

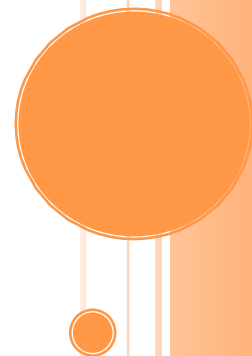


# WORLD ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

*2011 Conference Proceedings*

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World Association of Sign Language Interpreters  
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*Edited by Brendan Costello, Mary Thumann, and Risa Shaw*



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## INTRODUCTION

The collection of papers in this volume are a representation of the papers presented at the third WASLI conference held July 17-21, 2011 in Durban, South Africa. The conference brought together 285 of participants from around the globe to engage in thoughtful and exciting discussion and sharing.

We wish to thank the conference participants, organizers, and presenters, as well as the scientific committee who reviewed and selected presentations for the conference. The process of compiling a proceedings and editing is a rewarding and challenging opportunity. It allows presenters to refine and pen the work they have so thoughtfully brought to the conference in order to share their work more widely. Thank you to the presenters and authors for their writing and revising work. This ongoing and joint effort brings forth new and exciting collaborations. It is an honor and delight to work with those paving new roads.

This volume begins with reflections from Nicole Montagna (US) on her experiences and impressions of how WASLI has evolved since it was established. Montagna shared her experiences through her lens with description and video documentation, showing “where we have been” and “where we are headed”.

Angela Murray (New Zealand) and Joneti Rokotuibau (Fiji) describe an emerging language group, or ‘wantok’, among the Deaf community in the Solomon Islands. They describe a developing sign language and interpreting in a nation where, until recently, opportunities for Deaf people to receive an education were scant. In 2010, the authors participated in a development project that brought together Deaf/hearing people from Fiji, New Zealand and the Solomon Islands. The project provides a model of cross-national

collaboration with the potential to benefit Deaf communities and grow the interpreting profession, particularly in developing regions.

Avoii Patrick Micheal (Uganda) examines the development of sign language interpretation in Uganda. He describes legal and policy provisions in Uganda for the development of sign language, the development of sign language interpretation, and the birth in 2003 of the Ugandan National Association of Sign Language Interpreters. Finally, he reports on an empirical study of the challenges interpreters in Uganda face in office, educational and religious settings, and recommends several policy and practice solutions to these challenges.

Paul Bartlett (UK) and Stuart Anderson (UK) explore the definition of Deaf interpreting and propose four categories for Deaf interpreting. Using their own experiences of developing programs for Deaf people to work as interpreters or translators, the authors advocate for the development of Deaf Interpreting qualifications in the UK. They argue for the potential of such qualifications to have cross-national utility given the existing foundation of occupational and assessment frameworks used in the UK and their foundation in international policy.

Since 2009 Jordi Ferre (Spain) and Meliton Bustinza (Chile) have each established social media forums for sign language interpreters from Latin American countries to come together electronically. In this paper the authors discuss three issues they have come to view as relevant to all interpreters: information, training and catastrophes or natural disasters. Using real-world events as examples, the authors show how the expanded use of the internet to establish communication networks can provide interpreters and Deaf communities with needed resources at critical times.

Following Ferre and Bustinza's, Debra Russell (Canada), WASLI President, provides an update on several collaborative task groups, including the Task Group on Communication Access during Natural Disasters, formed in response to the concerns raised by these authors.

Odette Swift (South Africa) uses an analysis of filmed lectures to explore the potential role conflict for educational interpreters and the teacher-interpreter paradox in post-secondary educational settings in South Africa. Swift's presentation of this original research highlights the complexities of interpreting in these contexts and the important role of interpreters in the educational process and its outcomes.

Len Roberson (US), Debra Russell (Canada), and Risa Shaw (US) present on a mixed-methods study of 1,995 interpreters working in North American legal settings. They describe interpreter demographics and identify effective practices that promote consumer access to the legal system, as well as others that challenge both interpreters and consumers. While interpreting in legal settings requires specialized knowledge and skills, the authors conclude that a systemic training sequence for legal interpreters would bring more interpreters into the field and has relevance across geographic contexts.

Christopher Stone (UK) and Deb Russell (Canada) report on a qualitative study where they examined the work of Deaf/non-deaf interpreter teams providing service in an international conference setting. In particular they looked at the linguistic decisions and meta-communication strategies used, and found that familiarity with one another and the sharing of a signed language contribute to the end result of the interpreting work.

Maya De Wit (Netherlands) and Mark Wheatley (Belgium) close this volume by describing the ways that EUD and efsli produced a joint agreement for the

two organizations to expand the participation of Deaf people in European society by way of increasing the quality and number of sign language interpreters. This agreement was finalized in 2010 and is a model example of a co-operative demonstration of movement that they hope will spark similar actions across the globe.

Though WASLI's history is still young, we are moving forward and exploring new topics while deepening our understanding of issues in our local and global communities. This proceedings is one more example of engaging on an international level while furthering the world sign language interpreting communities.

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## REFLECTIONS ON ADVENTURES WITH WASLI

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*Editor's note: We asked Nicole, who has been present at all of the WASLI conferences and has taken on the task of documenting them on video, to describe her experiences and to give us her impressions of how WASLI has evolved since its birth in the early 2000s.*

I had to be there. It was 2002, I was in the beginning stages of my interpreting career, and as soon as I found out about these events I made plans to spend part of my summer in Washington, D.C. for Deaf Way II and for the RID-sponsored special event that preceded it: The World Symposium for Sign Language Interpreters. Since interpreters from around the world were already going to be in town for Deaf Way II, it was a great opportunity for the second gathering. The goal of the symposium was to formalize the establishment of a global organization of sign language interpreters. Up until that point, my international signing experiences were limited to volunteer interpreting for the World Games for the Deaf in 1997 and the Gay Games in 1998. After the enriching and inspiring experiences I had working with interpreters from other countries for these events, I found the prospect of an international association of interpreters very exciting. I brought a video camera to the symposium, and since then my own involvement with WASLI has been focused on media and the ongoing project of documenting our meetings with video.

The idea of an international association of sign language interpreters goes back to the mid-1970s, but it was another 20 years until a structured effort was organized. A working group during the WFD Congress in Australia in 1999 created documentation that would then be used for the 2002



symposium. This was an opportunity for more interpreters to become involved with and learn about what the working group had been doing. Much of this symposium was spent discussing possible names of the organization. Would we be an association, a federation, or perhaps a society? A room full of interpreters dissecting these terms became a lengthy discussion. After many hours of debate, the symposium gave rise to the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters, with our first official congress to take place three years later in South Africa.

### **2005 Worcester, South Africa**

Large-scale interpreting events tend to happen in Western countries. That this conference was taking place in the southern hemisphere added to the excitement of our first meeting. In South Africa, we established a foundation for what would become the core of our organization – gathering together at periodic conferences. As we were building our organization from the ground up, we were literally on the ground: the open air resort where the conference was held had few paved paths between the rondawels (small huts where the guests stayed) and the conference room. One wall was a large screen for presentation slides, the others were wood-paneled, and there was a lot of natural light. There were no elevators, just stairs. There was also a small shop for snacks and sundries, a pool, and an office building, where you went to use one of the few computers available if you needed to check email. Later on, a small internet café area with two computers was set up in the back of the conference room, where we could queue up and quickly go online. Between the layout of the venue and plentiful access to earth and sky, this inaugural conference had a very organic and rustic feel.

The conference opened with a drum circle and people clapping and dancing, beginning a WASLI tradition of creating a festive atmosphere. This jovial spirit gave rise to other celebratory traditions of being together: enjoying

good food and each other's cultures, and dancing until the hotel staff had to shoo us away so they could clean up. This usually happened on the banquet evening, but we managed to fit some additional dancing into our schedule throughout. In this case, the conference banquet was a traditional South African style outdoor barbeque called braai, set up outside in oversized tents. Some people wore traditional dress from their countries, and we danced and enjoyed each others' company late into the evening.

Many attendees came from African countries where the profession of interpreting was just developing, but lacking support structures or funding. One of the many positive aspects of having the first conference in Africa was being able to listen to the experiences of interpreters and deaf people from underrepresented communities. Since most research about interpreting comes from Western developed nations, our knowledge base is often limited to the experience from those countries. Many developing nations were beginning to create service provisions for Deaf people, which gives rise to a need for an organized base of interpreters to provide communication access services. While sign language interpreting has been an established profession for several decades in Western nations, interpreting done by family members and friends was still prevalent in many places around the world. It was truly humbling to witness the stories of interpreters who managed to serve their local deaf communities with little or no support for themselves or their associations, and with little training or recognition of interpreting as a profession. Sharing their pride in their efforts and homelands was truly the best gift I took home with me from this trip.

### **2007 Segovia, Spain**

The second conference was in a more urban setting in Segovia, Spain, near Madrid. The conference hotel was near an ancient Roman aqueduct, so we made visiting this marvel of engineering a night out on the town for us. This

conference venue was more familiar to me, in that it was more aligned with the Western notion of a conference environment: a hotel with shiny accents, elevators, card keys, busy carpeting and those awkward pillars blocking important sight lines in a signing space. The location also gave the conference a different energy because the participants were mostly from Europe, with a large contingent from Spain naturally because their national association of interpreters organized the conference. Rotating locations around the world varies the countries that participate, bringing new perspectives each time we meet.

