluster	Four-year colleges	Two-year colleges
Higher order thinking	54	47
Basic skills	20	26
Discipline specific knowledge	35	29
Liberal arts	25	27
Work and career prep	34	33
Personal development	37	43

In order to examine differences within each discrete goal statement, each goal cluster was expanded to reveal the top three specific teaching goal statements for interpreter educators in two-year and four-year programs. Although the development of higher order thinking skills is a top teaching goal for interpreter educators at both two-year and four-year institutions, the discrete ratings for teaching goal statements within each cluster do differ slightly. Table 5 reports these findings.

Table 5. Mean Rated Top Three Priority Teaching Goals by Institution Type

Goal cluster	Goal #	Goal description	Institution type	
			Two-year colleges	Four-year colleges
Higher order thinking skills	1	Apply principles	4.47	
	2	Analytic skills	4.42	4.59
	3	Problem-solving	4.56	
	5	Synthesize info		4.45
	6	Think holistically	4.42	
	51	Think for self		4.48

In order of frequency, interpreter educators at two-year programs aim to develop (a) problem solving skills, (b) the ability to apply principles, (c) analytic skills, and (d) the ability to think holistically. All of these goals fall within the higher order thinking goal cluster. However, this is not true for educators at four-year colleges. Their top three teaching goal statements rated as being most essential fell within two goal clusters: higher order thinking and personal development.

In other words, these data suggest interpreter educators at two-year colleges aim to focus on developing higher order thinking skills exclusively, yet interpreter educators at four-year colleges aim to divide their teaching goals between higher order thinking skills and personal development. However, chi-square analyses indicate that these subtle differences are not statistically significant.

## 4. Limitations

It is worth noting that these findings might be limited by the demographics of our sample. The NCIEC (2008) estimates that there are 367 full-time interpreter education faculty and 554 adjunct ASL and interpreter educator faculty in the United States. These numbers suggest a full-time to adjunct educator ratio of 1:2. The full-time to adjunct educator response ratio for the current study was 2:1. The NCIEC also reports 71 two-year interpreter programs and 20 four-year interpreter programs, a ratio of 4:1. The

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ratio of the number of two-year faculty to four-year faculty in our sample was 1:2. Thus, we must be cautious in our conclusions, given the differences in these demographic variables between our sample and the interpreting educator population.

Furthermore, the educational background of our respondents is unknown. Although employment in an academic institution typically requires a minimum academic qualification, the areas and duration of study of each respondent is unreported. It may be the case that important differences in teaching goals could be traced to educational backgrounds.

## 5. Discussion

The reported data concerning the teaching goals of signed language interpreter educators in the US indicates that interpreter education is not similar to any of the nine disciplines identified by Angelo and Cross (1993). The teaching goals judged most important by interpreter educators were (a) problem solving, (b) thinking for self, and (c) analytic skills. This set of teaching goals has some degree of commonality with English, but the teaching goals for English do not include problem solving, which is the most important goal for interpreter educators. It seems most appropriate, in terms of the teaching goals within the field, to consider interpreter education as a distinct entity from the other disciplines studied by Angelo and Cross.

Cross (2005) reports that across all disciplines, 28 percent of teachers consider higher order thinking skills as being essential. The contrast with interpreter educators is substantial—50% of the faculty in our sample rated higher order thinking skills as being essential. Our data support the conclusion that interpreter education constitutes a distinct, independent academic discipline, even though it has yet to formulate a strong footing (Baker-Shenk, 1990; Pöchhacker, 2004).

Our analyses failed to find any differences in the teaching goals of full-time and adjunct faculty, and in faculty at four-year institutions and two-year institutions. These data are in line with studies reported by Angelo and Cross (1993) and Schwarz (1996), who note no differences in the teaching goals of these populations. In other words, there is a strong similarity in teaching goals among interpreter educators at two-year and four-year institutions and educators employed in a full-time or adjunct capacity. We do note however, that the demographics of our sample are quite different from the population of interpreter educators reported by the NCEIC (2008).

The goal cluster that was judged to be most important by all of the interpreter educators in our sample was higher order thinking. There was an overwhelming consensus of the importance of this cluster. These findings echo those of Winston (2005), who found that interpreter educators “valued activities that lead students toward constructing their own knowledge through critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment” (p. 220). These three specific attributes or skills all fall within the larger context of higher order thinking skills.

The initial impetus for the creation of the TGI was to provide data to educators regarding their teaching goals in an effort to design meaningful assessments of learning (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The next steps for interpreter education then would be to:

Examine the design and effectiveness of higher order thinking assessment instruments currently employed by interpreter educators

Employ qualitative data collection methods to develop a broader understanding of how higher order thinking skills are fostered among various interpreter programs and student populations

Examine how interpreter educators operationalize higher order thinking teaching goals into learning activities and outcomes

Facilitate the creation of common exit standards and, perhaps, more effectively connect interpreter programs to national certification exams criterion

Winston (2005) wrote:

What needs to be made explicit is the understanding that critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment underlie competency in all areas of competent interpreting. Content, specific texts, and settings are the areas where these abilities need to be applied. Educators

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need to understand how to develop these skills and processes in interpreting students. (p. 229)

Of Angelo and Cross' (1993) six teaching goal clusters, higher order thinking might very well be the most difficult cluster to assess. The next steps might indicate that, whereas interpreter educators consider higher order thinking skills to be essential, there is little done in the classroom with regards to the instruction or the assessment of these skills. Ludwig (2000) reports "often, faculty hold higher-order thinking as a goal, but it is not clear that their instructional practice goes as far as it might to help students develop their higher-order thinking" (Information Technology section, p. A44).

### **6. Conclusion**

In terms of the teaching goals of respondents, these data suggest that signed language interpreter education distinguishes itself from the nine other disciplines identified by Angelo and Cross (1993). Interpreter educators place far more emphasis on the development of higher order thinking skills than do educators from most other disciplines. There appear to be no differences in the teaching goals of interpreter educators employed in a full-time or adjunct capacity, nor for interpreter educators employed at two-year and four-year institutions. In sum, despite interpreter educators being "the products of a unique history" (Ball, 2007, p. 1) and unusual early beginnings, and although the vast majority of interpreter educators may be skilled practitioners and not trained educators (Winston, 2005; Monikowski & Winston, 2003; Winston & Schick, 2000), interpreter educators demonstrate a strong consensus regarding the importance of higher order thinking skills as the prominent teaching goal. These findings can only be applied in relation to the signed language interpreter educator population of the United States. Therefore it would be interesting to administer the same survey to signed and spoken language interpreter educators internationally to determine whether there is consensus across the interpreter education field in more general terms.

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# **Universal Design in Technology Used in Interpreter Education**

**Daniel R. Roush<sup>1</sup>**

*Eastern Kentucky University*

## **Abstract**

Interpreter educators need to consider whether the educational technology they use is maximally accessible and usable. This paper discusses the application of universal design (UD) principles to educational technologies that have been adopted for use in interpreter education. Particularly, the focus is on the design of video annotation software features used in the assessment of interpretations. Some features currently being used meet minimal standards of accessibility but do not fully comply with principles of UD. This paper provides an overview of a pilot study of the development of prototype annotation features that would not only accommodate specialized needs for users who are deaf, but would actually be more usable by all levels of users. As part of this study, preliminary survey and discussion forum results are reported.

Keywords: interpreter education; technology; universal design; accessibility; video annotation; American Sign Language; English

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [daniel.roush@eku.edu](mailto:daniel.roush@eku.edu)

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# **Universal Design in Technology Used in Interpreter Education**

## **1. Introduction**

As part of the considerations of how educational technology may expedite intended educational outcomes, interpreter educators need to consider whether the tools chosen are maximally accessible and usable. According to the Center for Universal Design (CUD), universal design is “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (CUD, 1997). At first blush, universal design may not seem pertinent to interpreter education but rather a concern of engineers and architects. I will discuss the application of universal design (UD) principles to educational technologies that have been adopted for use in interpreter education. In particular, I will focus on the design of video annotation software features used in the assessment of interpretations. Based on data collected as part of a three-day online seminar held in May of 2009 related to technology use in assessing interpretations, I will argue that there are some technology features currently being used that appear to meet minimal standards of accessibility (i.e., the “adaptation or specialized design” mentioned above) but do not fully comply with principles of UD. I will also report a pilot study of the development of prototype annotation features that would not only accommodate specialized needs for users who are deaf, but would actually be more usable by all levels of users. As part of this study, I report preliminary survey and discussion forum data. I will focus on technologies used for American Sign Language (ASL) and English interpreter education in the United States. In keeping with the concept of UD, I will attempt to consider how the technology features may be useable in interpreter education in other language pairs, whether they are spoken or signed. The framework of UD and standards of accessibility will help interpreter educators answer the question of whether a given tool is maximally accessible and useable for its intended purpose.

## **2. Accessibility as a relative term**

Since my focus is on the design of software technology used in interpreter education, I will center my discussion of accessibility within this area. In the United States, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act<sup>2</sup> provides standards for technology used by employees of the federal government and/or members of the public accessing federal services. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), part of the international World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), has developed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W3C, 2008) and the Accessible Rich Internet Applications (W3C, 2009) that are used by Web designers and developers who wish to voluntarily create accessible Web sites and Web applications. Some organizations and educational institutions have internal Web accessibility policies

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<sup>2</sup> The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in the United States is part of civil rights legislation intended to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability.

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that incorporate the WAI standards by reference. Both Section 508 and the WAI standards have considerable overlap in their criteria for developing accessible Web content.

The overall goal of these standards is to make technology features and content more accessible for people with disabilities. These standards have been established in an attempt to strike a balance between making features and content accessible for the maximum amount of users and, at the same time, not put an undue hardship on designers and developers. The risk inherent with establishing criteria is that people may make absolute statements based on minimal compliance. In other words, designers may claim that their software is accessible, not recognizing that this is relative term. Compliance with these standards does not constitute that the features and content are absolutely accessible for every user and for every application of the features.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. Alternative formats vs. language translation**

One of the primary criteria within the accessibility standards is that all non-text content should have a text equivalent. For example, if an image is used, it should be tagged with descriptive text that can be processed by text-to-speech screen readers for users who are blind or visually impaired. For audio content, a text transcript or synchronized captions should be provided for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. By and large, the standards are concerned with providing accessibility from a *modality* perspective—since sound cannot be perceived by deaf individuals, the content should be provided in an alternative visual modality (i.e., text). Although visual text can be perceived by a person with vision, it does not necessarily mean it can be *linguistically comprehended*. Many deaf people in the United States can read English text quite well. However, for some deaf people, American Sign Language is their primary language and their preferred means of comprehending language-based content (e.g., consider the host of Internet video logs in ASL). Technology accessibility standards do not require translation of content into a signed language. To do so may be considered an undue burden. However, if software or Web content is designed and/or promoted for use by signing users, consideration should be given to provide more than text for language-based content. Principles of universal design, rather than accessibility standards, may be a better guide to ensuring greater usability of software features and content designed for interpreter education.

### **4. Universal design**

When accessibility requirements, such as sidewalk curb cuts for people who use wheelchairs, are implemented there are often unintended positive consequences. Not only do curb cuts make sidewalks accessible to people in wheelchairs, but also make sidewalks much more usable for the person pulling luggage on wheels or pushing an infant in the stroller, or the elderly person who doesn't have to lift his/her foot as high to step onto the sidewalk when crossing the street. Because certain designs benefit more than just people who are disabled, and because the population in the United States is aging, design professionals began considering maximum usability at the beginning of the design process, not as an afterthought or for minimal compliance with accessibility standards.

In 1997, a group of design professionals developed a set of principles to guide various disciplines in the design of environments, products, and communications. They developed the Principles of Universal Design 2.0 document.<sup>4</sup> I present the seven principles here, along with a definition of each (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

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<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, the same could be true of something designed in compliance with the Principles of Universal Design—the phrase “universally designed” is also relative.

<sup>4</sup> Copyright © 1997 North Carolina State University, the Center for Universal Design, compiled by advocates of universal design, listed in alphabetical order: Bettye Rose Connell, Mike Jones, Ron Mace, Jim Mueller, Abir Mullick, Elaine Ostroff, Jon Sanford, Ed Steinfeld, Molly Story, & Gregg Vanderheiden.

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### **PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use**

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE TWO: Flexibility in Use**

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE THREE: Simple and Intuitive Use**

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

### **PRINCIPLE FOUR: Perceptible Information**

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE FIVE: Tolerance for Error**

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

### **PRINCIPLE SIX: Low Physical Effort**

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

### **PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Size and Space for Approach and Use**

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use—regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

In the full document, each principle has a set of guidelines that may, or may not, apply to all designs. Also, since the focus of this paper is on software technology, some principles, such as number six, Low Physical Effort, which is more related to computer hardware design, do not apply. I list these principles here as a brief introduction. In the following sections, I will attempt to apply various UD principles to certain current and emerging features in software programs used in interpreter education.

## 5. Universal design in software annotation features

English and other spoken languages share the ability to record the language using a standardized writing system. ASL does not have such a writing system. The writing system of spoken languages affords the ability to proliferate its own literature; it also serves as a tool to annotate and critique itself and is useful for educating interpreters who work between two spoken languages. Interpreter educators and students of spoken languages can conveniently use the writing system of the target and/or source language to capture the interpreting performance and provide specific and permanent teacher-, peer-, and self-assessment in either the target and/or source language. The collection of a student's transcribed interpretations and written feedback in a portfolio forms the basis of assessment in spoken interpreter education (Sawyer, 2004).

With the advent of computer-based word processors and electronic texts, the ability to annotate and evaluate text with text is essentially as easy as marking up a paper with red pen. Word processing software, such as Microsoft Word, contains features that allow for the sharing and tracking of comments between authors and reviewers; it could be used in interpreter education as well. This commenting feature can be seen in Figure 1.

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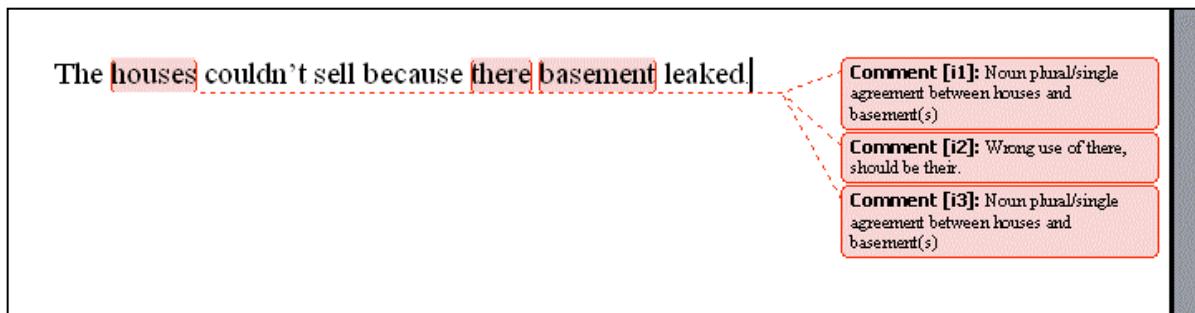


Figure 1: Comment feature in Microsoft Word.

Electronic text and related callout graphics exploit the non-linear/non-instantaneous nature of the English writing system<sup>5</sup> by allowing for annotations to precisely reference the text being critiqued. On the other hand, those rendering interpretations from English into ASL cannot enjoy the same benefits of having a writing system and the advances that electronic text offers (i.e., there is an inequality here, cf. UD Principle One). Additionally, although English text is visually accessible from a modality perspective, it is not *linguistically accessible* for deaf people whose native language is American Sign Language (i.e., there is inflexibility here, cf. UD Principle Two).

Despite popular belief, American Sign Language is not a code or “linguistic prosthesis”<sup>6</sup> based on English. It cannot be adequately recorded by the English writing system (English glossing of ASL is discussed below). Although there are several writing/notation systems<sup>7</sup> that have been developed, in general, the de facto method of “writing” ASL is to capture it through video recordings.<sup>8</sup> ASL-English interpreter education programs use video recording equipment to capture the English-to-ASL interpretation of students/mentees and attempt to use that for providing feedback. The difficulty in using video recordings as an evaluation tool is that there is essentially no convenient and practical means to provide feedback to students using ASL itself.

In particular, students or mentees often do not have the benefit of having comments provided in ASL that can be referenced to the precise moment in their language performance that is being critiqued. Teachable moments and connecting specific exemplars or errors with specific feedback is difficult. This is because video, as opposed to written text, is in a linear and instantaneous format (typically displayed between 15 and 30 frames per second). By its nature, video format is ideal for displaying a representation of the movement of ASL signing performance, but it does not have the same overall *gestalt* as text on a page or screen—where all the words on a page can be seen at once and any graphic hierarchy or annotations to the text can easily be found.

Based on data from an online survey of 150 interpreter teachers and mentors who participated in a three-day online seminar in May 2009 hosted by the National Interpreter Educator Center and entitled “Technology Tools for Assessing ASL-English Interpretations,” technology used in interpreter education often lacks features, which limit its utility in interpreter training and mentoring (more about this seminar and the survey is described below). One of the questions on the survey is: “What technology do you primarily use to provide feedback to students’ video-recorded English to ASL interpretations or signing skills?” Of the 150 interpreter teachers and mentors who responded, 33% selected “VHS/VCR technology.” Forty-two percent (42%) selected “other” and specified the technology they used with a comment. Nearly all these comments specified the use of digital video recorded

<sup>5</sup> I use the term *non-linear* here in the computer science sense of *random access* contrasted with *sequential access*. In other words, a reader can access English script at any point on a page/screen without having to sequentially move through all the words from the beginning. Because of this, a reader has an overall sense of the graphical layout of the page/screen and can immediately skip to areas of the page/screen where annotations have been made. On the other hand, because video format is time-based, it is linear in nature and requires sequential access to locate specific parts.

<sup>6</sup> I attribute the coining of this phrase to Harlan Lane (personal communication).

<sup>7</sup> Among these systems are SignWriting, Hamburg Notation System, and Stokoe Notation.

<sup>8</sup> In the early 1900s, the National Association of the Deaf in the United States recorded ASL on film as a way to preserve the language (NAD, 1913). Since the 1980s hundreds of ASL titles have been produced in video format. Recently, we have seen the advent of online scholarly journals published in ASL (see <http://dsdj.gallaudet.edu>).

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on DVD, a local computer, or online (see Table 1 in the Appendix for a summary of responses and Table 2 for a list of comments).

The use of these technologies can be problematic. Comments cannot be directly tied to the precise moment in the student's performance on video. It is possible to use the time code on the VCR/DVD player or online video player to make a reference, but this may be cumbersome for both the teacher and the student (i.e., it is not simple and intuitive, cf. UD Principle Three). Although there are some interpreter education programs (IEP) programs that have adopted software that was originally designed for feedback of athletic and artistic performance and allows for time-based text annotations of video, these programs can cost between \$4,500 and \$7,400 (US dollars) for a single license; less than 4% of the survey participants reported the use of these programs. Some IEP programs utilize a free software program called ELAN (see <http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan>), which was designed for synchronized linguistic annotations of video data; less than 3% of the survey participants reported the use of this program. These software programs do offer the ability to annotate video with text, but this does not address the issue of linguistic accessibility for the one giving feedback, and text does not provide feedback in a form that students could then easily model (again, cf. UD Principle Three).

For example, if an interpreter recorded an interpretation of a lengthy English discourse into ASL and interpreted the sentence "This morning an orange car smashed into my red car." into ASL incorrectly, the mentor would first need to reference this part of the interpretation and attempt to provide an English text gloss of the ASL. Because ASL uses a grammatical classifier<sup>9</sup> system to represent objects and spatial relationships, it is difficult to use English text characters to fully represent ASL classifiers. An English gloss of an equivalent<sup>10</sup> way to interpret the sentence in ASL is provided in Figure 2.

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<sup>9</sup> I use the term "classifier" here; elsewhere in the linguistics literature, these signs are also referred to as *polycomponential* signs.

<sup>10</sup> Equivalency in interpreting largely focuses on producing the equivalent *intent* and *meaning* from the source language to the target language. Therefore, since the focus of interpreting is on retaining the meaning and intent, it is often stated idiomatically and is not a word-for-word literal interpretation that attempts to retain the form of the source language. New interpreters often make errors in meaning equivalency when interpreting into their second language (e.g. ASL) because they may not know how to produce an utterance in an idiomatic way. They tend to fall back on a literal word-for-word interpretation, which often has no meaning, or a completely different meaning for speakers of the target language. Although students should be encouraged to develop self-assessment skills, this may not be realistic at an early stage in their education if they have not sufficiently developed native-like intuitions about their second language.

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MORNING, #CAR RED,  
(gaze lf)      (gaze rt )t(eyes follow orange car \_\_\_\_\_ )pow  
                  ORANGE, 3→CL-rt'move to lf and crash into rt side of red car'  
                  3→CL @lf \_\_\_\_\_ →

Figure 2: Text-based glossed transcription of an ASL sentence (Baker-Shenk, Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1991:288).

This gloss attempts to capture not only the manual classifier on the right hand (i.e., representing the red car) but of a separate simultaneous classifier signed with the left hand (i.e., representing the orange car). The gloss also attempts to record the important simultaneous non-manual grammatical features of eye gaze and modifying facial expressions. As can be seen from this example, attempting to represent ASL with text is unduly complicated for both the transcriber and the one reading the transcription. It is more linguistically accessible for both the mentor/teacher and the mentee/student to have ASL annotations represented in a graphical, *analog* way such as seen in the static illustration in Figure 3, or better still, to use dynamic video format.



Figure 3: An illustration of the ASL classifier phrase “car smash into other car” (from Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1991:288).

## **6. Methods and results of the pilot study: The development and evaluation of prototype annotation features**

As mentioned above, in May 2009, the National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) at Northeastern University, in Boston, Massachusetts (US), hosted a three-day online seminar entitled “Technology Tools for Assessing ASL-English Interpretations.” An announcement for this seminar was sent to hundreds of e-mail addresses from the NIEC contact database. The announcement targeted interpreter mentors and teachers who provide feedback to interpreting or ASL students. The purpose of the seminar was to present and discuss current and potential uses of

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technology and/or to assess video-recorded interpretations. Online registration for participation in the seminar was required. As part of the registration process, participants were required to complete an online survey that included 39 questions/items. The first question in the survey was, "Do you give feedback on signing and/or interpreting skills in your work?" Of the 150 responses, 100% selected "Yes." Participants were also asked to select their role/employment title from a list. As participants were allowed to select any number of roles that applied, there is no straightforward breakdown of roles (see Table 3 in the Appendix for a summary of responses).

The online "Technology Tools" seminar used discussion forum software that was organized around several discussion topics. Discussion topics included open questions, such as what technology participants were currently using. Other topic areas provided materials for participants to review and post comments. Participants could navigate to any discussion topic at any time during the three-day seminar. One of the discussion topics included a prototype mentoring environment for participants to test and discuss (see Figure 4 and [www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/demo\\_fs.html](http://www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/demo_fs.html)). The purpose of developing this prototype and discussion topic was twofold. The first purpose was to prove from a technology perspective that it was possible to develop online annotation features for video-recorded ASL that were more congruent with the principles of universal design than text annotation features. The second purpose was to allow the participants to test the prototype software and provide evaluative comments.



Figure 4: A prototype mentoring environment that uses signlinking to add video annotations to an interpretation (see [www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/demo\\_fs.html](http://www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/demo_fs.html) ).

The core technology for the prototype was based on exported *signlinked* Web pages created by a Web editing tool called SignLink Studio (SLS). Developed by the Centre for Learning Technologies at Ryerson University, The Canadian Hearing Society, and the University of Toronto, SLS is available to Web authors to create and implement accessible sign language-based Web pages (see [www.signlinkstudio.com](http://www.signlinkstudio.com); Richards, Hibbard,

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Hardman, Woodcock, & Fels, 2008). It is a stand-alone program that must be downloaded and run on personal computers. The fundamental concept of SLS is the creation of hyperlinks within a video so that there is no need to use text-based linking for navigation.

Signlinking is conceptually equivalent to text hyperlinking on a Web page. However, although text hyperlinking identifies the space occupied by a string of text on a page that links to some other resource on the Web, signlinking identifies a time interval of video during which the signer refers to the resource (Richards et al., 2008). The prototype mentoring environment harnessed the basic concept of signlinking as a method to add video-based annotations to ASL interpretations, thus proving that a more universally designed approach to annotation features is technologically possible.

Other features of signlinked videos that conform to UD principles are two navigation aids. When multiple hyperlinks appear in a conventional text-based Web page, users can simply scan over them to gain an overall view, or a gestalt, of the distribution of links with respect to each other and to the rest of the page, enabling them to form a quick, intuitive understanding of the Web page's role (e.g., the page is a content page or an index to other pages). In signlinking, this top-level view is achieved via the interaction of two navigation aids. The first is a *signlink density display* (Figure 4) that shows the location and relative length of all of the signlinks in the video, with the current link displayed in red (in the prototype mentoring environment, these links reference video comments about the interpretation). Clicking on a link lets the user discover the content of the link as it is played in the video area (in the prototype, this is the content in the interpretation that warranted a comment).

The second navigation aid is the *signlink thumbnail images* (Figure 4). These are arranged, three at a time, in a row below the video. The thumbnail images, one for each signlinked time interval, represent a frame captured from the respective intervals in the video. Each thumbnail image is given focus with red highlighting when the corresponding signlink occurs in the video. The static thumbnail images are not necessarily sufficient to unambiguously label what the signer is saying since movement is critical to sign language, but they are often enough to provide a hint or trigger recall for a returning user (Richards, et al., 2008).

*Optional text* features in the signlinked prototype also support UD principles. The first is an optional text label that was added below each thumbnail—this text label attempted to summarize in one word the topic of the linked video comment (sometimes using a gloss). The text label is also a hyperlink with the same URL as the signlink it is associated with. The second text feature is an optional text content area displayed to the right of the video. Within the prototype, this area provides an English transcription of the original source audio on which the interpretation is based, as well as instructions for the mentee. SLS also includes a captioning feature that was used in the prototype to provide a synchronized transcription of the source audio (Richards et al., 2008).

The prototype mentoring environment proved that it is technologically possible to apply signlinking as a method of adding video-based ASL annotations to interpretations. Since UD is ultimately about human usability of designs, I was also interested in testing the prototype with interpreter educator participants of the seminar. A link to the prototype was provided within a separate discussion topic area entitled "Signlink Demo: Prototype Interpreter Mentoring Environment." Participants were simply asked to explore the demo and discuss their thoughts and opinions within the respective discussion forum area. Over the three-day period, 16 separate comments were posted by 11 different participants (I do not count my three posts in this number). A thematic analysis of these 16 comments reveals four basic themes: favourable comments, questions regarding future development, technical support for viewing the prototype, and concerns with training and support (see all comments in Table 5 of the Appendix).

The qualitative data from the discussion comments that were part of the favourable theme corroborate with related quantitative data from the survey. Participants were asked to rate on a five-point scale the importance of the ability to provide feedback in ASL using video comments rather than text only. The majority (42%) selected the highest rating, "5, very important," followed by 28% selecting "4," followed by 17% selecting "3," followed by 7% selecting "2" and 7% selecting "1, not important." It appears that this feature, which was included in the prototype, is an important one for the participants. Another feature that participants were asked to rate, and was also included in the prototype, was the ability to provide feedback at the moment in the student's video to which the feedback refers. Participants were asked to rate the importance of this feature on the same five-point scale. The majority (62%) selected "5, very important," followed by 27% selecting "4," 6% selecting "3," 5% selecting "1, not important," and 1% selecting "2" (see the Appendix for a table that summarizes participants' ratings of six

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software features). Based on both qualitative and quantitative data, it appears that the participants favoured the prototype software and highly valued its key features.

### 7. Limitations of the pilot and future directions

The results of this pilot study completed with interpreter educators are preliminary and warrant further testing of the usability with the mentee/student population. Another limitation to the pilot study is the fact that the prototype mentoring environment represents an end product that provides an interface for *reviewing* video annotations. It does not, however, represent the software tools required for *adding* annotations to video—which was accomplished with SignLink Studio (SLS). The current SLS offers a rich authoring environment for the user who has the desire and skill to create Web pages. Admittedly, users may view the use of SLS for assessing interpretations as time consuming and overly complicated. In other words, while SLS may be well designed for the user it was intended for (i.e., Web page authors), the innovation of using the current SLS design in interpreter education may not be *universal enough*—particularly when considering UD Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive Use. More work is required to develop tools that are universally designed with this new application of signlink technology and the end user in mind.

The prototype mentoring environment demonstrated that it is possible to use signlinking for adding comments to ASL recorded on video. Its design is universal enough to be used with any signed language (UD Principle Two: Flexibility in Use). It is also flexible enough to use the audio capabilities within video format to be able to add spoken language comments (with or without captions) to either spoken or signed interpretations. Other flexibilities with future designs could allow for mentees/students to assess and annotate her/his own interpretations and submit these to the mentor/teacher to assess his/her ability to do self- or peer-assessments. This technology could also be used to provide feedback to language performance (as opposed to an interpretation performance) in ASL language classes or any other language class.

### 8. Summary and conclusions

Although technology used in interpreter education may comply with *modality-based* accessibility standards, such as those found in the WAI or Section 508, this does not mean that features or content are accessible from a linguistic perspective. Universal design principles may be a better guide in assuring that technology used in interpreter education is maximally accessible and usable. An example of this can be seen in the prototype mentoring environment, which attempted to gain greater equity, flexibility, simplicity, and perceptibility in allowing users to review synchronized video annotations as an interpretation assessment tool. UD principles were used to assess the usability of both the prototype as an end product and the SignLink Studio software that was used to create the prototype.

As technology continues to develop, the interpreter educator should continually survey what tools are available and critically consider how these tools may expedite intended educational outcomes. Both accessibility guidelines, as well as the principles of universal design, can be used as frameworks to enable critical thinking about both the design and application of technology to interpreter education. These criteria might be used to think and dialogue critically about the use and application of general technology resources (e.g., online course platforms) provided by educational institutions in which interpreter education programs are situated; many technology support staff within institutions are familiar with these guidelines and principles. These frameworks could also be used to consider software programs that are specifically marketed to interpreter educators, and interpreter educators can either work with the designers of these programs to make improvements or independently design new alternatives (as has been done in the online prototype discussed above and with VideoLinkwell™ software—available at [www.videolinkwell.com](http://www.videolinkwell.com)—that was programmed by an interpreter educator). Interpreter educators can use accessibility and usability criteria as they consider the use of online tools

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designed for anyone to publish Web content, such as the use of Blogger™ ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)) that was used to create co-authored video logs shared between teachers and students (Roush & Coyer, 2007) or the potential use of annotation tools available on video sharing Websites such as YouTube and Viddler. A demonstration of these tools was made available during the “Technology Tools” online seminar and can be seen at [http://www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/vid\\_annotate\\_demo.html](http://www.interpreting.eku.edu/bigmac/demo/vid_annotate_demo.html).

More work needs to be done in our field to specify our technology needs, collaborate with designers and developers, and agree on best practices for expediting intended student learning outcomes using technology. This work will no doubt require more technology training for interpreter educators and, ultimately, more money for the development, purchase, and administration of technology. Learning more about usability design helps us become more savvy as we pursue these means to attain our goals. It will help the professionals in the field advance in the use of technology and, ultimately, improve the ability to educate interpreters.

### **9. Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Betsy Winston and Sarah Snow for their support in arranging the “Technology Tools” seminar and in developing the survey and for everyone who participated. Thanks also goes to Karen Petronio, Ward Henline, and Gay Woloschek for assisting me in the development of the prototype mentoring environment. I would also like to thank Lisa Bordone Roush, Karen Petronio, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments in the writing of this article. I accept full responsibility for any errors.

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## Daniel Roush

### 11. Appendix

What technology do you primarily use to provide feedback to students' video-recorded English to ASL interpretations or signing skills?	Count	%
Traditional VCR/VHS format	49	33%
StudioCode	1	1%
CommuniCoach	1	1%
Dartfish	0	0%
Sony Virtuoso/Soloist	6	4%
YouTube	3	2%
None, I only assess live performances	20	13%
N/A	7	5%
Other, please specify	63	42%
Total	150	100%

Table 1: Survey Responses to "What technology do you primarily use to provide feedback to students' video-recorded English to ASL interpretations or signing skills?"

#	Comment	#	Comment
1	emailed comments/advise	33	they give me cds or send them through you send it
2	flip cam - use Blackboard uploads, quicktime	34	VideoLinkwell
3	DVD	35	For students, Logitech Webcam w/Windows Media.
4	DVD w/ Media Player	36	also assess live performances
5	DVD/VHS from them	37	CDs, DVDs
6	ELAN (annotation) and PANDA (capture) software	38	GenCom
7	DVD format	39	Whatever the student records on.
8	audio recordings of feedbk sync to Std recording	40	use the camera in my MAC
9	A mix of analog, digital, and in person	41	I don't really understand the question
10	DVD	42	Digital recording
11	BB w/Wimba and Camtasia, Adobe Connect, ooVoo, Ang	43	Digital Video
12	Digital video and video annotation software	44	DVD, ELAN and Panda software
13	dvd/ cd rom	45	Combination of: Video/VHS, Panda (software), ELAN
14	digital videocamera	46	Webcam w/Rec. SW, similar to Sony Virtuoso/Soloist
15	DVD recordings	47	Save work to flashdrives.
16	Vimeo	48	recordings in format available to working terps
17	Written reports	49	Digital recordings - not those programs listed
18	Blackboard	50	Live signing and VHS/DVD format

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19	in person and face to face	51	Also, DVDs, QuickTime movies, and 'live'....
20	iMac Webcam/iMovie capture/Quicktime Share	52	Vimeo
21	DVD and live settings	53	Vimeo
22	DV and DVD	54	General Communications
23	QT files uploaded to Blackboard	55	QuickTime movies made with iMovie or QuickTime Pro
24	Voice Thread	56	I mostly use live and vhs. I use them equally
25	combination of VHS & live performances	57	Sony Mini DVD
26	digital video recordings played back in WMP	58	VCR/VHS, digital video formats, internet
27	iMovie and written comments	59	Variety of Media Resources - CamCorder Recording
28	CD/DVD recordings	60	written / verbal
29	Vimeo, posted online on designated Website	61	DVD format and live performances
30	Email	62	generally live, but have used DVC video
31	Google Video, will switch to Picasa	63	Viewpoint
32	"tape" onto the harddrive with MovieMaker		

Table 2: "Other, please specify" Survey Responses to "What technology do you primarily use to provide feedback to students' video-recorded English to ASL interpretations or signing skills?"

Please describe your primary role: Select as many as apply to you.	Count	%
Full-time interpreter educator	33	22%
Part-time interpreter educator	59	39%
Full-time ASL teacher	9	6%
Part-time ASL teacher	29	19%
ITP/IEP program director/administrator	21	14%
Mentor/practicing interpreter	92	61%
Practicing interpreter	90	60%
Interpreter student	3	2%
Institution/agency-based technology support person	3	2%
Technology developer	6	4%
Other, please specify	37	25%

Table 3: Survey Responses to "Please describe your primary role: Select as many as apply to you."

Participant	Comment
A	Danny, Thanks for this demo--I have been looking for a long time for the right combination of software with these features combined and included in one place. The demo makes this look easy--what is still needed to continue development and make this accessible for people to use?
B	Very cool! I love the fact that you can identify and mark where in the video you want to make a comment, provide feedback or compliment. A great tool! Plus, to have the option of captioning so it combines access to both languages. Providing comments in the target language reinforces the goal of language exposure as is mentioned in several of these articles.

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	The blue background is a bit strong for my eyes... but I really really really like the tool! 😊
C	<p>Hi, Danny --</p> <p>I'm not sure which demo you and [Participant A] were talking about, but I was blown away (in a very good way!) by your demo video -- with comments interspersed at key points. Fantastic!</p> <p>To clarify, is that what you used Signlink Studeo for? Or is that something you can do on YouTube?</p> <p>I know I've seen things like this on YouTube before (and even including links on the video), but I'm not sure how it's done... (It'd be great to have a quick and easy way to do this... ???)</p>
D	<p>I really like this... but its not a package?... is the idea for you to make it one? I think this could be put to great use with distance learners. The thing I still envision though as I mentioned on a different thread is the ability to do a "live" or synchronous session... where you are audio or video linked to the student while both are viewing the sample.</p> <p>[Participant F].. the skype idea is brilliant!</p> <p>On another note, I realize we are working to build second language fluency which for most of us is ASL but I would like to see these tools demonstrated in the ASL to English interpreting instruction as well. I see too many ITP graduates and practitioners in general adverse to working ASL to spoken English. The reasons are many but there is a common thread of not enough training on working from ASL as source... and in terms of learning sequence, one wants to first work from L2 to L1.. yet all these tools are appearing to emphasize the opposite. The Deaf community does have issue with interpreters having substandard ASL but they also have issue with substandard English interpretations ... anyway... these tools work equally effectively ASL to English I assume?</p>
E	<p>Is anyone else having difficulties getting the demo to open? I just tried it from my work computer and I get a blank window. I'll try it at home later today to see if it's something to do with our firewall.</p>
E	<p>OK, it works (mostly) at home using FireFox. However, when I clicked on the "SignLinks" they downloaded and opened in QuickTime, but all I get is colored squiggles.</p> <p>Guess this is a good preview of the kinds of difficulties students (and instructors) may have when we try various new technologies.</p>
F	<p>yes, i too am having difficulty opening it. I will try a different computer.</p>
G	<p>Wow, this is a great tool! I think this as a "package" would be a great investment to anyone mentoring/teaching interpreters.</p> <p>I could see this program allowing me to video an educational interpreter, reviewing and offering feedback, and sending the program with my reviews to the interpreter. This would allow the interpreter to have written comments to the sections and an easy review of the tips. I like having the ability to mark a particular section for feedback. I am going to play with this and see if I can make it work.</p> <p>I hope you get the funding so we will see this product in the future.</p>
H	<p>It seems to me that the Signlink prototype demo with synchronized ASL feedback is forging a new accessible avenue for ASL mentees/students and their mentors/instructors. Daniel, you mentioned that there is "manual work needed even though the Signlink Studio software helped you make it possible;" my biggest concern: is this simple enough for me to use? I like that it is reinforcing for students, which research tells us will enhance achievement and will stimulate motivation. Educational psychology supports the notion that reinforcing efforts will teach students the valuable lesson of: the harder you try, you'll likely be more successful.</p>

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	<p>What I especially like about this prototype demo is its potential. One of the biggest challenges with the technology is simply to get it to the people who need it. Obviously, Daniel, you have done the hard work needed to assemble the tools to make this prototype attractive. Now, the challenge is how to make it available(which really should have been the easiest part of this process)? We have "Le Reve"(the dream), like a sparkling silver star, now we have to make it reachable. One of the most appealing features of this prototype is that it will allow those previously "disenfranchised" individuals who are Deaf to be part of interpreter training and development, which could have a exponential impact on number of interpreters who are more "culturally sensitive" and more highly skilled in the interpreting process.</p> <p>Of course, as you mentioned, Daniel, developing the prototype for those who need it is one thing, it is quite another to make it financially feasible. Do you have any idea what this Signlink prototype might eventually cost? And, what kind of time line you might be looking at, once funding is secured?</p> <p>In terms of cognitive psychology, J.R. Anderson addresses skill mastery in "Learning and Memory: An Integrated Approach," and notes the amount of practice necessary for students to achieve a "fair" level of competence in a skill; learning new content requires practice over a period of time. Japanese educators have taught us that slowly shaping learning is more effective. This prototype it seems will allow students to adapt or "shape" language skills as they are learning them. Furthermore, it seems this technology would allow an instructor/mentor to examine a few problems in depth with focused practice (practicing a complex, multistage skill), allowing the student/mentee to engage in the overall process of interpreting but allowing for targeting of specific aspects of the feedback process for skill development.</p>
H	Danny, thanks for your response. If it is simple enough for me to use, free for users, and accessible for Deaf and Hearing users, you will have done a community service. That's what I call new technology at its best---making life better.
I	I am wondering about training for all these different programs. Danny you mentioned "Since it is intended to create signing Web pages some familiarity with publishing to a server and using hyperlinks is necessary". I am, sad to say, out of the loop with a lot of this new technology in the interpreting field. With all these different softwares becoming available, it would be nice to have workshops or classes that not only introduce these programs, but train the user on them. I am already so overwhelmed with all the information I am learning in this conference, but am eager to learn and use this stuff when it becomes available. As a hands on learner, and life-long seeker of CEU's 🎓, I am thinking that I would like more hands- on training and information on these programs and software. Would that be something you would consider with the mentoring version of this you are working on?
J	My sentiments exactly, [Participant I]. I am also overwhelmed with the technology options available today. I agree that training is a great need. I would like to be trained more specifically, with guidance, on how to use these tools. I would be willing to pay for training. Is anyone thinking of developing such a course for those who want to know more? I need more detail in order to determine what might work for specific assignments in interpreter training.
C	Maybe something at CIT next year? (hint, hint)
D	That is exactly what I am walking away with from this conference... great introduction but my level of tech "know how" is limited and I would need a compare and contrast training of the various options. Definitely something I would pay to get

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## Daniel Roush

K	You raise a good point,[Participant I]. Training is vital for teachers, but I think more so for students. I know students can become frustrated when the technology is difficult to use; it can impede their ability to actually DO the work since they stress about whether the stuff will actually work or not! We need to take the technology learning curve into account in planning lessons as well.
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Table 4: Comments posted by 11 participants in response to the "Prototype Mentoring Environment"

Rate the level of importance for the following features:					
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	1—Not Important	2	3	4	5—Very Important
Ability to provide feedback in ASL using video comments rather than text only	10	10	25	42	63
	7%	7%	17%	28%	42%
Ability to provide feedback in English using audio comments rather than text only	15	15	30	40	50
	10%	10%	20%	27%	33%
Ability to provide feedback at the moment in the student's video to which the feedback refers	7	1	9	40	93
	5%	1%	6%	27%	62%
Ability to monitor both the source and target languages at the same time when assessing interpretation	6	3	5	39	97
	4%	2%	3%	26%	65%
Ability to add captions to English source or target videos so that they are accessible for Deaf teachers/mentors	8	13	27	38	64
	5%	9%	18%	25%	43%
Add accessibility features such as captioning, etc.	16	10	31	46	47
	11%	7%	21%	31%	31%

Table 5: Survey Participants' Ratings of Six Features

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# A Competency Model for Video Relay Service Interpreters

**Norma Lee Oldfield<sup>1</sup>**

*Performance Improvement, LLC*

## Abstract

The development of Video Relay Services (VRS) has resulted in a new specialization in the field of sign language interpreting. However, the supply of highly skilled practitioners falls short of the increasing demand. Though interpreters are being placed in VRS call centers, there is no standardized model by which to measure VRS interpreter performance. This study uses a classic competency model design to guide the development of a competency model that identifies and describes sign language video interpreter competencies related to VRS work. A VRS competency dictionary and rating tool were created and used to measure current practitioners, and both were successfully validated. Further research for future development of VRS interpreters is specified.

Keywords: sign language interpreting; video relay services; VRS; competency studies; expert development; assessment; training; performance improvement

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

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# A Competency Model for Video Relay Service Interpreters

## 1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to create a video relay service (VRS) competency model to be used by educators, trainers, and VRS providers to evaluate current and future video interpreters, as well as guide the development of those video interpreters toward expert performance. The study uses a continuum of expertise to benchmark the differences between novice, competent, and expert VRS performers. The study also identifies and describes the behaviors and competencies of VRS interpreters.

### 1.1. *VRS creates demand*

A situational analysis shows that sign language interpreter education and development are not producing the number of practitioners needed to keep up with current demands, much less the predicted demands for the near future. There is also an existing competency gap for general interpreters who successfully complete an interpreter training program yet are not ready to begin a successful practice (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). This means a graduate of an interpreter training program is not considered part of the qualified talent pool for general interpreting practice, much less for a specialization such as VRS.

It is estimated that VRS centers throughout the United States employ over 4000 interpreters on either a full- or part-time basis to provide millions of minutes of interpreting services per month. VRS providers compete for the most qualified, experienced, and highly certified interpreters across the country (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2006). The recognized need for more interpreters is industry-wide.

### 1.2. *Interpreter education: Moving from deontological to teleological*

There are numerous studies surrounding expert development, and there is evidence in the literature to suggest that experts do things differently than novices (Benner, 1984; Ericsson & Smith, 1991). For instance, experts employ different problem solving strategies in complex environments. They exhibit deeper understanding of the principals of the subject matter in which they are experts. They have automated many of the simpler tasks, and this allows more attention to be directed to new challenges. Furthermore, experts are more aware of how they do things, as well as when they are right or wrong. The process of expertise development involves the learning of more effective problem-solving and metacognitive strategies, as well as a heroic effort over and above what normal learning requires (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). Yet, instructional models in traditional interpreter training programs continue to emphasize low-level cognitive and practical skill development: “earlier models often discouraged practitioners from exploring the implications of decision-making on communication outcomes and offered limited direction in how to apply critical thinking to resolve demands associated with the work of interpreters” (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 1998, in Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005, p. 24).

## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

Models of interpretation used in sign language interpreter training programs were designed to structure content and text so that interpreters could process the information in a way that led to a semantically equivalent translation (Gish, 1996).

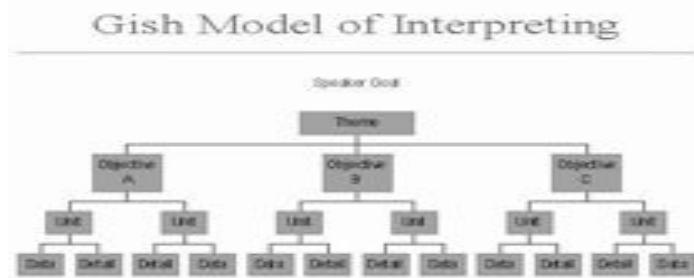


Figure 1. Gish model of interpreting.

Sign language interpreter training has been predominantly a transfer of knowledge, comprehension, and application surrounding linguistic skills and message equivalencies. However, sign language interpreter training is changing.

Current cognitive models are beginning to account for the potential demands of the environment and the participants of an interpreted event. There is a movement to move the critical thinking of sign language interpreters from a *deontological*, or rule-based approach, to a more *teleological*, or goal-based approach. The work of Robyn Dean and Robert Pollard is responsible for this shift in approach. Dean and Pollard (2006) use a demand-control schema theory to analyze interpreting work. Practitioners are introduced to the complete spectrum of interpreting work challenges and are taught to consider specific factors within the interpreting work environments that affect them, their consumers, and their resulting translations. This demand-control schema, as a work analysis tool, allows interpreters to incorporate the development of higher levels of cognitive and metacognitive skills, such as evaluation, synthesis, and judgment, as they analyze their own work.

Dean and Pollard's introduction of demand-control schema and the application of a teleological approach to interpreting requires practitioners to consider multi-layered decision-making processes, the psychological stresses surrounding the demands, and responsibility for the results of the work as it is performed. The result is a much more complex, multilayered environment requiring higher order cognitive processing skills in which the application of a specialized VRS skill set would be centered (see Figure 2).

In such complex environments, expertise is both acquired and required. Superior performers manage and excel, sometimes without knowing what or how they do it. In complex jobs, competencies are relatively more important in predicting superior performance than are task-related skills, intelligence, or credentials (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Interpreting for a VRS is a complex job, and identifying competencies to measure levels of expertise is foundational.

## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

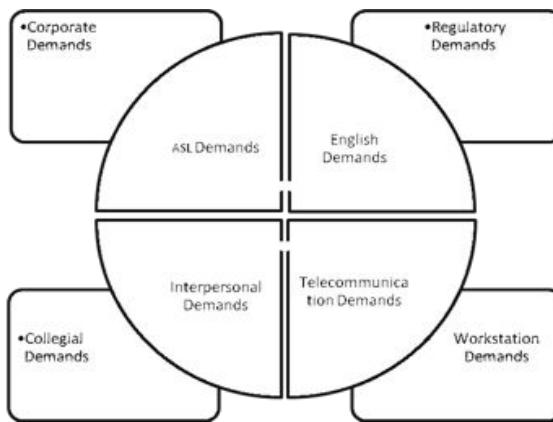


Figure 2: Areas of expertise required for VRS

## 2. Competency study design

This study uses a classic competency model design (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) as a guide:

Performance effectiveness criteria were defined. Three groups of VRS managers and trainers made up the expert panels. Each group brainstormed ultimate video interpreter (VI) behaviors that they recognized in their superior performers. The groups prioritized the behaviors according to the importance to job success.

The first criterion sample was identified and invited to participate. The groups of VRS managers and trainers were asked to nominate interpreters in three categories: novice, competent and expert practitioners.

Data were collected from nominated practitioners. Behavioral event interviews (BEI) were conducted with nominated VIs from four different call centers. These interviews provided the language for how the competencies are expressed in specific industry or organizational cultures. The BEIs provided very specific descriptions of effective and ineffective job behaviors that can be used to show and teach others what to do, and what not to do, on the job.

Data were analyzed and a competency model was developed. Data were analyzed from all four groups (i.e., managers and three levels of VIs) to quantify the behaviors of VIs, as described in their transcribed interviews. The numbers were analyzed to identify any significant correlations between the groups' rankings of each competency and its salience to the job.

The competency model was validated. Two managers and one trainer were asked to rate and rank members of a second criterion sample on competencies, using a rating form developed from the competency model. In this type of research, if the competency model and the rating form are valid, superstars in the second sample should get higher scores on these rating forms than the average or novice performers. This satisfied the concurrent construct validation.

### 2.1. Thematic analysis

There were four occurrences of data analysis during this study. The first occurred in the process of developing the competency statements. The information gathered from the expert panels was used to establish competency statements. By carefully examining the data generated in the facilitated discussion, themes were identified and clusters of competencies became the competency dictionary. The second data analysis occurred during the rating

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

of the BEIs. Each time an example of a listed competency was identified, it was noted and counted toward a final score for each VI interview. The third analysis occurred when the quantitative data were compared across groups to establish significance. And the fourth analysis was accomplished by tallying the rating sheets that were filled out by VRS managers and a VRS trainer in order to validate the competency model.

### **2.2. Measures**

In developing themes and codes from raw data, researchers must have a great deal of faith in the process because they typically do not know what the destination will be or what it will look like or how long it will take (Boyatzis, 1998). Data driven codes are constructed inductively from the raw information. Working directly with the raw information enhanced an appreciation of the information and allowed the researcher to appreciate the gross (i.e., easily evident) as well as the intricate (i.e., difficult to discern) aspects of the information. For example, in the present research, the phrases “I can keep an appropriate emotional distance.” or, “I know how to deal with people in general.” and “I’m helpful to others.” might be labelled as “customer service orientation.” These phrases could be said to have a unifying theme and a notation would be made in this category each time any of these phrases are mentioned in an interview story.

Transcribed interviews were coded and each time a competency was mentioned, it was marked for frequency of occurrence. That data were transferred onto one of three master tables: one for performers identified as being superior, one for performers identified as being average, and one for performers identified as being novices. The data collected on the three master tables were used to create charts comparing the three groups.

The outcome of this step was a set of qualitative categories (i.e., competency dictionary with examples of phrases) and a rating sheet for VRS skills assessment (see Appendix).

### **2.3. Limitations of methodology**

There was a potential for contamination of performance and responses due to the familiarity of some of the participants with the researcher. Participants outside of the researcher’s own workplace were included. The volume of information collected by way of BEIs had to be transcribed and analyzed for each interview, which was time and cost intensive.

The final number of VI participants was thirteen. A greater number of respondents would have been desirable, in order to have more application and generalization of the findings. However, it proved to be quite difficult to recruit individual participants. VRS providers are competing for the same number of qualified interpreters, therefore the nature of the industry is proprietary and information is fiercely guarded. Asking interpreters to participate in discussions with other interpreters from other VRS providers required reassurance that the discussions would be in general about the work, never specifically about a company or any company’s processes. Some interpreters declined to participate due to the potential conflict of interest.

### **2.4. Data collection**

Data collection for this study was completed in two parts. Part one of the data was collected from VRS managers. These management group discussions resulted in a clustering and ranking of competencies that supervisors and trainers found to be important in VRS interpreting. This portion of the data served as the foundation for a competency dictionary and a starting place for organizing behaviors into clusters. A benefit of collecting data from management is the ability to identify the potential rhetoric versus identifying de facto phenomenon. It can happen in a practice profession that a “prevailing schema or belief of how that profession conducts its work fails to adequately account for the realities encountered in the professional practice” (Marchark, Peterson, Winston & Sapere, 2005, p. 264). Gathering descriptions of a superior VRS performance from a management perspective

## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

followed by data collection from the practitioners themselves illuminated some gaps between what is believed to be effective and what VRS practitioners actually do in their jobs.

