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# International Journal of Interpreter Education

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# *Editorial*
# Putting Interpreter Educators to the TEST: Testing, Ethics, and Technology

**Jemina Napier, Editor**[1]

*Macquarie University*

Welcome to the fourth volume of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE)*. I am delighted to announce that this will be the first of two volumes to be published this year. The second volume is due in November 2012; this will be a special issue that will feature papers on educating interpreters that were presented at the *Critical Link: Interpreting in the Community* conference in Birmingham, UK, in July 2010. Momentum is increasing for the journal, and we have already allocated papers to volumes in 2013, so please do remember that there is a rolling call for manuscripts and submit something for consideration in the Research or Commentary sections. If you are not sure where your manuscript might fit, do not hesitate to contact me as the Editor, or any member of the Editorial Board, for advice.

As with previous volume, this issue has articles concentrated on particular themes. It features a balance of manuscripts submitted by spoken and signed language interpreter educators and researchers, whose findings and discussions are applicable across the languages and modalities of our work. The three key themes of this volume are those that particularly TEST interpreter educators:

- **T**esting
- **E**thic**S**
- **T**echnology

Each of these three areas has been an underresearched component of our work in educating and training interpreters, but are all increasingly becoming important issues for us to consider.

Language testing research is a long established area of speciality in applied linguistics (see Brown, 2005; Hughes, 1989; McNamara, 2000), which has significance in interpreter education as much of the testing protocols have been developed in relation to testing linguistic and communicative competence. There is now an emerging

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body of research that focuses on translation and interpreter testing. Various research studies have investigated the challenges in setting and rating tests for interpreters (e.g., Angelelli, 2006; Bernstein, 2000; Clifford, 2005; Stansfield & Hewitt, 2005) and translators (e.g., Goff-Kfouri, 2004; Kozaki, 2004); and recently, Angelelli and Jacobsen (2009) produced an edited volume that focuses specifically on issues in translation and interpreting testing. Yet discussion of testing in signed language interpreting is scarce (see Russell & Malcolm, 2009; Leeson, 2011). This scarcity is somewhat surprising considering that this is an area that we as interpreter educators constantly grapple with when considering program entry and exit testing (as discussed by Bontempo & Napier, 2009). What assessment is needed to ascertain if someone has the aptitude to be an interpreter? How do we decide if someone has the competence to qualify from an interpreter education program and go out into the real world as a practitioner? How do we verify whether a practitioner deserves certification or accreditation in his or her country of practice?

For this reason it is heartening to see two contributions in this volume that discuss testing with interpreters, from two different perspectives. Lisa Diamond, Maria Moreno, Christy Soto, and Regina Otero-Sabogal explore factors for bilingual staff who work in a healthcare setting and are tested on their language competence to be able to function as interpreters, with a focus on Spanish-English interpreters in the United States. Jim Hlavac, Marc Orlando, and Shani Tobias discuss intake tests for a short interpreter-training course for students using a variety of different spoken languages in Australia. Each of these articles identifies the complexities for designing, administering, and validating the results of interpreting tests in their different contexts.

Another emerging area of research and discussion in interpreting studies focuses on the ethical decision making of interpreters; some might even argue that it is "trendy" to discuss ethics (Mikkelson, 2000). The notion of ethics is neatly summed up by the ethicist Peter Singer:

> Ethics is about how we ought to live. What makes an action the right rather than the wrong thing to do? What should our goals be? These questions are so fundamental they lead us on to further questions. What is ethics anyway? Where does it come from? Can we really hope to final a rational way of deciding how we ought to live? If we can, what would it be like, and how are we going to know when we have found it? (Singer, 1994, p. 1)

In the last decade, practitioners and researchers in spoken and signed language interpreting have become much more engaged in exploring questions such as those posited by Singer in relation to interpreting. There is greater discussion in the literature about what we mean by ethics in interpreting, and about the impact of our decision making on the outcome of the interpreter-mediated communicative event as well as on the participants who rely on the interpretation (e.g., Cokely, 2000; Hoza, 2003; Janzen & Korpinski, 2005; Katan & Straniero-Sergio, 2001; Lipkin, 2008; Rodriguez & Guerrero, 2002; Rudvin 2007; Tate & Turner, 2001).

A popular approach to ethical and professional decision making in signed language interpreter education has been proposed by Dean and Pollard (2001), who adapted Karasek's (1979) demand-control theory to examine the complex occupation of signed language interpreting. *Demand-control theory* is a job analysis method useful in studies of occupational stress and reduction of stress-related illness, injury, and burnout. Dean and Pollard have described sources of demand in the interpreting profession, including environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal demands. They suggest that interpreters can use "decision latitude" and implement various controls to deal with the demands placed upon them. An updated description of their theoretical application and an argument for ethical decision making as applied to interpreters of all languages can be found in a more recent publication in the journal *The Interpreter & Translator Trainer* (Dean & Pollard, 2011). The demand-control schema has been promoted and widely adopted among signed language interpreter educators (particularly in the United States) as a framework for the analysis of interpreting assignments, role, and ethics (e.g., Dean & Pollard, 2006; Forestal & Williams, 2008; Witter-Merithew, 2008). As much as more published discussions of ethics in interpreting emerge, and the teaching of ethics and ethical decision making to interpreting students proliferates, there is still a dearth of research that investigates how interpreters behave ethically, and on their perceptions of ethical practice. Thus Liz Mendoza's article in this volume is timely, as it provides an overview of an empirical study of processes of ethical decision making by novice and expert American Sign Language interpreters, and it gives us food for thought in how to use this knowledge base in teaching interpreting students. Although her paper is not strictly about ethics alone, Ali Hetherington's article in this volume discusses research on supervision and

the signed language interpreting profession in the UK, which has a direct impact on ethical practice for interpreters.

The Commentary section features three articles that all focus on technological aspects of interpreter education. The advent of video and digital technology has made a significant difference to what we are able to do inside and outside the classroom as interpreter educators, and the articles provide an overview of how each of the authors uses technology in their classrooms to enhance the student learning experience. Della Goswell in her article and Judith Collins, Granville Tate, and Paul Hann in theirs describe how they use the annotation software ELAN to teach students how to gloss and analyze their interpretations. Tom Cox shares how he provides feedback to students using YouTube functions to annotate video clips. In the student section, an article from a graduate student at Gallaudet University, Erica Alley, provides another discussion of technology in her review of the literature on video remote interpreting and exploration of the implications for educating video remote interpreters. Finally, in the open forum section, CIT's resident technical expert Doug Bowen-Bailey and Dr. Sherry Shaw from the University of North Florida have a conversation about online learning, which concludes the technology theme.

The next convention of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers is taking place in Charlotte, North Carolina (see the announcement later in this journal), and I encourage readers who are spoken and signed language interpreter educators to attend. The program is always full of robust discussions of research-based and reflective teaching practices. The first volume of IJIE in 2013 will be dedicated to papers presented at this conference, so if you are not able to attend in person, you will at least be able to read about some of the interesting work taking place in our field.

To end with a quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." This journal seeks to provide more to interpreter educators and researchers in terms of evidence-based knowledge, so we can progress our thinking in theoretical and practical terms about interpreter education. This volume advances our understanding of **testing**, **ethics,** and **technology** in interpreter education, and thus provides us with a little more evidence for some of the core principles of interpreter education. Happy reading.

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# Bilingual Dual-Role Staff Interpreters in the Health Care Setting: Factors Associated With Passing a Language Competency Test

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**Abstract**

**Although using trained interpreters can improve care for patients with limited English proficiency, using untrained interpreters may impair it. Without a valid language skills test for interpreters, it is difficult for health care organizations to identify bilingual staff who can serve in a dual role as interpreters. We hypothesized that individuals born outside the U.S. with a higher education level and prior interpreting training and reporting high confidence in interpreting abilities would be more likely to pass a test to function as a dual-role interpreter. We surveyed and tested 387 dual-role interpreters in a large, integrated health care organization. There was a positive association between the above factors and passing the test. Studies like these may help health care organizations to better screen dual-role interpreters. Until standards for interpreters are developed, anyone asked to function as an interpreter in a health care setting, including dual-role interpreters, should undergo testing.**

Keywords: interpreter; foreign born; survey; testing, assessment and evaluation; training

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# Bilingual Dual-Role Staff Interpreters in the Health Care Setting: Factors Associated With Passing a Language Competency Test

## 1. Background

Although using trained interpreters has been shown to improve quality of care and outcomes for patients with limited English proficiency (LEP; G. Flores, 2005; Karliner, Jacobs, Chen, & Mutha, 2007), using untrained, ad hoc interpreters may impair them (Gany et al., 2007; Gerrish, Chau, Sobowale, & Birks, 2004). Effective communication between patients and providers is critical to the delivery of safe, high-quality care. With approximately 100 languages commonly spoken in the U.S. (Shin & Bruno, 2003), it is often not feasible to provide professional interpreter services for all LEP patients. Providers often resort to other means to communicate with these patients, including family members, friends, and bilingual ancillary or clinical staff who serve a dual role as interpreters in a medical setting. *Dual-role interpreters* are generally ad hoc interpreters who are hired in an administrative or clinical position as their primary role but use their bilingual language skills to serve as interpreters in a secondary role (Wilson-Stronks & Galvez, 2007). A bilingual employee may provide direct services in both languages, but without confirmation of language proficiency and additional training in interpreter ethics and confidentiality, this employee is not qualified to serve as an interpreter (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, 2010). The U.S. government mandates that health care organizations ensure that interpreters achieve proficiency in English and the target language, complete formal training, and comply with ongoing quality assurance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, 2001). Despite the national movement for standards and training, the literature contains few studies of the contributing factors associated with passing medical interpretation tests.

Serving as a dual-role interpreter does not ensure the language proficiency and interpreter skills needed to provide protection of a patient's confidentiality, impartiality, accuracy, and completeness of interpretation, which are commonly included in interpreter trainings. Frequently, dual-role interpreters have not received training in medical terminology, a code of ethics, and patient confidentiality. Even when using trained, experienced interpreters, there are variations in medical interpretation. A recent study of routine clinical encounters identified alterations in 31% of all utterances, only 5% of which had a clinically significant effect on the clinical encounter (1% had a positive effect and 4% had a negative effect; Jackson, Nguyen, Hu, Harris, & Terasaki, 2010). Several studies have shown that untrained dual-role interpreters are more likely than professional interpreters to make significant errors with potential clinical consequences when interpreting for LEP patients (G. Flores et al., 2003; G. Flores, M.D., 2006; Gany et al., 2007; Moreno, Otero-Sabogal, & Newman, 2007). One study showed that untrained, dual-role interpreters (who were administrative and not clinical staff) made 83% more interpretation

errors compared to trained interpreters. When untrained dual-role interpreters were tested for language competency including medical vocabulary, 23% did not pass a test at the level to be able to assist with provider–patient communication (Moreno et al., 2007).

Without a valid and reliable language skills test that will allow all interpreters, both dual role and professional, to be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they possess, it is difficult for health care organizations to identify bilingual staff who might do well serving in a dual role as interpreters and those who would not (Moreno et al., 2007). Understanding which factors might influence a bilingual staff member's ability to serve as a qualified dual-role interpreter in the health care setting—in particular, passing or failing a language competency test—would be helpful in the process of hiring and training bilingual staff. Factors that could affect dual-role staff interpreter language skills include being born outside of the U.S., higher education level, experience with interpreting, and confidence in interpreting abilities (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Capps, Fix, Passel, Ost, & Perez-Lopez, 2003; Downey & Zun, 2007). A study from the Urban Institute found that 14% of workers in the U.S. in 2002 were foreign born, and many could be found in administrative and allied health jobs, suggesting that they may be asked to serve as dual-role interpreters (Capps et al., 2003). Although the perception is that many foreign-born workers enter the U.S. with minimal education, according to the U.S. Census, of the foreign-born people in the U.S. age 25 and over, 40% had completed high school or some college whereas 27.3% had bachelor's degrees or more education (Larsen, 2004). In addition, research has suggested a relationship between education level and communication competency (Downey & Zun, 2007) and has suggested that previous work experience and confidence may positively influence job performance (Bandura, 1977, 1994). For dual-role interpreters, having strong self-confidence in interpreting abilities may be influenced through mastery of those experiences with previous interpreter trainings. According to Bandura's theory, people who believe in their own capabilities have a higher performance, given that such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and motivation to engage in activities (Bandura, 1977). A study indicated that individual characteristics can impact the interpreter's belief about whether or not a certain knowledge or skill should be a core competency. These characteristics include length of training, trainees' experiences with prior training or relevant courses, and the number of interpreting encounters performed (Refki, Avery, & Dalton, 2008).

Based on the current literature and feedback from our own workforce, we hypothesized that a dual-role interpreter born outside the U.S. and with a higher education level would be more likely to pass a language competency test to function as a dual-role interpreter. We also hypothesized that dual-role interpreters who had prior interpreting training and reported high confidence in their interpreting abilities would be more likely to successfully pass a language competency test.

## 2. Method

### *2.1 Setting*

The integrated not-for-profit health care organization involved in this study (Sutter Health) comprises 26 hospitals, five medical foundations, more than 3,000 physicians, and approximately 4,000 dual-role interpreters. It serves 23 counties throughout Northern California, delivering in-patient and ambulatory services to approximately 18.4% of the state's patients, who represent wide cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. According to the American Community Survey estimates for 2009, more than 3.6 million people in the counties served by the health care organization in this study speak a language other than English at home, and 27% of adults in these areas reported LEP (American Fact Finder: United States Census, 2009; California Health Interview Survey [askCHIS], 2008). In addition, 2000 U.S. Census data shows that more than 1.5 million people speak English "less than well" or are LEP. Among this population, 49% speak Spanish, 39% speak Asian languages, and 12% speak Indo-European languages as their primary language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

## *2.2 Study Sample and Procedures*

Eligible participants were the 387 Sutter Health dual-role interpreters who had participated in both the required language competency test and a posttest survey. Beginning in April 2003, organizational executive staff worked with managers to identify staff persons serving as dual-role interpreters who had not previously received formal interpreter training or testing. The process of recruitment and language competency test of dual-role interpreters at this organization has been described previously (Moreno et al., 2007). The language competency test is described below and was mandatory for all staff persons functioning as dual-role interpreters at Sutter Health. The survey was sent via email to those who had completed an online training module on skills used by interpreters. The survey was sent in October 2009 and included 18 questions on demographics, interpreted language history, English language speaking history, employment status, prior experience with interpreter trainings, and confidence in interpreting ability (see Appendix). Survey invitations were initially sent by email to 1,069 participants. One participant no longer worked for the organization, and 144 email addresses were invalid and thus were nonresponders. The survey was ultimately received by 924 dual-role interpreters, and 387 responded to the survey (42%). The survey was initially used to assess the success of the online training module. De-identified data was used in this study and was deemed exempt by the Sutter Health Services Research Institutional Review Board.

## *2.3 Language Competency Test*

Participants took a language competency test, which had written and oral components measuring completeness, accuracy, and medical terminology in English and the non-English language spoken. The test used a Likert scale to measure skills in language competence, which included assessments of overall accuracy, how clearly meaning was expressed, speed and pace, repetitions and clarifications, omissions and additions, factual data, and overall resourcefulness. Errors made were categorized as additions, omissions, over-summarizations/editing, delivery pace, errors in factual data, and misinterpreted or changed meanings. Subsequently, tested interpreters were given focused feedback containing recommendations for improvement, which included studying medical terminology, increasing exposure to the non-English language via media, and practicing conversation. The test is described in detail elsewhere (Moreno, Otero-Sabogal, Soto, Van, & Newman, 2009). Testing was available in 149 languages, including Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin, which are three of the most common languages requested by patients in the health system. A passing score was 70%. Failure to pass the test at the medical level meant that participants scored 69% or less on the test and, although participants may have demonstrated conversational skills in both languages, they did not possess adequate knowledge of medical terminology in English or the non-English language spoken.

## *2.4 Statistical Analysis*

We sought to identify whether being born outside of the U.S. and having a high education level, experience with interpreting, and confidence in interpreting abilities were associated with passing the language competency test. Baseline and unadjusted measures of age, sex, racial/ethnic group, primary language of participants, the language tested, education level, percent effort at work, job description, where second language skills were learned, and confidence in interpreting abilities were compared using chi-square tests, Fisher's exact test, and the Cochran-Armitage Trend test, where appropriate. In addition, logistic regression was used to identify main predictors of passing the language competency test, modeling outcomes with covariates introduced stepwise. All statistical analyses were performed using SAS Version 9.2 (Cary, NC, 2008).

## 3. Results

The study population consisted of 387 dual-role interpreters. Detailed patient characteristics are presented in Table 1. The majority of study participants were under 40 years old, female, Hispanic or Latina (Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina, or Of Spanish Origin), and had either graduated from high school or attended some college or technical school. Eighty-seven percent were full-time employees and half worked in some type of clinical job, which included physicians (MD), registered nurses (RN), physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), registered dieticians (RD), medical assistants (MA), licensed vocational nurses (LVN), and technical assistants. More than half of participants were born outside the U.S. (26% in a Latin American country, 16% in an Asian country, 4% in Eastern Europe, 0.3% in Western Europe, and 5% in another country not listed). Most had been in the U.S. for more than 15 years. The majority of dual-role interpreters reported their primary language as English, and 80% were native speakers of the language in which they interpret—that is, they learned the non-English language spoken at home or with family. Seventy-six percent reported Spanish as their spoken non-English language, and most were asked to interpret at least weekly, if not daily. Sixty percent reported some previous interpreter training, and 94% reported high confidence in their interpreting abilities.

### Table 1: Study Population Characteristics

| Characteristic | *N*=387 (100%) |
|---|---|
| Age | |
| • Less than 30 | 127 (33.2) |
| • 31–40 | 130 (33.9) |
| • 41–50 | 70 (18.3) |
| • Over 50 | 56 (14.6) |
| Female | 352 (91.2) |
| Racial/Ethnic Group | |
| • Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina or of Spanish Origin | 258 (67.4) |
| • Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Indian) | 73 (19.1) |
| • White (non-Hispanic/Latina) | 45 (11.8) |
| • Other | 7 (1.8) |
| Education | |
| • High school graduate/GED or less | 60 (15.6) |
| • Some college or technical school | 195 (50.8) |
| • College graduate | 129 (33.6) |
| Full-time employee | 334 (86.5) |
| Clinical job (MD, RN, PT, OT, RD, MA, LVN, other) | 194 (50.1) |
| Born outside the U.S. or Canada | 195 (51.2) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Years in the U.S. >15 | 333 (86.1) |
| Primary language<br>• English<br>• Spanish<br>• All others combined | <br>200 (51.8)<br>120 (31.1)<br>66 (17.1) |
| Native speaker | 311 (80.4) |
| Interpret in Spanish | 293 (76.3) |
| Use language skills in regular job duties daily or weekly | 299 (77.3) |
| Prior interpreter training | 229 (60.3) |
| High confidence in interpreting ability | 357 (93.5) |

Table 2 compares the proportion of respondents who passed the language competency test to those who failed by our variables of interest. All were analyzed as categorical variables. There were no differences observed in the proportion of respondents who passed the test and those who failed by age, sex, race/ethnicity, full-time effort, having lived more than 15 years in the U.S., being a native speaker, primary language, non-English language spoken, or those who use their language skills as a part of regular job duties frequently. A significantly higher proportion of participants who passed the language competency test had at least some college or technical school ($p$ = .02) compared to those who had a high school education or less. A higher proportion of those in clinical jobs passed the test ($p$ = .01) compared to those in administrative jobs (e.g., front-desk clerks, billing clerks). Passing the language skills test was significantly associated with being born outside of the U.S. ($p$ = .02). The proportion of participants with prior interpreter training who passed the test was significantly higher ($p$ =.01) compared to those with no experience. Finally, the proportion of participants who reported higher confidence in their interpreting abilities was significantly higher than those who reported lower confidence ($p$ < .0001).

**Table 2: Factors Associated With Passing or Failing the Language Competency Test**

| Characteristic | Fail * *n* = 94 (24.3%) | Pass* *n* = 293 (75.7%) | *p*† |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | | | n.s. |
| • Less than 30 | 35 (38.0) | 92 (31.6) | |
| • 31–40 | 31 (33.7) | 99 (34.0) | |
| • 41–50 | 15 (16.3) | 55 (18.9) | |
| • Over 50 | 11 (12.0) | 45 (15.5) | |
| Female | 85 (91.4) | 267 (91.1) | n.s. |
| Racial/Ethnic Group | | | n.s. |
| • Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina, or of Spanish Origin | 65 (69.9) | 193 (66.6) | |
| • Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Indian) | 15 (16.1) | 58 (20.0) | |
| • White (non-Hispanic/Latina) | 12 (12.9) | 33 (11.4) | |
| • Other | 1 (1.1) | 6 (2.1) | |
| Education | | | .02 |
| • High school graduate/GED or less | 18 (19.2) | 42 (14.5) | |
| • Some college or technical school | 55 (58.5) | 140 (48.3) | |
| • College graduate | 21 (22.3) | 108 (37.2) | |
| Full-time employee | 84 (89.4) | 250 (85.6) | n.s. |
| Clinical job (MD, RN, PT, OT, RD, MA, LVN, other) | 37 (39.4) | 157 (53.6) | .01 |
| Born in the U.S. or Canada | 55 (59.1) | 132 (45.7) | .02 |
| Years in the U.S. >15 | 84 (89.4) | 249 (85.0) | n.s. |
| Native speaker | 81 (86.2) | 230 (78.5) | n.s. |
| Primary language | | | n.s. |
| • English | 52 (55.3) | 148 (50.7) | |
| • Spanish | 27 (28.7) | 93 (31.9) | |
| • All others combined | 15 (16.0) | 51 (17.5) | |
| Interpret in Spanish | 71 (77.2) | 222 (76.0) | n.s. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use language skills in regular job duties daily or weekly | 68 (72.3) | 231 (78.8) | n.s. |
| Prior interpreter training | 46 (49.5) | 183 (63.8) | .01 |
| High confidence in interpreting ability | 77 (84.6) | 280 (96.2) | <.0001 |

*Values are number (%). Some denominators are lower due to missing data and columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

†Comparisons made using chi square or Fisher's exact where appropriate for categorical data and Cochran-Armitage Trend Test for ordinal data (education level, confidence levels).

We also used bivariate analyses to understand the relationship between our variables of interest (born outside the U.S., higher education level, prior interpreter training, and confidence in one's interpreting abilities), because many of them are related either intuitively or in published research (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Capps et al., 2003; Downey & Zun, 2007). Consistent with prior studies (Capps et al., 2003; Larsen, 2004), being born outside the U.S. was significantly associated with having a higher educational level ($p$ = .001). Those born outside the U.S. reported significantly higher confidence in their ability to interpret ($p$ = .02). There was no difference in education level among those with and without prior interpreter training or by confidence in interpreting abilities. Dual-role interpreters with prior interpreter training reported high confidence in their interpreting abilities ($p$ = .01) compared to those with no prior training.

In stepwise logistic modeling, there were no significant differences among participants who passed the language competency test and those who did not when the predictors of interest were controlled for. The results were similar when appropriate interaction terms were included.

## 4. Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the association between socio-demographic characteristics of dual-role interpreters and passing a language competency test. Our findings demonstrate the positive association between being born outside the U.S., having a higher education level, maintaining clinical jobs, having prior interpreter training, and reporting high confidence in the ability to interpret with passing a language competency test as a dual-role interpreter in a medical setting.

Medical interpreting is a field in evolution, with the ongoing development of standards of practice and codes of ethics (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, 2010). Currently, trainings for medical interpreters range from several hours in total to year-long courses; this variation may result in a wide range of competency levels among medical interpreters. Developing standards for medical interpreter certification is critical to assuring quality interpreter services in any health care setting. Ad hoc interpreters, such as bilingual dual-role interpreters, usually have at best minimal training in medical interpreting, and their fluency in both English and their native language is not known. Given the increased use of ad hoc interpreters in medical settings, it is critical to test the fluency (in English and non-English languages) of all health care staff serving in this dual role regardless of their racial/ethnic background, primary language spoken, or other demographic factors. Our study suggests some factors that may serve as helpful screening mechanisms for organizations seeking to hire personnel to function as dual-role interpreters.

Our findings indicate that whereas participants born outside of the U.S. had higher education levels than their U.S.-born counterparts, both of these factors could be considered indicators of passing the language competency test. Our study confirms previous research suggesting a relationship between being foreign born and having a high education level. One study showed that naturalized citizens born outside of the U.S. were more likely to have graduated from high school than noncitizens (Larsen, 2004), and that 67% of foreign-born people over the age of 25 living in the U.S. had completed high school or had received further education. Due to the relationship between

being foreign born and education level, it is difficult to predict how these independently influence success as a dual-role interpreter.

Our findings call attention to the critical need to train dual-role interpreters to enhance their language competence skills and confidence in performing their secondary role as interpreters. In our study, both prior interpreter training and a high level of confidence in one's ability to interpret were significantly associated with passing the language competency test. Studies show that accurate self-assessment of abilities usually stems from actual experience in using the skill in question (Bandura, 1977; Ehrlinger, 2008). According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy can come from both "mastery experiences," for example, performing a task successfully, and from psychological responses, such as the confidence reported by our participants (Bandura, 1994). Further research is needed to understand these relationships before they can be used as predictors of success for dual-role interpreters.

Although our study has findings important to health care organizations trying to hire dual-role interpreters to work with LEP patients, there are some limitations to consider. First, aside from the interpreter test scores, all of the other data used in these analyses were self-reported. There may be data that are over- or underreported, depending on participants' perceived incentives and disincentives to self-report. In particular, because all of the study participants were already functioning as dual-role interpreters, it is possible that some may have overestimated their confidence in their abilities in an effort to appear competent to be fulfilling this role, whereas others may have underestimated their confidence levels to keep expectations on themselves low. Although there is no evidence that confidence is reported higher among women or a particular ethnic or racial group, our study was disproportionately populated by Hispanic/Latina women, which may not be generalizable to dual-role staff interpreters in other health care settings. Currently, there is no universally agreed-upon test of interpreter skills. The test used in our study, although professionally developed and validated, may need improvement to assess interpreter ability once national standards for interpreters are established. Finally, our study demonstrates important associations that are no longer statistically significant in multivariate regression models, which implies that unmeasured variables may also be contributing to passing the language competency test. Further research is needed to identify these unmeasured variables and to further understand the influence of having a higher education level, being born outside of the U.S., having a clinical job, receiving prior interpreter training, and reporting high confidence in one's ability to interpret on language competence.

To date, bilingual dual-role interpreters' language competency levels have not influenced policies in health care organizations. The National Council on Interpreting in Health Care is piloting a national certification test for health care interpreters (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, 2010). This national consensus-building process will result in guidelines to assure that testing and training programs are teaching interpreters appropriate content to perform in a dual role effectively. Additionally, The Joint Commission recently released accreditation requirements to help hospitals better address effective communication, cultural competence, and patient-centered care (The Joint Commission, 2009). Although many aspects of effective communication, cultural competence, and patient-centered care are currently supported by existing requirements, the proposed requirements have not been translated into testing and training curricula to further improve the safety and quality of care for all patients.

Our study shows that having a higher education level, being born outside of the U.S., having a clinical job, receiving prior interpreter training, and reporting high confidence in one's ability to interpret were all factors associated with passing a language competency test for interpreters. These findings could also have implications in other countries where the use of foreign-born health care workers is common (Cummins, 2009; de Veer, den Ouden, & Francke, 2004; Okougha & Tilki, 2010). Further research must be done to understand the interrelationships between these factors and understand the role of self-efficacy in the training of dual-role interpreters. Studies like these may help health care organizations to better screen and train dual-role interpreters. Until national standards for interpreters are developed, anyone asked to function as an interpreter in a health care setting, including dual-role interpreters, should undergo testing and training.

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## Appendix: Sutter Health Interpreter Survey

Instructions: Sutter Health is interested in knowing what are the characteristics of the interpreters serving our patients. Please complete the following questions. Please select one response per question by placing an X next to your answer choice in the column titled "Response."

| Q# | Response | Question |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | What is your occupation? |
| | | Administrative assistant (Patient Service Representative, Front Desk) |
| | | Medical assistant, LVN, Technical Assistant |
| | | Clinical staff (MD, RN, PT, OT) |
| | | Other |
| 2 | | Is your job at a Sutter Health affiliate: |
| | | Part time |
| | | Full time |
| | | Per Diem |
| | | Other |
| 3 | | What is your age? |
| | | Less than 30 |
| | | 31–40 |
| | | 41–50 |
| | | 50 or over |
| 4 | | What is your gender? |
| | | Male |
| | | Female |
| | | Transgender |
| 5 | | What is your primary language? |
| | | English |
| | | Spanish |
| | | Russian |
| | | Mandarin |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Cantonese |
| | | Tagalog |
| | | Hmong |
| | | Punjabi |
| | | Vietnamese |
| | | Hindi |
| | | Arabic |
| | | French |
| | | Italian |
| | | German |
| | | Other |
| 6 | | In what **Non-English** language do you provide interpreter services? |
| | | Spanish |
| | | Russian |
| | | Mandarin |
| | | Cantonese |
| | | Tagalog |
| | | Hmong |
| | | Punjab |
| | | Vietnamese |
| | | Hindi |
| | | Arabic |
| | | French |
| | | Italian |
| | | German |
| | | Other |
| 7 | | In general, what languages do you read and speak? |
| | | English Only |
| | | English better than Non-English second language |
| | | Both Equally |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Non-English second language better than English |
| | | Non-English second language Only |
| 8 | | What language(s) did you speak as a child? |
| | | English Only |
| | | English more than Non-English second language |
| | | Both Equally |
| | | Non-English second language more than English |
| | | Non-English second language Only |
| 9 | | What language(s) do you speak at home NOW? |
| | | English Only |
| | | English more than Non-English second language |
| | | Both Equally |
| | | Non-English second language more than English |
| | | Non-English second language Only |
| 10 | | Where did you learn the **non-English** language you use to interpret? |
| | | At home or in family life |
| | | High school or college courses |
| | | Independent study courses |
| | | Study abroad or from living in another country |
| | | Other |
| 11 | | Where were you born? |
| | | United States |
| | | Latin American Country |
| | | Asian Country (including India and Pacific Islands) |
| | | Eastern Europe (including Russian-speaking countries) |
| | | Western Europe |
| | | Other |
| 12 | | If born outside of the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.? |
| | | Born in the US |
| | | 0–5 years |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 6–10 years |
| | | 11–15 years |
| | | 16+ years |
| 13 | | What is your race or ethnicity? |
| | | American Indian or Alaska native |
| | | Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Indian ) |
| | | Black, African-American |
| | | Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina, or of Spanish origin |
| | | Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Pacific Islander |
| | | White (Non-Hispanic/Latino) |
| | | Other |
| 14 | | How often do you use your language skills to interpret as part of your regular job duties (what you were hired to do – MA, LVN, RN, etc.)? |
| | | Daily |
| | | Weekly |
| | | Monthly |
| | | Rarely |
| | | Never |
| 15 | | What is your highest year of school completed? |
| | | Less than high school |
| | | Grade 12 or GED (High school graduate) |
| | | College 1 year to 3 years (Some college or technical school) |
| | | College 4 years or more (College graduate) |
| 16 | | When was the most recent interpreter training you attended? |
| | | Less than 1 year ago |
| | | 1–2 years ago |
| | | More than 2 years ago |
| | | Never attended an interpreter training course |
| 17 | | How confident do you feel in your ability to interpret? |
| | | Highly Confident |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Confident |
| | | Somewhat confident |
| | | Not confident |
| 18 | | How confident do you feel in your ability to provide accurate information? |
| | | Highly Confident |
| | | Confident |
| | | Somewhat confident |
| | | Not confident |

# Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback

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**Abstract**

**This article discusses features of an intake test for potential trainees for short, locally focused training in rural areas of Victoria, Australia. First, the design and choice of test components are discussed, with reference to the testing tools commonly employed in community interpreting training and in light of the fact that testers could not directly test proficiency skills in the language/s other than English (LOTE). The intake test itself elicited information such as level of motivation, knowledge of skills required of interpreters, and educational and occupational experience. Information elicited through the test provided a basis for diagnosis of testees' linguistic level, motivation, and general aptitude for acceptance into a training program and was the basis of a needs analysis upon which subsequent training was based. At the end of the training, both trainers and trainees were asked to provide feedback on the intake test's content. Trainers and trainees both saw the usefulness of these test components: English language level, anecdotal or general knowledge about interpreting, listening and note-taking skills, and communicative pragmatics. Both trainers and trainees identified education level as an important indicator of trainee suitability to training and to a trainee's capacity to engage successfully, more so than employment history. Components such as reading comprehension and written or sight translation were not rated as useful.**

Keywords: interpreter testing, interpreter training, community interpreting, intake testing

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# Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback

## 1. Introduction

This article discusses the contents of an entrance test designed for potential interpreter trainees and assesses the contents of the test on the basis of responses from test-takers and trainers. Construct validity in interpreting testing has been the focus of a number of studies (e.g., Clifford, 2005; Lee, 2008; Eyckmans et al., 2009; Turner et al., 2010) but few studies examine the contents of entrance tests that determine trainee selection. Among the tools available for test evaluation, this article focuses on the psychometric category of *authenticity,* that is, the relationship between test contents and the elicitation of skill performance during the test are those skills that were the focus of post-test training. Responses are gathered not only from test-takers but trainers who were not involved in the test design itself. This article is a contribution to the small but growing body of research on entrance test design (cf. Moser-Mercer, 1985; Bernstein & Barbier, 2000) and in particular to test design for vocationally focused initiatives that target particular potential candidates from less-represented language communities.