A special feature of this conference was having spoken Spanish interpretation, which meant more technical resources, additional logistics and adding another layer to the communication process. This was just one sign of the fact that WASLI now had more structure: interpretation booths, preparation rooms, and even a media team. We were maturing as an organization, generating our own media, and creating resources to share amongst conference participants and interpreters around the world. In this way, we were starting to sacrifice some of the rustic aspects of the conference as we grow and develop.

By this point we had a lot more global participation. In the early stages, the pioneers of the organization were a few people occupying several different roles, being board members as well as conference organizers, presenters, and even interpreters. By 2007, there were more people involved on an organizational level, with a larger and more diverse team of people working to make the conference happen. Continuing with our fine WASLI tradition, there was no lack of festivity. The conference banquet was truly a sight to behold -- performances, live music, and dancing all reflecting the local culture. By the end of the evening, people were sharing pieces of their outfits, mixing and blending cultures – a Spanish hat with a kente cloth shirt –

exemplifying the intermingling of sign language interpreters and cultures from all over the world.

### **2011 Durban, South Africa**

By 2011, I definitely was not the only one there with a camera. It was almost a decade since the first WASLI meeting and in that time the ability to capture video had become ubiquitous: having a camera, filming and being filmed, and sharing digital video over the internet had become common practices in our 21st century digital culture. In sharing this content, we are able to foster global connections; these advances in technology work in our favor and have added another source of momentum. As outlets for sharing video online develop and evolve, so do the ways in which video can be used to not only document our meetings but perhaps continue the dialogue beyond the conference time frame.

Reconnecting with interpreters I filmed my first time in South Africa (2005), I was able to show the footage of them at the first WASLI conference. This served as a stimulus for reflection on their own progress with WASLI and with interpreting in their own countries. This made people even more aware of how quickly time passes, and perhaps it also helps us recognize how much we can really achieve in a few short years.

### **WASLI: where are we going?**

It is interesting to hear new members talk about WASLI. Some have a perception of the organization that is larger than it really is. Thanks to access to technologies that easily connect people despite time and geography, nurturing the development of this global community, the small and dedicated team of WASLI volunteers is able to use its time and resources to the fullest. We share a common virtual space with our website and various forms of social media. When possible, multi-lingual members volunteer to translate

documents and messages, especially when it gets close to and during a conference.

Each conference is influenced by the location, with participation reflecting the local and regional geography. I believe there is a strong awareness and consciousness of where the conferences are held, being mindful of those who do not have consistent access to training and networking opportunities. At the same time, there is the desire to grow and have professional level conferences, despite the fact that countries vary greatly in their organizational and professional development for their sign language interpreters. I have been impressed with the generosity of members and their willingness to donate funds to help keep the representation at our conferences as diverse as possible.

I think one of the biggest challenges we face, and handle well, is managing the complexities of multi-lingual, multi-cultural meetings. It is not possible for us to hire spoken language interpreters in every language represented at conferences. Our conference communication is effective due to a variety of strategies, with the key element of everyone stepping up, and being patient and gracious with each other. A few countries bring their own interpreters (usually to work from the spoken English), presenters prepare very visual presentations, and participants have spontaneously made themselves available if they are able to help out with the languages in need. Our temporal version of International Sign evolves over the course of the few days into our common language.

There are so many ways for people to participate in WASLI, during the conference and the years in between. We are still small enough of an organization that contributions of any size can make a big impact. What unites us are our shared values and experience: we come together in a space

that is defined both in terms of our profession and also in terms of a shared culture. From my experiences interviewing dozens of people from around the world documenting our meetings, I realize that we are all saying the same thing: we want to improve the communication experiences Deaf people are having in our native countries. We strive for sign language awareness and recognition, for improved educational and employment experiences for Deaf people, and expanding opportunities for interpreter training. These are the shared values that help us to overcome any communication or cultural differences that there might be between us. This is why interpreters come to these meetings. Coming together to create this global community reinforces my faith in humanity and the possibilities for human communication and connection. This kind of participation energizes my daily interpreting work. The story continues as we prepare for our next meeting in 2015 in Turkey.

## **WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THE SOLOMON ISLANDS: AN EMERGING DEAF AND INTERPRETING COMMUNITY**

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### **Abstract**

The Solomon Islands is a country with a unique Deaf and interpreting community. Located in the Pacific Ocean, it is one of the poorest countries in the Oceania region. Diverse in spoken languages and rich in culture, the Solomon Islands has long neglected the rights of its Deaf people. People of one language group are locally called a 'wantok', and it is this identity that Deaf people in the Solomon Islands are now beginning to develop. The Deaf community is therefore still emerging as a sign community. Likewise, the concept of interpreting and acknowledgment of this need is barely recognised.

This paper explores the emerging 'wantok' of the Deaf community and an emerging interpreting profession, and also describes efforts of other countries in the Australasia/Oceania region to support this development. With the fundraising efforts of SLIANZ (Sign Language Interpreters Association from New Zealand) we recently conducted a development project in the Solomon Islands. A Deaf/hearing team from Fiji travelled to the Deaf school and led workshops on Deaf culture, Deaf identity, sign language and interpreting. The interpreting profession in Fiji is also still developing, but they have come through similar struggles and have a wealth of experience to share. As a result of this initiative, the interpreting and Deaf communities in the two

countries will continue to work closely together, with support from New Zealand and Australia.

### **Introduction**

This paper describes the Deaf community in the Solomon Islands, the developing sign language, interpreting and issues facing the Deaf community in the Solomon Islands. Additionally, the paper focuses on the Fijian/Solomon Islands development project and explores the potential for a growing interpreting profession. Our aim is to share insights about how our approach might benefit other communities in developing countries.

Having trained and worked as a sign language interpreter in New Zealand I (Angela Murray) had the opportunity in 2009 to live and volunteer in the Deaf community in the Solomon Islands. My role there encompassed mentoring interpreters, teaching literacy, teaching sign language and documenting sign language. The other co-author of this paper is Joneti Rokotuibau, an interpreter from Fiji who works as a community interpreter and an interpreter and teacher in the Gospel School for the Deaf in Suva. She is the chairperson for the Fijian Sign Language Interpreters Committee.

In 2010 I was involved in a development project that was set up by the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI). The purpose of this project was for Fiji and the Solomon Islands to collaborate, with support from New Zealand and Australia. Joneti Rokotuibau, a hearing interpreter and Serevi Rokotuibau, a Deaf man, spent a week in the Solomon Islands, giving training, support and guidance to Deaf people and interpreters.



## **The Solomon Islands and Education for Deaf People**

The Solomon Islands is a part of Melanesia and is located north of Australia and east of Papua New Guinea. With a population of approximately half a million people, the Solomon Islands is one of the poorest of the Pacific Islands. It has a GDP of only \$2,600 compared to \$46,400 in the US. (Wikipedia.com<sup>1</sup>). Most of the population live in rural areas and are involved in subsistence living. There are over 70 different local languages. English is the official language but only 1-2% of the population speak English. The most common spoken language is Solomon Islands Pidgin. (Wikipedia.com<sup>2</sup>)

Prior to 2008 Deaf people of the Solomon Islands had little opportunity to receive an education. Deaf people were scattered throughout the islands and sign language was known only by a small community of Deaf people who had been to a mixed disability primary school run by the Red Cross in the capital city, Honiara.

The San Isidro Care Centre, the training centre/school for the Deaf, is situated in a village called Aruligo, about a 40 minute drive from Honiara. The Deaf students come from all over the many islands in Solomon Islands. The San Isidro Care Centre (commonly called Aruligo by the Deaf community) was set up to provide for young adults who had missed out or wanted to get additional education alongside their Deaf peers. For a number of Deaf students, coming to Aruligo means they can meet other Deaf people for the first time. For many, it is also a means of learning sign language for the first time and accessing an education in this language.

Solomon Islands people are hard-working people. The San Isidro Care Centre is a registered Rural Training Centre, which means it provides instruction in

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_the\\_Solomon\\_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_the_Solomon_Islands). Retrieved 18/11/11

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon\\_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Islands) Retrieved 18/11/11

basic skills (agriculture, carpentry, building, life-skills and basic literacy and maths) to equip people to go back to their village or community and develop and contribute to a rural lifestyle. An example of applying the skills learned in this school is that the older Deaf boys built all the original buildings for the school from local materials.

The teaching staff at the centre/school has included Deaf people, but none of the teachers have had training to educate Deaf people, and while most have now learned sign language there are still a couple of staff members who cannot sign. Approximately one third of the Deaf students at the centre have not had any education prior to arriving at the San Isidro Care Centre. Many of them arrive with little or no language apart from visually iconic signs or their own home signs.

One thing that really impressed me was how keen the students were to learn. They took every opportunity offered to them. During my stay I was often approached (day and night) to interpret something they had read but did not understand. I spent a lot of the time teaching them language or basic literacy.

Sadly, Deaf people in the Solomon Islands are commonly referred to as 'deaf and dumb' by the general public and even their families. This label carries the attitude that Deaf people are second-class citizens. This discrimination is present, but to give credit to the hearing public, they are very good at picking up sign language.