Part two of the data was collected from three levels of practitioners who were nominated by the management group as novice, competent, or expert. The Dreyfus and Dreyfus skill development model describes these levels as: (a) *novice*, those who follow rules with some flexibility; (b) *competent*, those who are able to apply goal-directed plans and strategies; and (c) *experts*, those who have reached a point where decision making becomes unnecessary and they naturally do the right thing, without having to think about it (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993).

From the participant group, the data showed that the average VRS interpreter in this study was female, in her thirties, is not a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), holds a degree in interpreting, has been nationally certified for an average of six years, and has been professionally interpreting for an average of 11.5 years with just under two years of VRS experience (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Summary Statistics

	Mean	Median	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Age	34.75	31.50	27.00	23.00	50.00
Years interpreting	11.50	10.00	23.00	2.00	25.00
Years certified	6.00	6.50	15.00	0.00	15.00
Years VRS Experience	1.90	1.75	5.00	0.04	5.00
		Total		Male	Female
CODA		Yes	3	2	1
		No	9	1	8
		Total	12	3	9

The individual behavioral event interviews were coded by number of times each competency was mentioned. Spencer and Spencer (1993) explain that the BEI method identifies competencies needed to do the job well. Interviewees tend to tell vivid “short stories” about how they handle the toughest, most important parts of their jobs and, in doing so, reveal their competencies to do the job (p. 98). Competencies were counted each time they appeared in the BEI, providing data on frequency per expert level, as well as an order of importance.

Counting and ordering the competencies by number of times they were mentioned reflected, first, a differential between expert levels and, second, an ordinal ranking of individual practitioners’ beliefs of what is most important for the job. The management group ranked each competency from highest to lowest in order of importance for the job. If the individual VIs had mentioned the use of these competencies along the same lines of priority as the management group, the highest number of times this occurred would map out at 1A while the next highest number of mentions would be 1B, and then 1C, and so on, throughout the list of 23 competencies. If the work that was being done (*de facto*) aligned with what management thinks is being done (*rhetoric*), the managers and practitioners would have ranked the list of competencies identically. However, the three groups of VIs (i.e., novice, competent and expert) rated each competency and its perceived importance to the work differently from the management group.

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

### **3. Findings**

#### *3.1. Population sample*

The variance of participants was averaged to create a profile; however, the dispersion of their ages, years of experience, and years of certification was noticeable (see Table 1). A larger sample would have been necessary to provide greater estimation precision. This will have an impact on a generalization of the findings. The assumption that a proportionate percentage of the general interpreting population would be represented in the sample did prove true. A majority of professional interpreters are female and have a degree; the majority of respondents were female and did have a degree.

An interesting finding is that of the participants: two-thirds of the sample were native sign language users (i.e., CODAs—Children of Deaf Adults) and two-thirds of the CODAs were male. It may be significant that in VRS, the gender item did figure into the CODA population sample. This issue will be addressed in the implications/recommendations section.

#### *3.2. Ranking of competencies*

The managers and practitioners agreed on the salience of 11 items, which is almost 50%. This means that half of what the managers believe their top performers are doing is what they are indeed doing. The rhetoric versus defacto is in alignment half of the time. The only differences in the top 50% of agreed upon competencies are the ranked order. Managers ranked the clusters ordinally: #1: personal effectiveness, #2: customer service, and #3: interpreting skills. The novice group ranked them: #1, #3, #2. The competent group ranked them: #2, #1, #3. And, the expert group ranked them: #1, with #2 and #3 tied. The expert group most aligned what they do with what the managers say they do.

The differences in ranking were in the latter 50% of the competencies. None of the groups ranked the latter half of the competencies similarly. However, each group had evidence of each competency and cluster being salient to the job, so, though there are differences in the rankings of the competencies, the competencies overall were found to be appropriate.

#### *3.3. Comparison between groups*

In this sample, the correlations between group rankings proved to be significant. There was a correlation (at .01cv) between the managers' and the practitioners' rankings of competencies. There was a correlation (at .01cv) between the managers' and the novices' rankings of competencies. There was a correlation (at .01cv) between the managers' and the experts' rankings of competencies. There was a significant correlation (at .01cv) between the novice, competent, and expert groups rankings of competencies. There was not a correlation (at either the .05cv or .01cv) between the managers' and the competent groups' rankings of competency clusters. This means that the correlations between management/novice and management/experts are driving the overall finding of significance between management and all practitioners. The greatest difference in correlation and ranking was between the managers and the competent group. The description of performance leading to expertise lists characteristics of competent performers to be one that relies on trial and error to resolve problems and still requires guidance from more skilled individuals to improve (McCarthy & Senebald, 2000). If the competent VIs in this study were furthest from the managers', experts', and novices' ranking of competency order of importance, they might be the group that needs more formal induction into VRS so that the weighted values of the competencies can be emphasized. If they understand that their own personal effectiveness and customer service skills are valued above their interpreting or technology skills, then trial and error might be minimized. Comparing rankings between groups of expertise shows where each group aligns with the stated goals of management and where the gaps

## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

occur. A question posited by Gilbert (1996) in his behavioral engineering model (BEM), box number one (see Figure 3), is whether individuals know what is expected of them.

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>	<b>Motivation</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>1. Data, information</b> Do performers know what is expected?	<b>2. Resources, tools, environmental support</b> Do performers have what they need to perform?	<b>3. Consequences, rewards, incentives</b> Do performers get appropriate feedback?
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	<b>4. Knowledge, skills</b> Do performers have the knowledge or skills to perform?	<b>5. Capacity</b> Are performers capable of performing?	<b>6. Motivation</b> Do the performers care about the job or their performance? Are recruiting objectives matching the realities of the job?

Figure 3: *Gilbert's behavior engineering model (1996.)*

Helping the competent VI understand what management expects them to prioritize in the workstation would be a human performance improvement application. Box number four (see Figure 3) in Gilbert's model suggests that specific training could be designed and applied to the competent group to match performance requirements.

### 3.4. Rating sheet to validate the competency model

A score sheet was designed and sent to two VRS managers and one VRS trainer to rate VIs in each of the skill groups: novice, competent and expert. Analysis of the rating sheets indicated that the managers and the trainer did rate expert VIs higher than competent VIs, and that they rated competent VIs higher than novice VIs. The ratings were clearly entry level scores in the novice group (at the 1- and 2-point levels on a 5-point scale) and clearly expert level scores with the expert group (at the 4- and 5-point levels on a 5-point scale). It was the competent ratings that tended to be higher than average (at the 4- and 5-point levels on a 5-point Likert scale). In spite of the higher scores, this group was still categorized as competent by the raters. Again, the perception of the competent VIs having to use trial and error as a problem resolution technique might be underdeveloped in the opinions of the managers. Use of the demand-control schema as a work analysis tool might allow this group of interpreters to incorporate the development of higher levels of cognitive and metacognitive skills such as evaluation, synthesis, and judgment as they analyze their own work. Identifying the gaps and designing training protocol for human performance improvement could be focused on this group of practitioners.

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

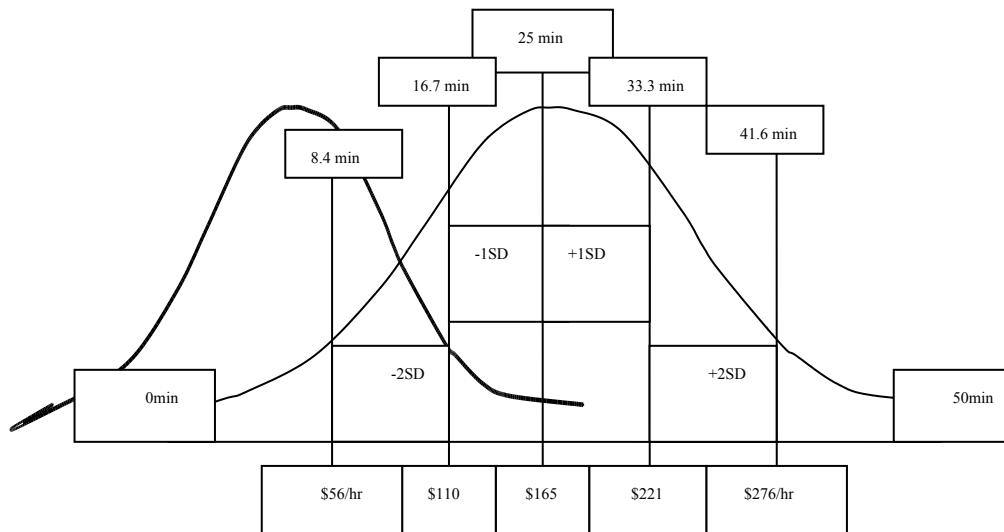
### **4. Implications and recommendations**

In consideration of the population sample for this study, it may be significant that in VRS, the gender item did figure into the CODA population sample. VRS is a lucrative specialization compared to the historically classified social service of general sign language interpreting. Men who were primary income streams for families might not have made a good living as a general practitioner in the past, nor would they have had much opportunity for upward mobility. Now, with respectable wages in VRS and positions of management in corporate organizations, there may be more men, and therefore, more male CODAs entering the field. Further research might compare the number of male general interpreters and the number of male VRS interpreters with an emphasis on male CODAs working in VRS. Also, there might be an interest in how a VRS environment and managers' assessments of competencies differ across genders.

Pertaining to specific VI skill levels and their alignment with management expectations for VRS, the competent group was most out of alignment with management in ranking of competencies, as well as in how they were rated in the validation step. If the expert and novice group are in general alignment with managers' expectations, then why is the competent group's ranking not in alignment? And why is the competent group scored high in skill sets but not considered expert by management on the continuum of expertise? Consider the process of interpreter development; the novice VI would be coming out of recent training and education programs fully loaded with VRS jargon and managers' expectations (rhetoric) while the expert VIs have accumulated the requisite number of years and experience and have the confidence of performance (*de facto*). It might be the competent VI who has general interpreting experience, perhaps some VRS experience, but enters this specialization without formal induction and is left to his or her own devices. Perhaps each group is learning on the job by trial and error; however, the novice group would be held to entry level expectations and the expert group is setting the standards. The groups at either end, novices and experts, have a comfortable level of expectation as they align with what their managers value. Competent VIs may be experiencing discomfort or conflict, as it would seem that their values do not completely align with expected social values. This conflict may lead to frustration and dissatisfaction and, eventually, attrition.

Human performance improvement interventions could be used to reduce the time and frustration spent at this level of performance. Another question to consider as per the behavioral engineering model (see Figure 3), box number three is whether there are career development opportunities available in order to attain desired accomplishments from human resources (Gilbert, 1996). Moving competent practitioners to the expert level might be considered a career development opportunity, especially if that kind of development is rewarded with financial incentives. The gap between what the competent group valued and what was socially valued could be addressed directly by way of coaching and guidance about their performance. It is possible that without intervention the competent practitioner could remain competent without advancement. On the whole, that is an expensive difference for the VRS provider (see Figure 4).

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Each VRS hour caps at 50 minutes  
 Each conversation minute is worth \$6.64 in reimbursement  
 50% or 25 minutes would be an average performance  
 -1 SD is potentially worth \$110/hr  
 +1 SD is potentially worth \$220/hr  
 Or, 100% more potential productivity from an above average performance  
 than a below average performance

*Figure 4: Potential productivity value of 1 standard deviation.*

The economic example of one superior performer capturing up to \$2380 in reimbursable minutes per shift versus an average performer capturing \$1322 in reimbursable minutes per shift is a substantial difference. From the company's perspective, the employee costs could be the same for both VIs but the returns are significantly different. Not only are there potential revenue losses for the company, but stagnancy and lack of development could be a potentially unsatisfactory career path for the competent individual as well. Turn-over costs would have to be estimated along with the potential per-minute revenue loss of an average performer. If this assumption were accurate, the competent group might be best served with a human performance improvement intervention of VRS coaching to promote immediate structured development.

Another speculation about the competent group is that, according to the results of the rating sheet, the competent group is doing what the managers think they should be doing but perhaps are not able to articulate or sustain it. If they are performing the higher skills sets (Managers did tend to rate them at the higher end on the Likert scale.) but not able to recognize it in their own work, training toward expertise might not be complicated or lengthy. Targeted training to identify the skills, label them, and show current application and effectiveness might be enough to move competent VIs to an expert level.

It is often assumed that only the most experienced interpreters are successful VRS practitioners. The profile of the average VI included 11.5 years of professional experience. However, in this study, recent graduates from interpreter training programs reduced the average noticeably, as they offset the 20-plus years of professional practice by each of the CODA VIs. The novice VIs were placed in VRS call centers and were doing the work at least at entry level and some at a competent level. Using the rating sheet, VRS managers and trainers could target a novice VI's training and development.

To address human performance improvement for professional development of current VIs, VRS providers could use the rating sheet to objectively categorize their VRS staff and know where to begin addressing each VI's

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## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

professional development. Because each competency is described in the competency dictionary, it might be in each VRS provider's best interest to establish a rating sheet training to standardize assessment results.

The literature review asserted that studies using competency model designs can identify what needs to be taught to future practitioners and how it can be taught, as well as determine the most effective media for the delivery of instruction (Dubois, 1998). Interpreter education programs at the two- and four-year colleges can use this competency model to outline skill sets required and write curricula tailored to VRS as a specialization over and above their general sign language interpreting courses.

Brenda Seal's study (2004) identifying characteristics of general sign language interpreters showed that interpreters in her population scored strongly in six out of seven multiple intelligences and showed highly developed linguistic, spatial, logic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities that apply to superior performers. Using this competency model, future research in human performance improvement concerning the personal characteristics and strengths of VRS interpreters could be explored. Again, Gilbert's (1996) BEM box number six (see Figure 3) enables us to consider if people are being recruited to match the realities of the job. Matching personalities and characteristics to performance competencies, interpreter education programs could guide appropriate students toward VRS as a specialization and VRS providers could target recruiting opportunities.

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## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

### 6. Appendix

#### *VRS Competency Scoresheet*

VRS Manager or Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

VI Ranking (Circle One): Novice      Competent      Expert

#### 1. Personal Effectiveness Cluster

Least

Most

1A Self Control	1	2	3	4	5
1B Self Confidence/Low Fear of Rejection	1	2	3	4	5
1C Flexibility/Stamina	1	2	3	4	5
1D Accurate Self Assessment	1	2	3	4	5
1E Use of Socialized Power/Org Commitment	1	2	3	4	5

#### 2. Customer Service Cluster

Least

Most

2A Pleasant Demeanor	1	2	3	4	5
2B Positive Regard/Concern for Close Relationships	1	2	3	4	5
2C Perceptual Objectivity	1	2	3	4	5
2D Use of Unilateral Power/Autonomy	1	2	3	4	5
2E Developing Others	1	2	3	4	5

#### 3. Interpreting Skills Cluster

Least

Most

3A Fluency in ASL & English	1	2	3	4	5
3B Fluency in Range of Registers	1	2	3	4	5
3C Role Shifting	1	2	3	4	5
3D Stamina	1	2	3	4	5

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## Competency Model for VRS Interpreters

3E Self Monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
3F Team Interpreting	1	2	3	4	5
3G Linguistic Multitasking	1	2	3	4	5

### 4. Technology Skills Cluster

Least

Most

4A Use of Workstation Equipment	1	2	3	4	5
4B Conceptual Understanding of Call Center Infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
4C Sequential/Analytical Thinking	1	2	3	4	5

### 5. Telecommunications Skills Cluster

Least

Most

5A Call Management	1	2	3	4	5
5B Manage Group Process	1	2	3	4	5
5C Manage a Virtual Environment	1	2	3	4	5

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

### *VRS Interpreting Competency Dictionary*

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#### **1. Personal Effectiveness Cluster**

##### **1A. Competency: Self Control**

*Narrative Definition:* I maintain composure under stress. I stay calm and am not easily provoked. I am able to manage stress. I was caught off-guard but handled it well. If the caller gets angry, I just keep doing my job. When I see a certain caller's name on the screen, I cringe, but I take the call and work with it. I maintain a high level of professionalism. I have the emotional maturity that comes with professionalism.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Controlled responses, responding instead of reacting. Calm responses to stressful situations.

##### **1B. Competency: Self Confidence/Low Fear of Rejection**

*Narrative Definition:* I am decisive. I take responsibility for my decisions. I am thick skinned and objective. I know what I am doing and do it well. I take calls/callers even when I know they will be hard. I know when its time to transfer the call. This is my job, I know what I'm doing. I've handled enough conflicts, I am ready to go through it again.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Problem solving, presents impressively, takes on challenging situations, learns from mistakes, quick recovery balance.

##### **1C. Competency: Flexibility/Stamina**

*Narrative Definition:* I adapt easily. I can change my behavior to suit the situation. I can stay on the call when necessary. The situations are always different and it keeps me on my toes. I'm able to handle things that come my way. My brain can switch on a dime. VRS is an ever changing environment. I can deal with new rules and different ways of doing things. I don't wear out easily.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Makes long or short term adaptations on the spot, has strong coping skills. Can maintain high levels of performance for long periods of time.

##### **1D. Competency: Accurate Self Assessment**

*Narrative Definition:* I know my strengths and weaknesses. I know when to switch, I know when I'm out of my league; I can't be perfect for every caller and that's ok.

...those calls are not fun for me. I know when I need to debrief. I love that callers come to me. I can take constructive criticism.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Able to identify own strengths and weaknesses.

##### **1E. Competency: Use of Socialized Power/Organizational Commitment**

*Narrative Definition:* I am a member of a team. I understand the need for cooperation to achieve larger organizational objectives. The company depends on me. I take care of my co-workers. I have responsibilities to my bosses and my co-workers. I show up on time. I am willing to back up other interpreters. We all process together after calls, asking each other what they did when this happened.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Puts organizational needs first, has loyalty toward co-workers, "fits in". Understands the relationship between employee performance, customer satisfaction and a sustainable job opportunity.

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

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### **2. Customer Service Cluster**

#### 2A. Competency: Pleasant Demeanor

*Narrative Definition:* I am friendly, crisp and clean, professional. I have a good attitude. I'm friendly, smiling and everyone feels good at the end of the call. I have a fun demeanor, I smile a lot.

*Behavioral Indicator:* smiles easily, well groomed, good posture.

#### 2B. Competency: Positive Regard/Concern for Close Relationships

*Narrative Definition:* I am good. I am likable and caring. I'm a team-player. I feel some responsibility for removing the barrier between the Deaf and hearing callers. I like it when the callers thank me for doing a good job. I feel honored to be a part of their lives. I'm there for my teamers and know what they need to be supported. Having a caller who is willing to work with me makes a difference. I know how to respect people and treat callers on the videophone. I really like it when the callers and I work together as a team.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Has verbal and non-verbal skills that result in people feeling valued.

#### 2C. Competency: Perceptual Objectivity

*Narrative Definition:* I keep an appropriate emotional distance. I don't take things personally. Calls are harder when callers aren't friendly or polite. Our customers could have more training on how to treat interpreters. I know how to deal with people in general. I made a rookie mistake. I am thick skinned. I can't own everything in the process.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Uses effective distancing skills, doesn't internalize failure.

#### 2D. Competency: Use of Unilateral Power/Autonomy

*Narrative Definition:* I am in charge. I can make decisions within my scope of authority. I make sure the customer is getting the service. I have to pick and decide what to address. I decide if this person is just ticked off or if this is a power play. I'll give instructions to get the most out of this. I know which comments to ignore and which to include in order to make it all make sense. I have good judgment.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Problem solving skills, effective decision-making.

#### 2E. Competency: Developing Others

*Narrative Definition:* I am helpful to others/callers. I gently coach or tutor as needed.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Able to give feedback to facilitate development.

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### **3. Interpreting Skills**

#### 3A. Competency: Fluency in ASL and English

*Narrative Description:* I am highly skilled. I read ASL well. I produce ASL well. I voice well.

*Behavioral Indicators:* Greater than 80% interpreting accuracy with a variety of signers in a variety of situations.

#### 3B. Competency: Fluency in a Range of Registers

*Narrative Description:* I can flow from formal to intimate register. I know when the register is intimate and when the call is "inside information".

*Behavioral Indicators:* Can seamlessly change sign or word choice, and can just pass along dialogue that doesn't make sense to a third person.

#### 3C. Competency: Role Shifting

*Narrative Description:* I know when to jump in/out of various roles during a call.

*Behavioral Indicators:* knows how to perform as an operator, interpreter, ally, coach or customer service provider.

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## **Competency Model for VRS Interpreters**

### **3D. Competency: Stamina**

Narrative Description: I can tolerate stressful situation for extended periods of time.

Behavioral Indicators: has physical and mental endurance.

### **3E. Competency: Self Monitoring**

Narrative Description: I know when I'm linguistically effective and when I'm not.

Behavioral Indicator: self awareness, situational awareness, able to ask for support.

### **3F. Competency: Team Interpreting**

Narrative Description: I know how to feed and how to ask for feed in a workstation environment.

Behavioral Indicators: asks for support, indicates to team how to feed.

### **3G. Competency: Linguistic Multitasking**

Narrative Description: I can take in visual information, process it and produce verbal output while taking in auditory information, process it and put out manual information.

Behavioral Indicators: Simultaneous interpreting without interruption of communication flow.

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## **4. Technology Skills Cluster**

### **4A. Competency: Use of Workstation Equipment**

Narrative Description: I'm not afraid of the equipment.

Behavioral Indicators: Can use all pieces of workstation equipment efficiently for a variety of call types (standard, VCO, conference, transfer, etc.)

### **4B. Competency: Conceptual Understanding of Call Center Infrastructure**

Narrative Description: I know how the general technicalities of a call center work.

Behavioral Indicators: Can name parts and processes of call center systems, understands how the technical aspects potentially impact calls.

### **4C. Competency: Sequential/Analytical Thinking**

Narrative Description: If this happens, I know what to do.

Behavioral Indicators: Procedural problem solving, controls technical processes well, knows which buttons to push and when.

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## **5. Telecommunications Skills Cluster**

### **5A. Competency: Call Management**

Narrative Description: I know how to manage calls.

Behavioral Indicators: Uses verbal and non-verbal cues to place-hold, indicate turn-taking with efficiency and limited intrusion.

### **5B. Competency: Manage Group Processes**

Narrative Description: I can make the call work effectively. I can mediate between the callers.

Behavioral Indicators: Able to correctly assess callers' objectives, employing skill sets to match those objectives.

### **5C. Competency: Manage a Virtual Environment**

Narrative Description: I am aware of the potential needs of a 2-D environment.

Behavioral Indicators: Can explain gaps in caller's expectations or close those gaps with minimal intrusion.

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# Mentoring: A Vital Learning Tool for Interpreter Graduates

**Tamara Pearce**

*Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (Victoria)*

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

*Macquarie University*

## Abstract

In 2007, the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association [Victoria; ASLIA (VIC)] and the Victorian Deaf Society (Vicdeaf) ran a twelve-month pilot mentoring program for new graduate sign language interpreters who lived in the state of Victoria, in collaboration with Macquarie University and the Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Northern Melbourne Institute of Technical and Further Education (NMIT). Fourteen mentees and matching mentors participated in the program. Both ASLIA (VIC) as a professional body, and Vicdeaf as an employer, shared a commitment to professional development for practitioners and also a keen desire to stem the attrition of experienced interpreters from the industry. This article details the evaluation of the program and the key outcomes for the participants. The evaluation was based on qualitative action research principles and involved formative and summative evaluation. The mentoring program, guided by the principle of lifelong learning, resulted in significant personal and professional gains for the participants. As a result of the pilot program and the evaluation, an ongoing program is planned for 2011.

Keywords: mentoring; sign language interpreting; action research; lifelong learning

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [jemina.napier@mq.edu.au](mailto:jemina.napier@mq.edu.au)

# **Mentoring: A Vital Learning Tool for Interpreter Graduates**

## **1. Introduction**

In 2007, fourteen graduate interpreters in Melbourne, in the Australian state of Victoria, undertook the first ever formal mentoring program for Australian Sign Language (Auslan) Interpreters in the country. This article describes the evaluation of that program and investigates the critical elements that determine a successful mentee-mentor relationship. The mentees met with their mentor over the course of a year, during which the evaluation process sought to find answers to the following three questions: What are the successful components of a mentoring partnership? How important is a mentor to a graduate practitioner? What place does this type of learning have in the wider milieu of lifelong learning?

The increase in demand for interpreting services, coupled with the increase in demand for well-trained and experienced interpreters, has put pressure on the sign language interpreting profession in Australia. A report entitled *Auslan Interpreter Services Supply and Demand* (Access Economics, 2008) discovered that the states of Victoria and Tasmania<sup>2</sup> have the highest unmet demand for interpreting services. It also revealed that 13% of current practitioners are considering leaving the profession. Lack of workplace support, including mentoring, is mentioned as one of ten reasons for workplace dissatisfaction. These statistics reflect what the local professional body, the Victorian branch of the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association [ASLIA (VIC)] has been observing for many years. A mentor program had long been discussed and called for by the local interpreter body.

Thus, the goal of this project was to develop more highly skilled interpreters and to encourage interpreters of all experience levels to remain in the field. Specifically, the mentoring program set out to support new graduates exiting their education program and transitioning to “practitioner-in-the-workforce,” in the hope that the graduates would enjoy more success and feel part of the profession; it was also hoped that this would, in turn, curb the high attrition rate. The ideal aim of the program was that it would also provide a learning opportunity for the participants, one in which they could self-reflect and independently develop additional skills that would augment their ongoing professional development. The goal of the program evaluation was to discover whether the aims of the program were achieved and what elements constitute a self-described “successful” mentor-mentee relationship.

This project specifically targeted interpreter graduates receiving the Diploma of Interpreting from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in 2005 and 2006. This is a one year, part-time program in which many of the students have matriculated from a two-year Diploma of Auslan program. A qualification in Auslan, however, is not mandatory to enter the Diploma of Interpreting; therefore, graduates come from a range of backgrounds, including native signers and people who have worked in the community and developed their language skills over time. The Diploma of Interpreting is the only tertiary-based education program specifically for Auslan interpreters currently provided in Victoria. Successful completion of the program results in an industry entry-level qualification of Paraprofessional Interpreter, endorsed by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). The Professional Interpreter level accreditation is only attainable by testing,

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<sup>2</sup> Australia has six states: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia. Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria.

and no formal training for this level of accreditation is currently available in Victoria. Macquarie University in Sydney offers a program that can be undertaken by Victorians in distance mode. Even with formal education and training opportunities, there still remains a critical learning and development time that the new graduate must traverse in their professional life before they are able to undertake further study or undergo testing for the next level of accreditation.

The mentoring program and resulting evaluation (i.e., the Auslan Interpreters Mentorship Project) was conceived and developed by the ASLIA (VIC) in partnership with the Victorian Deaf Society (Vicdeaf), Sign Language Communications Victoria (SLC VIC), and in collaboration with Macquarie University and the Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Northern Melbourne Institute of Technical and Further Education (NMIT).<sup>3</sup> The program was designed in consultation with the local interpreter population and directly reflected local needs. The mentoring program was created to support interpreters holistically and was not intended solely as a platform to develop technical skills via coaching. Skills coaching was endorsed; it did not form the premise of the program and was not the focus of the training for the mentors.

Informed by an action research framework approach, the evaluation tools included pre- and post-interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and a journal that was completed by both the mentees and mentors throughout the duration of the program. Through a cyclical process of evaluating change (as described by Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005), the evaluation drew on an action research framework to both inform the evaluation process during the program and to ensure future programs are modeled on what was learned through this process. This study is significant for interpreter educators, practitioners, and employers, by helping them to understand how mentoring could potentially serve as a learning and development tool for graduate interpreters.

## 2. Literature review

In order to set the scene for the study, we provide an overview of literature relevant to action research, mentoring in general, and mentoring that is specific to sign language interpreters.

### 2.1 Action research

To evaluate the mentoring program, it was felt that an action research model would best suit the project. The key principles of action research involve (a) planning a change, (b) acting and observing what occurs, (c) reflecting on the consequences, (d) planning for further changes, followed by (e) making more observations (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). The cycle of change, observation, and reflection can be repeated, continuously improving the event and learning. The goal is to make real changes to what people do and how they interact in their environment. The emphasis is on actual practices not theoretical assumptions. Action research differs from traditional research in that it occurs in a real situation, rather than a theoretical one that is tested by scientists (Burns and Hood, 1998).

Mentoring is particularly suited to this form of research as it is, in essence, a process that is about transformative change, reflection, and improvement. In addition, action research often occurs within a context of wider social change, such as the green movement or the women's movement. It could be argued that the desire of deaf people to have access to highly skilled and contextually experienced practitioners forms part of their wider social movement for inclusion and rights. Initially, the deaf community fought hard for the right to an interpreter; now the focus of that fight is the education, qualifications, and skills of the interpreters provided.

Interpreting research has led us to leave behind the "conduit" model of interpreting, in which the task was perceived only as an impartial decoding and re-encoding of lexical equivalents. Now we recognize a more holistic

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<sup>3</sup> The project team consisted of Sandra Leane (Project Coordinator, ASLIA VIC) and Marc Curtis (Manager, SLC VIC), and the evaluation team included Jemina Napier (Consultant, Macquarie University) and Tamara Pearce and Pip Cody (Project Officers).

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model of the interpreter as a linguistically, socially, and culturally aware agent, capable of wider social understanding, and someone who excels in communication and mediation (Metzger, 1999; Roy, 2000; Wadensjö, 1998).

### 2.2 Mentoring

Mentoring is an established form of support within the nursing and teaching professions (Ballantyne, Hansford & Packer, 1995; Butterworth & Faugier, 1997; Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1998). It is a common learning tool in business (Underhill, 2006); one recent study in Boston, claims that from their research, one in five companies are planning to introduce some type of workplace mentoring program (Kranz, 2010).

The literature discusses mentoring as a holistic development practice and as a tool for technical skills improvement. Arnold (2006) mentions two kinds of support offered by a mentor: (a) personal support to help combat lack of confidence in work or insecurities and (b) professional support to focus more on skills development. Fletcher (2000) states that coaching is a part of mentoring, as is counseling and learning through interaction, and describes additional changes that might occur as a result of mentoring, which include (a) increased reflective practice, (b) the development of a relationship between the mentee and mentor, (c) both professional and personal support being provided, and (d) improved confidence in skills. Brookes and Sikes (1997) discuss a range of mentoring models applied to teachers that can suitably be applied to interpreters, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Brookes & Sikes' Mentoring Models

Model	Features	Implications
Apprenticeship	Modeling  Mentee is passive, watches the “master” and learns from their experience	Mentee learns only what the mentor <i>does</i> , but not <i>why</i> they do it or the values that underpin those decisions
Competence-based	Invests the mentor with a training responsibility  Mentor trains or teaches the mentee as per pre-defined competencies	Model that underpins the vocational training sector in Australia  Subordinate role for the mentee
Reflective coach	Peer-based relationship  Reflective coach encourages the mentee to revisit their work and, via discussion and reflection, guide the mentee toward a deeper understanding	Mentor and mentee on equal footing  Mentee encouraged to develop critical thinking skills about their work
Co-enquirer	Peer-based relationship	Mentor and mentee observe and collaborate together  Involves both working to critically analyze the mentees work together

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The reflective coaching model is popular in sign language interpreting, although it was not the goal of this project. Coaching is described as “an active process which depends on the mentor making planned and systemic interventions into the students reflection in order to make them more meaningful and analytical” (Brooks & Sikes, 1997, p. 23). By questioning underlying assumptions and exploring ideas, the mentee will hopefully gain a deeper knowledge from their own work experience. It is argued that this type of reflection process should be modeled and taught to graduates as a professional skill at the time of their training. London (2002) emphasizes that “coaching is an on-going, one-on-one learning process enabling people to enhance their job performance” (p.164)—a statement that is also easily applied to interpreters and interpreting.

Peluchett and Jeanquart (2000) recommend that different mentors could be used for different aspects of work, although this was not possible within the scope of this project. Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) highlight the potential negative experiences of mentoring but emphasize that if someone has a negative experience, this does not necessarily mean that they have had a negative relationship. Godshalk and Sosik (2000) state that mentoring agreement and under- or over-estimation of the relationship can impact the quality of that relationship; thus, these issues were taken into consideration in the development of this mentoring program.

### *2.3 Mentoring sign language interpreters*

In a recent white paper by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, mentoring for sign language interpreters was reported as the “...most common approach to inducting new practitioners into the fields and orienting experienced practitioners into areas of specialization” (National Consortium Mentoring Workteam, 2009, p. 2). Hawkings and Walker (2008) conducted a survey of different countries to ascertain the mentoring arrangements for sign language interpreters and found that some form of formal or informal mentoring or coaching system existed in most countries.

There is no doubt that as a model of learning, success with mentoring has been experienced in a range of contexts. In particular, some of the literature makes reference to the concept of “skills gap.” This refers to the time in which an interpreter graduates from their training program but is yet to either be accredited/certified by the sanctioning body or develop sufficient professional practitioner experience. Several pieces of literature refer to interpreters’ skills gaps or lack of readiness-to-work (Bontempo & Napier, 2007; Clark, 1994; Frishberg, 1994; Nishimura, Bridges, & Owen-Beckford, 1995; Resnick, 1990; Wiesman & Forestal, 2006).

Much of the literature on mentoring sign language interpreters recognizes that after completing an interpreter training program, the mentee interpreter is all too often placed on the job with little or no support or the opportunity for improvement. The literature further emphasizes that interpreters need to be afforded the opportunity to grow, not only in their skills, but professionally and ethically (Barber-Gonzales, Preston & Sanderson, 1986), and the importance of interpreters being supported by more experienced interpreters as “seasoned professionals” (Napier, 1996; Plant-Moeller, 1992). Gunter and Hall (1996) stress that “it is imperative that the professionals of today guide the professionals of tomorrow so that we may grow, not only as individuals, but also as a body of professionals” (p. 114). Preston (1995) states that mentoring should be designed to develop interpreter skills through an on-going relationship.

Palmer (1986) states that mentoring in the sign language interpreting profession is:

...an undertaking that requires intensity, commitment, common goals, and a lot of dialogue on insights and problem-solving. The mentor is usually an advisor and friend to the protégé.... Initially, the mentor and protégé work out mutual needs and expectations matched to accomplishments.” (p. 141)

This allows for sign language interpreters to engage in a “nurturing” mentoring process (Anderson & Shannon, 1995; Nishimura, Bridges & Beckford, 1996). According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in the US, mentors should demonstrate, among other things, the following qualities: be willing to share knowledge; be encouraging, experienced, and open to learning and role modeling; demonstrate mutual respect; be credible and display appropriate professional demeanour, enthusiasm and patience; be personable, dependable, open-minded,

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committed, and talented; know their own limitations and what they do not know; be assertive; and have realistic expectations and world knowledge (Registered Interpreters for the Deaf, 1995). Davis, Fried, Herbst, McCaffrey, Toothman, and Clark (1994) provide guidelines for sign language interpreter mentors that encourage mentors to reflect on who they have looked up to and been guided by, both professionally and personally. They acknowledge that mentoring can provide a context for working interpreters to upgrade their skills, and Harrigan (1999) suggests that this upgrade occurs by exploring the technical aspects (i.e., cognitive, linguistic, cultural) of the interpreting process through collaborative guidance with a more experienced interpreter.

Labath (1998) recommends that mentor and protégé interpreters agree on their approach to the mentoring relationship and define what the relationship will involve and the goals for interpreting skills development. She advises that protégés need to have some ownership and make suggestions, as well as accept guidance from their mentors. The experience of the Master Mentor Program for American Sign Language interpreters administered by Northeastern University in the US was that “quite simply mentors are capacity builders and skill multipliers who know how to guide adult learners in a lifelong process of professional self-discovery” (Project TIEM, 2009). Therefore, the program evaluation was designed to search for evidence of these critical changes.

One of the few publications on mentoring sign language interpreters outside of the United States discusses the situation in Australia. Napier (2006) adapted Kram’s (1985) notions of mentoring “phases” and identified six key phases for a sign language interpreter mentor/protégé relationship with a proposed curriculum for a formal mentoring program based on these six phases:

1. Developing a mentoring plan (*Initiation*)
2. Preparing for interpreting assignments (*Cultivation*)
3. Joint interpreting assignments (*Cultivation*)
4. Supervised interpreting assignments (*Cultivation*)
5. Analysis of recorded interpreting material (*Cultivation*)
6. Developing a portfolio (*Separation & Redefinition*)

Napier’s discussion is significant when considering the development of a local program. Napier identifies several issues in the development of a program, such as how it will be coordinated, who will develop the training, and who will be responsible for the program overall. There are two main contenders, the professional association (ASLIA) or the interpreting agencies. Napier argues the need for a nationally run mentoring program and highlights potential difficulties. These include the employment of interpreters who work for a range of agencies, making the coordination of a program difficult from an employer perspective.

In considering how individual interpreters can process the learning experience of mentoring, the six-stage Cycle of Competence described by Napier, McKee, and Goswell (2010) in relation to the skills development of sign language interpreters can also be applied to the mentoring process. At a beginning level of *unconscious incompetence* (Stage 1), mentees have less awareness of their actual skills. Through the mentoring process, they may become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses or their need to improve; this allows progression to *conscious incompetence* (Stage 2), an awareness of what one does not know.

The ideal progression is to develop this awareness along with our skills, with insight into what we are doing effectively; this is the stage of *conscious competence* (Stage 3). Once a skill has been thoroughly acquired, we begin to function so automatically that we become unconscious of what we do know; this is the stage of *unconscious competence* (Stage 4). We continually move between stages of conscious and unconscious competence as new skills are developed. In the fifth stage, *reflective competence*, an interpreter is able to reflect on their performance and identify further areas for improvement, which leads them back to Stage 2, starting the improvement cycle again. However, if an interpreter bypasses reflective competence they can move into *complacency* (Stage 6). When we are complacent and non-reflective, bad habits can become fossilized, and we run the risk of moving back to a level of unconscious incompetence (Stage 1). (Napier, McKee & Goswell, 2010, pp. 58–59).

Coaching can also be an appropriate method for interpreters to develop awareness of competence levels. For example, Portland’s Community College Interpreter Program focuses discussion of mentoring work on the interpreting “product” and “process,” both of which are seen as equally valuable (Hearn & Moore, 2006).

A review of the literature on mentoring in general reveals that, although existing frameworks exist for mentoring, these frameworks may not appropriately “fit” with the needs of sign language interpreters. Similarly, a

review of the literature on mentoring in sign language interpreting highlights that although progress has been made on developing mentoring structures, more work needs to be done to understand the mentoring needs of sign language interpreters. Nonetheless, it is clear that the demand for mentoring of some kind is evident. In particular, there is a need for newly graduated interpreters to be mentored as they transition into the workforce.

Thus an action research project was developed to address key questions regarding sign language interpreter mentoring for graduates, reflecting the needs in this local context.

### **3. A mentoring project and evaluation of mentoring as a learning tool**

A localized mentoring program was devised within an action research framework in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and answer the following research questions.

- What are the successful components of a mentoring partnership?
- How important is a mentor to a graduate practitioner?
- How does mentoring function as a form of learning in a community of practice?
- What place does this type of learning have in the wider milieu of lifelong learning?

#### *3.1 The mentoring program structure*

The program ran for 12 months across a calendar year (i.e., 2007). For the participants, the program consisted of training, social events, meetings between mentee and mentor, and participating in the evaluation process. The pairs were requested to meet for 15 face-to-face sessions, twice a month for the first three months, then monthly thereafter. Additional meetings and contact was at the discretion of the participants. The participants determined where and when they would meet. Locations included private homes, cafes, and at either of the participants' places of work. Places were filled in the program by calling for expressions of interest for both mentors and mentees. The program capped places at 14 to reflect the budget allocated. Both the mentees and mentors completed a profile document that assisted the coordinator matching the pairs.

Training for the mentors was conducted for eight hours over two days. The training was developed and delivered by the Australian Institute of Management (AIM), which has had much experience with mentoring in a business environment. The content was developed in conjunction with the project coordinator. The training covered the role of the mentor, understanding mentoring and coaching, communication, journaling, and personal reflection. This training reflected the underlying style of the mentoring, which was holistic. In this context, this meant that the mentee and the mentor would meet to discuss their interpreting work, ethical issues, critical decision making, and personal reflections. Coaching the mentee's technical skills was possible if agreed upon, and orchestrated by the mentoring pairs, but was not the principle focus of the relationship.

The mentees had one three-hour session with an experienced interpreter mentor and trainer and the mentoring project coordinator. During this session, the mentees explored their expectations of the program and discussed journaling as a self-reflection tool.

#### *3.2 Mentoring program evaluation*

Action research advocates a range of data collection methods. Burns and Hood (1998) describe data collection methods as either observational or non-observational. Direct observation of the mentoring sessions themselves was not seen as necessary for two reasons. First, it was felt that the success of the program was best evaluated through the direct self-reporting of the participants. Second, a third party observing the sessions would have altered the dynamics and possibly skewed the outcome of the sessions. Therefore, the participants were asked to complete journals relating to their sessions as a form of observational data collection. The other non-

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observational data collection methods included questionnaires, focus groups, and face-to-face interviews. Evaluation methods were both formative and summative.

Across the 12-month period of the program, there were five different opportunities for data collection from the mentors and four from the mentees. Mentees were interviewed face-to-face both before and after the program. The mentors completed a questionnaire prior to commencing the program and were interviewed face-to-face at the completion of the program. Ideally, the mentors would have been interviewed pre-program as well as the mentors, however budgetary restrictions prevented this. Both mentees and mentors were required to complete a journal throughout the program. The evaluation journal was structured in three parts, Parts A, B and C. Initially, a format was provided for the first six formal meetings (Part A). Data analyzed from the pre-program interviews and questionnaires informed the design of the journal structure for meetings 7–12 (Part B). Analysis from Part A of the journal informed the design of the final section of the journal, Part C (sessions 13–15). By adopting an action learning cycle to the development of the evaluation journal, a more tailored and organic structure was devised. Some of the questions in the journal overlapped with questions posed in the interviews. This allowed for the responses to be formed at different times and for them to be compared. The mentors completed an additional questionnaire that related specifically to the training they undertook prior to the program commencing. The results from this questionnaire instrument were analyzed and compared with the data provided at the end of the training (via a separate questionnaire and journal).

### 3.3. Summary of data collection methods

Table 2 provides an overview of the data collected and how it was analyzed in a data matrix.

Table 2: Data Matrix

Task/measure	Data collection tool	Procedure for data collection	Method of analysis
Pre-training expectations of mentors	Questionnaire	Questionnaire emailed to mentors prior to training and collected at the commencement of the training	Content/thematic analysis, discourse analysis
Pre-program mentor expectations, thoughts and goals	Questionnaire	Questionnaire emailed to mentors prior to commencement of the program	Content/thematic analysis
Pre-program mentee expectations, thoughts and goals	Face-to-face interview including a written questionnaire	Interview conducted one-on-one with a project officer, audio taping of the interview transcribed	Content/thematic analysis, quantification of responses
Mentee and mentor thoughts and experiences during the program	Written journal	Structured journal in three parts (A, B and C) provided to the participants as required, responses submitted electronically	Content/thematic analysis
Post-program mentee conclusions and reflections on the program	Face-to-face interview including a written questionnaire	Interview conducted one-on-one with a project officer, audio taping of the interview transcribed	Content/thematic analysis, quantification of responses

Post-program mentor conclusions and reflections on the program	Face-to-face interview	Interview conducted one-on-one with a project officer, audio taping of the interview transcribed	Content/thematic analysis
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### 3.4 Participant profile

The mentees ( $n=14$ ) fell into two distinct groups: new graduates with no interpreting experience (six) or recently qualified interpreters with up to two years experience (eight). Two of the mentees did not live in metropolitan Melbourne and were based in regional towns within the state of Victoria. All of the mentees were graduates of the Diploma of Interpreting at RMIT. This is a one-year, part-time interpreting qualification that requires fluency in Auslan and English to enter.

Mentors were required to be accredited as a NAATTI Professional Level interpreter<sup>4</sup> or be experienced Deaf Relay interpreters (DRIs). Given that there are currently no formal training opportunities for DRIs in Australia, the project team used their discretion to encourage the most senior and highly experienced DRIs to participate. Two of the fourteen mentors were DRIs and the remaining 12 were NAATTI accredited Auslan/English interpreters.

### 3.5 Difficulties with the data collection

Some difficulties were encountered during the collection of data. The mentee pre-program interview incorporated a written survey. Three mentees had difficulty completing the survey at this stage in the program because they had not yet commenced work as an interpreter (having just graduated from their diploma course). In the final interviews at the completion of the program, copies of the survey were inadvertently not provided to five of the mentees and therefore had to be completed post-interview. One of the mentees failed to return his/her survey.

At various times, technological error and life events prevented some of the participants from completing parts of the evaluation. Reasons for missing data included (a) the technical failure of one of the transcription tapes; (b) one mentee no longer having had access to a computer at the end of the program (he/she was encouraged to submit a hand-written copy but declined to do so); (c) one mentee having had a serious accident at the start of the program and, although having met with their mentor, was recovering from substantial injuries and did not complete the journal; and finally, (d) no explanation having been offered for the final missing mentee journal. Strenuous efforts were made to recover all the data.

Of the mentors, one lost their pre-program questionnaire due to computer failure and two others were not submitted. The poor attendance at the mid-point focus group was largely a result of people having other commitments. Many comments were made throughout the data that suggested people would have liked to have attended the focus group.

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<sup>4</sup> Interpreters of all languages in Australia are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators & Interpreters (NAATTI) at the Paraprofessional, Professional, Conference, or Senior Conference level. Professional level is considered to be the minimum professional standard with Paraprofessional accreditation regarded as being a “stepping stone” to achieving the Professional level. Auslan/English interpreters are only able to attain accreditation at the Paraprofessional or the Professional level.

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### 4. Results of evaluation

Evaluation of the success of the mentoring project involved reviewing and analyzing the range of data collected throughout the mentoring program and collecting reports from the participants concerning their perceptions of their experiences during the mentoring program.

#### 4.1 Return rates

Table 3: Data Collection Return Rates

Mentees	Number returned	Percentage returned
Interview prior to the program, incorporating a short questionnaire	13/14	93%
Focus group mid-point in the program	6/14	43%
Interview post-program, incorporating a short questionnaire	14/14	100%
Journal during the program	11/14	79%

Mentors	Number returned	Percentage returned
Pre-training short questionnaire	13/14	93%
Questionnaire after the training, prior to the program	11/14	79%
Focus group mid-point in the program	4/14	29%
Interview post-program	14/14	100%
Journal during the program	12/14	86%

#### 4.2 Journal data

Analysis of the journal data provides an insight into the nature of the discussion within the formal mentoring meetings. The session topics presented here are in order of the frequency in which they were cited in the participants' journal data:

1. Managing people and dynamics
2. Technical skills
3. Managing situations ethically, hypothetical and real life scenarios
4. Professional and personal boundaries
5. Preparation
6. Tandem interpreting
7. Vocabulary

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8. Educational versus community interpreting, pros and cons of each
9. Business skills, such as invoicing and tax
10. What to expect in the workplace
11. Interpreting field, organizations, and politics

The actual work in the sessions between mentee and mentor that was described in the journals varied. Some pairs merely talked; others set concrete goals and tasks. The pairs were mixed in how goals were set. The definition of a goal in this context is an agreed-upon action on the part of the mentee to be actively undertaken on their own, outside of the mentoring meetings. Goals were either set by the mentee or in conjunction with the mentor. The most common goals set in sessions were:

1. To attempt jobs of a more difficult nature or jobs in a new context, such as working with people who are deafblind
2. To implement strategies discussed in the session, commonly relating to ethical issues
3. To complete translation exercises
4. To utilise existing resources, such as video material

Thematic analysis of the data gathered through the journals and interview process revealed a typical pattern of the relationship between mentees and mentors. Most relationships undertook an initial meeting and introduction phase that lasted during the first and, possibly, the second meeting of the mentee with the mentor. During this time the pair established areas of concern, areas of expertise (in the case of the mentor), and potential goals and or tasks. The next 4–6 meetings focused on the business of mentoring with both addressing the earlier identified goals and working with new scenarios that appeared in the working life of the mentee. The mid-point in terms of time (around 6 months) emerged as a critical time of renewal, re-focusing, and moving forward or, alternatively for some pairs, it signalled the winding down of the usefulness of the relationship. All of the pairs had developed a personal relationship with each other, and some chose to coast along, tackling issues as they emerged. Other mentors recognized the lull and attempted to issue more challenges and take more control of the sessions.

It was from the mid-point in the program that telephone use, mobile phone text messaging, and e-mail contact became more common. With the relationship established, using alternative communication means worked well, especially for those who lived or worked long distances from their partner. Communication, in addition to the formal meetings, was used by half of the pairs (7/14).

The most common meeting time length was 1.5 hours. Many pairs met for longer than that, choosing to meet less often, but longer. Three pairs, that at times struggled to fill the hour, met mostly for one hour and did not use all 15 sessions. In fact, only two pairs used all 15 sessions. Ten sessions was the most common number of times participants met; however, this does not factor in time spent on the phone, additional debriefings, or contact via e-mail.

Five pairs had the opportunity to undertake interpreting work together. In addition, one mentee observed their mentor working, and two mentors observed their mentee at work. The mentees that did work with or observe their mentor benefited greatly from the experience. No negative experiences were related. Working together was not an option for some, as the nature of the work the mentor undertook prohibited an inexperienced interpreter to be present. It was difficult to find jobs that were suitable for co-working and could be successfully attempted by an inexperienced mentee interpreter. Some pairs were disappointed that they did not have the opportunity; however, others felt it was not necessary and, indeed, that it was disruptive to the relationship.

One pair was able to work on a weekly job together for a period of eight weeks, and another pair focused on the interpretation of a theatre production. These are excellent examples of how the program adapted to the needs of a particular mentee. At a minimum, all of the pairs reported developing a warm working relationship and enjoyed a strong collegial relationship with their partner. Only one mentor reported they would not be interested in participating in a future program, and that was due to time constraints and other commitments.

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### 4.3 Pre- and post-program data

The mentor pre-program questionnaire consisted of (a) seven open-ended questions designed to establish the expectations of the mentor, (b) examples of what the mentor felt he/she and the mentee may get out of the program, (c) suggestions as to what the major areas of discussion might be, (d) expected challenges, (e) details on how the process would impact the mentor's own practices, and (f) what skills would be utilized. The final question specifically concerned self-reflection and asked the mentors to consider what techniques may encourage a mentee to develop self-reflection tools. Post-program interview questions numbered 16. These questions covered program management issues such as how participants were matched, the pre-program training, and program length. In addition, the mentors were asked to discuss (a) what skills they had gained or still lacked, (b) what effect the program had on the mentee, (c) topics that were discussed, (d) whether skills coaching was possible, (e) whether self-reflection was developed, and finally, (e) whether they would continue in the program.

The mentees were posed nine pre-program interview questions and provided a short survey containing 14 questions. The interview covered topics such as (a) expectations, (b) concerns, (c) predicting what they might learn by the end of the program, (d) specific areas they had identified to improve upon, and (e) what they might contribute to the program. Post-program, the questions sought to discover (a) what the mentee had gained from the experience and how this related to their expectations, (b) whether skills coaching was possible and how it would be structured, (c) whether the mentee's desire to remain an interpreter was influenced by having a mentor, and (d) whether having a mentor had an impact on the mentees work that was undertaken. In addition, there were questions relating to the program management, such as the length of the program, payment for services, and recommendations for improvement.

#### 4.3.1 The mentee questionnaire

Through the initial interviews, the most desired outcome of the program identified by the mentees was to improve in confidence and to receive support. Other outcomes sought were advice, an empathetic ear, a challenge, and the opportunity to be heard with honesty, openness, and tact. Mentees wanted to feel that the mentor would be open to any question or concern without passing judgment. In terms of technical skill development, readback/voicing or Auslan-to-English interpretation was the most cited area of development (5/13 mentees).<sup>5</sup> Other specific areas were working in tandem, working in front of a group, and fingerspelling.