The entrance test was designed for selection of candidates for training in an interpreter skills training course. The course was an initiative funded by an Australian state government department, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, that is responsible for multicultural policy and programs that support linguistic diversity. The initiative sought not only to build basic interpreting skills among speakers of new and emerging languages but also to promote interpreting as a career pathway.

The initiative targeted speakers of new and emerging languages (see the Appendix for a list of the targeted languages). However, speakers of other languages could take the entrance test and be considered for inclusion in the training In most cases, individuals eligible to apply for the training were proficient in at least two spoken languages, but they were not expected to have had experience in interpreting or translation, nor were they required to have specific formal training or a minimum level of education. With no specific prerequisites, the program therefore began with an intake test to assess potential trainees. The test was designed to elicit specific information about testees' educational and occupational profiles and included exercises and questions to diagnose English language level and general aptitude and interest in interpreting. (Language skills could be elicited in English language only—an assessment of testees' proficiency in languages other than English [LOTEs] was not possible.)

Rather than simply document acquisition of linguistic forms or grammatical structures in a manner typical of traditional language tests, this intake test assessed abilities using competency- and function-based approaches (cf. Quinn, 1993). Such functionally focused testing, that is, testing to see if a testee can perform a particular task using any linguistic form appropriate to the task regardless of complexity, is an approach now commonly used in the assessment of language-focused courses in adult vocational education in Australia. Both second-language-acquisition assessment (e.g., the Australian Adult Migrant English Program) and language and literacy teaching for first-language speakers (e.g., adult literacy and basic education courses) have adopted such teaching and testing to a particular situation or context for their curricula and assessment tasks. In the context of training, the

value of the intake test lies in how well it elicits individuals' functional abilities. The test's value as an instrument subjected to analysis lies in how easily it can be implemented by testers and used by testees, and whether it relates to skill elicitation that is relevant to subsequent training.

To explore the value of the intake test, we first outline components of existing tests and test materials developed for potential and targeted community interpreting trainees. We then discuss the design of the test used and describe how each subsection was administered to and completed by testees. We examined testees' performance on the test through a needs analysis, and this determined the content and pedagogical approach for the training. Finally, we measured this intake test's "authenticity" or "validity"—its ability to elicit responses relevant to the training of interpreters and to allow diagnosis of capabilities and proficiencies—through evaluative feedback from both trainers and trainees. In the conclusion, we provide a comparison and summary of findings.

## 2. Entrance Tests for Community Interpreter Training

The testing of potential applicants for community interpreter training has received little attention in the relatively modest body of literature on community interpreter training. Most studies on interpreting training focus on the testing requirements for specialized, high-level courses, many of them 2 years in length and postgraduate, that typically train students for simultaneous or conference interpreting (e.g., Bowen & Bowen, 1989; Clifford, 2005; Gerver, Longley, Long, & Lambert, 1989; Lambert, 1991; Niska, 2005; Pippa & Russo, 2002; Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas, 2008). Lotriet (2002) discussed the selection of elements of an intake test for a group of potential trainees for a 1-month crash course in simultaneous interpreting. This test included diagnostic exercises for both languages but also other features such as the individual's reading activities, personal interests, handling of controversial questions, and self-concept that were thought to be important for the nature and content of future assignments.

The International Council for the Development of Community Interpreting (Critical Link) has recently promoted research into training and entrance testing for community interpreting. Papers from Critical Link conferences have touched on issues relevant to the testing needs we explore in this article. For example, Straker and Watts (2003) discussed training students from refugee backgrounds, many of whom speak languages that are new to their new place of residence; the authors also pointed to the "activist" nature of such training for disadvantaged groups. Michael and Cocchini (1997) also focused on the emancipatory and empowering effects of training young adult bilinguals and placing them as employed interpreters in their local neighborhoods, within language communities that are familiar to them. Penney and Sammons (1997) discussed in detail the experience of training community interpreters in a remote area (of Canada), whereas Valero Garcés (2003) bemoaned the haphazard training of large numbers of community interpreters in a country (Spain) that has only recently experienced large-scale immigration. In Australia, the notion of formal testing for community interpreters is usually discussed in the context of testing competency level for accreditation or formal recognition (e.g., Bell, 1997; Roberts, 2000), rather than as a means of selection for future training.

Few studies have focused on the characteristics of intake testing for community interpreter training. Mikkelson and Mintz (1997) suggested that asking ethics questions is as important a starting point as testing English-language level. Corsellis (2008) argued that test design for low-level training should elicit macro-skills in both languages as well as prior education and employment and include short role plays, sight translations, brief written translations, and free written compositions in both languages exploring the applicant's motivations. Gentile, Ozolins, and Vasilakakos (1996) also suggested a comprehensive list of features, to test general language skills with a focus on the macro-skills of listening and speaking, knowledge of cultural mores within each language community, basic note-taking techniques, memory retention exercises, and professional ethics.

Of course, an entrance test may include other components that a training course may further develop, such as questions and exercises to assess the applicant's knowledge of (cultural- or linguistic-specific) discourse-pragmatic norms, topic- and domain-specific terminology; skill level in voice modulation (i.e., enunciation in the L1, pronunciation in the L2), handling or establishing turn-taking conventions, and whispered simultaneous interpreting; and other elements such as stress-management training, dual-tasking exercises, freelance business

and self-management procedures, and use of audio-recording and playback technology (Hale, 2007). The test design used here seeks to address skills and competencies that are process related, heeding Hatim and Mason's (1997) cautions that interpreting and translating testing run the risk of providing only "once-off" demonstrations of skills that are otherwise process rather than product related.

The small body of research on community interpreting training is due to the unfortunate general lack of training that is either available for or required of interpreters. Pöchhacker (2004) lamented the low remuneration and frequent absence of training for community interpreters, which have commensurate effects on the attention and resources afforded to community interpreting, either from governmental or educational institutions. Hale (2007) identified the lack of recognition and pay for interpreters as a cause of the lack of interest or finances available for training, leading to a low demand for training courses and therefore a general paucity of courses available. Government-funded focused training programs are infrequent but welcome, and this study examines an example of pretraining screening for one such program as a general contribution to an emerging area of interpreting studies research.

Australia has particular challenges in developing appropriate practice models for interpreting. In Australia, provision of interpreting for new and emerging languages (see the Appendix for a list of these languages) includes some languages that have only recently completed a process of codification (i.e., the process of choosing which lexical items and forms, syntactic rules, and orthographical conventions are to be accepted in a language's standard) and standardization (the systematic ordering of rules, conventions, and norms together with the distinction between those forms that the standard includes and those forms that it does not, i.e., "dialecticisms"). For some interpreting-training participants, there may be no established standard in their language/s, which makes the development of appropriate practice models for interpreting extremely difficult (cf. Penney & Sammons's [1997] suggestions for trainees about noncodified terminology for Inuktitut). To be sure, this is not to suggest that community interpreting in any way disregards the needs of speakers of nonstandard varieties or regional dialects. As many community interpreters in Australia can attest, (at least passive) proficiency in a variety of dialects or nonstandard varieties is highly desirable, if not essential, for many language groups.

## 3. Method

To encourage a large number of bilingual speakers of such languages to develop interpreting skills, the Victorian Multicultural Commission's initiative set very few restrictive criteria for its applicants, making the intake test a crucial screening tool. Questions and exercises to assess a number of the elements mentioned above were included in the test design, including: (English) language proficiency, educational and occupational profile, aptitude/motivation, interpreter-specific skills, and writing, reading, and listening (Corsellis, 2008; Gentile et al., 1996; Timarová & Ungoed-Thomas, 2008). The test also asked for a brief written translation (Corsellis, 2008) based on a source text typical of sight translation tasks often performed by interpreters. Questions on ethics (Gentile et al., 1996) and role-relationship—which, in Chesher, Slatyer, Doubine, Jaric, and Lazzari's (2003) study, was rated as a highly important personal quality among a sample of 92 community-based interpreters—were also included. The mix of tasks was congruent with those included in the various test designs developed according to the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (cf. Wylie and Ingram, 1999) that elicit general and specific functional abilities. Other test design models based on conversational or pragmatic performance (e.g. Walters, 2007) or on control of categories of linguistic forms (cf. Carr, 2006) were not considered. The test comprised 10 areas of focus:

1. Educational level and employment experience
2. English language level
3. Language level of LOTE(s)
4. Knowledge of specialist language and terminology
5. Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics

6. General motivation
7. Reading and writing
8. Listening, note-taking, and memorization skills
9. Speaking and communicative pragmatics
10. Translation exercises

The test was administered to 32 potential trainees in Victoria, Australia—21 in Geelong, 11 in Morwell—in late August and early September 2010. Potential trainees were informed that the macro-skills of listening and speaking would be tested specifically and that the entire test would last 2.5 hr. Testees were required to attempt all sections of the test.

None of the program's five trainers was involved in the test design or delivery or in the needs analysis of testees' performance (neither were any of the authors of this article trainers in the program). The first author invited trainers to evaluate the intake test and provide feedback by participating in an anonymous, online SurveyMonkey questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 10 components, with responses graded along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not at all important*. Three of the five trainers completed the questionnaire. Total responses were averaged out to the closest whole number and are discussed below in Section 6.

We also asked accepted applicants to assess the test. Upon completion of the training, all trainees were given a blank copy of the intake test and a letter inviting them to provide feedback, via either a one-page questionnaire addressing the 10 components of the test or an anonymous online survey. Trainees were asked to rate the importance of each of the test's 10 components for admission to training. Responses were graded along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not at all important*. Sixteen of the 25 trainees completed the questionnaire—all opted for the paper version. Total responses were averaged out to the closest whole number and are discussed below in Section 7.

## 4. Test Content and Delivery

The test was administered by two testers. The first tester, the first author of this article, is a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)–accredited professional interpreter with experience as a community interpreter in Australia and Europe. Both the first and second testers are trained and experienced testers of the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR, formerly ASLPR) and the National Reporting System for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRSALN), both standard tests used in adult and postsecondary educational settings for ESL and EFL students in Australia. The second tester is also an accredited International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) tester. The tester orally asked the first three questions of the test and wrote down testees' responses verbatim.

**1. Personal details**

Name Age Citizenship Date of arrival in Australia Ethnicity/Nationality

**2. Languages**

What is (or are) your first language(s)? Other languages learnt in childhood?

Foreign Languages learnt later at school/ in adult life?

**3. Family**

Which language/s did you speak with your parents and other members of family?

Testers also orally asked Questions 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28, (see Sections 4.1 to 4.10). Testees completed all other questions independently—assessing testees' functional literacy skills in reading instructions and writing answers, skills also required for interpreting when completing sight translations, note-taking, and so forth.

The test included exercises that systematically elicited performance in the four macro-skills and note-taking. For a narrative writing exercise, testees had to read two texts together and answer reading comprehension questions. The testers administered two listening tests to evaluate comprehension and note-taking skills. Both listening tasks were played only once, and testees could take notes in the test papers. After listening, testees were invited to use their notes (and memory) to complete listening comprehension exercises: factual questions and responses (listening test 1) and information-gap cloze questions (listening test 2).

## *4.1 Education Level and Employment Experience*

Information was elicited about primary and secondary education, technical or occupational training, university study, and any other courses completed, along with details about the location, period, duration, language of instruction, and content of coursework (where relevant). Testees provided information about their current and previous employment, including formal job title, place of employment, duration, and duties performed. In addition, questions were asked relating to testees' voluntary or unpaid work and their knowledge of and eventual engagement with those language communities in Victoria for whom they could be potential interpreters. Information for this section was gathered from responses to Questions 5–9, 16, 17, and a curriculum vitae that testees were requested to provide.

**5. Primary Education**

Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

**6. Secondary Education**

Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

**7. Further Education / University**

Where? When? What studied? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

**8. Technical / Occupational Training**

Where? When? What learnt? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

**9. Other courses**

Name of course/s? Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

**16. Employment**

Please list previous employment, paid or voluntary. (Last job first)

## *4.2 English Language Level*

Information from Questions 5-9 provided a guide to testees' length and intensity of contact with English as a first, second, or subsequent language. Where childhood and adult education occurred outside Australia or not in another Anglophone country, questions were asked about formal instruction in and/or informal contact with the English language (place, time period, duration, level completed or formal qualifications gained) and subsequent contact with English as a formal subject and/or language of instruction in an Australian educational institution. This was elicited in Questions 10–12 and 14–15 and partly from Questions 1-4 (see above Section 4.1).

**10. English Language Learning Overseas**

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained:

**11. English Courses in Australia**

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained:

**12. Certificates/Qualifications of English level**

Name of certificate/Qualification: When awarded?

**14.** What do you find easy to do in English?

**15.** What do you need to work on most in English?

## *4.3 LOTE Language Level*

For all testees, acquisition of English followed contact and acquisition of one or more LOTEs. For most testees, proficiency levels of LOTEs could not be diagnostically tested or verified; therefore, testers made inferences about testees' formal and informal acquisition of language/s and functional use thereof from information about educational and occupational experience. Further information to more closely ascertain proficiency levels in LOTEs was gained through a variety of other questions. These included questions about informants' first language, language/s of which they consider themselves to be native speakers, any other languages learned in childhood or adulthood, language choice with parents, and language choice with other family members. Questions 4 and 13 below, in addition to Questions 2–3, 5–9 (see above 4.1) focus on self-declared functional proficiency.

**4. Personal use**

Which language/s do you think in?

Which language/s do you count quickly in?

Which language/s do you speak to yourself in?

When you are angry, which language/s do you speak in?

**13. Other language courses:**

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained?

Self-estimations of LOTE proficiency were also elicited through tables in which testees listed functional abilities for each macro-skill from simple to complex abilities. For example, for the macro-skill "speaking," functional abilities commenced with "use simple greetings," "small talk," "talk about your life," "talk to strangers for 5 minutes" to more complicated oral abilities such as "tell a joke," "take part in a job interview," "debate an issue," and "talk to a group of people of people for 15 minutes about health/education/law." Testees were invited to indicate which capabilities they had for each of their languages. Self-declared proficiency for the macro-skills of speaking and listening were elicited in Questions 20 and 21, presented below. Analogous questions were asked for the remaining two macro-skills, reading (Question 22) and writing (Question 23), which are not shown below.

**20. Speaking**

| | English | Language 1 | Language 2 | Language 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use simple greetings | | | | |
| Small talk, e.g., talk about the weather | | | | |
| Talk about your life | | | | |
| Talk to strangers for 5 minutes about your first country | | | | |
| Make an enquiry about a job | | | | |
| Tell a joke | | | | |
| Take part in a job interview | | | | |
| Debate an issue (e.g., Should smoking be banned in public?) | | | | |
| Talk to a group of people for 15 minutes about health/education/law | | | | |

**21. Listening**

| | English | Language 1 | Language 2 | Language 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Can't understand anything | | | | |
| Follow someone giving directions | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Understand weather forecast | | | | |
| Understand a television drama | | | | |
| Listen to jokes | | | | |
| Understand radio interview with a famous person | | | | |
| Listen to a university lecture | | | | |
| Listen to a doctor /lawyer/university professor talking about their subject area | | | | |

### *4.4. Knowledge of Specialist Language and Terminology*

Testees were invited to provide self-ratings of ability, from *not good* and *fair* to *good* and *excellent* for all languages in relation to specialist areas. Testers generally did not administer this question directly to testees but explained the intention of the question, namely, proficiency in special terms commonly used in these areas and the ability to understand speech and to be able to speak fluently in these subject areas as well.

**19.** How good is your knowledge of specialist language in English and in your other language/s?

Please rate your knowledge as: *not good* *fair* *good* *excellent*

| | English | Language 1 | Language 2 | Language 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medical terms | | | | |
| Legal terms | | | | |
| Economics terms | | | | |
| Political jargon | | | | |
| Consumer affairs / advertising / marketing | | | | |
| Literature | | | | |

### *4.5. Knowledge of Interpreting Skills, Ethics Questions, General Motivation*

The information flyers for the training did not state that previous interpreting experience was necessary or even advantageous. We anticipated however, that many testees would have experience as formal or informal interpreters. We gauged levels and circumstances of previous interpreting experience through invitations to

provide details (Question 18), knowledge of assumed attributes for an interpreter, (Question 26), and anticipated areas of difficulty (Question 27).

**18.** Have you ever worked as an interpreter before?

**26.** What do you need to do to become an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

**27.** What do you see as the hard things about being an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

Two ethics questions were asked. The first was a "faithfulness to dutifully interpret the source text" versus "faithfulness to the truth" test (Question 28). A question relating to personal management of stress in a difficult situation was also asked (Question 29). A further ethics question dealt with confidentiality (Question 30).

**28.** You are interpreting for a client in a court. The client says something that you know is untrue. What do you do?

**29.** You are employed by a government agency to interpret for a person who has personal problems. The person becomes abusive to both you and the government agency for whom you are interpreting. What would you do?

**30.** A husband and wife are divorced and the wife has custody of the children. She has moved to a different city with the children. You have interpreted for the wife and you know where she now lives. By chance you meet the husband and he asks you to tell him the new address of his former wife and children. What would you do?

Motivation is often measured through apparent and initial displays of behavior such as keenness, degree of seriousness shown to the testing situation, attentiveness, evident or assumed diligence in attempting tasks, and others. But these need not be reliable indicators of a person's aspirations. Questions about future plans (Question 24) and reasons why a testee wants to work in a chosen field (Question 25) are standard questions in job interviews. Written responses may corroborate demonstrated behavior.

**24.** What do you plan to do in the next two years?

**25.** Why do you want to work as an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

### *4.6. Reading and Writing*

Two texts were presented for testees to read through. The first text, "How to Become an Interpreter," was 350 words long and was an abridged and adapted version of a text from the Web site Spanish-translation-help.com

(n.d.). The text was modelled to contain a moderate level of difficulty. For example, some sentences contain multiple clauses. The content of the text was specific to matters concerning trainee interpreters only; the text's register is didactic and advisory, typical of that found in the opening pages of training manuals. Five questions related to information contained in the text and checked the testee's comprehension. Questions did not require testees to make extra-textual inferences.

The second reading text was directions of use for medication. The text contained 150 words and was a typical example of a sight translation text. Questions related to information contained in the text. Answers were judged for their content accuracy; grammatically incomplete sentences, spelling mistakes, and poor handwriting were not taken into account. The text was comparable, in content and in linguistic complexity, to texts encountered by community interpreters and to texts used in Certificate II to III level courses in postsecondary ESL courses.

**Reading test 2: Medication—Directions of use**

Directions of use

This medication is pleasant to take and starts to work quickly because it forms a clear solution and is ready to be absorbed as soon as you drink it.

It provides fast and effective relief from: toothache, migraine, cold & flu symptoms, sore throat, muscular pain.

Dosage: Adults take 4 tablets dissolved in half a glass of warm water every six hours.

Children over 15 years: Take 3 tablets dissolved in half a glass of cold water every twelve hours.

Children under 15 years: Do NOT give to children under 15 years of age.

Do not take this medicine if you suffer from stomach ulcers or asthma, if you are pregnant, or if you have an allergy to non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

Seek the advice of your doctor if you are over 65 years of age and if you take medication regularly.

**Questions:**

i. Does this medication start to work as soon as you drink it?

ii. Name two things that it provides fast relief from:

iii. How often should adults take the medication?

iv. How many tablets should children over 15 take in one dosage?

v. Is this medication recommended for children under 15 years of age?

vi. Name two conditions or symptoms that prevent you from taking this medication

Literacy skills are not a prerequisite for interpreting, although in the context of interpreter training, literacy skills that enable trainees to not only read but also note and record information are still important. Therefore, although the test focused on oral/aural skills, it included a small written component, designed to elicit testees'

ability to narrate, order, and describe visual stimuli. The writing test was based on the narration of a series of events. Visual stimuli for the events was provided in the form of 10 photographs that sequentially showed a cyclist riding on a road, being knocked over by a car, and being attended to by bystanders. The instructions for the writing test read: "Write a story about what happened in the pictures." Testees were requested to write approximately 80 words over 15 lines, and performance was judged on the accurate replication and the correct sequencing of the visual stimuli in writing. We looked for appropriate past tense forms—past simple, past continuous, present perfect—as well as linking words of sequence. Spelling and handwriting were not taken into account, and the written section was weighted less than the speaking and listening sections of the test. Testees' performance in the reading and writing sections contributed to the information presented about testees' acquisition of English (cf. Questions 10–13).

### *4.7. Listening, Note-Taking, and Memorization skills*

There were two listening tests. The first was a conversation between two people, unknown to each other, who engage in casual conversation on the street. Topics of conversation include the weather, daily activities, and a description of the duties of a travel agent. The dialogue was 350 words long and lasted approximately 3 min. We told testees that the listening text would last a few minutes and they were required to take notes, which would enable them to answer questions about the listening text's content. Testees were able to see in advance the questions that they would be asked in relation to the two listening exercises; however, they were actively discouraged from answering the questions while listening to the listening exercises.

Comprehension of the first listening test was tested through eight questions that required short responses of five words or fewer. Responses were judged according to their accuracy. The second listening exercise was a news report of a car accident. The text was a monologue of 310 words which lasted just over 2 min. Both exercises were designed at a level of complexity comparable to that of the tasks that were contained in the training itself.

No guide or instructions were given to testees as to how they were to take notes. Note-taking was primarily assessed by the number of correct responses that testees gave to the questions, that is, the form and content of note-taking was not assessed as such, simply its ability to assist testees in retrieving information required for question-answering. Testees were not expected to produce notes showing the use of symbols, acronyms, abbreviations and/or contractions for particular content-bearing items which are skills taught and acquired in formal training. Where notes demonstrated knowledge of symbols, contractions, and so forth, this was weighted positively. Attempts to capture every word (which were inevitably unsuccessful) were negatively judged. Lastly, Question 17 asked if testees had had a job that required note-taking or memorization skills:

The script and questions for Listening Test 1 follow:

**Listening Test 1: Conversation in the street—Transcript**

A. It looks like it's going to rain soon.

B. Yes, it does.

A. That's good. We need the rain. The ground is so dry at the moment. It must be very hard for the farmers.

B. Yes. My brother is a farmer and he said that if it doesn't rain soon, the price of fruit and vegetables will go up.

A. Oh. Look, it's raining already.

B. Yes, do you have an umbrella? I don't want to get wet. I'm wearing my best clothes and I have a job interview in about 30 minutes.

A. No, I'm sorry, I don't have an umbrella. Maybe we should go to the bus stop over there. At least there we won't get wet.

B. That's a good idea.

A. So you have a job interview in just half an hour. What job are you applying for?

B. I'm applying to work as a travel agent.

A. Gee, that sounds like a good job. What sort of things do you have to do as a travel agent?

B. You have to help people with enquiries about their travel plans both on the phone and face to face. This means that you have to look up on the computer the possible dates of travel and various ways that a person could travel to a particular destination. You also have to handle questions about accommodation and booking hotels. Another thing is organising insurance for travellers. And, of course, you have to find the best possible travel route at the cheapest possible price for your customer because there is a lot of competition amongst all the travel agencies. People often ring up four or five times to check different prices and routes. So you have to be able to deal with people well, both on the telephone and in person, so you need to have good communication skills.

A. Well, I hope you get the job. It sounds interesting and I wish you the best of luck!

B. Thanks a lot. Oh, look, the rain has stopped. Now, I must go now to be on time for the interview.

**Listening Test 1: Conversation in the street—Notes**

Please make notes here as you listen:

**Read through your notes and answer the following questions with short answers:**

i. Is the ground dry?
ii. What job does his brother have?
iii. What is he going to do in half an hour?
iv. Does he have an umbrella?
v. Where do they go when it starts raining?
vi. What job is he going to apply for?
vii. Name <u>two</u> things that a travel agent does?
viii. At the end of the conversation, is it still raining?

## *4.8. Speaking and Communicative Pragmatics*

The entire test lasted 2 to 2.5 hr. During this time, testees were usually reading, writing, or listening independently, without any interaction with others. There was a brief opportunity for testers to engage with testees before the testing started, and the tester orally asked the first three questions of the test and Questions 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28. There were also numerous other opportunities to test the aural/oral skills of testees in other areas of the test questionnaire. Assessment of speaking skills covered clarity and ease of expression, fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, volume, word-attack skills, and prosody. Pragmatic features such as turn-taking,

comprehension of indirect imperatives (e.g., "It would be good to include as many details as possible") salutations, and taking leave were also assessed. Features such as eye contact, body language, conventions of personal space, or emotional disposition were not judged.

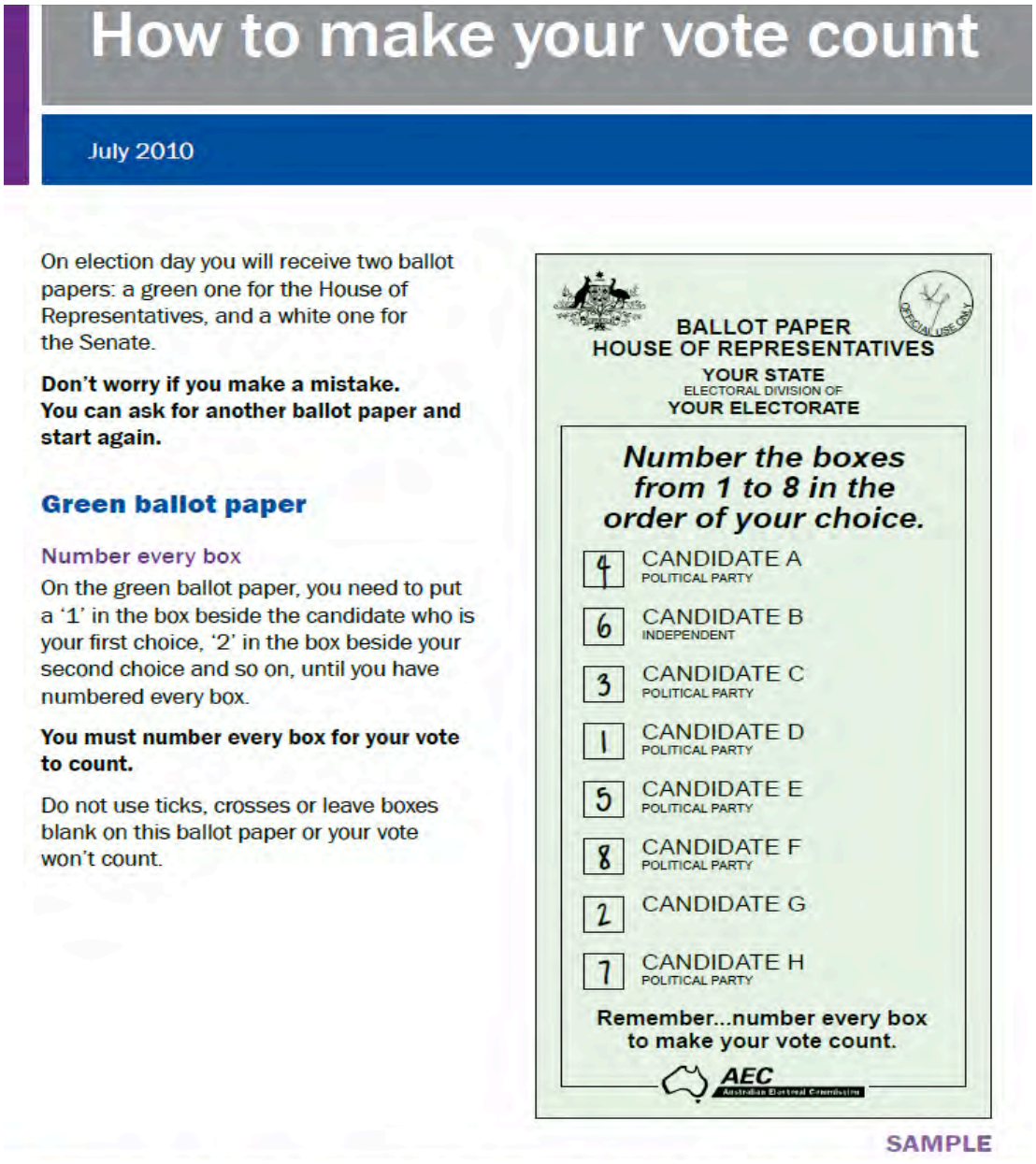
After the initial salutation, welcome, identity verification, explanation of test format and other ambient small talk, testers filled in numeric responses for each of the nine questions (1, 2, 3, 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28) from the questionnaire that they orally posed to the testees. Testers recorded numeric responses on the ISLPR scale (Wylie & Ingram, 1999) for these questions, and scored other spoken (solicited or unsolicited) responses. Both scores were collated to a total score at the end of the test. A score of 2 on the ISLPR scale for English speaking and listening skills was envisaged as a threshold for admission to training. A score of 2 was applied as the minimum entry level for the nine trainees accepted at Morwell, whereas a higher entry level of 2+ was retrospectively applied for applicants for Geelong, due to the overall higher level of oral/aural skills displayed by applicants at this center.

### *4.9. Translation Exercises*

The test included translation exercises into English. Translation is not a prominent part of interpreting training, and examples of transfer from written sources are usually modelled as sight translation exercises (cf. Corsellis, 2008). However, translation reading and writing exercises have been used in testing for certification in some community interpreting situations (e.g., Beltran Avery, 2003), and because we could not directly test testees' LOTEs, we included a translation exercise to give us some idea of testees' transfer abilities from the LOTE to English. We chose materials in LOTEs that had been translated from the same source-language (SL) English texts and that were topical at the time of testing, in August and September 2010, during the Australian federal elections. Materials from Arabic, Croatian, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Persian, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish were taken from an information page of the Australian Electoral Commission (Australian Electoral Commission [AEC], 2010). We present an example of one of the English SL texts below. Speakers of those languages not covered in the AEC translations were provided with short translations from the same English SL texts from the Department of Human Services of the Victorian Government, which has a Health Translations Directory database (Department of Human Services, 2009). Translations for the following languages were taken from this Web site: Amharic, Burmese, Dari, Dinka, French, Pashtu, Sinhalese, Tamil, and Urdu. We could not test translations from some languages spoken by multilingual testees, such as Ewe, Goun, Kiswahili, Liberian Creole, Mina, Nuer, Shilluk, Twi, and Watchi. We tested these multilingual testees in the translation skills from another of their languages for which there were translation materials.