It is obvious to anyone who meets Deaf people in this community that the school at Aruligo is positively influencing the lives of these young Deaf people. You can see how they have so much joy for life. I saw so much potential in this community, though it is a shame that the country they live in is so limiting in terms of access.

### **The Solomon Islands and Languages**

Wantok is a Solomon Islands Pidgin word literally meaning “one talk”. As there are over 70 different languages in the Solomon Islands, those that speak the same language are referred to as wantok. Traditionally wantok look out for each other. The wantok system could be seen as an unwritten social contract between those that speak the same language to assist each other in times of need. I believe the Deaf community is the newest wantok community, as they come together to learn and support each other.

Solomon Islands Sign Language is still developing and is influenced by various sources so it varies from person to person. There are influences of Australian and Fijian signs, however the language the Deaf people are using is distinct and unique to the Solomon Islands. When I arrived in the Solomon Islands their sign language did not have an official name so after spending time in the Deaf community I suggested that it be named Solomon Islands Sign Language, which was accepted.

Solomon Islands Sign Language can be seen as a unique language to the Solomon Islands because of its links with Pidgin English. Solomon Islands Pidgin is the most commonly spoken language in the Solomon Islands. A lot of Pidgin mouthing is used with the sign language and Pidgin grammar is very similar to Solomon Islands Sign Language grammar. This made it easier for me to learn and for the hearing people who were learning sign language. There are local signs that are unique to the Solomon Islands. They are signs created and shared in the community. Home signs are also common and vary from family to family.

Below is a translation of the comments of a Deaf man, Ali, using Solomon Islands Sign Language. He is talking about the Deaf people who have come straight from their villages into this new signing community.<sup>3</sup>

Ali: They've come here from their many different homes. All the Deaf people together in this one group. But some of them don't know sign language and teaching them is really hard. You sign or show them written words and they don't understand. The language they use are home signs like this [index fingers on both hands pointing out in front of the chest representing breasts] for 'mummy' or this [palms flat points out of chest and then pointing down to represent breasts], and this [index finger and thumb pressed into side of mouth to represent sunken cheeks and then fist like holding a walking stick] for 'old person'. This is one group of Deaf people here. Then there are the Deaf people who have had an education from the Red Cross School. They've grown up signing and they understand written words. So we have these two groups of Deaf coming together. And this group who isn't educated, they don't know English words like 'for' 'the' or 'to'.

Tome, another Deaf man, spoke of his use of home signs.

Tome: I don't use this sign for 'Father' [ASL letter 'D' on temple]. The language I use at home is 'mother' [both fists on chest representing breasts] and 'father' [palm facing face on the chin and moving down from chin to mid chest where fingers and thumb meet to represent a beard].

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<sup>3</sup> Both of the following translations from Solomon Islands Sign Language to English were done by Angela Murray.

Documentation of Solomon Islands Sign Language began in 2009 and was part of the project I was involved in. I worked alongside the school and families of our students who also wanted the indigenous Sign Language documented. Almost 200 copies of the sign language book were printed and distributed and the Deaf community now takes real pride in showing people their language.

There are a number of the San Isidro Care Centre staff who know sign language, but one person who stood out as a real leader among the community was Mary Maneka. She has taken the role of communicator/interpreter and teacher. I interviewed Mary and spoke to her about her experiences. Below are excerpts from the interview.

Mary Maneka: “My name is Mary Maneka. I am the interpreter at San Isidro Care Centre. I have worked for the Deaf in the Solomon Islands for the past 8 years.

Q: Have you had any formal training?

Mary Maneka: I have never had formal training in sign language or interpreting. I have learnt sign language from the Deaf people themselves and through Australian sign language books.

Q: Is it hard to interpret here?

Mary Maneka: Yeah sometimes I have found it really hard to interpret, especially because in the Solomon Islands the Deaf [people] come from lots of different spoken language backgrounds. Many of them don't know English or Pidgin.

Q: Is English your first language?

Mary Maneka: English is my third language and Pidgin is my second language and interpreting is not always easy.

Q: Why do you like working here?

Mary Maneka: I like working here because I have a big heart for the Deaf people.

Q: What would you like for your future?

Mary Maneka: For my future I would like to have training in interpreting and my dream for the Deaf [people] is that when they have finished their training they can get jobs and contribute to their communities.”

Mary and I were referred to as a ‘teachers’ rather than interpreters and therefore Mary has a different understanding of her role as an interpreter. Interpreting in the Solomon Islands is not recognized as a profession. Joneti and I believe they are still in an ad-hoc/ helper model. From my time in the Solomon Islands I was able to support Deaf people, Mary and the other staff, but I often thought about other ways to better support the interpreters and Deaf people. This is what led us to look to Fiji for their experience.

### **The Project: Fiji and The Solomon Islands**

Fiji is culturally and geographically more similar to the Solomon Islands than NZ or Australia. The Fiji Deaf community has also been through similar struggles to what the Solomon Islands Deaf community is now facing. I thought it would be beneficial for the Solomon Islands Deaf people, interpreters and teachers to learn from Fiji’s experiences.

In 2010 with the support of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand and WASLI we conducted a development project to bring Fijians to the Solomon Islands. Money was raised at a SLIANZ conference specifically for this project and I know that New Zealand interpreters are very proud of the work being done in our region to support our neighbouring countries.

Serevi Rokotuibau is a Deaf teacher of the Deaf at Hilton Special School in Suva, Fiji. He is also the president of the Fijian Association of the Deaf. The Solomon Islands Deaf community could relate well to Serevi. He is an example of a Deaf man who, despite also living in a country with limited access to resources and education, has achieved a great deal. Through workshops and the opportunity to socially meet with the Deaf community, he was able to share his experiences from Fiji and inspire the Solomon Islanders to also achieve great things for themselves and their community.

Joneti spoke of the impact that Serevi had on the Solomon Islands Deaf community: "Serevi spoke on several topics. Deaf culture was an eye opener for them, seeing a role model who is Deaf and like them and a qualified Deaf teacher. Serevi said that they would stay up late every night because the boys were so excited to see his stories and ask him many questions.

The training was an empowerment to the Solomon Islands Deaf students. We showed them pictures of our Deaf members in Fiji doing activities and playing sport like them and Solomon Islanders would only ask one question: 'Are they Deaf?'"

During my year with the Solomon Islands Deaf community I informally taught them some of the things Serevi talked about (Deaf culture, Deaf identity, Sign Language and teaching Sign Language). However, having Serevi there was much more powerful because they could relate to him as a role model with similar experiences to their own.

The Deaf people were teaching sign language to the hearing public but these classes stopped when I left so Serevi encouraged them to start them up again. He gave them outlines on how to run sign language classes, and we hope these classes will lead to more interpreters and will break down barriers and discrimination.

Joneti led workshops on interpreting for a group of five hearing Solomon Islanders. She gave some real practical advice as well as theory of interpreting. The young interpreter students came away a bit overwhelmed but hungry for more training. Joneti also led a workshop for the Deaf people, explaining the role of an interpreter. Her workshop even prompted a question from one Deaf man about whether he should be paying for interpreters. Of her time there Joneti says: “The trip to the Solomon Islands has been a great learning experience. I have learnt the importance of the Deaf community and interpreters working together. Traditionally, both in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, our cultures are rich and still practiced today. This has allowed me to be able to compare, realise and understand their behaviours and surroundings...Both the Deaf community and the interpreters and teachers need a lot more training...We both knew one week was not enough but if given another chance we would really love to go back and do workshops.”

It is very encouraging to see this connection has continued. Anna, a teacher fluent in Solomon Islands Sign Language is working voluntarily in Honiara, interpreting and helping Deaf people who have graduated from Aruligo. Anna (like Mary Maneka) has not had interpreter training either, but is very keen to do further study. She is well respected among the Deaf community and is really supportive of them creating a community in the city, potentially a Deaf association and/or a Deaf club one day.

Anna has been in contact with Serevi and has helped the Deaf boys apply for a scholarship to study in Fiji. I asked Anna why she thinks Fiji is a good place for the Deaf boys to go. I have translated this quote from Solomon Islands Pidgin into English. Anna says: “It is good for them to go there because in Papua New Guinea I don’t know whether there is an interpreter



or not. But an interpreter and a Deaf man from Fiji came to Aruligo when I was there so I know them. Joneti and Serevi. So I know that if the Deaf boys from the Solomons go there they will feel at home.”

There are many exciting developments and plans for the Solomon Islands. Joneti and I believe that there is potential for growth with both the Deaf community and the interpreters. Joneti, Serevi, Mary, Anna and I all agree that access and education for the Deaf community need to improve and interpreters and teachers need training. Collectively we are all working to help achieve these things.

There are some strong young leaders in the Deaf community in the Solomon Islands and Serevi encouraged them to start their own Deaf Association and start advocating for better services. Joneti and Serevi are both keen to keep the connection they have with the Solomon Islands community strong and are very willing to go back to do more workshops and training. I too plan to continue supporting this community. Together we can help to see the Solomon Islands Deaf community achieve great things.

### **Further Collaboration**

We believe that this collaboration project can be a model for other developing countries. This is just one example of neighbouring countries coming together to share resources and skills with another country in need. Developed countries such as New Zealand and Australia are important players, especially with financial support, however, we believe that there is a real wealth of knowledge and guidance that other developing countries like Fiji can offer. Look around you and see who is close to you, geographically, culturally and in terms of development. The best assistance can come from places you might not expect.