A survey was conducted with the mentees to measure any change in their confidence. The same survey was completed prior to the program (in the initial interview) and also in the final interview. Questions focused on the confidence of the mentee in a range of interpreting contexts, as well as questions about the likelihood of the mentee working in the field in five and in ten years time. Mentees were asked to rate their responses on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The results indicated a clear and resounding improvement in confidence across all interpreting contexts (i.e., triad, group, educational setting) in both language directions, co-working in primary mentor, and in secondary mentee roles, as well as in situational management. In the initial survey, 9 of the 13 mentees rated confidence in working in a triad (Auslan to English) predominately at *agree* (4), where it remained. However, an additional mentee selected *strongly agree* (5) at the completion of the program; no one had selected this category previously. The shift was more dramatic in English to Auslan; the majority (11/13) selected *agreed* indicating that they were confident, which was up from only 7 of the 13. The overall response to working in a triad (in both language directions) was initially 62% (*agree*) and grew to 77% with an additional 8% *agreeing strongly* (previously 0%).

With such an overall shift in the confidence of the mentees in a range of contexts and in both language directions, it is safe to conclude that the first and second years of an interpreter's working life are one of great changes and development. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this can be attributed to the mentoring program and how much would have occurred anyway. The mentees themselves, although reporting great benefit from the program, including increased confidence, could not quantify to what degree the improvement in their confidence was attributable to experience and to what degree the improvement was attributable to the presence of a mentor.

<sup>5</sup> Although 14 mentees undertook the program, one mentee failed to complete the pre-program survey and, therefore, their results are not incorporated in this section.

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Two things can be concluded: (a) that this time is critical in developing confidence for new practitioners and (b) that having a mentor can contribute to increased confidence in new graduates.

Increased confidence in working as a team was also identified by 7 of the 13 mentees experiencing an increase in *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* to being confident. All of the mentees that undertook interpreting work with their mentor (5/13) reported that the experience was positive. In addition, the topic of working with another interpreter was also one of the most commonly cited discussion areas for the pairs.

Management of the interpreted event was identified in both the journals and in the interviews as a major area of concern and discussion. In the survey, when asked if they agreed with the statement, “I am confidant managing the interpreting situation. I will happily manage my own break times, assert my role if necessary, and request clarification when required,” the number of mentees *agreeing* with this statement grew from four to ten with an additional two *strongly agreeing*. This shows a strong shift in the perception of the mentees’ ability in this area. Another area much discussed in the sessions was that of managing business affairs, billing, negotiating with clients and booking agencies, and negotiating fees. Confidence in this ability rose as well, with 5 of the 13 selecting (5), *strongly agreeing*, up from only 2 of the 13.

Mentees were also asked to consider the likelihood of remaining in the profession in five and ten years time. A similar pattern of response occurred with both questions. Initially, the majority of responses *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they would still be in the field. By the end of the program, responses were spread across the range of responses. More people chose to *disagree* and more people choose to *strongly agree* that they would stay. It might appear that the year meant the mentees were able to see their future more clearly. In response to the question about whether they would be working in the field in ten years time, 9 of the 13 responded positively and 4 of the 13 negatively.

## 5. Participants’ perceptions

The mentees’ initial learning requirement focused on specific skills acquisition. Over time, this changed as the breadth of learning available to them became apparent. For most participants, there was a shift away from microanalysis of the elements of interpreting to a more broad discussion of the values and philosophies underpinning decisions. This is demonstrated in the following mentee quotes, taken from the final interviews.

I think all of us had expectations that the programme would help us with our signing skills. That’s not really what I got out of it. What I got out of it was actually better because it was more validation and the ethical issues and looking at handling or controlling different situations, and being able to ask how better or how else to manage situations.

If you had a bad time, or you had an awful situation such as an awful doctor who was awful to the patient you could just spill it all out to the mentor. I never thought about that kind of stuff, or that I would need help with that either. I just thought it was about my Auslan skills – and I knew I needed to improve them because I was brand new, and I do still need to improve them—I hadn’t actually thought about the situations.

For the mentees, a significant aspect of the mentoring relationship was the fact that the relationship that developed with their mentor did not necessarily end when the formal mentoring program finished, as illustrated by the following comments from the final interviews.

One thing that I didn’t expect was that my mentor and I got on so well so that now [he/she has] become a friend. I didn’t know who my mentor was going to be, but the person they matched me with was so perfect for me. Now we will continue on. [My mentor] can still be a support or even a friend. So I didn’t really expect that.

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My mentor now wants to keep going, regardless of fees. We've struck up a bit of a professional friendship. I didn't know that I'd get as much out of it as I have, if you know what I mean.

At the completion of the program, the two most commonly reported outcomes by mentors were an acknowledgment of the wealth of knowledge and experience the mentors possessed and a greater reflection on their own practice. Mentors reported that their life experience, professional experience, communication skills, and professional networks were their greatest assets. From the final interviews, some mentors share their reflections.

The first two or three times it was a formal mentoring relationship but it became much more of an equal, sharing, interactive relationship after that.

I have also started to ponder the idea of doing further study due to this experience.

It's very much been a partnership where we've both developed new skills throughout this relationship.

I've definitely stopped and looked at myself and my own practice a lot more than I did previously because I think when someone asks you what you would do in a certain situation you actually have to think about what you actually have done. Sometimes the thing that you think you "should do" or you "would do," you don't actually do when it comes to the crunch, for reasons that are beyond the initial considerations that you made. It doesn't necessarily mean that you do the wrong thing, but when you have these hypotheticals in your mind, they are very different from real life. So I think this mentor programme has made things a lot more realistic for me.

The comment below, also from the final interviews, shows evidence of the co-enquirer model proposed by Brooks and Sikes (1997), whereby the mentor and mentee discuss an aspect of work and critique it together or find a solution to a problem.

We always focused on the positive things to start off a session then we'd get to a point where there were some issues. Then we would discuss the issues, and try and look at different ways to either resolve them or work things differently, and talk about problem solving techniques. Then we would finish on something positive.

Clearly the program had educational outcomes for the mentors as well as the mentees. As mentioned above, one mentor talks about further study, and a mentee also states an intention to sit for the professional level qualification much earlier than he/she had planned, due to this experience.

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## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

The goal of the mentoring program was to assist new graduates in the transition from student to practitioner in the workforce. Data revealed that both the mentors and mentees felt the benefit of the mentoring program. Evidence of increased confidence across a range of interpreting scenarios was reported by the mentees, as well as the ability to manage stress, professional business tasks, and the interpreting situation. As was identified in the literature, it can be difficult to categorically link the mentoring work to the development of the mentee. However, the mentees

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were able to report confidently that having a mentor made a difference and had a significant impact on their ability to cope with difficult situations and improve their technical skills. Most mentees saw the program as an opportunity to continue their schooling and develop technical skills but were surprised to receive much more in the way of personal and professional support.

The mentoring work achieved strategies and a schema for handling work situations. Issues that arose were discussed and strategies were developed. From the mentees' journals it became clear that a problem-solving template or approach was developed in conjunction with their mentor. This template was then able to be applied independently by the mentee. This transition, to self-reflection and self-analysis, is a key lifelong learning tool.

There was evidence of the mentoring models discussed in the literature. The most common was that of the reflective coach model (Brooks & Sikes, 1997), in which elements of the mentee's work are discussed and reflected upon. Mentors reported a stronger awareness of their own practice and increased reflection upon it. This was an important outcome, as much of the focus of the program is on the mentees; however, the benefits for the mentor were substantial.

The most common reflection reported from the mentors was that they became cognizant of their own achievements, body of work, and accumulated skills. Mentors were challenged to let others talk and developed their communication skills in the process. One of the long-term goals of the program was to encourage interpreters to stay in the field. By creating a feeling of connectedness to the profession, and by providing the mentors with recognition of their achievements, mentoring encourages both mentees and mentors to remain in their field. A mentoring program offers educational opportunities that are currently unable to be delivered by existing formalized learning programs.

Recommendations from participants will influence future programs and the next cycle of action research. The participants requested more training for the mentors and more interaction opportunities for both mentees and mentors. Although operating as a two-person unit, both mentees and mentors expressed a need to meet with others in the program—to get ideas, find inspiration, and to feel connected. Mentors especially needed their own support, in particular, because this was the inaugural program. These recommendations will be incorporated into the next stage of the action research cycle, through the development of the next mentoring program that is being planned for 2011.

As foreseen by Napier (2006), the complex nature of employment structures and interpreting work created a barrier for participants to work or observe each other. This did not obstruct the overall success of the program for the mentees but will require consideration for future programs in that there will be a need to work more closely with employers to ensure opportunities for skills coaching are available for the participants, should they want it.

The Victorian interpreting and deaf communities have benefited greatly and, hopefully, will support an ongoing program. The focus of this program was new graduates. There are other possibilities for mentoring, such as a specialized focus, as was seen in the pair that worked together on a theater production. This idea could be extended to contexts such as mental health or court interpreting. Peer-to-peer mentoring should also be considered in order to increase the opportunity for mentoring the whole interpreter community, as mentoring has proved to be a significant learning opportunity for both the mentees and mentors. Ideally, mentoring could be incorporated into formal training programs to provide a seamless transition. This approach would foster a lifelong learning philosophy and help create professional networks that can bridge the transition from student to practitioner.

We envisage that such an approach to mentoring interpreter graduates could be applied with signed and spoken language interpreter graduates worldwide, although systematic evaluation of appropriate structures would need to be undertaken before generalizations can be made. We conclude with the following quote from a mentee, which we feel encapsulates the fact that mentoring is a vital learning tool for interpreter graduates.

I am very grateful to have been included in a mentoring program. I hope it continues, so that first year graduates get the benefit straight away. Also I believe any interpreter who hasn't had the opportunity of mentoring would benefit from being in the program. I think it is an essential step to continue to grow and develop as an interpreter.

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### 7. Acknowledgments

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# Culture Brokers, Advocates, or Conduits: Pedagogical Considerations for Deaf Interpreter Education

**Campbell McDermid<sup>1</sup>**

*George Brown College*

## Abstract

In a qualitative review of interpretation and Deaf<sup>2</sup> studies programs in Canada, some educators described their experiences teaching Deaf students. Most of the Deaf instructors had worked as Deaf interpreters (DIs). Given the challenges they faced as a DI, and in light of research concerning interpreters from other minority cultures, the conceptualization of their subjectivity should consider their ethnicity; perhaps the role of culture broker or advocate is appropriate in some settings. The inclusion of Deaf students in the programs led to many benefits, as described by the participants, including a heightened awareness of power, Freire's (2004) *conscientização*, through awareness of praxis. Examples of Freire's philosophy of education as being dialogic were also noted, as the Deaf students took on the role of teacher. However, educators might wish to reconsider practices that promote massification (Freire, 1974), such as assignments only in English and the Deaf interpreter serving in the role of a conduit.

Keywords: Deaf; interpreter; epistemology; audism; advocate; oppression; praxis; identity; culture; power; pedagogy

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

<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: Although the convention for this journal is to use the lowercase 'd' when referring to deaf people, the author has expressed his wish to use the uppercase 'D' convention to imply a linguistic and cultural minority.

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# **Culture Brokers, Advocates, or Conduits: Pedagogical Considerations for Deaf Interpreter Education**

## **1. Introduction**

The ascribed or assumed subjectivity of professional interpreters is a complex phenomenon, as the history of hearing American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters in North America has seen a metamorphosis in the conceptualization of the role from that of helper, to conduit, to communication facilitator, to bilingual–bicultural professional (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Roy, 1993) and ally to the Deaf community (Mikkelsen, 2008). It has been theorized that this change in perception and metaphorical representation was the result of several factors, such as a movement in the field from a psycho-linguistic paradigm to that of a cultural view and the increased recognition of ASL as a language (Roy). With each re-inscription of the interpreter’s identity or his/her subjectivity came implications in terms of what was deemed to be ethical behavior (Mikkelsen, Roy). While the role and identity of interpreters who can hear was being debated in the literature, little attention was given to the work of Deaf interpreters in Canada and the United States. To date, there have been few empirical studies concerning this phenomenon (Forestal, 2005; Keller, 2008; Ressler, 1999; Stone, 2009). To address this lack of information, and as the result of a broader qualitative study to examine interpreter education in Canada, this manuscript focuses on Deaf interpreter preparation and subjectivity from the perspective of the respondents. What emerged from this study was a number of areas concerning the need for the education of working Deaf interpreters and a list of the benefits and challenges of Deaf students who had enrolled in the programs. Perhaps of great significance to the field is the suggested differentiation between the role or the subjectivity of hearing ASL–English interpreters, who have typically acquired ASL as their second or “B” language, and Deaf interpreters, who have acquired ASL as their first or “A” language.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

As with spoken language interpreters, some Deaf interpreters work between two languages, such as ASL and Langue des Signes Québécois (LSQ; Boudreault, 2005). In Britain, Deaf interpreters translate live newscasts, working from the printed English on a teleprompter or autocue to British Sign Language (BSL; Stone, 2009). They are also employed, at times, to shadow or mirror a signed message from a hearing interpreter or from a Deaf speaker to a Deafblind client with limited vision (Boudreault; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). Deaf interpreters might

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also work between their native signed language, for example ASL, and International Sign<sup>3</sup> (Boudreault; Forestal, 2005).

To understand the role of a Deaf interpreter, this study made reference to the growing canon on spoken language interpreters from minority language cultures in the North American context (e.g., Cree, Inuit, and Spanish); as fellow members of a linguistic minority, it was found that they have many experiences in common with the participants of this study. To delimit the review of the literature, however, no reference will be made to the canon on spoken language interpreters in court settings,<sup>4</sup> or minority language interpreters in educational settings, as they rarely work in this environment. Instead, the focus of this manuscript and literature review will be on the articles written concerning spoken language interpreters, primarily in medical and mental health settings, and Deaf interpreters. To differentiate between interpreters who do not have English as a first language and who come from a linguistic minority (i.e., Deaf, native users of ASL, and spoken language interpreters whose first language is Spanish or Cree) from interpreters who have English as a first language and are members of the majority culture in the North American context, the former group will be designated *minority language interpreters* (MLIs).

### 2.1 *Deaf minority language interpreters*

As mentioned earlier, and as should be noted in this literature review, there is little empirical research into the phenomenon of Deaf interpreters;<sup>5</sup> much of the literature is based on autobiographical or anecdotal accounts. Several terms have been used to describe the role of a Deaf MLI, such as a *relay interpreter* (Frishberg, 1986; Ressler, 1999) or an *intermediary interpreter* (Forestal, 2005; Frishberg; Mathers, 2009). In these roles, the Deaf MLI observed the interpretation from a hearing interpreter and then re-interpreted their signed language into a more comprehensible form of ASL for the Deaf consumer. At one time, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) assessed Deaf interpreters and awarded a Reverse Skills Certificate (Frishberg), a designation that was problematic given that the “reverse” of interpreting seems theoretically impossible. This nomenclature was later changed to Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). As early as 1984 in the United States (Bonni, 1984) and 1990 in Canada (Dubienski, 1990), authors have advocated for the employment of Deaf MLIs. Unfortunately, according to Dively (1995) and Ressler, they have had limited opportunities to work.

Based on personal experience, P. Wilcox (1995) believed a significant and systemic barrier faced by Deaf interpreters was the unwillingness of the public to accept the role of a Deaf MLI. This differs greatly from the experiences of MLIs in spoken languages, who are more readily employed in medical settings; those experiences will be described later in this manuscript. The reluctance to employ a Deaf MLI is thought to be the result of audism—a form of racism directed against Deaf individuals for using a signed language (Lane, 1994) and the subordinate position accorded Deaf people by society (P. Wilcox). The concept of a Deaf person providing interpretation services to another Deaf person, it has been theorized, is “inconceivable to many hearing people,” according to P. Wilcox (p. 90) or viewed as “somewhat preposterous” (Ressler, 1999, p. 72) to the hearing public.

#### 2.1.1 Deaf minority language interpreter competencies

The clientele with whom Deaf interpreters work and the competencies needed to perform their duties are of interest to interpreter educators. It should be noted that the role of an interpreter is not foreign to Deaf adults, for as students, some were called to consecutively translate lessons for their peers from their instructors’ impoverished ASL to fluent ASL (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005).

In the North American context, a Deaf MLI typically works on a team with a hearing interpreter (Dubienski, 1990) to reinterpret the signed message to a Deaf consumer. This experience differs from that of a spoken

<sup>3</sup> To communicate across different cultures, the international Deaf community has encouraged the development of a system that borrows lexical items and grammatical features from a number of signed languages. This system has been referred to as International Sign and there is controversy regarding its status as a language especially as its nature varies from signer to signer (Moody, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> See Mathers (2009) and Mikkelson (2008) for a discussion of Deaf interpreters in legal settings.

<sup>5</sup> See C. Stone’s (2009) comprehensive empirical study of Deaf interpreters.

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## Pedagogical implications for Deaf interpreters

language interpreter, who probably works alone, interpreting between Spanish and English or English and French. A Deaf MLI might provide interpretation services for Deaf individuals who lack fluency in English or who are characterized as being monolingual ASL users (Frishberg, 1986; P. Wilcox, 1995). Mathers (2009) also advocates for a Deaf and hearing interpreter pair in settings where the clients are “foreign born” or where there is a “lack of family support, substance abuse, discrimination, inappropriate education, residence in a rural or low-income urban area, limited socialization, or a bilingual home environment (without signing)” (p. 72). Frishberg suggested that a Deaf and hearing interpreter pair be employed with individuals who exhibit “idiosyncratic” vocabulary or grammar.

Deaf interpreters work in partnership with hearing interpreters because, as authors such as Dively (1995) and Mathers (2009) believe, a Deaf MLI is considered more fluent in ASL than the typical hearing ASL–English interpreters and more aware of Deaf culture. This enables them to provide more comprehensible texts in ASL to the Deaf clients. In a comparison of interpreters translating British newscasts, Stone (2009) found that the Deaf MLI, more so than their hearing counterparts, enriched their target texts in BSL in a number of ways. Some Deaf MLI added information about the content of the English text, referred to as thematic enrichment (Stone). Some added information about the geographic area being discussed, locational enrichment (Stone).

The ASL target texts produced by hearing interpreters, on the other hand, have been described as retaining much of the English source text features (Frishberg, 1986; Ressler, 1999; Stone, 2009; P. Wilcox, 1995), making them more difficult to understand or incomprehensible to some Deaf consumers. Thus, in situations in which both a hearing and Deaf interpreter are employed, it allows each to focus on their “A” language, their stronger language, providing a separation of duties as suggested by Mathers. When the hearing interpreter’s signed text contains too many features of English, the Deaf interpreter can then re-interpret the signed message into a more complete form of ASL.

In terms of competencies, and as mentioned earlier, interpreters must be fluent in their native sign language (e.g., ASL) and another sign language (e.g., LSQ or International Sign), as they may be called to work between the two signed languages (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005). They must also be adept in a number of modes of interpreting, such as sight translation (Forestal, 2005; Montoya, Egnatovitch, Eckhardt, Goldstein, Goldstein, & Steinberg, 2004; Stone, 2009), consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Ressler, 1999). When working with certain clients, such as recent immigrants who lack knowledge of ASL or English, a Deaf MLI needs a facility with different systems of communication (e.g., miming and gesturing) and must be ready to use props to achieve communication (Boudreault). In some instances, they must draw upon artistic abilities to create pictures (Forestal, 2005). When working as an interpreter for Deafblind individuals, the interpreters must also be adept with tactile sign languages or alphabets (Frishberg, 1986).

Based on her belief that a Deaf MLI had a superior command of ASL and knowledge of Deaf culture, as compared to their hearing peers, Mathers (2009) argued that a Deaf MLI was better suited to work with a variety of Deaf clients. From a number of anecdotal accounts, it was recommended that a Deaf MLI be employed in legal proceedings (Mathers; P. Wilcox, 1995), immigration procedures, or with Deaf children or seniors (Dubienski, 1990). A Deaf MLI was also recommended in mental health settings (Montoya, et al., 2004), for example, to translate psychological or psychiatric evaluations, as Humphrey and Alcorn (2001) believed that “misinterpretations of questions and answers have repeatedly led to the misdiagnosis of the Deaf individuals involved” (p. 13-49).

### 2.1.2 Benefits of MLI

Based on the personal experiences of several authors, a number of hypothetical social or interpersonal benefits to employing a Deaf MLI have been suggested, information that, perhaps, should be considered for inclusion in interpreter education programs. The presence of a Deaf MLI has the potential of providing emotional support and comfort for Deaf clients (Dubienski, 1990; Frishberg, 1986; P. Wilcox, 1995). Frishberg wondered if “the presence of a deaf interpreter may relieve the anxiety of a deaf person, who is having difficulty communicating to several hearing people” (p. 153). Because of his experience as a Deaf interpreter, Boudreault (2005) thought a Deaf client might experience a sense of “cultural identification” and “empowerment” (p. 335) when a Deaf MLI was present. P. Wilcox also wondered if their presence lent “credence to the entire communication process” (p. 92) and responded to the cultural oppression faced by Deaf clients.

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Reflecting on her experiences as an interpreter educator, Dively (1995) recommended having had prior experience as a Deaf MLIs as a criterion of employment for instructors in an interpretation program. She thought having Deaf MLIs on staff would enhance the Deaf community's understanding of interpreting and would give the hearing students more exposure to native language users and role models. Support has also been growing for the inclusion of Deaf students as MLIs in interpretation programs (Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada, 1988; Bonni, 1984; Frishberg, 1986). In a study of interpreters in legal settings, Russell (2002) expressed her belief that Deaf graduates of these programs "often become the best allies" (p. 13) in describing and advocating for areas such as consecutive interpreting in legal settings.

Unlike Deaf MLIs, there is a growing canon of empirical studies concerning interpreters in spoken languages within medical or mental health settings. These studies outline a number of benefits for clients and the institutions when professional MLIs are present. Benefits include an increase in patient visits to the outpatient department (Flores, 2005) and better follow-through with prescription drugs (Flores). Studies noted equal "adherence to follow-up" treatments (Flores, p. 743), frequency of service use, and visit length when compared to English speaking patients who did not require an interpreter (Karliner, Jacobs, Chen, & Mutha, 2007). When professional interpreters were booked, their presence served to "decrease communication errors, increase patient comprehension, equalize healthcare utilization, improve clinical outcomes, and increase satisfaction with communication and clinical services for limited English proficient patients" (Karliner, et al., p. 748). In one survey, it was found that patients with limited English fluency also asked more questions during their treatment, had better recall in terms of the health information, reported better physical functioning and well-being, more frequently made use of vaccination services and cancer screenings for mammograms, and went for blood testing more often when trained interpreters were present, as compared to patients who were not given an interpreter (Flores). Flores concluded that the cost of providing a professional or trained interpreter for hospitals was therefore cost effective, in view of reduced errors, less demands on the hospital services, and fewer lawsuits.

### 2.1.3 MLI education

A lack of preparation seems endemic in the field of Deaf minority language interpreters (Dively, 1995; Forestal, 2006) and for spoken language interpreters in medical and mental health settings (Baker, Parker, Williams, Coates & Pitkin, 1996; Davidson, 2001; Elderkin-Thompson, Silver & Waitzkin, 2001; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997; Singh, McKay & Singh, 1999). At one time, a Canadian program offered a series of courses for Deaf MLIs (Mitchell, Evans, & Spink-Mitchell, 1988). In the United States, P. Wilcox (1995) identified a number of ad hoc training programs in 1995, such as ones through the Superior Court of Los Angeles County and at the Bicultural Center in Maryland. At one point, Northeastern University in Boston reported enrollment of a Deaf MLI (P. Wilcox, 1995), as did Gallaudet University (Dively). However, in a review of the literature, Mathers (2009) opined that generally, "most interpreter education programs are ill-equipped to admit deaf students" (p. 69).

Forestal (2005) conducted a qualitative study in which she interviewed nine Deaf individuals who described themselves as Deaf interpreters. In terms of their education, "three received their training from an interpreter education program, three primarily from workshops, and three from a federally funded Deaf interpreting training program that met one full weekend, once a month, for three years" (p. 244). Although better trained than their hearing counterparts, as we will see next, the participants still desired further, ongoing education.

Although there was a lack of training for Deaf MLIs, as mentioned earlier, the picture was similar for spoken language interpreters working in medical or mental health settings. The concept of proficiency and training was frequently not addressed by these institutions (Baker, et al., 1996; Davidson, 2001; Flores, 2005; Karliner, et al., 2007). When the qualifications of the interpreters were documented in the research, they were described as being untrained medical staff (Baker, et al.; Davidson, 2000; Elderkin-Thompson, et al., 2001; Nilon, 2006) or as family members (Baker, et al.; Karliner, et al.). Davidson (2000) found that in one hospital that employed professional interpreters, their preparation was in fact "scant" and included "a good grasp of both English and Spanish and the ability to translate 50 medical terms on a test with complete accuracy" (p. 400). Davidson (2000) was concerned that the interpreters lacked training in "discourse processes" (p. 400), and that the education they received consisted of "nothing more than a period of time following an interpreter on her daily rounds, an assurance that the interpreter in question [was] actually bilingual in the relevant languages, and paperwork

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documenting that the interpreter [was] informed (somewhat) about issues of patient confidentiality" (pp. 385–386).

In another study, in which professional interpreters were booked from a local agency, they had been provided 45 hours of training and had passed an unspecified competency test (Rosenberg, Seller, & Leanza, 2008). In a review of the literature on medical interpreters, it was found that "currently, training ranges from several hours to more than a year; this variation may result in a wide range of competency levels among professional medical interpreters." (Karliner, et al., 2007, p. 749). Areas suggested for inclusion in training programs for medical or mental health interpreters were English, mental health issues, medications, interpreting, culture, assessment, counseling, ethics, advocacy, community-based resources, boundaries (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997) and medical terminology (Musser-Granski & Carrillo; Nailon, 2006).

### 2.1.4 Deaf MLI coursework

In terms of coursework for a Deaf interpreter preparation program, Boudreault (2005) proposes that a curriculum is needed and Mathers (2009) argues for defined program outcomes and further research. Boudreault suggests coursework including ASL linguistics, interpreting theory, Deaf culture, ethics, International Sign Language, Deafblind interpreting, and the role of the interpreter. As identified by Stone (2009), programs could instruct Deaf MLI in how to enrich target texts thematically, temporally, and at the level of discourse. Forestal (2005) further recommends processing skills, ASL and gestural skills, expansion techniques, interpersonal training, working with hearing interpreters, and coursework that covers topics such as educational, medical, and mental health interpreting. Both Forestal and Mathers advocate for education related to specific contexts, such as legal settings. Forestal and Mathers agree that programs should include coursework for hearing interpreters on how to work with their Deaf colleagues, and Mathers feels that it is necessary to teach hearing interpreters how to advocate for the employment of Deaf interpreters.

To deliver courses, only two authors specifically touch on the pedagogy of Deaf interpreter education. Forestal (2005) found that the Deaf MLI she interviewed appreciated "hands-on activities, role-plays, and team or group activities that provided opportunities for skill application based on what was briefly explained in the lectures" (p. 247). While lecturing was not described as a successful pedagogy, the study participants described a preference for learning activities based on consecutive work (Forestal). In 2008, Keller noted a similar preference for role-plays in the Deaf students she interviewed who were enrolled in a course she taught on ethics. Also of interest to program designers was the suggestion for separate courses for Deaf and hearing students, due to a disparity in their power and educational backgrounds in areas such as linguistics and culture (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal). Keller also recommends the demand-control schema (Dean & Pollard, 2001) as a pedagogical model for use with Deaf students.

## 2.2 *Role of Deaf MLIs*

Few studies have been done on the role of a Deaf MLI. Stone (2009) noted where Deaf interpreters were employed to interpret newscasts; they believed their role shifted from translator, interpreter, presenter or news reader. In community settings, Boudreault (2005), a Deaf interpreter, also talked about the need for a Deaf MLI to adopt different roles, such as the position of facilitator or advocate, due to the "educational, language and cultural backgrounds" or "semi-lingual" status of their consumers (p. 331). He suggests that in these roles the interpreter works to "focus" the client's attention "just on the information being requested" and to help "the consumer to frame her response to match the conventions of the setting" (p. 333).

Keller (2008) provided a number of examples of behaviors adopted by Deaf interpreters, perhaps associated with the role of advocate or facilitator. As a teacher, she had invited a Deaf interpreter to a class on ethics, and this individual described a Deaf client's frustration when asked to reply repeatedly to the same questions at a social service agency. One suggested response was to have the Deaf interpreter "explain that it was a factor of the system," to help the Deaf client realize they were "not being singled out" (p. 10). A Deaf student in the same course shared an experience as an interpreter in which he/she had been asked to interpret information concerning cochlear implants that he/she believed to be inaccurate and oppressive. This Deaf student "used the control option of stepping out of interpreting role and into participant role to address the inaccuracy" (p. 8).

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However, while Boudreault (2005) and Keller (2008) described incidences of Deaf interpreters acting as an advocate, there was still the belief that they were limited to a conduit model and that whatever action they took must be “within the limits of the code of ethics” for ASL–English interpreters (Boudreault, p. 335). In Keller’s interviews, for example, the classmates of the Deaf student “challenged the control option” (p. 8) of direct participation and suggested other controls that they felt were more in keeping with ethical behavior, such as “debriefing with a colleague” (p. 9) after the interpreting session. Not surprisingly, it was suggested by Boudreault that the professional code of ethics for hearing ASL–English interpreters must be re-examined in light of the experiences of Deaf MLIs.

Given the different roles Deaf MLIs take on in comparison to the expectation that they adopt a conduit model, it is perhaps not surprising that Frishberg (1986) postulated that one of the biggest challenges a Deaf MLI might face was the ability to maintain “role-separation” and neutrality (p. 153). Based on his experience, Boudreault (2005) also wrote that the Deaf MLI might experience “a different dynamic than most hearing interpreters experience in the Deaf community” (p. 347). He believed the Deaf community did not understand the role of a Deaf interpreter and that Deaf MLIs might have to learn how to balance professional distance and Deaf cultural expectations for establishing polite rapport. A Deaf MLI may also experience some internal conflicts not faced by hearing ASL–English interpreters, in view of what was described as their dual role as service provider and consumer (Keller, 2008; Mathers, 2009).

Based on their experiences, Forestal (2005) and Mathers (2009) also mentioned the need to address the willingness and ability of hearing interpreters to accept the role of their Deaf colleagues, another challenge to their role and authenticity. Earlier, Frishberg (1986) speculated that hearing interpreters perhaps experienced a “temptation” (p. 169) to interpret directly to the Deaf clients when a Deaf MLI was present, thereby bypassing the Deaf interpreter and negating their presence. She suggested special seating arrangements so that the hearing interpreter could see only the Deaf MLI (Frishberg). Boudreault (2005) provided examples of what he believed to be the most efficient seating arrangements for different contexts.

### 2.2.1 Role of spoken language interpreters

For MLIs of spoken languages, unlike for Deaf interpreters, several roles have been described and have been the subject of study; these roles will be reviewed next because they help to contextualize the challenges faced by Deaf interpreters. One of the most frequently mentioned roles was that of a neutral, *linguistic translator* (Dysart-Gale, 2007; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Leanza, 2005; O’Neil, 1989; Rosenberg, et al., 2008), also referred to as a *conduit* (Hatton & Webb, 1993; Hsieh, 2007; Rosenberg, et al.), or *voice box* role (Hatton & Webb). In this role, it was believed that the interpreter did not, or could not, alter the information in any way (Kaufert & Koolage), and it appeared to be the preferred role of inexperienced interpreters and clinicians (Hatton & Webb).

Whereas it was commonly mentioned, the conduit role “was also the most frustrating” for some interpreters (Leanza, 2005, p. 178), perhaps because “the exact translation of words was extremely complex work” (Hatton & Webb, 1993, p. 141). Especially in a medical setting, it was thought that the conduit model was inadequate to describe the interpretation process that was needed (Bolton, 2002; Davidson, 2001; Dysart-Gale, 2007; Rosenberg, et al., 2008). Individuals who advocated for this role did so under the erroneous belief that an interpreter did not have an impact on the interpreted interaction (Mikkelsen, 2008), and as such, the role contradicted the interpreters’ social and professional identities, for example, by limiting their ability to show empathy (Rosenberg, et al.). Perhaps as a response to the limitations of a process of literal interpretation, Bolton suggested the conveyance of connotative meanings in addition to the denotative sense of the participants’ utterances; however, he also realized that this was a challenging role, especially in mental health settings when interpreting the language used by some clients.

A second role described was that of *culture brokers* (Bolton, 2002; Dysart-Gale, 2007; Hatton & Webb, 1993; James, 1998; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Labun, 1999; O’Neil, 1989; Rosenberg, et al., 2008; Singh, et al., 1999) or *collaborator* (Hatton & Webb). In this role, interpreters were seen as active participants (Rosenberg, et al.) in a relational process (James), in which they conveyed culturally significant aspects of the interaction (James). Dysart-Gale postulated a semiotic or mixed model of interpreting, in which meaning was negotiated and interpersonal relationships were prioritized. This was believed by some to be a bi-directional process: from the interpreter to both the patient and clinician (Kaufert & Koolage, Labun).

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However, the role of culture-brokers has also been described as uni-directional: from the clinician to the patient (Leanza, 2005). In this role, and as culture-brokers, interpreters have been described as *agents of the state* (Rosenberg, et al., 2008), or as an *ally of the state* (Davidson, 2001; Leanza), as *cultural informants* (Leanza), or as *culture broker–biomedical interpreters* (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984, p. 283). They were given the responsibility to explain medical terminology and procedures to the clients (Kaufert & Koolage; Rosenberg, et al.), but appeared to implicitly support the dominant, medical discourse over the needs of the patient (Leanza). The genesis of this role appeared to be interpreters' perceived lack of power in healthcare institutions (O'Neil, 1989), as they felt that they had to defer to the physician's tolerance toward their work and interests (Rosenberg, et al.).

Like Deaf interpreters, another role minority language interpreters adopted was that of *advocate* (Davidson, 2001; Dysart-Gale, 2007; James, 1998; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990; Labun, 1999; O'Neil, 1989; Rosenberg, et al., 2008) or *community agent* (Leanza, 2005). In this role, their loyalty was to the community as they recognized differences in culture and power and chose to bring to the foreground the values and norms of the patient (Kaufert & Koolage, Leanza). Not all interpreters adopted the advocate role, however, (Davidson, 2000; O'Neil; Rosenberg, et al.; Leanza), and some refused to do so, even "in case after case it was clear that patients and providers [failed] to grasp the intent of the other's message" (O'Neil, p. 331).

Several authors supported the role of an advocate, as patients wanted interpreters who demonstrated caring (Rosenberg, et al.) and because there was concern that a role of neutrality could "result, somewhat paradoxically, in the circumscription of patients' presentations of their problems" (O'Neil, 1989, p. 331). O'Neil believed that given disparate levels of power between clinicians and minority status patients, "advocacy [was] a necessary strategy to ensure that even basic clinical information [was] presented and translated" (p. 331). Advocacy was also necessary "for empowering the patient to assert rights that might otherwise be ignored or denied" (Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990, p. 41).

The role of *editor* (perhaps also described as the *excluder role*; Hatton & Webb, 1933) is another one that was adopted by or ascribed to interpreters (Davidson, 2001; O'Neil, 1989). In several examples, interpreters took it upon themselves to leave out information shared by the patient or doctor (Davidson, 2001; O'Neil, 1989; Poss & Rangel, 1995), such as extraneous details (Davidson, 2001), "environmental or lifestyle" or contextual information (O'Neil, p. 337), right up to the actual diagnosis from the physician (Poss & Rangel, 1995). The interpreters took on this role because they saw it as their job to control the flow of information and to keep everyone on track (Davidson, 2000; Rosenberg, et al., 2008); in some instances they answered for the physicians or clients (Davidson, 2001). Some also assumed this role because they believed the physicians expected them to edit out information and to not waste time (Davidson, 2001; O'Neil). Poss and Rangel cautioned that interpreters from the same background as the patient might adopt this role to save face for the patient and to protect them, if they thought the patient wouldn't comply with the doctor's instructions, or if they had strong beliefs against the medical advice given. In some cases, in which the interpreters had experienced trauma similar to that of the patient (e.g., being a refugee), there was concern that the interpreters might also "subtly discourage clients from talking about their painful experiences" (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997, p. 57).

Healthcare professionals, however, did not like being left out (Nailon, 2006). Some felt "cast aside" (Hatton & Webb, 1993, p. 141) and some "became hostile when they felt that interpreters were censoring or inadequately translating a patient's reply" (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984, p. 284). As some were not bilingual, the clinicians might not have realized that the interpreter was trying "to establish rapport or find culturally appropriate terminology or analogies for explaining biomedical concepts" (Kaufert & Koolage, p. 285). Physicians were also left with the impression that some patients were passive or not interested in their diagnosis if the interpreter took control (Davidson, 2001).

In some clinical settings spoken language interpreters have also been viewed as co-diagnosticians (Davidson, 2001; Hsieh, 2007; Nailon, 2006; Singh, et al., 1999). In this role, the interpreter as culture-broker was expected to "familiarize the clinician with the world views of individuals from different cultures, and to advise them to use an emic approach" (Singh, et al., p. 4). This meant aiding the clinician in getting information from the patient by probing (Davison, 2000; O'Neil, 1989; Singh, et al.), and creating culturally compatible treatments (Singh, et al.). Several clinicians expected interpreters to help them establish rapport with the patient (Bolton, 2002; Labun, 1999; Hatton & Webb, 1993; Nailon; Rosenberg, et al.; Singh, et al.), to "vouch" (p. 107) for the doctor, or to act as "a buffer zone," shielding the clinician from the emotional response of the client (Bolton, p. 109). Other duties included "(a) assuming the provider's communicative goals, (b) editorializing information for medical emphasis, (c) initiating information-seeking behaviours, (d) participating in diagnostic tasks, and (e) volunteering medical

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information to the patients" (Hsieh, p. 926). Hsieh cautioned, however, that activities of a co-therapist "would be considered as interpreting errors" by some professionals (p. 925).

Perhaps as a co-therapist or diagnostician, authors stressed the need for interpreters to take on the responsibility of ensuring informed consent was obtained (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990). Typically, it was suggested that Western doctors used "culturally based explanatory models" (Kaufert & O'Neil, p. 41) to describe the costs and benefits of medical procedures. In one study, however, the authors noted that because the "risks and benefits were not formally discussed [by the physician], the interpreter elaborated on the basic diagnostic information" and later "introduced a more formal decision point" to more clearly request consent (Kaufert & O'Neil, p. 49).

A number of other roles were suggested for interpreters in medical or mental health settings. They included the roles of *gatekeeper* (Davidson, 2001), *clarifier* (Dysart-Gale, 2007), *welcomer* or *greeter* (Leanza, 2005, p. 178), and as a source of support for the family and patient (Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990; Leanza). Leanza described the role of some interpreters as being an *integration agent*, in which the interpreter helped the patients negotiate norms and resources outside of the hospital setting (p. 186). Not surprisingly, it was suggested that interpreters needed time to negotiate a shared role with the service provider (Labun, 1999) and that as a profession it was very dissimilar to other fields (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984).

### 2.2.2 Cultural brokerage

Specific examples of the role of culture broker or advocate, as performed by MLIs in spoken languages, have been given in the literature. Where interpreters work with patients of Asian origin they might need to broker concepts such as the Chinese medical practice of coining and cupping that leaves obvious bruises; Western doctors did not seem familiar with these treatments (Ngo-Metzger, Massagli, Clarridge, Manocchia, Davis, Lezzoni, & Phillips, 2003). Hsieh (2007) gave an example in which an interpreter used the concept of having "caught the wind" from a Mandarin-speaking patient as having "caught a cold" in Western medicine (p. 933). While interpreting with Inuit Canadians, interpreters had to be aware that "sewing, drum dancing, or hunting and trapping" were viewed as "recreational" activities by non-Native doctors, whereas they were "understood by the Inuit as being fundamental to self-esteem, productivity, and gender identity" (O'Neil, 1989, p. 341). Researchers also noted how the act of offering tobacco could be considered the equivalent in Native culture to signing a consent form in Western medicine (Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990). In one study, the interpreters working between English and Cree "often found it necessary to move beyond the direct translation of the concept" by describing "familiar animal anatomy and by making analogies between metabolic processes in a diabetic's diet and familiar mechanical processes such as maintaining a gas and oil balance for outboard motors," thereby ensuring patient comprehension (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984, p. 284).

As culture-brokers and agents of the hospital, some researchers found that therapists relied on their interpreters "to ascertain whether the client's words, attitudes and behaviours [were] considered normal and acceptable in their culture" and if the therapist's questions were "culturally inappropriate" (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997, p. 54). Hatton and Webb (1993) described how a Spanish-English interpreter rephrased a health nurse's request concerning a family's Christmas Eve dinner. The interpreter talked about having visited other homes also receiving social assistance, indicating that it was difficult for families to buy groceries, which led the mother to admit that there was no food in her house (Hatton & Webb). As an example of semiotic mediation, Dysart-Gale (2007) described a situation in which an interpreter talked to the doctor of a young comatose patient and suggested the clinician approach the family about turning off life support by agreeing with their religious beliefs that it was "in God's hands" (p. 244).

In another study with interpreters between Cree and English, the interpreter found it necessary to explain to a physician that an elderly Cree grandmother's desire to maintain her body for the afterlife was the reason that she resisted the amputation of a gangrened limb (Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990). In a discussion of the duration of back problems with a native female patient, one interpreter related the question to the birth of the patient's children to determine the number of years she had been experiencing pain (O'Neil, 1989). In another example of cultural brokerage, anaemia was described in Cree as a lack of blood (Kaufert & O'Neil).

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### 2.2.3 Challenges to their role

Much like Deaf MLIs, several authors noted a number of challenges faced by spoken language interpreters in terms of defining and maintaining their role (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997; Rosenberg, et al., 2008). This was perhaps due to a lack of guidelines, which no doubt led to clinicians' preference for a language transmission model (Dysart-Gale, 2007). One author described the expansion of the interpreter's role beyond a neutral conduit as "controversial," as it was thought to "compromise confidentiality" and could lead to "patient requests for advice, recommendations, clarifications" (Dysart-Gale, p. 240). Probing patients for information as a co-therapist or on behalf of a physician could be construed as an invasion of privacy (Hsieh, 2007). In situations in which the advice given by an interpreter contravenes the physician's medical opinion, the interpreter could be guilty of malpractice (Hsieh).

A number of social pressures acted on minority language interpreters in their attempts to define their roles (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997). They faced conflicting values between their cultural group and the medical establishment (James, 1998; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984; Labun, 1999; Musser-Granski & Carrillo). Extended kinship ties challenged some to keep information confidential and also clouded their feelings of loyalty (Kaufert & Koolage). As an interpreter, MLIs may have experienced an elevation or change in status (Kaufert & Koolage; Musser-Granski & Carrillo), but were also cautioned not to "abuse their power and position" (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, p. 57). Their new role also "*distanced* them from some members of their community" (Kaufert & Koolage, p. 285; emphasis authors') or made them feel like an outsider in their own culture (Musser-Granski & Carrillo). Some reported jealousy in their peers because of their new social status (Musser-Granski & Carrillo). Yet some MLIs needed support for their own acculturation into the dominant English community; especially as refugees or immigrants themselves, the interpreters perhaps found it "emotionally painful to listen and interpret traumatic life experiences so similar to their own" (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, p. 57).

It must also be recognized that the interpreters were outsiders, the "other," and so lacked the power to make changes to the system (James, 1998). Medical institutions, in particular, were seen as colonial in orientation (Davidson, 2000; James; O'Neil, 1989) and asymmetric in power (Davidson, 2001; Kaufert & O'Neil, 1990). Clinicians preferred a transmission or conduit model, as the doctor was seen as the expert and the patient as being passive (Dysart-Gale, 2007). The ability of interpreters to intervene or to act as an advocate was thus limited; to do otherwise meant either challenging the clinician's authority (O'Neil) or taking action that was not seen as threatening (Leanza, 2005). Some interpreters refused to act as advocates, perhaps due to their lack of power (Davidson, 2000; O'Neil); some did not feel like part of the healthcare team and believed they were not given respect (Rosenberg, et al., 2008) or that they were not valued (Davidson, 2000). Perhaps in response, some interpreters adopted the role of *assimilator* (Leanza) and continued to ascribe traditional roles to physicians and used Western labels (Hsieh, 2007); the discourse of medicine put them in the position of being "*native informants*" and "subordinate to the dominant white English-speaking service provider" (James, p. 60).

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## 3. Theoretical Framework

Having looked at the literature concerning both Deaf interpreters and hearing minority language interpreters, we turn now to Freire's (2004) model of critical emancipatory education as a framework for understanding the findings of this research study. Freire believed it was imperative for educators to acknowledge the impact of oppression on students and to recognize the possibility for pedagogy to become a force "to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (p. 44). This is a particularly relevant epistemology given the experience of oppression faced by Deaf people as a linguistic minority (Ladd, 2008; Lane, 1992; S. Wilcox, 1989). In terms of pedagogical practices, Freire envisioned teaching as an active process of engagement and of consensus building to discover solutions, perhaps in keeping with the characteristic of a collectivist society as ascribed to the Deaf community (Mindess, 1996; Page, 1993; P. Wilcox, 1995).

At the level of epistemology, Freire (2004) described education as a transformative social phenomenon, dialogic in nature, and one in which the educators and students taught each other. This view of pedagogy resonates with the value system ascribed to the Deaf community, with an emphasis on involvement (Hoza, 2007), consensus, reciprocity (Mindess, 1996; Smith, 1983), and, potentially, diffuse orientation (Page, 1993).

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The ultimate goal of education, according to Freire (2004), was to assist students in becoming more fully human, their “ontological and historical vocation” (p. 55). This act of becoming more human was accomplished through the naming of the world, then critically reflecting on the naming in a continual process of recreating the world and reflection. As sites of education for both hearing and Deaf interpreters, interpreter preparation programs are well situated to facilitate this process of naming and ownership in both Deaf and hearing students, fostering a sense of Deafhood, or pride that Deaf people have of themselves and of their culture (Ladd, 2008).

At the same time, it should be recognized that interpreter educators such as Baker-Shenk (1986) and Gish (1988) were of the opinion that the interpreting field is capable of perpetuating audism. Based on her experience, Gish believed that programs have historically employed more hearing than Deaf staff. Both anecdotal (Dively, 1995) and research-based (McDermid, 2009) evidence has suggested that Deaf staff in interpretation programs could be ascribed a lower status than their hearing peers. Both Gish and Stratig (1996) worried that the Deaf instructors acquiesced to hearing staff, especially concerning decisions regarding culture and language classes.

During the process of naming their world, it should be kept in mind that students can confront limit-situations (Freire, 2004). For Deaf students and instructors, these limit-situations they might encounter include the oppression they have faced or the myths and stereotypes created about them (S.Wilcox, 1989; Woodward, 1989). When they realize these situations and act to change them, they come to understand their own praxis or power in an act of *conscientização*, the ability to think critically and develop a conscious awareness of their power to transform their world (Freire), again tied to a sense of Deafhood (Ladd, 2008).

It is also important to realize that as an oppressed population, Deaf instructors and students might have a “submerged state of consciousness” (Freire, 2004, p. 95), in that they wish to support their own culture but might also have an unconscious desire to take on the power and position of their dominators. This Freire (1974) described as the process of *massification*, in which the oppressed take on a role of power to enjoy more local benefits or privileges. Freire (1974) theorized that massification was the result of an education that did not address broader issues of power but instead prepared students for an individual, historically constituted role and privilege. In the case of the Deaf instructors and Deaf students, as Deaf MLIs they might wish to adopt the role of a typical professional ASL–English interpreter without critically considering what that means. Such a view does not take into account the unique culture and values they bring to the field of interpretation and could thus lead to “fatalistic attitudes towards their situation” or “docility” (Freire, 2004, p. 61), “horizontal violence” (p. 62), or “self-deprecation” (p. 64) should they fail to perform like their hearing peers or where they see other Deaf people failing to conform to the “standard” role of Deaf interpreter. Instead, during the process of education, instructors have the ability to facilitate emancipation from these prescribed subjectivities (Freire, 2004) and to imagine new conceptualizations, in this case the role of minority language interpreters.

## 4. Methodology

Within an ethnographic and qualitative framework (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), faculty of five interpreter education programs and four Deaf studies or pre-interpreter programs in Canada were contacted and invited to participate in an interview concerning their teaching experiences. Each participant was given a description of the research proposal and broad research questions through electronic mail. In addition to the interview questions, the participants were also encouraged to discuss issues of relevance to them.

As the study was designed within a qualitative paradigm, the research questions were of a general nature, in order to solicit topics of interest to the participants. For example, the participants were asked to talk about the students they taught, their experiences as interpreters, and how they designed and taught their courses. Several areas were identified, and the specific focus of this paper concerns the comments of the participants about the education of Deaf students as future Deaf interpreters and, in the case of the Deaf instructors, on their experiences as Deaf interpreters.

Interviews with the hearing participants were conducted in spoken English. With the Deaf participants, the interviews were conducted in American Sign Language; the principal researcher, a nationally certified interpreter and interpreter educator, translated their comments from ASL to written English. Each participant then received a copy of their interviews for verification, additional comments, and as a source of triangulation.

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In order to maintain the anonymity of the individuals, each instructor was provided with an identifier, consisting of two letters, such as HP or DP, indicating a hearing participant or a Deaf participant, respectively, and a number. For example, HP1 represented a hearing participant and DP5 indicated a Deaf participant.

### 4.1 Participant demographics

Eighteen of the 34 participants in this study identified themselves as being Deaf. As a group, none of the Deaf staff reported graduating from an interpreter preparation program; only three Deaf faculty members mentioned having had training specific to the field of interpreting, which consisted of from one to several workshops on the interpreting process or legal interpreting. While 17 of the 18 Deaf instructors were active members of a Deaf community association or club, only five held membership in a professional interpreting organization; none of the 18 Deaf participants reported membership with the Conference of Interpreter Trainers or American Sign Language Teachers Association. Three Deaf staff held ASL Instructor Certification from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Faculty Demographics*

Cultural identity	Deaf	Hearing
Total participants	<i>N</i> = 18	<i>N</i> = 16
PhD / EdD		3
MA / Med	5	5
BA/BEd/BS	9	6
College diploma/certificate	4	1
Graduate of AEIP	0	7
Certification	3 ASLIC	8 (COI, RID)
Member of interpreting organization	5	15
Member of a Deaf organization	17	3
CIT /ASLTA member	0	5

### 4.2 Data analysis

Utilizing an analytic–induction methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), major categories and properties were identified from the research notes and transcripts specifically related to the participants’ comments concerning the education of Deaf interpreters (see Table 2). As additional instructors were interviewed, their comments were compared to the previous interviews and the literature and initial categories and properties were re-evaluated or reformulated. Examples of the major categories and properties can be seen in Table 2, in which Competencies was identified as a category with the properties of settings, modes of interpreting, and additional skills.

*Table 2: Categories*

Category	Properties
Competencies	Settings Modes of interpreting Additional skills
Challenges	Lack of paid positions Lack of standards
Benefits of Deaf MLI	Clients benefit Staff and hearing students benefit Deaf students benefit
Education	Lack of training Deaf MLI coursework
Pedagogy	How to support Deaf students Better understanding of hearing culture Enhanced awareness of community resources More examples to share (e.g., linguistic, experiential)
Role	Confidentiality Hearing interpreter respect

## 5. Findings

Turning to the findings of this study, 17 of the 18 Deaf respondents reported having experience as a Deaf interpreter, which has significance in terms of their thoughts on interpreter education, as will be discussed. They typically worked in tandem with a hearing colleague. It should also be noted that, based on the comments of the participants, three of the interpreting programs had accepted Deaf students on either a full- or part-time basis; seven Deaf and three hearing faculty members talked about their experiences or their views of working with Deaf pupils. In some cases, the Deaf students were enrolled on a part-time basis and typically took only a few of the courses in the interpreting program as a replacement for general elective courses. One Deaf student had, in fact, graduated from a program and was working in an educational setting as a Deaf interpreter.

### 5.1 Competencies

Within the category of Competencies, the Deaf participants in this study described working with a variety of clients, including Deafblind individuals, newcomers to Canada, and monolingual ASL users. They believed that Deaf interpreters were needed to work with Deaf students in elementary and secondary educational settings, and a graduate of one program was now employed in a school setting. The Deaf participants did not mention

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## Pedagogical implications for Deaf interpreters

interpreting between two different signed languages, nor did they talk about having fluency in another signed language, such as Langue des Signes Québécois (LSQ) or International Sign.