We checked the translations from the LOTE texts (as back-translations) against the English source texts for content, expression, and grammatical accuracy. The content of the texts: registering to vote, how to vote, and community health information are common topics for community interpreting. Below is an example of an English source language text from the AEC.

Figure 1: Example of English source text. LOTE translations of this text were compared against this ST.



# How to make your vote count

July 2010

On election day you will receive two ballot papers: a green one for the House of Representatives, and a white one for the Senate.

**Don't worry if you make a mistake. You can ask for another ballot paper and start again.**

## Green ballot paper

### Number every box

On the green ballot paper, you need to put a '1' in the box beside the candidate who is your first choice, '2' in the box beside your second choice and so on, until you have numbered every box.

**You must number every box for your vote to count.**

Do not use ticks, crosses or leave boxes blank on this ballot paper or your vote won't count.

BALLOT PAPER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
YOUR STATE
ELECTORAL DIVISION OF
YOUR ELECTORATE

*Number the boxes from 1 to 8 in the order of your choice.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 | CANDIDATE A, POLITICAL PARTY |
| 6 | CANDIDATE B, INDEPENDENT |
| 3 | CANDIDATE C, POLITICAL PARTY |
| 1 | CANDIDATE D, POLITICAL PARTY |
| 5 | CANDIDATE E, POLITICAL PARTY |
| 8 | CANDIDATE F, POLITICAL PARTY |
| 2 | CANDIDATE G |
| 7 | CANDIDATE H, POLITICAL PARTY |

Remember...number every box to make your vote count.

AEC

SAMPLE

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 2010.

## *4.10. Assessment of Test Performances*

In a prototypical sense, intake tests seek to ascertain that applicants have minimum levels of ability that conform to a preconceived standard required for subsequent training. In relation to this test, "minimum levels of ability" relate to language level (we elicited this for English, but for the LOTE this was in most cases deduced through biographical and self-reported information) and motivation level.

We weighted other skills and abilities in our assessment, but these were not essential for selection for training. Occupational experience in any country or context demonstrates knowledge of "the world of work" and is a desirable asset that a candidate brings to "the world of interpreting work." Educational level provides a guide to a testee's length of contact with formal and focussed training, which can influence his/her readiness to undertake further training. Familiarity with the relevant LOTE community or communities is important so that trainees know how to interact with them in a culturally suitable manner. Knowledge of interpreting skills, whether personal or anecdotal, shows that testees view interpreting as an ability beyond that of simply knowing two languages. Answers to ethics questions indicate whether testees can conceptualize the interpreter's role as one in which professional as well as moral standards apply.

Additional skills are of less importance as the training presumed no previous knowledge of note-taking or specialist terminology. Although interpreters employ oral/aural skills far more than the macro-skills of reading and writing, community interpreters in Australia are required to acquaint themselves with a great deal of written information in a variety of fields. Even where a testee's LOTE has no formal orthography or writing system, Australia requires interpreters to have basic writing skills in English for training and employment. In order to model exercises, where possible, we attempted to include at least two speakers for each LOTE, so that trainees could use both languages with another trainee in role-play activities.

In Geelong, 16 of the 21 testees were accepted to the training. As stated, selection was based on demonstrated language level in English and demonstrated as well as inferred level of interest and motivation toward potential training. Nine of the 16 were speakers of new and emerging languages (see Appendix). The Geelong trainees were between 32 and 57 years old (average age = 41), and length of residence in Australia varied from 1 year to entire lifetime (average length of residence = 18 years). Almost all trainees had extensive employment histories, many had been or were currently employed in geriatric care, education, social work, and business and retail. Table 1 below presents the key characteristics of those accepted for training in Geelong.

*Table 1. Testees accepted for training—Geelong.*

| **Languages** | **Age** | **Length of residence (years)** | **Education level** | **Occupation** | **Previous experience** | **Note-taking skills** | **Prof. with termin-ologies** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turkish | 49 | 34 | Dip. Arts, Dip. Ed. Assoc. Dip – IT – Aust. | Casual relief teacher | Informal - family | Yes. Good | Very high |
| Macedonian. Also Serbian, Croatian | 43 | 23 | Yr 12 – Macedonia | Aged care worker | Informal - family | Fair, good | Good |
| Croatian | 52 | 41 | Yr 11 – Aust. Cert. III – Asset management | Accounts clerk | Informal - family | Did well in consec. exercise. | Good |
| Croatian | 54 | 51 yrs | Yr 11 - Aust | Unemp. aged care worker | Informal - family | Good | Fair |
| Croatian. Also Serbian | 52 | 50 yrs | Yr 11 – Aust. Cert I, II in Pharmacy | Pharmacy Assistant | Informal - customers, family | Good | Fair |
| Serbian. Also Croatian | 34 | Aust. born. Returned to Serbia aged 1 ½. Back to Aust '95. | Yr 12 – Serbia. Cert. IV in Nursing | Aged care Worker | Informal - family. Residents at aged care | Very good | Very good |
| Italian | 54 | 40 yrs | Yr 10 - Aust | House-keeper | Informal - family | Good | Fair |
| Pushto. Also Dari, Hazargi, Urdu | 33 | 9 yrs | Sec. School – Pakistan, Cert II – Transport & Logistics | Transport, logistics | Informal - family | Very good | Good |
| Sudanese Arabic, Shilluk | 49 | 6 yrs | Limited primary | Aged care worker | Informal – Sudanese youth | Poor | Fair |
| Persian, Dari | 43 | 4 yrs | Yr 12 Iran. Nursing degree Iran | Teacher at Aust school | Informal – family. Family teacher | Good | Good |

Australia ranged from 2 to 6 years (average length = 4 years). Many were tertiary (i.e., university) students, meat packers, or laborers.

*Table 2. Testees accepted for training—Morwell.*

| Language/s | Age | Length of residence in Aust. | Educational level | Occupation | Previous experience | Note-taking skills | Prof. with termin-ologies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arabic | 21 | 5 yrs | Yr 12 Aust, Cert IV – Bus. Admin | HR officer | Informal | Good | Good |
| Dinka, Sudanese Arabic | 37 | 6 yrs | Completing: B Soc. And Comm. Welfare | Multilingual teacher aide | Formal. Schools, Refugee camps. | Fair | Good. Knowledge of limits. |
| Nuer, Sudanese Arabic, Amharic | 36 | 2 yrs | Yr 10, Cert III Aged care | Student | None | Fair | Fair |
| Dinka, Sudanese Arabic, Kiswahili | 35 | 4 yrs | Yr 11. Cert II Disability, Comm. works | Multicultural education aide | Formal. Schools | Good | Good |
| Nuer | 35 | 5 yrs | Yr 11. Cert II, IV | Student | Informal | Not good | Fair |
| Nuer | 18 | 4 yrs | Currently yr 11 | Student | Informal | Fair | Good |
| Dinka, Sudanese Arabic | 37 | 4 yrs | Yr 9, Cert IV. Disability Services | Meat packer | Informal, formal,kindergarten | Fair | Fair |
| Nuer, Sudanese Arabic, Amharic | 41 | 6 yrs | Yr 10, Cert IV. Mental Health, Dip. Youth Work | Student support worker | Formal. NGOs, refugee camps | Fair | Fair |
| Nuer, Amharic, Sudanese Arabic | 42 | 3 yrs | Yr 12, Ethiopia, Hospitality course | Cleaner | Informal | Poor | Good |

## 5. Relation of Test to Training

Section 4 above described how the intake test sought to ascertain minimum capabilities. In regard to training, the test also sought to do the following: first, gauge personal profiles and ability levels to see what applicants could do—allowing for cross-comparison of abilities to see how homogenous a group the selected trainees would be, and second, ascertain strengths and weaknesses, with the intention that the training would particularly address the latter. Third and least important, the intake test aimed to solicit evidence of performance against which exit test performance could be compared.

To structure the training, we used as a basis a course outline (conforming to the overall guidelines for the training set by the Victorian Multicultural Commission) that contained an exhaustive and maximalist list of features. Specifically, training developed skills in the following areas:

- Basic skills in dialogue interpreting, including competence in active listening, memory retention, paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, and accurate transfer between English and LOTE (test elements: listening and note-taking, speaking, translation exercises).

- An understanding of the role and responsibilities of an interpreter working in community domains (test elements: knowledge of interpreting skills).
- Skills in researching terminology and preparing for assignments (test elements: knowledge of specialist language and terminology).
- An understanding of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics and of how interpreters should handle ethical dilemmas and intercultural challenges (test elements: ethics questions, knowledge of cultural practices of speakers of LOTE and Australian English, communicative pragmatics).
- Knowledge of pathways for further training and qualifications (test elements: educational level and occupational experiences).

## *5.1. Delivery of Training*

We offered the training course in basic interpreting skills in two regional locations concurrently. Training consisted of 30 hr delivered over five 6-hr blocks on alternating Saturdays from late September to early December 2010. Five different instructors led the training. The curriculum was designed to implement the objectives outlined above and was based on the needs analysis undertaken in light of intake test results. For example, we found that overall English proficiency, particularly literacy levels, were significantly higher among the cohort at one location compared to the other. On average, the length of time living in Australia was also greater for the former cohort, and educational levels were higher. This information was useful for the curriculum designers, who were able to tailor the training package accordingly: For the group of relatively new arrivals, written materials provided in the course workbook were simplified, as was the content of linguistic exercises and the final assessment, and more introductory information on Australian social systems was incorporated. In addition to its importance for curriculum design, the intake test also assisted instructors by providing a profile of the trainees, which enabled them to pitch the content, discussions, and activities at an appropriate level and judge a suitable pace for the training delivery. The information was also used to choose topics and culturally appropriate examples that trainees could relate to, thereby facilitating greater engagement with the training.

The course content delivered in the 30 hr of class time included:

1. Introduction to what interpreters do, the different modes of interpreting, and the situation of community interpreting in Australia/Victoria, including training pathways and accreditation.
2. The role of the interpreter, ethical requirements including the AUSIT Code of Ethics, and ways to deal with ethical challenges.
3. Linguistic exercises to build interpreting skills such as memory training, accurate repetition, listening comprehension, paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, and shadowing. These were introduced as monolingual (English) activities and then progressed to activities that involved linguistic transfer (LOTE<>English).
4. Preparing for interpreting assignments by building research skills and creating glossaries.
5. Dialogue-interpreting techniques related to seating, turn-taking, using the first person, eye contact, controlling the pace and flow of the conversation, asking for clarification, the attitude of the interpreter, and cross-cultural communication issues.
6. Role-play activities of dialogues in community settings involving both monolingual memory tasks and bilingual interpreting practice.
7. Sociocultural contexts and challenges of interpreting in community settings in the health care, legal, social security, and other domains. This information was then linked to the role-play activities.

To supplement the face-to-face sessions, trainees were also required to undertake self-study tasks from a course workbook, which were discussed in class the following week. These included building glossaries,

researching case studies on community interpreting settings and presenting them in class, answering questions posing ethical dilemmas, practicing interpreting from CDs with bilingual dialogues in (most of) their languages, preparing for role-plays, and reading articles on community interpreting. A variety of written information and links were provided to assist with self-study.

## 6. Feedback From Trainers About Intake Test Content and Allocation

The intake test was designed by staff persons who are practicing interpreters and who have much experience teaching both interpreting courses at the postgraduate university level and language courses in adult, postsecondary vocational educational institutions. Materials from existing intake tests, however, could be used to a limited extent only, as we could not use exercises such as paraphrasing or examples of written or spoken consecutive interpreting dialogues eliciting responses in both languages. Conversely, the inability to test LOTE skills meant that a significant part of the test needed to elicit detailed information about self-reported functional abilities in the LOTE. Further questions in the intake test also functioned to check self-reported abilities that had been elicited elsewhere. Our intake test also emphasized questions about future plans and motivations—such questions are redundant in intake tests for fee-paying, university-level courses.

Logistic and staffing constraints meant that the intake test and course design were completed by staff persons other than those who delivered the training. Although such an arrangement may be disadvantageous for the cohesion of test and training, this has the advantage of allowing trainers to examine a text, free of the need to defend "their test." Trainers were presented with a table containing a list of the sections of the test, divided in a way similar to the ordering of Sections 4.1 to 4.10 above, that is, "educational level and occupational experience," "English language level," "LOTE language level," and following. Trainers were asked, "How important were these things for admission to training?" and were invited to provide responses on a 5-point Likert scale that contained the following degrees of quantification: *very important, important, neither/nor, not so important,* and *not at all important*. Table 3 includes comments representing three trainers' combined and averaged responses. For readability, total averaged responses are allocated to the closest whole response.

*Table 3: Responses from trainers about intake test content and training content*

| **Profile / Ability / Skill** | **Section of entrance test and question nos.** | **Importance of these elements for admission to training?** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Education, Employment | General education: primary, secondary, vocational, tertiary (Q. 5–9) | | X | | | |
| | Employment experience (Q. 16, 17, 24) | | | | X | |
| English language | Level of English, including evidence of acquisition in formal settings (Q. 10-13) | X | | | | |
| | Subjective assessment of strengths / weaknesses in English (Q. 14, 15) | | | X | | |
| LOTE | Information about LOTE, circumstances of its acquisition and use (Q. 2-4, 20-23) | | X | | | |
| Terminology | Knowledge of specialist language and terminology (Q. 19, 20-23) | | | X | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics | Knowledge of interpreting skills (Q. 18, 26, 27) | X | | | | |
| | Ethics questions (Q. 28-30) | | | X | | |
| Motivation | Enthusiasm, motivation to become a well-skilled interpreter (Q. 24, 25) | | X | | | |
| Reading and writing | Reading for specific information (Reading test 1, 2) | | | | | X |
| | Writing a narrative (Writing test 1) | | | | | X |
| Listening, note-taking and memorization | Listening for gist and specific information (Listening test 1, 2) | X | | | | |
| | Note-taking and memorization (Q. 17, Listening tests 1, 2) | | X | | | |
| Speaking and communicative pragmatics | Clarity and ease of expression, fluency, pronunciation, volume, etc. (cumulatively assessed throughout spoken interactions) | X | | | | |
| Translation exercises | LOTE into English translation (Select tests from AEU or DHS Web sites | | | | | X |

*Note.* 1 = *very important*; 2 = *important*; 3 = *neither/nor*; 4 = *not so important*; 5 = *not at all important*.

The feedback from the trainers included both expected and unexpected responses. Trainers rated level of English, in particular clear and fluent speaking skills, as well as listening skills and the ability to listen for particular information, very important. These features are generally minimum or "threshold" capabilities that determine admission to the course as well as active and successful participation in training. Trainers also rated knowledge of interpreting skills as a very important feature. This response was unexpected, and it reflects trainers' assessment that skills specific to interpreting, for example, physical arrangements in a triangle, direct speech versus oblique oration, and speech flow and length are important parts of training. Trainers also listed educational level as important but previous occupational experience as unimportant. It appears that trainees' aptitude in learning new skills with a pedagogic approach (that may have been unfamiliar to some) was determined more by a higher educational level than by any particular previous work experience.

Although trainers were unable to ascertain trainees' knowledge and use of LOTE, this rated as an important factor for trainees to be able to attempt interpreting role-play activities or interpret into English texts played to them aurally. Prior subjective assessments about trainees' strengths and weaknesses in English were of importance only where weaknesses impinged on trainees' ability to engage successfully in certain activities. However, as trainers explained at the first session, the training was not intended to be a means for trainees to improve their English language skills. Building on listening skills, note-taking and the capacity to develop memorization skills were also important—this was one of the activities that was widely practiced in the training. Unsurprisingly, reading and writing as skills elicited in isolation were not rated as important skills before admission. Reasonable literacy skills are presumed, however, for a number of activities, for example, reading about ethics, reading role-play dialogues, glossary compilation, and texts on interpreting health, legal, education, immigration, social security, and other domains.

## 7. Feedback From Trainees

The 16 trainees at Geelong and nine at Morwell completed a variety of final assessment tasks and course feedback forms in the last session of the last day of training. Eleven Geelong trainees and five Morwell trainees completed the optional survey about the content of the intake test and its relationship to the training. As outlined above in Section 3, trainees were given a blank paper copy of the intake test to reacquaint themselves with the test content. Trainees were asked to think about the content of the training and to then consider whether each of the 10 components of the test were important for them to commence and undertake the training. The question posed to trainees was "How important were these for admission to the test?" Trainees recorded responses on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*very important*) through 3 (*neither important nor unimportant*) to 5 (*not at all important*). Trainees were not required to give their names, and trainers were not present when trainees completed the survey. Combined and averaged responses to the closest whole number are set out below in Table 4.

*Table 4: Responses from trainees about intake test content and training content*

| **Profile / Ability / Skill** | **Section of entrance test and question nos.** | **Importance of these elements for admission to training?** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Education, Employment | General education: primary, secondary, vocational, tertiary. (Q. 5-9) | | X | | | |
| | Current and previous employment. (Q. 16, 17, 24) | | | X | | |
| English Language | My level of English, (Q. 10-13, 14, 15) | X | | | | |
| LOTE | My level of LOTE (Q. 2-4, 20-23). | X | | | | |
| Terminology | Knowledge of specialist language and terminology (Q. 19, 20-23) | X | | | | |
| Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics. | Knowledge of interpreting skills (Q. 18, 26, 27) | | X | | | |
| | Ethics questions (Q. 28-30) | | X | | | |
| Motivation | My attitude and level of motivation. (Q. 24, 25) | | X | | | |
| Reading and writing | Reading for specific information (Reading test 1, 2) | | | | X | |
| | Writing a narrative (Writing test 1) | | | | X | |
| Listening, note-taking and memorization | Listening for gist and specific information (Listening test 1, 2.) | X | | | | |
| | Note-taking skills and memorization (Q. 17, Listening tests 1, 2). | | X | | | |
| Speaking and communicative pragmatics | Clarity and ease of expression, fluency, pronunciation, knowing how to communicate clearly with English and LOTE speakers | X | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Translation Exercises | LOTE into English translation (Select tests from AEU (2010) or DHS (2009) websites) | | | | | X |

*Note.* 1 = *very important*; 2 = *important*; 3 = *neither/nor*; 4 = *not so important*; 5 = *not at all important*.

There is great similarity between trainers' and trainees' responses about the relative importance of various sections of the intake test. Unsurprisingly, trainees rated their LOTE proficiency as just as important as their English proficiency in being accepted for the training—trainers, of course, were unable to ascertain trainees' LOTE levels. Trainees also rated their current or previous employment as being more important for their admission than did trainers. Terminology was also rated more important for trainees than trainers. This is also unsurprising, as trainees may have had little need to consider the particular features of language use in specialist contexts. Listening skills were predictably rated as important, whereas reading and writing skills were considered less so. Written translation exercises did not figure in the training so their importance as a test feature was also not rated highly.

## 8. Conclusions and Findings

This article examined the design and implementation of an intake test that specifically sought to elicit demonstrations of skill levels and to elicit information indicative of skill levels that could not be directly tested. This led to the design of a sizeable test, containing over 30 questions, tables, and exercises, that required between 2 and 2.5 hr to complete. Often in community interpreter training only one of a trainee's two languages can be systematically tested; trainers usually can monitor performance in simulated or role-play activities in only one language. Therefore, detailed questioning, often using various questions to elicit skill capabilities, is not only justifiable but essential.

The test also contained many questions that sought to elicit answers about testees' understanding of the interpreting profession and questions that contained hypothetical scenarios problematizing the interpreter's role. These questions sought to discover testees' prior knowledge about interpreting and to check, indirectly, if they had attempted to find out any information about it, in the absence of any (formal or informal) interpreting experience. Trainers reported that, at intake level, these questions had little bearing on training content and trainee involvement, as the training itself contained explanation and situation modelling of basic interpreting techniques and concepts so that prior knowledge was neither essential nor expected.

Both trainers and trainees identified education level as an important indicator of trainee suitability to training and to a trainee's capacity to engage successfully; education level was reported by both groups to be more important than employment history.

Overall, in determining the suitability and success of applicants to community interpreter training, skills activities such as reading and reading comprehension, writing, sight translation, and written translation exercises are of limited value. Intake tests for community interpreter training programs should therefore instead take care to solicit applicants' education level, as well as test performance in the key areas of listening, speaking, and communicative pragmatics.

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## Appendix

**Information flyer from the Victorian Multicultural Commission for regional interpreter training**

VICTORIAN multicultural commission

GPO Box 4698, Melbourne VIC, 3001
T. 03 9651 0651
F. 03 9651 0612
www.multiculturalvic.gov.au

# REGIONAL INTERPRETER SKILLS 2010 TRAINING COURSE GEELONG

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN INTERPRETING?
THIS COURSE COULD BE THE FIRST STEP TO AN EXCITING CAREER IN INTERPRETING

## STUDY TO BECOME AN INTERPRETER

The Victorian Multicultural Commission is offering Victorians in the regional areas the opportunity to study the basic skills of interpreting and gain a snap-shot of the language services industry through the 2010 Regional Interpreter Skills Course.

## WHAT IS AN INTERPRETER?

An interpreter is a person who transfers meaning from one language into another to help people who speak different languages to communicate.

## STUDY THE BASIC SKILLS OF INTERPRETING

Successful applicants will undertake a short course which will introduce the basic techniques and skills of interpreting.

## WHAT LANGUAGES DO I NEED?

The Regional Interpreter Skills Course is not a language specific course. If you are proficient in English and any of the target Languages Other than English (LOTE) you are eligible to apply.

The priority languages for the program are languages which are in recognised by the Victorian Government as being in short supply for interpreting services.

Speakers of other languages are encouraged to apply and will be considered if places are available. Speakers of the nominated languages (below) will be prioritised.

**Priority languages include:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Acholi | Amharic | Arabic (Sudanese) | Bari | Burmese |
| Chaldean | Creole | Dari | Dinka | Dzhongka |
| Eastern Kaya | Ewe | Falam (Chin) | Fanti | Fula |
| Fur | Gan | Haka (Chin) | Hazaragi | Hmong |
| Ikbo | Kachin | Kakwa | Kannadai | Karen |
| Khmer | Kikuyu | Kingoni | Kinyarwanda | Kirundi |
| Kono | Kpelle | Krio | Kuku | Kurdish (Kurmanji) |
| Kurdish (Sorani) | Lao | Liberian Pidgin | Lingala | Lisu |
| Loko | Luo | Madi | Mandingo | Mara (Chin) |
| Maru | Mende | Mina | Mizo (Chin) | Moru |
| Nepali | Nuer | Oromo | Pojulu | Rohingya |
| Sinhalese | Siym | Sukuma | Susu | Swahili |
| Tamil | Temne | Tidim (Chin) | Tigre | Tigrinya |
| Tshiluba | Twi | Uighur | Uzbek | Watchi |
| Yalunka | Zande | Zomi (Chin) | Zonot (Chin) | |

# Supervision and the Interpreting Profession: Support and Accountability Through Reflective Practice

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**Abstract**

**In this article, the author argues for the development of consultative supervision within the interpreting profession to reduce work-related stress, provide interpreters with opportunities for regular examination of their practice, and to protect those to whom interpreters provide a service. Supervision is a recognized means of accountability and support for many professions, yet it is largely absent from the training and continuing professional development of interpreters. Furthermore, the absence of literature into occupational stress for interpreters implies that such stress is unrecognized or considered unproblematic by the profession. The author draws on findings from a recent qualitative research study into occupational stress among signed language interpreters in the northwest of England to make an argument for the benefits of consultative supervision for the interpreting profession.**

Keywords: supervision, reflective practice, occupational stress, emotional and psychological impact, signed language interpreter, interpretative phenomenological analysis, ethical practice

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# Supervision and the Interpreting Profession: Support and Accountability Through Reflective Practice

## 1. Introduction

In this article, I argue for the development of consultative supervision for interpreters. The argument emerges from, and is substantiated by, a qualitative research study I conducted into the causes and management of occupational stress among a sample of signed language interpreters working in the northwest of England (Hetherington, 2011). I undertook the research because, as a practitioner, I was concerned about the lack of professional frameworks of support and accountability for signed language interpreters, and I was convinced of the need to understand and develop such frameworks within the profession. When I interpreted on a diploma in counselling course in 2002, I discovered the consultative model of supervision, which seemed to be a model of supervision that could benefit interpreters. I have since undertaken group, peer, and one-to-one supervision; due to the absence of signed language interpreters offering supervision, all my supervisors have been practitioners from outside the interpreting profession. My experience of supervision has strengthened my belief in the importance of supervision for interpreters and the need to increase the number of supervisors within the profession. In 2008, I undertook a Post Graduate Certificate in Supervision at Manchester University in the U.K.; qualifying in 2009, I progressed onto the MA research module, hoping to research the adaptation of existing models of supervision for the interpreting profession. I faced a problem of lack of evidence, however, due both to the absence of supervision in the profession and a lack of research, particularly with regard to occupational stress among interpreters. Preliminary, primary research was required, and my MA dissertation (*A Magical Profession? Causes and Management of Occupational Stress in the Sign Language Interpreting Profession;* Hetherington, 2011) was, therefore, research into the existence and causes of occupational stress and current strategies and support utilized by interpreters in the absence of supervision.

Two overriding themes arose from the MA study. First, interpreters believe that there is a continued assumption that they work as conduits in a purely linguistic capacity, which contrasts greatly with their own accounts of the complexity of their role and the responsibility they take to ensure effective communication. Second, interpreting can have considerable emotional and psychological impact on interpreters, particularly when they work with vulnerable client groups, for example, within child protection, social work, and mental health settings; furthermore, interpreters tend to work in isolation without organizational support. Based on these findings, this article puts forward an argument for consultative supervision as a beneficial means of ongoing reflective practice, support, and accountability for the interpreting profession.

*Supervision* is a recognized means of professional support and development in professions such as counseling and social work and other professions that take place in clinical settings (Carroll, 2007; Cutcliffe, Butterworth, & Proctor, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Inskipp & Proctor, 1995; Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000; Page & Wosket, 2001). Studies also indicate that supervision can reduce occupational stress and burnout (Begat, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Jones, 2009; Sterner, 2009), yet there has been limited discussion of supervision within the interpreting profession. This article explores why such an established and valued framework has not been developed for interpreters and considers how existing models of supervision can both support interpreters and protect those with whom they work. The following is a description of supervision, which, although it relates to clinical work, could be equally beneficial to the interpreting profession:

> Supervision is a formal process of professional support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop knowledge and competence, assume responsibility for their own practice and enhance consumer protection and the safety of care in complex clinical situations. It is central to the process of learning and to the expansion of the scope of practice and should be seen as a

> means of encouraging self-assessment and analytical and reflective skills. (Department of Health, 1993, p. 3)

The professions for which supervision is integral to practice can be characterized as "practice professions," "where careful consideration and judgment regarding situational and human interaction factors are central to doing effective work" (Dean & Pollard, 2005, p. 259). My research study suggests that there is a continued perception of interpreting as a "technical profession," in which the technical aspects of the work (linguistic ability, in the case of interpreters) are sufficient for effective work practices (Hetherington, 2011). This may offer some explanation for the lack of development of supervision within the interpreting profession, yet it does not accurately reflect the work of interpreters (Berk-Seligson, 2002; Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2005; Dickinson & Turner, 2009; Dysart-Gale, 2005; Harrington & Turner, 2001; Hsieh, 2008; Lee, 2009; Roy, 2000; Wadensjo, 1998) and, furthermore, it is a significant cause of stress.

## 2. The Research Study: Methodology

The aim of the MA research study was to gain a deeper understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences as interpreters and the meanings these experiences hold for them. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was the chosen methodology, as the primary concern was to gain an understanding of psychological processes and individual perception, rather than producing an objective "truth." This is particularly important as such accounts are underrepresented in literature. Furthermore, my role as the researcher within a range of possible methodologies was an important consideration in my selection of a method of inquiry. The core principle of IPA is that "the analyst explicitly enters into the research process" (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 20); I was aware that participants would relate to me as a fellow practitioner and I anticipated that our shared experience as interpreters would shape the interview process.

This study uses qualitative methodology in the form of semistructured interviews to allow participants to give detailed, first-person accounts of their experience of working as signed language interpreters. A loose structure gave some direction to the interview while simultaneously allowing for flexibility within the process, by allowing "the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants' responses" (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009, p. 57). I made an effort to design open, nonleading questions and follow-up prompts to make sure that I would not influence the participants or make assumptions about their concerns. The interview schedule aimed to encourage participants to reflect on their work experiences, and I invited their narratives by asking sufficiently open questions such as, "What do you like about being an interpreter?" and "Describe the main differences between a 'good' day and a 'bad' day.'" I anticipated that participants would not necessarily have supervision and wanted to gain an understanding of their reasons why. Mentoring is the framework currently offered by the signed language interpreting profession in the U.K.; for this reason, participants were asked, "Have you ever considered professional support such as supervision or mentoring?" and "What do you see as the difference between supervision and mentoring?" The interview schedule was consciously left flexible in order to ensure opportunities for participants to raise their own concerns that I had not considered. The aim was to obtain rich, detailed accounts from the participants of what they, as experienced practitioners, considered significant.

IPA uses purposive sampling to find a homogenous group for whom the research question will be significant, which then allows for in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Six interpreters participated in the study; all were women between the ages of 29 and 58 years and had been (fully qualified) Members of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI) in the U.K. from 18 months to 10 years. All of the participants either worked solely as community interpreters or spent a significant percentage of their working time in community interpreting situations. I informed participants that the information they provided would remain confidential and asked them to try to avoid naming other interpreters or clients in order to protect their confidentiality. I assured them that in the event of this happening I would use pseudonyms to replace any identifying information. I obtained permission to use direct quotes, all of which have been made anonymous, and participants are identified with pseudonyms.

## 3. Causes of Occupational Stress for Interpreters

There is a dearth of literature into occupational stress in the interpreting profession, which implies that such stress is either absent from or unrecognized by the profession. Recent research challenges this view (Dean,

Pollard, & Samar, 2010; Hetherington, 2011), and I draw on accounts from participants in my study to provide a context for a discussion on the benefits of supervision for interpreters. (I am concerned with the psychological rather than physical causes of stress, although I acknowledge that stress can also manifest itself physically [Dean et al., 2010; Delisle, Durand, Imbeau, & Larivière, 2007; Freeman & Rogers, 2010; Qin, Marshall, Mozrall, & Marschark, 2008]).

### *3.1. Conflicting Views of the Role of the Interpreter*

Participants in the study noted that a significant cause of job-related stress is the assumption that interpreters work solely from source to target language, without an understanding of how they manage instances of nonequivalence between two languages and the complexities of human interaction. Chris, one of the participants, described how she thought hearing professionals perceived her:

> They think I'm a magician's assistant, I wave my hands and the deaf person understands and they have no cognition around how I get from A to B or how things are being conveyed, or the amount of work that I need to do to enable this dialogue to happen. They can't pick up on gaps in deaf people's knowledge themselves; it's often the interpreter who will pick up on that, so they don't get a true sense of the deaf person. They maybe just go through this procedure; a procedure that they have designed for the majority community, which is hearing—one size fits all.

Other participants related similar accounts of how they supplement gaps in "fund of information" (Pollard, 1998, pp. 182–183), by providing explanations or background information to facilitate understanding. They expressed a belief that a lack of understanding of what the role actually entails can lead to a lack of respect for the profession, which echoes findings in other studies (Angelelli, 2006; Dysart-Gale, 2005; Hsieh, 2008); Chris described this as feeling like she is "an accessory they can pick up and drop at any point." All participants described a marked contrast between this expectation that they work as conduits and what they believe is necessary to ensure effective communication. This led some participants to express concern that they may "step out of role," an anxiety similar to that raised by interpreters in a study by Harrington and Turner (2001).