We are very thankful to WASLI for giving us this opportunity to share our experiences and also thankful for WASLI's support in terms of advice for this project. We want to thank SLIANZ for their financial support. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work that our Oceania regional representative, (2008-2011) George Major, has done not only for the Solomon Islands and Fiji, but for our whole region.

## **A GLIMPSE AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION IN UGANDA**

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### **Abstract**

For over a decade, the political atmosphere in Uganda has favoured the implementation of the United Nation's declaration on equalization of opportunity for people living with disabilities. This involves the struggle to overcome the burden of inequality and discrimination of people with disabilities. Why does sign language interpretation remain an obscure concept to common Ugandans despite several legal and policy provisions in support of its development? This essay examines the development of sign language interpretation in Uganda. It explores legal and policy provisions, as well as other factors, in support of the development, and challenges, of sign language interpretation.

### **Introduction**

The process of equalization is primarily aimed at empowering and uplifting deaf people and improving communication in the community. Education for deaf people was unsatisfactory and provided disappointing experiences for many of the children, teachers and communities striving to have access to such facilities. In that context, the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) took on the responsibility of training sign language interpreters from 1993.

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<sup>4</sup> The author is Secretary of the World Association of the Sign Language Interpreters (2011-2015).

However, sign language interpretation is still a young and growing profession in Uganda, East Africa and other third world countries. There continue to be a lot of challenges compared to the profession in developed countries.

The first sign language communicators/interpreters in Uganda emanated from teachers of the deaf, family members and friends who had grown up with deaf person(s). These people acquired some knowledge and skills of signing through their association with deaf people. The desire to have specialised sign language for the deaf in schools gained hold in the 90s as a fundamental human right. Prior to that time, sign language interpretation remained within the confluence of academia with little influence at the grass roots level.

UNAD's international links with other organizations in the same struggle, (e.g. Danish Deaf Association (DDL), World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Regional Secretariat for East and Southern Africa, etc.) increased the demand for Deaf people to fully participate and play major roles in determining policies affecting them in the community. This increased demand brought attention to the roles of sign language interpreters in society.

Similarly, UNAD and National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), the umbrella organization for organizations of persons living with disabilities, played an advocacy and lobbying role in the major events of the Constitutional Assembly in 1993. Another significant event that demonstrated improved involvement of Deaf people in the community through sign language interpretation was in 1994 when Uganda hosted the fourth East and Southern Africa Sign Language Seminar. All these events paved the way for the official recognition of Uganda Sign Language (USL) in the 1995 Uganda constitution. This was a major achievement for the

development of USL. With the involvement of the government and the formulation of laws, the development of sign language and the professionalization of sign language interpretation in the country have gained support. Examples of these laws and where they can be found are outlined below.

### **Legal and policy provisions for the development of sign language in Uganda**

#### 1. The Constitution of Uganda 1995: Objective (xxiv)

According to the Constitution, the State promotes cultural values and practices to enhance the dignity of all Ugandans; encourages the development of a national language or languages; and the development and preservation of all Uganda Languages. These three stipulations provide support for the development of sign language in Uganda and for enhancing the well being of Deaf Ugandans. The constitution also calls for promoting the development of a sign language of the Deaf.

2. Uganda National Institute of Special Needs Education (UNISE) Act 1998: The Act supports the establishing of UNISE as an institution for the training of special education needs teachers and professionals for the needs of people with disabilities. UNISE is now referred to as the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Kyambogo University. Sign Language Interpreters are now being trained in this Faculty.

#### 3. Persons with Disabilities Act 2006 parts II and IV:

There are two relevant parts of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2006. Part II is the Right to Quality Education and Health and states that the Government shall ensure that sign language is introduced into the curriculum for medical personnel and that interpreters are included in the hospital organizational structure.

Part IV relates to Accessibility, particularly access to information and to public transport facilities. This section states that people with disabilities have the right to access information through sign language, tactile sign language, and interpretation in all public institutions and public functions. There is a government authority that is responsible to promote this right. In addition, the act requires any person who owns a television station to provide subtitles or a sign language inset in at least one major newscast program each day and in all programs of national significance.

With regard to public transport facilities, this Act requires that all public transport services provide access for persons with disabilities who need assistance. This includes people who use sign language or other support for communication.

In addition to these laws, the international convention of the rights of people with disabilities, international laws and engagement have also helped in the shaping and development of Uganda Sign Language and increased awareness of sign language interpreters.

### **Development of sign language interpretation in Uganda**

Sign language interpretation in Uganda is primarily practiced in Uganda's capital city, Kampala, and is slowly spreading to other districts/regions. This profession is young and growing, and faces many challenges. In many areas, many people do not know how to use sign language interpreters for effective service delivery. In addition, some of the sign language interpreters that are currently practicing are those who began working prior to the introduction of the interpreter training at Kyambogo University; these interpreters did not go through intensive formal training. This lack of formal training means that these interpreters may lack knowledge of sign language, interpreting and

Deaf culture. In addition, they may not have the proper qualifications or the appropriate skill level to interpret professionally.

In 1993 UNAD (funded by DDL) took on the responsibility of training Sign Language Interpreters. Basic interpreting courses were offered, and individuals in these courses were trained to bridge the communication gap between the Deaf and Hearing community. This laid the foundation for the professionalization of sign language interpretation services and became the model that Uganda National Institute Special Needs Education (UNISE) then adopted. Training sessions were conducted for short periods of one to two weeks, known as the sandwich programme. Some of the trainees who successfully completed these courses are now practicing interpreters. They work to facilitate communication between the Deaf and hearing people interpreting in schools/universities, with organizations of Deaf persons and other organizations for/with Deaf people. These interpreters are also in the forefront of advocating for better sign language interpretation services and welfare.

In 2000 UNAD, in collaboration with former Uganda National Institute of Special Needs Education (now the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Kyambogo University), introduced a certificate course in sign language interpreting. This certificate program is conducted at regional level for a period of two years. However with the growth of sign language interpretation services, the change in the environment in Uganda and the increased demand for effective sign language interpretation service provision by society, additional training was needed. Kyambogo University with the cooperation of the Danish Deaf Association (DDL) and UNAD introduced a recognized training programme for Sign Language Interpreting in 2002. The training is conducted for a period of 2 years, and successful students are awarded a Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting.

### **The birth of Uganda National Association of Sign Language Interpreters (UNASLI)**

The idea to create an association of sign language interpreters was first raised in the mid 1990s but it did not come into being until 2003. The Uganda National Association of Sign Language Interpreters was formed when sign language interpreters from around Uganda came together during the weekly sign language interpretation training (final examinations) at Uganda National Institute of Special Needs (UNISE). These interpreters developed a constitution and elected officers to run the association for the next three years. In 2007 the association held its 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and new office bearers were elected. The assembly also developed a five-year strategic plan to guide the running of UNASLI activities.

UNASLI is registered with the Non Governmental Organisation Board as required by law in order to operate in Uganda. Currently the association lacks funding and this is one of the biggest challenges to be able to implement the five-year strategic plan. UNASLI is a registered member with WASLI and works closely with Uganda National Association of the Deaf and other Organizations for and of persons living with disabilities in Uganda for its lobbying and advocacy work.

### **Challenges faced by sign language interpreters in Uganda**

In this section I report on a study I conducted on the challenges faced by sign language interpreters in Uganda. The challenges discussed below are based on a brief assessment and interaction with practicing sign language interpreters in different interpreting settings. This study was carried out in several of the districts where interpretation is provided in Uganda.



### **Office settings**

There are four general challenges faced by sign language interpreters in an office setting. These challenges are: 1) Lack of awareness by the community of the roles, duties, rights and obligations of sign language interpreters. One example that was reported is that people often blame interpreters for the actions of their clients. 2) Interpreting for long periods of time. Because many organizations/offices want to minimize their expenses, they tend to employ only one interpreter rather than two. This results in the interpreters working for a longer time than is recommended (interpretation is effective within the first 35 minutes), particularly during staff meetings, which can be dangerous to their health and also reduces the effectiveness of the service delivery. 3) Lack of professional recognition. Because sign language interpreting is a new profession, there is no specific definition for the job description for interpreters. This results in interpreters being asked to do additional tasks as secretaries, helpers or guides. 4) Low pay. Sign language interpreters are not paid competitive salaries for their work. There is no set standard payment rate for sign language interpreters.

Possible solutions to address these challenges include: sensitization of the community about the roles, duties, rights and obligations of sign language interpreters; establishing requirements for hiring an appropriate number of sign language interpreters for situations that continue for an extended time; education and sensitization of managers and other professionals about sign language interpreting as a profession; and establishing standardized pay rates for sign language interpreters.