Two settings were most often described by the instructors. The first included a number of legal contexts (as described by nine Deaf individuals); examples include court appearances, police interviews, and visits to the local jail. The second most frequently cited setting was medical institutions (as described by five Deaf individuals). Four of the Deaf respondents began their careers as a Deaf interpreter at Gallaudet University, working as Deafblind interpreters. One of these individuals, however, did not believe that Deafblind interpreting was really a form of interpreting or a professional role. Three Deaf instructors mentioned interpreting for family meetings, two had worked in a group home setting, and one had worked as an interpreter at a local university. Whereas two Deaf instructors had interpreted in mental health settings, one of the two described translating psychological assessments and shared how much this experience was “hated” because of the complexity of the language used in the test protocols. Two individuals were frequently called upon to interpret for friends at social gatherings or to translate written English texts to ASL. One Deaf instructor mentioned that it was common practice to look to a Deaf congregant in church to explain the sermon in ASL while the minister used some form of sign language.

One Deaf participant believed that there had been an increase in the demand for Deaf interpreters, especially in medical settings, and two mentioned the need for Deaf MLIs for an increasing number of Deaf immigrants. Two others advocated for the employment of Deaf MLIs in educational settings, and, as mentioned earlier, one instructor reported that a Deaf student had graduated from his/her program and had gone on to work in an integrated educational setting.

The Deaf participants described specific modes of interpreting, both consecutive and simultaneous; as mentioned earlier, at least two of the Deaf instructors had experience in conducting sight translations of written English forms into ASL. One of the two instructors believed that consecutive interpreting was especially appropriate for legal proceedings. The simultaneous mode, according to the participants, was typically used in settings such as an appointment with a doctor, meetings, or family gatherings.

The interpretation process for a Deaf MLI was described as being more complicated than just working between two languages. In medical settings for example, one Deaf instructor noted the need for interpersonal skills. Instead, he had “met interpreters who said they could sign well, but it’s not about being fluent in ASL. There are a lot of other skills required in those settings” (DP2). As one participant noted, the interpreter had to resort to gesturing or drawing in order to ensure the Deaf client’s comprehension.

When working as a Deafblind interpreter, one instructor described how she was responsible for sharing “background information and describing what was going on in the room” as well as arranging the seating (DP4). During meals, she had to identify where different food items and utensils were placed on the table. She also realized she would need to be “very patient” with Deafblind clients and shared the following.

At lunch I realized how messy [the Deafblind person] was when [he/she] ate. Again, I saw a similar parallel to how hearing people get upset when they think Deaf people eat too loudly or make too much noise. I really had to take a hard look at myself. (DP4)

### 5.2 Challenges

The participants reported that a number of challenges were encountered when working as a Deaf interpreter. Three of the instructors were concerned about a lack of professional assessment or “clear standards” for the position. At the time of this study, and according to the participants, there were no formal screening protocols in place in Canada. According to one Deaf instructor, there were few, if any, paid positions or contract work for a Deaf MLI. Five of the Deaf participants, in fact, reported working on a volunteer basis.

### 5.3 Benefits of a Deaf MLI

In their interviews, the Deaf instructors described the benefits of their involvement as Deaf MLIs with Deaf clients; they also talked about the benefits of having Deaf MLI students enrolled in ASL–English interpretation programs. For example, a number of the participants talked about the role of a Deaf MLI as a source of support for Deaf clients. One Deaf faculty member emphasized the importance of hiring a Deaf person from the same

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background as the Deaf client, especially for citizenship and swearing-in ceremonies, as someone from the same culture would have more cultural sensitivity. In other settings, the presence of a Deaf MLI seemed to help the clients “feel like they were more normal, and they could understand the information clearly. They needed a second voice... support to turn to and that was the Deaf interpreter” (DP1). Another instructor believed that Deaf Canadians “who were mis-educated” from their experiences in mainstream or integrated settings also benefited from working with a Deaf interpreter, as it improved communication and provided the Deaf pupils with a role model.

In a discussion of the benefits of having Deaf students in interpreter preparation programs, overall, the Deaf instructors were pleased and hoped to have more Deaf students enroll. Three, in particular, described the experience as “fantastic” and felt that they had benefited from the participation of the Deaf students. During discussions of cultural norms or history, for example, the Deaf teachers appreciated input from the Deaf students. This lent credence to their lecture, and it was felt that, otherwise, the hearing students may have “disbelieved” the information they were learning from only one source, typically the only Deaf person with whom they had interacted. Another Deaf faculty member described feeling that s/he had made a contribution to the lives of the Deaf students, an experience of “giving something to them, something that they valued” (DP5).

The benefits for the Deaf students in the programs were described as “wonderful,” especially for the Deaf learners who had not attended a residential program. Three Deaf instructors believed this cohort finally had the opportunity to study and understand his/her own culture and language. The Deaf students who had not been in a residential program typically “excelled” and developed pride in their identity as a Deaf person; being in the program was “very important” for them. It enhanced their self-esteem and allowed them to interact with Deaf professional role models, their teachers. One Deaf instructor was certain that it wasn’t until the students had met a Deaf teacher in person that they finally believed “that Deaf people could have degrees or hold college teaching positions” (DP5).

Also, the presence of Deaf students in the programs supported the education of the hearing students in a number of ways. Hearing instructors modeled “appropriate behaviours” when interacting with Deaf students by responding to the Deaf students directly in ASL. In classes where the hearing instructors were not fluent in ASL or not comfortable teaching in their second language, professional ASL–English interpreters had been hired. The presence of interpreters gave the students a chance to see how the process worked. In other classes the hearing instructors taught through ASL, thus precluding the need for interpreters, which was described as a cost-saving measure for the colleges. There were concerns, however, about the ability of the hearing students to learn the course content through their second language and about the hearing instructors’ level of fluency in ASL.

When Deaf students attended class, it “forced” the hearing students to sign, again increasing their use of ASL. The presence of Deaf students also gave the hearing students more direct access to the real-life experiences of the Deaf. For example, in one class, a Deaf student translated a poem into ASL, and because of her fluency and cultural adaptations, the hearing students were brought “to tears because she had done such a great job” (DP9).

### 5.4 Education

As mentioned earlier, only a few Deaf respondents discussed specific training to be a Deaf interpreter or MLI, and that consisted of a few workshops. When asked about establishing a program for Deaf interpreters, the concept was unanimously supported. However, in further discussion, the participants felt that launching an accessible Deaf interpreter program was problematic for a number of reasons. Two instructors (one Deaf, one hearing) believed that the pedagogical processes they used would have to be modified, as well as the curriculum goals. A Deaf faculty member raised questions about the best place to house such a program (within a college or a university), the cost, and financial support. Three instructors (one hearing, two Deaf) noted a lack of appropriate resources and the need to create or adapt specific interpreting activities that are based on spoken English into a printed text to accommodate Deaf students. One hearing faculty member questioned the wisdom of undertaking these revisions and adaptations, as some of the part-time students currently enrolled were not planning on becoming interpreters. A Deaf instructor suggested hosting a series of workshops initially, and then, if there was interest, creating a separate one-year program.

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## Pedagogical implications for Deaf interpreters

### 5.4.1 Deaf MLI coursework

As mentioned, some of the instructors reported having taught Deaf students, and some believed that Deaf students could be successful within the established programs. Coursework recommended by the participants included: a Deaf history class “because they didn’t know their own history” (DP13), Deaf culture or Deaf studies, ASL, an introduction to the Deaf community, issues and trends in the Deaf community, intercultural communications, and visual gestural communication. A hearing instructor suggested the students might also be best served with coursework on “hearing culture first.”

Several concerns about coursework were raised, however, that should be noted. Some educators (two Deaf, one hearing) didn’t know which classes should be mandatory for the Deaf students and felt that they were experimenting with this group. A Deaf teacher questioned if the interpreting and translating courses actually “fit” the needs of Deaf students. As mentioned earlier, in some institutions, the hearing faculty could not or would not teach using ASL. As a result, and due to a lack of interpreters, the Deaf students were limited in their course selections and were encouraged to take only the courses taught by the Deaf instructors.

There were also some very real concerns about the students’ ability to succeed academically, especially on a full-time basis. Four Deaf faculty members suggested that Deaf students would do well if they enrolled only in the Deaf Studies Program or took classes in the interpreting program on a part-time basis.

### 5.5 Pedagogy

In a discussion of their teaching practices, three of the Deaf instructors and one hearing faculty member were not sure how to accommodate a Deaf student and worried that these students were not able to manage all of the program requirements because many of the courses were too difficult for them. Some of the Deaf students were characterized by a hearing instructor as “grassroots” and “not classroom savvy.” One Deaf instructor had concerns about the ability of the Deaf students to do the same assignments as their hearing peers. To accommodate Deaf learners, this instructor assigned only “small research projects of interest,” such as researching “the history of the residential schools.”

Another serious concern expressed by the interpreter educators, both Deaf and hearing, was the lack of English fluency they saw in the Deaf students. While it wasn’t expected that they had “advanced English skills,” several didn’t exhibit even “basic fluency,” perhaps because “they were not bilingual” (HP9). In the experience of the two Deaf instructors, the Deaf students also repeatedly voiced concerns about the number of assignments and readings they were required to do in English. Some Deaf pupils frequently requested to have the course content explained through ASL and needed additional tutoring with the use of English textbooks or help writing essays. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the Deaf participants described his/her experience with this cohort as being “awful” and noted that Deaf students typically “struggled,” eventually leaving the program.

Recommendations from the participants to support the inclusion of Deaf students in the programs included examining the screening tools and entrance requirements to clarify the level of English fluency required. Two Deaf staff suggested the elimination of tests based on audition and spoken English and the creation of a policy accepting assignments in ASL from the Deaf students. A third Deaf instructor recommended an English course for Deaf student interpreters, and a fourth suggested hiring Deaf tutors to work with Deaf students.

In addition to their insights and concerns about teaching Deaf students, four of the Deaf instructors also talked about how their experiences as a Deaf MLIs had informed their pedagogy, the next property identified in this category. As one instructor described it:

Maybe there are things I do now, which are in the back of my mind that I’m not aware of. For example, being a DI might have made me more sensitive to hearing people. Or maybe I’ve become a stronger political advocate for the Deaf community. As a DI, I saw a lot of horrible things, but I also got to see the other side to many stories that I wouldn’t have seen ordinarily. Maybe because I have seen those things, it helps me to talk about Deaf culture and the Deaf community in the classroom with the students and share more interesting experiences. (DP18)

A second educator felt experiencing the role of a Deaf interpreter was beneficial to understanding the contexts Deaf people lived within and the support services available in the community.

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I think that it [interpreting] is important for teachers because it is an experience most Deaf people don't have. Most Deaf people, when they think about counseling or psychologists, feel that they are sent there because they are in trouble or that they were bad. They don't realize that it is a positive experience and can give them support. (DP1)

A third educator described how she used examples from her DI experiences to prepare students for placement and to teach the translation process.

Before the third year students go on placement, I usually give a short lecture about it. I describe the different levels of communication or language that Deaf people use. And try and educate them about that. I tell them that not all Deaf people sign at the same level, and I try to describe the role of the DI to them. (DP14)

For example, the Deaf client might not understand the label for "mustard." I showed the students how to interpret that clearly, how to describe the colour and how to describe the jar, how to spread it on food, and things like that. (DP14)

A fourth Deaf instructor shared the following viewpoint.

Yes, I think the instructors should be working interpreters. If not, they keep teaching the same old stuff. Or they become stale. They have to get out there and see what's happening, and use that in the classroom. That way they can share things with the students and understand their experience. For example, when the students bring issues back after practicum, I am able to understand what they went through. So instructors must keep themselves up-to-date and can do that by working in the field. (DP2)

### 5.6 Role

The final major category identified from the data and of interest to interpreter educators was that of the role of a Deaf MLI. From their experiences, three of the Deaf instructors described their role as "a great experience," or "enjoyable." As one instructor put it, "every assignment was different, and I liked the challenge of adapting my work to meet the individual clients" (DP10). Several of the Deaf instructors, however, talked about the challenges they faced. Some Deaf clients wanted to share a lot of information about their problems and looked to the Deaf interpreter for advice. One participant found the experience "awkward" and didn't know what was expected. Another participant found the experience educational but would not like to take on the position again. A third Deaf participant was reticent to interpret in mental health settings again, due to the complexity of the language used during assessments and because she felt unable to do more than just literally interpret the tests or interviews. A fourth instructor was concerned about the impact of her work as a Deaf interpreter on her life as a Deaf community member, in particular around expectations of confidentiality. As standard practice, she made sure she explained to the clients that she would keep their information confidential, but worried that some would not understand or would question her ability to do that. As a result, the Deaf community was perceived as less welcoming or "guarded," which led to a sense of isolation.

Different terms were used to describe the work that these individuals performed. One had considered taking on the role of an advocate instead of acting as an interpreter. Three other Deaf participants described their work as that of a communication mediator. They had to take on the responsibility for clarifying the sign language used by a hearing interpreter to the Deaf clients or, conversely, they had to explain to the hearing sign language interpreter what the Deaf clients were describing. This meant "expanding" or "explaining" things in more detail to the Deaf clients. Where the Deaf client had "limited vocabulary or low language skills," it meant presenting the client's language at a level that matched the interpreter's ability to understand. One instructor believed that a Deaf MLI should also know the history of the community they work in, the names in ASL of significant Deaf people and places, and important events in the local Deaf community, as they might be needed in the interpretation or could come up in discussion with the Deaf client.

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## Pedagogical implications for Deaf interpreters

Only two Deaf faculty members had concerns about working with hearing interpreters. One described how the hearing interpreters often shirked their responsibilities of interpreting into ASL. Instead they used more English-like signing when they found out a Deaf interpreter was present and refused to function as a team. At other times, the same instructor noticed that while she was adapting her signs to ensure client comprehension, the hearing interpreter would then mimic or copy her language choices. This left her wondering, "If they do that, why am I there? Then I feel like the client doesn't need to watch me" (DP10). The second Deaf respondent believed that hearing interpreters didn't "realize the support they could get, especially if they're struggling," from a Deaf interpreter, as it would be a team working together to interpret; however, the concept of a Deaf interpreter was "a new idea for them" (DP1).

## 6. Discussion

Turning to a discussion of the findings, it should be kept in mind that the nature of this study was qualitative and the research questions were general and open-ended. Of interest to note is that not all of the participants spontaneously talked about working with Deaf learners. Of the 16 hearing instructors interviewed, nine worked in programs in which Deaf students had reportedly been enrolled; yet only 3 of them talked about working with Deaf learners. Perhaps this is indicative of the field, in which the concept of a Deaf MLI is still in its infancy and not considered by hearing ASL–English interpreters. As will also be noted, there was not a lot of spontaneous discussion concerning curriculum design or modifications specifically for Deaf students. Again, this may mirror the current state of affairs for teaching Deaf interpreters, as the participants may not have been sure how to adapt their curricula for this group of students.

Having said that, the participants did describe the competencies needed to be a Deaf interpreter, reported some of the challenges they faced in this role, and mentioned issues of teaching and pedagogy. For example, from their work as Deaf MLIs, the instructors had many insights into the competencies required to be a Deaf interpreter, which, in turn, can help to formulate program outcomes.

### 6.1 Competencies

Similar to what was reported in the literature, some Deaf instructors had been interpreters in legal and mental health settings (Frishberg, 1986; Mathers, 2009), as well as for immigration services (Dubienski, 1990). Some also had experience as an interpreter in medical, educational, religious, and social contexts and provided services to group homes and to Deafblind clients. To work in these settings, they had to be fluent in ASL and tactile signing and be able to use environmental props or drawings to assist with communication. Unlike the findings of other authors (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005), however, they were not called upon to interpret from International Sign or LSQ. They had also provided interpretation services in all three modes: translation, consecutive, and simultaneous. These settings and competencies largely mirror what was found in the literature on Deaf interpreter education (Boudreault, Forestal, Frishberg, and Mathers) and perhaps should be considered to be desirable outcomes for Deaf interpreter preparation programs.

### 6.1. Benefits of a Deaf MLI

When establishing a preparation program for Deaf interpreters, it is advisable, as several authors noted (Forestal, 2005; Mathers, 2009), to teach hearing students how to advocate for the employment of Deaf interpreters, for example, by explaining the benefits of their participation. In a discussion of spoken language MLIs, Labun (1999) described one benefit as the concept of "culturally competent care" (p. 215), elaborating that an interpreter who shared the same background as the patient could ensure better service delivery due to cultural sensitivity. For example, in medical or mental health settings, the use of professional spoken language interpreters from a minority background led to increased treatment efficacy, patient health, and treatment compliance, as well as reduced errors, demands on service, and overall costs (Flores, 2005; Karliner, et al., 2007).

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While largely anecdotal, the literature also outlined several benefits to hiring a Deaf MLI, such as Mathers' (2009) comprehensive list of reasons for employing a Deaf interpreter within legal contexts. For Deaf clients, the presence of a Deaf MLI also potentially provides emotional support (Dubienski, 1990; Frishberg, 1986; P. Wilcox, 1995), reduces anxiety (Frishberg), and might give them a sense of empowerment (Boudreault, 2005). The employment of a Deaf MLI might further dispel audist beliefs about the ability of a Deaf person to work as an interpreter (P. Wilcox).

In addition to the benefits described above, other benefits were noted by the participants, specifically by having Deaf students enrolled in an interpretation program and by having Deaf teachers who were experienced Deaf MLIs. For example, according to the instructors, the presence of Deaf students enhanced the informal acquisition of Deaf culture and ASL by the hearing students, as the Deaf students served as native language models, a benefit predicted in the literature (Dively, 1995). According to the instructors, the Deaf graduates had a better understanding of the abilities and role of an interpreter and so were potentially better prepared to advocate on behalf of the profession, as postulated by Russell (2002).

The inclusion of Deaf students and Deaf interpreters as a topic of study might also dispel the conflicts between Deaf and hearing interpreters, as was described by two participants. It might increase the willingness of hearing interpreters to work with their colleagues, a concern noted by Forestal (2005), and help hearing interpreters understand their responsibilities in language translation.

For Deaf students in particular, the instructors thought that participation in an ASL–English interpreter program was extremely beneficial. As the programs were designed to examine both hearing and Deaf cultures, they spoke to the praxis of the Deaf students, as well as their worldview (Freire, 2004), and facilitated their authentic participation. It was within an interpreting program, for example, that they could critically examine their ascribed subjectivity as “disabled” and impart a cultural perspective to the hearing students. Input from the Deaf students was also encouraged by the Deaf instructors, another example of authentic participation (Freire), as their comments were seen as a source of expertise.

Because issues of oppression were routinely discussed in the interpretation programs, it could also be argued that participation fostered an awareness of power and social capital in Deaf students, *conscientização*, as described by Freire (2004). This is particularly significant for the field of interpretation and for preparation programs, given their goal to be allies to the Deaf community; for as allies, do they not support a humanist pedagogy of emancipation? It would appear that some Deaf staff members felt more empowered in the presence of Deaf students. As reported by the Deaf staff, some of the Deaf graduates had found employment as role models and communication aids in educational settings with integrated Deaf students, another example of the power of education to empower and emancipate. It could be argued that for Deaf learners, the act of meeting Deaf professionals and of having their identity as a Deaf person validated and deemed worthy of study, challenges the prevailing pathological societal view of the Deaf and promotes a positive sense of Deafhood (Ladd, 2008). The act of passing on their culture and language also allowed the Deaf instructors and students to honour the expectations of reciprocity and the collectivist nature ascribed to the Deaf community (Page, 1993; P. Wilcox, 1995). Based on these findings, instructors might want to encourage the enrollment of Deaf students.

### 6.2 Education

Similar to the findings of Forestal (2005), as prior or currently working Deaf interpreters, the Deaf participants in this study were fairly well educated, with a college diploma or certificate, at the minimum; the majority of the Deaf participants (14/18) had a bachelor's degree, or higher. In comparisons to their hearing peers, it should be recognized that Deaf MLIs are, perhaps, better educated than many hearing MLIs, some of whom are family members of those for whom they are interpreting.

However, as mentioned earlier, many of the Deaf instructors had little or no specific education to work as a Deaf MLI, which is similar in many ways to their hearing counterparts. For example, only one instructor had attended a workshop on interpreting in legal contexts and only one Deaf participant was concerned about her ability to interpret for mental health assessments. Most of the participants, however, saw the need for additional training, which is similar to the findings of other studies (Forestal, 2005; Keller, 2008), in which it was noted that the participants “felt most unprepared for or least confident in were mental health, educational, legal, and lastly medical” and wanted additional, ongoing education in these settings (Forestal, p. 251). Perhaps further education

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and increased access to interpretation programs would reduce the anxiety of Deaf interpreters and increase their numbers.

An examination of the participants' comments seems to indicate that Deaf interpreter preparation is indeed happening, but it is occurring in an ad hoc manner. At the same time, there is enthusiasm from several participants for establishing a Deaf interpreter program. Boudreault (2005) and Mathers (2009), therefore, are correct in saying that there is a need to establish outcomes and for a curriculum for this cohort.

Perhaps as a starting point for a program, educators might want to note the competencies mentioned by the participants of this study. One such area for consideration is the level of fluency needed in English and in ASL by applicants, in light of the work done by a Deaf interpreter in medical and legal contexts and the concerns shared by the participants about working in these settings. When Deaf interpreter programs are established, in order to facilitate student success, programs might want to consider offering immediate assistance in the form of tutoring, peer support, and additional English coursework for Deaf students, as suggested by the participants of this study. The creation or adaptation of existing resources might also be considered. As recommended by one participant and in the literature (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005) as well, perhaps separate coursework is needed for Deaf and hearing students in order to address their different levels of power and knowledge. Deaf learners might also benefit from a college transition program or preparatory coursework to ensure that they are academically prepared. Or, as suggested by one instructor, perhaps a series of coordinated workshops might serve as a good introduction to the field of interpreting for Deaf students.

During the process of determining program outcomes, it should also be kept in mind that there is an important role for national organizations, such as the Register of Interpreters for the Deaf, an organization that has an established certification process. Perhaps it would also be beneficial for the staff members who are not yet members to join organizations such as the Conference of Interpreter Trainers or the ASL Teachers' Association.

### 6.2.1 Deaf MLI coursework

In terms of coursework for a Deaf interpreter preparation program, the participants in this study suggested classes on Deaf history, Deaf culture or Deaf studies, ASL, an introduction to the Deaf community, issues and trends in the Deaf community, intercultural communications, visual-gestural communication, and a class on hearing culture. It was suggested that most Deaf students seemed to experience success on a part-time basis and when enrolled in courses such as Deaf culture and ASL linguistics. The literature review also identified courses such as ASL linguistics (Boudreault, 2005), interpreting theory (Boudreault; Forestal, 2005), the role of ethics (Boudreault, Forestal), "processing skills, ASL and gestural skills, expansion techniques" and both "interpersonal training" and "working with hearing interpreters" (Forestal, p. 253). Furthermore, it was suggested that Deaf interpreters might take classes in International Sign Language, Deafblind interpreting, and working with semi-lingual clients (Boudreault). Coursework for hearing interpreters providing information on how to work with their Deaf colleagues was also recommended (Forestal; Mathers, 2009).

However, given the diverse settings in which Deaf interpreters are called to work, offering only the coursework recommended by the participants of this study is problematic. As noted by several authors and the participants of this study, because Deaf MLIs work in specific settings, it would seem reasonable to include preparation in legal interpreting (Mathers, 2009; Russell, 2002; P. Wilcox, 1995), immigration procedures (Dubienski, 1990; Frishberg, 1986), mental health (Frishberg; Montoya, et al., 2004), and medical contexts. Appropriate practicum sites should also be considered. As described by the participants in this study, there are a limited number of student placements in some jurisdictions, another factor to be considered in the creation of a Deaf interpreter education program.

## 6.3 Pedagogy

As mentioned earlier, the participants of this study did not describe in detail how to teach Deaf interpreters, or how to adapt their curriculum to the needs of this cohort. But in terms of their pedagogical practices, the Deaf instructors described an epistemology that was dialogic in nature. In this process, the Deaf students were invited to share their experiences; the roles of the teachers and students were fluid in nature, as both assumed the responsibility of expert and learner (Freire, 2004). This was the type of pedagogy espoused by Forestal (2006),

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who advocated for a critical, social epistemology founded on “knowledge communities” (p. 6). Additionally, Forestal (2005) and Keller (2008) described a preference in Deaf students for a pedagogy of active learning, in which learners are allowed to participate in activities, groups, and role plays, and to be able to utilize consecutive interpreting.

There was also evidence from the interviews that for the Deaf instructors their experience as a Deaf MLI was an important part of their preparation for teaching in an interpretation program. One instructor, for example, described how she brought into the classroom examples of classifiers she had used, such as how to describe mustard. Another talked about how she had learned much about confidentiality and so felt more confident when discussing this topic with students. The role of a Deaf MLI had given the instructors insight into the abilities of working interpreters and a deeper understanding of the broader community in terms of the services and supports available to Deaf individuals. As recommended by Dively (1995), perhaps a criterion for employment as Deaf instructors in interpretation programs might be prior experience as a Deaf MLI.

Of significant interest to educators considering a Deaf MLI program is the work of Stone (2009). As mentioned earlier, Stone looked at the work of Deaf and hearing interpreters and noted differences in terms of a Deaf interpreter’s ability to enrich target texts in British Sign Language. As an example of “locational enrichment” (p. 152), Stone noted how a Deaf interpreter translated the phrase “on the Clyde” in BSL as “I-C-L-Y-D-E- SCOTLAND,” adding Scotland (p. 152). As another example of enrichment, Stone found that Deaf interpreters felt “names often need enrichment to ensure their relevance is more fully determined” (p. 137), leading to one Deaf MLI adding Beatles in the BSL interpretation concerning a discussion of Paul McCartney.

There were some teaching practices described by the participants of this study, however, that educators might wish to re-examine if they do establish a program for Deaf students. Instead of a critical pedagogy, there was some evidence of Freire’s (2004) banking model of education. During the interviews, several Deaf instructors described courses (e.g., Deaf culture) as being lecture based and teacher centered with a set curriculum. Some Deaf teachers were troubled when the hearing students challenged their lessons and would not accept the knowledge that was imparted. A few instructors viewed as problematic the struggles Deaf students had in completing what were described as “standard” assignments. Some were concerned that these students had to be given different projects, described as more interesting to them (e.g., researching events or places in the Deaf community). This raises the pedagogical question: Should not assignments be of interest to students? Instructors also worried that the Deaf students had less fluency in English literacy than the hearing students, but at the same time the instructors were not willing to accommodate the students by accepting assignments in alternative formats or languages, such as ASL. The expectation of some teachers, that students uncritically participate in lessons, that tests and assignments should be teacher determined, that students should learn similar topics at the same rate, and that the curriculum is sacrosanct does not fit with a philosophy of reflective practitioners as described by Freire. In following this model, instructors value the explicit, written curriculum over the social learning process of Deaf and hearing students, as a result, ascribing a subordinate role to the students.

To support a critical epistemology, educators must be cognizant that learning is a social process, one that involves identity formation and issues of power (Freire, 2004). Especially in terms of preparing MLIs, instructors would do well to consider how they “inculcate values” in their students that support or work against the prevailing hegemony (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984, p. 286). As the Deaf community is an oppressed minority in North America, and the programs are preparing predominately hearing, privileged interpreters, a critical pedagogy should be considered. Within such a pedagogy, projects of interest to the students and learner-generated resources or assessments could be encouraged, as they foster the *conscientização* of both the Deaf and hearing pupils and facilitate their exploration and naming of the world. Such an epistemology would avoid the depreciation of the abilities of Deaf students by recognizing what they bring to the programs (e.g., their experiences and language, ASL) instead of what they lack (e.g., English academic fluency). In such classes, students would be asked to explore why there is a lack of support for Deaf interpreters and an unwillingness to employ them. Learners would discuss how the presence of a Deaf MLI could enhance communication access and legitimate the authentic experiences of the Deaf clients, benefits that have been outlined in this research study. A central question to this pedagogy is an authentic awareness, in both hearing and Deaf graduates, of their limitations, their praxis, and the benefits of working in partnership with a Deaf colleague.

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## Pedagogical implications for Deaf interpreters

### 6.4 Role

The final category identified in the research process was that of the role of Deaf interpreters, an important concept to consider in the education of future Deaf MLIs. What seemed to emerge from the comments of a few participants was the expectation of a mechanistic, conduit role for a Deaf interpreter, a trend noted with hearing ASL–English interpreters (Roy, 1993) and a challenge faced by Deaf MLIs (Boudreault, 2005; Keller, 2008; Stone, 2009). For example, one participant felt limited to just interpreting mental health exams, and another wanted to act as an advocate but did not see it as the role of an interpreter. Similar challenges concerning a conduit role were also faced by spoken language interpreters and noted in the research (Bolton, 2002; Kaufert & Koolage, 1984).

The conflicts experienced by the participants concerning the adoption of a professional or conduit role may have been exacerbated by what has been described as the dual role of a consumer and practitioner experienced by Deaf interpreters (Keller, 2008; Mathers, 2009). Unlike their hearing colleagues, they may have been more sensitive to the challenges faced by the Deaf clients with whom they worked. A neutral conduit role might also be problematic for Deaf interpreters, given Deaf cultural values that encourage the sharing of information (Page, 1993), the amount of detail and narrative structure preferred by Deaf interlocutors (Mindess, 1996), and the cultural inclination of Deaf individuals to relate to an individual and not their role from a diffuse perspective (Page). In fact, the latter was mentioned by some participants, as Deaf clients turned to them for advice.

Within a collectivist orientation, it has been suggested that one of the most severe forms of punishment is ostracism from the group (Mindess, 1996). Perhaps some of the apprehension described by the participants concerning their role, for example, in terms of the reaction of Deaf community members concerning confidentiality, was heightened by their concerns about being rejected from their own culture. Based on Deaf cultural practices and mores, it would therefore be difficult for a Deaf interpreter to successfully negotiate disparate professional and social levels of involvement within the Deaf community. Hearing interpreters, on the other hand, as members of the majority community, might not have to confront similar fears of banishment, neutrality, or confidentiality. Adopting a conduit model of behaviour might be one means of dealing with these tensions.

The adoption of a distant or conduit role is perhaps evidence of a process of massification (Freire, 1974), in which the Deaf teachers assume a traditional position, as an interpreter, that they believe to be innocuous or expected of them by the field. However, by assuming an uncritical position of local privilege, they run the risk of supporting the existing oppressive system and ignoring the conflicts they experience in their values and role. If they continue to act only as language mediators, such a role might perpetuate the audism faced by Deaf people. This is based on the comments of several authors suggesting that the literal translation of one language to the other within a conduit model is problematic for interpreters working with minority language clients and puts the clients at a disadvantage in medical contexts (Bolton, 2002; Davidson, 2001; Dysart-Gale, 2007; Rosenberg, et al., 2008) and legal contexts (Mikkelsen, 2008).

While they found the role challenging, the Deaf instructors also personally benefitted from working as a Deaf MLI. Experiencing the role of a Deaf interpreter seemed to foster *conscientização* (Freire, 2004), or self-awareness, in the Deaf instructors. It was in the role of a Deaf MLI that they confronted disparate levels of power between themselves and the hearing interpreters they worked with and were witness to the subordinate position experienced by other Deaf individuals as members of a minority culture in a hearing society. From these experiences, they gained insight into their ability to affect change and transform their world. For one instructor, she was able to reflect on her view of Deafblind clients and relate that to the pejorative view some hearing people had of her as a Deaf person. Some did not challenge the limited situations they were confronted with, whereas others campaigned for Deaf advocates and Deaf interpreters to work with new citizens and Deaf children in mainstream programs.

Another benefit to their role and presence, as has been suggested in the literature (Dively, 1995; Frishberg, 1986; Mathers, 2009; Stone, 2009), is the superior fluency in ASL and cultural awareness compared to their hearing peers. In the examples given, one Deaf instructor knew how to describe mustard to a Deaf client and another was able to use gestures or drawings to get information across. Others talked about describing information to the clients they worked with until the Deaf consumers understood what was being said. These are advanced socio-linguistic abilities that hearing students of ASL might not possess, perhaps because they do not spend

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enough time in preparation programs to achieve such levels of cultural fluency (Mikkelson, 2008). These advanced aptitudes allow Deaf interpreters to take on a different role with the Deaf clients and do more than just convey the words of the English speaker.

Looking to the canon on interpreters for language minority groups, examples were found of culture-brokerage that are worth repeating here. As mentioned earlier, in one study, a native Canadian interpreter knew when to use analogies, such as “maintaining a gas and oil balance for outboard motors” (Kaufert & Koolage, 1984, p. 284) to describe a medical condition to a patient. Another author noted how native MLIs were aware that some activities are seen as cultural, not recreational, in some Native communities and knew how to associate various time frames (i.e., months, years) with significant life events (i.e., her children’s birthdays) in a native patient’s life (O’Neil, 1989). Dysart-Gale (2007) gave an example in which an interpreter recognized conflicting religious beliefs between a doctor and a family and knew how to intervene successfully. In yet another study, the authors noted how minority language interpreters were asked to judge the language used by a client to see if it was “considered normal and acceptable in their culture” (Musser-Granski & Carrillo, 1997, p. 54). If a hearing person as an interpreter was to begin explaining medical concepts to a Deaf patient or Deaf cultural values to a hearing consumer, they run the risk of appearing to patronize the Deaf clients. Their ethnicity as non-Deaf individuals thus challenges a hearing interpreter’s ability to take on the role of ally (Mikkelson, 2008) or advocate, whereas this might not be the case for a Deaf MLI.

Based on the results of this study, perhaps it is time for programs to reconsider the role of the interpreter and take into account variables such as context (Mikkelson, 2008), issues of power (Page, 1993; Roy, 1993), and expectations of the clients. Added to that list should also be consideration for cultural affiliation. This could entail, as Boudreault (2005) suggested, a re-examination of the code of ethics of professional interpreting organizations, “since these tenants were developed from a hearing perspective” (p. 347) and so might not speak to the different roles ascribed to or negotiated by Deaf MLIs. Such a model would account for the “balance of power” (Page, 1993, p. 121) that can be achieved in an interpreted interaction between Deaf and hearing interpreters. It would also take into account the multiple roles of the interpreter given their ethnicity, the socio-political context, and the expectations of the interlocutors. If instead, educators and professional interpreters insist on a conduit role, whether unintentionally or not, they disregard issues of culture, power, and consumer expectations. They could, as James (1998) noted of spoken language interpreters, continue, “to reinscribe the power relations and concomitant discriminatory approaches that traditionally have characterized practices regarding ethnic minorities” (pp. 52–53).

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# Issues in Interpreting Pedagogy

**Leelany Ayob<sup>1</sup>**

*Universiti Sains Malaysia*

## Abstract

This paper attempts to uncover some of the issues that are relevant to the training of interpreters: (a) optimal training at the undergraduate or postgraduate level; (b) training consisting of teaching language, as opposed to teaching translation only; (c) theoretical input as a means to assist and improve translation and interpreting; (d) text typologies as a pedagogical tool; and (e) evaluation and errors. These issues are also discussed in the Malaysian context. By uncovering the issues pertaining to the training of interpreters, steps can be taken to allow further improvements to be made, not only for training purposes, but also to elevate the status of the profession.

Keywords: interpreting pedagogy; translation teaching; language training; text types; skills; assessment

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [leelany@usm.my](mailto:leelany@usm.my)

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# Issues in Interpreting Pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

The training of interpreters has been intensely debated; issues include areas as basic as the general requirements for students entering the field to the complexity of the teaching method itself. This paper attempts to uncover some of the issues that are relevant, with special reference to the Malaysian context. The areas discussed in this paper include:

- optimal training at the undergraduate or postgraduate level,
- language teaching vs. translation teaching,
- directionality of interpreting,
- theoretical input as a means to assist and improve translation and interpreting,
- text typologies as a pedagogical tool, and
- evaluation and errors (assessment).

It is believed that many of the aspects of translation teaching are applicable to interpreting training, or at least form the basis for it, that is, understanding the features of texts, translation theories, and methods. Hence, there are facts that touch on translation that have been gathered for this paper that are very relevant to interpreting and its training. However, as many scholars in the interpreting field have argued, there are many other skills required for interpreting that are not part of the skills needed for translation, such as speaking, listening, and note-taking, which makes interpreting unique from translation.

In the Malaysian context, the country's involvement in the translation and, in particular, the interpreting field has been a rather subdued process. Only in recent years has translation taken center stage, when the government's aim was to acquire as much knowledge as possible from various parts of the world. Translational activities, including interpreting, have been given special status where, currently, they are tax exempt. Despite this fact, interpreting is still an unknown territory to many. It is a highly specialized area in which very few are willing to venture. By uncovering the issues pertaining to the training of interpreters, steps can be taken to enable further improvements—for training purposes, as well as to elevate the status of the profession.

## 2. Is the optimal training at the undergraduate or the postgraduate level?

One prominent issue concerning the training of interpreters that is often debated is whether it should be taught only at the postgraduate level. Although interpreter training is offered at the undergraduate level at a number of academic institutions worldwide, it is generally the norm for institutions to offer interpreter training at the postgraduate level. This is likely due to the nature of the training, which requires a certain level of maturity, knowledge, and experience in a variety of fields. Individuals must also be mentally and physically ready to undergo the tasks presented to them in the training, which, more often than not, are exhausting and stressful.

The Monterey Institute of International Studies lays out quite stringent but useful guidelines for interested students, in order to prepare them to become students of interpreting. The guidelines given are:

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1. Read extensively, especially in your non-native language(s).
2. Watch the TV news and listen to radio news in all working languages.
3. Strengthen your general knowledge of economics, history, the law, international politics, and scientific concepts and principles (in that order).
4. Live in a country that speaks your non-native language. A stay of at least six months to a year is recommended.
5. Fine-tune your writing and research skills.
6. Improve your public speaking skills.
7. Hone your analytical skills.
8. Become computer savvy.
9. Learn how to take care of yourself—eat sensibly, exercise regularly, and get sufficient sleep.
10. Be prepared for the long haul.

The guidelines are meant to prepare individuals interested in this field, prior to the training process at the institution. It is apparent from the list that they need to be very well-disciplined, hardworking, experienced, fit, and, most important, already competent in their working languages. This brings us to the issue of whether translation and interpreter training should include language training. One can surmise from the list that Item 1 should be practiced as regularly as possible and that the materials should be from various fields and at different levels of difficulty. Thus, one does not only learn the language but also the way texts are structured, opinions are presented, and styles vary with different people when conveying their individual messages and intentions. Item 2 requires, not only listening skills, but also various other skills, such as the understanding of dialects and views of particular individuals, societies, or countries, in general—apart from the obvious need to keep abreast of current issues. Item 3 is needed to complement the knowledge of current issues, as well as the historical elements, because all of these fields are important aspects that are discussed worldwide. Item 4 obviously assists the interpreter in experiencing and understanding different cultures and the lives of different people. Items 5 through 8 sharpen the skills needed to become a better interpreter. Item 9, although seemingly trivial, is actually among the basic necessities for good interpreting; these are habits required of a good interpreter. Finally, the last item warns apprentice interpreters about their future in the field.

The work of interpreters should never be taken lightly; misinterpretation could lead to embarrassing or disastrous consequences, affecting the reputations or even the lives of innocent victims. Thus, absolute maturity and commitment are critical, which is why many argue that the coursework should be offered at the postgraduate level. In 1959, a school policy was discussed at several Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (International Association of Conference Interpreters; AIIC) general assemblies, and a standard criteria was adopted. The first criterion is that the training should start at the postgraduate level; applicants should have three or four years of university training before entering a course for interpreters (Seleskovitch, 1999). An example of an established and well-known interpreter training institution in the United Kingdom is the former Polytechnic of Central London (now known as Westminster University). It offered a six-month course with rigorous training that was as close to the real scenario as possible. The reason for a short-term course was that it should be kept separate from the teaching of languages or from the training of translators. The candidates selected were very small in number, never exceeding 30 in any given year. They were also graduates specializing in a variety of areas or mature students who had acquired real-world knowledge and an understanding of the languages required, although they may or may not have had a language degree. The school also did not believe that students with previous undergraduate level training in translation or interpreting were especially well qualified as bad habits that were acquired made teaching and learning more difficult (Longley, 1978). Only candidates who were very experienced and fluent in the languages required would be accepted. The University of Westminster had a change in the program structure whereby it currently offers a master's level course for the duration of one year. The entry requirement for one of the programs, a Master of Arts in Conference Interpreting, is still quite stringent and requires candidates to have a university degree, a thorough understanding of two or three passive (C) languages and an excellent command of the mother tongue (i.e., their A language). Applicants with a second active (B) language, with or without a C language, are also considered for admission into the program. They are also

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expected to have a broad general education, strong analytical skills, an interest in current affairs, as well as flexibility, stamina, and the ability to work under pressure.

Keiser (1978) asserts that a certain maturity and level of previous training are desirable, if not necessary, in learning interpreting. The candidate is required to, first and foremost, understand the message in order to interpret it. In order to understand, the interpreter must be able to place himself/herself at the intellectual level of the speaker. More often than not, these speakers will be scientists and/or university-trained people. Thus, the translator and interpreter must have the same frame of mind and master the same intellectual discipline. Secondly, once the original message has been understood, it should never be rendered in another language by mere word-by-word translation, but in its whole essence—the content, the sense, and the emotion. Knowing how extremely demanding the (pre)requisites for learning interpreting are, individuals training to become interpreters should understand the amount of responsibility that must be shouldered.

With regard to this matter, Keiser (1978) also points out that “it is all a matter of how much one wants to invest in such training, of how long one can keep a student on a school bench, of how big a percentage of failures one is willing to accept” (p.14). This fact should be taken into consideration as not all translators, or even true bilinguals, can become interpreters. Another point that should be considered is stated by Seleskovitch (1999):

Given the rather low social standing of interpretation, it is hardly to be expected that highly gifted, bilingual if not trilingual young people endowed with vast culture would chose interpreting as a vocation when more prestigious professions are within their reach. It is therefore more realistic to determine the length of training in accordance with the average level of graduate students and, based on experience, to recognize that several years of training may be necessary in view of the degree of proficiency to be achieved and of the fierce competition on the market. (p. 61)

Within the Malaysian context, students with high proficiency in languages are typically also high achievers in other subjects. To attract them to a field such as translation and/or interpreting against the more attractive fields of medicine, engineering, information technology, and architecture, among others, has not been an easy task. Interesting information based on verbal reports received from alumni of the Universiti Sains Malaysia Translation and Interpreting bachelor of arts program is that high performers graduating from the program have been offered positions other than those of translators and/or interpreters. They managed to secure jobs very quickly because of the skills that they had developed in the program. These graduates would decide to do translation and/or interpreting tasks only on a part-time basis or as part of their future plan, once they are ready to be full-time translators and/or interpreters. In an interesting twist, the ideal criteria for candidates for interpreter training are found in people who are already bilingually/multilingually fluent, as well as biculturally/multicultural competent, with excellent skills and abilities in areas such as speaking, listening, researching, and critical analysis. Yet it is hard to attract these people, as they have other, perhaps more attractive, career options. Thus, to allow for more numbers, the entry level requirement is often lowered so that more candidates are eligible. However, once these candidates have been accepted into the program and have gone through the training, possibly excelling in the field, they might not end up as translators and/or interpreters because they have very marketable skills in other fields due, in part, to the skills that they have acquired during the translation and interpreting training.

Nevertheless, program designers should not lose sight of the importance of creating an interpreting program with high standards. The length of training required depends on the students’ level of competence at the start, the type and nature of the coursework taught, and the expected results. This is also related to what Pöchhacker (2004) notes as the “relative weight of professional vs. academic course content” (p. 179) that would be the basis for the decision on which level and format should be taken for any interpreter training programs. In the Malaysian context, it may seem disheartening to see a large number of students who have excelled in the interpreter training program and who have not ended up as interpreters. However, it may be a huge consolation to know that the skills the students have acquired have molded them to become people with specialized skills relevant to other fields as well.

### **3. Language teaching vs. translation teaching**

As part of the admission process for translator and/or interpreter training, many institutions require a high level of language competency, underlining the notion that the training is mainly focused on sharpening the translation or interpreting skills themselves rather than language skills. But for practical, social, and political reasons, admissions of many institutions may choose to disregard such a ruling. One such example is illustrated by Pym (1992a), cited in Hatim (2001), who argues that:

The power structures...are such that translation is and will continue to be used as a way of learning foreign languages, [and, to insist on] a perfect command of foreign languages before learning about translation...would mean teaching translation to virtually empty classes. (p. 168)

This notion is also supported by Li (2007) in a study that found that one of the three most important considerations in recruiting new translators is their language competence, apart from translation skills and experience. Thus, there is a demand or a need for language training to be an integral part of the training program. Although many would argue that translation programs are not language programs, it should not be totally excluded from the curriculum.

This situation has been particularly true at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, particularly during the early years after the introduction of the bachelor of arts in translation and interpreting. As translation and, particularly interpreting, were unknown to many, the program did not attract students who were really interested in the field or had achieved the necessary standards required to undertake the program. With some lowering of the entrance level requirements, one of the consequences was a rather heavy inclusion of language training in the program. Recently, however, the trend seems to have changed; the field is now widely recognized, and the program has attracted more highly qualified candidates from within Malaysia. This could also be due to positive comments received from graduates of the program, which at the same time have increasingly improved the status of the field and the program in Malaysia.

This supports Pym's (1993) remark, cited in Li (2007), that the best that can be done is to encourage flexibility and be on the alert for changes in terms of translation training. The market demand for translation and interpreting in Malaysia has been increasing, which has resulted in the profession being more visible to, and well regarded by, the general public; consequently, the attraction to the field has increased. Simultaneously, this has encouraged candidates who are better qualified to venture into the profession. At the same time, the type of training provided would also experience changes according to the market demand, as well as current developments within the field. In terms of language training, it should not be merely grammar-based, but there must be the inclusion of more complex aspects of language learning, such as coherence and cohesion, text types, and communicative values.

### **4. Theoretical input as a means to assist and improve translation and interpreting**

The question as to whether theoretical input is desirable for the training of translators and interpreters leads to the question of whether translators and interpreters are born or made. It is the earlier resistance to theory that was partly a legacy of the interpreters-are-born-not-made school of thought. However, as Herbert (1978), quoted in Mackintosh (1999) says: "Fortunately a number of excellent schools, particularly in universities, can now supply them, and it can no longer be said, as was formerly admitted (*sic*), that an interpreter is born, not made" (p. 67).

The benefit of learning theoretical concepts may not always be evident to students directly, as Mackintosh (1999) (who cites Gile, 1995) indicates:

The fact that many courses thus equip them with theoretical tools enabling them to identify the probable causes of difficulties, and successes, when engaged in the interpreting process enables students to focus their attention in a more productive manner and, in the longer term, this is likely to result in higher levels of performance overall as awareness of the factors involved grows. (p. 74)

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Li (2000), cited in Li (2007) states that many administrators of translation services, as well as professional translators, do not deny the usefulness of teaching theories, as it would eventually assist translators in producing quality translations and communicating effectively. However, it is also suggested that better methods need to be devised for effective learning and application. This brings us to those people who are training. Longley (1978) comments that “there are some things that only a professional can teach, but at the end of the day’s work in the booth, one is too tired to think a great deal about pedagogical methods” (p. 53).

Furthermore, the number of truly professional translators and interpreters is small; among them, only a few know how to impart their knowledge. Hale (2007) confirms this fact when she asserts that, based on anecdotal evidence, it also “shows that very few interpreters are able to justify their interpreting choices when asked to do so” (p. 184). Hence, professional interpreters, although they are the best candidates to teach interpreting skills, cannot guarantee success for the students. As Longley (1978) also claims:

Although there are some things that are best taught by experienced professional interpreters, unless that interpreter also knows how to impart his knowledge, and develop skill and ability in others, his students will become but pale reflections of their teacher. (p.53)

Even among qualified teachers themselves, not all of them are confident that they can teach effectively, which explains why training and seminars are constantly being offered to teachers to ensure better results. What is best, perhaps, is that the professional interpreters and the teachers of interpreting work hand-in-hand and for both to be constantly involved in on-going discussions of matters pertaining to the translation and interpreting field, as well as the didactic implications. These discussions are now more easily accessible as they no longer take place only in formal settings like seminars or conferences. More relaxed and casual discussions are also conducted through translation and interpreting Web sites, where individuals can chat about or discuss with the rest of the members any relevant topics or issues that have been raised. Hale (2007) raises a significant point when she states:

Whereas it is crucial for the validity of courses to have the input of practitioners, it is crucial to ensure that those practitioners who are trainers have the appropriate academic and research background to inform their teaching....there needs to be cross fertilization between research, training and practice: where the research informs the training and the practice, the training improves the practice and generates research questions, and the practice improves the training and generates research questions. (p.184)

Increasingly more people involved in the field of translation studies, particularly the ones directly associated with the training of translators and interpreters, are leaning toward the belief that inclusion of theoretical input is critical to producing better translators and interpreters. Factors such as understanding text in context are becoming increasingly popular, as the approach is holistic and encompasses important and practical features, such as register variables, pragmatics, semiotics, structure and texture, etc. Kussmaul (1995) also asserts that one of the characteristics of a good translator and interpreter is self-awareness, which breeds self-confidence. Self-awareness includes the ability to recognize problems. If this ability is lacking, apparently smooth translation processes may result in blunders. An interpreter, without a proper training, might not realize that underlying features exist in a text, other than the fact that the lexical and semantic knowledge is not substantial enough. This is where skills such as text analysis can come into play.

Another argument that should be taken into consideration is the fact that possibly one of the most important factors in interpreting is speed. It is also worthwhile to invest time in teaching students the analytical procedures of the interpreter training. The outcome is highly likely to produce interpreters who possess the professional expertise and behaviours necessary for taking on new responsibilities and fulfilling tasks, which adds prestige to the profession. The strategies learned during the training stage may become internalized and automatic through frequent use. Their application will take increasingly less time; thus, the critical aspect of speed is achieved. Nord (1997), cited in Bastin (2000), asserts that anything that obstructs the achievement of a particular function for the recipient constitutes a translation error. According to Nord (1994), also cited in Bastin, if the original linguistic and cultural setting is correctly analyzed and a translation brief which defines the intended function of the target text is given to students, fewer linguistic and translation errors are likely to be made. As a result of minimizing obstructions to the understanding of a text or an utterance, the speed in interpreting could also be improved. Theoretical input provides the critical information necessary in minimizing obstructions to text comprehension; combined with practice, the desired output, in terms of interpreting performance, might be further improved.

## **5. Text typologies as a pedagogical tool**

A course must be carefully planned in order to ensure success. One of the most important aspects in course development is the choice of text material. It is on this point that a course stands or falls. Among other things, written materials should be original, not translations, unless they are being used for comparative study. For recordings used for interpreting practice, live recordings of native speakers, as well as non-native speakers, are preferable. The use of recordings of non-native speakers is advised, as speakers at international gatherings are often called upon to express themselves in a language that is not their own, typically English. Hence, it is important for the interpreters to attune their ears to various accents. Furthermore, a speech delivered in broken English simply cannot be transposed literally. Clumsy as it may sound in the English source text, the target text interpretation must make sense to those in the room when it is delivered. The meaning has to be reconstructed on the basis of the knowledge of the subject, the culture of the speaker's country, and the clues that can be gathered in understanding the texts (i.e., the use of metaphors, marked use of lexical items, intertextuality, etc.). Attempts should also be made to give the students opportunities to practice through role playing, such as in simulated interviews and discussions in which actual people are involved and the students are required to be the interpreters. The people involved in the simulated settings could be the staff, invited guests, or even the students themselves. In this way, the students are exposed to an environment in which various features of communicative events can occur spontaneously, as would be encountered in normal and unpracticed dialogues. Whenever possible, excursions to various settings to practice their interpreting skills and be given input on their performances would not only provide further practice, but a different environment could be a welcome change from the monotony of practicing in lab booths.