Dean et al. (2010, p. 42) identified "a problematic, stress-inducing gap between interpreting practice rhetoric versus the de facto practice experiences and behaviors of sign language interpreters." The implication is that, in addition to other professions misunderstanding the interpreter role, the rhetoric of the interpreting profession may also not accurately reflect de facto practice. Numerous studies have claimed that codes of conduct for signed language interpreters can lead to uncertainty about what is permitted within the role (Angelelli, 2006; Atherton, et al., 2002; Bahadir, 2001; Dean & Pollard, 2005; Dysart-Gale, 2005; Tate & Turner, 1997; Turner, 2005). For example, the statement that interpreters "should be impartial" (National Registers of Communication Professionals Working with Deaf and Deafblind Peoples [NRCPD], 2010) may lead interpreters to believe that there is an expectation that they *feel* impartial as well as behave impartially. Participants in the study described the code of conduct as too prescriptive and preferred to apply the ethical principle of "do no harm" to their own practice. The principle of "do no harm" has been one of the ethical principles guiding interpreting practice; however, the current code of conduct for interpreters working in the U.K. no longer contains ethical principles (NRCPD, 2010).

In addition to illuminating how interpreters manage complex communication dynamics without a feeling of recognition or respect of other professionals, my study also found evidence of the psychological and emotional impact of the work on interpreters. Dean et al. identified that "sign language interpreters on the whole reported significantly more psychological distress, depression and physical exertion than either the practice profession or the technical profession norms" (2010, p. 41). That interpreters experience "significantly more psychological distress and depression" should be of great concern for the profession.

### *3.2. The Psychological and Emotional Impact of Working as an Interpreter*

Interpreting assignments can be highly emotional, and witnessing the distress of others can be distressing for interpreters. Interpreters may also witness discrimination and poor service provision, which can result in conflicting emotions; interpreters may feel a sense of responsibility to "act" while simultaneously experiencing a sense of powerlessness. Amy, a participant in my study, described the effect interpreting for a deaf patient receiving upsetting news at a hospital appointment had on her:

> I got in my car and I cried just because of what had happened; it just didn't go the way it should have gone and I was just, I think I was just so angry with this doctor that it came out in emotion. I wouldn't put up with it and I know she did challenge it, so that was great she did that.

Harvey (2003) highlighted the risk of signed language interpreters empathically "drowning" and emphasized the importance of maintaining a sense of self as distinct from another to avoid this (p. 211). Figley (1995, p. xiv) used the term "compassion stress" to describe how professional caregivers, therapists in particular, experience "the natural behaviors and emotions that arise from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other—the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized person." However, interpreters do not only witness or "know about" events; they are also required to convey the content and affect of any interaction, often through use of the first person. Jenny described how she sometimes feels like she is "channelling someone." This raises the question of what interpreters do with their feelings while interpreting, and indeed how they prevent these feelings from surfacing. Furthermore, Amy's account suggests that because interpreters are not active participants and do not have an opportunity to have direct communication during the interpreted event, they may be left with unwanted feelings on completion of an assignment. Chris described her feelings being "pushed out" in the course of her work, which indicates that she was unable to prevent them from surfacing:

> Historically [the work] would trigger lots of feelings and emotions in me that I wasn't really prepared to let come out. That's why I went to go and do my own counselling and stuff, because those feelings and emotions did need to come out, but they were being pushed out through the type of work I was doing.

The emotional and psychological impact of interpreting has received some acknowledgment (Angelelli, 2003; Baistow, 1999; Bontempo & Van Loggerenberg, 2010; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Johnson, Thompson, & Downs, 2009; Malcolm, 2010; Tribe, 1999; Weibel, 2009), yet it requires further attention to equip interpreters with the relevant strategies to manage their responses. Without this, interpreters may not be aware of, nor prepared for, the effect the work might have on them and may believe their responses are due to personal weakness. Equally important is how interpreters' responses, including any negative reactions they may have toward clients, can affect others and inadvertently influence their interactions. This is particularly important as frequently no one else bears witness to their work; interpreters are often the only people present with access to both languages during interpreted events.

## 4. The Benefits of Supervision for the Interpreting Profession

Entering into supervision can be a cause of anxiety for interpreters, who may fear being "found out" or judged, particularly if we consider concerns they may have of "stepping out of role." To mitigate this, a model of supervision referred to as "consultative" or "professional" supervision, in which "the essence of effective supervision lies in the quality and character of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee" (Feasey, 2005, p. 41) emphasizes the importance of the supervisee choosing their supervisor. A positive supervisory relationship is regarded as paramount for supervisees to feel able to discuss difficult assignments or ethical decisions; without this, they may be reluctant to raise issues where they perceive they may be judged and supervision would be less effective. Val described what she would want from such a relationship:

> I would hope you could build up a rapport, a relationship with somebody that was strong enough to be able to accept positive criticism and know that it's not going to be shared with other people. I think it needs to be at that level where you trust somebody enough. I think you want that professionalism, that confidence, to be able to discuss with them things you might go home and think you could have done better, but you wouldn't tell another interpreter that because they might criticize you.

Participants in my study expressed a sense of loneliness when working alone. They valued opportunities for reflection and reported relying on informal support. Only one participant had formal supervision; the other participants reflected on their practice either alone or with trusted colleagues. Informal networks are a vital source of support; however, if the colleagues whom interpreters approach are friends, they may be reluctant to

challenge each other, which may limit opportunities for development and change. Supervision provides an opportunity for a trusting relationship to develop outside of a friendship network. Challenge and accountability, as well as support, are built into this relationship through the supervisor's professional role. The supervisory relationship acknowledges the power difference; the supervisee brings his or her work for discussion with the supervisor, for which the supervisor is paid by the supervisee. Dual roles are not recommended; for example, supervising a friend or close colleague may affect what the supervisee feels able to bring to supervision and, equally important, may restrict responses by the supervisor. Emphasis is therefore placed on maintaining the boundary between the supervisor and supervisee (Feasey, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Inskipp & Proctor, 1995; Page & Wosket, 2001).

There are three main functions of supervision, which vary slightly among the differing models. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) described the functions as "developmental," "resourcing," and "qualitative," and suggested that "combining the multiple functions is at the heart of good practice" (2006, p. 57). Below is a brief outline of these functions and how they can be applied to the supervision of interpreters.

## *4.1. Developmental Function*

The *developmental function* provides supervisees with an opportunity to develop their skills, understanding, and capabilities through reflection and exploration of their work practice with their supervisor. Supervisees enter into supervision at various stages of their development, and supervision can be tailored to meet their specific needs. For example, an inexperienced practitioner may require more support than a more experienced colleague who might prefer a more challenging experience. Although the supervisor may be more experienced than the supervisee, both recognize that the supervisee may bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the supervision session. This awareness redresses the power imbalance described above, to some extent. Feasey (2005) refers to this as "relational supervision."

Through the process of supervision, the supervisee also develops an "internal supervisor" as skills in self-reflection develop. Self-reflection complements rather than replaces supervision, because the opportunity to discuss work with a supervisor allows for the identification of issues the supervisee may not recognize, nor, indeed, wish to acknowledge. Val described the potential limitations of self-reflection: "You can do it yourself, but you can also fool yourself sometimes because you don't want to hear the bad stuff." The opportunity to receive feedback and guidance from an experienced colleague can be beneficial for interpreters at all stages of their development, enabling them to expand upon their existing knowledge and expertise.

## *4.2. Resourcing Function*

The *resourcing function* of supervision develops supervisees' awareness of their emotional responses to their work and helps them develop resources to manage their reactions. In Section 2.2 I described the emotional and psychological impact the work can have on interpreters and raised the question of whether it is possible for them to bracket their feelings while they are working and, if so, what effect does this have on them, and what do they do with these feelings on completion of an assignment? The work of an interpreter can extend across either side of an interpreting assignment; for example, most hospital assignments include time spent in hospital waiting rooms. Interpreters develop trusting relationships with clients while continuing to maintain ethical boundaries (Angelelli, 2006; Davidson, 2000; Hetherington, 2011; Hsieh, 2008), judging how much self-disclosure is appropriate to enable a client to feel comfortable discussing personal information with a clinician in the presence of the interpreter. Consider this in the context of a definition of "therapeutic listening," described as an "imperceptible activity that can be viewed as relaxing and chatting" (Jones, 2009, p. 353). Although interpreters may not describe such conversations as therapeutic, how they conduct themselves while "chatting" can have a significant impact on the client. Furthermore, minimal access to those with whom they can communicate with may lead some deaf people to share personal information with an interpreter, who in some situations may be unsure whether to act on such information. This is an instance in which the qualitative and resourcing functions overlap; supervisees may wish to explore their feelings as well as strategies for managing such situations.

Supervision can provide supervisees with an opportunity to recognize their personal and professional limits and gain a better understanding of how they work. A supervisor will be able to pick out "themes" that arise in sessions to facilitate an awareness of personal triggers and blind spots. Chris explained how through supervision she has developed an awareness of herself and what she brings to assignments: "You are the interpreter but you are also a person and sometimes your own personality can affect your practice," she continued. "I understand my own vulnerability, I take that in the room with me wherever I go; if it's part of me, it's part of the whole thing." By recognizing the impact certain types of assignments have on them, interpreters can make informed choices about the work they undertake.

### *4.3. Qualitative Function*

Recognition of the emotional and psychological impact of the work on interpreters is an important factor when exploring the benefits of supervision; however, of equal importance is the consideration of what safeguards are in place to protect consumers of services. The *qualitative function* of supervision ensures that interpreters monitor their practice, explore ethical decisions, and consider options for future action outside of the event itself, protecting interpreters and safeguarding those with whom they work. This is of particular importance when we consider that, in contrast to other practice professions, interpreters primarily work as freelance practitioners, outside of organizational structures. In most community settings—medical, social services and legal domains—interpreters work as sole practitioners, and bad practice can go unnoticed. The consequences of decisions made by interpreters can be considerable and require careful, considered ethical reflection. Supervision can provide a framework that can both inform and support ethical decision making.

Interpreters report that the majority of their education occurs after they complete their training and is learned "on the job" (Dean & Pollard, 2001). In other practice professions, newly qualified practitioners work under the guidance of senior colleagues and are "rarely the only individuals in the work environment with the specialized knowledge needed to conduct the work, and they rarely perform their duties unsupervised" (Dean & Pollard, 2001, p. 10). This is in marked contrast to the interpreting profession, in which not only do newly qualified practitioners work alone, but those in training do as well. Tort law requires practitioners to provide a standard of care whereby "the inexperienced professional is negligent if he does not achieve the standards of a reasonably competent and experienced person exercising the particular skill of his/her profession" (Pannet, 1992; cited in Jenkins, 1997, p. 42). This study provides further evidence that interpreters are required to make ethical decisions beyond the purely "technical" aspects of the work; without regular examination of their practice; interpreters, particularly those in training and those newly qualified, may be working beyond their personal and professional limits. Supervision can provide a "pragmatic, defensible framework for ethical decision making" (James & Elizabeth, 2006). Working collaboratively, supervisors and supervisees can develop a trusting working relationship to allow for an open discussion of work-related issues, allowing for a "reflective and creative" process rather than one that is "reactive and mechanistic" (Beddoe, 2010, p. 1284). Constructivists would argue that the very act of supervision can produce ethical practice as "the stories we tell of our practices and the ethics of those practices do not merely *reflect* our work, they produce us as practitioners and produce our practices" (Crocket, 2004).

In the U.K., supervisors are not responsible for their supervisees' practice. Supervisees alone have a duty of care to their clients, known as the *Bolam test* (Jenkins, 2006), to work according to the standards of care expected of a practitioner. The supervisor does, however, have an ethical and professional duty to protect clients from poor practice and, as a last resort, may inform a supervisee's registering body of unprofessional practice if this is unresolved within supervision. Supervisors ensure their own accountability by undertaking supervision of their supervision practice.

Overall, supervision provides an opportunity for supervisees to reflect on their practice, gain a different perspective on their work, and receive feedback and guidance where appropriate. The process of supervision helps supervisees develop an understanding of how they work, including their blind spots, prejudices, and limitations, which in turn informs the work they undertake.

## 5. The Absence of Supervision in the Interpreting Profession

There has been limited discussion of supervision within the interpreting profession, and practitioners I have spoken to from other professions have also expressed surprise at the notion that interpreters might have supervision, assuming that this would be purely to discuss lexical choices—a further indication that interpreting may be regarded as a technical profession. Within spoken language interpreting there has been some mention of supervision groups (Sande, 1998; Tribe, 1997), and more recently Dean and Pollard (2005, 2009) have emphasised the importance of supervision within the practice professional model. The following are reasons why I suggest that supervision has not been developed within the sign language interpreting profession in the U.K.

### *5.1. Perceptions of Supervision*

A discussion thread in response to my paper on supervision for the Supporting Deaf People Conference (2010) suggested confusion and misunderstanding within the signed language interpreting profession regarding the purpose and function of supervision. Supervision was generally regarded as part of a hierarchical line management relationship, a perception reflected in accounts given by participants of my study. Morton-Cooper and Palmer (2000) make a similar observation of health care professionals, who, they suggest, viewed supervision with suspicion as it was perceived as "top-down," a view also shared by midwives (McDaid & Stewart-Moore, 2006). This does not accurately reflect the model of supervision I present in this article; the supervisor is chosen by the supervisee and is often only aware of the supervisee's work through what the supervisee chooses to discuss in supervision. Line managers, on the other hand, have a responsibility to the organization they work within; as such, they are expected to monitor standards of practice and may raise issues with supervisees regarding their performance. Furthermore, they are responsible for staff appraisals, all of which may result in a guarded supervisory relationship. The perception of supervision as solely relating to line management could offer one explanation why mentoring, rather than supervision, has been developed for sign language interpreters in the U.K.

### *5.2. The Development of Mentoring Programs*

The Association of Sign language Interpreters (ASLI) in the U.K. has introduced formalized interpreter support through a mentoring program. Its policy document states:

> ASLI wish to stress that mentoring is about working on specific objectives. An interpreter may choose to have 6 sessions one year to focus on a specific aspect of their work; 2 sessions another year just to monitor progress on something else; or 0 sessions because they are developing themselves in other ways or have not identified anything specific to work on yet. (Association of Sign Language Interpreters, 2003, p. 3)

The implication is that mentoring is not intended for ongoing reflective practice, as the frequency of meetings depends on whether the mentee has "something specific to work on." My own experience of supervision suggests that topics for discussion can evolve from discussion within supervision and are not always formulated in advance. In supervision groups, an issue raised by one member may trigger something for another, which then becomes their issue for the session. The process of supervision itself may also identify issues that may otherwise go unrecognised by the supervisee. The suggested infrequency of mentoring sessions would potentially leave some issues unidentified.

Goal setting and models of problem solving feature strongly in literature on mentoring (Connor & Pokora, 2007; Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000; Parsloe & Wray, 2005; Young, 2005). The stress the ASLI mentoring program places on having "specific objectives" reflects goal-oriented support; plans and reports are also features of the program. Furthermore, the terminology associated with mentorship, such as *protégé* and *apprentice,* implies that mentoring has a more developmental function—that it represents the teaching, education, and coaching of less-experienced practitioners. This is reflected in the nursing profession, where mentoring is provided for those in training and supervision is offered to qualified practitioners (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000). I argue that there remains a gap in opportunities for ongoing reflective practice for sign language interpreters and that the formation of supervision groups throughout the U.K., despite the absence of supervision being promoted within the profession, suggests there is a need for such provision. A review of the mentoring program would provide interesting information regarding whether, in the absence of supervision, there is a demand for ongoing reflective practice by mentees, although this is not the intended purpose of the ASLI program.

### *5.3. Transferability of Existing Models of Supervision.*

The absence of supervision in the interpreting profession could be due to the perceived limitation of the transferability and efficacy of existing models of supervision. However, models are not intended to be prescriptive; their purpose is to "identify central functions, philosophy and principles and act as a framework to guide, rather than dictate practice" (Mullarkey, Keeley, & Playle, 2001). Models do tend to be specific to a particular professional context; nevertheless, I suggest these could be adapted and applied to the interpreting profession. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) have, for example, developed their model to encompass all "helping"

professions, particularly those using counselling skills within their work. Applying their model would require consideration of just three issues: the term *helping profession,* the assumption that practitioners use counselling skills in their work, and the notion of a "client."

The term *helping profession* is problematic for the sign language interpreting profession due to the historical context in which the profession developed. In the U.K., communication was historically performed by family members, missioners, and, later, social workers for deaf people, who would perform the role of both interpreter and advocate. The development of the interpreting profession saw the introduction of the conduit model, where interpreters were regarded solely as transmitters of information as a means of distancing the profession from the "helper" role described above. It is for this reason I prefer to use the term *practice profession* rather than *helping profession* to describe this wider professional context. Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) model also refers to professions that primarily use counselling skills in individual work with clients. Neither is the notion of a "client" straightforward for the sign language interpreting profession, as interpreters facilitate communication between two or more interlocutors. However, for the purposes of supervision, a distinction can be drawn between clients of services and professionals with whom interpreters work, a psychiatrist seeing a patient, for example. As interpreters work as part of a triad, they may regard their fellow professional as a "coworker" and the individual the professional is seeing as the client. The work of an interpreter can also extend beyond the interpreted event, as I described in Section 3.2, as interpreters use their interpersonal skills to develop a trusting relationship with a deaf client. This is also true of ongoing assignments, such as child protection, where interpreters may work with a family over several years. I would argue for interpreter training to include basic counselling skills, such as the core conditions (Rogers, 1957) in recognition of this aspect of the work. The issues interpreters bring to supervision may, therefore, relate to a variety of people and organizations they work with, including fellow professionals, clients, and interpreters as coworkers. Feasey (2005, p. 33) describes supervision that encompasses the full context of the work of a practitioner as supervising the "whole practice."

## 6. Conclusion

My own research findings and the work of Dean and Pollard (2005) support the argument that interpreting should be recognized as a practice profession requiring the support framework of supervision. The accounts of sign language interpreters in this study strongly indicate that the role and responsibilities of interpreters extend beyond the purely linguistic, as they work—with careful consideration of work practice—to facilitate and ensure effective communication and ethical practice. The responsibilities of community interpreters clearly extend beyond those expected of interpreters working purely as conduits, yet the interpreters in this study report an assumption, both within and outside the profession, that they make decisions pertaining only to the linguistic aspects of their work. This is a significant cause of work-related stress for interpreters. Existing models of consultative supervision can be adapted, and new ones developed, to combat this stress by providing interpreters with regular, protected time to receive support, guidance, and feedback on their work. Supervision offers an additional benefit in that it acknowledges the impact interactions and interpersonal dynamics may have on interpreters, as well as the impact interpreters may also have on their clients. This study makes one contribution to the scant specific research material in this area; much more research into areas of occupational stress among interpreters and into supervisory frameworks of support and accountability is needed. Such research will elucidate both the causes of stress and the development of frameworks to meet the specific needs of the interpreting profession.

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# Thinking Through Ethics: The Processes of Ethical Decision Making by Novice and Expert American Sign Language Interpreters

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**Abstract**

**In the course of their work, interpreters face ethical dilemmas that require prioritizing competing moral beliefs and views on professional practice. Although several decision-making models exist, little research has been done on how interpreters learn to identify and make ethical decisions. Through surveys and interviews on ethical decision making, the author investigated how expert and novice American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters discuss their ethical decision-making processes and prioritize prima facie duties, or meta-ethical principles (Ross, 1930/2002). The survey participants included 225 novice interpreters with 3 or fewer years of experience as nationally certified interpreters and 168 expert interpreters with 10 or more years' experience. 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," although there was variability between the groups. To explain their responses, novice interpreters cited their professional ethical code and rubric decision-making guidelines, and they used low-context discourse to analyze individual-focused responses. Expert interpreters, conversely, drew upon tacit knowledge built upon a foundation of the *Code of Professional Conduct* and used high-context discourse to develop a collective-focused response.**

Keywords: ethical decision making, ethics, sign language, interpreters, novice, expert

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# Thinking Through Ethics: The Processes of Ethical Decision Making by Novice and Expert Interpreters

## 1. Introduction

The interpreting process gives interpreters access to a large amount of private and personal information. In the context of signed language interpreting, interpreters typically work most assignments without other interpreters (Humphrey, 1999; Metzger, 1999), with the communication triad consisting of the deaf consumer, hearing consumer, and interpreter. During their work, interpreters make logistical decisions, such as where to sit or stand so that both participants can clearly see and hear the interpreter. They also continuously and autonomously make ethical decisions (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Gish, 1990; Hoza, 2003), such as whether or not they should report spousal abuse they discover in an interpreting situation. Because signed language interpreters are the only participants in the discourse triad who are knowledgeable about both languages and cultures (typically hearing culture and deaf culture), it is incumbent upon them to make an ethical decision that is fair for all parties. This mixed-methods study provides insight into how expert and novice signed language interpreters make ethical decisions, with implications for wider interpreter training and assistance for those interpreters who need support in making ethical decisions.

## 2. Review of the Literature

My research with American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters was guided by an overarching question: How do novice interpreters develop expertise in making ethical decisions? To explore this issue, I sought to answer the following subquestions:

1. How do interpreters define an ethical situation, and what kind of knowledge is required for interpreters to make ethical decisions?
2. How do expert and novice interpreters differ in making ethical decisions?
3. How do expert and novice interpreters prioritize competing meta-ethical principles when making ethical decisions?

I started by discovering what is already known about ethical decision making, expert–novice differences, and signed language interpreters. I wished to situate the questions in research about ethical decision making in general,

in research about ethical decision making among interpreters, and in research into other service-providing professionals. During the literature search, I found that the following areas of research relate to signed language interpreters' ethical decision making: (a) signed language interpreting and ethical codes, (b) expert–novice differences, (c) ethical decision-making models, and (d) signed language interpreting and decision making.

## *2.1 Signed Language Interpreting and Ethical Codes*

When signed language interpreting was first established in the United States as a profession in 1964 (Smith, 1964), its founders strived to ensure that interpreters would be of high moral standards. Within this requirement, however, it was not clear if high moral behavior was expected only in the role of interpreting or also when interpreters were conducting their lives outside of interpreting. The original document from the Workshop on Interpreting for the Deaf (Quigley, 1965) describes the qualifications of signed language interpreters. Interpreters were expected to possess the following characteristics:

1. A proficiency in manual and/or oral communication.
2. A high moral character.
3. A professional attitude which will insure ethical conduct.
4. An understanding of Deaf people.
5. An education sufficient to embrace the problems of life and a sophistication to cope with its variations.
6. Special skills for specific situations. (pp. 1–2)

Many signed language interpreter organizations have ethical codes that their members must follow. The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (2008) lists several signed language interpreters' ethical codes. Finnish, Australian, Kenyan, Irish, Canadian, and Philippine sign language interpreters' codes of ethics all include themes of confidentiality, business practices, appropriate compensation, interpreting accuracy, respect for consumers, discretion in accepting jobs, and impartiality. These concepts are foundational for making ethical decisions because they all include, but are not limited to, meta-ethical themes of do no harm, autonomy for the consumer, justice and equality, and protection of the vulnerable (Humphrey, 1999).

## *2.2 Expert–Novice Differences*

The research on experts and novices attempts to describe how professionals who have been in a given field for a period of time differ in complex cognitive tasks from professionals who are new to that same field. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1986) defined categories that distinguish experts from novices using a scale ranging from very low to very high levels of attainment. They described four areas in which novices become experts: complexity of skills, amount of knowledge, knowledge structure, and problem representation. Novices, by definition, have a basic foundation of skills and knowledge that have a "shallow structure" (p. 12)—a few ideas and not a lot of connections between ideas—and they are not adept at solving "novel problems in one's own domain" (p. 13). Experts are better at using their extensive knowledge of the subject to structure the problem or process in a few broad categories, with smaller categories that have more complex connections to the larger categories. They then present the problem in a more complex way than the novice. The novice, with a more limited knowledge base, can assess the problem in only a limited way.

There have been several studies on expert–novice differences, particularly in the field of education. Some researchers argued that expert teachers make more reflective comments than do novice teachers when discussing their decision-making processes (Stough & Palmer, 2001). The prominent difference between expert and novice teachers is that the expert's knowledge "is extraordinarily well organized, and this organization centers around a relatively smaller number of 'big ideas,' such as fundamental concepts, principles, theories, or themes" (Niemi, 1997, p. 240). The novice's knowledge, on the other hand, is limited and not well organized, which results in a simplistic representation of the process. St. Germain and Quinn (2005) posited that experts also possess tacit, or

instinctual, knowledge that allows them to take the right amount of time to think through decisions before they make them and that novice educational leaders make decisions too quickly.

## *2.3 Ethical Decision-Making Models*

Historically, the definitions of *morals, values,* and *ethics* have been used as standards for measuring ethical decision making. According to Kohlberg (1975), a "moral principle is a universal code of choosing, a rule of choosing which we want all people to adopt in all situations" (p. 58). Although morals are difficult to define in absolute terms, they are said to be the foundation for ethical codes that guide professionals in day-to-day ethical decision making (Rachels & Rachels, 2006). Ross (1930/2002) posited that morals are also the basis for meta-ethical principles, also called *prima facie duties,* on which ethical codes are developed, such as the following:

1. Do no harm (nonmaleficence)
2. Do good (beneficence)
3. Fidelity (to keep one's promises and contracts and not to engage in deception)
4. Reparation (repair the injuries that one has done to others)
5. Gratitude
6. Justice and equality
7. Self-improvement

Others added to Ross's list of prima facie duties the principles of protection of the weak and vulnerable, responsible caring, self-improvement, and informed consent (Humphrey, 1999; Humphrey, Janosik, & Creamer, 2004). These meta-ethical principles are the foundation for all ethical codes, including the National Association of the Deaf and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's *Code of Professional Conduct* (CPC; available online at http://www.rid.org/ethics/code/index.cfm; Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, n.d.). To understand and adhere to ethical codes, members of any group must understand the meta-ethical principles and use those meta-ethical principles to make solid ethical decisions. When professionals face a situation that has competing meta-ethical principles, such as respect for autonomy and do no harm, they are expected to draw on their own values and personal ethics and apply those to the situation at hand. Although the literature describes several ethical and decision-making models, there have been no studies exploring how individuals actually process information to make those decisions.

## *2.4 Signed Language Interpreting and Decision Making*

Scheibe (1984) was the first to develop a decision-making model specifically for interpreters. She developed the "creative problem solving model—a repeatable process," a circular model expanded on by Gish (1990), who added "outlining the steps of the solution" to the process of interpreter decision making. In 1995, Humphrey and Alcorn developed a third model with 10 steps in the decision-making process. This model added the concepts of meta-ethical principles, interpreter's emotions, and consulting with colleagues, if necessary. Table 1 shows Hoza's (2003) comparison of these models. The models assume that interpreters will define the problem accurately, collect facts in the situation, take action, and reflect on their actions. The models, however, lack interpreters' accounts of their actual decision-making processes.

Table 1: Comparison of signed language interpreters' decision-making models (Hoza, 2003, p. 32)

| **Scheibe (1984)** | **Gish (1990)** | **Humphrey & Alcorn (1995)** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The situation: where are we in relation to where we want to be?<br>2. Fact-finding: who, what, when, where, why<br>3. Problem definition: zeroing in on the problem<br>4. Solution findings: brainstorming, deferred judgment<br>5. Evaluate ideas: criteria, listing<br>6. Implementation: commitment, target date<br>7. Follow-up: effective? | 1. Describe the problem clearly: What is happening? What to change?<br>2. Find out all the facts you can about the problem (who, what)<br>3. Think of possible solutions: ways to change the situation (don't evaluate)<br>4. Think of the pros and cons of each possible solution (evaluate)<br>5. Choose a solutions to try (best choice)<br>6. Outline the steps of the solution<br>7. Try the solution (accept responsibility)<br>8. Evaluate what happened | 1. Collect all information and facts possible<br>2. Identify goals and relevant meta-ethical principles<br>3. Note all possible options<br>4. Identify all potential beneficial and negative results<br>5. Review foundational goals and principles<br>6. Identify any emotions that may bias or influence judgment<br>7. Consult with colleagues as necessary<br>8. Rank options<br>9. Take action<br>10. Review and evaluate action taken |

Dean and Pollard's (2001) demand-control schema theory developed and expanded on Karasek's (1979) demand-control theory. Karasek had (1979) developed a job-strain model that compared the demands of a job and the controls that the employee has to act on those demands, finding that jobs with high demands and low controls produce more stress than a low-demand and high-control job. Dean and Pollard (2001) proposed that interpreting is a high-demand yet low-control occupation. They characterized the demands of interpreting as belonging to four areas:

- Environmental: specific to the setting (i.e., professional roles, terminology, physical surroundings)
- Interpersonal: specific to the interaction of the consumers and interpreter (i.e., culture, goals)
- Paralinguistic: specific to the expressive skills of the deaf/hearing consumers (i.e., style, pace, volume)
- Intrapersonal: specific to the interpreter (thoughts, feelings, physical reactions) (p. 5)

Dean and Pollard (2001) suggested that interpreters do have choices in certain areas and can make decisions that can have either a positive or negative outcome, either a short-term or long-term. This is the current theory of decision making and one that has been used for developing the national interpreter exam and for educating future interpreters. However, the Dean and Pollard study was, again, based on a theory and not on probing interpreters themselves on how they think through ethical decisions.

# 3. Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand the strategies and behaviors that expert and novice signed language interpreters reported using when making ethical decisions in work situations; therefore, the focus was on these two specific groups of interpreters. I defined *novices* as those interpreters who had the National Interpreter Certification—Certified (NIC–Certified), a certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) that had only been offered in the 4 years prior to this research, which ensured that these interpreters had been nationally certified for fewer than 4 years. The expert group included interpreters who possessed RID's Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC), a national certification offered by RID only until 1987, and thus these interpreters had many years of experience. Both certifications are, or had been, developed, administered, and maintained by the RID, the national certifying body for signed language interpreters in the United States. The potential participants for the study included a total of 1,403 certified interpreters from novice and expert groups as found on RID's online interpreter database. Of the 1,403 potential qualified participants, 393 successfully completed the survey. Of the 393 survey participants, 225 interpreters (57%) had earned the NIC–Certified certification and were classified as novices, and 168 (43%) interpreters had earned at least the CSC and were classfied as experts.

The study included an analysis of documents used in the signed language interpreting field in the United States and responses to the online survey and interviews. The documents included the CPC, RID's *NIC Interview Evaluation Rubric Anchors,* and other documents that outline the criteria of the National Interpreter Certification exam. The online survey asked participants for demographic information and posed questions about how often they experienced certain areas in ethical dilemmas (see Appendix for survey questions). The six interview participants (three novice and three expert interpreters) were selected and interviewed in English via webcam (see Appendix for interview questions). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The survey covered ethical areas deliberately limited to four tenets from the CPC: confidentiality, impartiality, professional conduct, and business practices. *Confidentiality* in the field of signed language interpreting pertains to keeping all assignment-related information protected and restricted to only those participants in the interpreting situation. *Impartiality* is defined as the interpreter being neutral and unbiased during the work, regardless of how strongly the interpreter supports or opposes the topic of discussion, or how the interpreter feels about either participant in the dialogue. Impartiality also includes providing services regardless of the consumers' age, gender, race, ethnicity, and/or religion. The ethical area of *professional conduct* refers to interpreters possessing necessary updated skills and using discretion when accepting and performing interpreting tasks. *Business practices* are guidelines for interpreters to honor commitments, charge fair and reasonable wages for their services, and perform pro bono work.

My analyses followed Ross's (1930/2002) theory of prima facie duties and his assertion that people's tendencies to choose a right action initiate "a certain change in the state of affairs irrespective of motive" (p. 6). Ross's prima facie duties were chosen because all professional ethical codes are related to prima facie duties. These concepts embody the basic morals and beliefs of most professional organizations. According to Ross, a prima facie duty might present itself as a moral situation on the surface, but when studied more closely, it "is an objective fact involved in the nature of the situation, or more strictly in an element of its nature, though not, as duty proper does, arising from its *whole* nature" (p. 20, emphasis in original). One must analyze each situation for its elements to distinguish if one or more of the elements are, in fact, of moral or ethical nature. One must also prioritize prima facie duties in order to make the decision that will benefit all parties involved. Ross said that if there is a conflict of duties, or more than one prima facie duty involved in the situation, the decision maker must have a tacit understanding that one prima facie duty, for example, fidelity, would have priority over another, such as beneficence, to ensure the ensuing act has a morally beneficial outcome for all involved.