### **Educational settings**

In my study five general challenges were reported by sign language interpreters in an educational setting. 1) The expectation that interpreters interpret dictated notes. Most lecturers are not aware of the special

educational needs of Deaf students with regard to the difficulty of writing and looking at the interpreter. As a result it is a challenge for the interpreter when the Deaf person looks down to write; the interpreter is expected to listen to the incoming information and remember it until the Deaf person looks up. 2) Interpreting fast speaking teachers/lecturers. Many teachers/lecturers are not aware of how to work with sign language interpreters. Some teachers/lecturers speak very fast making it difficult and tiresome for the interpreter to keep up with the pace of the lecture. 3) Lack of proper/standard pay for sign language interpreters. Because most schools/institutions do not have proper job descriptions, responsibilities for sign language interpreters vary. Because the pay is not appropriate for the work, this discourages interpreters from providing interpreting services in educational settings. 4) Use of Sign-Supported-English (SSE). SSE is a system of signing while maintaining English word order (grammar) and is often more difficult and taxing to interpret. 5) Lack of signs for some of the subjects taught. There are no standardized signs for many terms in science, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. These courses also involve calculations that are often difficult to interpret because of the need to understand the process involved.

Possible solutions to address these challenges include: Lecturers should slow their pace as they dictate notes to avoid over loading the sign language interpreters with incoming words. Teachers/Lecturers should use a reasonable pace as they speak so the sign language interpreter will be able to keep up with the lecture. Schools/Institutions should develop proper job descriptions; this will also help with standardizing the pay for the sign language interpreters. Finally, teaching methods or curriculum should be developed that are appropriate for special needs children (especially Deaf children).

### **Religious settings**

There are four general challenges faced by sign language interpreters in a religious setting. 1) Interpreting church songs; church interpreters always find it a challenge to find a suitable voice and rhythm when interpreting from signs to voice and this becomes more difficult when they don't practice together and have no background of the song. 2) Interpretation of church drama; interpreting a drama is always a challenge for the SL interpreters because it involves many characters, unfamiliar to Deaf people. Positioning is one of the problems. 3) Lack of signs for some church words i.e. the Bible has got many names of different personalities, books, and words that don't have signs, so it makes it difficult and tiresome for the interpreter to keep on finger spelling them every time they are used. 4) Interpreting for Deaf people with little or no sign language knowledge. Churches always involve people from different backgrounds, so it becomes difficult for the interpreter to interpret for the Deaf people who are not familiar with his/her signing or uses only home signs (local signs).

Possible solutions to address these challenges include: Have both Deaf people and sign language interpreters practice together to find a suitable voice for the song. Encourage Deaf people to invite sign language interpreters to attend practice when organizing a drama and advise them accordingly. Research and develop signs for the books and names in the Bible. Encourage sign language interpreters to socialize and become aware of different signers and variations.

### **Discussion**

The findings of my study show that the most common challenges faced by sign language interpreters in Uganda include:

- Undefined/specific roles and responsibilities for sign language interpreters as mentioned by both interpreters working in educational settings and those working in office related settings. Most institutions and offices do not have defined job descriptions for sign language interpreters because it is a new profession in the country. As a result interpreters are expected to do other things in addition to interpreting (e.g. interpreter/secretary, interpreter/note taker or interpreter/guide).
- Low pay/motivation; this challenge was also cited both in the educational setting and office related setting. Because most institutions and offices do not have defined roles for sign language interpreters, they also do not have defined pay rates. In most cases the interpreters are paid less than competitive salaries for the work they do.
- Lack of awareness by other professionals regarding how to work with sign language interpreters (e.g. expecting the interpreter to work for extended times without rest). The sign language interpreters of the educational setting also complained of teachers/lecturers who speak very fast as they dictate notes which makes it difficult/tiresome for them to deliver their services.
- Limited specialized sign language vocabulary. This problem is primarily experienced by church interpreters who reported that there are many words, names of persons and books in the Bible that do not have established signs. As a result, it is difficult for interpreters who have to fingerspell these words every time they are used.

The following suggestions are possible solutions to these challenges faced by working sign language interpreters in the field:

- Establish defined roles/responsibilities of sign language interpreters to avoid over loading them with other responsibilities that are not meant for interpreters.
- Establish a standardized, appropriate pay rate for interpretation services and notify different organizations/institutions of these pay rates.
- Educate and sensitize different professionals to create awareness on how to work with sign language interpreters.
- Develop (more research on USL) standardized sign vocabulary (agreed on by Deaf people and sign language interpreters) for concepts, words and names in the Bible that do not have signs. This will reduce the requirement to finger spell these terms.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the information provided by my study on the service delivery of sign language interpreters in Uganda, recommendations include:

- 1) Lobbying and education. Because most of the challenges and solutions mentioned involve advocacy, lobbying and sensitization, it is very important for countries to have a professional body for sign language interpreters. This body should be empowered to create awareness about sign language interpreters and advocate for the recognition of their rights and needs as means to address some of the challenges mentioned in this paper.

- 2) Research has to be carried out on the sign language of a particular community/country and documented for it to be recognized.
- 3) Supporting laws and policies should be implemented as a major tool in the advocacy and lobbying for better welfare of sign language interpreters and sign language interpretation as a right for Deaf people.

## **DEVELOPING DEAF INTERPRETING TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS**

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### **Abstract:**

“Deaf Interpreting” is a generic term which has come to refer to Deaf people working in interpreting, translating and language mediation capacities in a range of situations. But things are not this simple and the question of what exactly a Deaf Interpreter is needs to be answered. This paper looks at the definition of Deaf Interpreting and outlines our own experience in developing training and assessment programmes for Deaf people to work as either interpreters or translators. We describe the occupational and assessment frameworks used in the UK, and examine how the development of a range of Deaf Interpreting qualifications in the UK can benefit Deaf people around the world. In addition, this paper argues that a solid foundation for Deaf Interpreters exists in the UK (and Europe as well), that this foundation is rooted in international policy, and that Deaf Interpreting can be implemented in other countries.

### **What is a Deaf Interpreter?**

Deaf people have worked in an interpreting capacity for as long as there have been Deaf communities. This includes lipreading what a hearing person was saying and relaying this information to another Deaf person, or translating a

document into sign language (SL). More recently, this includes Deaf people working in formal situations such as translating dialogue on television and the Internet into sign language, and alongside hearing interpreters in one-on-one situations.

When we were researching Deaf interpreting issues, it became apparent that Deaf interpreting falls into several categories and each category needs to be assessed separately. (We do not include interpreting directly from a spoken language to a signed language). Several years ago Signature<sup>5</sup>, the main body in the UK that awards nationally accredited qualifications related to language and communication methods used by deaf and deafblind people, published two documents on the role of Deaf interpreters. From these we were able to determine 4 distinct categories of Deaf interpreting, as follows:

1. **Sign language to sign language interpreting.** This refers to interpreting between two separate signed languages, for example from British Sign Language (BSL) to American Sign Language (ASL), Irish Sign Language (ISL) or other signed language.
2. **Translation from written English to BSL.** This refers to translating written text from a spoken language into a signed language. Examples include translating written English into BSL for broadcast on television or for websites to be accessible for Deaf people.
3. **Intra-lingual interpreting.** This refers to what many consider to be Deaf interpreting and is perhaps the most misunderstood category of them all. Intra-lingual interpreting involves changing dialogue from one variant of a signed language to another variant of the same

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.signature.org.uk/page.php?content=88> Accessed June 22, 2011.



language. An example is interpreting from one variety of BSL to another variety of BSL. The reason for this is sometimes the variant of the BSL used is not accessible by the person receiving information, perhaps because of unfamiliarity with the subject matter, participants being from different generations, or due to learning difficulties. This is also known as relay interpreting, language modification, or language facilitation.

4. **International interpreting and facilitation.** What is commonly known as International Sign is not a recognised language and efsli (the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters) has issued the following policy statement: “It clearly appears that International Sign Interpretation should not be considered a substitute for national sign language interpretation. The European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters promotes the use of national sign language interpreters and encourages national sign language interpreting training.”<sup>6</sup>

According to efsli, International Sign should only be used for initial contact with Deaf people from other countries, but if higher-level contact is required (i.e. conferences, meetings) then the national sign languages should be used. Additionally, International Sign interpreting is akin to interpreting using “a situational pidgin which is idiosyncratic language use but also generally requires some knowledge of some other sign language(s).” (Robert Adam, personal communication, 2011).

Without endorsement from international associations it is difficult to see how International Sign (IS) interpreting can be formalised

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.efsl.org/efsl/trainers/istrainingpolicy.php> Accessed June 22, 2011.

although there are several IS training courses and assessment programmes around the world. In addition, there are contact situations where there is no common sign language. In these situations, communication facilitation (not interpreting) occurs between a user of one national signed language and a user of another SL. This occurs when International Sign is not known or used, such as liaising with Deaf people in refugee and advice centres or talking with visitors from another country.

These categories of Deaf interpreting correspond more or less with the categories outlined in Patrick Boudreault's (2005) paper "Deaf Interpreters", which are: translation; signed language to signed language interpreting; intra-lingual interpreting; and international sign. Boudreault mentions Deafblind interpreting as a category of its own, but we have placed Deafblind interpreting under the intra-lingual interpreting category when performed by Deaf people working as Deaf interpreters. Judith Collins and John Walker delivered a paper at WASLI in 2005 defining Deaf interpreting as: on-screen interpreting; sign language to sign language interpreting; and working with Deafblind people (Collins & Walker 2006).