In interpreting, one cannot rely on words alone. A great deal more is involved, including the knowledge of the speaker's and listener's cultural backgrounds, intentions, and motivations, and the knowledge of the subject matter of the gatherings, discussions, or events taking place. The practice materials must be from a variety of fields—it may be of a political, cultural, legal, medical, or sporting nature—unless of course, the practice is for a specific type of interpreting, such as health care or legal interpreting. Nonetheless, even within those specific types of interpreting, variety can be achieved as different scenarios can be created to enhance the learning process. Bastin (2000) suggests that teachers may demonstrate their creativity in various ways by selecting texts that meet their pedagogical objectives and the interests of their trainees, suggesting exercises based on their own process for finding solutions, designing assignments that involve creative solutions to major difficulties, and finally, stimulating the trainees' creativity and stressing it in their evaluation.

## **6. Evaluation and errors**

There is no simple and convenient way of grading. Evaluation measures the extent to which teaching objectives are achieved; it does not only reveal the success or failure of each student, but also the teacher's teaching performance and his/her ability to establish a viable relationship between the teaching objectives and activities and their students' performance (Bastin, 2000). Trainees must be taught how to do things right rather than being punished for what they have done wrong. Error analysis teaches the trainees what not to do; how to do things right and how to replicate good methodology is the teacher's duty. As Hatim and Mason (1997) explain, “[t]here is everything to be gained from increasing trainees' awareness of curriculum objectives and stages in skill development” (p. 200).

It is very difficult to assess translation objectively, as House (1976) points out, quoted in Mason (1987), "...translation is a complex, hermeneutic process....It seems to be unlikely that translation quality assessment can ever be completely objectified in the manner of the results of natural science subjects" (p. 82). Nevertheless, there should be guidelines for how the process is to be assessed. The following are broad categories of assessment guidelines, as proposed by Mason, in which analysis of texts and assessment of adequacy of any target text in relation to its source text. It is a checklist of variables, rather than a full-fledged model, and it is presented to students so that they can perform comparative evaluations of translation/interpreting. It is also used to assess

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students' work, which then leads to discussions of translating/interpreting problems that are exemplified in particular text samples. The categories proposed are:

CONTEXT	Communicative (i.e., topic, field, mode, tenor) Pragmatic (i.e., speech act, text act) Semiotic (i.e., text norms, text type)
STRUCTURE	Cohesion/coherence Informativity (i.e., redundancy, ellipsis)
TEXTURE	Syntactic organization Sentence perspective Lexical selection

Which aspect of the above categories needs to be emphasised depends on the type of interpreting. For example, Hatim and Mason (1997) describe the prominence of context over structure and texture in liaison interpreting; therefore, every segment of the text has to be processed, treating it as a completed statement, making sure it is consistent with the segment that precedes it:

...on the basis of separate installments of input, linked with each other only at the highest level of text organisation (i.e. that of the entire interaction) each chunk of output is expected to be coherent in its own right contextually. (pp. 50–51)

The three categories listed above provide quite an extensive view of the items to be aware of in understanding a text and which should help in being able to convey the messages in interpreting. A thorough grasp of the different categories in interpreting would also enable self-directed learning among students, in addition to providing the trainers with a guideline on how to analyze students' interpreting attempts.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper provides the many issues that are relevant to the training of interpreters, with special reference to the Malaysian context. Issues given focus include: (a) optimal training at undergraduate or postgraduate level; (b) training consisting of teaching language, as compared with teaching only translation; (c) looking at theoretical input as a means to assist and improve translation and interpreting; (d) text typologies as a pedagogical tool; and, (e) evaluation and the assessment of errors. Interpreters and translators share many common traits and Kussmaul (1995) touches on the significance in improving the status of the profession through professional training so that “[t]here is a good chance that once translators behave as experts when talking to other experts they will be regarded as experts in their own right” (p. 147). To be called an expert, one must have the skills required in the field. Through the understanding of the issues that prevail within the field of interpreting, solutions to the challenges faced in interpreter training can be uncovered and assimilated into the learning environments. It is hoped that the trainees learning the skills will be part of those who “behave like experts” and contribute to the expansion of expert interpreters—a force to be reckoned with.

Within the Malaysian context, the sustainability of the interpreting industry relies heavily on the visibility of the profession. People's naïve thinking, that there couldn't be anything to be learned in the field, as well as an unprofessional way of providing services, results in unprofessional treatment toward interpreters. Training should provide the necessary elements for candidates to become interpreters who are ready to provide services professionally, and consequently, eliminate this perception as well as the unprofessional responses from the

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general public. By being aware of the issues related to the training of interpreters, steps have been made that have resulted in overall improvements, particularly in terms of the methods and materials of teaching. The changes have made the program more attractive to more highly qualified candidates and have encouraged more graduates to venture into the field of translating/interpreting. By doing so, they are making the profession one that is more easily recognized and well regarded by the general public.

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# **Effective Strategies for Teaching Consecutive Interpreting**

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

*University of Alberta*

**Risa Shaw**

*Gallaudet University*

**Karen Malcolm**

*Douglas College*

## **Abstract**

Current research in the field of spoken and signed language points us in the direction of using consecutive interpreting; however, signed language interpreter education programs report inconsistent approaches to incorporating this research (Russell 2002b). This paper describes a frame of reference used to shape learning activities that help students to acquire the competencies required for proficient use of consecutive interpreting. This framework includes guidelines for structuring observation and analysis of interpretations. In addition, we present a typical progression of skill sequencing and material selection criteria. Finally, we suggest that programs that structure the teaching of consecutive interpreting from a holistic integrated approach across their curricula and throughout the entire program contribute to shifting practices in our profession toward incorporating research and best practices.

Keywords: consecutive interpreting; simultaneous interpreting; blending consecutive and simultaneous interpreting; discourse analysis; teaching approaches

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

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# **Effective Strategies for Teaching Consecutive Interpreting**

## **1. Introduction**

Current research in the field of both spoken and signed language interpreting points us toward consecutive interpreting; however, signed language interpreting programs report inconsistent approaches to incorporating this research (Russell 2002b). Some programs are consciously striving to shift the dominant paradigm away from simultaneous interpretation as the ultimate goal for interpreters. As well, the past few years have seen a shift in the certification of interpreters. For example, the Canadian certification system of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters offers interactive test segments that allow candidates to use *consecutive interpreting* (CI) or a blend of CI and *simultaneous interpreting* (SI). This same approach is used for some provincial screening tools, thus bridging research and best practices within the testing process (Russell & Malcolm, 2009).

This paper describes how educators<sup>2</sup> can create meaningful learning activities that allow students to develop a strong foundation in consecutive interpreting. This approach allows them to later use consecutive interpretation in interactions best suited to CI and also to determine when the interaction is best suited to a combination of consecutive and simultaneous modes. Such a blended approach demonstrates the ability to bridge CI research (Russell, 2002a, 2005) with effective practices. In our interpreting and teaching practices, we believe that when interpreters recognize interpreting options based on discourse requirements, we can make choices about using simultaneous or consecutive interpreting. We recognize that spoken language interpreter education programs have always approached the learning of consecutive interpreting in a structured manner, however, one of the unique elements of signed language interpretation is that an interpreter can be working with the two different language modalities (i.e., a spoken and a signed language) at the same time without interference, which has led to much more use of simultaneous interpreting in our field.

While research has demonstrated the effectiveness of consecutive interpreting, educators and interpreters often view CI as only a stepping-stone to simultaneous interpreting (Cokely, 2005; Russell, 2002b). Many experienced interpreters have had little training in CI, and few workshops address the issue. As well, interpreters and educators may have limited exposure to seeing interpreters successfully use CI in their practice, and thus believe they should use CI but lack the skill to do so (Russell). Therefore, students need to be firmly grounded in consecutive interpreting.

During the 2008 Conference of Interpreter Trainers convention in Puerto Rico, we led a workshop on effective strategies for teaching consecutive interpretation and have since responded to numerous inquiries about our work. This article describes some of our approaches to help practitioners acquire proficiency in consecutive interpreting. Such proficiency in teaching will allow interpreters to examine the discourse event and select strategies for successful interpretation by blending CI and SI.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the information in this article applies to deaf and non-deaf educators, practitioners, and students. “Interpreter” and “teacher” are used to refer to *both* deaf and non-deaf persons unless otherwise specified. In addition, we use the singular for teacher and interpreter, although we acknowledge that courses are often team-taught and more than one interpreter may be present.

### 2. Our frame of reference

We approach interpreting and teaching with a view that meaning is created and co-constructed by participants in the interaction/conversation (Halliday, 1976; Mishler, 1986; Roy, 2000; Schegloff, 1982), and interpretation is a “meaning-making event.” During an interaction, participants and interpreters rely on contextual knowledge, schemata or interpretive frames (Goffman, 1974), and linguistic and cultural knowledge. This meaning-making process takes time, in order to work with all of these variables, and underscores the need for consecutive interpreting.<sup>3</sup> We define consecutive interpreting as the rendering of interpretation after the participant has produced a complete response, question, or idea(s). Using this frame of reference, we want students to:

- consider the mode to be used, the rationale, and how to incorporate consecutive and/or simultaneous modes throughout an assignment according to a meaning-based model (Russell, 2005; Shaw, 2007)<sup>4</sup>
- assess the requirements of an assignment *prior to* accepting it (this requires obtaining sufficient information)
- analyze the impact of their decisions and actions before, during, and after assignments
- provide effective consecutive interpretation

To learn consecutive interpretation, students must first acquire the theory and experience of using CI. Students gain fundamental skills by studying and applying discourse and text analyses. With this foundation, students are ready to acquire additional interpreting skills. Our first step is to help students understand the evidence from spoken/signed language research that supports the use of CI for accuracy, precision, and effectiveness. Next, we link research with practice, through educators modeling CI, students practicing CI, and educators and practitioners sharing their CI experiences.

This approach assumes the instructor has an understanding of CI research; that research should include work by Alexieva (1991), Bruton (1985), Cokely (1992), Gile (1995), Leeson (2005), Mikkelsen (1995), Napier (2003), and Russell (2002a, 2002b, 2005). The instruction should also have the ability to link evidence to practice, model consecutive interpretation, and analyze student work per a meaning-based model. In the next section, we describe how we structure teaching activities.

### 3. Teaching approaches

Ultimately, our goal is to equip students with competencies to effectively choose if and when to use CI and SI within a given interaction. Dialogic interpreting situations are particularly suited to developing these skills, allowing the interpreter to attend to discourse demands and choose the mode that allows effective interpretation. We do not employ monologic discourse at this stage (except for teaching text chunking). What follows is a typical progression of skill-based activities.

#### 3.1. Typical progression

We structure the learning environment sequentially, with the understanding that overlap occurs, and learning is an iterative process. Our programs are philosophically rooted in discourse analysis approaches (Roy, 2000, 2005), and this is where we begin. The students first engage in learning based on discourse and text analysis approaches, in which they acquire foundational knowledge through exploring existing research and theories pertaining to

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<sup>3</sup> It is outside the scope of this short paper to provide a complete review of the literature about consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, discourse analysis, and cognitive models of interpretation. Readers are encouraged to see Gile (1995), Janzen (2005), Pöchhacker (2004), Roy (2000), Russell (2002a), and Wilcox and Shaffer (2005).

<sup>4</sup> See Russell (2005) for an overview of the Meaning-Based Interpreting Model and the role of context in shaping the decision to use consecutive or simultaneous interpreting and Shaw (2007) for the role of context in locating and discerning meaning.

discourse analysis, linguistic features/analysis, and text analysis principles. Student outcomes focus on (a) mapping interactions/texts, (b) building contextualization and construal strategies, and (c) dealing with cross-cultural approaches to purpose, goals, and information in interactions. At this stage, students are exposed to models of interpretation, including interactional and cognitive models.<sup>5</sup>

Translation skills are the second major subset. Our goal is to introduce translation strategies to and from both languages<sup>6</sup> across various genres. Translation steps include (a) planning, (b) understanding text, (c) using research/resources to deepen comprehension, (d) using conceptual mapping, (e) creating an outline/structure (associated with the target language), (f) preparing initial drafts, and (g) revising drafts after consultation with target language native users, producing a final translation product. These translation skills require students to consistently apply their knowledge of discourse analysis approaches and focus on discrete skill sets, work collaboratively, and analyze their work (process and product) for effectiveness in achieving a desirable meaning-based product.

Consecutive interpreting skills form the next major subset, which is introduced after discourse/text analysis and translation skills are achieved. Our philosophical approach here is that we want students to see consecutive interpretation as a viable approach throughout their careers, not just for learning simultaneous interpreting. Once more, we bridge research and practice by exposing students to existing research in both spoken and signed language communities. Consecutive interpreting competencies require students to (a) appropriately describe the need for CI in both languages and culturally appropriate ways, (b) create effective recall notes, (c) chunk or segment participant messages appropriately, (d) use culturally appropriate signals to have participants pause at appropriate points, and (e) use strategies to create meaning-based interpretation while minimally altering participants' interaction patterns.

Simultaneous interpretation skills are taught once students have a solid base in consecutive interpreting. If students are permitted to move to simultaneous interpreting prior to internalizing the consecutive process, we see typical error patterns emerge, including the absence of construal and comprehension due to short processing times resulting in lexical transcoding and absence of meaningful linguistic use.

Finally, based on this progression, students are ready to practice blending consecutive and simultaneous interpreting within a given interaction. This requires (a) application of discourse/text analysis skills, (b) consecutive and simultaneous interpreting abilities, and (c) decision-making schemas. Beginning in the foundational courses, students are guided through analysis of their work. Self-analysis is an essential learning component.

### ***3.2. Skills***

Ideally, students come to the interpreting task with bilingual competence (Witter-Merithew, Taylor & Johnson, 2002). Then, through systematic exercises designed to develop cognitive and interactive processes for translation and consecutive interpreting, we can help students master the interpreting process. Such training, whether in the classroom, workshops, or community practice, includes the following (Russell, 2005):

- text analysis that includes identification/control of linguistic aspects such as genres, registers, semantics, cohesion, grammar, and prosody
- memory development through structured practice exercises designed to enhance short-term memory
- text mapping for linguistic elements and interactive patterns among participants
- note-taking and mapping techniques
- identification of strategies to segment linguistic and meaning-based interactive chunks suitable for interpretation, and to recreate the same linguistic aspects in the target language (e.g., affect, cohesion, linking questions and answers, and dealing with new or shared information)
- creation of culturally appropriate signals to ask participants to pause for interpretation

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<sup>5</sup> For a complete overview of interpretation models, see Pöchhacker (2004).

<sup>6</sup> While our context for teaching involves American Sign Language (ASL) and English, we understand that readers will be approaching their teaching from a variety of language pairs. The teaching skills outlined here apply across all languages.

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## **Effective Teaching Strategies**

- effective discourse-based decision making within interactions and selection of an interpretation mode best suited to discourse/interactional goals
- awareness of the need for consecutive interpreting when content is complicated, detail laden, presented using linguistic structures and/or contextual cues that challenge the interpreter's ability to construct meaning, or situations in which error consequences are grave
- describe CI in ASL and English and introduce the rationale for consecutive interpreting or a blend of CI/SI to participants prior to an assignment

Beyond acquiring the above skills, students must learn to manage logistical issues such as positioning, the use of pen/paper, and teamwork. We also consider eye gaze an important variable and skill, and differentiate between its linguistic use and other purposes. Non-linguistic eye gaze considerations include (a) the interpreter's need to see the non-verbal message produced by the non-deaf participant, thus requiring both participants to be in his/her range of vision; (b) direction of gaze while attending to the message; (c) direction of gaze while producing spoken interpretation; and (d) use of eye gaze as a cueing device (e.g., to ask for repetition or clarification). Students must develop an awareness of the footprint their decisions and actions leave on the interaction and the ability to lessen that footprint. Finally, students must develop a keen sense of self-analysis and the ability to articulate the effects of their decisions and actions.

### *3.3. Activities*

Multiple teaching activities can be used; in this paper we describe the use of role-plays as one approach. Other classroom activities include working with DVD samples to show successful and less successful interpretations and to practice interpreting, teacher-modeled examples of discrete skills and CI/SI blends, and the modeling/sharing of perspectives by experienced practitioners. We have also organized three-day retreats involving multiple student role-plays. These retreats require numerous deaf and non-deaf participants, and multiple teams of co-teachers (deaf and non-deaf). In our experience, these immersion-style retreats, where teachers lead analysis and feedback conversations after small-group role-plays, can dramatically improve student performance in ways not possible in regular classes.

### *3.4. Creating practice scenarios*

Learning activities must be carefully considered and selected in terms of materials, scenarios, and role-playing participants. We invite deaf and non-signing participants who can play various roles and create natural, spontaneous interactions. Whenever possible, we ensure that guests have insightful conversations with students after role-plays, describing their perceptions of the interaction.

We create scenarios and provide participants with cards describing their roles and offering contextual information (e.g., interactional goal, time/place, ideas for conversation). Scenarios range from hiring a party planner or returning defective equipment to a store to holding a parent-teacher interview or organizing hospice care. We use simple interactions to start and increase complexity as students acquire competencies. We cultivate relationships with deaf and non-deaf community members to make this successful.

Besides designing classroom scenarios, we take students into the community to practice interpreting in local businesses, such as the post office or insurance agency. We cultivate relationships with community business owners; they are delighted to see us return and usually allow us to film the interactions.

### *3.5. Role plays*

Prior to working with filmed interactions, we introduce consecutive interpreting through role-plays, beginning with CI demonstrations. Demonstrations are twofold, showing the CI process and showing discussion of the work with the interpreter. We begin by interpreting a typical non-complex interaction between a deaf person and a non-signing hearing person. In the first interpretation, the teacher models inappropriate behavior and demonstrates a few strategies that produce effective and ethical interpretations. In other words, we do what is *not* appropriate.

This includes directing participants where to sit; physically touching participants; producing source language intrusions; adding, omitting, and skewing information; neglecting note-taking or writing copious notes; interrupting mid-sentence; and using inappropriate language to ask participants to wait.

After the interpretation, we model an analysis discussion in the same vein. The teacher-interpreter models undesirable behaviors, including being defensive and justifying every mistake; blaming participants for ineffective interpretation; claiming obstacles to proper preparation; citing lack of preparation for poor decisions and errors; focusing on lexical choices for equivalence; and dismissing any suggested link to cognitive or interactional interpretation models. This demonstration provides students with a frame of reference, offers a contrast for later work, and provides a way to think about the range of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

In the second CI demonstration, deaf and non-deaf participants redo the first interaction while the teacher models effective interpreting strategies. An analytical session follows, in which the teacher-interpreter models discussion of her work with behaviors that we are teaching. The second demonstration provides students with an exemplar and template; for some, it is the first observation of consecutive interpreting. They have the opportunity to discuss the work, the interpreter's strategies, and how the interpreter handles unforeseen issues. This exercise provides students with ideas to try and often dispels fears that consecutive interpretation is simply about memory and that it is too difficult. Once they have seen effective CI, many report they can envision providing CI successfully.

During both demonstrations, students observe and take notes for later conversations. We explicitly guide students with our expectations of appropriate observation protocols. We require them to take notes and seek evidence of effective decision-making strategies. We ask them to link their observations to interactional or cognitive models and to provide examples from the actual interpretation. We encourage students to note the impact of interpreter decisions on participants and the interaction and how those decisions influenced participant dynamics and goals. Students may comment on interpretation strategies, cultural appropriateness of signals, turn-taking processes (including length of turns), and whether the interpreter inhibited participants' interaction patterns. We ask them to note evidence of accurate, equivalent, and precise interpretation that conveys essential elements of meaning and target language discourse features. As well, students comment on natural chunking or segmentation in the discourse, additions, omissions (Napier, 2003), and skews. When commenting on language use, students cite examples of semantics, cohesion, coherence, adjacency pairs, and other linguistic and discourse features.

Prior to inviting student-observer comments and questions, we invite deaf and non-deaf participants to comment. Participants can offer valuable information about what worked and what did not and how they experienced the interaction. For example, either participant might say, "I wasn't sure who was asking for clarification when you asked me to repeat my address." We cultivate relationships with participants who are especially insightful about their interactive experiences and invite them to return for further role-plays. Participants also benefit; this experience fosters acceptance of, and the desire for, consecutive interpretation in the community.

During discussion, we sometimes need to point out and reframe inappropriate student comments. For example, when a student says, "You weren't clear when you said x, y, and z," reframing might take the form of, "In your work when you said, 'X, y, and z,' can you tell me why you chose to do what you did?" Another student comment could be "I would have signed that this way." Our response here might be, "Our discussion is focused now on *this* interpretation and *this* interpreter's decision-making process." We are purposefully teaching and modeling interpreting strategies and processes, interpersonal interaction with participants and colleagues, and interpretation analysis, so students can understand and effectively manage the interpreting without interfering with participant interactions. We do not assume that students, whether novice or longtime interpreters, have these necessary knowledge or skills.

Often during discussion, a student will ask how to do something, such as explain the need for CI. Whenever possible, we adopt the roles of interpreter and participants and practice an actual conversation. Several students might practice the conversation, and/or the teacher might model an effective conversation. If and when we encounter resistance, it is usually short lived and due to observations or experiences of inadequately performed CI, or fear of forgetting information. We discuss the resistance but quickly replace talk with action. When students experience the work directly, they become immersed in learning while practicing. Their resistance is replaced with pride at the efficacy of their work.

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## **Effective Teaching Strategies**

Role-plays are followed by teacher-guided discussion. The analysis discussion includes (a) addressing participants' goals, (b) discourse goals of specific utterances, (c) examples of successful work and why they were successful, and (d) how interpreter strategies supported or impeded effective interpretation.

We film the practice-interpreted interactions 95 to 100 percent of the time, so we can return to the work for further analysis and to see student progress. Taped scenarios have multiple uses—additional consecutive practice for students, more detailed linguistic and interpreting analysis of their work, later simultaneous interpreting practice, samples of effective or ineffective practice, and inclusion in student portfolios.

On occasion, students take on the roles of participants in role-plays. Students become adept at playing various roles and staying in character. Non-deaf students can and do depend on the interpretation, whenever they look down, write notes, or distract themselves from the deaf participant's signed message. They can contribute valuable information to the discussion from the perspective of hearing persons depending on interpretation. When students take on participant roles, they also gain experience embodying various characteristics and ways of using discourse. This broadens their perspectives and prepares them for interpreting in diverse contexts not previously experienced.

Overall, role-plays provide invaluable opportunities for students to learn from each other, creating collective knowledge and enhancing understanding through hands-on work. Analysis of their work leads to insightful discussions that provide a foundation for the rest of their careers. We continue role-plays and analysis discussions throughout the students' education.

### **4. Selection of filmed materials**

We carefully select filmed materials for student practice and encourage students to follow suit. Criteria for creating DVDs or using pre-made DVD materials include:

- authentic interactions/discourse vs. scripted/read (may be simulated for filming)
- complete discourse interactions of 12–15 minutes in length so students experience conventional approaches to interaction, including greeting and leave-taking
- materials with natural, complete, lengthy chunks of discourse so students gain experience deciding when to interrupt for interpretation
- materials that lend themselves to pausing in realistic places
- materials filmed using CI
- inquiry narratives, such as job interviews or medical scenarios
- materials that reflect realistic interactions for effectively using CI/SI blends

We recommend avoiding materials filmed using SI and edited to include timed pauses, as the pauses may not support effective decision making about processing time required. We do use materials filmed using SI to teach chunking, but not to practice CI.

### **5. Why this approach?**

For many dialogic interactions, consecutive interpretation is the most appropriate mode. These include medical appointments, Video Relay Service (VRS) calls, and interviews. Many interpreters use CI when interpreting for children, seniors, and foreign sign language users, or situations in which the interpreter lacks contextual knowledge or does not know the participants well. In some of these situations, a combination of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting can be most effective.

We suggest that the interpreting task requires ongoing evaluation to determine the most appropriate mode at any given time. This choice cannot be definitively made at the beginning of the assignment; it needs to be re-evaluated as the discourse unfolds. To best translate meaning, an interpreter may move seamlessly between consecutive and simultaneous as the situational demands warrant. Describing teaching approaches for blending CI

and SI is beyond our scope here; however, we can say with certainty that teaching a blended approach cannot occur until students first acquire proficiency in consecutive interpretation.

We recognize that certain myths have shaped our interpreting and teaching practices, and may have contributed to educators not teaching CI as a viable mode for interpreter use across settings. These myths include:

- Only less skilled interpreters use CI.
- CI takes (much) longer.
- CI is not necessary for signed/spoken language interactions because the modalities are different; we can use both languages, simultaneously, without interference.
- CI is used only by hearing children with their deaf parents.
- Participants don't like CI (so we shouldn't do it and/or non-deaf people won't tolerate silence).
- CI isn't used in the "real world."
- SI is the ultimate goal.

Our particular frame of reference and teaching approaches reinforce that consecutive interpreting is a viable mode, not just a pedagogical tool leading to simultaneous interpreting. We believe our approach equips students with tools to significantly enhance interpreting services. Lastly, we emphasize that programs are best served by integrating consecutive interpreting instruction throughout skills classes for the entire program. By doing so, we begin to move from "consecutive interpreting as a stepping stone to simultaneous interpreting" to integrating consecutive interpreting across and throughout the curriculum.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper,<sup>7</sup> we have described our frame of reference that guides the design of learning processes to support the teaching of consecutive interpreting. We have highlighted considerations for designing learning activities, material selection criteria, and structuring linguistic/interactional analysis conversations. When interpreters possess a solid foundation of consecutive interpreting, they are much more able to make appropriate decisions to integrate consecutive and simultaneous interpreting into meaning-based work. The field is in the process of rethinking what interpretation means and how best to offer effective service based on the modes of interpretation available. Finally, we suggest that programs that structure the teaching of consecutive interpreting from a holistic integrated approach across their curricula and throughout the entire program contribute to shifting practices in our profession toward incorporating research and best practices.

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# **Skill Transfer from Sight Translation to Simultaneous Interpreting: A Case Study of an Effective Teaching Technique**

**Stanley Zhongwei Song<sup>1</sup>**

*Macquarie University*

## **Abstract**

In this article, a case study is presented that demonstrates the potential of a new *sight translation* (ST) teaching technique for *simultaneous interpreting* (SI) training. By using animated, time-controlled PowerPoint presentations instead of texts on paper, this method induces constraints such as time pressure and attention splitting, thus making ST essentially an on-line information processing activity, closely resembling SI. Apart from reviewing how to design the method, the author compares it with the two existing methods (i.e., ST with prior reading and ST without prior reading), makes some hypothetical analysis of its functionality in SI training, and discusses some preliminary research findings from using the technique. The author argues that the simulated SI-related constraints, which the traditional ST methods cannot provoke, are helpful in enhancing students' awareness and acquisition of SI-related skills and strategies for SI training, hoping that the case study can arouse more interest in future empirical investigation.

Key words: sight translation; simultaneous interpretation; skill acquisition; skill development; skills transfer; deliberate practice

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [zhongwei.song@mq.edu.au](mailto:zhongwei.song@mq.edu.au)

# Skill Transfer from Sight Translation to Simultaneous Interpreting: A Case Study of an Effective Teaching Technique

## 1. Introduction

*Sight translation* (ST) has long been used in conference interpreting training. However, few research efforts have identified and tested what specific skills learned from ST are applicable to *simultaneous interpreting* (SI). Even less research has been focused on how to deliberately acquire these skills and what techniques or methods of practice can be used to efficiently transfer these skills to SI.

The dearth of research on the pedagogical relationship between ST and SI constitutes a sharp contrast to the growing wealth of literature on conference interpreting as a whole, indicating that the pedagogical value of ST skills as part of SI training is yet to be corroborated (Song and Noël, 2007). In other words, we, the interpreting teaching community, must question ourselves as to whether we have effectively used ST for SI purposes, or whether the existing methods of ST are, indeed, efficient, relevant, or deliberate enough for use in skill acquisition and transfer.

Didactically, there are two commonly used ST teaching methods for conference interpreting training and empirical investigation: a) ST with prior reading and b) ST without prior reading. Lambert (2004) defines the two methods as two variants of ST—one less challenging and one more challenging. By *less challenging*, she refers to ST with prior reading, in which an interpreter is allowed approximately ten minutes to read a 300-word passage and prepare the vocabulary to be used; by *more challenging*, she refers to ST without prior reading, in which preparation time is eliminated altogether, and the interpreter is asked to begin translating immediately, without having a chance to read the source language text (Lambert, p. 298).

The practice of using ST to facilitate skill acquisition for SI through these two existing methods is largely based on the conviction that SI and ST are both complex cognitive processes, involving parallel operations in the transfer of the meaning of a text from one language into another, despite the fact that ST is from the visual mode to the oral mode and SI from the auditory mode to the oral mode (Ilg and Lambert, 1996; Lambert, 2004). To carry out these cognitively interdependent operations, the two processes require shared complex skills: meaning unit identification, chunking, anticipation, and a quick response (Brady, 1989; Gile, 1995; Ilg and Lambert, 1996; Jiménez, 2001; Moser-Mercer, 1995). Thanks to its commonalities with SI, ST is duly regarded as an integral part of conference interpreting training or one of “the training wheels” for skill development and acquisition of SI.

Despite the shared features, however, one of the fundamental differences between the two is that SI is an on-line information processing activity, in which attention is constantly divided between comprehension of the input and production of the output (de Groot, 1997, p. 27), whereas ST is not, particularly given the two traditional methods where information is available, at any time, on paper. To innovatively use ST for SI training, a new method should be created whereby ST can be tweaked to share some on-line information processing attributes. To this end, it must enable a text to be fed, segment by segment, in the form of animation, so as to resemble the

delivery of an oral presentation. That is, with each new segment of information coming up, the old, instead of remaining as part of the text, disappears. In other words, input rate must be introduced, and it must be time-controlled and externally manipulated. Only in this way can some of the SI constraints be induced in ST to enable conference interpreting students to develop on-line information processing skills and strategies prior to, or at the very beginning of, simultaneous interpreting training.

## **2. ST pedagogical values in SI skill development**

### **2.1 ST, a cognitive process as SI**

Traditionally, ST is believed to have played a secondary and supportive role in interpreting training and that its primary task is to boost language proficiency, in that it is able to increase information processing speed, speaking proficiency, reading comprehension, and speech production (Curvers, Klein, Riva & Wuilmart, 1986; Falbo, 1995; Mikkelsen, 1992; Spilka, 1966; Viaggio, 1995; Weber, 1990). The major reason for ST's supportive role for language competency is summed up by O'Malley & Chamot (1990), quoting Anderson's thesis (1983, 1985) that "the mental processes necessary for language comprehension of both aural and written texts are sufficiently similar that comprehension of both can generally be discussed as a common phenomenon" (p. 34).

In addition, the versatility of ST in interpreting training and research stems from the fact that ST is a complex cognitive process, characterized by the simultaneous management of two tasks: visual reception and oral production (Brady, 1989; Chernov, 2004; Jiménez, 2001; Moser-Mercer, 1995). In other words, ST is a simultaneous process of oral translation, delivered at a speed controlled by the translator and conditioned by the interconnected sub-processes—ranging from reading and comprehending the text of a source language to reformulating and producing in a target language. Many scholars, therefore, have qualified it as a variant of SI, *simultaneous translation* (McDonald & Carpenter, 1981), or *interpretation with texts* (Howard, 1986). Further, many researchers have used ST as one of the experimental components to explore the skill components of SI training and the development of those skills. For example, Lambert (2004) studied shared attention by comparing ST with sight interpretation and with SI for different types of information processing; Agrifoglio (2004), in comparing the constraints and failures of ST with consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, has found that the "sight translator has to rely on short-term memory to retrieve information from the beginning of sentences, or the formulation he/she has already embarked on, especially where grammatical structures differ markedly between the two languages" (p. 61). This finding adds to, rather than contradicts, Gile's (1997) Effort Model of ST in which ST is believed to involve no memory effort at all. These findings point to the potential pedagogical value of ST; its usefulness could go far beyond the realm of language competency.

In explaining his conceptual Effort Model of ST, Gile (1995) points out that the listening effort of SI is replaced by the reading effort in ST. Despite one being the auditory mode and one being the visual mode, the analysis process of ST remains unchanged, leading to high cognitive demands on the reading and analysis capacity. ST is thus regarded as an ideal means to train novice interpreters but only for those situations where an interpreter is required to simultaneously interpret a written text given before a conference starts (Weber, 1990). Not in disagreement with this practical view, Gile, however, focuses more on the similarities of ST and SI in the cognitive process, vigorously advocating the concurrent teaching of both ST and SI upon the mastery of consecutive interpreting. Moser-Mercer (1994) also attaches great importance to, and strongly supports, the pedagogical value of ST in conference interpreting training, arguing that it helps students divorce themselves from the original text, increase their speed of analysis, and manipulate a text with syntax and stylistics. Pratt (1990) concludes that ST as a teaching tool can contribute to "self-discipline, self-training, self-assessment and feedback" (p. 604). These views have pedagogical ramifications for ST teaching, highlighting the assumption that ST is a tool of deliberate practice for skill acquisition and skill transfer to SI.

From a perspective of deliberate practice, several skills and strategies for information processing with ST (which are also required by SI) were observed: compression of the main points of information from a written text and presentation of a restructured "oral" speech (Weber, 1990); segmentation, through reading, for ideal closure;

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## Teaching sight translation

anticipation based on grammatical, syntactical, semantic, and contextual cues; time pressure management to avoid limiting attention resources; and delivery of an oral nature (Ilg and Lambert, 1996). Therefore, it is fairly safe to say that using ST as a tool of deliberate practice for acquiring these skills and strategies can have a significant impact on the students' ability to develop the skills of SI.

### 2.2 *The two existing methods of ST*

The two commonly used methods of ST have long been used in facilitating skill development for conference interpreting training. The first one is *ST with prior reading*, an activity where students are allowed to read a source language text of 300 to 500 words for a limited amount of time prior to providing an oral translation in a target language. The second one is *ST without prior reading*, an exercise in which students are required to interpret a given written text immediately upon reading it. In both instances, students are instructed to deliver their text in the target language at an even but self-paced rate while trying to maintain the same level of fluency.

### 2.3 *The problems with each of the two methods used for SI training*

Although ST shares some skills and strategies with SI, when used for the purpose of SI training, ST presents some limitations both intrinsic to, and generated by, the two existing methods. If not appropriately dealt with, those limitations can prevent SI skill development from progressing appropriately.

First, in both methods, the presence of visual interference, together with syntactic interference from the source language text, tends to slow down comprehension, delay delivery time, and compromise performance quality. If not handled properly during training, the syntactic complexity and differences of the source language from the target language, combined with the visual interference of the written text, may hinder SI skill development in terms of a quick response, idea closure, and anticipation. In her experiment, Agrifoglio (2004) has corroborated the findings of several other researchers, indicating that the subjects were observed having a constant struggle against increased visual interference from the source language, making ST more hazardous than SI in operation (Brady, 1989). Agrifoglio emphasizes, "The sight translator needs to know at what point he/she can look ahead to identify key words and units and anticipate conceptualization, while planning and executing his/her expression in the target language" (p. 54).

Second, for ST with prior reading, a sight translator not only has access to the text beforehand, but also is given several minutes to read it before translating it. In Agrifoglio's (2004) experiment, the subjects were given about five minutes to read a text of approximately 800 words. Given those conditions, it would be extremely hard to assess and verify whether the final output is indeed achieved by a set of skills they have developed or by the contextual knowledge (and/or memory) obtained through reading the text. For anyone who is linguistically competent and trained in the consecutive technique, three to five minutes of preparation time for a short passage of 300 words means a great deal and can make a huge difference in output. Obviously, using this method does not help develop additional skills and strategies necessary for on-line information processing.

Third, ST without prior reading clearly is more challenging; it can be argued that the process becomes multi-tasking, similar to SI in terms of accessing the new information input and delivering the output in an almost on-line manner. To perform ST in this manner, however, the interpreter must be able to read ahead for meaning (as the words gradually appear), just as was suggested by Agrifoglio, above. Apart from the intrinsic visual and source language interference that can upset a student's anticipation, the method itself cannot dictate the output rate of the translator, for he/she can, consciously or unconsciously, slow down the information processing in order to identify additional linguistic cues or clues. Once this occurs, staccato or long silent pauses take place, reducing the constraint of time pressure this method is intended to create. Since the text is written, the students can still search for linguistic and contextual cues and clues at a self-controlled pace. This highlights the fact that real on-line information processing skills for SI cannot be developed using this method, unless external input rate is introduced to simulate the constraint of time pressure.

### **3. Rationale for designing a new method of ST**

In conference interpreting training, ST is not taught or practiced merely for its own sake. It is taught with hopes that those particular skills of ST that are shared with SI can be developed prior to the commencement of SI training and eventually acquired in time. Essential for skill development and acquisition, *deliberate practice* has been referred to as highly structured activities designed to improve specific aspects of the experts' performance and facilitate the development of their mediating representations (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). To acquire a skill or a cohort of them from one domain to another, the precondition is to reconstruct the representative conditions in the laboratory that can elicit the same performance in the needed domain (Ericsson, 2000). Given Ericsson's Theory of Deliberate Practice (2000), the extent to which skills are acquired, developed, and transferred primarily depends upon: a) problem identification and b) design of deliberate practice for problem solving.

In SI, the processing speed is critical, given time limitations and cognitive overload. Thus, in order to develop a more cohesive teaching approach aimed at effectively and efficiently developing and transferring skills required for on-line information processing, the constraints of time pressure, constant attention splitting, and cognitive overload must be taken into account when ST is part of conference interpreting training. Although regarded as valuable for training in terms of developing a quick response and avoidance of transcoding, the existing methods, (with information accessible at any time on paper) are unable to simulate the effect of real on-line information processing of SI where words disappear gradually.

Therefore, when using ST, it is important to remember that although both methods are valuable, a new method is needed, one in which new elements will be introduced. It must meet the following three requirements in order to turn ST more closely related to SI in practical terms:

- It must be able to minimize the visual interference so that the skills of meaning-unit identification and chunking can be practiced with relative ease.
- The effect of having the words vanish shall be simulated to the extent that the exercises for SI skill acquisition are made similar to the actual SI process.
- In order to achieve this effect and the interplay of working memory with other skills in SI, external input rate must be introduced according to the individual competency levels of students.

Once the above preconditions have been met, two hypotheses can be established:

- If an adjustable external input rate is introduced that enables upcoming information to vanish gradually, the SI effect can be created to generate manifested on-line constraints.
- With these constraints now available in ST, students can cultivate their awareness of, and develop skills for, some specific strategies needed in SI in a practical manner.

### **4. Designing the method**

Various software applications can be employed to meet these requirements. One of the easiest methods is to use Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 or 2007, in which a selected text can be uploaded to a number of slides and automatically timed to appear on the screen, one at a time, and with segments gradually appearing on the screen at a preset speed. For the purpose of demonstration, Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 is used below to demonstrate how to make slides for the proposed ST method.

**Step 1:** Open Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 and type in, or paste from a Word document, the topic of the text that is to be used, as shown in Figure 1.

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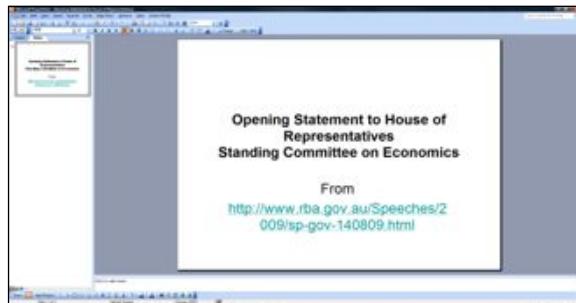


Figure 1

**Step 2:** Open the second slide and paste onto it the entire text (300 words or more) that will be used, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2

**Step 3:** Further divide the text and individually upload sequential segments onto additional slides. Limit the number of words on each slide to between 15 and 30, as shown in Figure 3. Click on **Slide Sorter View** in the lower left-hand corner of the screen in order to show all of the separate slides (see Figure 4).



Figure 3

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Figure 4

**Step 4:** Choose **Font Size 40** for each slide by selecting/checking each slide, from the third slide through the last slide; click on the **Font Size** button on the dropdown menu and select **40**, as shown in Figure 5.

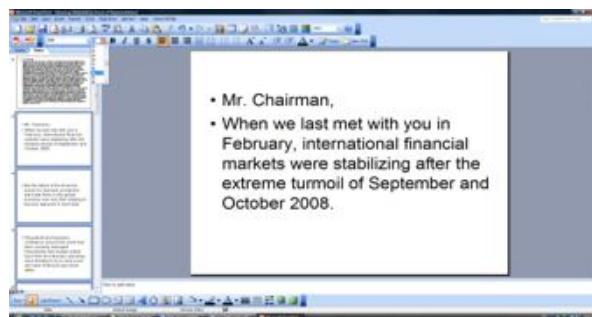


Figure 5

**Step 5:** Once all slides have been set, click **Slide Show** (as shown in Figure 6) and find **Animation Schemes** in the dropdown menu; click to open up the **Menu** on the right-hand side, as shown in Figure 7.

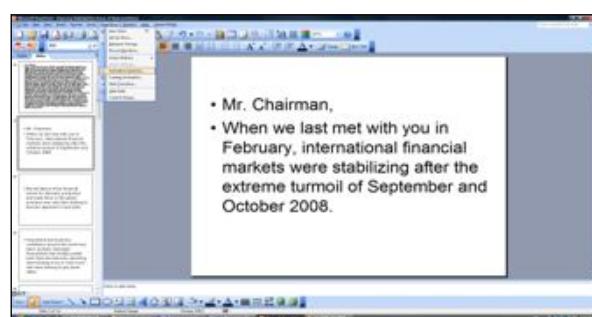


Figure 6

## Teaching sight translation

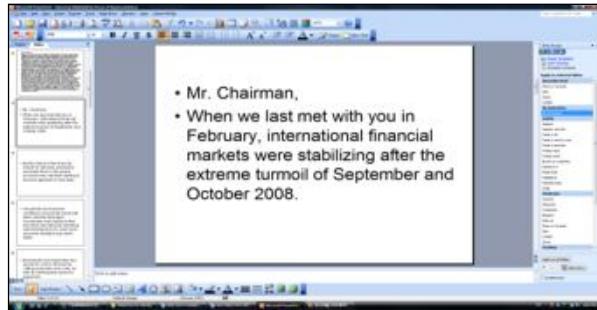


Figure 7

**Step 6:** On the right-hand side of the screen, find the window **Apply to Selected Slides**. Under it there are four categories: **Basic**, **Subtle**, **Moderate** and **Exciting**. In **Moderate**, select and click **Unfold**, as shown in Figure 8, then click **Apply to All Slides** in the box below the window. All the slides will now be animated, as shown in Figure 9.

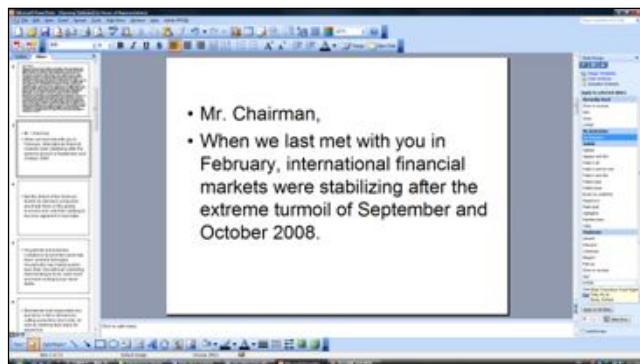


Figure 8

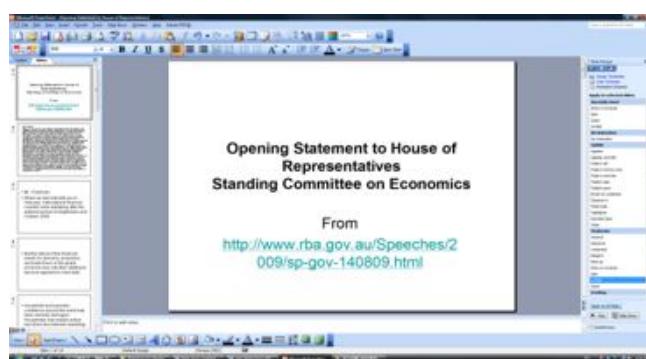


Figure 9

**Step 7:** Since the words on each slide are not equal in number and will need different viewing times, it is likely that you will need to go back to **Slide Show** where you can click on **Slide Transition** to select the viewing time given to each slide as well as the amount of time that transpires between the slides (see Figure 10). On the right-hand side of the screen, you will find **Modify Transition**, and you are given the options of **Fast**, **Medium**, and

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Slow for choosing the length of time each slide will remain in view (see Figure 11). Below the box labelled **Modify Translation**, you will find **Advance Slide**, which provides you with two options: a) **On Mouse Click** and b) **Automatically After**. Below **Automatically After**, you will find a box in which you can indicate the transition time, in seconds, that you desire for each slide (see Figure 12).

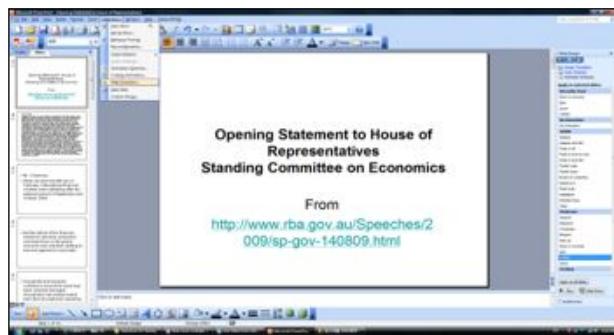


Figure 10

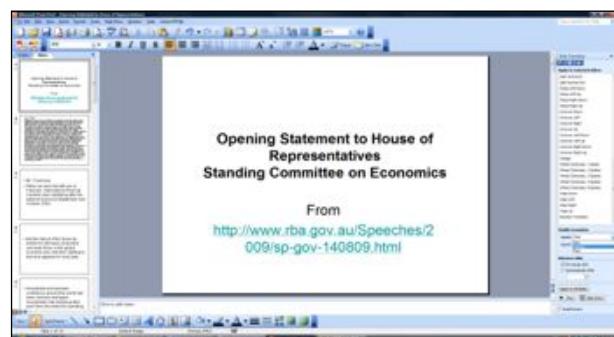


Figure 11

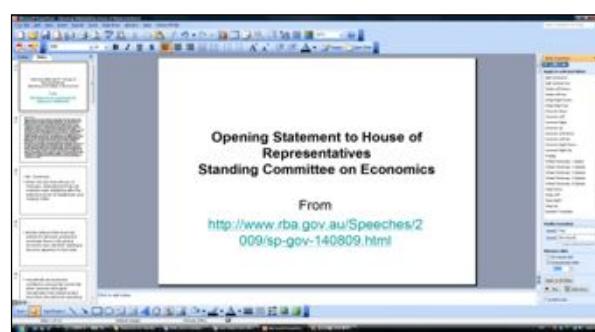


Figure 12

**Step 8:** Another option allows you to click **Rehearse Timings** under the dropdown menu of the **Slide Show**; this allows you to allocate time for each individual slide as well as the time between the slides, according to your teaching intention or the amount of words on each slide, as shown in Figure 13. Compared to using the **Slide**

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Transition option described above, **Rehearse Timings** is more time-consuming but also more “consumer-friendly” in terms of being able to individualize each slide.

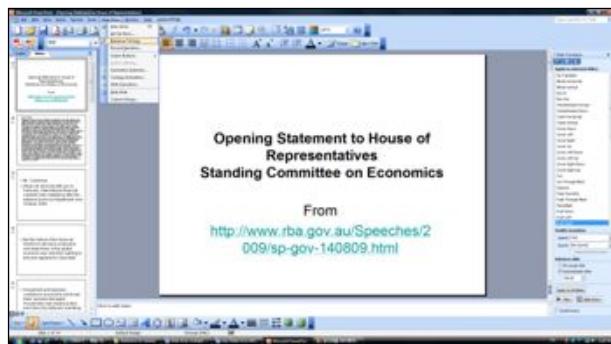


Figure 13

When the above steps have been taken, save the ST text in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. The prepared text can now be run automatically once you click the **Slide Show** icon found in the lower left-hand corner.

If one prefers using Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007, the whole designing process is much easier. Just click **Animation** and then **Custom Animation** to open up the window on the right-hand side. Select **Add Effect** to scroll down to **Entrance** in the dropdown menu, where you select the **Unfold** mode; then click **Add Effect** again to find **Exit** using the same **Unfold** effect. With the **Unfold** mode selected in both **Add Effect** and **Exit**, the slide is now capable of having the text gradually disappear after it has been seen in its entirety. The slides will appear automatically, one after another, and once the last word of the segment appears on the screen, the segment will vanish gradually from the slide, from the beginning of the text to the end.

## 5. A preliminary experiment

When it comes to SI training, it is not uncommon that trainers find some students initially progressing at a very slow pace. This is due, in part, to the fact that the students tend to return to their habitual consecutive skills in dealing with the on-line information processing of SI, and, partly, to the fact that they lack multi-tasking skills (e.g., splitting their attention in order to simultaneously handle comprehension of the input and production of the output). Either way is stressful, and, in turn, further hinders their progress. As this is the case, the SI training and exercises should not be begun prematurely; transition time is necessary for students to move from consecutive interpretation to simultaneous interpreting. Moser-Mercer (1995) has long cautioned interpreting researchers against taking ST for granted, because “each type of sight translation makes different demands on the translator’s or interpreter’s processing capacities, any empirical study on sight translation needs to proceed from a precise definition on what type of sight translation is being investigated” (p. 160). This new method is clearly not used to replace, but rather to supplement the two traditional ones. By doing so, it is intended to generate more value to the progression of skill development that lead to SI.

This proposed method is deliberately designed for SI students; not only do the words on each slide gradually unfold, or appear, letter by letter, but the gradual appearance of the letters and words on the screen are “speaker-paced” at an externally set input rate, one that is adjustable to the extent to which a certain skills are to be acquired. In this situation, continuous access to information in the text, a distinct feature of ST, is not available, as it disappears from the screen segment by segment, resulting in high demands on the interplay between working memory and splitting attention, a defining feature of SI. It allows students to gradually, but confidently, acquire SI skills through ST, a mode of interpretation with which they are familiar and comfortable, before embarking on

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SI; the rationale is, therefore, to bridge the gap between ST and SI in terms of skills, dovetailing the merger of their shared skills.

With the proposed method put into operation, the students and trainers are able to monitor several things pivotal to SI skill development. The performance of the students can be self-assessed, using the following questions to determine where their weaknesses are and how to address them: How fast can I follow? How many omissions have I made? What is the quality of my delivery? If I am slow and my delivery is staccato, is it because of my lack of a multi-tasking ability or chunking skills, or is it due to my inability to identify meaning units? If I can follow, can I go even faster by anticipating what is yet to be shown in the next segment or slide? With the help of their trainers, students can develop suitable strategies of deliberate practice while reducing the level of psychological stress—as compared to plunging into SI straightforwardly. To trainers, after deciding upon what skills are to be targeted and by which ST drills, one of their tasks is to determine which specific skills individual students still find challenging and what the underlying causes are (e.g., lack of chunking skills, visual interference of ST, etc.) for poor performance.

Bearing in mind the above questions, the author conducted an experiment with subjects selected from students studying for their master's degree in conference interpreting at Macquarie University, Sydney. Six subjects were given two ST exercises. To sight translate the first exercise, the subjects were given a text of 290 words, which was presented on a piece of 4A paper; for the second exercise, a text of 300 words was uploaded onto a computer through Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003. Fifteen slides were used, each slide containing, on average, 20 words, or approximately one or two sentences. The slides were set at a prescribed rate of 90 words per minute and projected overhead onto a large screen to be sight translated by six subjects (four sitting in each of four booths and two sitting in the lecture room, ten meters apart).

For the first exercise, one of the subjects, identified through training as being weak in delivery due to the lack of chunking skills, spent six minutes previewing the printed text, as compared to the slightly over three minutes required by the other five students. However, when forced to sight translate 15 slides of the second text in the form of PowerPoint presentation, this particular subject managed to finish ST in 3'25", within close range to his peers, who completed the ST between 3'10" and 3'15".

## **6. Discussion**

Judging from the weakness of his chunking skills, which resulted in cognitive overload and forced him to commit more omissions or misinterpretations because of his difficulties in reformulation and delivery, it was assumed that this particular student's overall performance would be worse than his peers. However, the subsequent findings from the analysis of the recordings indicate that little difference was identified between his scores and those of the others in terms of omission and misinterpretation. This subject committed four omissions; his five peers committed two (three peers) and three omissions (two peers). The results are more or less the same as the data we collected from another experiment, in which self-designed computer software was used. Based on the analysis, preliminary conclusions were reached:

A text uploaded to Microsoft Office PowerPoint tends to increase students' reaction time in both reformulation and production, since they are left with no alternatives but to process the texts and complete ST in line with the externally set input rate.