For my initial analysis, I first established a list of a priori codes from Ross's prima facie duties..The participants were presented with six questions that required narrative responses (see Appendix). Coding followed meta-ethical principles (Humphrey, 1999; Humphrey et al., 2004; Ross, 2002) to determine how interpreters make ethical decisions from the scenarios presented to them. Each response was first coded for prima facie duties; through analysis and an evolving deductive process, a second list of emerging codes was developed and refined. Some of these codes were specific to the CPC, such as quoting verbiage, specific tenets, or following the NIC

evaluation rubric. I added other codes that emerged from patterns that were not identified as prima facie duties but were interesting nonetheless. These included feelings of conflict, perceived bias in relationships, not being qualified, demanding payment, and not mixing personal and professional relationships. Other codes were based on theories, such as espoused and enacted theories of action and use of metaphor. The remaining codes were developed to ascertain if the interpreter correctly identified the ethical situation, or if the interpreter stated that the situation was not ethical when, in fact, it was ethical. The last code, "other," was chosen when the participant responded with a statement or exclamation that did not fit into the above categories.

In last phase of the study, I interviewed three novice and three expert interpreters, to examine their perceptions of, explanations of, and justifications for their behaviors and the strategies they used in ethical situations. Interviews were conducted in English via webcam, audio recorded, and transcribed. The interviews were semistructured, meaning that the same topics were covered for each participant, but the order of the questions was sometimes changed according to individual responses (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In designing the interview questions, I used Patton's (1990) question typology, in which questions are designed to elicit information on the opinions, values, and feelings of the participants that relate to their behaviors and experiences, their knowledge of a given situation, how they perceive the world around them, and any particular themes that emerge**.** The responses were initially analyzed for similarities and differences among and between groups. The concepts of high-context/low-context language and collectivist/individualistic discourse patterns (see Section 4.3 for further discussion) emerged as the strong patterns between groups.

# 4. Findings

## *4.1 How Do Novice and Expert Interpreters Identify Ethical Dilemmas?*

The first key observation from the survey data was that that novice interpreters identified similar ethical conflicts as the expert interpreters, but only when the ethical issue was a main tenet of the CPC and one they had rehearsed answering for the National Interpreter Certification. For example, when the ethical issue involved the act of interpreting, such as in Scenarios 1 and 3 in an educational setting (see Appendix for the scenarios presented), both groups replied that they would prioritize the meta-ethical principle of fidelity (keeping one's commitments) over other meta-ethical principles. A typical response from an expert interpreter was, "Yes, it is a confidentiality issue. The interpreter should not engage the parent in that type of conversation, but rather nicely suggest that the parent contact the classroom teacher to set up a conference time." A typical novice response was, "This one falls under confidentiality. I would encourage the parents to talk to the teacher about how the student is doing in class." Both groups identified the ethical category as confidentiality and claimed that they would continue in their role as interpreters and redirect the questions to the proper authority, a concept that is explicitly defined in the CPC.

Another similarity between both groups was the prevalence of the code for the category of fidelity in situations where there were billing issues and interpersonal conflict issues. Both novice and expert interpreters expressed a strong commitment to staying within their role as interpreters and abiding by time commitments. Both groups stated that they would not risk deviating from their prescribed role to answer questions meant for someone else and work for the billed time frame. Their responses to Scenario 5 demonstrated a commitment to their roles as interpreters and abiding by the CPC. Experts said, "You have billed for the two-hour minimum so you do have an obligation to continue to interpret." Novices said, "If I was booked for the client for two hours, I would expect to stay for the two hours and would expect my team interpreter to stay as well."

Novices and experts differed in their responses to ethical issues embedded in the scenario that related to the subtenets of the CPC. Scenario 2 asked about impartiality and avoiding perceived conflicts of interest, which is not one of the main tenets of the CPC but is found under the third tenet, Conduct (3.8). Most experts responded that they felt qualified to interpret the interrogation and provide resources for the police department to secure future interpreting services. Novices, on the other hand, responded with deep sympathy for the deaf person who could potentially be incarcerated without being cognizant of the charges. They would opt to interpret the

assignment, even though they were not qualified and despite a possible perceived bias with a brother being the police officer.

The results indicate that novice and expert signed language interpreters make different ethical decisions based on their experience. Novices appeared to have difficulty identifying the ethical area in the scenarios, possibly due to lack of experience and exposure to a given setting. Novices attempted to look for "black-and-white" answers in order to more easily identify the ethical issue. When they did so, they explicitly referred to a main tenet of the CPC. Experts displayed a multilayered level of analysis; they asked probing questions, considered multiple perspectives, and illustrated a firm understanding of the ethical consequences. In addition, novices were concerned about being perceived as professionals through payment, contracts, and not mixing their personal and professional lives, whereas experts tended to make decisions based on tacit knowledge of relationships with deaf community members, agencies that employ interpreters, and fellow colleagues.

When they were asked for suggestions to improve interpreter training curricula, novices answered that they would recommend that expert interpreters join interpreting skills classes to discuss their experiences in the field, as well as describe how they make ethical decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. None of the experts made this same suggestion; all three experts recommended that students learn how to think critically about each situation and act accordingly.

### *4.2 How Do Interpreters Prioritize Competing Meta-Ethical Principles?*

Most of both groups of interpreters' responses (i.e., novices and experts) fell under the principle of fidelity. Ross (1930/2002) defines *fidelity* as being faithful to one's contracts or promises; both groups responded that they would remain in their role as interpreters even when faced with an ethical dilemma. Ross has received criticism for not having tested his theory of prioritizing prima facie duties. In my study, I used his prima facie duties as a framework for coding survey responses and applied them to the research on novice–expert interpreters. Both groups were coded for prioritizing "fidelity" as the first prima facie duty and "do good" and "reparation" as the second and third, respectively (Table 2). The next pair of prima facie duties, "do no harm" and "justice and equality," were inversely listed. Both groups had zero codes for the last two prima facie duties, meaning that there were no responses coded for "gratitude" or "'self improvement."

Table 2: *How novice and expert interpreters prioritize prima facie duties*

| Novice | Expert |
|---|---|
| **Fidelity** | **Fidelity** |
| **Do good** | **Do good** |
| **Reparation** | **Reparation** |
| **Do no harm** | **Justice and equality** |
| **Justice and equality** | **Do no harm** |
| **Gratitude** | **Gratitude** |
| **Self-Improvement** | **Self-Improvement** |

"Professional conduct" was coded a similar number of times for both groups. *Professional conduct,* as RID defines it, is when interpreters "conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation." Of the five ethical scenarios, one clearly involved professional conduct issues, but how interpreters conduct

themselves in dealing with the demands of their job is important and relevant in any given situation. Interpreters appeared to choose "professional conduct" as a way to illustrate that how they would act in their decision is just as important as what they would choose to do as a result of the decision they chose. The findings indicate that interpreters, regardless of professional experience, make an effort to ensure that they faithfully remain in their role while interpreting and adhere to contractual obligations. Both novices and experts responded that *how* they approach individuals in the situation, or their professional conduct, was an important technique for resolving conflicts during their work. They believed that interpersonal skills, incorporating respect and consideration for others, would guide how they would approach the other person in the scenario.

### *4.3 Novice and Expert Discourse Characteristics*

Novices and experts showed patterns of explaining their decisions in specific ways. One of the aspects of the NAD-RID National Interpreter Certification's rubric is to include in one's answer implications for the candidate's response to "contain sufficient discussion of both the short-term and long-term effects that might include cultural, political, and/or sociological implications." Hofstede (2001) includes a long-term-versus-short-term dimension to his analysis, which is "related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present" (p. 29); in this study, novice interpreters typically responded with an emphasis on present outcomes. Novices also used low-context, individual-focused responses when describing their ethical decision-making processes. Hall (1976) describes *high-context* cultures and languages as those that are "rooted in the past, slow to change, and highly stable" (p. 93), whereas *low-context* languages are the opposite, recently occurring, quickly changing, and unstable. Novices would explain their decisions, explicitly describing the context and asked if the interviewer understood the situation. Experts, on the other hand, discussed the consequences of their decisions on the deaf community and perceptions of interpreters and used high-context, collectivist-focused responses. They assumed intersubjectivity between interlocutors and included others' perspectives in their decision-making processes. Experts used language that included a shared understanding of cultural contexts.

Hoftsede (2001) posits that societal norms and values shape how cultures are either individualistic or collective in nature. "The relationship between the individual and the collectivity in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, it is intimately linked with societal norms" (p. 210). Mindess (2006) applies these concepts to deaf culture and English speakers and explains that ASL is a high-context language, whereas English is a low-context language. Mindess writes, "Every verb in an English sentence shows its tense, while, in ASL, tense may be set at the beginning of an utterance and the carried implicitly until a change of tense is noted" (p. 47). ASL interpreters live in both worlds: the hearing American culture, which is typically individualistic, and the deaf American culture, which is typically collective.

Novice interpreters, as individuals who are new to the profession and are learning deaf history, culture, and language; interpreting skills; and ethical codes and rules of conduct are not yet equipped to make decisions based on complex connections between the concepts that are required as a foundation for becoming an expert interpreter. As they gain expertise, they are able to draw on more complex cultural relationships to make decisions that include the collective culture. They thus move along a continuum from low-context to high-context and from individual-focused to collective-focused decisions. A typology of this concept is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Typology of novice and expert interpreters' discourse narratives

| | Individualistic | Collectivistic |
|---|---|---|
| High-Context | | **Expert interpreters** |
| Low-Context | **Novice interpreters** | |

# 5. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore how novice and expert ASL interpreters make ethical decisions. Through online surveys, document analysis, and face-to-face interviews, interpreters were asked how they would respond to a series of ethical scenarios Novice interpreters looked for clear-cut ethical issues and based their decisions on the overt ethical dilemma. Expert interpreters were able to distinguish more subtle ethical issues embedded in the ethical dilemma. Experts also appeared to base their decisions on how those decisions would affect the communities as a whole, not just the individual, as in the novice responses. The discourse patterns of the two groups varied; the novices made explicit connections, using low-context language, whereas the experts used high-context language that assumed the researcher knew contextual connections in their discourse.

## *5.1 Implications of This Study*

This research supports an argument for expanding curricula in interpreter education programs (in all languages) to include different ways of teaching ethical decision-making. Interpreter educators presenting ethical dilemmas for analysis can encourage students to identify the meta-ethical principles involved and then follow Dean and Pollard's (2001) demand-control schema process of ranking the principles in order of priority. By prioritizing the meta-ethical principles they identify in a situation, students will develop insight into *why* they make certain decisions in certain situations. For example, students presented with Scenario 2 (below) can develop a list of decisions and discuss *why* they would make that particular decision.

> You are a certified interpreter and your brother is a police officer. One night he calls you and begs you to do him a favor and come in and interpret for a man they just picked up for allegedly committing a crime. Your brother tells you that they have called everyone on the list and no one is available. What do you do?

In the above scenario, there are several options available, and students can prioritize meta-ethical principles to come to a final decision. One can:

1. Decline the assignment due to the perceived bias with your brother, the police officer, and the perception of power aligning the interpreter with the police officer. Non-maleficence (do no harm)
2. Accept the job because you do want to help facilitate the communication with the Deaf client. Beneficence (do good)

3. Accept this assignment and adhere to one's professional commitment, regardless of the fact that your brother asked you to interpret the interrogation. Fidelity (keep one's promises and contracts and not to engage in deception)
4. Accept the assignment because you do not want the client to sit in jail with no communication as to why he is there. Protection of the weak and vulnerable and/or responsible caring
5. Accept the assignment to ensure that the deaf client has the same access that a hearing client would have. Justice and equality
6. Other meta-ethical principles that would not be relevant: Reparation (repair the injuries that one has done to others), gratitude, self-improvement, and informed consent.

One response to the scenario might be to give names and contact information of other qualified interpreters to the brother (beneficence/responsible caring). Even though the brother stated that he has "called everyone," the police department might not have the names of everyone who is qualified to interpret the interrogation. Another response might be to accept the assignment if another officer replaced the brother in the interrogation (fidelity). The prevailing choice of response is to not interpret the interrogation with your brother as the interrogating officer (non-maleficence), as the deaf client could perceive the interpreter and the police officer in an authoritative relationship with him in a powerless role.

The findings could aid novice ASL interpreters in the process of studying for and initially passing the National Interpreter Certification for ASL, or assist working interpreters in advancing to a higher certification level. The same process of identifying meta-ethical principles can be used in professional development opportunities for working interpreters who have worked longer than novices but are not yet experts in decision making. Now that there is evidence of how expert signed language interpreters make ethical decisions, instructors can use that information to teach novices in both signed and spoken language interpreting to follow the same decision-making processes.

This study also highlights the potential benefits of teaching interpreting students to think of the collective culture when they make decisions. If interpreters are explicitly taught to consider the potential impact of their decisions on consumers in both cultures, as well as on the interpreting profession, would interpreting students become more expert-like in their decision making? Interpreting students have to learn a new language and culture, develop their understanding of their own native language and culture, analyze the theory and application of interpreting, and then apply those concepts to ethical decision making. Many novice students are not yet acculturated into the culture of their clients and make decisions based on their native culture—in the case of ASL interpreters, typically American hearing culture, which is an individualistic culture (Gish, 1990; Mindess, 2006). Explicitly teaching decision making and how those decisions affect the collective culture could assist students in becoming confident ethical decision-making interpreters.

## *5.2 Limitations*

Space limitations here prevent elaboration on the entire discussion of the findings of this research. Approximately one third of the potential novice and expert groups from the online survey responded, so this study is indicative of only that population. Research on ethical decision making is also limited by the presentation of hypothetical rather than actual scenarios, with responses divulged to the researcher. Even with these limitations, this study presents foundational evidence on the differences between novice and expert interpreters' ethical decision making that can assist student interpreters in learning to make sound ethical decisions in their future work.

This study focused on how novice and expert interpreters differ in identifying ethical dilemmas and in making ethical decisions. It did not address how interpreters gain expertise in ethical decision making. Is expertise gained solely through experience over time? Or can one gain expertise in a classroom? A longitudinal study could discover interesting and useful information to help educators develop their students' expertise in ethical decision making.

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## Appendix

### Survey questions

**Scenario 1:**

You work as an interpreter/classroom assistant for a deaf student in a classroom of 34 students. Part of your role is to interpret; part of your role is to work with all of the students in support of the teacher—grading papers, helping with learning activities, etc.

You have known the deaf student for several years and know his parents quite well. As a matter of fact, you socialize with them outside of work. This student has begun displaying some behavioral problems at school, acting out, skipping class, and acting rude to you and to the teacher. The parents have asked you how their child is doing in school.

**Scenario 2:**

You are a certified interpreter and your brother is a police officer. One night he calls you and begs you to do him a favor and come in and interpret for a deaf man they just picked up for allegedly committing a crime. Your brother tells you that they have called everyone on the list and no one is available.

**Scenario 3:**

You interpret in an educational setting with 20 students (five of whom are deaf), a hearing teacher, and a deaf teaching assistant. The teacher has a habit of asking you questions concerning the progress of the deaf students. You keep directing the questions towards the teaching assistant but it is clear the teacher still doesn't understand your role as the interpreter. Further, you feel she is not showing proper respect toward the deaf teaching assistant.

**Scenario 4:**

You are interpreting a professional development workshop where a video will be shown. The hearing presenter turns off all of the lights in order to improve the video clarity, but the deaf participant now cannot see you when you interpret.

**Scenario 5:**

You and another interpreter have been booked to interpret a 1½-hour appointment between a deaf social worker and the hearing parent of a deaf child. You will both bill for the two-hour minimum. Without tell you, your team interpreter contacts the deaf social worker in advance of the appointment. The interpreter explains that he is really busy with another volunteer project and hopes the meeting will finish early if at all possible. The social worker thanks your partner for the call and promises to do what she can to keep things on schedule. You show up at the appointment, unaware of this earlier conversation. The two of you interpret the appointment that wraps up after only 35 minutes. The social worker thanks your partner and tells him he can go that she would like you to stay the remaining 3–4 minutes to interpret several telephone calls.

Is this an ethical issue? If so, under what category?

- Confidentiality: Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
- Impartiality: Interpreters render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated.
- Professional conduct: Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
- Business practices: Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner.

What would you do in this situation and why?

**Interview Questions**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. It is designed to help me understand how sign language interpreters make ethical decisions.

1. First, I would like to know:
    a. How long have you been an interpreter?
    b. How long have you been a certified interpreter?
2. Describe a recent interpreting situation where you felt you had to make a decision that involved ethical issues related to confidentiality, impartiality, professionalism, and/or business practices.
3. What triggered the acknowledgment that this was an ethical dilemma?
4. What made the situation ethically challenging?
5. How did you feel about this ethical issue?
6. Please describe the process you went through in resolving the dilemma.
7. What did you decide to do?
8. Would you change your decision?
9. What training, background, and experience did you draw upon to determine a course of action?

# Do You See What I See? Using ELAN for Self-Analysis and Reflection

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**Abstract**

**This commentary discusses the application of video annotation software (ELAN) in the Auslan–English interpreter-training program at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. It gives an overview of the program's context and highlights experienced-based learning as one of the key pedagogical approaches being used to foster student self-analysis and reflection. In order for students to analyze their own interpreting performances, they must first be recorded, so the article touches on the rationale and some techniques for the video capture that provides the data for subsequent ELAN analysis. Examples of activities based on the use of ELAN software are then discussed.**

Keywords: ELAN, reflective learning, experience-based learning, video, signed language interpreters, self-assessment

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# Do You See What I See? Using ELAN for Self-Analysis and Reflection

## 1. Context

The postgraduate diploma of Auslan-English interpreting at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, is a small and specialized government-subsidized program[2] that was established in 2002 in response to the dearth of trained professional-level interpreters working with deaf communities around Australia. The program structure has recently been expanded: eight units (four core, four elective) are now offered part time over 2–4 years in "blended" mode. Each unit is one semester in length and taught via a mix of online (moodle platform[3]) interaction, plus one or two on-campus 3-day blocks, for face-to-face delivery. We enroll approximately 8 to 10 students per year, who are already practicing interpreters with minimum entry-level interpreting qualifications[4] plus at least 2 years' work experience (see Napier, 2006, for a more in-depth description of the program structure and development). This commentary piece is written from both my current role as program convenor and my experience as a graduate of the program.

For most students, it has been quite some time since they undertook any formal education, so they often need to "learn how to learn" in an academic environment. In addition, they have little opportunity for feedback and reflection on their professional practice, so they start the program somewhat disconnected from the quality and impact of their interpreting decisions and output. As Fowler (2007) suggests, interpreters who are not self-aware are unable to evaluate their own performance, nor address any shortcomings, which is a professional liability. One of the aims of any interpreter training program (ITP) is to therefore develop self-assessment, critical analysis, and decision-making skills—core competencies that underpin more specific interpreting skills and knowledge (Winston, 2005, 2006). These qualities are embedded in all Macquarie University programs as part of required "graduate capabilities." As we offer a part-time program, with students who are already practitioners, we have the opportunity to apply classroom (on-site and online) learning to students' concurrent interpreting experience in the "real world," and vice versa.

## 2. Experience-Based Learning and Reflection

> The centre of learning is experience: your own subjective experience…this puts the learner (not the teacher) at the centre of the learning process. (Kolb, 2008).

[2] Student fees are subsidized by the federal government to encourage student enrollment in selected programs that meet identified community or industry need.

[3] Moodle is software that supports Internet-based courses and is used by many colleges and universities.

[4] Australian interpreters (across all language pairs, spoken and signed) are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). Auslan–English interpreters are currently able to be qualified at NAATI paraprofessional and professional levels.

## Using ELAN for Self-Analysis and Reflection

Adult educators since Dewey (1938) have suggested that learner experience is the means and goal of education; however, the 1980s saw the start of a major paradigm shift from from teacher-centered to student-centered curriculum design. Theorists such as Brookfield (1993), Boud (1995), Kolb (1984), and Schon (1987) have focused attention on the importance of engaging learners by incorporating and building on their own experience. This includes educators bringing prior learning to a new situation in the life experience of the learner, as well as designing learning processes in which the experience of the learner is used as the prime source and stimulus for learning (English, 2005).

An inherent part of the experience-based learning (EBL) approach is to create the opportunity for learners to synthesize their experience after the fact. Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1985) emphasize the importance of processing and integrating our own experience into learning through reflection, both individually and via group discussion. They suggest that following the experience (the behavior, ideas, feelings), the learner needs to return to it—to examine both positive and obstructive feelings and outcomes that arise. In this way the experience is reevaluated more objectively, which can lead to new perspectives or changes in behavior.

Although EBL is not the only pedagogical approach used in our program (problem-based learning and collaborative learning, for example, are overlapping and equally relevant frameworks), it can be a powerful perspective. Examples of learning activities (already familiar to ITP educators) that elicit and/or respond to student experience include:

- Choosing case study discussion topics (translation and/or behavioral decisions) based on students' own experiences, so that they "own" the content.
- Simulated experiences, such as interpreted role plays, that are set up as authentically as possible (e.g., with real doctors, laywers, deaf professionals, etc.) and act as catalysts for self-analysis and discussion (see Metzger, 2000, for a comprehensive description of this in practice).
- Submission of mid-semester and end-of-semester reflective journalling, about which concepts and experiences, from students' unit readings and learning activities, resonate (or not) with their outside interpreting practice.

For some learning activities, the focus is on students experiencing, and then reflecting on, what it is like to be the "other" in interpreting and classroom interactions. These activities include:

- Learning how to provide effective peer feedback, by starting with their perspective as the receiver.
- Watching video clips of their own interpretations (from their outside practice, or classroom-generated) with only the target text available, that is, without sound (for English-to-Auslan monologues), or without looking (for Auslan-to-English monologues). In this way, they experience, and can then analyze, the respective client's access to the information, without being beguiled by the source text.
- Participating in a simulated interpreted meeting as a deaf client (via earplugs plus earmuffs), where the majority of participants are hearing, so that students directly experience limited access to information.
- Participating in a simulated mainstream classroom as a deaf student (again with earplugs & earmuffs), to experience the compromise of reliance on multiple information sources at the same time.

One of the challenges to accessing any interpreting experience is the ephemeral nature of oral target texts. Unless interpretations are reflected upon (either individually or in discussion) soon after the event, their form, content, and process can easily be lost. Another compounding dimension of our particular language pair is dual modality: working between a signed and a spoken language. The students' capacity to hear their spoken output, although imperfect, makes it easier to monitor and remember than their signed output—they can't see themselves in the way that they can hear themselves. Given that the majority of students coming through the training program are not native signers, monitoring the production of what for these students is their least fluent language is even more problematic. Consequently, like many ITPs, Macquarie has been using video technology to capture student

performance for feedback and reflection, since the program's inception. More recently, we have added ELAN analysis as a further step in the process.

## 3. Video Capture

The capacity to revisit performance, and to do so in detail, reveals a wealth of feedback data for interpreting, as well as for other "practice professions" (Dean & Pollard, 2005). Xiao, Seagull, Mackenzie, and Klein (2004) describe video capture in medical settings as allowing "time-shifted" analysis for repeated and fine-grained review. In sports training, video feedback has been invaluable in improving performance, but learners need to "see" their performances to gain maximum benefit from feedback sessions (Miller, Doering, & Scharber, 2010). If interpreters can witness and learn to critically analyze their behaviors and decisions, they can become more autonomous learners over time.

Brookfield states that "our experiences as learners provide us with a powerful lens through which we can view our own practices as educators in a more formalised and purposeful way" (1994, p. 156). As a former student of the program, I remember the difference between being told what I was doing (via verbal feedback immediately after an interpreting task, or via written notes on an assessment rubric long after the event) versus seeing it (and believing it) for myself, on video. I also remember how illuminating and confronting it was to closely analyze filmed interpretations of my own work.

Some of our students have videoed themselves in earlier training courses (when VHS was the dominant format), but this practice has not been continued into their working careers. The video-capture process has changed markedly even in the last few years, by virtue of improving technology, storage capacity, and reducing cost. As Bowen-Bailey & Gordon (2004, p. 107) note, the move to digital video technology has made it possible for us to work with more "speed and precision, freeing us to focus on the learning experience." The ability to view a text frame by frame, without loss of definition, allows greater access to detail; it is a natural partner to the study of signed languages and signed language interpreting.

At Macquarie we predominantly use two digital video-capture methods. One is via desktop computer filming of student interpretations in our Mac lab.[5] We use Panda software[6] that has added dubbing and annotation options, but any built-in webcam can be used. This is useful for monologic interpreting tasks, where the source text can be provided live or from recorded media. Panda creates mp4 files, for immediate, or later, analysis. This capture is most successful when working from English into Auslan, as the source text (ST) and target text (TT) are automatically jointly recorded, The ST sound can be available or muted in later review. In this language direction, it is easy for multiple students to record themselves simultaneously. The partitions that divide the booths can be extended for exam conditions so that students cannot see each other's signing.

When working in the other language direction, two issues arise. The first is competing TT sound interference between students. In the absence of conference-interpreting-style booths, we address this by supplying students with earplugs plus earmuffs, which cut out intelligible sound from the renditions of their peers as they interpret. We also seat them further apart, so that their headphone mics don't pick up too much external sound—this necessitates more than one shift of candidates for testing in larger groups.

The second issue is the capture of both the ST and TT (as the built-in computer camera only records the student speaking and not the TT he or she is watching). When filming in the lab, we are able to use Panda to overdub video clips of signed STs. As this software is only available for Macs, is licensed to the university, and is no longer supported, this option is limited. In PC labs, or when working on Macs without Panda, we sometimes use pocket digital video cameras (discussed in the second method of video-capture, below) pointed at the signed ST on the computer screen, as the student interprets. The camera's microphone picks up the student's English

[5] We have 12 iMacs in booths along opposite walls.

[6] Developed by the Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of Bristol in the U.K., as part of their SignLab learning suite. As far as I am aware, this software is no longer available for purchase.

rendition, so both TT sound and ST vision are available for analysis. When the Auslan ST media is only available via a data-projected screen at the front of the room, or when we don't have enough cameras, we just record the students' English TT at their computers and supply a transcript of the ST for later analysis instead.

The second method we use for video capture is via high-definition pocket digital video cameras, for filming interactions which would be awkward to anchor to a desktop camera, for example, dialogic interpreting or multi-party meetings (either in the lab or in external settings). We have been using Flip cameras[7] as they are small and lightweight, have excellent vision quality, and have a direct camera-to-computer USB connection, so that the video content is available for immediate analysis and feedback— this is particularly useful for time-poor teachers and learners. Unfortunately Flip cameras are now being phased out,[8] but pocket video camera alternatives that also feature an in-built USB arm are available, including Sony Bloggie and Kodak Playfull. Many students now have smartphones with sufficient video-recording capacity. On entry to the program, all students are are required to purchase some form of small digital video camera, so that they can film themselves in classroom activities, in their work (with relevant permissions), and at home.

Once captured, interpreted texts can be shared via memory stick or cloud storage (e.g., Dropbox).[9] We also use a selection of prerecorded English source texts, Auslan source texts, and videoed interpretations by other practitioners for practice and analysis.

It's easy to be seduced by the bells and whistles of digital technology (Bowen-Bailey, 2006), but digital technology is not always available, nor is it appropriate in every case. The process can be time consuming, especially when technology fails (Bowen-Bailey & Gordon, 2004). Getting face-to-face peer or teacher feedback in the moment is just as valuable and can be less confronting. However, there is value and reward in revisiting the detail and nuances of intepreter performance (especially our own), when there are so many variables to disambiguate. Regular filming is therefore highly recommended, especially when the analysis can be done with ELAN.

## 4. EUDICO Linguistic Annotator (ELAN) as an Analysis Tool

ELAN was developed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands, based on video-editing software. It is specifically designed for the annotation and analysis of spoken and signed languages, and gesture, and it is being adopted widely for language analysis and research. It is free to download[10] and works with both Windows and Mac OS platforms, so it is ideal for student use. Using ELAN, interpreting students are able to annotate digital video files—mapping the video clip for easy navigation and recording their observations and transcriptions at the exact points that they occur, time-aligned to the source. ELAN annotations can be searched and exported for further analysis (e.g., via Excel). This has classroom teaching, independent-study, and further research applications.

[7] Thanks to a presentation by Dr Suzanne Erlich at the 2009 Australian Sign Langage Interpreter Association (ASLIA) national conference.

[8] As of the end of 2013, the manufacturing company, Cisco, will no longer be producing or supporting Flips. Despite some reports of "short life" issues, we have not experienced any difficulties with Flip camera use over time so we will continue using them until they "expire."

[9] Approximately 6 minutes of high-definition digital video uses 1GB of storage, so emailing is not yet a transfer option.

[10] Mac OS or Windows versions can be downloaded from http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/download

*Figure 1: Macquarie University Auslan video lab, showing students using ELAN for self-analysis.*

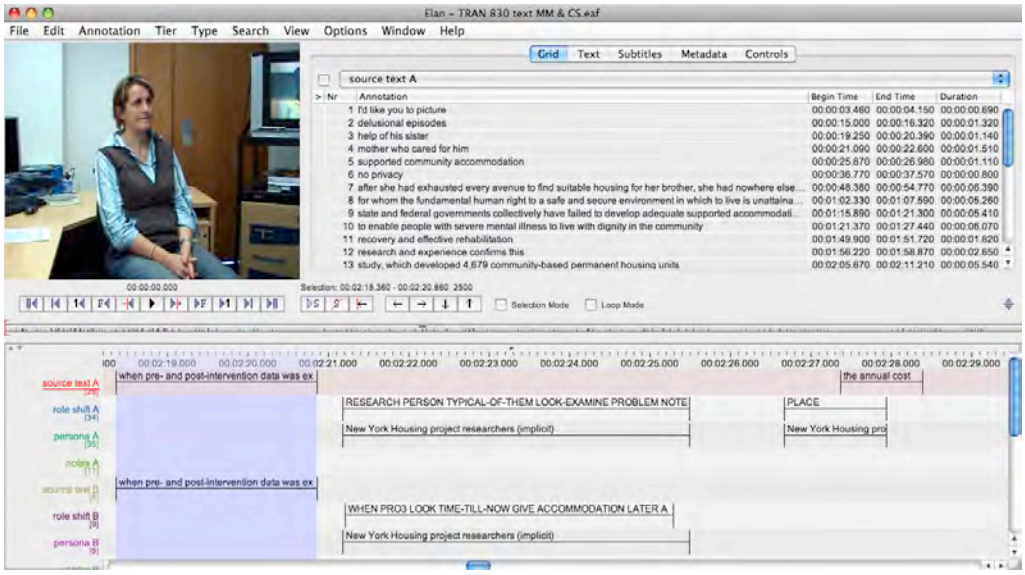


*Figure 2: Screen shot of ELAN file showing linked video clip with playback controls (top left), tiers for each variable being analyzed (bottom left), annotations that have been added as the video was played (rest of lower half of screen), and the data being generated across tiers, ready for export (top middle and right of screen).*

I was introduced to ELAN via Auslan linguistics research and could see its potential as a tool for interpreter training—I remembered the laborious logging of Auslan and interpreted video clips for my own assessment tasks. When I joined the Macquarie signed language interpreter (SLI) teaching team in 2008, I took the opportunity to apply ELAN to classroom learning and was validated by the immediate and positive student response, as per these typically effusive recent comments:

> The ELAN software is an excellent tool for self-evaluation. It provides the ability to critique our own performance as an interpreter that will be very useful for evaluating and developing skills in a safe environment. I'm confident this personal and professional development tool will enhance my future interpreting skills. (student journal feedback, 2011).

## Using ELAN for Self-Analysis and Reflection

> Best of all I would have to say ELAN has been an amazing piece of technology, especially for the visual language that we are all involved in. I must say I love to hate it, because "wow," this made a huge impact on me in terms of what I am producing. To be able to analyse this much has been a blessing to my interpreting education.
>
> (student feedback, 2011).