Our proposed categories of Deaf interpreting further refine both of the above and fit neatly into the UK interpreting qualification, assessment and accreditation framework. We expect our categories to be debated as we have not been able to identify any widely agreed upon categories of Deaf interpreting, and this is still an evolving discussion. For example, where does Deafblind fingerspelling fit in? Does this fall in the category of intra-lingual or inter-lingual interpreting or something else? Should international sign interpreting be considered intra-lingual interpreting rather than have its own category? Finally, some would argue that mirror interpreting, where one

watches an interpreter and repeats what is signed to another audience, is intra-lingual interpreting.

In the UK, interpreting (and shortly, translation) registration is carried out by the National Registers of Communication Professionals with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD). To be registered as a communication professional in the UK interpreters must comply with and successfully satisfy communication qualifications requirements as set out by the NRCPD. Signature is the main awarding body in the UK for communication qualifications relating to deafness although there are other institutions in the UK whose interpreting qualifications have been mapped and accepted by the NRCPD for registration.

### **Sign Language to Sign Language**

In the previous section we identified four categories of Deaf interpreting, and we began with sign language to sign language interpreting. In the UK, the main sign language and interpreting qualification awarding body, Signature, released a sign language to sign language interpreting qualification and assessment framework in 2010. However, to successfully meet the requirements of the assessment programme, all members of the assessment team need to demonstrate competency in both languages being assessed, at Level 6 and Level 7 on the UK languages framework.<sup>7</sup>

The candidates need to demonstrate or provide proof of competency in both languages they work with. This can be problematic as it can be difficult obtaining qualifications in the second signed language. For example, if the two languages to be interpreted are ISL (Irish Sign Language) and BSL (British Sign Language), London-based candidates will need to have their

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<sup>7</sup> The UK languages framework adheres to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages. Levels 6 and 7 correspond to C1 and C2, respectively, in the CEFR.

ISL skills assessed or verified in Ireland as there are very few ISL assessors and verifiers in London or elsewhere in the UK.

Developing skills and knowledge in training programmes for sign language to sign language interpreters is straightforward. Curriculum planners just need to adapt the teaching curriculum for English to sign language interpreting. The spoken to sign element can be replaced by a sign to sign element, along with other minor changes and allowances.

### **Translation**

Now we turn to translating from English text to sign language. In September 2011, Signature released an English to sign language translation qualification at the same level as is required of sign language interpreters, Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation. This is an important and encouraging advance. This qualification adheres to the National Occupational Standards for Translators (NOST), and several minor modifications have been implemented to produce the Qualification Specification. This qualification includes translating in a live environment, which rarely exists for spoken language qualifications. It also includes a sight translation module adapted from the Interpreting Qualification Specification.

Signamic Limited, a London-based sign language and interpreting training centre, has been working in partnership with Signature to develop the translation qualification, with input from a team of qualified interpreters, academics specialising in interpreting and sign linguistics, training providers, and broadcasters. Like interpreting trainees, translation trainees are required to demonstrate that they have achieved 1,300 or more Guided Learning Hours (GLH) of training and assessment.

Comparing the translation qualification with the equivalent interpreting qualification, which is also awarded by Signature, brings to light several differences. For example, there is no two-way element in translation, and translators are able to review their work before it is submitted to the client, whereas interpreters do not have this opportunity. There is greater emphasis on managing new assignments and reviewing your own performance as a translator than there is in interpreting. Also, there is the added module of developing and maintaining resources to aid in translation tasks such as collaborating with peers for co-translating and reviewing work, reference systems, and assuring the quality of translation.

Currently, there are many English to sign language translators working in the UK in a variety of roles such as: in-vision translators for television broadcasters, document translators, and internet translators. Theatre interpreting incorporates some translation elements. Most translators received on-the-job training over the years and their skills have been honed and refined as a result. Thus, many of these translators require training in professional practice and developing their professional skills rather than their core skills to prepare them for the formal assessment for the Qualification Specification. Undergoing a comprehensive core skills and knowledge training programme is not necessary for these translators.

Signamic has been working in partnership with Action on Hearing Loss (formerly known as the RNID) to deliver the first professional translation skills development and assessment programme. This has been a three-step process, with the first step being to develop a screening exercise to assess aspiring translators for the qualification specification. This screening exercise consists of several tests to assess competency in English reading and writing, translation skills, knowledge of ethics and professional practice, as well as self-evaluation.

When a group of applicants has been identified as assessment-ready, they will undertake a professional development and induction programme over six days from the end of July 2011. After this they will undergo the assessment programme over several months. This initial cohort will consist of some of the first Deaf interpreters in the UK to possess qualifications comparable to those possessed by their hearing interpreter peers. They will also become the first Deaf interpreters to be fully registered by Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) and the NRCPD.

For those whose core skills require further development, Signamic has been developing a comprehensive training programme directly linked to the qualification specification and the prescribed knowledge and skills requirement. When this comprehensive training curriculum was undergoing its first draft, it adhered to the current sign language interpreting training programme conceptually. But after closely examining the NOST and draft Qualification Specification, it was soon apparent that this was not appropriate because professional interpreters and professional translators require quite different skill-sets, as outlined previously. This means that sign language translation training programmes need to be structured very differently from those for sign language interpreters.

### **Intra-Lingual Interpreting**

This brings us to the third type of Deaf interpreting: intra-lingual interpreting. Developing an intra-lingual interpreting assessment framework is problematic because this specific category of interpreting is so broad. It would be very difficult to fit all aspects of intra-lingual interpreting into any single framework or qualification specification. Additionally, there are very few aspects of intra-lingual interpreting which fit into any of the

communication facilitation frameworks which exist in the UK, apart from, perhaps, those which apply to working with Deafblind people.

To enable the creation of a more specific qualification it is necessary to examine the term “intra-lingual interpreting”. What is this exactly? Does this include working with Deafblind people? Is it mirror interpreting? Is it communication facilitation with deaf people who do not know sign language or only have a basic understanding of it? Does it include using drawings, miming, making items, etc? Where do you draw the line between intra-lingual interpreting and the provision of advice and advocacy support? One solution to the lack of a suitable qualification framework in this case is to develop a new framework for this purpose, or to develop an assessment template drawing on the contents of various other UK-accredited assessment frameworks.

### **International Interpreting**

The fourth type of Deaf interpreting is international interpreting. The ideal way to develop skills in international sign is to maintain constant contact with Deaf people from other nations who use IS. Completing interpreting and translation core skills training is necessary for learning the processing and associated theories and principles for interpreting. The same applies to contact situations when meeting with deaf people who use a different sign language but do not use IS.

### **The International Perspective**

Around the world different nations either are developing or have developed various Deaf interpreting qualifications and training programmes. What is happening in the UK at this time will benefit Deaf communities around the world. The two Deaf interpreting qualifications discussed in this paper are

rooted in the international Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning,

Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). Those who have been assessed as meeting the standard also meet the international European standard by demonstrating the depth and complexity of the skills and knowledge exhibited by Deaf interpreters that are equal to those exhibited by hearing interpreters.

The British interpreting framework adheres to European standards, therefore, it is easier to support other nations in Europe with developing their own interpreting training programmes. Another benefit of the UK using the European framework is that it makes it possible to team up with Deaf interpreters from other European countries and set up training programmes in developing countries. It is most likely that Deaf interpreters who are citizens of developing countries will be asked to work as intra-lingual interpreters and document translators. Currently, many Deaf Britons work in a voluntary capacity in Africa, South East Asia and other places. If these Britons were armed with Deaf interpreting qualifications, they would be better qualified to set up interpreting training programmes in developing countries.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed four types of Deaf interpreting: sign language to sign language, translation, intra-lingual interpreting, and international interpreting (which may involve the use of International Sign or, alternatively, consist of contact situations where there is no shared code). In the UK, training programmes and qualification assessment frameworks have been developed for the first two (sign language to sign language interpreting and translation). In the case of sign language translation a



completely different training programme had to be constructed since the occupational standards were different from those required for interpreting.

The third type of Deaf interpreting (intra-lingual interpreting) is problematic because this is a unique area and no occupational standards or qualification frameworks exist. The challenge is to develop one.

These are exciting times for Deaf people in the UK because their language skills are finally being recognised and opportunities for employment are starting to open up. We are very thankful to Signature for making this happen.

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## **COLLABORATION AMONG INTERPRETERS: A WORLDWIDE COMMUNICATION NETWORK**

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### **Introduction**

Thanks to technology contact among people from different countries has increased in recent years. An obvious example of this is Facebook. In 2009, Meliton Bustinza, created a Spanish-speaking Forum of Sign Language Interpreters on Facebook. Many interpreters in Latin American countries started to participate in this forum and we realized how important information and communicating with each other was. In 2010, Jordi Ferré, created a Sign Language Interpreters group in Facebook, which is open to any sign language interpreter who wishes to join.

The authors of this paper represent a small group of sign language interpreters from various Latin American countries. In this paper we address three main issues relevant to interpreters: information, training and catastrophes or natural disasters.