The quality of the performances by some students can be affected more by visual interference than by lack of chunking skills. The new method limits each slide to approximately 20 words, significantly reducing visual interference as only one or two sentences appears at a time in font size 40, much larger than size 12 on A4 paper. With shorter segments comprised of sentences and embedded clauses, trainees tend to find it relatively easy to identify and chunk meaning units. The change helps psychologically by increasing the confidence of the students, as it reduces the visual interference of the text to a more manageable degree. The author is aware that more investigational effort should be made for the purpose of assessing skill transfer to SI, in order to fully understand if visual interference is, indeed, reduced.

Faster reaction time by subjects during production seems to indicate that with the presentation time of the words appearing on the slides significantly less than that of words seen on paper, students are less likely to observe the

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left-to-right strategy in processing the message when reading the rapidly appearing slides than they do in reading text written on A4 paper. In this way, trainees avoid translating certain sentences, which would be virtually impossible to interpret (Moser-Merser, 1995).

Driven by an externally set speed for each segment that appears letter-by-letter on a slide before switching to the following slide, students are working under pressure and tend to interpret the text with their working memory while anticipating and establishing a mental representation of the concept. Part of this thesis seems to have been corroborated by the fact that all the subjects participating in the experiment continued to interpret for a space of time ranging from 8 to 21 seconds after the last slide was finished and that none of them committed any omissions in the last segment.

### *6.1 Implications for anticipation*

Previous research shows that one of the fundamental differences in ST between professionals and students is that the former are capable of handling the comprehension process (i.e., reading, parsing, and meaning integration) spontaneously, and the latter often separate the process into segments, completing the reading before translating (Moser-Mercer, 1995). With an externally set input rate, the effect of words vanishing from the screen has turned ST into on-line information processing that requires, among other cognitive resources, a sense of urgency that results in speeding up meaning-unit identification and chunking by incorporating reading, parsing, and meaning integration simultaneously. In so doing, students will feel, for the first time, the necessity of anticipating linguistic and extralinguistic features as a strategy to deal with time constraints and cognitive overload.

For training purposes, the external input should be set between 70 and 75 wpm if the purpose is to use this type of ST as a pedagogical tool for observing and discussing anticipation with students. This exercise could be done regardless of whether students have already been exposed to SI or not. The cues and clues that encourage anticipation could be observed by students in this way, "so that the intelligence of the process and the acquired skill could be transferred successfully to the full-fledged SI situation" (Song and Noël, 2007, p. 43).

### *6.2 Implications for ear-voice span, working memory, and other skills*

Thanks to the simulation of a speaker-paced input rate, time pressure stands out as one of central issues for students when working with on-line information processing. If not appropriately dealt with, time pressure can lead to many cognitive problems. In this context, the input rate has a direct bearing on comprehension, working memory, splitting attention, and future training on ear-voice span (EVS), another defining feature of SI.

Perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization, the three interrelated processes in comprehending written texts, are consistent with listening comprehension processes (Anderson, 1983). In SI, information is, through listening comprehension, continuously chunked into more abstract units that combine the essentials of meaning of the smaller units that are being recoded (Moser, 1978). As with SI, the extent to which the upcoming information can be chunked and how it is chunked in ST determines what specific strategies and skills are to be used for comprehension and production.

One strategy often used in SI is to change EVS, the time lag between comprehension and production. Whether EVS should be shortened or enlarged depends upon several factors, including input rate and information density, and each has positive and negative effects on the cognitive efforts of an interpreter. The application of this strategy requires the interplay of many other skills to offset the accompanying negative effects. To shorten EVS reduces cognitive overload on working memory, yet, it increases the risk of losing the context. Generally speaking, however, interpreters are highly motivated to keep pace (Goldman-Eisler, 1972) and they must resolve all syntactic and semantic ambiguities (de Groot, 1997) in order to do so. Therefore, at times, the interpreters must enlarge EVS for in-depth comprehension at the cost of working memory overload and simultaneity.

From a perspective of scaffolding SI skills through ST, it seems imperative that students be exposed to exercises as well as given opportunities to gain some procedural knowledge and skills in order to balance out time lag strategy in SI. With the new technique, the input rate (i.e., the speed at which the information is uploaded onto

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individual slides), is adjustable, as is the interval time between slides. In other words, speed can be manipulated to allow “students to lengthen and shorten their EVS in specific cases” (Gile, 1995, p. 195). By doing so, the students are given a taste of EVS before SI training starts.

Given that EVS is often changed to cope with problems of memory overload and comprehension, the underlying skills, such as how to chunk and when to delay the response, to assist the alternation of EVS change in SI are very important. It is assumed, therefore, that the new method is theoretically able to prepare students for acquiring skills that allow adequate adjustment to EVS in SI ahead of actually practising SI.

## **7. Conclusion**

When using ST for SI training, the major impediment to skill transfer from one to the other seems not to originate from the fundamental difference of the two, but from the static nature of ST; this is in sharp contrast to the dynamic on-line nature of SI. The proposed method is designed using manipulation to add more similar conditions to ST, as well as the constraints representative of SI. In this sense, the existing two methods of ST are not as helpful. Naturally, what ST can help achieve in skill acquisition only constitutes part of what SI requires, at best. Other modes of interpretation training components, methods, and approaches (e.g., consecutive interpreting) must also be utilized (Déjean Le Féal, 1997). Given that skill development is a qualitative stage-like progression (Ericsson, 2000; Hoffman, 1997), the new method is but one of many “training wheels” used only as a complement to other types of ST methods, prior to—or together with—ST for SI skill acquisition.

Theoretically, this new method, with the effect of words vanishing from the screen and with an externally controlled input rate, can simulate the conditions of SI and induce its constraints, which include, but are not limited to, meaning unit identification, splitting attention, chunking, anticipation, EVS adjustment, and segmentation. Its potentials, as discussed above, do need to be further corroborated with further empirical investigation. The author will continue to probe the application of this technique with more experiments and hopes to further verify or falsify those hypotheses related to the development of various SI-related skills and strategies.

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# **Intentional Development of Interpreter Specialization: Assumptions and Principles for Interpreter Educators**

**Anna Witter-Merithew<sup>1</sup>**

*University of Northern Colorado*

**Brenda Nicodemus**

*San Diego State University*

## **Abstract**

Specialization of interpreting practice exists in the field of interpreting and interpreter education through *de facto* and *de jure* processes. Interpreters are *de facto* specialists when they self-designate as having specialized competence for working in a particular setting, with certain populations, or within unique functions. Conversely, interpreters may be designated as specialists through external (*de jure*) processes such as adhering to national standards, completing advanced educational programming in specialty areas, and achieving specialty certification. There are a variety of factors that have shaped the evolution of specialization in the United States—several of which have application to the specialization of practice regardless of locale. This article addresses the implications of specialization for the fields of interpreting and interpreter education with specific attention to necessary elements associated with the preparation of practitioners for specialist practice. These elements are framed within the context of assumptions that currently exist in interpreting literature and/or current practices related to the training and certification of specialist practitioners. This framework offers sound rationale for the establishment of structured mechanisms to guide the intentional development of specializations within signed language interpreting.

**Keywords:** specialization; patterns of practice; *de facto* process; *de jure* process; decision latitude; relational autonomy

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [Anna.witter-merithew@unco.edu](mailto:Anna.witter-merithew@unco.edu)

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# **Intentional Development of Interpreter Specialization: Assumptions and Principles for Interpreter Educators**

## **1. Introduction**

In its brief history of professional practice in the United States, signed language interpreting has undergone shifts of seismic proportions. Initially an infrequent activity provided primarily by individuals who had familial or social ties to the Deaf community, interpreting today has evolved into a conglomerate of people, programs, conferences, corporations, and certifications. As the professionalization of interpreting unfolded over time, a natural process of maturation occurred in which practitioners, either intentionally or by default, began working in particular settings, within specialized functions, or with specific groups of consumers. It is that narrowing of practice, known as specialization, that is the focus of this article.

In this paper, we argue for a proactive and intentional development of specialization areas within the interpreting profession. We begin by providing a background on specialization as a general phenomenon within professions at large. Next, we examine specialization within signed language interpreting as it manifests through de facto and de jure approaches and in response to societal trends and demands. We assert that a key component of interpreter specialization is deepening the conceptualization of professional acts and practices, which can be evidenced by the decision latitude and autonomy of practitioners. While we argue for the intentional development of interpreter specialization, we describe potential unintended and negative consequences that may result from this action. Essential elements of preparation for interpreting specialists are discussed in the form of a set of assumptions that are drawn from a review of literature, as well as current practices in the preparation and certification of signed language interpreting specialists. Finally, guiding principles that underscore the importance of the intentional development of specializations within interpreting are offered as a means of ensuring the best interests of society, consumers, and practitioners.

## **2. Specialization as a professional phenomenon**

How do specializations emerge within the professions? Historically, as professions grow in stature, they evolve toward developing areas of specialization within their discipline. The assumption is that professions are ever changing in the face of new knowledge and technology, and specialization offers the opportunity to gain the highest levels of competence possible in a specific area of practice. *Specialization* is the deliberate narrowing of practice requiring didactic and experiential preparation that provides the basis for competent service delivery with respect to distinctive patterns of practice in essential domains (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). *Patterns of practice* refer to the unique and reoccurring professional acts of specialists that are based on defined standards of practice and involve a high degree of problem-solving expertise (Kasher, 2005). Distinctive patterns of practice may be exemplified in the knowledge of a specialized system, its unique terminology and discourse features, and its norms of professional protocol. As a result, a *specialist* is viewed as a practitioner who, through advanced training, acquisition of specialized skills and knowledge, and

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experience, distinguishes himself/herself as being uniquely qualified for the demands of the specialized interpreting work.

One of the central goals of specialization is to provide assurance to consumers that those claiming to hold specialist competence possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and credentials necessary to provide competent and reliable practice (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002). Specialists possess expertise that exceeds the capacity of generalist practitioners. As a result, efforts of practitioners to specialize will benefit from the field's intentional development of standards for the practice and preparation of specialists. In conceiving such standards, ways in which specialization can be classified is one consideration.

An examination of the literature regarding the professions indicates that specializations can be classified in several ways: by setting, by function, by population served, or other relevant factors (Kasher, 2005; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002). For example, in the nursing profession the most common specialties can be divided into roughly four categories—by work setting or type of treatment; disease, ailment, or condition; organ or body system type; or population served (Styles, 1989).

### 3. Specialization within the interpreting profession

#### 3.1 Specialization as “setting”

It is useful to consider how specialization occurs in professions at large in comparison to its development within interpreting. For example, specialization in the field of interpreting is generally regarded as being driven by specific settings. The term *setting* is used to refer to the time, place, and circumstance of the interpreted event, including the context that surrounds it (e.g., backgrounds and characteristics of the consumers). It is commonly acknowledged that a classroom, medical setting, or legal setting each involve a unique set of factors and considerations that impact the patterns of practice of interpreters. Specifically, each of these settings involves unique systems knowledge, subject matter knowledge, specialized terminology, and discourse patterns, among other factors. Further, conflating setting with specialization has been the norm in interpreter education, which is evidenced by course titles in many programs (e.g., “Medical Interpreting,” “Educational Interpreting”). We suggest that a framework for classifying specialization that extends beyond setting may prove useful to current trends in the field of signed language interpreting. For example, the incorporation of deaf interpreters into a schema of specialization is best suited to a classification that looks at unique functions and/or populations served, rather than setting. Deaf interpreters frequently interpret for deafblind individuals, or deaf individuals who are not fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). Likewise, the work of interpreters whose working conditions involve technology, such as video relay or video remote interpreting, doesn't meet the definition of a setting per se. We argue that the use of technology for transmission creates unique conditions of work that require certain patterns of practice; however, the interactions that are interpreted include any number of topics tied to a wide range of settings. So a framework that includes specialization around unique functions—such as operation of computer and phone equipment during the interpreting process—would more accurately describe what actually transpires within the field of signed language interpreting. As well, interpreters may also combine more than one area of specialization, for example, interpreting via technology (function) for medical appointments (setting).

#### 3.2 Factors that drive interpreter specialization

Considering alternate ways of classifying specialization also provides insight into the factors that drive specialization in the field of sign language interpreting. These include, but are not limited to, legislative trends, market trends, needs and demographics of consumers, and practitioner interest.

- **Legislative trends.** When laws are passed, regulations follow. In the United States, federal and state legislative trends have significantly impacted the specialization of interpreters in public schools, legal

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settings, and vocational environments. In many instances, laws and regulations specify standards for interpreting practitioners. In turn, these standards drive the need for training programs and the development of systems of credentialing. Often, regulatory bodies maintain and distribute lists of qualified practitioners to entities responsible for providing interpreting services, including a wide range of state agencies such as courts and human services organizations.

- **Market trends.** Entities providing interpreting services to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals seek practitioners that possess a high degree of specialized competence in a particular setting. Evidence of this can be seen in the rapid growth of the video relay industry. In the inaugural stages of this industry, companies recruited the most qualified interpreters from the local community. Hiring highly qualified interpreters became a necessity in order to be competitive among companies who were establishing their identities as service providers. These highly qualified interpreters were able to learn and contribute to the new patterns of practice required for interpreting via technology. The expectation became that the newly hired interpreters bring or acquire a high degree of specialized competence in a short period of time.
- **Needs and demographics of consumers.** As more deaf immigrants and refugees move to the United States, interpreting demands often exceed the grasp of a generalist practitioner who possesses only a basic understanding of settings and the related discourse and protocol. Further, as deaf people achieve greater degrees of access within society and as services are expanded, practitioners are entering settings for which they have little or no foundation for effective practice. For example, with greater frequency, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are becoming “specialists” within their chosen occupations (i.e., accounting, medicine, linguistics, etc). This trend requires that interpreters have the advanced knowledge of a specialist versus the default knowledge of a generalist.
- **Practitioner interest.** Finally, as part of natural career development, practitioners seek out opportunities to advance competence through specialization. It is not uncommon for interpreters to gain specialized expertise in one or more settings as they gain maturity in the field.

These various factors have shaped the development of specialization within interpreting. It may be regarded as a positive outcome that individual interpreters are carving their own paths for specialization. As with any new developments, there are consequences that need to be considered and addressed proactively.

### *3.3 Potential consequences of specialization*

Although the benefits of specialization are inviting, including the possibility of increasing scholarship (Swabey & Nicodemus, 2010), it is important to consider other potential consequences that may negatively impact stakeholders. For example, given the Deaf community’s concerns about the changing relationship between deaf people and interpreters (Cokely, 2005), it is critical that any framework for specialization be sensitive to the possibility of further alienation between practitioners and consumers. Further, advancing specialized competence of interpreting practitioners is challenging because of the gap that exists between the readiness of pre-service program graduates to meet the minimum professional standards of certification set by the field (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004, 2005). These sensitive issues would require a proactive approach to problem solving, with collaborative and ongoing action by stakeholders from the Deaf community and interpreter educators.

A further potential consequence is the reality that administering a specialist credentialing system is a costly and labor-intensive process. It is important, therefore, that a sufficient need and critical mass of interpreters for specialized practice is evident before specialist designation and credentialing is undertaken. There is also merit in exploring more efficient ways of creating designation of specialist competence—such as completion of training, supervised induction, and portfolio assessment.

Another possible downside is the potential of practitioners making the investment of time and fiscal resources to specialize only to find themselves in a market that cannot support their expertise. This reality is not unique to

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interpreting; the same outcome is evidenced in other professions, particularly in rural areas. Further, specialization may reduce the availability of generalist practitioners in the community. If interpreters work strictly in their area of specialization, the result may be creating shortages in qualified personnel in some areas of generalist practice. The issues of supply and demand could be addressed by first performing a quantitative analysis of the resources available in relation to the needs in the community, followed by developing long-range targets for increasing interpreters in the community. Additionally, local demands could be improved by progressive policies of interpreting agencies and flexibility on the part of practitioners.

Another likely consequence of specialization is the increased cost associated with interpreting services. Typically, specialists charge more, in recognition of the added investment in education, training, and certification necessary to achieve specialist standing. These increased costs can become a significant barrier to accessing the most appropriate and qualified services. Certainly, the need for a more judicious and equitable way of determining and setting the costs of interpreting services must be balanced with the right of practitioners to earn a fair and equitable wage. Therefore, it is in the best interest of consumers, practitioners, and the publicly-funded systems that underwrite the cost of interpreting services (in many instances), to explore cost-effective approaches to service delivery that do not sacrifice quality or integrity.

Although these and other potentially negative consequences of specialization exist, it is likely that further specialization by practitioners will increase. Specialization is a natural result of new knowledge, new technologies, and the advancement of a profession, as well as shifting demands in the marketplace.

### *3.4 De facto and de jure processes of interpreter specialization*

Despite the sensitive issues associated with developing specializations within interpreting, specialist practice already exists through both *de facto* and *de jure* processes and, given market trends, specialization within interpreting is likely to increase. The *de facto* process of specialization occurs when interpreters self-designate as specialists in certain settings—such as public school, healthcare, and legal interpreting. Interpreters may also self-designate as specialists working with specific populations—such as the deafblind or immigrants. Ideally, this self-designation, or *de facto* process, occurs as a result of concentrated practice in an area and through additional training and/or mentoring specific to the setting or population.

Conversely, *de jure* processes of specialization occur through external measures, including the successful completion of targeted education programs and certifications. Several universities in the United States offer additional or advanced sequences of interpreting study in specific settings such as legal, healthcare, and public school education. As well, nationally recognized entities, including (from the United States) the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and Boys Town National Research Hospital, administer standardized specialist certification systems for signed language interpreters.

Later in the paper, we will argue for an intentional development of specialization within the interpreting profession that will ameliorate and expand the current *de facto* and *de jure* processes. First, however, we offer two constructs—decision latitude and professional autonomy—that can be used to assess the degree to which specialization efforts to date have indeed advanced knowledge and expertise within the discipline.

### *3.5 Decision latitude and professional autonomy*

The literature on professional autonomy emphasizes the responsibility of professions to regulate their specialties as a means of recognizing and promoting advanced knowledge and skills and of ensuring orderly development of the field (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Lewis, 1989; MacDonald, 2002; Sandstrom, 2007; Seago, 2006). One measure of a profession's progress in fulfilling this responsibility is an assessment of the degree of professional autonomy that is afforded and exercised by its practitioners. Professional autonomy does not mean that specialist practitioners can make decisions arbitrarily, based on personal inclinations. Rather, the decision latitude that accompanies professional autonomy is the result of a profession's deep conceptualization of professional acts and professional practices and the agreement of practitioners to act in a manner that is similar to one another (Kasher, 2005). It is adherence to these acts and practices that make professional autonomy possible and assure the public that agreed upon and enforced standards exist within a profession. The emphasis on collective agreement

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regarding the acts and practices of specialists highlights the relational nature of autonomy. *Relational autonomy* is the recognition that “autonomy is socially constructed; that is, the capacity and opportunity for autonomous action is dependent upon our particular social relationships and power structures in which professional practice is embedded. It requires that one’s professional relationships with particular individuals and institutions be constituted in such a way as to give one genuine opportunities for informed and transparent decision-making” (MacDonald, 2002, p. 197). Put another way, the emphasis of relational autonomy is the “social embeddedness of the self” within social organizations (Westlund, 2009). Within this framework, effective autonomy is achieved when the social conditions are in place that support it. The social conditions allow the practitioner (and the public) to have confidence in the decision latitude afforded to the participants, so that they can each take charge of their choices.

Understanding the conditions that foster informed and transparent decision making by interpreters, as well as those conditions that restrict it, involves recognition of both *internal* elements (i.e., how the interpreter perceives his/her role and work; how each participant views himself/herself), and *external* elements (i.e., how the work of interpreters is perceived by others). An examination of the internal and external elements gives insight into how specialization in signed language interpreting in the US has evolved to date.

Consider, for example, the nature of decision latitude as applied by signed language interpreters in certain areas of specialization. The increase in the demand for interpreters in the U.S. public school setting occurred at such a rapid and dramatic rate that the profession was not prepared to respond. Lacking a formal certification process, having few training options, and with little or no induction into the field, these early public school interpreters were left to carve out their individual patterns of practice without an organized collective to verify and shape their decisions (Hurwitz, 1991; Stuckless, Avery & Hurwitz, 1989). Further, the concerns that exist within the Deaf community and with educators of deaf children around the implications of interpreted versus direct instruction have delayed the interpreting profession’s acceptance of public school interpreting practitioners (Marschark, 2007). As a result, many public school interpreters continue to work outside the norms of the profession and have yet to satisfy the standards set by the profession; thus they are relatively uninformed about the profession at large (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). As de facto specialists, the work of educational interpreters has often been based on individual decisions and/or driven by the external directives from school policies. Their standing within the public school system is also lacking—state standards are set relatively low in terms of academic and certification requirements, and interpreting positions are often part of the para-professional versus professional salary schema (Schick & Williams, 2004; Schick, Williams, & Bolster, 2000). Therefore, applying and sustaining professional autonomy is difficult, making their standing as specialists tenuous at best.

Interpreting in the video relay industry offers yet another example. Significant limitations to decision latitude are imposed on interpreter practitioners working in this industry, both by the government and corporate policies and procedures. As an example, the common practice of interpreters asking consumers about the goal and details of the call prior to making the call (which also serves as an opportunity to become familiar with signing style), is discouraged or prohibited by the industry, as it infringes on billable minute standards and definitions associated with functional equivalency. This leaves interpreters feeling deeply conflicted because they are expected to behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the norms and values of the profession. When the social conditions in which the work of interpreters occurs do not support the application of appropriate degrees of decision latitude, the professional autonomy of practitioners is greatly compromised. When interpreters are unable to forge the relational impact necessary to sustain decision latitude, the entire system of communication access suffers. “If our factual understanding of the preconditions for autonomous action is flawed, so will be our ethical reaction to that autonomy” (MacDonald, 2002).

Yet, there is at least one area of specialization where effective decision latitude and autonomous practice is evidenced. For decades, legal interpreters have experienced a high degree of professional standing when working within the legal system. The pay for the work of interpreters in this setting is set at a premium rate and often involves working in collaborated teams. Interpreters in this setting are viewed as officers of the court and therefore have the accompanying duty of serving the interests of the court (Mathers, 2007). In this role, the interpreter can request to approach the bench to discuss issues impacting the interpretation, request correction to the court record, request assistance of other practitioners and/or experts, and a variety of other practices that constitute patterns of practice unique to legal interpreters (Stewart, Witter-Merithew & Cobb, 2009). The court considers these practitioners experts, expecting them to possess a thorough knowledge of the legal system and its

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procedures, terminology, and discourse, along with a high degree of competence and reliability in their interpreting performance. Further, the court expects legal interpreters to report to the court any barriers to effective performance and consumer understanding and to collaborate with the court in resolving issues that may arise. These practices provide interpreters with the social conditions that promote a high degree of decision latitude and relational autonomy.

How has this level of professional standing been achieved? Certainly, in part, it is because the legal profession at large is one of the esteemed professions of society. As well, the interpreting field at large confers a high degree of respect and professional standing to interpreters working in the legal setting. This is evidenced by the fact that in the United States the first specialty certification developed and implemented by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf was the Special Certificate: Legal, first awarded in 1974 [Registered Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), 2007]. Specialized training programs preparing interpreters to work in the legal setting have existed for decades and now include graduate level programs. Further, there exists an extensive amount of scholarship in both spoken and signed language interpreting related to interpreting in the legal setting. This scholarship evidences the ongoing efforts to deeply conceptualize the work of interpreters in this setting. As a result, interpreters who are specialists in this setting are granted the social capacity to make informed decisions based on discretion derived from standards of professional practice evolved over time and in collaboration with the legal system. Practitioners can use decision latitude to justify and explain professional acts based on a conception of the whole profession and its ethical principles—because the social conditions that support this process are in place within the legal system.

### **4. In support of the intentional development of specialization**

These variations in the professional standing and ability to exercise decision latitude by interpreting practitioners engaged in specialized practice gives insight into why a framework for the intentional development of specialization is needed. Access to public educational institutions, communication access, and legal counsel are all critical human rights for individuals in a democratic society. Each is embedded in highly structured institutions and is protected by legislative mandates in the United States. In the area of education and law, specialty professions (requiring higher education and credentialing) exist. However, within the profession of signed language interpreting, the development of specialization has varied significantly in these areas.

Professions are marked by the degree of autonomy in decision making that reflect society's trust that practitioners share common values and practices. Signed language interpreters in the U.S. share common values and practices in a variety of formal and informal ways, *inter alia*, the RID Code of Professional Conduct and Standard Practices papers, conference presentations, listserv discussions, and blogs. However, the question of how these mechanisms lead to codification and standardization of profession autonomy is still largely unexplored.

While legal, video relay, and public school interpreting continue to develop professional maturity by standardizing patterns of practice, the process has been less orderly for public school interpreters and those working in the video relay industry. The interpreting profession was simply unprepared for the impact of legislative action that mandated the provision of educational interpreters and video relay interpreters across the country. And, there was no conceptual framework upon which to rely when attempting to address the need once the demand was present.

To insure the successful development of specializations within signed language interpreting, both external and internal issues should be addressed proactively, rather than in reaction to legislative mandates. Establishing an intentional stance for the education and credentialing of specialists will lead to more effective and trustworthy practices within the field. Professional autonomy can be limited and weakened over time by the relationship of one profession to another, the influence of other social institutions, or by the internal disposition or insularity of the profession itself (Sandstrom, 2007). Therefore, it is essential that—while considering market demand and available supply—specializations in interpreting be developed intentionally and with an understanding of the factors and processes that shape its development and maintain its viability. To that end, a conceptual framework has been conceived that is based on current literature and practices in the field of interpreting as well as interpreter education.

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## **5. A conceptual framework: Assumptions and core values**

This conceptual framework is based on the work of a group of experts in interpreting and interpreter education from the United States and Canada who were brought together by the Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center (MARIE), one of the six members of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers. This expert group reviewed literature, both internal and external to the profession, that addressed specialization and professional autonomy. From this process, the experts identified assumptions and guiding principles that currently exist relating to specialization and the preparation of specialists that can provide useful direction in the development of a conceptual framework.<sup>1</sup>

In research, conceptual frameworks are sometimes offered as an outline to possible courses of action or to present a preferred approach to an idea or thought (Botha, 1989). In this case, the elements of a set of assumptions and guiding principles provide a map that can serve as a foundation for further delineation of a conceptual framework. The elements addressed in this article represent the essential considerations associated with an orderly development of specialization in signed language interpreting.

The assumptions and core values underscore the training and certification patterns that have been successfully applied in the United States, as illustrated in the development of specialization in legal interpreting. Specifically, the assumptions recognize that practitioners make the individual decision to narrow their practice after establishing themselves, first, as generalist practitioners. Then, through a process of additional training and some type of supervised induction, they engage in specialized practice for some portion of their work (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001). It is typical that once a person is recognized as having specialist competence, their fees for service increase, and they begin following the patterns of practice that are unique to the area of specialization involved. These patterns of practice may involve unique staffing patterns, such as interpreting in teams during complex matters to enhance accuracy. When this process is translated into a series of assumptions about specialization, the values that underscore the assumptions become apparent.

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

**Core Values:** The goal in creating an intentional and orderly development of specialization is to protect the interests of consumers and society from potential harm perpetuated through incompetent practice by unqualified individuals. This goal must be carefully balanced against fiscal constraints associated with the cost of interpreting services and the potential of creating a system of service provision that further alienates interpreters from the communities they serve and/or diminishes the availability of competent generalist interpreters. To this end, specialists must remain deeply rooted in the Deaf community and engage in on-going interaction within the community for the purpose of remaining attuned to changing needs and expectations and accessing the counsel of deaf individuals as part of their ongoing practice (Cokely, 2005; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004, 2005).

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

**Core Values:** The goal of specialization is to advance knowledge and competence in the interest of the public good. Recognizing that a significant amount of the cost for interpreting services is paid by public tax dollars and that the unique and often ideal staffing patterns sometimes associated with specialty practice (e.g., multiple member teams) can be costly and therefore potentially prohibitive, specialists will consistently seek ways to creatively collaborate with other professionals and entities who are responsible for paying for interpreting services in order to ensure reasonable fees for appropriate services. The goal is balanced with the right of qualified practitioners to secure fair and equitable earnings (Witter-Merithew, 2010).

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

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

**Assumption 4:** Generalist competence is a prerequisite foundation for specialization.

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

**Assumption 5:** Established generalist practice is a prerequisite for specialization

**Core Values:** The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf recommends a period of 3–5 years of well-rounded, practical work experience as a generalist before specialist certification examination. This is considered a sufficient amount of tenure to gain experience in a broad range of low-risk settings with a variety of consumers and to develop a foundation of judgment upon which to recognize unique and complex demands requiring specialized competence.

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

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

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

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

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**Assumption 8:** Specialists sometimes work in teams—of which one member is often deaf.

**Core Values:** In some situations, due to a combination of factors that increase the complexity of an interpreted interaction, there is a need for more than one interpreter. Deaf Interpreters (DIs) are central and essential to the effectiveness of many interpreting teams, particularly when the linguistic and cultural demands require the competence of a native ASL user or specialist in the use of visual-gestural patterns of communication (RID, 2007). The distinctive patterns of practice utilized by DIs often exceed the competence of non-deaf interpreters—even those with specialized knowledge and skills. The formative experiences of deaf interpreters in using language with a wide range of deaf and non-deaf individuals, over long periods of time, and across many settings, provide them with unique formative experiences and a foundation of competence to contribute to interpreting teams (Stewart, Witter-Merithew & Cobb, 2009). It should be noted that there may be appropriate alternatives to a team of interpreters in some situations. For example, in the area of healthcare in Minnesota, deaf individuals are gaining training and becoming Certified Healthcare Workers. In this capacity, these deaf individuals can engage in advocacy and education, while working as members of the healthcare system. Typically, these individuals also possess distinctive patterns of communication that enable them to communicate directly with a wide range of deaf and non-deaf individuals to ensure interpreted information is being received and understood. When such non-interpreting specialists are available, it can result in a more effective and cost efficient approach to addressing unique communication demands.

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

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

We suggest that the assumptions can be applied to signed language interpreting in other countries and, with alterations, to spoken language interpreting communities that are seeking to address specialization in the profession. With these assumptions serving as the foundation, the next section will detail a series of guiding principles to apply in creating systems for training and regulating specialist practitioners.

## 6. A conceptual framework: Guiding principles for education programs

The second part of the framework is a set of guiding principles. The four discussed herein specifically relate to interpreter education and are offered as a starting point for teaching faculty to consider their own belief systems about specialization. These are drawn from a set of fourteen principles that evolved from the expert work group.<sup>11</sup> Although every effort has been made to anticipate all of the key elements associated with a framework for training, likely elements are missing and will benefit from contribution of a wider audience of stakeholders.

**Principle 1:** Specialty preparation extends beyond foundational preparation and the competency required of all generalist interpreter practitioners. It includes functional and specialty-distinctive competencies unique to the specialty (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008). The scholarship

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and formative experiences of experts that undergirds the specialty includes theoretical foundations and descriptions of specialty-relevant patterns of practice, and is based on effective and best practices.

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

**Principle 2:** The functional and specialty-distinctive competencies of any specialty are acquired in an organized and integrated program (Kasher, 2005). They are built upon and integrated with the foundational competencies of generalist practitioners and are acquired through graduate level certificate or degree programs.

**Commentary:** Competencies for specialization should be acquired as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes, and values (Cesna & Mosier, 2005; Cheetham & Chivers, 2001; Lewis, 1989). An appropriate scope and sequence of learning should be defined at a graduate level and implementation managed within a formal academic structure. Currency in the specialization can be maintained through continuing education programs, but mastery of the functional and specialty-distinctive competencies should be acquired through an integrated, competency-based approach to teaching and learning—pre-service versus in-service (Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology, 2008).

**Principle 3:** Education and training requirements are reviewed periodically to assess their continuing effectiveness and relevance.

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

**Principle 4:** Professional education and training programs that prepare specialist interpreter practitioners seek accreditation for the benefit of their students and quality assurance for the public.

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

The assumptions and principles that help to form the conceptual framework are not intended to constrain further evolution of approaches to specialization. We assert that they provide a starting point for guiding deliberation about such a process and can lead to productive changes in the curricula.

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## 7. Conclusion

Specialization in signed language interpreting exists, and it is likely to continue, given the ways that technology, trends, and consumer demands are surfacing. The path towards specialization can manifest in distinct ways. The status of legal interpreting benefited from the early creation of education programs, a specific credentialing

system, collaboration with the legal system regarding role and responsibility, and a deep conceptualization of ethical and legal standards impacting the work of interpreters. As a result, patterns of practice emerged in which roles are clearly defined and must interface with one another for success in moving cases forward (Stewart, Witter-Merithew & Cobb, 2009). On the other hand, the proliferation of deaf students integrated in the public school system, as mandated by federal legislation, found the interpreting profession unprepared to meet the demand with trained and certified interpreters. Further, once the demand existed, the field of interpreting failed to promulgate a national standard for interpreters in this setting, leading to a lack of standardization and a significant number of individuals working outside the norms of the profession (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). These divergent histories present sound rationale for the establishment of structured mechanisms to guide the intentional development of specializations within signed language interpreting. Interpreting can benefit from an examination of other professions who have undergone the development of specializations.

Further, we can examine the current status of interpreting specialization within the framework of de facto and de jure processes and the influence of legislative and market trends, as well as consumer and practitioner demand. The role of decision latitude and professional autonomy can provide a path to understanding how patterns of practice have developed within certain interpreting settings (e.g., public school, legal) and functions (e.g., video interpreting). We suggest that by understanding the assumptions and core principles underlying interpreting practice, interpreter educators can establish curricula that will support the development of specialization in a way that prepares practitioners to more effectively apply decision latitude in light of the social conditions that support or limit professional autonomy. Finally, we suggest that without an orderly development of specialization and the ability of specialists to capture the unique patterns of practice that define specialization in interpreting, it is difficult—perhaps impossible—to protect the interest of consumers who rely on the services of interpreters with specialized competence.

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### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> The experts involved in the Project on Specialization were Dr. Steven Collins, Washington, DC; Ms. Eileen Forestal, Camden, NJ; Ms. Sharon Neumann Solow, Pebble Beach, CA, Dr. Brenda Nicodemus, San Diego, CA; Dr. Marty Taylor, Edmonton, Alberta; and Mr. Kevin Williams, Rochester, NY. The project was led by Ms. Anna Witter-Merithew and funded by the co-directors of the Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center, Dr. Leilani Johnson and Dr. Linda Stauffer.

<sup>ii</sup> The complete report from the expert group is contained within *Conceptualizing a Framework for Specialization in ASL-English Interpreting: A Report of Project Findings and Recommendations* by Anna Witter-Merithew. The document may be accessed on the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) website at <http://www.nciec.org/projects/legal.html>.

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# VITAL: Virtual Interpreting Training and Learning

Javier González and Francesca Gany<sup>1</sup>

*Center for Immigrant Health*

## Abstract

This paper describes a distance learning solution for the training of medical interpreters: the Virtual Interpreting Training and Learning (VITAL) Program. VITAL was developed to offer an effective, efficient, and scalable learning alternative to conventional models. The main objective of VITAL is to increase the pool of trained medical interpreters, while providing the same quality of training as in-person programs. Currently, VITAL is used in training bilingual (i.e., English and Spanish) individuals to perform as medical interpreters. An expanded pool of trained medical interpreters will ultimately lead to enhanced communication between providers and their patients and reduce the occurrence of medical errors.

Keywords: distance learning; interpreting; linguistic access; immigrant health

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [c.javier.gonzalez@nyumc.org](mailto:c.javier.gonzalez@nyumc.org)

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## **VIRTUAL interpreter training**

### **1. Background**

There are over 33 million foreign-born residents in the United States—nearly three times the number of immigrants present in the country three decades ago (Larsen, 2004). Twenty-one million US residents are considered to be limited English proficient (LEP), which represents a 50 percent increase in the number of LEP residents reported in the US in 1990 (Shin & Bruno, 2003). Among the immigrant population, the five most widely spoken languages are Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, French, and Vietnamese (MLA Language Map, 2010). About 30% of the Spanish language group speak English “not well” or “not at all,” as do 27% of Chinese speakers, 8% of Tagalog speakers, 8% of French speakers, and 33% of Vietnamese speakers (MLA Language Map).

The inability to communicate in English often prevents immigrants from obtaining adequate medical attention (Lai & Chau, 2007; Mui, Kang, Kang & Domanski, 2007). The lack of trained interpreters in health care facilities puts these individuals at risk for significantly poorer outcomes than their US-born counterparts (Gany, Leng, Shapiro, Abramson, Motola, Shield & Changrani, 2007). While some states have hospital regulations that require access to interpreters for all patients with limited English proficiency (LEP), the pool of qualified interpreters is alarmingly small. The shortage of qualified interpreters often pushes hospital administrators and providers to use untrained staff or visitors as interpreters (Gany, Kapelusznik, Prakash, Gonzalez, Orta, Tsen & Changrani, 2007). At best, the usage of untrained bystanders as medical interpreters can have a minor negative impact on the patient’s overall experience; at worst, it can have a potentially detrimental effect on the medical care received by the patient (Gany, Gonzalez, Basu, Hasan, Mukherjee, Datta & Changrani, in press). One study found that the errors made by untrained interpreters were more likely to have clinical implications than errors made by hospital interpreter staff (Flores, Laws, Mayo, Zuckerman, Abreu, Medina & Hardt, 2003). As the nation’s foreign-born population continues to increase, so too does the need for training in medical interpreting.

With the Internet’s rise as a popular and growing educational platform, the possibility of training interpreters through this forum has been explored (Draves, 1999). The format of educational delivery itself, whether via a Web-based learning module or through live instruction, has little effect on student achievement, as long as the delivery method is appropriate to the content (Chumley-Jones, Dobbie & Alford, 2002). In fact, studies comparing multimedia and traditional educational approaches suggest an improvement in students’ performances using multimedia (Kaelber, Bierer & Carter, 2001). Web-based instruction has the advantages of allowing students to work at their own pace, view engaging video clips, and participate in interactive learning with immediate feedback and self-assessment. There is also an advantage of being able to deliver stimulating interactive learning material to large groups, even when the availability of appropriately trained faculty and time in the curriculum is limited.

The Virtual Interpreting Training and Learning (VITAL) program, an online distance learning course developed by the Center for Immigrant Health, is designed to provide a level of quality instruction that is at least equivalent in its effectiveness to comparable conventional training provided in person. The mission of VITAL is: (a) to increase the student’s interpreting skill practice time through its virtual lab (VITAL enables the student to spend significantly more time on his/her interpreting skill practice, in contrast to the group size and time limits found in conventional classroom settings); (b) to augment the ability of geographically dispersed adults to access training at their convenience and from their setting of choice; (c) to improve efficiency by reducing scheduling and other logistical tasks that are costly and often a burden for busy health care systems or other interested target populations; and finally, (d) to offer an advantage in terms of specialized training and continuing education instruction. Specialized modules in refugee health, mental health, simultaneous interpreting, and continuing education sessions can be added to the main backbone structure of the application through its dynamically engineered modular design. These modules may be accessed independently, according to the needs of the student. Whereas VITAL is designed to be delivered as a linear conceptual whole, an individual may participate only in language-specific practice through VITAL’s virtual lab.

### 2. General course description

The training uses a combined asynchronous and synchronous model of instruction. The asynchronous segments (i.e., videos, language discordant medical encounters, readings, bulletin board) allow the students to learn the materials posted online at their convenience. The synchronous segments (i.e., chat sessions) simulate the environment of a classroom, thereby enabling a suitable learning exchange among the students and the instructor. Throughout the course, students study the role of the interpreter, the medical encounter, medical terminology and colloquial language, linguistic concepts (e.g., tense, register, and tone), and interpreting techniques, as well as engage in case study exercises that trigger their critical thinking and decision-making abilities that are necessary to use in addressing ethical challenges that are typical during the language discordant medical encounter. The course segments, including the videos, stimulate awareness of issues regarding the biomedical environment, linguistic and cultural diversity, and the limited English proficient population. The practice sessions in the virtual lab provide students with the opportunity to hone their interpreting skills and to learn medical and colloquial terminology. The course is designed to actively engage students. Students participate in discussions and in terminology-building sessions. The students learn to become adept at self-analysis. At the end of each lab module, students must complete a self-evaluation tool in which they evaluate their performance as interpreters. They submit their completed forms to their instructors and receive feedback. Instructors have access to the students' recorded interpreter exercises.

More specifically, the course consists of 10 instructional didactic modules and 10 lab or practice modules. All modules have a clearing test that must be completed before the student can move onto the next module. Clearing tests evaluate the students' progress by asking key questions that relate to the objectives of each specific module. The course is designed to be completed in its totality using a linear model. That is, a student must complete Module 2 in its entirety and clear its test to be able to advance to Lab 2, and so forth. As described later in the modularity section of this paper, accessing specific modules for specialized training is also a possibility.

The instruction for each VITAL course is provided by a live instructor, thus the feedback and instruction is not entirely computer generated. Instructors are able to see the students' progress on the instructor page. They are able to see the students' responses to all questions asked during the course, listen to their lab recordings, and monitor their scores on the clearing tests that have been generated by the application. They communicate with the students through the repository page, by e-mail, and through the bulletin board. These features are described in detail later in this paper. The course starts with a pre-test in Module 1 and ends with a post-test in Module 10. The tests are designed to evaluate three areas: (a) knowledge of role and ethics, (b) knowledge of medical terminology, and (c) interpreting skill level. Modules 2 through 9 consist of a set of clearly defined educational objectives followed by some instructional text/readings, videos, reflective questions, and expert responses. Each of these modules contains three sections.

In the didactic modules the student learns different aspects that pertain to role and ethical decision making. Most of the instruction in these modules is presented in video vignettes illustrative of the discordant language encounter in the American biomedical culture. They constitute a series of case studies that the student is then asked to analyze. After each video, the student has the opportunity to answer a series of questions related to each specific case and receives feedback from the instructor in the form of expert responses generated by the application.

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The screenshot shows a slide from a presentation titled "MODULE 3: INTERPRETING". The slide has a red header bar with the title. Below the header, there is a section titled "II. Setting the Ground Rules and Role Expectations". A note says "Feel free to use the video you just saw again as you answer these questions." Below this is a large black video frame with a play button and other video controls. To the right of the video frame, there are two sections: "Your answer(s):" and "Don't know". Below these are two "See the expert answers below" sections. The first one defines translation as "the written version from one language into another language; interpretation, on the other hand, is the oral version from one language into the other language". The second one defines source language and target language. At the bottom right is a "NEXT PAGE" button.

Figure 1: Sample page illustrating a video case study vignette.

The oral practice labs are designed to teach the student medical terminology in English and Spanish; the student uses these terms to practice interpreting skills by acting as the interpreter for a patient/physician in a given clinical exchange. The student listens to the recording and records the interpretations using Audacity, a recording software that can be downloaded free of charge on the Internet. Through these exercises, the student learns useful interpreting techniques.

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Each didactic and lab module ends with a clearing test that the student must pass in order to proceed to the next module. These tests use the multiple-choice method and evaluate the student's comprehension of role and ethical decision making discussed in the didactic modules and the use of medical terminology learned in the lab modules. Although these scores do not impact the final evaluation, they help the student understand his/her strengths and weaknesses.

### 2.1 Virtual Lab

VITAL's virtual lab modules give the student the opportunity to practice and learn interpreting skills at an individualized pace. In the traditional in-person classes, the student's practice is limited by the face-to-face time factor; VITAL's virtual lab allows the student to practice extensively at his/her own pace.



Figure 2. Sample Web page illustrating VITAL's virtual lab feature.

Each language lab is comprised of four sections:

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## **VIRTUAL interpreter training**

### **2.1.1 Section 1: Linguistic tips and interpreting strategies**

In this section, the student is provided with readings and video exercises. They address, for example, culturally-bound terminology in English that may not have equivalents in the target language, ethical challenges in interpreting, informed consent, managing the flow of communication, and linguistic register. Information provided in this section reinforces the knowledge gained in VITAL's didactic modules and prepares the students for practice and real-life interpreting.

### **2.1.2 Section 2: Medical terminology**

In Section 2, the student is given a number of medical terms along with their definitions. The terms are presented by medical specialty (e.g., cardiac disease) in an order that coincides with the next recording exercise in Section 3, allowing the student to reinforce memorization and practice of the terms. The student is expected to search for these words in the online glossary and memorize the terms through context-based exercises.

### **2.1.3 Section 3: Oral practice**

The student has the opportunity to practice his/her interpreting skills in Section 3. The student has three recording exercises per lab. These recordings simulate discordant language encounters between English-speaking providers and Spanish-speaking patients and last between 10 and 15 minutes. The student saves and uploads the recordings once they are completed. The recordings are uploaded to a collective repository where the instructor and all of the students can hear them. After each recording, the student also completes and submits to the repository a self-evaluation form of his/her performance. These exercises teach the student about evaluation and self-evaluation, vital aspects for professional growth.

### **2.1.4 Section 4: Journal entries**

Finally, in this section the student has the opportunity to write about what has been learned. There are a series of questions that encourage reflection upon one's linguistic and cultural background and how they may impact one's role as an interpreter in health care. The student's responses are shared with all the students and with the instructor.

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## **3. Course evaluation**

To receive a passing score and the program certificate of course completion, the student must earn 80 of the possible 100 points. The students receive their grades by e-mail and all data (except the oral recording tests) are automatically calculated, aggregated, and archived by the application. Three areas are evaluated: (a) knowledge of the role of the interpreter in health care, including ethical decision-making; (b) knowledge of medical and colloquial terminology; and (c) interpreting skill. The first two are tested through multiple-choice tests. For the latter, instructors listen to the audio recording uploaded by the student and score them using scripted linguistic tools designed for this purpose and described in an earlier study (Gany, Kapelusnik, et al., 2007).

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## **4. VITAL application features**

### **4.1 Repository: View your activity and communicate with your trainer**

This feature allows the student to communicate with his/her trainer through personal message boards. If the student has a question about VITAL, he/she may direct it to his/her trainer by using this messaging system.

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Likewise, the trainer will provide feedback on each module the student has completed through the repository. The student is notified of new messages every time he/she logs into VITAL. Furthermore, he/she may view details on the modules that he/she has already completed by clicking on “My Previous Activity” under the repository tab.

The screenshot shows the 'Trainee Repository' section of the VITAL system. At the top, a message says: 'You can click on **Read & Review** the learning on the left panel menu for review for your learning module.' Below this, there is a summary of the trainee's information:

Name:	Javier Gonzalez
Identifier:	GONZALEZ-J-23-2009-001
Language:	Spanish
Course Session Number:	U1-23-2009-001 (Completed)
Course Start Date:	23/06/2009
Course Type:	VITALFULL

Below the summary, there are two red links: 'My Activities' and 'Post item Feedback'. Under 'My Activities', there is a table titled 'Read and respond to feedback' containing the following data:

Subject	Post Date	Status	View Feedback
U1 Healt 1	12/08/2009 12:26:15 AM	New	View
checking repository	12/03/2009 1:25:40 AM	Old	View
module 4	12/03/2009 1:42:48 AM	Old	View
module 10	12/03/2009 1:42:48 AM	Old	View
module 9	12/03/2009 1:43:47 AM	Old	View
module 10	12/03/2009 1:45:42 AM	Old	View
09 10/10/09 3:09 pm	12/03/2009 1:46:04 AM	Old	View
module 9	12/03/2009 1:49:30 AM	Old	View
module 3 done	12/03/2009 2:08:48 AM	Old	View

Figure 3. Sample Web page illustrating VITAL trainee's repository's main page.

### 4.2 Virtual library: Bilingual medical glossary

VITAL comes equipped with a comprehensive medical English–Spanish glossary to be used for completing lab work and other didactic sections. The glossary has a search key to locate specific terms, facilitating usage. The student is given a list of medical terms and their definitions, all in English. These terms are embedded in the application. The student is then asked to find the terms in the glossary. These are the terms that are later used in the interpreting skill practice of the lab.

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## **VIRTUAL interpreter training**

### **4.3 Bulletin board**

The bulletin board is public and can be viewed by instructors, as well as students, and is an effective means of starting discussion about the various aspects of the interpreting profession or the training itself. Throughout the course, the student is prompted to post his/her thoughts and/or questions on the bulletin board.

### **4.4 Listen to other students**

The student has the option of listening to his/her fellow students' lab practices submitted during the course of their training. By listening to fellow interpreter trainees, the student can practice his/her evaluation skills.

### **4.5 Help: Tips and troubleshooting**

The help section has been created to alleviate any confusion or technical problems that may occur throughout the duration of the course. The student is able to find the answers to most of his/her questions in this section.

### **4.6 Change password**

This feature has been added for privacy and convenience. When the student first registers for VITAL, he/she is e-mailed an automatically generated user ID and password. This feature allows the student to change his/her password to something that is easier to remember. The student may change it at any time during the training. Additional passwords are generated by the application for module specific usage by a student. These passwords are coded so that the student will only navigate through the modules for which he/she has been enrolled.

### **4.7 Back to learning**

Every time the student visits a page with additional instruction, tips, or exercises, or every time the student is on the bulletin board or repository during the training, the "Back to Learning" link will return the student to the module where he/she left off.

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## **5. Modularity**

Since its inception, VITAL has evolved from a linear and conceptually whole model, in which the student would take all modules in numerical order, to a modular alternative, in which a student may only take the didactic section or the lab section. In addition, a module on simultaneous interpreting with a didactic section and a lab section was added. This section can be taken independently of the rest of VITAL program or in conjunction with its other parts. Similarly, a module on refugee health, which will function in the same manner, is being developed.

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## **6. Evaluation**

The evaluation of VITAL consists of key informant interviews; focus groups with pilot users; and pre- and post-testing for documenting changes in knowledge, attitudes, and interpreting practice. The evaluation uses the same instrument that is used in the face-to-face interpreting program at the Center for Immigrant Health. Results have been used to modify the training program. Initial data suggested that there is a learning curve for developing

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familiarity with the recording tool; after that, the program is very accessible technologically. Some students find the labs to be long but noted, at the same time, that they valued the educational opportunity to practice. Many students commented upon the notable depth of information they obtained from the training. The videos were viewed as important teaching tools. The glossary search key was helpful, as was the capacity to print all didactic materials. The interactivity provided through the bulletin board and the repository was an important adjunct. The capacity to supervise all the students individually and the computer-generated scoring were noted by the instructors.

We also conducted a pre- and a post-training evaluation to test the students' knowledge of role and ethical decision making in health care interpreting. There was an average of a 25% increase in scores from the pre- to the post-test (range 5%–67%, with 29% achieving a score of 100%).

### 7. Conclusion

VITAL has the potential to reach large numbers of bilingual individuals in disparate geographic settings. Furthermore, VITAL's scalability should increase the numbers of individuals trained, while lowering training costs for the system in comparison with in-person trainings. We believe that VITAL will be equally successful in other commonly spoken languages. To that purpose, we will be developing the program in Chinese, followed by other commonly spoken languages. VITAL will ultimately help to ensure equitable access to quality health care for underserved populations and impact health outcomes for millions of limited English proficient individuals nationwide, while contributing to the growth of a qualified pool of professional interpreters at lower costs.

### 8. Acknowledgements

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# The Master's Degree in French/French Sign Language Interpreting at ESIT

Philippe Séro-Guillaume<sup>1</sup>

*École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs, Université Paris III –Sorbonne Nouvelle*

## Abstract

This paper presents the master's degree in French/French Sign Language Interpreting at École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) at Université Paris III–Sorbonne Nouvelle. First, it describes the situation of deaf people, sign language, and spoken language interpreting practice and training in France. Second, the paper explains the specifics of the ESIT master's degree.

Keywords: French Sign Language (LSF); spoken language; LSF interpreting; pedagogy; theory

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [ph.sero-guillaume@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ph.sero-guillaume@wanadoo.fr)

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## **Master in French/LSF Interpreting**

### **1. Introduction**

In France, although deaf people have always communicated among themselves in sign language, this mode of communication was not considered to be a language, and the few people who acted as interpreters did not receive any training. Since the end of the 19th century, the use of signed language was prohibited in the French educational institutions for deaf people. In 1975, its use was authorized again, but it was not until the 1990s that parents were given the option of having their deaf children integrated into regular educational institutions. Naturally, this decision gave rise to a huge need for competent interpreters and, therefore, to setting up specific interpreter training programs.