As the convenor of the first unit in the Macquarie program, I introduce students to ELAN on the first day of their first on-campus block. From then on, the rest of the teaching team use it for different tasks, on and off campus, throughout the program. It takes a 1-hour training session to get students started on their initial interpreting analysis activity (see below). It is important to note that ELAN is just video annotation software—it enables analysis, but it cannot do the analysis. It is a window into data, but looking is not seeing, and it is often difficult for students to notice anything meaningful (except how their hair looks!) at the first pass of a video clip. The things they next tend to notice in English-to-Auslan interpretations are obvious linguistic features, like the production of particular signs, or fingerspelling, or nonmanual expressions. As Dean and Pollard (2005) note, interpreters in the early stages of their careers are still attending to mastery of the signed language. Students need to incrementally learn what to look for as they are taught different constructs. ELAN allows for the creation of annotation tiers relating to selected variables for attention, which act as a template with which to view the data. In this way, the students are not overwhelmed by trying to notice everything at the same time.

To demonstrate some ways that we use ELAN in the program, the following section explains how I introduce it and use it in the first on-campus block. TRAN 863 is the first core unit of the program. On their first 3-day block, students meet each other and the lecturers for the first time. They are usually quite nervous about how their interpreting efforts will "stand up" in front of their peers.

Activity 1: Students are provided with a 5-minute clip of a graduate student (with permission), from a monologic interpreting task early in her program, when there were plenty of obvious skills gaps. This is less confronting for the students than watching themselves first up, and it shows them that they too can improve over time. Before the students learn how to open the clip in ELAN, we discuss a framework for analysis that they are already familiar with from the readings: Cokely's (1992) miscue analysis. We explore the broad concepts of omissions, additions, substitutions, intrusions, and anomalies using examples from their own experience.

We follow a "Basic Introduction to ELAN" guide (which I created as a reference for students' home study), to open an ELAN file with the clip, and we add Cokely's ommision categories as annotation tiers. I demonstrate the steps as the students go, via the data projector. I always get them to add an extra annotation tier for "comments"—anything that they notice along the way that is of interest or that they want to ask about.

Once the tiers are set up, the students practice inserting and deleting annotations, before they analyze the interpretation for themselves. This begins their mapping of the clip, allowing them to jump to any annotated segment, slow it down if they need to, or to view it a few times. Inevitably, they get sidetracked by other features that they are noticing and make a few annotation errors as they get used to the software and the taxonomy. They are asked to watch the clip with and without the sound of the English ST and comment on the difference. (They need the sound to check how accurate the message transfer is, but they see it more realistically when they watch with "deaf-client eyes").

At the end of the annotation time (20–30 minutes), the students can tally the number of annotations for each miscue type to get a sense of the patterning of the errors (as per Napier, 2005). Next, they pair up to compare tallies and observations, before we discuss the process and its outcomes in the full group. We explore the "why" behind some of the miscue behaviors, by getting students to identify and replay examples from their annotated clips and by drawing on their own experience to imagine possible reasons for the interpreter's choices. In this way, students start to learn that the root causes (Weisman, 2008) are usually more interesting and important than the presenting "symptoms." By this stage they have unwittingly developed a basic functional competency in using ELAN.

Activity 2: Next, the students film themselves (using Panda) interpreting a short English monologue (similar to the text they analyzed in Activity 1). They then create the same ELAN tiers and apply the miscue analysis in their annotations of themselves. Again, they move into pairs (of similar skill, so that they are not too daunted) and compare what they have noticed. In the full-group discussion, the "why" is more readily available, as they generally remember (and can see) very clearly what was happening for them in the moments they marked and annotated. Napier's (2002) taxonomy of omissions is then introduced, and the students revisit their omission annotations to see how this less-error-focused approach applies to their choices.

Activity 3: We discuss each of the English-to-Auslan monologic interpreting criteria that the students will be assessed against, to make sure they understand the concepts before applying them in self-assessment. Then they are videoed interpreting a second English monologic ST. This time they choose three TT features from the rubric that they wish to focus on (e.g., use of time lag, role shift, prosodic features, etc.) and create matching ELAN annotation tiers, along with the "comments" catch-all tier. Again, they start annotating solo, then share observations in pairs. But rather than finishing with general discussion, this time I come and sit alongside each student in turn, with other students watching on. One by one, the students take me through what they have annotated so far, which gives me access to what and how they are "seeing." In the allocated time (5–10 minutes for each student), I select a couple of their annotated examples (and ones that haven't been noted yet) and explore what was happening for them in that moment, before we canvas possible alternative responses. This enables me to role-model feedback techniques, before we cover peer-assessment strategies as the next topic. As Fowler (2007) notes, proficiency in peer assessment leads to more skilled self-assessment.

The on-campus block continues with a variety of activities related to the topics at hand, some of which include further application of ELAN. The students go home after the block able to use ELAN independently for text analysis. In later units, students use ELAN to analyze data in a range of tasks, including:

- Discourse analysis report, based on an Auslan text. Students select a discourse feature that they wish to better understand and improve in their own signing.
- Linguistic analysis of Auslan corpus texts to identify grammatical elements.
- Self-analysis report, of a filmed "real world" interpretation, applying demand-control schema (Dean & Pollard, 2005).
- Self-analysis report, of their interpretation in a filmed moot court role play, linking their observations to related readings.

We are still exploring potential applications, for our students and ourselves.

Although this is clearly a glowing report of how useful and necessary ELAN has become to our program, like any software, it is not without technical glitches, especially away from the controlled environment of the lab. ELAN is designed for use with both Macs and PCs, but the variable age, configuration, and capacity of student computers means that occasionally ELAN cannot be uploaded or doesn't function reliably (this is more common with PCs). To their credit, the software designers have continuously updated versions of ELAN, responding to user feedback, ironing out bugs, adding new features, and keeping it free. It is therefore recommended to download new versions as they become available.

## 5. Broadening Its Use

In an effort to "spread the word" about ELAN as a tool for self-analysis (and assessment and research) to signed and spoken language interpreting and educator colleagues, I have presented at a number of translation and interpreting conferences on the potential applications of using ELAN, and I have been invited to give hands-on workshops to interpreters across Australia.

During 2010 and 2011, as an extension of the domestic delivery of our program, I, with Jemina Napier (who now oversees the translation and interpreting section here at Macquarie) and Rachel McKee—our counterpart at Victoria University, Wellington—jointly adapted and delivered the postgraduate diploma in New Zealand. We

used the same experience-based and reflection-focused techniques, supported by ELAN analysis, which were revelatory to that cohort as well.

Signed language linguistics researchers routinely use ELAN for the creation and analysis of research data, and a number of our recent interpreting graduates are pursuing master's-level research using ELAN for their analysis—they have never known anything else.

If you are an interpreter or interpreter trainer and have not yet considered using ELAN as one of your teaching, learning, or research tools, I hope this article. encourages you to investigate the possibility.

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# A Translation Studies Approach to Glossing Using ELAN

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**Abstract**

**British Sign Language (BSL) and other signed languages do not have written forms. Students of BSL<>English translation need basic competence in glossing to aid their translations and for teachers' ongoing assessments. Software is now widely available that enables users to easily examine and reexamine video texts as well as to input written comments about the video text.**

**Glossing is a form of commentary to be used in different ways to suit different purposes. Translations studies programs' uses of glossing are for teaching and learning as part of this broad applied inter- and multidisciplinary field. As we show, translation direction can affect the way glossing is used. Glossing can be used either as a static, visible version of the source text or as a script for instruction of what and how to produce the target text.**

Keywords: annotation, glossing, script, linguistics, translation direction, translation studies

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# A Translation Studies Approach Glossing Using ELAN

## 1. Introduction

> A careful study of translation and its components is the "missing link" in interpreter education. (Patrie, 2001, p. 3)

Patrie modeled an early translation approach to be incorporated in interpreter education (specifically with regard to developing spoken-English-to-sign-language translation skills and abilities). It was an approach clearly focussing on aspects of the translation process, breaking it down cognitively and sequentially. Other educators support a similar approach, for example, Davies (2000) and Winston and Monikowski (2005).

The place of translation in interpreting is clearly described by Metzger et al. (2004).The authors use Goffman's (1981) *production format*, with its distinctions of *animator*, *author*, and *principal* to describe the relationship between a speaker (or signer) and an utterance. Metzger et al. are able to use the model in ways that draw attention to, and emphasize, the place of translation in interpreting:

> The interpreter not only is the animator of relayed utterances but also serves as the author of target language utterances. That is, the interpreter makes decisions regarding the lexical, morphological, and syntactic form of the relayed utterances when translating them into the target language. (pp. 119–120)

Translation studies (TS) can assist in developing and enhancing the skills and creative abilities of individuals in their translation/interpreting practice. The first two authors of this paper developed experience of a translation approach through the application of functionalist theory to the translation of primary school assessments (see Tate, Collins, & Tymms 2003). TS at Durham University (England) have developed from 2005 with the previous postgraduate diploma for beginner interpreters—for both native and second-language British Sign Language (BSL) users. The current MA in translation studies incorporates the BSL<>English Translation/Interpreting Strand. It aims to develop students' theoretical and practical experience and competency in translating/interpreting in both directions. Interpreting per se is taught in separate modules.

As BSL and other signed languages do not have generally used written forms, students of translation/interpreting will need to learn a basic competence in glossing to aid the ability to translate and for teachers' ongoing formative assessments. Students therefore need to learn some basic conventions of glossing a

signed language. The use of glossing may also assist the development of meta-level competencies in the cultural and cognitive spheres.

For teachers and students, glossing is a way of making easily available linguistic and pragmatic understanding of the source text and students' reasoning in the development of a final translation. A problem with regard to video texts of languages that are signed and without a written form has been the difficulty of repeatedly inspecting the video text and linking this with written forms of commentary such as annotation and glosses. Until recently, this has proved to be discouraging for practical education purposes for anything but short BSL texts. Repeatedly scanning and reviewing video texts is much easier with digital video software. However, methods of easily aligning video frames with written text has not been widely available until more recently, as written comments also need to be quickly and easily linked to a point on the video text timeline.

It is now possible to link the signed video text timeline to the written text as it is typed, making both available on screen at the same time. Software is now widely available that enables, with much improved ease, the ability to examine and repeatedly reexamine video texts along with the facility to input quickly and easily time-aligned written comments about a video text. One such freely available open source software is ELAN. Linguists, including signed language linguists, use the software for analyzing interaction, communication and for language documentation. ELAN is also a valuable tool for TS and for the education of signed language translators and interpreters. It is a tool enabling glossing to be used in a practical way by students of TS for preparation of longer target texts and as part of assessment evidence by educators.

## 2. Glossing Approach for Translation Studies

As signed languages do not have written forms, learning how to gloss a signed language is desirable as it offers educators and assessors objective evidence to identify source-language comprehension in the intermediate step toward a final translation.

> Much of our thinking remains in our minds, where it is not exposed to review. The very process of putting thoughts to paper forces clarification; seeing them on paper (or on the computer screen) facilitates our own evaluation and receiving comments from peers or teachers provides further help. (McKeachie, 2002, pp. 170–171)

Generally speaking, a *gloss* is an explanatory comment or note added to the text of a book. It also refers to a kind of explanation (thought not a translation) of a foreign or strange word that needs explanation.

We have mentioned how glossing may be used as a step to developing a final translation. However, as we show below, the direction of the translation can affect the way glossing is used. When English is the target language then English words are used singly or in combination and sometimes in combination with special grammatical indications to comment and describe the source text. We refer to Wilcox and Wilcox (2000) for a description:

> Glossing is the practice of writing a morpheme-by-morpheme "translation" using English words. Glosses indicate what the individual parts of the native word mean. Glosses do not provide a true translation, which would instead use appropriate English ways of saying "the same thing." For example, German *Es geht mir gut* may be glossed as "It goes to-me good" (the hyphenated gloss "to-me" indicates that it refers to a single word in the original). A true English translation of this expression would be something like "I'm doing fine." (Wilcox & Wilcox, 2000, p. 20).

TS at Durham University expects students to develop competence in glossing for meaning (at the morphemic level, providing semantic and syntactic information) but with less focus on phonological production, variation, and phonetic differences. This is glossing as a heuristic for specific TS aims of developing one-off translations. TS students are taught this way of glossing as a step in developing a final translation that offers tangible indications of their decisions leading toward their translation. A gloss can show understanding of meaning in context (e.g. DAUGHTER), helping to focus students on semantics and syntax (meaning and function) and pragmatics. The use of glossing in conjunction with categorization tags (e.g. "FS" for "fingerspelling") or for sign formational information (in this case, "DD") is less useful from this perspective.

## 3. ELAN as a Glossing Tool for Translation Studies

ELAN, open-source annotation software (available for download from http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/download) has become an invaluable tool for helping students use glosses to develop one-off translations. ELAN is designed to handle video texts for analysis of signed languages and gestural communication and spoken communication. It allows for the precise time alignment of annotations with the corresponding video sources on multiple user-specifiable tiers (see below). The software is being used by sign language linguists to develop corpora of Australian Sign Language (Auslan), Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT; see Johnston & Crasborn, 2006) and BSL (see Schembri, 2008). The project is also developing and promoting a standardized way of documenting, or annotating, the video texts of signed languages (Johnston, 2011). The aim is to develop a specific set of conventions—an annotating system—to document corpora of signed languages, which will function as searchable databases. (See Johnston, 2011, for an explanation of the aim of developing standardized annotating system). The annotation system is particularly concerned with the way sign form is annotated in standardized ways for categorization and searchability of a large database of many texts.

TS needs a way to annotate sign languages to create static forms of text for considered one-off translations. We want to promote a way that TS can also use ELAN or similar software for glossing and developing a translation. TS can use ELAN for glossing meaning in the more traditional, and less standardized way than that proposed from a sign linguistics perspective (the precise annotation of sign form and categorization is less important for TS purposes). We have developed our own template of four tiers. One tier is used for the *student gloss*. A second tier is for the final translation, which we refer to as the *free translation*. A third tier is for *commentary* notes, and a fourth tier is for additional *literal* notes (as an extra notes space if any examples are given by a student).

Our aim is for students to produce final translations in the target language. ELAN software allows the use of time-matched tiers, which can be used to create a gloss tier matched with a free translation tier. The latter can be the basis of assessment and examination marking. The gloss tier is to give a firm basis upon which to form and demonstrate free translation judgements. The free translation is one part of examination marks as students are also examined by an accompanying written "commentary," an essay about the translation (about the source text, translation decisions, and connections with theories of translation). Using ELAN will enable the "preparatory commentary" to be created as a separate tier where comments are easily aligned to the relevant video frames. The comments in this section are then used to help create the separate conventional essay version for marking.

## 4. Annotation in Linguistics and in Translation Studies,

Just as ELAN may be used in different ways for different purposes, so glossing may be used in different ways with different purposes. The purpose of using ELAN for TS modules is for teaching and assessing translation decisions, not for creating a database for research aims or an easily searchable database that categorizes and catalogs. Durham TS encourages glossing at the morpheme-to-morpheme level, paying less attention to phonological considerations (e.g., of sign variation). Glossing is for practical use for one-off translations for

teachers and students, as opposed to longer term "language documentation." (The language documentation project is promoting specific ways of annotation that are unnecessary and may be unhelpful for TS.)

As BSL does not have a written language format, the TS glossing model we use is either (a) for a static form of the BSL source text for more easily stepping in to the written or spoken English free translation or (b) as a prepared script for the BSL target text (see explanation below). We teach this use of glossing as it enables TS students to develop a translation as well as demonstration of their reasoning behind the translation.

Annotation may be used in different ways for different aims. *Documentation* and *annotation* are not neutral terminology; the way these terms are used can imply different theoretical directions. For example, the *Annotation Guidelines* (Johnston, 2011) being developed for documentation of signed languages refer to signs as fully or partially lexical. In Johnston's linguistic theory, depicting and pointing signs are designated as "partly lexical" signs, to be annotated with the tags "DS" and "PS." However, other signed language theoreticians and researchers use the terms "classifiers" and "indexicals." From a cognitive linguist's perspective these signs have a different lexical status (e.g., see Taub, 2001, pp. 39-40, 62, 225). Other researchers have used the term "productive lexicon" for those items that the *Guidelines* term partially lexical to include both classifiers and indexicals. These debates within sign linguistics overlap with difficulties in finding ways to label sign language lexemes, grammatical functions, and formational features in the goal of creating a searchable database and for future research and development of theory.

For TS, the issues are not ones of deciding between any particular theoretical perspectives or of needing to be too concerned with how to use annotation for archiving and searching or finding statistical evidence for linguistics theory. All of these are important and may affect translations and translators, but TS does not encompass or espouse any one particular linguistics perspective. Indeed, TS is much broader than linguistics, often referred to as an inter- or multidisciplinary field (Munday, 2008). The findings of linguistics will, of course, be used whenever they can illuminate or help translational practices. The use of tags such as DS and PS are unnecessary for the practice of one-off translations. The need of a generic tag such as "FS" (to indicate a relationship with fingerspelling) is also unlikely to be useful.

An English approximation of meaning for a sign—the gloss—is useful in a similar way for both language documentation and for TS. However, the fact that, for example, the sign formation for DAUGHTER, DD, may be historically related to fingerspelling and therefore indicates a form of borrowing is less useful or necessary for developing a translation. It may possibly be useful in some cases, as a teacher check of understanding and differentiation from other lexical items. There are conventionalized (lexicalized) BSL signs originally based on single or double initialized signs or partial fingerspelling that fluent, native users may or may not regard as "borrowing." The status of signs, like the status of spoken words, changes with time and use; "borrowed" is a concept that changes and disappears over time. The salient point for TS is that the annotation, the gloss, functions as a way to indicate a static form of the meaning and therefore does not need any indication of the sign formation as a step to producing a free translation.

The use of # is becoming a standard for indicating a fingerspelled sign (e.g., #BSL to indicate b-s-l). However, it is possibly more useful for TS for developing a translation when English is the source text to use the hash mark to easily indicate a word that is to be fingerspelled in the target BSL free translation. Therefore translation direction influences the way annotation/glossing is to be used by students/translators.

A very useful suggestion for TS from the *Annotation Guidelines* is of indicating cross-cultural gestures in a BSL original. This has teaching and learning implications for TS. Gestures, which can be culturally shared or idiosyncratic, occur commonly in speech and during signed discourse. The *Guidelines* explain how the gloss should describe meaning of the gesture rather than form (e.g., G:HOW-STUPID-OF-ME not G:HIT-PALM-ON-FOREHEAD). However, for TS aims, if the source is spoken English, accompanied by a similar gesture, the gloss functions as a script for student's target BSL free translation production and could usefully be of the original gestural form.

Meaning in signed languages is also encoded in the form of role-shift structure. Johnston describes this as follows:

> Role shift is used to indicate that part of a text is presented from the point of view of a particular participant. The participant referred to may be the signer himself or herself at some time other than the present (e.g., if the signer is relating a story about a past event in which he or she were involved), or some other person. (Johnston, 2011, p. 33)

The *Annotation Guidelines* suggest using the annotation tag RS: followed by the name of the person or entity marked by the shift or enactment. From a TS teaching perspective, the RS annotation tag could also be useful for students to indicate at the beginning and end of each period of role shift. Student glossing of role-shift would indicate evidence of understanding, provide possible teaching points, and aid the development of a target text.

The identification of chunks of meaning from utterances is also important for translation (see Sutton-Spence & Woll, 1999; Fenlon, Denmark, Campbell, & Woll, 2007). Students could use the convention // to mark meaning chunk or "sentence" boundaries or use ELAN's timeline function (a small section of timeline for a chunk of text) to indicate meaning chunk boundaries.

It is teachers who must be relied on, as experienced bilinguals, for their knowledge with reference to the variety of dictionary entries and digital resources that have been and are developing. The BSL corpus project will add to this knowledge. Even so, fluent, knowledgeable, experienced teachers (with all their differing biases and values and attitudes to language use) will still be central for translator/interpreter education.

## 5. TS Teaching and Assessment Approach: English–BSL

A recent study (Wurm, 2010) places English-to-BSL as a hybrid of prototypical translation and interpreting practice and positions translation as social practice, with the individual's background as central to that practice.

> As my findings suggest, influenced by their social experiences, the [translation] event is shaped by the agents' familiarity with and attitudes toward particular communicational practices . . . regarding the translation as social practice allows us to distance ourselves from a reductive understanding. . . . This research thus suggests that it is a TP's individualised, socially embedded history that directs a TE. (Wurm, 2010, pp. 206–207)

TS is the academic environment that provides a structured approach and fosters a wide knowledge and understanding of translation theories and practices to support the development of professional rigor important to both translation and interpreting as social practices.

Durham University adapted Patrie's (2001) approach of bringing translation theory to bear on English-to-BSL for its postgraduate diploma for beginner interpreters both native and second language BSL users. As a way of grounding this as translation rather than interpreting, we used written English texts instead of spoken English source texts (focussing on translation from written English ensures also that BSL "A" language deaf students are integrated into modules). In other words, we had fixed source texts in the way of traditional translation but students produced a final target text (BSL) in a different medium signed to video, which relies heavily on memory for the rendition of even short chunks. Even short utterances need to be rehearsed and kept in memory for production and recording (cf. Wurm, 2010).

With BSL-to-English translation we were able to develop a way to use ELAN with students in which the source text, gloss version, and target text are all included in the same file. However English-to-BSL posed different technical problems. The target text video (BSL) needs to be created step by step through editing (joining filmed sections), as a separate file from ELAN. We thus adapted our use of ELAN to the hybrid nature of English-to-BSL as translation/interpreting. For the TS English-to-BSL project module, the English source text (ST) is given as a movie file in ELAN as, for example, a documentary with subtitles. (The English source could be either

written or audio or movie text.) Students then submit for marking the complete BSL target text (TT) movie along with the original separate ELAN file that includes their glossing of the TT.

## 6. Horses for Courses

Out of this comes a view of glossing in terms of signed languages that is tailored to different contexts and aims. As we have stated, linguistics has its particular aims for standardization of annotation for documentation of signed languages as outlined by Johnson in the *Annotation Guidelines* (see Johnston, 2011). Linguistics aims are also to document phonemic/phonetic detail and for large database interrogation. TS's uses of glossing are for teaching and learning as part of the broader applied inter- and multidisciplinary field of signed language translation/interpreting, audiences, contexts and aims being inextricable and essential.

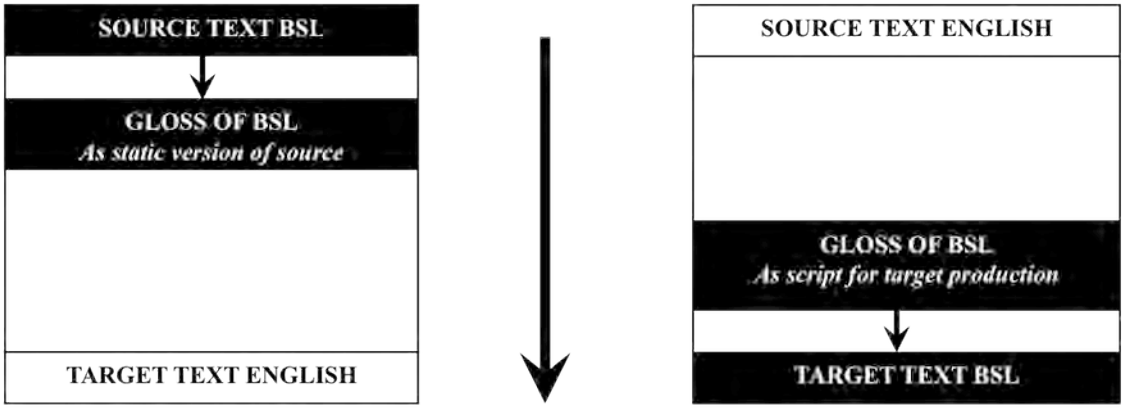
Translation studies wants to use glossing as commentary/annotation in two ways linked to the direction of translation. The glossing may need to be either close to the BSL ST or close to the pre-planned production of the BSL TT (see Figure 1). In terms of translation theories both could be seen as a strategy of being as literal as possible except that the glossing is understood as commentary/annotation rather than as a form of translation. The TT will influence the literal (commentary/annotation) form of glossing. When the ST is BSL and English is the TT, then glossing for meaning aims to create a static version of the source for fast reference to develop a final translation in English. When English is the ST and BSL is the TT, then glossing for meaning aims to create a static, visible version of the target as a *script for instruction* of what and how to produce the TT final translation in BSL. In the latter case, the target is being created in the mind of the student translator and through rehearsal but externalized and fixed in the gloss. It may change after reviewing filming of a chunk or section.

The gloss of the target BSL (the production script) may indicate an English source text word to be included by fingerspelling in the target text. A simple hash mark next to the gloss word may indicate this clearly for the translator's production, or the word may be typed in small case to differentiate from other glosses and indicate the fingerspelling.

When the source text is BSL, there are decisions for translators that are often related to fingerspelling. The text may include established lexical terms that are formationally related to fingerspelling (e.g., #gov or #GG) which, for commentary/annotation may, for audience reasons, need to be linguistically represented (as is the case for this article), whereas a gloss for meaning is fully adequate for the student/translator, for the student, and for the educator/assessor. In the example in parentheses, the hash marks, the handshape notation, and the partial English spelling are unnecessary for the TS student or the educator/assessor. The gloss GOVERNMENT would be sufficient.

A further example, provided above, relates to cross-cultural gestures. When the source text is BSL and the chosen translational strategy calls for it, the meaning needs to be indicated in the gloss (HOW-STUPID-OF-ME). When the source text is English, the form of the gesture is needed in the gloss-as-script if it is to be included in the BSL target to be produced (G:HIT-PALM-ON-FOREHEAD).

*Figure 1: Direction of translation*




## 7. Conclusion

We have outlined how glossing may be utilized from a pedagogical perspective for BSL<>English one-off translations: for teaching and learning translation and for the practice of translation. We have also explained, with examples, how TS for signed languages uses glossing with different aims from that of sign linguistics.

For translation of longer texts to be a realistic part of initial interpreter education and practice, it requires a means to repeatedly inspect the video of a signed ST and a means of producing a signed TT that is less reliant on memory. The ability to repeatedly inspect the video text and link this with written forms of commentary such as annotation and glosses is now possible with much improved ease due to the wide availability of software.

Translation studies is interested in using glossing when the signed language is either the ST or TT. The direction of translation influences whether glossing is to be used to produce a static version of the ST or as a script for the TT. As a static version of the source signed language, glossing avails the translator student a form of the source that is less reliant on memory, enabling deliberation about TT options. As a script for the target signed language, glossing offers visual direction and instruction for production.

Translation studies programs that include signed languages can now offer modules that lead to a wider range of qualifications: translation between signed languages, translation between spoken and signed languages, and translation as part of the foundation for initial interpreter education.

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# Broadcast Yourself: YouTube as a Tool for Interpreter Education

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**Abstract**

**YouTube is a website designed for the purpose of easily sharing videos and is extremely popular with today's generation of "digital native" students. The technology is easily accessible, free, and relatively simple to use. However, its merits as an educational tool for interpreting seem to be widely underutilized even though it is ideally suited for working with a visual language. In the fall of 2009, I began experimenting with YouTube in my American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting classes. I have slowly incorporated many of YouTube's useful features in my curriculum, enhancing my ability to provide pre-assignment information, interpreting models, and feedback on student work. So far, the response from students has been very favorable. I hope that sharing my strategies for using YouTube in the classroom will lead to collaboration with my colleagues and further exploration of YouTube as an effective tool in interpreter education.**

Keywords: interpreter education, YouTube, sign language, ASL, video instruction, technology

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# Broadcast Yourself: YouTube as a Tool for Interpreter Education

## 1. Introduction

I am an associate professor in the Department of American Sign Language (ASL) and Interpreter Training (IT) at San Antonio College, in San Antonio, Texas. This semester, I am teaching four sections of Interpreting I, the introductory interpreting class after students have completed four semesters of ASL instruction. I have been in my current faculty position since 2001, and although there are many things I like about teaching interpreting, I have never been completely satisfied with the traditional methods of instruction or of giving feedback to students pertaining to their ASL-to-English or English-to-ASL interpreting. A traditional way to provide feedback is to do it in real time, meeting with the student and having both of us review the work together. Alternately, I could grade a student's work by watching or listening to the student's recorded performance and taking notes on his or her strengths and weaknesses. Then, I would arrange to sit with the student and discuss the particulars of the performance, or I would provide the student with written comments to compare with the recorded work. Meeting with each of my students for each assignment takes a substantial amount of time. If I just give them my written feedback, students may or may not watch their work while reviewing my comments. Even if they do watch the work and review my comments, there is no guarantee that they will be able to synchronize my feedback with the respective segment of their work. These traditional methods of giving feedback are both time consuming and inefficient and, consequently, left me wanting a better option. Discovering the annotation features built in to YouTube provided me with that better option.

A few semesters ago I stumbled upon something that has had a significant impact on how I provide instruction and feedback to my students. In this article I discuss my use of YouTube in my interpreting classes. Specifically, I explain how this free service has dramatically improved what I am able to do in terms of providing direct, clear feedback to my students. To help demonstrate exactly what I do with YouTube in my classroom, I have created a series of companion YouTube videos as models. These samples are referenced during the corresponding sections of the article with the URL, which link the reader directly to the YouTube video.

## 2. Getting Started

At the beginning of each semester I ask all of my students to establish their own YouTube accounts. Many students come into my class already familiar with YouTube and have their own accounts. For those who are not familiar, opening a new user account is simple and free and involves only a few steps. I keep a list of students' YouTube user names in my grade book so that I am able to contact them with their assignment feedback. For this article, I will not go into specific details about the technical side of using YouTube; there are plenty of other resources already developed for this purpose. Instead, I will provide information on how I use YouTube as a tool in my classroom. (See Appendix for information on how to find resources for using YouTube.)

## 3. YouTube Video Privacy Settings

YouTube allows users to upload videos filmed in a variety of formats. Uploading videos to YouTube is a simple process (resources within the YouTube site can help with this). You can choose to assign to your uploaded video one of three levels of security. In this section, I explain each of the security levels and how I use them in my work with my students.

*Public.* This is the least secure method of uploading videos. When you upload your video to YouTube, you are asked to provide key words called "tags." For videos for my class, I might choose to include tags like "English to ASL," "sign language," "interpreting resources," etc. These tags serve as identifiers or search terms that allow anyone with access to the Internet to search YouTube for videos that might contain these tags. I upload videos as public if I am willing to share them with anyone with access to the Internet. I might choose to do this with samples of my own work that I want to make accessible. I also may choose to upload spoken English recordings that I make for my students to use as source material.

*Unlisted.* This is a medium level of security for uploading videos. Only people with the specific URL can actually navigate to an unlisted video; these videos will not show up on any of the areas on YouTube accessible to the general public. Once I have uploaded videos that I want my students to have access to, I simply send an email including the link or I post the link on the course page that the college provides for each section of classes being taught. (San Antonio College uses Blackboard or Alamo Colleges Educational Services [ACES]; other colleges may have different ways of electronically connecting students and professors.) If I decide to restrict access to the video at a later date, I can always update the Broadcasting and Sharing Options and designate the video as private.

*Private.* This is the most secure method for uploading videos. When I upload videos of my students' work for grading and feedback, I always use this method. This means that the work is inaccessible to the general public; it cannot be searched for and located using the tags associated with the video like in the public option above. Videos that are designated as private may be shared with up to 50 users only. When I am ready to make the graded video available to the student, I simply "share" the video with the student using the Broadcasting and Sharing Options tab and enter the student's user ID. The student then receives an email from YouTube that I have "shared" a video; this notification directs the student to the uploaded video on my YouTube channel, where he or she can view the video with my comments.