1. Information: In some countries, such as Paraguay, sign language interpreters have recognized the importance of establishing associations and organizations and they are currently working to

- create an organization. In other countries, local organizations may exist but there are no national associations. In countries like the Dominican Republic, religious bodies control who can work as an interpreter and this means that it is very difficult to self-organize or create an association.
2. **Training:** In many developed countries there are laws that recognize sign language and there are even published studies and research on sign language that make it possible to create and develop interpreter training programs. However, the vast majority of underdeveloped or developing countries have no official recognition of their national sign language and therefore there is no policy through which interpreting can be recognized as a profession or interpreter training can be established.
  3. **Catastrophes or natural disasters:** Every single year the world suffers various natural disasters. We can mention as examples the earthquakes in Turkey, Chile and Haiti, floods in Colombia and Pakistan, and the Tsunami in Japan, to name but a few. However, we are not able to say to any degree of certainty if Deaf people or interpreter colleagues were affected or even killed as a result of these catastrophes. Do we know if they need our help? How can we offer our help?

After the earthquake in Chile in 2009, some Chilean interpreters asked for help from the rest of the world to send as many letters as they could to the Chilean government requesting interpreters on TV so that Deaf people in Chile could be informed about the real situation after the disaster. We do not know how many e-mails or letters the government received. Maybe one or two hundred? If we had network for communication for all the interpreters in

the world, the government would probably have received thousands of e-mails, and interpreting would have been made available on TV, but this never happened.

One difficulty we are facing is to find interpreters from every country. Facebook is one forum for connecting interpreters, but not all interpreters use Facebook. Even if they do, they may not know that the sign language interpreter forum exists. It is necessary, and would be very helpful, to create a worldwide network where everyone who is willing to help can do so. This would bring together people who really want to collaborate. What do we know about the situation of interpreters in Ethiopia, for example? Do we have any idea if they need any help?

The interpreters who have been interacting up to now and helping each other to carry out this project have shared their email addresses and contact details in order to keep in touch. If any of us has a problem, we communicate it to the others and all together we try to offer solutions. We share our opinions and, of course, we have never asked for anything in return.

In Spain, some of us have been helping to create interpreter associations in different Latin American countries. However, we feel that this is not enough. We know there are other countries that are in need. Furthermore, there may be interpreters from other countries who have more information than we do but they might not have the means to share that information or they might simply not know how to. It is possible that some interpreters who attend international events like the WASLI conferences do not make an effort to share new information once they go back to their own countries. This is not a cooperative attitude and does not help to improve the situation. We want to work towards a common goal, which is to be helpful and share information.

This idea first started many years ago. In the 1994, Liz Scott Gibson went to Spain to give a talk. There she told Jordi Ferré about the importance of transmitting all the information we had, which was considerable, to the Latin American countries in order to help the interpreters in that part of the world. At that time there was no internet, no even a fraction of the technology that we have nowadays. Jordi Ferré wondered how he was going to communicate with those interpreters in the Latin world. Back then he did not know how to do it, but today we have many options.

Our aim is collaboration and mutual support among interpreters throughout the world. That is the point we want to reach. If we help each other, in the end everyone wins. Up to now we have described the problems and needs of sign language interpreters. We now focus on our proposals for solutions.

It is necessary to find a meeting point where all the world's interpreters can communicate with each other. This way, whenever there is a problem, interpreters can get in touch and ask for help from the rest of the world's interpreters. This would allow us to offer our support to interpreters in any country in the world.

We know that our proposal to develop a communication network involves a lot of hard work. It might take time to establish contacts in different countries. This is not a goal that can be achieved in a week or in a few days but we should still try hard. No doubt we will meet obstacles, such as the task of translating due to the various languages involved. We might also face resistance from some people, but we are convinced that we are working together and in the right direction.

We propose to create a blog or be authorized to download information from WASLI's webpage and also to post news there, create discussion forums or

create a Skype or Messenger account which interpreters have access to and share information on important issues. There are many social networks we could take advantage of just to deal with the basic topics of interest. WASLI could oversee these activities in a coordinating role. We can achieve a lot if we are given the opportunity.

Those interpreters who are willing to collaborate can find a way to transmit all the important information they can read on WASLI's web to their sign language community and spread the news using different formats and languages. This would help to overcome the obstacle of having all our information as written texts.

We could also create a webpage to unite interpreters and Deaf people so that in the event of a catastrophe we could all help the affected country and people in one way or another. If anyone needs to exchange information or in the case of a catastrophe, the closer the Deaf Community is, the more we will be able to help.

We are sure that there are a lot of interpreters throughout the rest of the world who are willing and eager to contribute more ideas to this project that we call "collaboration among interpreters".

Let us do all that is humanly possible to help each other. As the Mexican revolutionary, Subcomandante Marcos, said: "Another world is possible." It depends on people to change the status quo or not. This conference could be a good starting point to begin changing things and make a better world.

## **RESPONSE FROM WASLI PRESIDENT TO COLLABORATION AMONG INTERPRETERS: A WORLDWIDE COMMUNICATION NETWORK**

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Since the time of this presentation, both the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and our own organization, WASLI, have formed several collaborative task groups. One of the key task groups operating between 2011 and 2015 is the Task Group on Communication Access during Natural Disasters.

Drawing on the expertise of two WASLI board members, Jose Luis Brevia (Colombia) and Igor Bondarenko (Ukraine), and two WFD Board members, Dmitriy Rebrov (Russia) and Gaspar Sanabria (Spain), along with various volunteers, we have been able to produce a position paper that provides governments and communities with guidance about working with interpreters to ensure Deaf people have equitable access to information during natural disasters. This paper is currently being reviewed by both boards and then will be vetted by a small group of readers prior to taking the document to the entire WASLI membership for ratification. Once ratified, the document will be available on our website. It is anticipated that WASLI will rely on volunteers who will then make the paper available in international sign and any other languages where we have translation support.

The Task Group is also working on two additional papers, specifically designed to offer the Deaf community strategies and tips in order to lobby for effective services, and strategies and tips for interpreters working with

media. All of these documents have been created based on input and experiences of Deaf people and interpreters in each region, in an attempt to harness the power of effective practices that have been used in a region, in order to replicate them in other regions based on arguments of linguistic human rights. While we recognize the cultural and linguistic context of each region will vary, the information offered will serve as an excellent foundation for communication access.

Since 2011 we have also seen tremendous growth in terms of activity and readership on the WASLI Facebook page, as well as we note growth in the creation of regional Facebook groups that serve to support information exchange at the regional level. In addition, WASLI has recently created a new website that allows for much greater integration of international sign, along with English, modeling its website after the WFD website.

Another area of change for WASLI has been to review their membership fees. We sought advice from our members, both national and individual, which resulted in lowering the fees in order to be more accessible to emerging interpreter organizations and broaden the membership to welcome any individual interpreter who wishes to be part of our international growth. All of these efforts are resulting in greater information being shared, quickly and efficiently, and then adapted for regional and local successes. WASLI and WFD are pleased with these strides forward in supporting Deaf people's linguistic human rights through the provision of professional interpreting services.



## **THE “TEACHER-INTERPRETER PARADOX”: EXPLORING THE ROLES OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS**

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### **Abstract**

It is widely accepted among professional interpreter organisations that when an interpreter is present in a communicative event, she should take steps to limit the effects of her presence on the discourse processes that unfold between the two primary participants in the interpreting event, who do not speak the same language. It is also accepted that the ultimate goal of the interpreter is to ensure that the interpreted discourse processes that occur, in the end, ensure that all parties involved have clearly understood the message. Napier (2007) suggests that interpreters co-operate with the other participants in a communication event, and that we should now begin to analyse how this collaboration occurs in different contexts.

In the educational context, if it is ultimately the role of the interpreter to ensure understanding, there may well be times when the interpreter modifies her function in relation to the student and fulfils the role of a teacher, to ensure that the Deaf student has understood the content presented. This, it can be argued, is part of the role of the educational interpreter as an intercultural mediator. However, this is controversial in light of the normative role of interpreters contained in most codes of ethics, namely that they should interpret accurately what is said by the source speaker and not add or omit information. This paper draws on the analysis of authentic filmed lectures to explore whether there is a role conflict for the interpreter and the

teacher-interpreter paradox in post-secondary educational contexts in South Africa.

### **Background to the study**

In South Africa, the signed language interpreting profession has only very recently received the recognition and academic focus that has been given to the profession for many years in other parts of the world. Here, the formal teaching of South African Sign Language (SASL) at the tertiary level began in 1999 with the introduction of SASL as a subject at the Free State University (Akach and Naudé 2008). In 2000, both the University of the Witwatersrand and the ML Sultan Technikon (now Durban University of Technology) introduced SASL courses and the North-West University began offering SASL classes at the start of the 2011 academic year. Furthermore, formal training for South African Sign Language interpreters was not available until fairly recently. At present, the SASL interpreter training that is available generally focuses on the fundamentals of interpreting, not on specific contexts. The demand is generally for first-level courses in interpreting, which focus on practice of the interpreting process in general. There appears then to be a very heavy reliance on Codas (Children of Deaf Adults), who may be natural signers and interpreters, to carry the bulk of the high level interpreting needs of the Deaf community in South Africa.

According to the Deaf Federation of South Africa (2009), apart from Codas, many people who act as SASL interpreters come from the teaching profession. Research shows that in times of need, teachers who have learnt to sign adequately through their teaching were called upon to assist with interpreting work. This use of teachers to act as interpreters is common in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. This practice is problematic however, since the teachers frequently have no formal interpreter training and frequently confuse the roles of 'teacher' and 'interpreter'.