Institutions of higher education in Europe, and particularly in France, had been training conference interpreters since the 1950s, but there were no courses for the training of signed language interpreters. Danica Seleskovitch was the first interpreter to recognize that signed language was a language just as any spoken language and that, as Tweney and Hoemann (1976) noted, “there is no reason to expect translation involving sign languages to be radically different from translation involving spoken languages” (p. 149–50). She encouraged two sign language interpreters to study at École Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) at Université Paris–Sorbonne Nouvelle for a master’s degree in translation studies. In 1993, with the help of Seleskovitch, these two sign language interpreters, having been trained in the theory of interpreting, established a course of French/French Sign Language (Langue de Signes Française/ LSF) interpreting at ESIT, adopting the model of the tried and tested curriculum of the conference interpreting department.

### **2. The customers of LSF interpreters**

It is known that a first language is acquired and developed through immersion. Immersion in the spoken language, however, is quite limited for deaf children who, contrary to the natural language learning process of hearing children, learn the spoken language only when it is specifically taught to them. This artificial access to spoken language means that only a minority of deaf people are able to read and write French fluently. Few of them master the spoken language sufficiently to be able to communicate well in French, be it only in writing. In their dealings with administrators or lawyers, for instance, most of them need the mediation of a sign language interpreter. Until the end of the 1970s, the largest part of the work of sign language interpreters was made up by this type of dialogue interpreting.

Since then, France has witnessed a considerable development in sign language interpreting (Séro-Guillaume, 1994, 2006, 2008). Deaf people became aware that they were a linguistic community; they actively fought for the recognition of sign language as a legitimate language and demanded that their specific interpreting needs be met. A number of legal dispositions were passed that allowed deaf children to attend local schools alongside of their hearing peers; the right to bilingualism (French/ LSF), including in regular school settings, was recognized. Since 2006, compensation has been granted to handicapped people to cover interpreting costs; consequently, the demand for interpreters has increased.

Interpreting is vital for deaf people, whether it takes place between a social service representative and an illiterate deaf person who does not know what he/she is entitled to, between an administrator and deaf activists who defend their cause, or in a science classroom.

Interpreting is not only essential for deaf people who do not master French well, but also for those who do; it is extremely tiring to lip-read continuously during a class (or a meeting or conference). Olivier Delanghe (1997) testifies to this from personal experience. Before the time when interpreters were available, he was being educated in an institution for hearing children; a few deaf/hard-of-hearing children also attended the school. During classes, he never understood the whole of the information given by the teacher; he could not answer

questions because he had understood only part of what he had heard. The first time he had an interpreter, he was extraordinarily relieved because he was, at last, able to follow the class without having to make exhausting efforts to understand what the teacher was saying.

The president of the National Federation of French Deaf, Arlette Morel insists that interpreting enables deaf people to better understand the classes they attend and to read books more easily while, at the same time, improving their French (Seleskovitch, 1997). It gives them access to education, information, and culture.

Interpreters today do not only interpret in dialogue settings (e.g., welfare, healthcare), they also work in educational institutions, from primary schools through universities, in general education settings or vocational schools, in all forms of education.<sup>2</sup> They also interpret in courts of law and during conferences. (Deaf people particularly like to attend conferences dealing with linguistic, cognitive, social, or cultural aspects of deafness.) Moreover, television now regularly employs interpreters when broadcasting the debates in the French National Assembly and various other shows.

Unfortunately, however, not much progress has been made in the teaching of French to deaf people, so that they still have to resort to dialogue interpreting, perhaps even more than before. Today, the work of interpreters is divided into equal parts: educational interpreting and community interpreting for various agencies that deal with deaf people. Conference interpreting represents only about 5% of interpreting, a minute fraction of the whole. And remote interpreting is probably going to develop as a new mode of interpreting.

### 3. The Master's degree in French/LSF interpreting at ESIT

The aim of ESIT, as part of an institution of higher education, is to produce highly qualified practitioners who have also been familiarized with ESIT's theory of interpreting. The French/LSF interpreting curriculum follows the established curriculum of the conference interpreting training course. It is a two-year graduate level program. Incoming students must have completed three years at the university. They are admitted after a screening procedure that ascertains their language skills (languages are not taught at ESIT), their educational background, and the maturity that is required of highly qualified interpreters.

#### 3.1 A course integrated into a spoken language interpreting program

The program in French/LSF interpreting at ESIT is the only program in France that is fully integrated into a conference interpreting program for spoken languages. This contrasts with other sign language interpreting training courses, which are typically part of linguistics departments, and in which sign language is taught, rather than actual interpreting. In those departments, interpreting is usually considered to be a contact between two languages. In this strictly linguistic perspective, trainees attempt to find correspondents for each of the words or signs of the source language. This tendency toward transliteration (see the difference between "free" and "literal" interpretation in Napier, 2005, p. 86–7) is particularly apparent when interpreters deal with fields yet untouched by signed language. They then ask "How do you say this in sign language?" instead of asking themselves, "What is it really about?" As noted by Seleskovitch and Lederer (1995, p. 25): "We naturally and unconsciously neveralize what we hear when we communicate in a common language. But dealing with two languages at the same time has a way of impeding the process." A similar comment is made by Humphrey (1997):

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<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what could be expected, it is not easier, far from it, to interpret for young children or for little-educated adults than in conferences or university lectures. The more advanced the classes, the easier the task of interpreting becomes for professional, well-trained interpreters; university students have a better mastery of their subject, are more used to being in class, have a stronger foundation in French, and have a greater tolerance for occasional transliteration. They may even request signed French whenever they feel the need to familiarize themselves with French set expressions and idioms (see Napier 2005, p. 87)

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## **Master in French/LSF Interpreting**

When we look at English and ASL, we see two languages using very different, yet equally effective, devices to convey meaning. ASL/English interpreters must identify source language meaning and make a complete linguistic shift to express the information in the target language. Failure to drop form results in skewed or unclear communication due to the intrusion of source language elements in target language output. (p. 517)

### *3.2 A pedagogy with a theoretical foundation*

The (spoken language) conference interpreters graduating from ESIT in the last fifty years received, and still, receive training that is based on proven pedagogical practices and a sound theoretical framework that has been designed by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer (1995): the Interpretive Theory of Translation. Interpreting is taught by practicing interpreters with a master's degree in interpreting. In their teaching, all tutors apply the same theoretical principles; this is also the case for the tutors in the LSF interpreting program.

Two classes are common to all first year ESIT students (i.e., conference interpreters, translators, and sign language interpreters): Theory of Translation and Methodology for the Acquisition of Thematic Knowledge. The second class aims to provide students with a foundation for preparing for their future assignments, since “[w]henever an interpreter is working between two languages, it is essential that they have an understanding of the subject matter” (Harrington, 2000, p. 79).

### *3.3 Starting with consecutive*

An additional point of interest is that, just as it is the case for interpreting students in spoken languages, teaching does not start with simultaneous interpreting. True, consecutive interpreting is seldom used in the practice of sign language interpreters, mainly because speaker and interpreter each express themselves in a different code without the signals interfering, contrary to spoken languages. Nevertheless, it was felt that this kind of progression in the program should be applied to LSF interpreter trainees. In consecutive interpreting, it is easier than in simultaneous interpreting to show the students how to analyze and understand a message because the listening and reformulation stages are separate. Debra Russell (2005) notes that:

Bruto (1985), Lambert (1984), Seleskovitch and Lederer (1995) emphasize that through a progression of exercises aimed at teaching interpreters to grasp, analyze, remember, and only then reproduce the message of the speaker, it is subsequently possible to proceed to acceptable simultaneous interpretation where required or desired. (p. 147)

The first year of the program is, therefore, devoted to consecutive interpreting, first without notes, then with note taking. Students focus on making sense of the speech, taking context and text coherence into account, and trying to express spontaneously what they have understood. The second and final year is spent with the focus on simultaneous interpreting, while continuing to practice consecutive interpreting and internalizing the methodology. At the speed of an extemporaneous spoken or signed speech, “ideas *can* be understood and restated, whereas trying to render the actual verbal content alone would take too long and result in a spotty, incoherent interpretation” (Seleskovitch and Lederer, 1995, p. 130).

### *3.4 Progression of teaching*

Once the method is well established, the complexity of topics is increased, as well as trainers' requirements in terms of clarity, coherence, and completeness of the final product. The goal is that the method should become automatic, so that interpreters can concentrate on building sense and reformulating it in an idiomatic target language, whether signed or spoken.

As in the spoken languages program, ethics is dealt with in the various classes, as are ways to deal with rhetoric and lexical problems in fields yet unexplored in LSF. Students are also introduced to new technologies and, in particular, to remote interpreting.

### 3.5. *Sign language interpreting students work both ways*

One difference with the spoken language curriculum is that, whereas spoken language interpreters in Europe are required to have three, or even four, languages and they are mainly taught to interpret into their mother tongue, their sign language peers are bilingual and have to interpret both ways. However, in actual practice, interpreters work mainly by interpreting *into* sign language. What Ingram (1978) wrote is still true in 2010: “Interpreters, even those for whom sign language is their first language, consider interpretation from a sign language to be a more difficult task than interpretation into a sign language” (p. 115). Since they do it less often, they have less practice with it and their renditions into the spoken language are not always quite up to par. A poor quality of interpretation into French is of course detrimental to the image given by deaf people when they express themselves. Consequently, at ESIT, the same number of classes is devoted to interpreting into French as interpreting into LSF.

## 4. The triadic interaction and the interpreters’ role

Today the role of signed language and community interpreters is abundantly discussed in the literature (Angelelli, 2004; Hale, 2007; Roy, 2002; Wadensjö, 1998), as compared with the beginnings of research in interpreting, in which the focus was on the process of interpreting. This focus on the role may be due to the fact that research is applied to a majority of poorly qualified interpreters, or even untrained persons occasionally acting as interpreters, who have not been given the opportunity to reflect on their role. ESIT students are constantly reminded of the importance of paying attention to the context and the users of the interpretation. Clearly, the linguistic and cognitive dimensions are only two of the components of interpreting. Interpreters must also be able to adapt to different populations, from the asocial illiterate deaf person who is practically without any language to university students and be able to adapt to the most varied settings (including healthcare setting, courtroom situations, and symposiums that deal with, for instance, the notion of conceptualization in deaf children). This can and should be discussed in class. Adapting to one’s interlocutors is a basic characteristic of language.

Intelligibility, which is the goal of the spoken [and signed] language, is not merely expressed by a greater or lesser degree of explicitness—it takes other forms as well. One speaks louder to a deaf person and gestures to a person who is too far away to hear; in short, one uses the language that the other person can understand. (Seleskovitch, 1978, p. 18)

Discussing the role of interpreters in a conference setting, Seleskovitch (1978) observes:

Although their role is different from that of the delegates at a meeting, interpreters participate in it just as actively as they do. An international conference is thus a “*trilogue*,” in which interpreters seek neither to emphasize their presence nor to play it down but simply to play their role. They realize how much they contribute to the smooth running of the conference and know where to draw the line between saying enough to do their job properly and establish communication between delegates, and saying anything that would run counter to their role or over-involve them in the dialogue to the point that they would color the message with their own ideas. (p. 98)

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## Master in French/LSF Interpreting

The aim of interpreters is to transmit the message with absolute fidelity, that is, to make it understood by the recipients of their interpretation as it was understood by those who listened directly to the speaker or by people who looked directly at the person signing.

Very little explanation is needed, for instance, when interpreting for officials of an international organization in their everyday work. . . . On the other hand, with delegates who come from very different cultures and who speak very different languages, interpreters must sometimes be more explicit, concentrate on something that might otherwise have been misunderstood, or explain something that was only alluded to. In no way, however, should this be taken to mean that they say anything different from the speaker because, as a party to the “trilogue,” they always refrain from assuming a delegate’s role. (Seleskovitch, 1978, p. 100)

## 5. Conclusion

The notions of “trilogue” and of the “interpreters’ role” are applicable to French/LSF interpreting. The role of interpreters will obviously be different whether they interpret in a university graduate program, in a primary school, or in a social service agency for a deaf person who doesn’t know French well. But interpreting is interpreting, whether it is at a conference or in the community, and whether it takes place between interlocutors of a similar culture and social status or the interlocutors are separated by an important cultural and educational gap (see Mikkelsen, 1999). Its nature doesn’t change. However, the personal role of interpreters in the transmission of the message, a key element in interpreting, will vary according to the circumstances and settings. The staff at the French/LSF interpreting program at ESIT teaches this to the interpreters they train, in addition to teaching the correct interpreting methodology.

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# Struggling Between Aspirations to Innovate and the Tyranny of Reality

**Yong Zhong<sup>1</sup>**

*University of New South Wales*

## Abstract

In this paper, I reflect on over twenty years of teaching interpreting, evolving from a “listen and interpret” teacher to an aspirant for innovation. There are discussions of how I broke out of the comfort zone of notions of “accuracy” and “correct interpretation,” but the focus of the paper is on how a broadened vision enabled me to formulate my own teaching philosophies and on how I am teaching interpreting in an evolved regime. I will also discuss the outcomes of the innovations. As will be shown, there are positive outcomes for the students, the innovator, and the university. But there are also disappointing outcomes, including emerging signs of the unsustainability of the innovations vis-à-vis the commercial reality of interpreter education programs in Australia. I concede that I have not been able to reconcile the innovative teaching of interpreting and the pressure of commercial forces. However, I would like to think that if discussions and debates can be generated, more ideas may emerge that will eventually make innovations more acceptable. This paper is intended to stimulate such discussions and debates.

Keywords: innovative teaching; plan-based teaching; leadership; justification; self-directed learning; listen and interpret

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [Y.Zhong@unsw.edu.au](mailto:Y.Zhong@unsw.edu.au)

# Struggling Between Aspirations to Innovate and the Tyranny of Reality

## 1. Teaching “listen and interpret”

I pride myself on being an innovative teacher of interpreting, but I must concede that I have also been a frustrated innovator—the theme of the present paper. What prepared me for the innovation will be discussed in Section 2; how I taught innovatively will be discussed in Section 3. The innovative teaching is discussed further by means of three mini examples in Section 4. In Section 5, discussion focuses on how and why I have had to curtail my innovative aspirations vis-à-vis the commercial reality of delivering education programs in a tertiary context. In the present section, however, I would like to contextualize the discussion by reviewing, briefly, my history as a student, a practitioner, and a teacher of translation/interpreting.

I progressed along a seemingly typical career path, initially as a language major in a Guangzhou-based language institute; then, as a lecturer of translation and interpreting in the language institute at a Perth university, from which I graduated; then at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), where I have served to date. During this time, I have also worked as a freelance translator and conference interpreter.

For long periods of my rather typical career, I have subscribed to a typical discipline-wide conviction, which I was also committed to perpetuating. Central to the conviction are the imperatives of being a “truthful mouthpiece” and delivering the “correct” product. The designated textbook I studied exhorted students to be a “cog and wheel” for the Party (Zhong, 1980). My teachers told me—and in turn I told my own students—“yours is not to reason why, yours is but to interpret and be right.” So, no matter what complicated strategies are used to achieve fidelity and equivalence, my work, both in professional practice and classroom teaching, usually ended up as a simple and rather mechanical process of “listen and interpret,” a term inspired by Davis’ (2004) criticism of the “read and translate” approach.

I believe that my typicality as a conventional practitioner and teacher of interpreting must have contributed to enhancing my international marketability, enabling me to find teaching positions at programs for which “correct” interpreting/translation is of predominant importance. For example, my last two appointments were both made on the basis of an understanding that I was suitably qualified and experienced to develop and teach programs fit for accreditation by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). As the authority intended to safeguard a seemingly national standard of practitioners, NAATI is understandably obsessed with “correct” interpretation and translation. Accreditation by the organization involves its clearly spelled-out intervention for the programs regarding teaching content, method, hours, and assessment—all of which are intended to teach the skills to “interpret accurately by ensuring that the true meaning of words, concepts, statements, and bodily expressions is conveyed” (NAATI, 1990, p. 39). Accordingly, the two programs I worked for were very much teacher-centered, standard- and product-based, and also rather authoritarian and uninspiring. Clichés such as “fidelity,” “true meaning,” “correct translation,” “faithfulness,” “shadowing,” “equivalence,” and “objectivity” prevailed, leaving very little room for exploring other options and possibilities.

But a number of new developments disrupted the comfort zone. These included comments made to me, which appeared to be innocent, but nevertheless made me take a good look at what I had been doing. Some students, especially those with insight and knowledge acquired from outside translation/interpreting, could not understand

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the fuss about “correct” or “accurate” translation. A senior Spanish language teaching colleague of mine who observed how I engaged students in “systematic,” “structured” bodies of in-class and after-class drills designed to train accuracy called me a “slave driver” and “behavioural modeler.” A prospective professor refused to supervise my PhD thesis because, in her words, “translators and interpreters have no brains.” Additionally, I, myself, found the teaching very uninspiring and boring.

Perhaps a more pressing development was NAATI accrediting other Sydney-based tertiary providers of interpreting training at the professional level. The University of New South Wales (UNSW) had previously been accredited at the para-professional level but lost it in mid-1990s, mainly because the teaching hours of its curricula were short of what was required by NAATI. For the sake of clarity for international readers, I must add that NAATI accreditation is not just an academic or professional issue but also a commercial exercise. Primarily, it is a very effective marketing tool responsible for attracting masses of prospective students and contributes to transforming Australian tertiary education into an export industry with revenues of AU\$14.2 billion in 2008 alone (including AU\$3.107 billion from China, AU\$574 million from Hong Kong, and AU\$239 million from Taiwan—the three target markets for English-Chinese interpreting and translation programs).<sup>2</sup> There will be more discussions below on the instrumentality of NAATI for student recruitment. Suffice it to say that UNSW, where I teach English-Chinese interpreting, is also recognized as a leading educational exporter.<sup>3</sup> However, UNSW only managed to restructure its postgraduate translation/interpreting program and was re-accredited as a NAATI approved program in 2009. This meant that the university had to compete with two other Sydney-based universities with NAATI accreditation until 2008.

## 2. Visioning other possibilities

In order to modernize my teaching and to make the unaccredited UNSW program more competitive in the export-oriented educational market, I had to rethink the translation theories I grew up with and envision alternative theories and new theories. By doing this, I was able to break out of the cocoon in which I had grown and gradually came to realize that translation/interpreting is not just about producing a homogeneous, “correct” product. Instead, it should go beyond the product (Bell, 1991; Lee-Jahnke, 2005) to involve a paradigm of choices (Savory, 1957), a reconciliation of considerations of text types and functions (Reiss, 1989), a process of decision making (Levy, 2000), and a dynamic system of utilizing one’s own capacities (Gile, 2002).

Insights and inspirations from educators in neighbouring disciplines, such as teaching English as a second/foreign language (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1992; Haliday et al., 1964) were also instrumental in motivating me to reflect on my teaching. As a result, I became receptive to modern teaching approaches and philosophies, including most notably, student-centered teaching, communicative learning, cooperative learning, and self-directed learning. I went on to rewrite interpreting curricula, redesign teaching activities, combine teaching practice with research, and apply research findings to teaching. Through efforts made over the years, I came to form the following views in relation to the teaching of interpreting:

- Teaching is more effective and sustainable through self-directed learning, student-centered learning, and problem-based learning (Zhong, 1995, 2002, 2008).
- Rather than teaching the textbook, teachers should aspire to teach interpreters by treating students as individuals and real people (Zhong, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008).
- Teaching should be relevant to real-life personal experiences (Zhong, 1995), to real-world and industry practice, and to the aspirations for a better world/life for all.

<sup>2</sup> All export income data in this snapshot is sourced from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics’ publication International Trade in Services, by Country, by State and by Detailed Services Category, Financial Year, 2007-08* (ABS Catalogue no. 5368.0.55.003).

<sup>3</sup> For example, UNSW was a winner of the 2004 *Australia’s 50 Most Beautiful Exports* awards. More information available at: [http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2004/aug/Beautiful\\_exports.html](http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2004/aug/Beautiful_exports.html)

- Teaching, including assessment of learning outcomes, should respect students as individuals with different learning histories, methodologies, goals, and aspirations (Zhong, 2005b, 2006).
- Rather than regurgitating existing knowledge and perpetuating boundaries, learning should be about exploring the unknown and generating new knowledge (Zhong, 1998, 2002).
- Learning should aim to build and expand capacities, including leadership qualities.

### **3. Teaching interpreting innovatively**

Guided by the broadened visions discussed in Section 2, I was able to introduce a series of innovations to the Chinese-English interpreting programs at UNSW. In the limited space available in the present paper, I will discuss six of the major innovations. The discussions will be followed by three mini-examples of how the innovations work.

#### *3.1 Teaching interpreters through self-directed, student-centered learning*

Many of the innovations to be discussed, including plan-based, justification-based, and leadership-style interpreting, would not have been possible without a shift of attention from the teaching of *interpreting* to the teaching of *interpreters*, or without the introduction of student-centered, self-directed learning. The teaching of interpreting implicates as the subject matter, a set of skills, often quite structured and mechanical. The teaching of interpreters, on the other hand, is about recognizing individual differences, conditions, and aspirations, and about enabling different individuals to pursue different goals, including becoming an interpreter or becoming anything other than a professional interpreter. As the present paper is not intended to be a dedicated description of the concepts, I would like to direct interested readers to Zhong (2008) for discussions of teaching translators (comparable to interpreters) and to Knowles (1975), Grow (1991), and Thomson (2000) for discussions of self-directed learning.

#### *3.2 Plan-based teaching and assessment to facilitate individualized learning*

Generally speaking, a conventional “listen and interpret” class engages students in the drills intended to bring out the same standard but “elusive” outcome—a practice which I have metaphorically described with the Chinese idiom of “cutting the feet to fit the size of the shoe” (Zhong, 2005b). By contrast, I have formulated plan-based interpreting and assessment as a teaching methodology that aims to extend and diversify various learning processes and outcomes and that is intended to expand different capacities, develop different methods, and achieve different learning goals within one student cohort. More detailed explanations of this “plan-based teaching/assessment” can be found in Zhong (2005b, 2006). To put it simply, this pedagogical approach involves having students formulate their own action plans for an interpreting task, stating anticipatory objectives, problems, strategies, outcomes, and learning rationale. They must then endeavour to accomplish individually customized action plans. Their performance is assessed on the basis of, not only the result of their work, but also their accomplishment (or otherwise) of the action plans. Instead of being required to merely “listen and interpret,” students are encouraged to think “outside the text” and to learn to manage the infinite dynamics in relation to task requirements, industry expectations, clients’/audiences’ needs, and their own capacities. Thus, plan-based learning of interpreting is very much self-directed and prepares students for further continuing education after leaving the university.

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### 3.3 Justification-based interpreting to facilitate conscious, interactive, and peer learning

While a conventional interpreting course is often designed for students “not to reason why, but to interpret and be right,” I have renovated my teaching to realign it with reflective learning. Learning is thus stretched beyond “listen and interpret” to an extended process of justification. Students are expected to be able and ready to justify potentially every conscious choice adopted throughout the process, including planning, implementation, the actual performance, and outcome vis-à-vis their original plans. Hence, a typical lesson becomes an open stage where all kinds of thoughts, theories, perspectives, procedures, and evidences meet and interact. Delivering the correct interpretation is no longer that important. What counts now is the ability to make intelligent decisions, to perform purposefully in a conscious manner, to justify the decisions, and to articulate one’s performance and learning in a reflective manner. An additional benefit of doing this is that learning becomes much more intellectual, interactive, empowering, and mutually inspiring/enlightening than in a “listen and interpret” mode.

### 3.4 Leadership-style interpreting to facilitate leadership aspirations and pursuits

I reserve my harshest criticism for that aspect of conventional “listen and interpret” teaching which stresses the invisibility of interpreters as “shadows” and as mere objective mouthpieces of other speakers. In teaching, I take pains to highlight the leadership role as has been assumed by real-life interpreters and translators time and again in history. While famous role models (e.g., Chinese translators responsible for introducing western science and Marxism into China) are plentiful, I have been keen to share with students more recent and relevant case studies, including that of Yuan Tianpeng,<sup>4</sup> the Chinese translator and disseminator of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Students are motivated to learn from the leadership role models and explore how they can interpret to generate desirable social change, rather than being content as mere verbatim interpreters of real-time messages and utterances of other people. In a recent real-life learning activity, in which several students worked in the field in a Beijing-based, non-government organization (NGO) for blind people—known as Hong Dandan<sup>5</sup>, the students studied existing literature in the area of sign language and compiled the first known protocol for interpreting for blind people—more on this in an upcoming mini-example.

### 3.5 Research studies to make learning more intellectual and rewarding

I provide an overview of research studies to make learning more relevant to students with aspirations that cannot be met by a “listen and interpret” regime. There are two considerations for doing this: a) most professional interpreters do much more than interpret verbatim and use many more skills than required for verbatim interpreting, and b) not every one of those studying interpreting actually intends to be a dedicated interpreter. To address the first consideration, in addition to conventional drills, I incorporate such learning activities as public speaking, précis interpretation, concept-/theme-based interpreting, and super-charged presentation in the coursework.<sup>6</sup> To address the second consideration, I invite interested students to co-research with me, in order for

<sup>4</sup> As a disseminator, Yuan used a smart variety of interpreting techniques (e.g., purposeful but selective use of tones, body language, interpersonal communication skills, and props) and interpretational techniques (e.g., purposeful but selective use of content adaptation and localization) to effectively spread Robert's wisdom in China. I am in the process of writing up a paper to discuss the use of translation/interpreting to advance social changes and Yuan Tianpeng will feature in a case study. In the meantime, more information about Yuan can be found in a Chinese feature story “罗伯特议事规则”的南塘试验——让村民们学习罗伯特议事规则，学会民主辩论与表决’，《南方周末》(Robert's Rules of Order Trialled in Nantang – Helping villagers study ‘Robert's Rules of Order’ and learn to debate and vote democratically), authored by Zhai Minglei and published in *Nanfang Weekend*, 2 April, 2009. A copy of the feature article is also available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.xici.net/b366543/d88249922.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Web page of Hong Dandan: <http://hongdandan.nppcn.com/>

<sup>6</sup> The names of some of these activities are my own inventions. Précis interpretation involves hearing/listening of a lengthy text and then producing a minimal-length presentation of the central message. Concept/theme-based interpreting requires that students undertake literature review on the basis of a given concept or theme and then make a concise

them to acquire research literacy and academic writing skills. We have completed a series of impact studies and have published a good number of papers since 2004, including Zhong and Lin (2007), Xi and Zhong (2008), Wang et al. (2009).

### *3.6 Capacity building to support the innovations*

Innovations in teaching approaches and methods cannot get very far without the support of new resources, especially with regard to corresponding content. Over the years, I painstakingly developed a new and alternative repertoire of content. I compiled textbooks, designed Web pages, made sound files, and created artwork. The centerpiece of the new learning resources has been audio-visual productions. These productions serve a range of purposes required for UNSW's reinvented Chinese-English interpreting curricula, including:

- Promoting preferred teaching methodologies (i.e., self-directed learning and problem-based learning) and the best teaching practice at renowned international universities, as in the case of *French Way of Learning*
- Bridging learning and the real world by bringing industry and real-life professional practice to students, as in the case of *SA Confidential*
- Articulating interpreting as a dynamic process of communication and providing students with study guides/samples, as in the case of *Caged Animal* and *Trying a Foreign Woman*
- Re-theorizing interpreting/translation in jargons other than “accuracy” and providing students with study guides/samples, as in the case of *Adding Value* and *Live Translation*
- Providing students with study guides/samples and showing the scope of different possibilities, as in the case of *The Power of Speaking*
- Inspiring students to be leaders and to work towards a better and more fair society, as in the case of *Seeing with Ears*

The programs listed above are available for viewing on YouTube.<sup>7</sup>

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## **4. Three mini-examples of how interpreting is taught innovatively**

Shortly, I will discuss the tension between the above-mentioned innovations and commercial pressure, which is the intended subject matter of the present paper. I have discussed the innovations, but only in a quite abstract manner, and I am not able to delve into them in adequate detail. I have plans to revisit them separately in future publications for the purpose of sharing and dissemination. For the time being, I am happy to present three mini-examples of how the innovations work in a practical interpreting class setting.

### *4.1 How plan-based, justification-based teaching of interpreting works*

In the first mini-example, I will discuss how I manage an interpreting drill in an ordinary setting. I usually start by briefing students on an interpreting task, for example, who is speaking about what subject and what mode is to be used for the interpretation. Next, I ask each student to write down a number of keywords, which are meant to be an action plan, stating what style (e.g., minimalist, foreignized, domesticated, literal, or free) of interpreting he/she would use in order to achieve a specific anticipated outcome. Students can also indicate if they will use any

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presentation in the target language discussing the concept/theme. Super-charged presentations are expansions of the former two and require that the presentations entail artistic/performative practices (e.g., dramas, drawings and body language) and/or independent multimedia productions (e.g., video and flash).

<sup>7</sup> To look at some of these titles, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/> then search for titles.

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additional strategies (e.g., tone, body language and movements), noting what special purposes/effects they intend to achieve or what added value they hope to provide to a specific speaker/audience. There is also that other thing—which I never fail to do before actual drilling begins—I emphasize again that, rather than simply “listening and interpreting” and “interpreting correctly,” each student is expected to accomplish his/her own plan, albeit he/she may have to make necessary adjustments. Then, when drilling finishes, I engage students in one of several forms of performance evaluation (e.g., self-evaluation, peer evaluation, or teacher evaluation). There are two overwhelming concerns in this evaluation process. One is whether the action plan is justifiable, whether any additional strategies used are warranted and how a student actually justifies his/her plan. The other is whether a student has accomplished his/her action plan. In my experiences, this process of justification often stimulates intellectually and critically informed discussions, and many students learn more from these discussions than from the drills.

### *4.2 Procedures for teaching researchers, leaders, and activists*

In the second mini-example, I will discuss how I manage a learning activity designed to teach research, activism, and leadership skills in conjunction with interpreting. I usually start by inspiring students to see how interpreting is meant, not only to facilitate cross-language and interpersonal communications, but also to improve the life of real individual people, especially the underprivileged. There is a great deal of literature that can be used for this purpose, including the use of sign language in the courts and hospitals, both in Australia and internationally. I have also been using classic films (e.g., *Amelie* and *Cinema Paradiso*) and real-life examples (e.g., Hong Dandan) to suggest that there may be an opportunity for developing a new mode/style of interpreting to be used, for example, in improving the life quality of the blind. In that instance, I enlist interested students to form a project group with a mission to author a manual for interpreting for the blind. Next, I engage the group in a literature review. The group members will then undertake fieldwork, including visiting various professionals and users, people with visual difficulties, and the NGO. On the basis of literature and fieldwork, the group produces a manual for interpreting for the blind. The manual must be empirically tested, that is, used for real people in real-life situations. At the end of the project, the group will give a presentation to the class, demonstrating how the procedures work, as described in the manual.

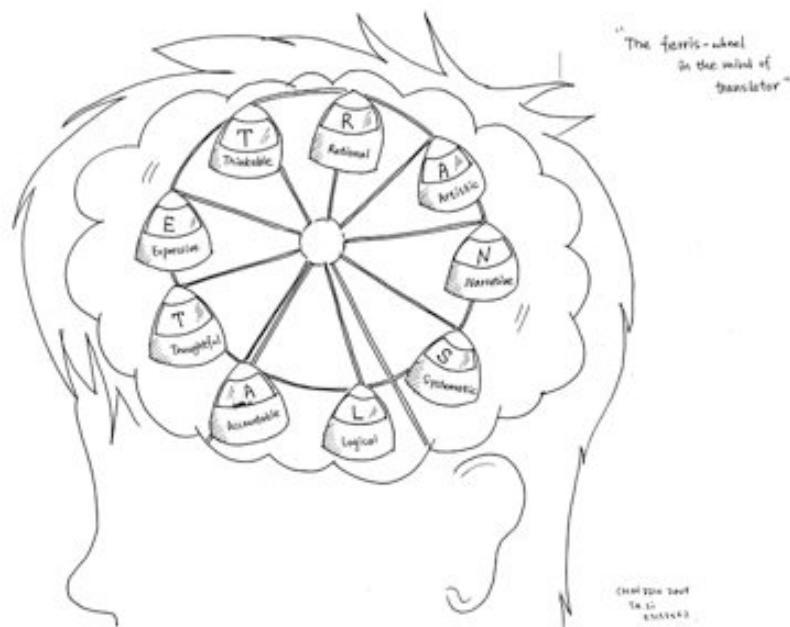
### *4.3 Cartoons, an alternative style of critical review*

The third mini-example involves an optional, and very unorthodox, learning project used in the UNSW interpreting courses, that of drawing cartoons; it warrants some initial justification of its rationale and use. Its inclusion is inspired by the career success of several earlier graduates in the visual arts and multimedia corporations. It is also conceived of as an answer to the lack of critical thinking in many students accustomed to rote learning and as an enhancer to the mechanical-looking procedures involved in language learning. There is an added benefit of the project, which became apparent to me as I engaged in reflective discussions of innovative teaching. The aspiration to submit a cartoon that is maximally ironic, reflective, and visually punchy often motivates students to tirelessly revisit the same question, to go into ever-greater depth, to consult the teacher and/or their peers and, most important, to try to address a real, pressing issue of the discipline/industry.

In the initial stage of the projects, students selecting this option are emphatically told of the expectation for them to go to the depths of a contemporary concept/issue of interpreting and translation and discover the irony in it. They then start conceiving and drafting ideas through individual reflections and discussions with the teacher, other students, and friends. Several times during the session, they are given opportunities to present their oeuvres in class to receive critiques and challenges from others, which provides a valuable opportunity for the teacher to clarify, elaborate, and comment on relevant issues in the practice of interpreting. Such interactions enable students to revise, redevelop, and finalize the oeuvres that they eventually submit to the teacher for assessment. Where there is ample time, I may even incorporate a peer evaluation in the assessment, which involves each student being given a vote to cast for what he/she sees as the most ironic, thought-provoking, and artistic work. I present two cartoons selected as the best by students of my 2009 undergraduate interpreting course.



The making of a successful classroom translator, cartoon by Lindan Huang (2009)



The ferris-wheel in the mind of a translator, cartoon by Yihang Li (2009)

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### 5. Outcomes of the innovation

Being the person responsible for the innovation, my review of the outcomes of this new approach must be subjective and biased. But I am happy to be able to cite some objective data to substantiate the positive benefits of the innovations for the students, for the innovator, and for the UNSW program. For many students, learning interpreting became an inspiring, capacity-challenging, and intellectually rewarding experience. In blind evaluations of teacher performance from 2000 to 2008, between 90% and 100% of the students enrolled in the two interpreting courses (one undergraduate and one postgraduate) agreed with the statement: "Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this lecturer's teaching." The Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) awarded me a national citation in 2009 for "playing a leadership role in innovating interpreting curricula and for tirelessly developing resources to facilitate the innovations."<sup>8</sup> UNSW also awarded me a Faculty of Arts Dean's award for best contribution to the scholarship of learning and teaching. For UNSW, the innovations have contributed to the sustainable development of its Chinese-English interpreting programs. In terms of enrolment, the undergraduate stream has always had to cap the class size due to significant student demand, and the postgraduate stream grew steadily to an enrollment of between 35 and 45 students, even without the NAATI accreditation.

But there is a twist in the tail in regard to the innovations, the subject matter of this section. Innovative teaching alone is not enough, especially in a market environment where a program's success is predominantly measured by its number of enrollments. Industry accreditation may be a much more effective marketing tool than anything else. Two other Sydney-based universities that are accredited by NAATI to give their graduates the title of "professional translator" and "professional interpreter" have been enrolling between 100 to 200 students annually in their postgraduate Chinese-English translation/interpreting programs. When UNSW gained NAATI accreditation in 2009, enrollments immediately surged to about 70 in that year and were projected to reach the 100-student mark in 2010. Simultaneously, however, signs emerged indicating that we started losing students who were not interested in NAATI accreditation. More troubling to me as an ALTC-citation award winner, the innovative teaching is becoming less sustainable because of a number of conditions, some of which I will discuss now.

Condition Number 1 involves the tyranny of existing market expectations and needs, especially where education operates as a top export industry of a country. I wrote in Section 1 that tertiary education is an AU\$14-billion export industry in Australia enrolling close to half a million international full-fee paying students, including over 200,000 from greater China. With regard to fee-paying students in languages or translation and interpreting programs of study, gaining industry accreditation and the subsequent priority access to a migration visa are a very effective marketing tool. By comparison, innovative teaching really seems like a rather elusive concept to prospective international students and their parents looking toward an education in an Australian university, although it undoubtedly enhances learning experiences for students already enrolled. People may wonder if the NAATI style of teaching and innovative teaching can be combined, or reconciled, to deliver a more balanced and satisfactory outcome. The answer, to be further discussed next, is negative.

Condition Number 2 involves the incompatibility of innovative teaching and the NAATI style of teaching. NAATI strictly defines and prescribes the content and end product of an accredited program. As a result, NAATI accredited programs are invariably centered on the acquisition of certain knowledge, language competence, and translation techniques required for answering a set of ethical questions and for interpreting certain texts (usually sourced or adapted from print media or artificial dialogues/speeches). Perhaps limited innovations can be made to improve the delivery of these required competencies. But ultimately the courses are mandated to prepare students for the NAATI tests, in which nothing matters other than accurate and adequate interpretation of jargon, syntax, grammar, and the supply of correct answers to ethics questions. I have not been able to figure out how to reconcile innovative teaching of content (e.g., leadership and research) and teaching methods (e.g., self-directed learning, problem-based learning, and capacity expansion) within a NAATI test-focused course structure.

<sup>8</sup> I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues (Professor Jon Kowallis, Professor Eileen Bauldry and Dr. Helen Dalton) for their selfless support and mentoring, which were crucial to my winning of the citation. More information about the award and ALTC is available at: <http://www.altc.edu.au/july2009-citation-winners-announced/>

Condition Number 3 involves potential discomfort for some international students who, having been accustomed to strict rote-learning, expect to be taught a structured body of knowledge and skills. While some of the enrolled students readily acclimatize, and may even flourish, in an innovative learning environment, some others are unwilling to, or fail to adjust. Some may also have difficulty adjusting even if they are willing to, because of the constraints on the length of a course (i.e., two to three hours per week, for a total of 12 weeks) and unfavourable teacher-student ratio (1 to about 30). The quick acceptance by some students of the innovative teaching may even be a cause of discomfort to those other students having difficulty adapting. Understandably, as far as assessment is concerned, the latter might receive more competitive marks in a traditional teaching environment.

Condition Number 4 involves the sustainability of innovative teaching of interpreting. Innovation is only meaningful if it can spread, generating systemic changes in wider scopes and being replicated across whole sectors. Otherwise, it would always be a novelty, an abnormality, or even a deviation and would discontinue if the individual teacher responsible for the innovation were to go on leave, or retire, or if he/she was simply overwhelmed by the status quo. Another important pressure to recognize is that student numbers and revenue have become one of the priorities in education in the recent Australian experience. In addition, encouraging and implementing innovative teaching is not easy. I have made massive efforts to disseminate innovative teaching through research articles, external lectures, and conference presentations, but I have yet to have a clear idea of any impact. Internally, there is little incentive to train teaching aids and tutors because few of them know how long they will stay in tertiary education where teaching manpower has been largely casualized. In this context, I recall a dialogue between Ms. Gruwell and Ms. Campbell, the head teacher, in a Hollywood movie titled "Freedom Writers Diary." Challenging the innovative teaching undertaken by Ms. Gruwell, the head teacher raised the following questions in front of the educational authorities:

What about new students that come in next year? Can she repeat this process every year? Her methods are impossible to implement with regularity. What if every teacher performed in this way? We have millions of children to get through the education system in this country and we need a means of accomplishing that, which allows as many students to benefit as possible, not just special cases.

Turning to Ms. Gruwell, she asked: Do you honestly think you can create this family in every classroom, for every grade, for every student you teach?

What did Ms. Gruwell say? "I don't know," was her answer.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have taken stock of my experiences in teaching translation and interpreting over recent years, focusing on the continuous struggles to reconcile the aspirations to innovate and the reality of the marketplace for education. I briefly visited some of the new theories, especially self-directed learning, on the basis of which I had been able to formulate my own teaching philosophies and methods, including plan-based interpreting and justification-based interpreting. Due to space constraints, I was able to give only three examples of how I teach interpreting innovatively. I will seek to delineate the innovations separately in a dedicated paper.

I have also discussed the outcome of the innovations, including the benefits for students, for the university, and for me, the innovator. At the same time, I conceded that I was not able to reconcile the innovative teaching of interpreting with the pressure of commercial pressure. As a result, some of my innovations proved to be short lived. However, I would like to think that by discussing the tension between innovations and reality, I may be able to stimulate discussions and debates that would generate new ideas and solutions.

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# **Book Review: Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training, Revised Edition**

**Sherry Shaw<sup>1</sup>**

*University of North Florida*

## **1. Introduction**

The new and improved edition of Daniel Gile's (1995) seminal work on training interpreters and translators through a process-oriented approach is a must-have for every interpreter trainer/educator. From a strictly aesthetic perspective, the volume takes on more of the appearance of a textbook than a handbook, and although it is intended for teachers of interpreting and translation in higher education settings, it definitely deserves consideration as a textbook for advanced students. If you are familiar with the first edition, you will instantly notice that this edition underwent a serious rewrite for flow, readability, economy of expression, and clarity (and changed from American English to British English spelling). Format modifications (e.g., spacing, fonts) make the text a comfortable read. In fact, it is such a "comfortable read" that it is difficult to put down, no matter how many times you might have reread the first edition. If it has been a while, you might just find yourself becoming so engrossed in Gile's discussions that the work impacts you again with all of its practical applications to your work as an interpreter trainer.

Upon examination of the revised edition (Gile, 2009), one immediately is struck by the fact that the volume is packed full of new references and topics that speak to trainers 15 years after the original version was published. This is indicative of Gile's attempt to incorporate such current topics as inference and anticipation (Chernov, 2004), physiological stress responses (Kurz, 2002), sociocultural aspects (Pym, Shlesinger & Jettmarová, 2006), working memory (Timarová, 2008), and lexical processing demands (Prat, Keller & Just, 2007). In the event that you share my tendency when reviewing new materials to turn directly to the reference list, you likely will discover that therein is an adventure in exploring the sources that support Gile's assertions. These sources come from a variety of perspectives on interpreting and translation training, especially when Gile taps into the fields of cognitive psychology (which he dubs "the most relevant reference discipline," p. 187) and psycholinguistics (unfortunately for me, not all are available in English). Gile has made every effort to review original examples for content obsolescence and acknowledges when something is outdated but still relevant (for instance, a source text

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [sherry.shaw@unf.edu](mailto:sherry.shaw@unf.edu)

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in an example, p. 49). The 2009 edition is so current as to include reference to this journal (IJIE), which is one of many allusions to signed language interpreting and its relevance to the discussion of interpreting models and concepts. Although the new edition continues to focus primarily on translation and conference interpreting, Gile acknowledges that the principles are applicable to signed language interpreter trainers. In fact, he opens the door for further development of these models and other conceptual frameworks that are specific to “public service” and signed language interpreting students (p. 23). On numerous occasions throughout the book, signed language is included when referring to such topics as executing the interpretation, general and thematic knowledge bases, interpreter role, sight translation, and language availability (informed by Carol Patrie through personal communication, p. 179). It is evident throughout the reading of this book that Gile’s perspective on the profession has broadened markedly since the first edition.

### 2. Primary distinctions between the first and the revised editions

In addition to the technical improvements, Gile made several content-related changes and replaced a previous chapter on interpreter/transliterator training with an introductory chapter on translation theory. (Keep in mind that Gile does not claim to be a theorist, but rather presents his models as strictly didactic and pragmatic to skill acquisition.) The purpose of the second edition, in the author’s own words, is to “correct and hopefully improve my ideas, models, and methods” (p. xiii). This is accomplished by distinguishing macro-level and micro-level communication aims (Chapter 2), adding the cultural component to *linguistically induced information* and expanding the fidelity discussion (Chapter 3), analyzing decision-making for gains and loss risk (Chapter 5), incorporating internet use in acquiring ad hoc knowledge (Chapter 6), and extensively developing the Effort Models to include working memory and the Tightrope Hypothesis, as they relate to cognitive psychology. A bonus to the text is the incorporation of a glossary, a name index, and a revised concept index. Additionally, what were initially identified as chapter main ideas are now highlighted in a contrasting font as *What students need to remember* items at the end of each chapter.

#### 2.1 The old and the new premises

There are several key premises that stem from the vast experience Gile brings to his conceptual framework for teaching translators or interpreters. First and foremost is that his models are continually refined to be useful and are simplified to represent the theoretical components that directly affect the interpreting process. Another is that students initially improve their translation and interpreting skills through a process-oriented approach, in which the teacher focuses on the reasons for student decisions during the interpreting process. Guidance provided to the student from this perspective ultimately results in an improved product, and students learn how to “use appropriate strategies and tactics” (p. 17) in new situations during their career. Throughout the text, Gile repeatedly brings the reader back to this purpose: using the models for process-oriented teaching (if the reader does not understand the term *didactic*, he or she will certainly be familiar with it by the time this book is completely digested).

Another premise that has been historically central to Gile’s models is that processing capacity is constrained by certain factors, and teaching students how to eliminate strains and maximize capacity through the allocation of resources is imperative to avoiding interpreting failure. This premise guides the reader through the expansion on the Effort Models of interpreting in Chapter 7 and presentation of the Gravitational Model of Linguistic Availability in Chapter 9. A final, overarching premise is that students must learn to face, and cope with, the inevitable, inherent difficulties associated with comprehending and reformulating messages as part of their learning sequence. In so doing, students perform crisis management tactics that do not involve what Gile calls “the wrong laws” of self-protection or least effort (p. 217).

Within Gile’s discussion of the Effort Models, a new term for an old concept emerged in the revised edition. The *Tightrope Hypothesis* characterizes what many practitioners and interpreter trainers have identified as a state of saturation in which simultaneous interpreters work with diminished processing capacity, whether as a whole or specific to a certain effort. Although Gile allows that the hypothesis is minimally substantiated by empirical

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evidence, he suggests that there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to warrant applying the hypothesis to his discussion of processing capacity constraints and coping tactics for failure prevention. The Tightrope Hypothesis is helpful in guiding students to identify their cognitive “problem triggers” or causes for saturation (p. 192) in the hope that they can reduce their processing capacity requirements.

In Chapter 3, regarding fidelity, Gile adds a cultural component to the term *Linguistically Induced Information*, so that the new term becomes *Linguistically/Culturally Induced Information*. This addition is particularly germane to today’s climate in which recognition of the cultural role is essential for effective communication, and the reader is assured that Gile is making every effort to bring the book up-to-date. Another addition is presented in a discussion of the Sequential Model of Translation in Chapter 5.

### 3. Applications to signed language interpreter training

As with the first edition of the book, Gile’s work can be applied to signed language interpreter training, although he suggests that someone with more expertise should further develop his models to directly apply to that area. Whether the topic is efforts, language availability, fidelity, coping, loyalty, knowledge, plausibility testing, quality, or theory, there is plenty within this volume that needs to be incorporated into training programs—regardless of modality. “Public service” interpreters and trainers/educators, such as those of us who work in signed language interpreting programs, will find boundless opportunities to filter this information through our own experiences and adapt the concepts, as necessary, so that our students can benefit from the content of this book. There is a lot to learn within the 263-page volume. We learn from Gile how to focus on the student’s process rather than the product and how to explain the importance of maintaining terminology and concepts within the active range of language availability. We learn about the difference between primary and secondary information within a message and how to instill the basic principles of fidelity in our students. Gile provides us with metaphors that can be used with students to clarify concepts, such as a road map with road signs that “point toward a destination,” (p. 73) or guide us in making linguistic and cultural choices when we interpret. Not only does he provide us with models, he elaborates on how to teach students about the models, which is particularly helpful.

The back cover of the revised edition of *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training* touts the book as a “systematically corrected, enhanced and updated avatar of a book (1995) which is widely used in T & I training programs worldwide.” In that regard, the revision certainly manifests Gile’s commitment to linking the literature and his best thinking to the fundamentals of interpreting and translating. The term *avatar* is a coincidentally appropriate descriptor, considering that *Avatar*, an Academy-Award-winning film of 2009, was an action adventure film making technological breakthroughs in cinematography, just as Gile takes us on our own action adventure of self-discovery about our capacity to do the work of an interpreter. For its stimulating and comprehensive presentation of models and concepts that are explained so that they will make sense to students and teachers, the revised edition is a welcome addition to any interpreter trainer’s (and student’s) personal library.

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# Cooperative Learning Applied to Interpreting Education

**Lauri Krouse<sup>1</sup>**

*Northeastern University*

## Abstract

This action research project explored whether employing cooperative learning activities would improve participants' perceptions of working in small groups. The action research model used in this study is based on a sequence of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hopkins, 2002; McLean, 1995). Action research is conducted by educators in their own classrooms and can lead to changes in curriculum, activities, or teaching methods. This style of research allows educators to reflect upon their teaching in a structured way, supported by valid research methods. Cooperative learning techniques (Johnson and Johnson, 1998) were applied in two interpreter education courses in order to facilitate student learning. A pre- and post-course survey of student attitudes toward working in small groups was used to measure student perceptions of working in small groups. Participants in both courses showed a shift to more positive perceptions of working in small groups with a stronger positive response in the non-graded summer intensive course with working interpreters.

Keywords: cooperative learning, action research, interpreter education, interpreting

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: lskrouse@earthlink.net

# **Cooperative Learning Applied to Interpreting Education**

## **1. Introduction**

This paper highlights the results of an action research project undertaken as part of the requirements for the Master of Education in Interpreting Pedagogy [American Sign Language (ASL)/English] program at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts (USA). The research project explored whether employing cooperative learning activities would improve participants' perceptions of working in small groups. The research was conducted with a group of interpreters who were participating in an intensive one-week summer course in interpreting and with a group of interpreting students in their third year of undergraduate study who were taking their first interpreting skills course at an institution in the Midwest. I will first describe my place as the researcher, followed by the literature review and methodology of the research, and the results of the data analysis. A discussion of the research findings and of implications for me and other educators will complete the paper.

Cooperative learning is "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p.2). It is different from merely placing students into small groups to do activities, as it involves specific techniques developed by, among others, David and Roger Johnson of the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota in order to foster positive interdependence and group goals. The specific techniques employed in this research project will be described in more detail in the methodology section of this paper.

The action research model used in this study is based on a sequence of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hopkins, 2002; McLean, 1995). Action research is conducted by educators in their own classrooms and can lead to changes in curriculum, activities or teaching methods. This style of research allows educators to reflect upon their teaching in a structured way, supported by valid research methods.

### *1.1 Situating the researcher in the research*

Like many others in our field, I started teaching interpreting without a background or education in teaching or adult learning theories. I taught in ways that I had been taught or had seen others teaching. As a person who has a background in community organizing and social change, I liked working in groups and having people work in groups to solve problems. I did not know whether small groups were effective for interpreter education, but I thought students would learn more this way. Yet, it was frustrating when students did not like small group work. I understood their perspective that often one person ends up doing all the work while others "go along for a free ride," yet I still thought they could learn more by working together on projects than by listening to lectures or working independently. I had experienced small group work as a barrier, not an asset, to my own learning during my first semester of graduate school, and I witnessed my children's frustrating experiences in high school with small group projects. However, the desire to have students work in small groups overpowered the personal and student objections.

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In my graduate school studies, I studied adult learning theories; social constructivism, with its emphasis on co-creation of learning and being a “guide on the side,” facilitating education rather than being a “sage on the stage” (Brookfield, 1986; Kiraly, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Reigeluth, 1999). I learned about the cognitive processes that lead to complex learning and critical thinking as described in Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al ., 1956). I wanted students to function at a level where they were not merely gaining knowledge that they could recite but applying it to their lives through synthesis and ultimately evaluation. I wanted to have students graduate with the ability to function at Bloom’s highest level by “being able to judge the effectiveness of their own interpretations” (Winston, 2005, p. 211). Reigeluth’s focus on instructional designs that were more student centered than teacher centered strengthened my commitment to teach in a way that engages students. This commitment was reinforced by Wiggins and McTighe’s pairing of educative assessment with student self-assessment and self-adjustment. So, I persisted in using small group projects in the classroom and continued to have students complain, “I’m doing all the work in the group and it isn’t fair,” or to have students who just want me to tell them the right answer.