## 4. Scaffolding and Advance Organizers: Pre-Assignment Information

In a recent article summarizing research on scaffolding, van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010) define *scaffolding* as "support given by a teacher to a student when performing a task that the student might otherwise not be able to accomplish" (p. 274). I routinely use YouTube to provide my students with scaffolding in the form of pre-assignment information such as background information and extra vocabulary they might need. These online "advance organizers" prepare students for the task of interpreting unfamiliar source material in several ways.

First, students use the contextual information provided in the advance organizer to develop schema or some way to relate the information to their own prior knowledge of the subject. I encourage students to do further research exploring additional themes that are likely to occur based on the information provided. As an interpreting instructor, I remind my students of the importance of continually developing their extra-linguistic knowledge, an essential component in comprehension (Gile, 2009).

Students also use the contextual information to assist in their "meaning making" when simultaneously interpreting cold material. Context plays a significant role in our ability to deduce meaning from discourse. Unfortunately, the process of teaching interpreting can sometimes lead to an artificial isolation of the discourse, separating it entirely from context. The more contextualized I can make the discourse for my students, the greater their chances of fully understanding the source message.

Finally, when students are given the technical vocabulary necessary to provide an accurate interpretation into their second language, more of their cognitive resources can be spent on the interpreting process itself. Having the vocabulary they need in advance of an assignment helps to reduce their cognitive load during the task. Lowering their risk of saturation helps them to experience a greater measure of success in the interpretation than they might otherwise experience (Gile, 2009).

Here is how a typical exercise unfolds. I assign the monologue "Betty Cox—International Student Scholarship." It is a spoken English monologue of about 3 minutes in length describing an international student scholarship at a community college, created in honor of Betty Cox for her 80th birthday. After I share this information with the students, I direct them to discuss what they already know about the topic and what they can reasonably assume might come up during the assignment. We do this collaboratively so that the class can benefit from schema some students may already have. If students do not seem to have much schema or seem to be off the topic, I gently guide them in a more productive direction. Depending on the assignment, the task might be continued as homework, with students encouraged to explore on their own outside of class.

Next, I have the students watch the pre-assignment video posted on YouTube that gives them background information and specific vocabulary that I know they will need but suspect they may not have. This link will direct you to the YouTube video of the pre-assignment information that my students see prior to attempting the "Betty Cox—International Student Scholarship" assignment in class:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmkTsjJlqEc

After students are comfortable with the vocabulary presented in the pre-assignment video, they film themselves interpreting the spoken English source material into sign language without rehearsal, or "cold."

## 5. Providing Feedback on Students' Work

After students record and save video samples of their work in class, I upload the videos to my YouTube channel as "private." I can then view the videos and add annotations, to give students direct feedback. (See Appendix for more information regarding resources on how to annotate YouTube videos.)

There are several ways I can add feedback using the various annotation types. I primarily use the speech bubble and the note features. For each of the annotations, I can specify the location on the video where the annotation will appear, the dimensions of the annotation, the font size and color of the text as well as the background color, the point during the video at which the annotation will appear, and how long it will remain visible. I especially like the speech bubble feature, because I can precisely locate the "pointer" to the exact area of the video that the comment applies to, as seen in Figure 1. For example, if I am providing feedback on a student's use of fingerspelling, I can orient the speech bubble so that it directly points to the fingerspelling.

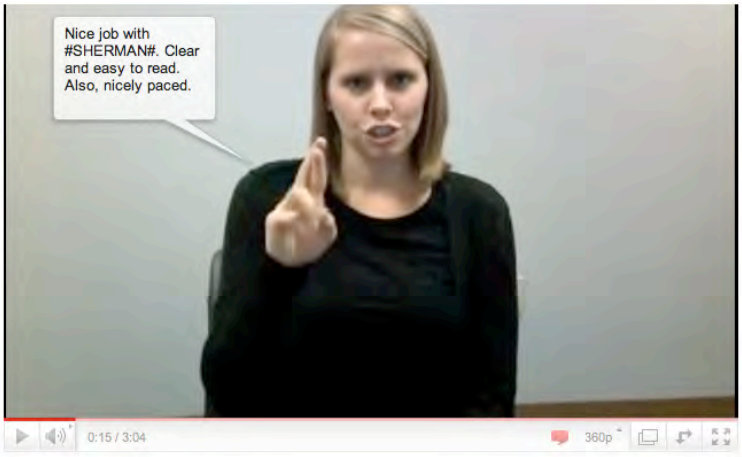

*Figure 1: Annotation using the pointer feature to highlight fingerspelling.*

When I begin adding annotations to a student's assignment, I find it helpful to adjust the scale of the video timeline using the magnifying glass symbols with the plus and minus signs, as shown in Figure 2. Increasing the scale makes viewing and aligning multiple comments much easier.


*Figure 2: Adjusting the scale of the video timeline.*

Once I have completed all the annotations to my student's work, I save and publish the annotations. I am now ready to share my feedback. To make the video accessible to this student, I simply "share" the video by using the Broadcasting and Sharing Options button on my YouTube window and enter the student's user name, as illustrated in Figure 3. From this screen I can also add a message to the student.

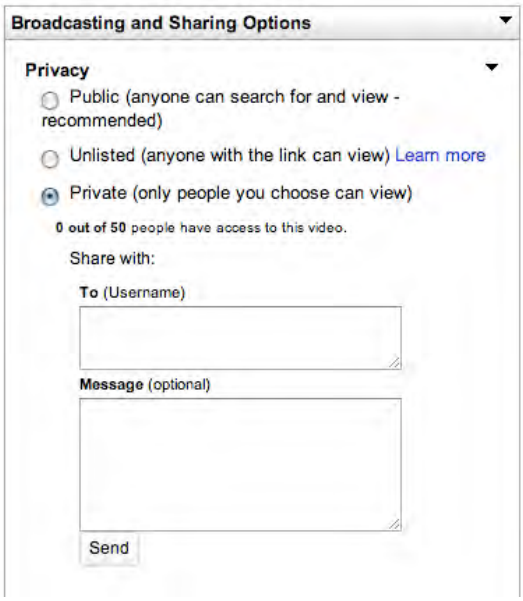


*Figure 3: Broadcasting and Sharing Options.*

For an example of a student video that has been annotated for demonstration purposes for this article, go to the following link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An3bvfGixdI

Students can also use the annotation feature to annotate a sample of their work or an instructor model uploaded to their own YouTube account, and then "share" the video with me. I can assign students the task of providing reflection on their own work or ask them to identify specific features within the signed model.

Within annotations, I can insert links to other locations on the Internet, for example, to refer students to samples in my video library that demonstrate effective methods for a skill students might have difficulty with. Suppose a student is struggling with a listing feature in the target message. I can add an annotation that points out how the listing feature was not as effective as it could be and then add a link. When the student clicks on this link, it automatically opens a video I have created that models several strategies for using listing in ASL.

Another effective use of the annotation/link feature is to direct students to source material I have found posted by other users on YouTube. When I find a sample of spoken discourse suitable for use as source material, I often make a model of the work and upload my interpretation of the source to my YouTube channel. At the beginning of my video, I add an annotation that includes a link to the original source. This allows students to navigate to the source material prior to viewing my model of the assignment. Of course, the link feature can be used to direct students anywhere on the Internet for an unlimited range of resources.

## 6. Student-Directed Video Logs of Sign Vocabulary

I have found it helpful to have my students create their own videos to upload to their respective YouTube channels. When we work with new source material, students typically generate lots of discussion about new sign vocabulary. Traditionally, students would write down in journals the new vocabulary they learned on a given assignment, and add to the sign vocabulary journal throughout the semester. However, it is not easy to describe the parameters of sign production in a written journal. This has an impact on the effectiveness of sign vocabulary journals and may diminish students' motivation for reviewing them. My solution is to have students create signed video logs periodically throughout the semester: After we conclude an assignment with a lengthy sign vocabulary discussion, students create a video log entry of the new vocabulary; in the video, the student models the sign production, explains the meaning(s) of the sign, and describes the context in which the sign may be used. Students then upload this video to their own YouTube channels. Now the new vocabulary is saved in a format that is much more useful and readily available anytime the students have an Internet connection—it is even viewable over their smart phones. For an example of a student-created video log, go to

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLO9qaWdOFg

## 7. Building a Database of Interpreting Models

For the last several semesters, I have been creating a video library of interpreting samples. Some of them are models of required assignments. For an example of an instructor model for "Betty Cox—International Student Scholarship," go to

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCuJ0n8eP3Y

Other videos in my YouTube library are brief samples of interpreter work that showcase specific interpreting skills. I am continually adding new video lessons demonstrating specific structures or features of ASL. Ideas for development include demonstrations of expansion techniques, effective use of space, role shifting, classifiers, various listing techniques, transitions, and so forth. I envision this library evolving into a collaborative collection

of samples available to any of my professional colleagues. These sample lessons could be listed as "public" and thus would be available to anyone who could benefit from the information.

A slightly different approach to using models of interpreted work on YouTube is to use the annotation feature to add comments throughout the model. This allows an instructor to, in effect, give a "play-by-play" breakdown of the work, highlighting specific features of the model for students to pay special attention to. These videos of interpreting models can then be made accessible simply by giving students the URLs.

## 8. Conclusion

I have found many benefits of using YouTube in my classroom. I love the convenience of storing samples of work that I want my students to view. YouTube is readily accessible, free, and familiar to many of my students; when I use this medium in my interpreting classes, I am using technology that they are comfortable with. I am approaching them on their terms (Clifton & Mann, 2010), which goes a long way toward building a rapport with students that I might not have under other circumstances. Also, I can watch and grade student videos from anywhere that I have Internet access. This makes grading students' work so much easier than being tied to a particular workstation in my office or having to transport materials. Once students' work is loaded onto my YouTube channel on the Internet, I have it accessible to me virtually anywhere; I do not have to carry around flash drives, DVDs, or videotapes. And with smart-phone technology providing ready access to YouTube, students are able to watch their recorded work or interpreting models I have uploaded right in the palms of their hands. This accessibility alone makes me appreciate the technology.

YouTube could be an effective tool for many other purposes and across different disciplines; the techniques I am using with students in my classroom could be easily adapted to distance education and mentoring applications, for example. I believe spoken language interpreter educators would find many similar uses of YouTube to support their work with students. What I am doing with YouTube in my interpreting classes is likely only scratching the surface—YouTube's potential is limited only by our own creativity and ability to conceive of ways to use this wonderful medium.

## 9. References

Clifton, A., & Mann, C. (2010). Can YouTube enhance student nurse learning? *Nurse Education Today*, *31*(4), 311–313.

Gile, D. (2009). Basic concepts and models for interpreter and translator training (Rev. ed.). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins North America.

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## Appendix

*YouTube Resources*

Resources for Creating an Account, Uploading Videos, and Editing Videos in YouTube

1. Go to Google and type "YouTube Help" into the search string.
2. Select "YouTube Help."
3. Select the help topic that you are interested in using.

Resources for Annotation in YouTube

1. Go to Google and type "YouTube Help Creating or Editing Annotations" into the search string.
2. Select "Creating or editing annotations—YouTube Help."
3. Select the expandable subtopics you are interesting in using:
    a. Accessing the Annotations Editor
    b. Tour of the Annotations Editor
    c. Creating an Annotation
    d. Editing an Annotation
    e. Saving, Publishing, and Deleting Annotations

Just a few minutes spent reading through these sections will provide you with enough of the basics to be able to use annotations with your students' videos.

# Moving Interpreter Education Online: A Conversation With Sherry Shaw

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**Abstract**

**In this Open Forum conversation between Doug Bowen-Bailey, a signed language interpreter educator and resource developer, and Sherry Shaw, a signed-language-interpreter educator, Sherry shares her experience of establishing and teaching an online master's program in interpreting at the University of North Florida. The conversation shares insights into the structure of the online program, as well as the benefits and challenges of teaching in an online environment. These include issues of time management for both students and faculty, faculty recruitment and retention, choices in technology, and establishing a program within an institutional environment.**

Keywords: online education, technology, time management, master's degree

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# Moving Interpreter Education Online: A Conversation With Sherry Shaw

## 1. Beginning the Conversation

*At the 2010 CIT conference, I attended a session entitled "Connecting Our World of Interpreter Education Through Research and Publication: What, How, and Why," by Dr. Jemina Napier, the editor of this journal. Dr. Napier challenged those in attendance to find creative ways to share our own learning and research with the profession.*

*I do not necessarily see myself as a researcher; my work mostly takes place outside of the context of academia. Yet, I appreciate the research and publications of others and how they inform my own work such that I realized that I needed to find ways to contribute to efforts such as the IJIE.*

*Fortunately, I was sitting in close proximity to Dr. Sherry Shaw from the University of North Florida. I was the webmaster for CIT and had met Sherry through her work as a co-editor for the CIT Conference Proceedings, and I knew that Sherry was involved in establishing a master's program for interpreters using an online format. As I work in the online realm, I was curious to know what Sherry had learned in that process, so I invited her to take part in a conversation with the intent of sharing it through this Open Forum.*

*I later learned that Sherry has been an interpreter educator for 23 years and is currently Program Director and Associate Professor in the BS and MEd ASL/English Interpreting programs at the University of North Florida. Her research focuses on spoken and signed language students' cognitive flexibility, visual and verbal memory, attention shift, and processing speed. Additional research interests include service-learning in interpreter education, social connectedness of deaf children and senior citizens, and interpreting student aptitude. Dr. Shaw is co-editor of the* Journal of Interpretation *and serves as a reviewer for the* Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship.

*With that experience, I knew the conversation would be a good one.*

*In terms of process, I drafted a set of questions that I sent in advance and then we scheduled a time to meet online for a conversation using the online meeting software Adobe Connect Pro. Using this technology, I recorded our conversation and then transcribed it. Sherry and I then collaborated to edit the conversation into a format that was more suitable for written publication, but that still retained the nature of our dialogue. We also made some changes to account for developments in the program that took place after our conversation but prior to publication. This process proved to be enjoyable and educational for both of us. We hope the same will be true for the readers of this journal.*

*Doug Bowen-Bailey*

## 2. The Conversation

*Doug: Could you start by describing your interpreter education program?*

Sherry: Sure. Let me clarify that we're talking about only the online master's program. The program was started because of demand. I had some prospective students approach me in August 2008 about starting an online master's degree at the University of North Florida (UNF). Although that was in the long-term plan, I was not prepared to deliver anything online at that time because we had just started the 2+2 bachelor's degree.

Yet, I had a department chair, Dr. Len Roberson, an interpreter and a real visionary, who said, "We should really think this through and see what we can do." So, after some deliberation, we decided to start a master's concentration under an existing degree. By doing that, we did not need to go through the long process of establishing a new degree and receiving approval from the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors. This allowed us to pilot a program to see if it was sustainable before establishing a stand-alone degree.

Those initial students were from Florida, so we planned to use a hybrid delivery model where students attended class online and then came to Jacksonville for three long weekends a semester. That was a very successful model for in-state students. It didn't have the inherent difficulties with a totally online program, because, first of all, these people already knew each other. We had students from Miami and Tampa, and even though the distance was up to 6 hours away, it was workable for them.

That delivery model was very short-lived because once the word got out that there was a master's degree, I started getting so many inquiries that I had to reconsider how to deliver the program. Florida is part of the 16-state Southern Regional Education Board's Academic Common Market Consortium, and once our program was approved, graduate students in the region could attend for in-state tuition. With this development, the program needed to adjust to people living in distant states. I really couldn't expect that they would come to Florida for three weekends a semester.

*Doug; In terms of the timing of those weekends, how did they fit into the structure of the overall semester?*

Sherry: When there were three weekends, we started off with the first on-site meeting a couple of weeks into the semester after students had completed preliminary readings and activities. Then, they had to come in around mid-term and about one week before the end of the semester. The weekends were intermittent throughout the semester.

Now, we have an on-site component of one weekend per semester, usually toward the end of the semester. We spend the semester working on units and completing all the preliminary work that students will need to apply in the long weekend of our on-site class. That's how the program is structured at this time. Last semester, the students came to Jacksonville in Week 14 of a 16-week semester. They arrived on a Thursday for an evening meeting and had class Friday, Saturday, and part of the day on Sunday.

We guarantee that students will not have to come to Jacksonville for more than one long weekend a semester, which is typically a Thursday night, all day Friday, all day Saturday, and Sunday until noon (it varies by professor). So, the challenge for me as the program director is to organize their courses so two courses that have an on-site component do not coincide. Some semesters, the students do not come on-site at all.

That's a rough description of how the program works currently. This is our fourth year of the program, and we have grown rapidly. We are in the process now of changing it from a concentration under an existing degree to a stand-alone degree, and that's a year-long process for the institution; we expect that change to become official in Fall 2012.The reason for submitting the proposal to change the current program from an MEd concentration in ASL/English interpreting to an MS in interpreting is that we want to be distinguished from education and no longer require the two core education courses—which total 6 graduate credit hours. So, when we are independent, the students will not have to take those core courses and can totally devote themselves to advanced interpreting coursework. Another advantage is that we will be able to add concentrations under the new major for specialty areas such as CDI, health care, trilingual interpreting, and pedagogy. For example, we currently admit deaf

interpreters who aspire to become CDIs and/or interpreter educators, but we do not yet have a full program of study to prepare CDIs. This will be possible if the program structure is right and the market demands it.

*Doug: The program's focus isn't about interpreter educators; it's about practitioners, is that right?*

Sherry: We started as a practioner-based program and recently branched out to create an option in interpreting pedagogy. We have partnered with Video Relay Service Interpreting Institute (VRSII) to pilot the interpreting pedagogy emphasis and gauge demand for a concentration once the new MS is in place. The 15 students who are selected to pilot the project, beginning in May 2012, will enter under the MEd and transition over into the MS seamlessly once the change is official. The UNF-VRSII partnership is structured a bit differently than the general program. It will consist of 3-week summer sessions in two summers with online courses during the fall and spring semesters. It is designed for students to receive the master's degree within 18 months if they have prior teaching experience and 24 if they need an additional internship to provide more teaching experience prior to graduation.

Students who are currently in the general program take one teaching course, Interpreting Process Pedagogy. Otherwise, they are focused on becoming more highly qualified practitioners. The ideas for expanding the program are pretty unlimited, but of course, we are restricted by resource limitations, such as faculty. However, the structure will be much better for expanding the program into specializations once we are a stand-alone degree.

*Doug: So you're currently in an institutional box that you have to break out of in order to have those choices?*

Sherry: Right. We started on a trial basis and the program's growth is allowing us to expand our thinking. We have gone from five students in 2009 to 38 students in 11 states in 2012. Thus far, we have graduated 12 students, with six more expected this summer. We've demonstrated to the institution that the potential for growth is there, and we're in the position now to move forward with that.

*Doug: That's great. You've talked some about the institutional issues you've faced in finding a home for this. What are some of the other institutional barriers you've encountered in creating an online program?*

Sherry: Originally, we had a barrier with out-of-state tuition and fees for students outside of our 16-state Academic Common Market region. However, the university instituted a special tuition reduction for our program for all out-of-state students, regardless of their state of origin. This was a huge development in 2011 and is tentative while the university evaluates program growth because of this discount. While it is not the in-state rate, it is much lower than the out-of-state rate. When this was approved last year, UNF made a strong statement about its support for this program. As a result, we now have students in areas outside our region, including Illinois, Colorado, Utah, Minnesota, and Arizona, who benefit from this tuition break.

*Doug: Dealing with out-of-state tuition was one challenge you faced. What have you seen as the advantages of going to a more online program?*

Sherry: It would not have been our first option to have an online master's degree because I'm very much a face-to-face person. I'm a little bit "old school," and this has all been quite a learning experience for me. That said, we work really hard at it because this is the only way possible to offer people the interpreting degree they want, in a reasonable amount of time, without requiring them to uproot and move to Jacksonville. If you were to look at our student population, most students are full-time interpreters and interpreter educators, and 75% of them are already certified interpreters. They need advanced degrees, and they come into the program knowing specifically why they want the degree. There would be no way for us to meet their needs if we didn't do something online.

*Doug: That flexibility is really a key component. It sounds like your target audience is people who are working professionals already.*

Sherry: Yes. However, one of the goals of the program is to assist precertified interpreters in achieving national certification. Those students who do not achieve national certification by their last semester are required to participate in a 6-credit-hour capstone internship. If a student is already certified, then that person is exempt from the 6-hour internship, which translates into a hefty savings of graduate credit tuition. That's very, very motivating for people to self-regulate their learning while they are in our program so that they can get their certification to avoid the added expense.

*Doug: That's great to have an incentive like that built in. It does make a difference.*

Sherry: I would like to require everyone to participate in an internship, but there are some logistical barriers, especially in the workload, in placing so many distance-learning students. The certification requirement adds an incentive because it motivates students to apply what they are learning in classes to their preparation for national certification. Of course, because ours is such a young program, I don't have data on graduates yet, but it will be very interesting to look at graduation-to-certification time spans for those students who come in without certification.

*Doug : What would you say are the challenges of online learning?*

Sherry: Time is a big one. I have found that it's much more labor intensive and time consuming to teach online than face-to-face, primarily because of the need to develop a "presence" in the online platform. The reasons are complex in that these students are all working individuals, and faculty have to make themselves available in typical off-hours so that students have a sense of connectedness. I have evening office hours, weekend meetings, and Saturday recording sessions. Students have my cell phone number and my commitment is that I will respond to emails within 24–48 hours. I'm almost always online to be available to students, so they don't feel like they are enrolled in independent studies. The students are committed to online learning, so our faculty members are challenged to maintain "community" with the students. I think this has been a key to the program's success. Keeping this schedule is practically life consuming, but I want the students to feel engaged. That's a summary of my biggest challenge, at least in the early stages of program development.

Our faculty members are challenged with staying current on the technology to deliver the highest quality program we can, and our advances in this area result in an improved experience for the students. In 2012, our program was selected by the university to receive online instructional designers to help us improve our delivery techniques. We were given budgets to receive Online Teaching Certification training, which five of us are involved in this year. In 2011, the university purchased ooVoo licenses to increase our capabilities in video conferencing with our students. Probably one of my greatest frustrations is just when I think I've mastered a technology, something new arrives, and there's very little time to rest.

*Doug: So what have been your strategies to make it sustainable? Because there's more to your life than just this part of it. At least, I hope so. What are some of the things that you've been able to do as an instructor to both maintain that commitment, but also to balance things out so that it's doable for you?*

Sherry: One of the strategies for sustainability is developing peer partnerships and groups so students can learn to depend on each other. We try to teach them how to use each other as resources. In our developmental phase, students were relying on my support for technology, among other things. We've become better at orienting students to online learning and the technology they require and directing them to UNF's excellent tech support (which their tuition dollars support). At first, I tried to answer all the technology questions, but I'm not the best person to field technology questions, so I learned quickly to instill in students the resourcefulness they need to get help from the right person. Certainly, the teamwork of the faculty is key to sustainability.

*Doug: It's the same thing, I think, as interpreters working with students in classrooms. The tendency is for the students to ask the interpreter, because it's the direct access to someone they know. Yet the goal is to have the interpreter interpret the question to the teacher or other resource provider. People will go to whom they're most comfortable with, so redirection is sometimes necessary.*

Sherry: Yes, and although I often just redirect them to other resources, I encourage students to "check in" when they are frustrated about something or have questions. The worst thing we can do is to appear too busy for students. Without them actually being on campus, there are no opportunities for them to drop in to the office and chat about their concerns, so when they reach out for help, it's important that we give them the support they need. I have found that most students struggle for quite a while to resolve a problem or answer their own questions before they contact me. This semester, in the Applied Research course, I sent a message to students asking them to contact me with an "SOS" in the subject line of an email if they needed immediate assistance. I guaranteed immediate response to an SOS. Within 10 minutes, I had five SOS messages, which tells me if we don't make an effort to stay engaged with students, we can't maximize their learning.

*Doug: You mentioned developing that peer-to-peer relationship. What are some other strategies that you have used to develop that sense of community, so that there's more cohesion online between the students and they're able to learn from each other and also have that sense of respect for each other?*

Sherry: Last year, we developed a Blackboard course called Boot Camp, and all incoming students participate in it the summer prior to admission. Boot Camp gives students practice with the online environment and experience with submitting assignments, participating in discussions, developing wikis (group projects), taking exams, and undertaking many other tasks that are part of their courswork. They also develop a website where they can post personal information and photos if they want. We are hopeful this will give students a head start on developing those peer relationships and prepare them to begin their courses without worrying about technology considerations. Once courses begin, students are involved in online discussions to develop a teamwork mentality. We orient them to the etiquette of online learning and the value of community building within an online environment so they can interact with respect and tolerance for differences.

The other aspect of community building is that students come to campus once every semester. Working together in groups when they're here seems to sustain them from semester to semester because they know each other. When we started the program, we admitted year-round, and it was more challenging because students might enter mid-year and miss the fall on-site course. We now admit only in the fall to avoid this, but it was necessary in the beginning for program-building reasons to maintain open enrollment. If students are able to participate in the short-term study abroad option, which we call a "transformational learning opportunity," they develop lifelong friendships with each other.

Coming to campus once a semester, working through Boot Camp, and participating in online discussions, video conferencing, and study abroad are the main ways that students build a sense of camaraderie in the whole graduate school experience.

*Doug: Does UNF have a pretty strong program in online learning for other departments, so that there's wide support for it?*

Sherry*:* UNF is committed to expanding distance-learning opportunities for its students. I am on the Distance Learning Committee, which is chaired by one of our faculty members, Dr. Len Roberson (who was the department chair responsible for establishing interpreter education at UNF and is also the Assistant Vice President of Academic Technology). The Interpreting Program is a forerunner at the institution, so administrators look to us to set the pace for more programs to transition to online delivery. They have their eye on us all the time, and that's a good thing! It definitely helps when the department chair, college dean, graduate school dean, provost, and president know about your program and understand its uniqueness. They want it to succeed, and that's what sets

this university apart, in my view. UNF's administration embraces innovation even when dealing with economic issues. With administrative support, I feel there is so much potential for expansion as we try to meet market demand for online graduate programming.

*Doug: It's nice to have allies within the structure of an institution. That really does make a difference.*

Sherry: If the administration does not have a true understanding about what you do, it can be like beating your head against the wall. I've been amazed by UNF's perspective on interpreter education and the value that it places on it. First of all, having some flexibility built into governance and the curricular process allows for the "wiggle room" I need to try new ideas. Just being able to try a new course as an experiment, before going through the entire curricular process of changing or adding a course, has been liberating. That allowed me to rapidly build a program. My immediate administrators have put a lot of trust in me to do it and it has worked. I'm very, very happy with the way the institution has worked with the program.

*Doug: That's great. You've talked about the program growing and you've talked about your role as one of the faculty members, but are there other faculty involved? Also, what are some of the challenges of recruiting and finding qualified faculty to be a part of the program?*

Sherry: Our master's program requires a tenure-track faculty member to have an earned doctorate, and it's a huge challenge in our profession, which until recently, did not have a terminal degree in interpreting. You can count all the people in our profession who have doctorates, and those people tend to be entrenched in coordinating or teaching in interpreting programs, researching, consulting, and doing other things. Even though we deliver the program primarily online, we still have a BS degree program that is on-site, and we teach in both programs. It's not so easy to recruit doctorate-level people, especially when it means moving, even if it is to beautiful Florida! When we were given another full-time, tenure-track position, it took us a while to locate the right person. Now, we have Dr. Janice Humphrey on board, and she brings a wealth of experience to our students. Jan moved to Florida in December 2011 and started teaching in spring 2011. Part-time faculty members include Drs. Len Roberson, Eileen Forestal, Carolyn Ball, Marty Taylor, Carol Patrie, and Debra Russell. One challenge we face regarding part-time faculty is the relatively low wage, especially when they live at a distance and money is limited for their travel for a class with an on-site component.

*Doug: So then the part-time faculty may be not able to be a part of the community building when it happens?*

Sherry: That's right. At least not in classes that require an on-site component.

*Doug: That's a challenge.*

Sherry: I need to figure out a way to fund part-time faculty travel and expenses, perhaps by applying for grants and finding foundation support. We're exploring a couple of foundations right now to help us with this dilemma of acquiring high-quality part-time faculty members who can be paid to come and teach their on-site component.

We are fortunate to have local part-time faculty like Len Roberson, who teaches Interpreting in Legal Settings, along with Sharon Caserta who's an SC:L and a legal aid attorney in Jacksonville. We also have deaf faculty members who are resident ASL experts and are authorized to teach with master's degrees as an exception to policy.

*Doug: That's the reality that I often face in terms of needing to pull bits and pieces together, but it seems like it's an added pressure that you are in some ways the model for the university about how this should go forward.*

*So, maintaining the level of standard is important from the quality standpoint, but also in that this will have a ripple effect with other programs.*

*I'm curious to know about some of the structure of your courses, and what sort of activities you do and resources you include. Because obviously interpreting as a visual medium requires working in signed language and some of those visual modes, and face-to-face interaction makes most sense to lots of people, so when you talk about doing online signed language things, people go, "How do you do that?" So, what are some of the things that you've found successful in integrating into your online courses?*

Sherry*:* The beauty of the times is that we have so many resources for students available to us online. Whereas we used to rely on our labs with 800+ videotapes, we've discovered that the Internet is our best tool as far as resources go. We use MIT's OpenCourseWare where their lectures are online, many with video material connected to the lectures. That's been a great resource for source text English materials. OIC Movies is one of several great sites for ASL source materials. Purchasing streaming rights to commercially produced materials can be exorbitant, so we produce many source materials in-house. Another resource for curriculum modification and enhancement is the National Interpreter Education Center, funded in 5-year grant cycles by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. In the current grant cycle (2010–2015), Northeastern University presently is administering the grant and taking steps to extend the way programs share effective methods, technologies, innovations, and materials with each other. The initiatives in this grant cycle include exploring the feasibility of using MIT's OpenCourseWare model in interpreter education. Open online access to entire courses is a new concept for interpreter education, but it has "come of age" and holds great promise for increasing access to good source materials online.

I can see where prospective students might be resistant and think that an online program translates into a lower-quality program, but that's really not the case. In an on-site program, I would require students to submit videos or DVDs of their work, but now, even on-site programs are using sites like YouTube for private performance submissions that are only viewable by the professor. UNF has a software license for Blackboard Collaborate that provides an online classroom via video. We now use ooVoo for videoconferencing with multiple students at a time, thanks to the university's new license.

The students who take the plunge into online learning typically are very tech savvy. They are also very patient because glitches happen, and they have to have the flexibility to work through those. If I feel that the student is developing a negative attitude or becoming overly frustrated, then I'll pick up the phone and call that person to see if I can make that personal touch readily available. I've learned over the years that if I let the problem escalate, one student's frustration starts to affect the other students. So, we keep our eyes on disposition in the online environment and offer support when we can.

*Doug; From my experience, that is very important. Most of the work I have done is hosted outside the context of institutions, so I've been the one who has really been the tech support. What has seemed to be the most important thing is not necessarily having the answers, but having a rapid response to people's sense of frustration. I always tell people that I may not have the answer but I will always have sympathy. A sense of a human connection allows them to tolerate the glitches that will be there. Sometimes it is having to pick up the phone and say, "Okay, let's talk about this," to avoid having more frustration through the technology. To me, that is a key to having people hooked in because I think it seems to be easier for people to drop out of online programs than other ones.*

Sherry: We had one student drop out of the program because of a rural location without frequent access to high-speed Internet. Otherwise, the students who start are prepared with the technology and access they need to persist.

Human connection is very important. Last year, I started conducting individual phone advising appointments over 1 week per semester. Previously, I advised via email. I was able to learn a lot about student satisfaction with the program through these personal conversations, and I think it was a good way for us to get to know each other better. I think that was really helpful. I'm not much of a phone person because I can do things much more quickly online and in email, but I find myself not always being as polite as I would like to be online. I just get straight to

the point, so I have to make an extra effort to be congenial in my messages to students (or anybody, for that matter). Next term, I will hold advising sessions individually and in small groups using ooVoo for better "visual identity."

*Doug: I know exactly what you're talking about. That's how I write all my emails. I leave a space to go back to the top and put in all the niceties.*

Sherry: Instead of email, which can appear abrupt if I am rushed, the phone helps me connect better and learn more in the advising process.

*Doug; I just heard David Brooks, who's a columnist for the* New York Times *talk about his best-selling book called* The Social Animal *(2011). One of the things he brings out is that in all the discussion about school reform, the thing that people forget and and the thing that's actually most important is that kids, and students, learn from teachers that they like and who they feel care about them. And what I'm hearing you talk about is how you impart that to students. That they have the sense that you're really in it for them. That sense of connection really goes way beyond the technology.*

Sherry: Yes, absolutely. I was quite excited on the Thursday night of our on-site weekend, when all of these students were flying in, some of whom I had never met because they started last fall when I wasn't teaching the on-site course. I made an appearance in the class, but I really didn't get to know them. So, that was the highlight of my semester!

*Doug: One question I'm really curious about, because I've been really trying to think through this in my own work, is about Bloom's taxonomy and the higher order of skills in terms of application and synthesis and evaluation. How are you able to structure activities in an online setting that really move towards those higher-order skills? Because it seems to me in my experience that it is much easier to create online activities toward the understanding, comprehension, and knowledge levels at the base of the taxonomy. And it's easier to evaluate those skills. So, I'm curious to know what you have found to be successful in terms of working toward those higher order skills.*

Sherry: I try to move quickly beyond the knowledge piece. I give online quizzes for knowledge-based material. I know that students can do their readings and take a quiz, but that's really a small part of their coursework. Our courses are skills-based, and because we're a skills-based program, we really need to move the courses beyond those basic levels of learning. Students need to be able to apply knowledge, so one class might take that application piece and require students to develop a wiki resource, either in a group or individually. For example, in our health care interpreting course, students are divided into groups around a topic and create a wiki webpage. They pull together resources and interview deaf people or family members who have direct or indirect experience with a particular condition. The students have to take what they learned about that situation and demonstrate application of the material. Then, at the end of the semester, students can export those wikis from Blackboard and everybody ends up with these wonderful resources. That's just one example of application.

When I taught Interpreting Process Pedagogy, the students read Gile's (2002) *Basic Models and Concepts* book. We talked about it throughout the semester, but when they came on-site, they were involved in role play and project development that demonstrated their ability to develop lessons, create rubrics, conduct evaluations, and teach models such as the Gravitational Model of Language Availability. When you have a class with an on-site component, that makes it a bit easier to pull in that application piece because students are able to interact around the material. Even if it is an online class, there is still group work on projects. For example, students might have to develop a module and present it in Elluminate to their classmates. The "Service-Learning" course is an example of totally applying and synthesizing what the students learn, and hopefully when they leave our program, becoming allies of the deaf community as part of their professional identity. We're very aware of Bloom's taxonomy and we want to make sure students have tools they can use beyond their formal education.

Higher-order thinking is also critical for students to become self-monitors and self-regulated learners. It is critical that they leave UNF with those abilities because they're not going to have us always there giving feedback. They need to learn how to monitor for themselves and regulate their professional growth through setting goals, enlisting mentors, and following through with personal development plans. I'd say, and I think the students also would say, that the program is very rigorous. I hope when they graduate they are able to apply the critical thinking skills they acquired here to their future as practitioners and educators.

*Doug; Do you have any perspective to share on the challenge of time management for students?*

Sherry: With the additonal faculty position, we can provide every graduate student with the opportunity to take a full load each semester, which is 9 credit hours. In the fall, we offered 12 credit hours. Those students who wanted to take four courses had to talk to me first about their time management before I would give them permission to enroll in that many hours. We have conversations about the limitations of their current situations. "Okay, so you're pregnant and you're going to have a baby mid-term? How can we say how that will affect your semester? What do you realistically think you can do?" That's an advising issue, but it also draws attention to their need to pace themselves so that they can do well in the program.

Students may attend part-time or full-time. We don't have a restriction on that (except for the pedagogy option), and I encourage students to gauge what they can do successfully. That's their call as much as it is mine. Some of them come in very ambitious, and I commend that, but if I notice within the first couple of weeks that students are getting a slow start or are becoming frustrated, that's when I pick up the phone and talk to them about possibly dropping down to a more reasonable number of credit hours where they can function successfully.

*Doug: It is interesting for me to hear this from the institutional standpoint. I don't know if it is a unique spot or not, but I'm in that realm where I'm outside of some of those restrictions but also without some of those supports. I hear you talking about them, and I think "Oh, I'm glad I don't have to deal with that." And there's other parts I hear and say, "Oh, that'd be really nice to have." And just recognizing the contradictions that some of what we miss comes with costs and what we get comes with costs, too.*

*Do you have any final thoughts to share about being involved in online education?*

Sherry: Last thoughts on online learning. . . .Students are learning a lot more than content by the simple fact that they're involved in online learning. Technology is very much a part of their future. I think we are traditionally very face-to-face and social people as interpreters and interpreter educators, but the time is now for us to embrace the technology that is available to us to prepare interpreters. I've experienced dramatic change, both personally and professionally, since I started teaching online. I've learned so much from the students because I'm constantly engaged with them . . . even much more than I was in a traditional face-to-face delivery mode. I'm finding great advantages to online teaching. I think it's made me contemporary. It's forced me, and I like that, because I like to keep learning and growing. It takes me right back to the comment about students' patience. Many of the students know a lot more about technology than I do, and they give me ideas so that we grow together. As professionals of interpreter education, we need to focus our efforts and take advantage of all these opportunities. I realize that many people are resistant to even the idea that we could have an online program. Until you are in the technology trenches yourself and experimenting with all these different things, you can't really embrace the beauty of it. I've had the privilege of doing this, thanks to those five students who originally came to me and asked me for it. I never would have initiated it on my own.

*Doug: I think that's a really great summary thought. Thanks so much for taking the time to be part of this conversation*

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# Exploring Remote Interpreting

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**Abstract**

**This article examines the field of remote interpretation in both signed and spoken languages. Remote interpreting is used throughout a range of specializations including medical, mental health, education, conference, and legal environments. Video interpreting is here to stay, despite obstacles that continue to pose a challenge; many who fight this technology do so against the natural paradigm shift that the field will take. I propose that rather than resist the expansion of technology, interpreter educators instead teach interpreters how to use it effectively. In this article I identify important topics for educators to address, to help interpreters make ethically wise decisions in this setting and to improve the provision of services.**

Keywords: remote interpreting, video remote interpreting, video relay service

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# Exploring Remote Interpreting

## 1. Introduction

Remote interpretation, as it occurs between American Sign Language (ASL) and English via video, is a relatively new phenomenon that consists of both video relay service and video remote interpreting. Given that this method of providing signed language interpreting service is such a recent innovation, we can learn much about its purpose and current use from those who have experience in this new field, particularly those who have worked in and studied spoken language remote interpretation via telephone. It is important to consider what our colleagues who provide remote interpretation in spoken language interpreting settings do both successfully and unsuccessfully. In this article, I examine the field of remote interpretation in both signed and spoken languages in order to identify important topics to address when teaching interpreters how to work in this setting, thereby improving the provision of services. I begin by identifying the difference between video relay service and video remote interpreting, then consider the individual settings that commonly utilize remote interpreting. Finally, I address a variety of topics for discussion in the classroom, which may benefit interpreters who work in this setting.

## 2. Video Relay Service and Video Remote Interpreting: A Comparison

The Video Interpreting Committee of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID; 2008) describes video relay service (VRS) as a federally funded, government regulated service provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals in order to achieve access to telecommunication that is functionally equivalent to that which is available to hearing individuals. The idea of *functional equivalency* originates with Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) describing the purpose of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). Funding for VRS derives from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, which is managed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and currently provides compensation for VRS service on a per-minute basis. In contrast to text-based relay, such as that mediated using a TTY, VRS allows for interpreted conversation to take place in real time using signed language. With the advent of this system, deaf people are no longer limited to communication via written English, in which—as in voice relay interpreting using a TTY—they have to wait for the other conversational participant to say "Go ahead" in order to continue their conversation.

VRS is a highly praised technological advancement, but it is limited to communicative interaction between two parties in different locations. A video interpreter (VI) who identifies that the hearing and deaf caller are in the same room must inform the callers that the call cannot continue and promptly disconnect. The interpreting agency is forbidden to bill the FCC for video remote interpreting services, because they do not fall under the purpose for which the Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) funds are allotted.

In contrast, video remote interpreting (VRI) agencies may be privately owned and regulated without funding from TRS or government involvement. VRI is provided in settings in which conversational participants are present in a common location and utilize the services of an interpreter at a distant location in order to communicate. The Video Interpreting Committee of RID describes VRI as being used often in medical, legal, business, and education settings for a variety of reasons, and with a range of benefits. VRI is cost effective, if used infrequently, and services are available immediately; participants do not have to wait for an interpreter to arrive at

a particular location. Whereas an on-site interpreter may charge by the hour and have a 2-hour minimum, VRI services often charge by the minute and have a 15-minute minimum (RID VIC, 2008). Businesses can set up rate plans, on-demand services, or ongoing assignments. These may be economically wise choices; however, charging by the minute adds up rather quickly if services are used for a long period of time.

Whereas VRI is frequently used in places of business such as doctor's offices and legal offices, research reported by Taylor (2005) indicates that VRS, on the other hand, is most often used at home; however, it is possible to use VRS from a person's place of employment, with the proper equipment. Taylor states that VRS calls made during the day, between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm, are different than those placed at night. Calls placed after business hours are often between family and friends; late night VRI calls may likely be regarding an emergency.

Another difference between VRS and VRI is the amount of preparation time and material that is made available to the interpreter. In a VRS setting, there is typically very little break time between calls and often a minimal amount of information from which to prepare. Any information that is received is shared seconds before the call is placed. This creates an environment in which the interpreter often does not know the subject or tone of the call until it is already being processed. VRI interpreters, on the other hand, are sometimes able to receive information when the request for interpreting service is placed (assuming that the request is made in advance, which is not always the case in an emergency situation). VRI work may include the interpreter meeting with the deaf participant prior to an interpreted event in order to assess linguistic needs and ensure that the interpreter can provide quality service. VRI agencies may have ongoing jobs to which interpreters, individually or as a team, are assigned and in which they can continue to work on a regular basis. Interpreters can thus build a schema in reference to the setting and participants, making it easier to provide higher quality interpreting service. They will also have knowledge of jargon and regional word or sign choices, which may assist them with their interpretation. The purposes and goals of VRS and VRI are very different; however, there are many similarities in the work. Both services are in 2-D format, using video technology as a medium. Keating & Mirus (2003) investigated communication that occurs in a 2-D environment using signed languages and found that consumers are aware that adjustments need to be made in this setting and change their approach to communication to ensure clear communication in a visually effective manner. Such strategies include reducing sign space in order to meet the spatial limitations posed by the camera, adjusting to palm orientation, using a slower pace, and emphasizing individual signs.

VRS and VRI are also similar in that they are both susceptible to technical difficulties that can prevent communication from occurring smoothly—or at all. Research conducted by the Interpreting via Video Work Team of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (2010) on VRI shows that conditions such as video quality, audio quality, stability of connection, availability of technical assistance, lack of training, and ease of using hardware/software may impact the efficacy of the interpretation. This can be applied to VRS as well. Specifically, VRS and VRI depend on the amount of available bandwidth in a particular location. The use of wireless Internet access may decrease the efficacy of the device and cause problems that limit visual access to information. Similarly, auditory access may be limited depending on the logistics of the interaction, the quality of the microphone, and the amount of background noise. Furthermore, if there are several participants in the conversation, it may be difficult to see or hear all participants.

Both settings require the interpreter to develop strategies for managing communication. For example, turn-taking can be complex when there is limited visual access to the individual with which a person is speaking. Consumers of VRS do not have visual access to one another and may struggle with turn-taking. In certain situations, consumers of VRI can see one another because they are in the same room; however, depending on the location of the VRI device, the hearing participant may or may not have visual access to the interpreter. If there are several people involved in a communicative interaction, such as at a business meeting, and only the deaf individual can see the interpreter on the screen, it is easy to forget that an interpreter is present. The interpreter will have to regulate turn-taking in order to prevent speaker overlaps that occur in natural conversation.

Because VRS and VRI are relatively new technologies, signed language interpreters may be able to benefit from spoken language interpreters who have accumulated a great deal of experience in remote interpretation over the years. In addition to considering their similarities and differences with and from each other, we must consider whether the consumer's experience of using VRS and VRI is similar to or different from the experience of

working with spoken language interpreters via remote interpretation. VIs may benefit from the knowledge of our spoken language interpreting colleagues. We can also learn from the experiences of nonnative English speakers who have worked with spoken language remote interpreters. What is their opinion regarding the effectiveness of this resource? Similarly, what are some of the concerns that interpreters have about working in these environments? A study of the remote interpretation setting as it is used globally may provide us with ideas for improving our work, in order to provide effective interpretation for consumers of video interpreting services.

## 3. Challenges to Effective VRI

Participants in interpreted interactions (including interpreters) may prefer not to use remote interpreters because they are not familiar with working in this environment (Gracia-García, 2002). Interpreters are often more comfortable with the type of interpreting that they are familiar with and uncomfortable with new approaches to interpretation. Given that there is minimal training offered to interpreters and consumers, participants are left confused as to how to proceed with an interpreted interaction. This places more stress on everyone involved.

Moser-Mercer (2005), in her study of presence in remote interpreting at an international conference, admitted, "Interpreters have not yet been trained to work in remote settings and are thus still having to rely largely on consciously controlled processing" (p. 77). Interpreters' lack of prior knowledge of how to adapt to this setting leads them to invest a great deal more energy into their interpretations. Similarly, the change from interpreting in a physical space to interpreting in a technological environment consisting of an entirely mental space has led to an increase in the amount of mental energy needed in an interpretation. Mintz (1998) emphasized the distraction that occurs when an interpreter has to pay attention to the equipment that is being used rather than the interpretation that is being conducted. This is often the case for new interpreters in remote interpreting settings. As Gile (1995) pointed out in his effort model, effort that is put into one area is taken from a finite pool of energy and, therefore, detracts from effort that could be invested in another area. This leads to fatigue, resulting in a greater number of errors in a given interpretation. Mintz (1998) recommended that interpreters receive training on how to work with remote interpreting equipment; once they become more comfortable with the technology, they may come to appreciate the convenience of remote interpretation.

Working in a remote interpreting environment may also have physical repercussions. Similar to a job that requires a person to work on a computer all day, remote interpreting may cause headaches, eye strain, and other physical pain. Research by Roziner and Shlesinger (2010) showed a significant increase in the number of headaches that the interpreters complained of when they worked in a remote setting. Interpreters also complained of increased drowsiness, anxiety, and trouble concentrating. All of these factors may lead to difficulty interpreting and ultimately to a poor-quality interpretation. It is interesting to note, however, that the authors attribute this to the interpreters working in a new environment outside of their comfort level; they liken these stress indicators to those felt by interpreters who were expected to interpret simultaneously rather than consecutively. Any change from the habitual norm produces a greater degree of stress. It is possible that as interpreters become familiar with the remote environment, the level of stress will decrease and the quality of the interpretation will improve. This is just another reason that training is needed in this field. Training that takes place outside of live interpretations will help interpreters feel more comfortable with remote interpreting without impacting the quality of an interpretation that has actual consequences.

## 4. VRI in Conference Settings

Moser-Mercer (2003) studied remote interpreting by filming interpreters working in both remote and on-site environments. Interpreters worked in the conference room where the event was taking place as well as a remote location for the same event; each interpreter was filmed in both environments. Results showed that the quality of the remote interpretation declined significantly after 30 minutes of interpretation, a greater decline than in

interpretations rendered in the conference room. Moser-Mercer interviewed the interpreters and found that one reason for the increased errors in the remote setting is a lack of presence at the interpreted event. "It seems that the lack of proximity to clients and staff produces a feeling of alienation that ultimately results in lack of motivation and hence produces a decrease in interpreting quality" (Moser-Mercer, 2003). Roziner and Schlesinger (2010) agreed with this finding, reporting that decreased feedback from the audience, due to being situated at a distance from the event, creates a feeling of having little control over the interpretation. It also leads to an inability to identify with the audience who relies on the interpreter. Interpreters in Moser-Mercer's study mentioned feeling as if they could not ask for clarification if necessary. Without the ability to ask for clarification or repetition, interpreters are unable to repair an inaccurate interpretation, which leads to a decrease in the quality of that target language output. It should not come as a surprise that distance from the interpreted event would produce a feeling of isolation that would ultimately impact the quality of the interpreters' work, because interpreting involves communication between people. An inability to see the people with whom you are communicating leads to a feeling that you are talking to yourself.

Roziner and Shlesinger (2010) identified the environment that the interpreter is working in as another constraint to remote interpretation. Long hours of sitting in a confined location (i.e., the booth) increased the level of stress that the interpreter experienced; the booth's dark background and partitions compounded this feeling. Although these features served a purpose— the dark background assisted with the clarity of the picture, and the partitions protected the confidentiality of the participants and reduced distractions during the interpretation—they nevertheless increased the interpreter's feeling of isolation.

## 5. VRI in Medical Settings

Although there are challenges to working with a remote interpreter in a medical setting, there are also a number of advantages. Gracia-García (2002) studied the pros and cons of telephone interpreting in medical settings and categorized the pros into four areas: advantages for doctors and health care providers, advantages for administrators and customer institutions, advantages for interpreters, and advantages for patients. Many of these points can be more widely applied to remote interpreting in general. The author recognized benefits to working with telephone interpreters such as the fact that they are more readily available than on-site interpreters in situations that require immediate action, such as in emergency hospital settings. This reduces the risk of lawsuits because immediate communication is an option, thereby ensuring that urgent matters are communicated in a timely fashion and the patient can arrive at and express an educated decision without delay. Additionally, it is also more cost effective to work with a telephone interpreter given that there is no charge for travel time and no 2-hour minimum. Furthermore, on a busy day, on-site interpreters may not be available; however, a telephone interpreter is just a call away.

Interpreters may prefer to work in remote medical settings rather than on-site in a hospital because distance allows them to remain detached from traumatic events and, therefore, to focus on the interpretation without visual distractions. In on-site situations, interpreters are often alone in the room with a patient when the doctor is not there, and they may find this uncomfortable or awkward; telephone interpreting allows the interpreter to maintain strict boundaries (Gracia-Garcia, 2002). In addition, because there is no travel time, interpreters can work with one person after another, and more interpreting requests can be fulfilled in a timely manner. There is also flexibility in medical settings; an on-site interpreter and a remote interpreter can both be used for the same interpretation. A remote interpreter can interpret until an on-site interpreter arrives, so the patient does not have to wait for interpreting services in order to begin communicating with medical personnel.

In a study of patient satisfaction with different interpreting methods, Gany et al. (2007) compared proximate and remote interpretations (by telephone) in a New York City municipal hospital in which more than half of the patients prefer to communicate in a language other than English. Because the interpreter is unable to see the patient, remote interpretation allows the patient to maintain privacy, and patients reported that they liked remote interpretations for this reason. Gracia-García (2002) found that patients were more comfortable asking personal questions about their health when the interpreter was not in the room. Patients were also satisfied with remote

interpretation because it decreased the amount of time they had to wait for an interpreter. In contrast to this, patients were dissatisfied with remote interpretation when technical glitches hindered communication.

Locatis et al. (2009) studied remote medical interpretations by comparing interpretations that occurred via video, telephone, and on-site at the Medical University of South Carolina. They used a Likert scale completed by patients, interpreters, and medical staff to assess satisfaction with the interpreting services provided. Results showed that most participants preferred on-site interpretations to remote interpretation. Patients claimed to prefer on-site interpretation because it is more personal, which leads to a better understanding of the information communicated. It is possible that this is due to the establishment of trust that coincides with clear communication. Regarding remote interpretation, patients preferred video interpreting, which gives visual access to the interpreter, to telephone interpreting. Some providers preferred telephone interpreting because it required less time than on-site interpreting; however, technical problems such as poor audio quality were recognized. Technical problems with video interpreting resulted from poor signal strength, due to the device's distance from the router. These issues detracted from the ability to have a smooth conversation and ultimately led people to dislike remote interpretation in most cases.

Research into the types of technological difficulty that is experienced in remote interpreting may help improve the quality of interpretations in medical situations. Furthermore, training of interpreters and conversational participants on how to work within the identified limitations may decrease the number of technological issues that occur. For example, if hospital personnel are aware that certain examination rooms closer to the router are optimal for working with these patients, using these rooms may avoid technical problems. This may decrease the amount of frustration felt by all people involved in an interaction.

## 6. VRI in the Courtroom

Remote interpretation in the courtroom is a serious issue. Courtroom interactions have serious consequences, including the life and liberty of the individual on trial. Inaccurate interpretation and/or ineffective communication may lead to a delay in the trial or, worse, an incorrect case ruling. The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) in the U.S. created a position paper regarding telephone interpreting in legal settings that states, "Telephone interpreting should only be used when no certified, qualified or language skilled interpreter (particularly in less common languages) is available in person at the location where the service is needed" (NAJIT, 2009). There is no further detail in this document regarding the meaning of *qualified* or *language skilled* with respect to the interpreter; therefore, justification for the decision to use remote interpretation becomes subjective. As with VRI, remote interpretation in the courtroom raises issues including problems with the technology, the importance of training, lack of local knowledge such as accents/terminology, and lack of visual access to the environment. NAJIT also points out benefits of remote interpreting, such as interpreter anonymity and the financial advantage. However, Vidal (1999) cautioned, "Tthe choice between spending more and spending less . . . is a false dichotomy. For the question here is not one of choosing between two equally good alternatives, one of which costs more. The question is one of the inherent unreliability of the telephone for meaningful communication of important legal matters" (p. 2).

If the purpose of including remote interpreting in the courtroom is to improve upon the current system, then we must take into account more than the financial benefit of utilizing remote interpreters. It is crucial that accurate interpretations be rendered in legal settings, and research into the effectiveness of remote interpreting in this setting is of the utmost importance. Decisions made in the courtroom have lasting consequences on the lives of those who work within the system. Swaney (1997) wrote that if we are improving our legal system through the use of remote interpreters, "Why don't we 'improve' the jury system by letting jurors go home to deliberate the facts of the trial via telephone or computer? Because there is no immediate substitute for human dynamics" (p. 1). It must be recognized that financial benefit is not synonymous with equal access.

Napier and Leneham (2011) investigated the effectiveness of VRI in a courtroom setting and found that VRI is a feasible option in certain situations; however, they maintained that technical, logistical, linguistic, and environmental issues must be considered in order to ensure that an accurate and quality interpretation can be

successfully rendered. Issues included television-screen size, bandwith speed, the visibility of the interpreters, background noise and visual distractions, lighting, set-up time, difficulty getting the attention of individuals who are not situated in the same location, turn-taking, knowledge of the physical layout of the space, and an inability to see people in certain places in the courtroom due to the fixed placement of cameras. Even when all of these issues are addressed, the authors suggest that VRI should not be the immediate and sole consideration when the services of an interpreter are needed.

Napier and Leneham (2011) conducted a series of interviews with the deaf participants in their study. Participants noted as negatives of VRI that they could not request clarification from the interpreter, that deaf family and friends in the courtroom could not access the interpretation, that they had difficulty focusing on the interpreter on the screen, that they suffered additional stress due to the method of interpretation (being understood in a 2-D environment), and that they felt disconnected from the interpreter. The interpreters reported feeling isolated and unsure of the effectiveness of their interpretation. They also asserted that they struggled with identifying who was speaking because they did not know where the individual was located in the room. Some of the hearing participants reported feeling as if they had to speak more slowly and stand in specific areas in order to be seen; however, most of the hearing participants thought that the interpretation was effective.

## 7. VRI in Mental Health Settings

Remote interpretation in mental health settings is not considered best practice for several reasons. Interpretations in this environment call for a high degree of trust between the interpreter and patient, and trust is more easily acquired in face-to-face encounters. Mental health settings can also be quite emotionally charged, and it is easier to understand the patient's emotions when there is clear visual access between the interpreter and the patient, which may not be the case with remote interpretation. Furthermore, technical difficulties would prove to be frustrating in this environment in which clear communication is so important. This is not to say that remote interpretation should never be used in mental health settings. Of course, as several of the aforementioned authors suggested, in small communities with few interpreters, the patient may prefer to work with an interpreter from outside of the area in order to maintain anonymity. An individual may prefer to use remote interpretation in order to ensure confidentiality; however, once again, remote interpreting should not be used without clearly weighing the pros and cons of its use as well as allowing the minority language–speaking participant to have a voice in the decision-making process. It is also important that interpreters are trained in how to effectively work in remote mental health interpreting settings in order to ensure quality of service.

## 8. VRI in Educational Settings

Interpreting remotely in a classroom environment can give rise to many challenges that may lead to an ineffective interpretation. Some of these problems are due to technical difficulties. Often laptops and webcams are used, which leads to visual constraints. The interpreter may not be able to see the entire classroom (blackboard, teacher, materials on the walls, other students, etc.), and the lack of access to visual information makes it difficult to accurately interpret information. For example, in a classroom the teacher may use graphs or visual displays; without seeing these, the interpreter cannot interpret information consistent with how it is presented. Technical challenges in this setting may also include poor lighting, background noise, and insufficient bandwidth.

Remote interpreting in an educational setting may also be challenging due to the interactive nature of many classrooms, including overlapping dialogue and occasional group work or role-playing scenarios for which the student moves away from the computer. VRI may be considered cumbersome for these reasons.

## 9. What Does This Mean for Remote Signed Language Interpreters?

In the interpreter education classroom, while students are learning about best practices in individual specializations, classroom work can incorporate mock remote interpreting scenarios to help students prepare for remote interpretations in various contexts. Students will begin to acquire strategies for asking for clarification, managing turn-taking, and working within a 2-D environment. After each practice session, interpreters should be given the opportunity to discuss their experience, which promotes the sharing of effective and ineffective strategies—interpreters can then put the effective strategies into practice in actual remote interpreting environments.

Interpreters can also share techniques for effectively navigating remote interpreting through workshops, intensive trainings spanning several days or weeks, or shorter courses that focus on individual topics. Workshops open to all ensure that not only new interpreters but also those who are already working in the field have access to training material. Topics for discussion in a workshop may include managing turn-taking, preparing for a video-interpreted event, working with remote interpreting in individual settings, presence and transparency in video interpreting, minimizing eye strain, troubleshooting and technology, acceptable versus unacceptable situations for video interpreting, and problem-solving strategies. Each of these workshops may include mock video interpreting situations in order to provide interpreters with realistic experiences.

As research is conducted and new information is acquired, interpreters should be made aware of important themes. New information may lead to the creation of best practices in particular settings, and sharing information will assist with the development of strategies for working in remote environments, ultimately resulting in the provision of quality interpreting services. Without standardization of norms and provision of training, participants in these interactions will continue to fumble their way through communication. It is crucial that we provide remote interpreters with the foundation of knowledge that they need in order to work effectively.

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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 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.

## *Perceptions of Interpreter Qualification by Deaf Consumers and Hearing Interpreters*

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This study sought to meet a need in educational literature for documented perceptions of deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters, with or without certification regarding perceptions of interpreter qualification. This study was exploratory in nature and investigated the similarities and dissimilarities in perceptions of salient qualities that deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters believe a qualified interpreter should possess relative to interpersonal skills, sign language skills, and formal education; explored whether cultural affiliation, acceptance by the deaf community, and parentage influences interpreter qualification; measured the salient qualities deaf consumers' seek in hearing interpreters; and solicited deaf consumers' opinion on what makes a quality interpreter training program. The research design for this study included a mixed methodology comprising quantitative and qualitative methods. Perceptions of interpreter qualification with regard to interpersonal skills, sign language skills, formal education, and cultural connections with the deaf community were obtained from 63 deaf consumers and 75 professional hearing interpreters through a five-part researcher-designed survey with Likert-scaled and open-ended questions. Qualitative survey methods were used to code responses and identify emergent themes in open-ended survey questions.

Findings included similarities in the perceptions of deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters in relation to the importance of interpersonal skills, sign language skills, and formal education, with differences noted in the desired length of formal education of interpreters by deaf consumers. This study found that (a) socialization with the deaf is necessary and strongly supported by the deaf to achieve linguistic and cultural competency in addition to formal education; (b) the subjective quality of trust influences the choice of a less qualified interpreter by deaf consumers; (c) qualification of interpreters should be predicated on evaluation; and (d) there is a preference for deaf involvement in training interpreters in informal and formal educational settings.

The findings imply that proactive leadership in developing, revising, and perpetuating interpreter training within a transformational environment should include increasing cultural, linguistic, and educational competency through building collaborative alliances with the deaf community to strengthen learning outcomes in training programs.

## Dissertation Abstracts

# *American Sign Language-English Interpreting Program Faculty: Characteristics, Tenure Perceptions, and Productivity*

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American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreting education, which began as a community apprenticeship and vetting process, has within the last several decades moved into higher education. Most recently, the number of baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting programs has continued to increase whereas the number of associate's degree programs has remained steady. This shift to higher education and to four-year colleges in particular has received little empirical analysis. The overarching objective of this study, which was framed by a conceptual model of the relationship among employment context, faculty member characteristics, perceptions, and productivity, is to better understand how ASL–English interpreting education programs and their faculty fit within the academy. The first purpose was to describe the institutional context and professional and personal characteristics of faculty members within baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting education programs in the United States. A second purpose was to describe the faculty members' and department chairs' perspectives regarding criteria and requirements for tenure and the extent to which their perceptions were aligned. The final objective was to determine if employment qualifications and context predict perceptions and productivity. Data were collected from program websites, department chairs, and faculty members of baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting programs in the United States. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data.

Analysis of the data indicated that relationships exist among components of the conceptual model. Employment context and faculty members' characteristics included variables that were significant predictors of perceptions and productivity. Implications for policy and practice include expanding degree opportunities for current and potential faculty members, increasing tenure-track appointments, increasing scholarly productivity in traditional outlets, and increasing the diversity of faculty members.

## Dissertation Abstracts

# *The Relationship Among Beginning and Advanced American Sign Language Students and Credentialed Interpreters Across Two Domains of Visual Imagery: Vividness and Manipulation*

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[Apologies from the editorial team for the inaccurate publication of this dissertation abstract in Volume 3, 2011. This reprint features the correct abstract.]

Given the visual-gestural nature of ASL it is reasonable to assume that visualization abilities may be one predictor of aptitude for learning ASL. This study tested a hypothesis that visualization abilities are a foundational aptitude for learning a signed language and that measurements of these skills will increase as students progress from beginning ASL students to advanced language learners and, ultimately to credentialed interpreters.

Participants in this study consisted of 90 beginning and 66 advanced ASL students in five interpreter education programs in four southern states along with 68 credentialed interpreters. Students and interpreters were administered the Vividness of Visual Imagery (VVIQ) self-report questionnaire and the objective Mental Rotations Test, Version A (MRT-A). All ASL students and their instructors were asked to rate students' sign language competency on the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview Rating Scale. All participants completed demographic questions regarding their age, gender, ethnicity, parental hearing status, number of years using ASL, number of years working with deaf professionals who use ASL, and their interpreting credential(s).

Students and their instructors rated students' sign communication proficiency similarly. Beginning ASL students were rated significantly lower than the advanced ASL students by both instructors' rating and students' self-rating.

No significant relationships were reported (a) among beginning and advanced students and credentialed interpreters with respect to either the VVIQ or the MRT-A, or (b) among the students' VVIQ and MRT-A scores and instructors' ratings on the SCPI. There was suggestive evidence of an increase in mean VVIQ scores from beginning ASL students to advanced ASL students to credentialed interpreters, but not to the level of significance. When advanced ASL students and lower-level state credentialed interpreters were removed from analyses, a significant difference in visual vividness was reported. Nationally certified interpreters scored significantly higher than beginning ASL students on the VVIQ, but not on the MRT-A