During one course, ASL and English Text Analysis, I tried what I thought was more of a social constructivist approach, in which a knowledge-building community learns through authentic practice, following the study of Kiraly’s (2000) book, *A Social Constructivist Approach to Translator Education*. Students worked in small groups in their first experience with preparing translations of texts. I did not provide a set of tools that they needed to use prior to the activity but, rather, hoped the situation would create a zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) for the students, and that I could assist in their learning process. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as the distance between the “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Vygotsky believed that when a student is at the ZPD for a particular task, providing the appropriate assistance (i.e., scaffolding) will give the student enough of a “boost” to achieve the task. As Kiraly explained, this zone is “more of a fleeting ‘virtual space’ of potential growth, a window of opportunity that is created within a specific learning situation and that can lead to learning and thus socio-cognitive development” (p. 40). Unfortunately, it did not work as I hoped. Instead of providing an opportunity for learning and growth, the experience primarily frustrated the students. I was left wondering what was missing.

During this same time period, I attended a workshop on cooperative learning by David and Roger Johnson from the University of Minnesota, two of the leading researchers and educators in cooperative learning, and I realized a few of the fundamental errors I had made in my attempts to have students learn from each other in small groups or to be in their zone of proximal development. I had simply placed students in groups and assumed they knew how to work in groups and that they already had the necessary interpersonal skills. I had not thought about the essential elements that would create a shared goal and positive interdependence. This then began my journey to learn more about cooperative learning and to conduct an action research project. Fortunately, in my review of literature related to cooperative learning, I came across a paper by Kreke, Fields, and Towns (1998) entitled “An action research project on student perspectives of cooperative learning in chemistry: Understanding the efficacy of small-group activities.” It addressed student attitudes toward small group work and provided me with a model on how others had conducted action research with a similar question in mind.

## 2. Literature review

In order to understand cooperative learning and its appeal, we need to place it within a context of the field of adult education. “The field of adult education has made major shifts in recent years, from the behavioral approach of teaching students who passively sit through lectures, toward a learning-oriented, student-as-active-learner philosophy, where students are held responsible for their own construction of knowledge” (Winston, 2005, p. 210). Many different approaches, such as problem-based learning, social constructivism, collaborative learning, and cooperative learning, are being used to develop the critical thinking that is necessary for the construction of one’s own knowledge. Johnson and Johnson’s (1991) meta-study of over 500 research projects showed

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cooperative learning surpassed both competitive and individualized learning in three main categories: “1) greater motivation to achieve and higher actual achievement and productivity by high-, medium-, and low-achieving students, 2) more positive relationships among students, and 3) greater psychological health, including greater self-esteem and the ability to handle adversity and stress” (Kiraly, 2000, p. 37). While Kiraly found the highly structured nature of cooperative learning stifling to constructivism, I thought that cooperative learning could provide the framework for students to have a positive experience working in small groups, thus allowing them to embrace critical thinking and learn interpersonal skills.

### 2.1 What is cooperative learning?

Cooperative learning groups are much more intentional than simply assigning students to work in groups. Research on cooperative learning began in the 1960s with Morton Deutsch, which led to the establishment of the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota by Johnson and Johnson. Cooperative learning differs from competitive learning, in which students work against each other to earn a grade (such as an A that only a few can receive) because the students are graded with a norm-referenced base. It also is different from individualistic learning, where students work by themselves to accomplish learning goals unrelated to what other students are doing and are evaluated with a criteria-referenced base (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). The meta-study of over 500 research projects by Johnson and Johnson (1991) showed that cooperative learning is more effective at promoting learner achievement than individual or competitive approaches (Kiraly, 2000).

To understand how cooperative learning differs from collaborative learning, it is important to look at some philosophical differences listed by Panitz (1997).

- Collaborative learning is established in theories of the social nature of human knowledge; cooperative learning is grounded in social interdependence theory, cognitive-development theory, and behavioral learning theory.
- Collaborative learning focuses on the *process* of working together; cooperative learning focuses on the *product* of the working together.
- Collaborative learning advocates more of a distrust atmosphere in allowing students more say in choosing groups; cooperative learning tends toward a teacher-centered classroom, reinforcing cooperation skills and positive interdependence.
- Collaborative learning is more focused on interacting and being responsible for actions; cooperative learning concentrates on accomplishing a goal.
- Collaborative learning asks the question, “How do we teach students various roles within a group setting?” whereas cooperative learning asks the question, “How can we empower students to become autonomous learners?”

There are three basic types of cooperative learning groups: formal, informal and base groups. All three types include five essential elements that increase the learning and community spirit within the classroom as the students work as a cooperative team rather than as individuals within a group (Tanner, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1998). These five elements, listed below, are described by Johnson and Johnson (1990) and listed in *Instructional Strategies* (Tanner, 2009, p. 9):

- *Positive interdependence*

Design the cooperative task so that the group has to rely on the contribution of each member. All team members must participate for the team to succeed. The teacher must define clearly the team roles, such as manager, recorder, or presenter.

- *Individual and group accountability*

Define the group goal clearly so that each group member knows what is needed to accomplish the task. Examples of group goals include creating a team product or becoming an expert on a specific topic. Develop a method for assessing the effort and contribution of each member of the team. Each must feel responsible for contributing to the success of the task. Cooperative learning is designed so that the contribution of each team member is essential. No one gets a free ride.

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- *Direct interaction*

Design the cooperative task to promote interaction among students, either face-to-face or by other means. As students work to meet the group goal, they provide assistance and feedback to team members, exchange information, discuss issues, and offer encouragement.

- *Interpersonal and small-group skills*

Require students to work together. Students must know and trust one another, listen to and accept others' ideas and points of view, and develop strategies for dealing constructively with conflicts. Teachers may have to teach students these interpersonal skills before initiating the strategy.

- *Group processing*

Provide time for the team to reflect on the cooperative process. Encourage members to consider the group's strengths and weaknesses and plan improvements. Students need opportunities to provide specific, constructive feedback. Teachers initially may need to provide formal group-evaluation forms to focus students' feedback.

Effective cooperative groups incorporate the five elements by first having the educator intentionally determine the group membership and size according to the activity or lesson. Groups should be heterogeneous and small in number to allow for the most divergent perspectives to be shared for maximum learning. Once students are divided into groups, they must all be clear on the goal. The goal must be such that the members are dependent on each other to accomplish the goal. The evaluation of the goal must promote positive interdependence rather than individual grades that have no bearing on what happened in the group. Groups are to be assisted with social skills and the group process. The educator is available to guide the group with both the academic issues and the group interactions.

Groups will need help to develop the necessary cooperative skills. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994), these skills are: "1) forming bottom-line skills vital to functioning groups, 2) functioning skills needed to manage activities to complete [a] task, 3) formulating skills for building deeper-level understanding of the material being studied, and 4) fermenting skills needed for stimulating reconceptualization of the material being studied" (p. 65). When a new group begins meeting, members will also need guidance as they go through the four stages of group development: 1) *forming*, when the group comes together and gets to know each other; 2) *storming*, which is a chaotic process of vying for leadership when conflicts arise; 3) *norming*, when agreement is reached on how the group operates and when the roles and responsibilities are clear; and 4) *performing*, when the group is effective at meeting its objectives with interdependence and flexibility (Stahl, 1995). Progression through these stages will allow students to develop the ability to understand their own perspective, and that of others, as they figure out how to work together for a common goal. Once the group accomplishes the goal, the students will need to debrief the experience of working together in the group in order to continue to develop their group and interpersonal skills.

Formal cooperative groups last from one class period to several weeks and include all the essential elements of cooperative learning. These groups can be used for any academic assignment, course requirement, or objective. Informal cooperative learning groups are ad hoc groups that meet briefly during direct teaching to assist students in processing information or focusing their learning. While informal groups include many of the essential elements of cooperative learning, they may not go through the stages of group processing or require debriefing after completion of the goal, as their goal is limited and accomplished in one brief meeting. Cooperative base groups are longer-term groups, lasting for the semester or for the year, whose purpose is for members to give each other the support and assistance that they each need to succeed, rather than the completion of a product for a project or assignment (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

### 2.2 Why use cooperative learning?

As interpreter educators, we are concerned with both the student's learning process and the preparation of the student to become an interpreter. We must consider both as we structure our curriculum, syllabi, course activities, and assessment strategies. Although interpreters need to have proficiency in meaning transfer between ASL and English, they also need to be able to interact with a variety of people, have good interpersonal skills, and use critical thinking in decision making. The importance of these skills is recognized in the ASL/English interpreters'

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## Cooperative learning

Entry-to-Practice Competencies (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005), in which Human Relations and Professionalism are two of the five competency domains. The Human Relations domain includes “a cluster of interpersonal competencies that foster effective communication and productive collaboration with colleagues, consumers, and employers” (p. 143). The Professionalism domain includes the ability to “demonstrate self-awareness and discretion by monitoring and managing personal and professional behaviors and applying professional conflict resolution strategies when appropriate” (p.145). When the Authority Opinion Group, convened by Witter-Merithew and Johnson, was considering the ideal interpreter preparation program, they included the need to integrate diversity education, critical thinking skills, and better decision making within the curriculum. This is reinforced by the inclusion of interpersonal and critical thinking competencies in the Standards Rubric of the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, the accreditation board for ASL/English interpreter education programs in the United States (Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, 2009). The Knowledge and Competencies section of Standard 5: Curriculum includes “logical thinking, critical analysis, problem-solving, and creativity, and human relations, dynamics of cross-cultural interaction, and intercultural communication, knowledge, [and] competency” (p. 14).

Interpersonal skills are important to working interpreters as they use these skills to get along with, not only the various deaf and hearing people they work with, but also other interpreters. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Professional Conduct emphasizes the importance of interpersonal skills and the ability to resolve conflicts within Tenet 5: Respect for Colleagues (RID, 2005). The guiding principle for this tenet shows the importance of learning to work together with others. “Interpreters are expected to collaborate with colleagues to foster the delivery of effective interpreting services. They also understand that the manner in which they relate to colleagues reflects upon the profession in general” (RID, 2005). It is this attitude of collaboration that creates good teamwork among interpreters (Hoza, 2010). The elements of a shared goal and positive interdependence in cooperative learning are the same as what is used by interpreters working as effective teams. “Keys to a team effort, then, are having a clear, shared goal; having good rapport and a good working relationship; and having a clear view of how the team can work together to successfully achieve that goal” (Hoza, 2010, p. 10). The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf also lists good interpersonal skills as a requirement for certification under Task 5 of the NAD-RID National Interpreter Certification Examination Test Outline, “Recognizing the impact of personal values and professional conflicts” (RID, n.d.).

Two interpreter educators, Patrie and Taylor (2008), emphasize the importance of interpersonal skills and critical thinking as individual attributes for interpreters who work in educational settings. They list the following interpersonal skills:

- identifies problems related to interpreting and seeks solutions
- seeks resolution to conflicts in a professional manner
- requests assistance from supervisors and administrators as necessary
- demonstrates negotiation strategies
- identifies problems related to communication
- seeks assistance from mentors as appropriate
- shows respect and professional decorum during interactions with all parties
- applies culturally and situationally appropriate behavioral norms (e.g., introductions, turn taking, follow up)

Macnamara (2009) notes the importance of interpersonal skills in her investigation of the aptitudes of successful interpreters. She states that:

The ability of the interpreter to function in dynamic settings with a variety of people and content is first considered. Broadly defined, social-cognition is the science of cognition affected by social encounters and structures, including one’s view of one’s self in relation to others. Social cognitive aptitudes include interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. (p. 11)

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She explains that this aptitude is manifest when interpreters “perform complex problem solving, consider various perspectives, and make decisions based on analysis as opposed to opting for the least cognitively effortful choice” (p. 13). Without this aptitude, individuals are not well suited to interpreting and have trouble with boundary balancing.

Clearly the interpreting profession recognizes the importance of interpersonal skills, yet they are often overlooked in interpreter education. In conversations with stakeholders about the entry-to-practice competencies, Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) state that “many of the associate level students reported that they felt insufficiently prepared in the human relations and professionalism domains” (p. 51). They also noted “when employers perceive a lack of professionalism and detect no united voice expressing a spirit of cooperation, the scope of the field’s [interpreting] influence is further diminished” (p. 97).

These human relation and critical thinking skills cannot be developed by students merely listening to lectures in the classroom, nor is that the best way for students to learn. Interpreting educators need to move beyond “static measurement of products and behaviors” (Winston, 2005, p. 210). Instead we need to look to approaches such as cooperative learning to develop critical thinking and interpersonal skills. Bentley-Sassaman (2009) showed the importance of including experiential learning in the interpreting curriculum and the power of group interactions. Adult learning theories, such as Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory, show the power of group interactions for enhanced learning as students engage in higher order thinking such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bentley-Sassaman). Students who have worked in groups commented that they gained “deeper levels of understanding” by reflecting on their learning experiences with each other (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005, p. 45). While interpreting educators know these skills are important, we still struggle with how to teach in a way that fosters these skills. “Interpreting educators need to learn how to structure, implement, and assess active learning approaches that will lead to active learning by their students, and, therefore, to competent interpreting” (Winston, 2005, p. 208).

Cooperative learning is one approach that addresses interpersonal and critical thinking skills. Johnson and Johnson (1995) argue that working in cooperative groups increases student achievement and has substantial effects on the development of positive social relationships and improved social skills, such as those needed for interpreter competencies. “Within cooperative learning groups there is a process of interpersonal exchange that promotes the use of higher-level thinking strategies, higher-level reasoning, and metacognitive strategies thus creating a better learning environment” (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 21). Johnson and Johnson’s conviction to use cooperative learning is supported by over 600 experimental studies and over 100 correlational studies conducted on cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts (see Johnson & Johnson, 1989, for a complete review of these studies). These studies show that when compared with competitive and individualistic efforts, cooperative learning typically results in the following:

- *Greater efforts to achieve:* this includes higher achievement and greater productivity by all students (high, medium, and low-achievers), long term retention, intrinsic motivation, achievement motivation, time-on-task, higher-level reasoning, and critical thinking;
- *More positive relationships among students:* this includes esprit-de-corps, caring and committed relationships, personal and academic social support, valuing of diversity, and cohesion;
- *Psychological health:* this includes general psychological adjustment, ego-strength, social development, social competencies, self-esteem, self-identity, and ability to cope with adversity and stress (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, pp. 1–7).

Increasingly in North America, our classrooms are becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. It is important that we recognize the variety of experiences and learning styles our students have and also assist students in appreciating a greater variety of perspectives on the world. As educators, we have our own preferred learning and teaching style that may not be the same as that of the students. “Discrepancies between learning and teaching styles are a source of conflict, frustration, and discouragement among students and teachers” (Grasha, 1996, as quoted in Kreke et al., 1998, p. 2). Cooperative learning acknowledges these differences and creates controversy that students learn from as they solve problems, give presentations, or prepare for quizzes or exams (Kreke, et al.; Ellis & Whalen, 1990). This allows students the opportunity to develop skills in seeing problems from various perspectives.

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Using cooperative learning techniques can help us, as interpreter educators, to teach in a way that fosters development of respect for diversity, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking. It is important to understand that cooperative learning groups are not the same as traditional small groups. The next section will explore these differences in more depth, and the methodology section will explain how cooperative learning was used specifically in this action research project.

### *2.3 Differences between cooperative learning groups and traditional small groups*

Many educators have students work in small groups and may think that this is all that is needed to develop interpersonal and critical thinking skills. There is more to it than just having students do group projects or talking to each other in small groups. Cooperative learning gives much more structure to the small group work and acknowledges the goal of learning to work as a group and use interpersonal skills, as well as the goal of the group product or project. Johnson and Johnson (1998, p.2) summarize some of the differences in Figure 1:

*Figure 1: Differences between cooperative learning groups and traditional small groups.*

Cooperative learning groups	Traditional small groups
High positive interdependence Members are responsible for own and each other's learning Focus is on joint performance	Low interdependence Members take responsibility only for self Focus is on individual performance only
Both group and individual accountability Members hold self and others accountable for high quality work	Individual accountability only
Members promote each other's success They do real work together and help and support each other's efforts to learn	Assignments are discussed with little commitment to each other's learning
Teamwork skills are emphasized Members are taught or expected to use social skills All members share leadership responsibilities	Teamwork skills are ignored Leader is appointed to direct member's participation
Group processes quality of work and how effectively members are working together Continuous improvement is emphasized	No group processing of the quality of its work Individual accomplishments are rewarded

These differences emphasize the structure of the essential elements of cooperative learning that require the positive interdependence of group members in order to accomplish a shared goal. The educator is actively involved in assisting the group members with the interpersonal skills they need to move through the stages of the group process that lead to effective teamwork. The educator determines the make-up of the goals, monitors the group's progress, assists in the debriefing of the group experience, and assesses the group's work in a manner that rewards the interdependence of the group rather than the individual.

This literature review section has provided an overview of where cooperative learning fits in the context of the field of education, what cooperative learning is, why it is important to us as interpreter educators, and how it differs from traditional small groups. From this we can see how the benefits of cooperative learning can provide the desired competencies in the application of critical thinking skills and social skills for graduates of interpreter education programs. We have also seen the structure and support that are necessary to effectively use cooperative learning skills and the essential elements that differentiate it from traditional small group activities. Next, the methodology section will explain more about cooperative learning as we look at the specific types of cooperative learning activities used in this study, the participants in the study, the data collection, and the method of data analysis.

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology for this project is known as action research, and it is based on a multi-method approach, drawing upon quantitative and qualitative approaches. As was explained in the introduction, the purpose of this research was to determine the impact on students of augmenting teaching with cooperative learning techniques. Like many other action research projects done by educators, the focus was on trying to improve something within the teaching by implementing a changed item, describing the effect through analysis of pre- and post-course survey questions and field notes, and then reflecting on those effects to determine the effectiveness of the change. These reflections will then lead to more ideas about how to improve something else, and the action research cycle will begin again.

In this specific situation, the goal was to see if the use of some cooperative learning techniques would result in more positive student perceptions of small group work. While learning activities conducted in small groups are beneficial for student learning, educators often face negative attitudes from many students when they are asked to work in small groups that become a barrier to their learning process. Similar to the action research done by Kreke, et al. (1998) the focus of this action research project was on the students' attitudes toward small group learning specifically. To do this, open-ended questions were designed to survey students' attitudes before and after the courses. The intervention of cooperative learning was applied during the teaching of the courses. An undergraduate student, who had taken the ASL and English Text Analysis course the previous year, worked in the fall course as a teaching assistant through the Assistant Mentorship Program at the university. She assisted in the research by taking notes on student comments during debriefing sessions and by assisting in data analysis of the survey responses.

Whereas Kreke et al. (1998) used a post-course survey only, both a pre- and post-course survey were used in this study to note any differences in the students' stated perception of working in small groups, strengths of working in small groups, and weaknesses of working in small groups. In addition, one question, unrelated to the research and about how to evaluate group work, was included to elicit input from students on the grading system. The survey consisted of the following questions:

- 1a. Pre-course survey: Having participated in many classes with small group activities and projects, please tell me your perception or opinion about doing small group work.
- 1b. Post-course survey: Now reflect back on your experience with small group work in this course as you answer these questions: Has your perception of working in small groups changed? If so, in what ways? If not, can you describe what your experience was that contributed to that view?
2. What is your view of the strengths of working in small groups? How were they helpful to you?

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3. What is your view of the weaknesses or challenges of working in small groups? How were they not helpful to you?

4. How should small group work be evaluated for grading purposes?

Due to the fact that the number of participants in the one-week intensive summer course was small (i.e., eight people), the research was also conducted in the fall (autumn) semester course. The action research project was given Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval by the university at which the courses were taught and by Northeastern University in Boston as part of the Master's in Interpreting Pedagogy program. The following sections will describe the specific cooperative learning activities used, the participants in both courses that were part of the study, and the data collection and analysis methods.

*Figure 2: Cooperative learning activities used.*

Cooperative learning activity	Summer course	Fall course
Base group	X	X
Cooperative formal groupjigsaw	X	X
Cooperative formal group graded project	0	X
Cooperative informal group	X	X

The study was based on data from two different courses in which various cooperative formal, cooperative informal, and base groups were utilized. While the cooperative learning techniques for the groups were the same in each course, the type of group and the number of groups was not. Students in both courses were placed in a base group after the first session of each course, and they continued to meet with these groups throughout the course. Base groups do not have a specific product or project they are working on but rather meet throughout the duration of the course for peer support. These base groups, limited to three students, were intentionally heterogeneous to allow for the greatest variety possible. Within the summer course, students were grouped by diversity of skills (i.e., certified, experienced interpreters with interpreters who are uncertified or less experienced) and different geographic locations. In the fall course, students worked with classmates whom they knew the least and with a heterogeneity of signing skills (i.e., more skilled signers with less skilled signers). In the summer course, the base groups met briefly at the beginning and end of each day; during the fall course, they met at the beginning and end of each week. During these brief meetings, they discussed assigned questions in order to help them get to know each other and to support each other in the work in the course. Examples of questions were: What do you hope to learn from this course? How can others help you to learn in this course? What are barriers that we can help you with? In this particular assignment, what is your greatest frustration? What kind of help can the group give you? When the class is taught in American Sign Language only, how does that affect you? What are strategies that can help overcome those frustrations? How is this class working with your learning style, and what can you do to advocate for yourself more? These questions guided the students in providing support for each other as part of building positive interdependence, and this led to the realization within the class that everyone was assisting each other in their learning.

In both courses, students also worked in formal cooperative groups using a technique known as 'jigsaw' to learn material in the course. Jigsaw is one of the types of cooperative learning techniques where the "work of a group is divided into separate parts that are completed by different members and taught to their groupmates" (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, pp. G-3). The idea is that by teaching something to another student, the student actually learns the material better and that by members being responsible for a different part of the whole, they are dependent upon each other in the shared goal of learning. During the action research, each member of each group was assigned a

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section of the material that the students needed to learn, such as reviewing the ten-step discourse analysis process by Witter-Merithew and Johnson (1999) for students in the summer course, or understanding specific linguistic concepts presented in an ASL linguistics video (Valli, 1991) for students in the fall course. All the people with the same section of the material met together to learn the material and plan how to teach it. Then they went back to their original groups, where they taught each other their section. Finally, for clarification, they met again with the people who had their same topic, compared what they had learned about the other topics, and discussed any remaining questions. Any questions that group members could not answer were brought to the teacher when the whole class reconvened. Later, individual students were required to apply what they learned, either in an activity during the summer course or in a test during the fall course. For example, there was no lecture to review the ten-step discourse analysis process, but students read an article on the process and had access to an independent study packet, *Analyzing Discourse* (Digiterp, 2003), with each person in the group focusing on separate sections of the process (e.g., prediction and content mapping, visualization, and salient linguistic feature analysis). Each of the students responsible for prediction and content mapping met together to plan how to teach that while the students responsible for visualization or salient linguistic feature analysis did likewise. Then the students taught members of their base groups their different sections. For added clarification the students who taught the same section (all who had the prediction and content mapping, for example) met again to see what others had learned about the other two sections and to ask clarifying questions. This knowledge that they obtained from each other was then used to conduct a discourse analysis of a text they were interpreting.

The students in the fall course also were in formal cooperative groups for a group presentation of a linguistic concept, such as prosody or register. Each group had a linguistic concept that they needed to teach to the students by using an assigned research article and additional research of their own finding. The group was graded as a whole on their presentation, with each member receiving an individual grade for their contribution to the group, based on a group participation evaluation and an individual reflection paper. These groups shared the common goal of a group presentation with a common evaluation, and each person needed to be responsible for the group's success as well as their own, thus creating positive interdependence. After the experience, the groups debriefed about their group experience to give each other feedback on what they thought went well and how they could improve in working together the next time. Each person also reflected on what they learned about themselves in the group experience and how they assisted the group in achieving its goal. When the groups met during class time, the professor and the teaching assistant observed the working groups to provide support with any group process issues or conflicts, such as disagreements on roles or how to handle the work or presentation. Prior to the group beginning its work, students were told that the group process, as well as the presentation, was important to their learning and both the product of the group presentation and the group experience would be evaluated as part of their grade. Students were reminded of the importance of collaboration and interdependence within their group projects and how that is similar to working as team interpreters (Hoza, 2010) in the future. They were also reminded that it was important to learn to understand other people's perspective within their group just as it will be in the future when working with a wide diversity of people.

Both courses used informal cooperative groups when they worked in pairs to discuss a topic during a class or met to review their individual videos of interpretations or translations. The fall course also had informal groups that met during one class period with community interpreters who joined the class to discuss cultural influences on interpreting or provide feedback on the students' translations during the process. These groups had a shared goal of gaining knowledge or improving a product that each student was creating within a project. None of these informal groups created a group product.

### 3.1 Participants

The research was conducted with both the participants in a summer intensive course in advanced interpreting skills and the first interpreting skills course, ASL and English Text Analysis, in a bachelor's degree program. The eight participants in the summer course were all certified interpreters with experience ranging from one to twelve years. There were seven females and one male; ages ranged from 25 to 45. All the participants were from the Midwest but did not all know each other prior to the course. Seven of the participants were European-Americans and one was an African-American. All but one had graduated from an interpreter education program. This course was a non-credit summer course that interpreters chose to take to learn more about consecutive interpreting and

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working with certified deaf interpreters. Students received hours toward the RID Certification Maintenance Program but were not graded in the course. Half of the participants knew the instructor/researcher from previous experiences.

The six participants in the fall group were students in the interpreting major at a university in the Midwest. The students ranged in age from 20 to early 40s. All the students were European-American females, and all but one was in her junior year. The course is required for the major, with students needing to earn a B- or above to continue in the interpreting major. Although some of the students knew each other from previous courses, one was a transfer student in her first semester at the institution, and one was originally in a different cohort. None of the students knew the instructor/researcher previous to the course.

The researcher and the teaching assistant were both European-American females. The researcher was in her 50s and had been teaching the fall course at this institution for five years. It was her first time offering this particular summer intensive course, although she had taught other intensive courses or workshops before. She had not met any fall participants before but previously had met half of the summer participants in interpreting situations. The teaching assistant was a senior in the interpreting program at the university and had taken the fall course the previous year. She knew all of the fall course participants. Neither the researcher nor the teaching assistant had previously done any formal research.

### *3.2 Data collection*

Data about student perceptions of small group work were gathered through anonymous written responses to an in-class pre- and post-course survey. The survey contained four open-ended questions with one question about the student's perception of working in small groups, a question about the strengths of small group work, one about the weaknesses of small group work, and one about the evaluation of group work. All surveys were given a code number by the students so that the pre- and post-course surveys could be matched, and all participants would remain anonymous. Participants could elect to take the survey, or not, without any consequences and could choose to stop filling out the survey at any point, so that no one was coerced into being part of the study. The paper survey was administered on the first and last day of each course without the instructor in the room.

## **4. Data analysis**

The researcher and the teaching assistant analyzed the data using an open coding scheme that is the "process of generating initial concepts from data" through qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 10). All the responses to the surveys were transcribed by question on the pre- or post-course survey. Then the researcher and the teaching assistant independently reviewed the transcript, question by question, to look for themes or concepts in the responses. The two then met to compare the concept coding system and themes. Within the first question, the focus was to determine which comments were positive, as compared to a negative statement about the participant's experience with small group work. Although participants were asked in the post-course survey if their perception of small group work changed, most people did not answer with a yes or no. Instead the responses were descriptions of their experiences that led to the researcher and assistant deciding whether the comments were negative or positive.

When reviewing the responses to questions two and three, there were themes that became apparent when types of comments were repeated more than once. In the responses to question two, concerning the strengths of working in small groups, the themes that appeared were: a) diversity of perspectives, b) increased sharing of ideas, c) building trust and rapport, and d) having more people to do the work. In responses to question three, regarding the weaknesses of working in small groups, the themes were: a) unequal participation, b) group conflicts, and c) off-topic discussions. Question three also had a sufficient lack of responses to the question to warrant this becoming a category in reporting the findings. These themes were then used to code each survey for the frequency of the themes.

#### *4.1 Findings*

The first three questions on the surveys (i.e., perception of working in small groups, strengths of working in small groups, and weaknesses of working in small groups) reflect student perceptions of working in small groups. The final question (i.e., opinion on evaluation of small groups for grading purposes) was asked only as information about student perception on evaluation and is not part of this study. The findings of the first three questions are reported separately by summer and fall courses in this section. The discussion of the findings and their implications follows in the next section.

##### 4.1.1 Please tell me your perception or opinion about doing small group work

*Figure 3: Question 1: Perception of doing small group work.  
Comparing pre-course survey and post-course survey responses*

Changes in perceptions	Fall course	Summer course
Negative to positive	2	3
Positive to negative	1	0
Negative to negative	3	0
Positive to positive	0	5

##### *Summer course*

There was a positive shift in student responses about their perceptions of working in small groups in the summer course; all students responded with a positive perception in the post-course survey. Three of the eight students' responses showed that their perception changed to positive from negative after the course that included cooperative learning activities. The remaining students showed no change; the perception of working in small groups was positive before the course and remained positive (Figure 3). There were many positive comments related to social interactions in the small group work:

The small groups helped me be more involved in a female environment, these groups helped me be involved more socially.

Yes! The way you mixed us was terrific. Base groups and discussion topics you gave us were very helpful. Helped me feel safe, and like I "belong."

This specific small group had more positive experiences than others I have experienced.

##### *Fall course*

## Cooperative learning

In the fall course, five of the six students started with a negative perception of working in small groups. That perception changed to a positive perception for two of the students while the other three maintained a negative perception (Figure 3). The shift from a negative to a positive perception is reflected by one student's post-course survey comment: "My previous experiences with group work were completely different than group work here in such a small program." This was in contrast to her earlier comment: "It's usually harder to get together with a larger number of people and feel like you are on the same page."

One student started with a positive perception: "I enjoy small group work. More questions get answered and it is not as overwhelming as doing a project alone." The response became more negative in the post-course survey: "It's less fun because we only do busy work."

### 4.1.2 What is your view of the strengths of working in small groups?

The responses to question two, about the strengths of working in small groups, can be categorized into four themes: diversity of perspectives, increased sharing of ideas, building trust and rapport, and having more people to do the work. Many of the students made comments that fit into more than one theme.

*Figure 4: Question 2: Strengths of working in small groups.*

	Summer pre-course survey	Summer post-course survey	Fall pre-course survey	Fall post-course survey
Diversity of perspectives	3	5	2	5
Increased sharing of ideas	7	7	4	3
Builds trust and rapport	4	3	3	1
More people to do the work	1	2	2	2

### *Summer course*

The summer participants listed strengths in all four themes. The importance of increased sharing of ideas was listed with the most frequency, with seven comments in the pre- and post-course surveys. The strength of small groups helping to build trust and rapport had frequent comments, with four comments in the pre-course survey and three in the post-course survey. The strength of diversity of perspectives was also listed frequently with three comments in the pre-course survey and five in the post-course survey (Figure 4). Many of the respondents listed comments that included more than one theme. Some of the comments from the post-course surveys follow:

The overall size of the group was nice which allowed all of us to get to know each other better, helped with the comfort level.

Trust the group to have the 'work the puzzle together' with me.

### *Fall course*

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A majority of the responses from the students in the fall course were about learning from a diversity of perspectives and the increased exchange of ideas (Figure 3). All six participants made comments about strengths in both the pre- and post-course survey and often more than one theme was included. Even when students had commented that their perception of working in small groups had not improved, due to a conflict, they still made comments about strengths of working in small groups:

You can get ideas from people and feedback on what you're doing. You can bounce ideas off of others and brainstorm together.

Several people with different experiences to lead the group one way or the other, can help one another.

Students in both groups listed many strengths of working in small groups even if they did not always like small group work.

### 4.1.3 What is your view of the weaknesses or challenges of working in small groups?

*Figure 5: Question 3: Weaknesses of working in small groups.*

	Summer pre-course survey	Summer post-course survey	Fall pre-course survey	Fall post-course survey
Unequal participation	3	2	4	3
Group conflict	4	0	0	3
Off-topic discussions	1	2	2	0
No response	1	4	1	0

#### *Summer course*

A strong positive perception of working in small groups was present in the summer participant responses even when they were asked about the weaknesses of small groups or how they are not helpful. Comments expressing concern in the pre-course survey about unequal participation decreased in the post-course survey from three to two. Similarly, there was a decrease in people's concerns about group conflict; no one mentioned it in the post-course survey, after four people had in the pre-course survey. Three of the eight people left the weaknesses question blank on the post-course survey after having answered it in the pre-course survey (Figure 5). One person even answered the weaknesses question in the post-course survey by stating, "This was a good experience for me."

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## **Cooperative learning**

### *Fall course*

Over half of the fall course participants listed in their pre-course survey that a weakness of small group work is having unequal participation; that improved slightly in the post-course survey, with one less person mentioning it. This group showed an increase in the concern about group conflict in their post-course survey, with three of the six people commenting. Prior to the course, two people had mentioned the concern of off-topic discussions; no one mentioned that in the post-course survey (Figure 4).

## **5. Discussion**

Upon review of the findings, there are several things that merit further discussion. Some of these relate to what the findings reveal about student perception of small group work after experiencing cooperative learning techniques, and others are about limitations and factors that influenced the study. The findings show evidence of a shift in perception about working in small groups and also some trends related to the types of comments made by participants.

The perception of working in small groups for the summer course students was completely positive in the post-course survey (Figure 3). Three people shifted from a negative to a positive response, and five remained positive. Their comments about strengths of working in small groups included comments in all four themes (Figure 4). This positive attitude is also noted when participants were asked about weaknesses and four of the eight in the post-course survey had no response after having responded in the pre-course survey (Figure 5). One person in the summer group even commented in the post-course survey question about weaknesses, “This was a good experience for me.”

The fall course participants made a slightly positive shift in perception, with two of the six changing from negative to positive, three of the six maintaining a negative perception, and one shifting from positive to negative (Figure 3). These participants showed concern about weaknesses of small group work when group conflicts arise; three of the six people mentioned this in their post-course survey (Figure 5).

Both the fall and the summer participants made negative comments that were related to the lack of positive interdependence that comes with trusting each other, one of the essential elements of cooperative learning. The following comments capture the sentiment of the people with a negative perception of working in small groups:

In every small group I've been in, someone ends up doing all/most of the work. Either people don't chip in or they aren't willing to trust someone else with the work.

I find group projects unfair to the individual participants.

When the essential elements of cooperative learning are part of the small group process, positive interdependence lessens the inequity of workload and can create a positive, equitable relationship. Students are then pleasantly surprised, similar to one person in the summer course who started out with a negative perception because she usually had to take the lead but then noted how well people worked together in this course. In the Kreke, et al. (1998) study, the authors noticed similar comments in seven of the nine participants whose perceptions changed from negative to positive. The shift from a negative perception of working in small groups, often due to lack of positive interdependence, to a positive perception appears to be a result of the use of cooperative learning techniques in the courses. Without controlling for other factors that influence student experience, we cannot be definitive about this; however, cooperative learning techniques were applied in all small group activities in the course and appeared to influence student perceptions.

Both groups also made comments about building trust and support or rapport. These comments were most frequent in the summer group's responses to question two, about strengths of working in small groups (Figure 3).

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## Krouse

Several people also made comments in their post-course survey response about their perception of working in small groups:

Built rapport with groups, great discussions at length. Laughed and vented. Found out I'm not alone in some things I questioned.

Base groups and discussion topics you gave us were really helpful. Helped me feel safe and like I "belong."

The small groups helped me be more involved in a female environment; these groups helped me be involved more socially.

Yes I prefer the small groups-it is not as scary.

These types of comments demonstrate the influence group work (in this case, cooperative learning), such as base groups, can have on building a “community spirit” or improving social relationships. This same effect was noted in other studies carried out by Johnson and Johnson (1998).

Both the fall and summer participants in this study listed the opportunity to experience diverse perspectives as a major strength of working in small groups; five of the summer participants commented on this in the post-course survey, as did five of the six in the fall course. As Johnson and Johnson (1994) and others have noted, this experience leads to more acceptance of diversity and an increased ability to manage conflict. These are attributes that are key to successful interpreting and required for RID certification (RID, n.d.).

It is important to discuss possible explanations of why these two groups were not equally positive in their responses to their group experiences. The summer group was composed of working interpreters who had chosen to take the course and were not graded. The fall group was filled with students who were enrolled in an interpreter education program and who were required to take the course; they had to receive a grade of B- or above to remain in the major. The summer group participants were older and started with a more positive perception of working in small groups. The length of the courses, one being a one-week intensive and the other a semester long, may also have contributed to differences. In order to determine if the age and experience of participants, length of a course, or grading are factors on the effect of cooperative learning, additional research would need to be done that focuses on these features. Additional studies by Johnson and Johnson (1989) would need to be reviewed to learn more about successful techniques with post-secondary students in graded situations, including grading methods. Action research could be conducted again with specific attention on grading methods, or it could be done with only activities that do not have a group grade to see how that influences students’ perceptions of working in small groups.

Another difference was that the fall group had to participate in a cooperative learning formal group project that was graded. The summer group did not have to participate in such a project (Figure 1). It is possible that the additional graded project did not create positive interdependence and, therefore, contributed to negative feelings about small group work. During the debriefing session of the groups that did the graded project, there were several comments about the conflicts within one group in particular. Students commented that others did not do their share of the work and two students had personal conflicts with each other. If this had been recognized earlier, the instructor might have provided assistance with these interpersonal skills, which is part of cooperative learning. Also, if the group members had the opportunity to continue to work together, they might have been able to move beyond this conflict, the storming stage, of the group process.

As the group begins to solve problems together, struggles are inevitable as they learn to interact with each other and accomplish tasks. Reminding the group to use their operating rules and leading the group through this processing discussion are two methods that faculty can use to help the group move through this storming stage. As

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## **Cooperative learning**

the group proceeds into the norming stage, a feeling of community and mutual commitment grows. Group members share mutual goals, solve problems, and accomplish tasks by sharing insights and different perspectives. Finally, the group reaches the performing stage where they use effective interpersonal and communication skills to nurture and maintain the group, focus on solving problems, and complete difficult tasks. (Kreke et al., 1998, p. 15).

There were also limitations in this study that may have contributed to the different findings between the two groups. First, both groups were small, which means there is less data and also that individual differences or conflicts will have a greater impact on the data. For example, there were only two small groups, of three people each, in the fall course. When there was a conflict between two people in one of the groups, the experience for half of the participants was affected. If there was a larger sample, the effect of periodic conflicts between people may have had less impact.

The research survey questions also posed a challenge because the open question format did not require people to state overtly if their perception about small groups changed or if their perception was positive or negative. Instead, the responses were open to interpretation by the researcher and the undergraduate teaching assistant. While each coded the data separately and then compared the coding in an attempt to corroborate the findings, interpretation of responses was still open to biases. Using a forced-choice scale, such as a Likert scale, would have given more reliable ratings on participants' perceptions of working in small groups. The questions also were not piloted or reviewed by other researchers. There may have been better questions for determining the extent to which the cooperative learning techniques influenced student perceptions of working in small groups.

A factor in this study is related to how thoroughly the cooperative learning techniques were followed by the instructor in the courses. It was easier to be consistent with base group meetings during the one-week summer course than to maintain the twice-weekly meetings during the entire semester course in the fall. The fall course also had an additional formal cooperative learning group activity that the summer course did not have. It was during this group project that two members of one group had a major conflict that was not resolved well. It is difficult, as an instructor, to know how to assist students with interpersonal interactions. While this is one of the essential elements for cooperative learning, it is one that the instructor lacked, especially related to assisting groups when they did have conflicts. While debriefing was helpful to the group to talk about the problem, group members were not required to do additional projects as a group; hence, they did not have the opportunity to move past this storming stage of the group process to finally reach the performing stage. Prior to doing more work with cooperative learning, the researcher will need to learn more about how to address interpersonal issues within groups and consciously think about how to assist groups through the stages of the group process.

Despite the limitations of the study, it provided insight into how the use of small groups influenced student learning. The cooperative learning techniques provided a tool for addressing small group work. Small group work shows the power of students learning from their peers, and cooperative learning helps to facilitate that. When incorporating small group activities, it is important to be intentional about applying the essential elements of cooperative learning, including being sure students understand what contributes to effective group functioning and why that is valuable to them; making sure students know what their shared goal is and the role each of them has in the plan to achieve that goal; and assisting students in developing the skills they need for working together effectively, both interpersonally and as a group.

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## **6. Implications for interpreter educators**

There are several observations that can be drawn from this study about the use of cooperative learning in interpreter education. These are issues that I will continue to explore within my teaching and that merit review by other educators. The positive shift in perceptions of working in small groups after the students experienced cooperative learning activities within a course is worth noting, as it shows the reduction of student resistance to working in small groups. When students are more open to small group work, they are more open to the benefits of developing better interpersonal skills and peer learning. There were also specific benefits that the students commented on that are assets within a classroom, such as learning to see other perspectives, developing more trust or rapport, and having an increased exposure to various ideas. As educators, it is well worth learning more about

cooperative learning and applying its essential elements to our classrooms to maximize the benefits of peer learning in small groups. Cooperative learning techniques can provide specific tools to facilitate small group learning. There were also the challenges of group grades and interpersonal conflicts noticed while students were working in cooperative learning groups that need further study.

In this study, cooperative learning techniques were used to create a sense of trust and support or rapport. Students commented on the importance of positive interdependence, building trust, and sharing diverse perspectives as the results of cooperative learning. These attributes can be advantageous, especially when working with interpreting students in high trust situations, such as doing self-assessments and peer assessments of interpretations. The use of base groups and formal cooperative groups by interpreter educators can be especially effective during workshops in which students do not know each other and need to develop trust quickly.

This action research project caused me to rethink how I use small groups to facilitate student learning and to be more intentional in facilitating the small group process. I had left the group process to luck or focused on the goal of a product only. I now realize that there are essential elements of cooperative learning that can be included when establishing and utilizing small groups. I understand that group work serves a key role in developing the interpersonal and social skills of interpreting students that is as important as their ability to transfer meaning between two languages. It is important to help students understand why they are working in small groups and how that will assist them in their work as interpreters. As the educator, I need to make this overt to the students by being intentional in my use of small groups. Social skills development needs to be stated as a goal in addition to the goal of the product of the project. I also need to teach the social skills needed for the group process and conflict resolution to students, as well as interpreting skills.

Frequently, students have not liked small group work because of the conflicts between members or the unfair division of work. Cooperative learning addresses both of these concerns but requires that we, as educators, know more about the stages of group development and how to assist group members through the process. This will not only reduce the conflicts that can arise during small group work but also will empower students to develop better interpersonal communication skills. Personally, the results of this action research have demonstrated to me that I need to deepen my skills in these two areas and to continue to grow in how I assist students in working in small groups. Clearly, this is valued in the field of interpreting with the inclusion of human relations and interpersonal skills in the requirements for certification by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID, n.d.) and in the domains of the entry-to-practice competencies (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005) for interpreting students.

## 7. Conclusion

Through this action research project, we have seen how cooperative learning techniques may have improved students' perceptions of working in small groups. I have shared why student perception of working in small groups in previous classrooms concerned me and why I chose the structured approach of cooperative learning to address it. In the literature review section of this paper, I have explained what cooperative learning is, why educators would use it, how it is different from competitive or individualistic efforts, how it is different from traditional small group work, and the ways cooperative learning is structured. I have explained how I used cooperative learning in two classroom settings and gathered data by surveys and field observations as part of action research. This data was then analyzed to determine any findings that might have implications for me, as an interpreter educator. All of this has convinced me of the value of using cooperative learning in interpreter education and the importance of being intentional in the use of small groups. I also realized I need to develop additional skills in the essential elements of assisting students with group development and interpersonal communication. So, I continue the cycle of action research by seeking to improve this aspect of my teaching and determine its effect on student learning.

I am also personally convinced of the merits of action research as a tool to improving teaching and determining whether what we are doing, as educators, is facilitating student learning in the way we had hoped. Prior to doing this action research I would use various methods of teaching and then wonder about the responses I was getting from students or from the evaluations of student learning. I had not done the literature review to place that teaching method, activity, or theory within a context; nor did I have a way to evaluate its effectiveness. Often

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educators have shared with me that they take little time to reflect on what is effective teaching from year to year; action research would give them that opportunity and tools for reflection. By adding some evaluative tools, such as student surveys, that are focused on a specific aspect or teaching approach, I will be able to continue to improve my teaching within the cycle of action research.

### 8. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their support: Amanda Moran for her help as my teaching assistant with this research; Dr Debra Russell and Kelli Stein for their support while conducting and writing-up the research; and Dave Gagne, Emily and Ben Krouse-Gagne, Patty Gordon, Dr Laurie Swabey, Jan Radatz and Paula Gajewski Mickelson for their encouragement and confidence in me.

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# Dissertation Abstracts

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

## Conference Interpreting in Malaysia: Professional and Training Perspectives

**Noraini Ibrahim-González**

*Universiti Sains Malaysia Email: [noni@usm.my](mailto:noni@usm.my)*

Degree: PhD dissertation, Universidad de Granada, 2008

**The primary aim of this research is to provide an exhaustive description of the situation of conference interpreting in Malaysia, from two different but very closely related perspectives: professional practice and interpreter education and training. This description may serve as a compass that helps relevant parties such as the interpreting service providers, the practitioners, the educators and trainers and the training institutions take crucial steps in order to move forward.**

This research consists of three studies in three distinctive areas: (1) Conventions and Meetings industry, (2) the practice and market of conference interpreting, and (3) interpreter education and training. In the first study, the principal objective is to identify the major players that are directly or indirectly related to the field of conference interpreting in Malaysia and provide a map of interconnection among them. In the second study, the prime objective is to describe the practice and profession of conference interpreting in Malaysia. This is a comparative study between the local conference interpreters and professionally trained conference interpreters who are members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters practicing in the Malaysian market. The third study aims to provide a description of interpreter education and training in Malaysia for future interpreters and already practising interpreters in the Malaysian conference market. The research strategy adopted for this research is the survey approach, combining multiple sources of data; review documents, observation, questionnaires, and interviews.

The main conclusions drawn from this research are: (1) the Conventions and Meetings industry in Malaysia has shown positive growth and conference interpreting as an important service that can further boost the industry's growth should take advantage of this situation, (2) the absence of a professional association for interpreters, code of ethics, standards or guidelines on working conditions and remuneration scale, as well as the lack of training and continuing education show that interpreting cannot be considered just yet as a true profession in Malaysia, (3) the current interpreter education programme in Malaysia does not meet the criteria of an interpreter training program and the graduates it produces are not qualified to present themselves as professional conference interpreters.

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## Dissertation abstracts

### **Thinking Through Ethics: The Processes of Ethical Decision-making by Novice and Expert American Sign Language Interpreters**

**Liz Mendoza, Ed.D.**

*University of California, San Diego Email: mendozaliz@cox.net*

Degree: Ed.D dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2010

In the course of their work, sign language interpreters are faced with ethical dilemmas that require prioritizing competing moral beliefs and views on professional practice. There are several decision-making models, however, little research has been done on how sign language interpreters learn to identify and make ethical decisions. Through surveys and interviews on ethical decision-making, this study investigates how expert and novice interpreters discuss their ethical decision-making processes and prioritize *prima facie* duties, also called meta-ethical principles (Ross 2001).

The survey participants included 225 novice interpreters who have three or fewer years experience as a nationally certified interpreter, and 168 expert interpreters who have ten or more years as a certified interpreter. Three novice and three expert interpreters were chosen to participate in the face-to-face interviews. The findings show that both novices and experts similarly prioritize the *prima facie* duties of 'fidelity,' 'do good' and 'reparation.' The variability between the groups indicate that novice interpreters' responses include citing their professional ethical code, rubric decision-making guidelines, and using low-context discourse to analyze individual-focused responses. Expert interpreters, conversely, drew upon tacit knowledge built upon a foundation of Code of Professional Conduct, used high-context discourse to develop a collective-focused response.

### **More than Meets the Eye: Revealing the Complexities of K-12 Interpreting**

**Melissa B. Smith**

*University of California, San Diego, Email: mbsmith@palomar.edu*

Degree: Ed.D dissertation, University of California, 2010

Although many deaf and hard of hearing children access education through interpreters, research on educational interpreters is scant and has focused on inadequacies of under-qualified interpreters rather than examining exactly what it is that qualified interpreters do. To determine the skills and knowledge interpreters need to work in K-12 schools, it is crucial to identify current practices of educational interpreters. For this research, three interpreters working in fifth and sixth grade classrooms at three school sites were videotaped and interviewed to explore what interpreters do in the course of their work, and to illuminate the factors that inform their decisions.

This study reveals not only five primary tasks that interpreters perform, but describes in detail what interpreters do as they strive to optimize visual access, to facilitate the learning of language and content, and to cultivate opportunities for participation. Data indicate that even qualified interpreters are not always well-equipped to meet the essential needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in K-12 settings. Results of this study contribute to our understanding of the complexities of interpreters' decisions in light of multiple and competing demands. Findings highlight the need for further research and serve as a call to action to improve the educational experiences of mainstreamed students.

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## Dissertation abstracts

### Studies in Swedish Sign Language: Reference, Real Space Blending, and Interpretation

Anna-Lena Nilsson

Stockholm University Email: [annalena@ling.su.se](mailto:annalena@ling.su.se)

Degree: PhD dissertation, Stockholm University, 2010

This thesis comprises four separate studies of the same material: a ten-minute Swedish Sign Language monologue. *Study I* describes the form, meaning, and use of the sign INDEX-c, a pointing toward the chest traditionally described as a first person pronoun. It is argued that INDEX-c is used not only with specific reference to the signer or a quoted signer, but also with non-specific reference. Contrary to what has been reported, INDEX-c is used not only for constructed dialogue, but also in constructed action. The analysis reveals two separate forms, as well, labeled as reduced INDEX-c and distinct INDEX-c, respectively.

*Study II* describes the activities of the non-dominant hand when it is not part of a two-handed sign. A continuum is suggested, moving from different rest positions that do not contribute to the discourse content, via mirroring of the dominant hand, for example, to instances where the non-dominant hand produces signs of its own while the dominant hand remains inactive, i.e. dominance reversal. Several of the activities of the non-dominant hand, including the four types of buoys that are described, help structure the discourse by indicating the current topic.

*Study III* uses Mental Space Theory and Conceptual Blending Theory to describe the use of signing space for reference. A correlation is shown between discourse content and the area in the signing space toward which signs are meaningfully directed, and also between these directions and which types of Real Space blends the signer mainly uses: token blends or surrogate blends.

Finally *Study IV* looks in more detail at three segments of the discourse and their Real Space blend structure. An initial analysis of eight interpretations into spoken Swedish is also conducted, focusing on whether preselected content units (discourse entities and relations) are identified. A large number of Real Space blends and blended entities are argued to result in less successful renditions measured in terms of preselected content units.

### Meaning in Context: The Role of Context and Language in Narratives of Disclosure of Sibling Sexual Assault

Risa Shaw

Gallaudet University, Email: [Risa.Shaw@Gallaudet.edu](mailto:Risa.Shaw@Gallaudet.edu)

Degree: PhD dissertation, Union Institute & University, 2007

This sociolinguistic study explored how female survivors of brother-sister incest talked about disclosing that abuse to family members. It examined how contextual factors influenced discourse usage and narrative structure in American Sign Language (ASL) and American English across two contexts – a conversation between two survivors, and an interview between a survivor and a person with no history of sexual abuse – allowing comparison across languages and across contexts.

The data included a first-time-told and first-time-retold narrative. The first-time-telling lacked cohesion and clarity, which increased significantly on retelling. The data show the vocabulary choices the participants used to index the perpetrators, themselves, and the abuse were highly context dependent. The ASL disclosure narratives revealed ways in which audism and linguicism exacerbated the traumatic experiences of the Deaf participants. The data also uncovered

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## Dissertation abstracts

backchanneling that functioned to display shared identity. This study suggests that non-verbal information captured through video-taping is essential to understanding spoken language interactions as well as signed language interactions.

The sociolinguistic and trauma findings suggest implications for the field of interpreting regarding how one conceptualizes the task of interpreting, the meaning of context, where meaning lies, and how an interpreter can gain access to the meaning in a particular interaction.