During the researcher's own practice as a post-secondary educational SASL interpreter, such confusion of roles was common. Some of this confusion was likely due to lack of training, but it was also partially a result of differing expectations of the interpreter from the Deaf students and administrators. These conflicting ideas about the role of the sign interpreter led to a search of literature to try and find a way to resolve the problem. However, the search for information revealed a remarkable silence – especially related to the South African context. There appears to be no literature on understanding the role of the post-secondary educational signed-language interpreter in South Africa. It was for this reason that an investigation into the notion of the role of the SASL interpreter in post-secondary education settings in South Africa was undertaken in order to understand more fully the manner in which interpreters in this context around the country fulfil their role.

### **Assumptions and the 'teacher-interpreter paradox'**

At the outset of the study, the working hypothesis was that the educational interpreter would be subjected to more than normal role conflict. This assumption is supported by Olivier (2008) whose research focussed on spoken language interpreters in post-secondary education in South Africa. She found that 79% of spoken language educational interpreters and only 47% of spoken language conference interpreters felt responsible for the users of the service. She adds that the interviews she conducted make it clear that the educational interpreters displayed an emotional connection to their role in the classroom and saw themselves as an aid to the students.

Another study that explores the role of the spoken language educational interpreter in the university setting (Bothma and Verhoef 2008) highlights the need for the interpretation not merely to convey subject content, but also the entire classroom discourse. In this study, the authors argue that when

interpreting in a classroom setting, maximum participation by users of the interpreting service can only be achieved when the interpreter balances the “functions of communication and the associated functions of the respective source and target texts against the background of the socio-cultural contexts in which these texts are produced...” (Bothma and Verhoef 2008: 136). Thus, in order to achieve the overall communicative function of language, i.e. constructing meaning, the interpreter needs to have a thorough understanding of the culture and social background of both the source language and target language users in the classroom as well as the discourse of the classroom. This is vital in order to mediate understanding of the lectures.

In the same study, Bothma and Verhoef (2008) include some of the responses obtained from questionnaires that were given to students who make use of the interpreting services. Two responses indicated an interesting perspective on the part of the students as to the role of the interpreter. The first response was made by a second year student when answering the question, “Do you understand the subject content as conveyed to you by the interpreter?” The student responded that sometimes when the interpreter could see on the students’ faces that they did not understand, she (the interpreter) would ask the lecturer to repeat it or would try to say it in a different way herself and that they accepted this practice. This indicates a break from the traditionally understood neutral role of the interpreter. Another response, from a second year student, to the question, “How would you describe the role that the interpreter plays in your class?” indicates again that the interpreter is not perceived as a mere translating machine. The student responded: “Is it weird to say she’s like a friend because she cares about whether or not we understand the work.” This confirms the findings of Olivier (2008) that the educational interpreter has an emotional connection to the users of her services.

As a result of this assumption of role conflict in the educational interpreter, it was hypothesized that the ‘teacher-interpreter paradox’ – a situation in which the interpreter steps out of the ‘interpreter role’ and into the ‘teacher role’ to ensure optimal learning – would be common among all post-secondary educational interpreters. Further, it was also hypothesized that among signed language interpreters in this educational setting, there would be no uniform understanding of role and how performance in that role would be realized. This hypothesis was based on the lack of educational interpreter training associated with this context specifically. Related to this, the role of the interpreter in the different types of post-secondary education settings in South Africa could be expected to vary and this variation would provide evidence of the diverse understandings of the role.

### **Methodology**

In order to investigate whether the signed language interpreters in post-secondary educational settings do in fact take on several roles during the course of their work, it was necessary to understand both the professional (production) norms that interpreters felt they ‘ought’ to adhere to, and the expectancy (product) norms as they were actually expressed in practice (Chesterman 1993). In order to do this, interpreters were interviewed regarding how they perceive their role and were then filmed interpreting in actual lectures. A total of 14 lectures (approximately 10 ½ hrs of footage) were filmed and included 8 different interpreters<sup>8</sup>, one of whom was the researcher. Of these interpreters only 5 were interviewed – the researcher could not interview herself – and the interviews with the remaining two interpreters did not materialise due to a last minute change to the interpreting schedule and an ad-hoc interpreter’s external commitments.

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<sup>8</sup> Two have tertiary level 1-3 SASL training and honours interpreting training. Two are Codas and three have no formal interpreter training and less than 2 years formal SASL training.

However, a total of 7 interviews were conducted as two interviewed interpreters were not filmed. One of the interpreters interviewed declined an invitation to be filmed for the research and the other interpreter's lectures, which were scheduled to be filmed, were cancelled. However, since the interviews and filmed data were analysed for broad congruence in professional and product normative behaviours of the interpreters rather than whether each specific interpreter does in practice what they believe they do, all the interviews and filmed data were used for analysis.

The interviews were semi-structured (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007). Thus the interviewer used a guide sheet of 15 questions around which to base the discussions but the precise questions and topics discussed with each interpreter differed. This type of interview structure was suited to this study as the roles and functions of the interpreters differed from one institution to another and from one position to another. This interview method leaves room for the interviewer to ask other relevant questions in order to clarify or expand the discussion for a given topic.

The filmed data was collected in authentic lectures at three different post-secondary education institutions – two universities and one Further Education and Training (FET) college. Permission was obtained from all the interpreters who were filmed as well as from the lecturers in whose classes filming took place. A central premise of interpreting studies is that analysis is done of actual utterances which occur naturally (Roy 2000). Thus for the data collected for this study, interpreters were filmed working in actual lectures. Transcription of the signed texts in the study proved very challenging and others have also found this to be the case (viz. Leeson, et al. 2006; Bungeroth, et al. 2008). Initially the intention for this study was to use a standard form of written spoken-language in the transcriptions to ensure a fluent written rendition of what was interpreted that would be easily

machine-readable. This was in keeping with the conventions of the corpus that the study would be adding to. However, in order for the research to be more easily used within signed language interpreting research generally, it was ultimately decided that a linguistic gloss would be more appropriate.

A second important aspect of data analysis in interpreting studies, highlighted by Roy (2000) is that a brief explanation of the context in which the data was collected should accompany the data. Thus, the explanation makes it clear to the reader what the social relationships were between interlocutors, the physical setting of the communication event and other relevant information related to the event that could influence the way in which the words that were uttered are to be understood. As far as possible this information is captured in the transcription header of the lectures by the transcribers. For this study two professional transcribers were used to transcribe the spoken portion of the texts and a Deaf SASL transcriber, familiar with the corpus transcription conventions (as described above) transcribed the signed portions of the texts. The researcher later redid the selected portions of the SASL transcripts to a full SASL linguistic gloss to more accurately represent the exact nature of the signed texts.

### **Analysis and findings**

Most of the interpreters interviewed had similar beliefs about the role of an educational interpreter and how that role should be fulfilled through normative behaviour in lectures. The widely accepted professional norm of impartiality was seen as the most important. All the interpreters interviewed mentioned that as an educational interpreter the ethical principle of remaining neutral in the role was exactly the same as interpreting in any other setting. However, each of them also indicated that there are certain limited occasions when it is acceptable from within the role of the interpreter

to become partial and in one way or another to deviate from the source text as uttered by the lecturer.

The other norms that were described as within the role of the interpreter by those interviewed were:

- Controlling the flow of talk in group situations
- Borrowing from the source language in the form of fingerspelling to ensure the academic terminology is transferred
- Ensuring linguistic competency, partly through socialising with Deaf students
- Developing sign lexicon in collaboration with a team consisting of Deaf students and interpreters
- Maintaining flexibility to cope with the variety in content, venues and communication functions in higher education
- Portraying academic content accurately

From the interviews it was clear that the interpreters generally view themselves as neutral but involved participants in the classroom discourse. In order to examine how the involvement relates to the transfer of the message, the filmed data were examined and instances of interpreter-generated utterances were noted. An interpreter-generated utterance is considered as an addition to the source text which does not detract from the meaning of that statement. Thus an additional explanation of a word not provided by the lecturer but added by the interpreter to ensure understanding would be an interpreter-generated utterance. These utterances, as well as certain omissions, are not viewed as errors although errors were observed and noted during the study too. Errors are considered any additions or omissions in the target text which alter the meaning of the source text message or “leaves out” significant information.



The filmed data showed that signed language interpreters in post-secondary settings shift away from the source text in a similar manner to interpreters in other settings. A preliminary review of the transcriptions during analysis made it clear that the types of shifts and the frequency of the shifts varied quite substantially between experienced / trained and inexperienced / untrained interpreters. This is an area of potential further research.

During analysis of the filmed data, the following types of shifts away from the source text were noted:

- Addition: where the interpreter produced a target text with lexical items that were not present in the source text. Additions included explication of information, repetition of source text items and a “little bit of explaining” as described during the interviews.
- Fingerspelling: where the interpreter either conveyed subject-specific jargon for which no sign has yet been established or where the interpreter was not aware that a sign for a specific word exists.
- Collaboration: where the interpreter controls the flow of talk, gets the attention of the primary interlocutor or seeks clarification for herself.
- Omissions: some observed omissions were most likely conscious decisions but erroneous omissions were also observed, especially where novice interpreters were concerned.

## **Conclusion**

What are the roles that post-secondary educational signed language interpreters in South Africa fulfil? From the research above it can be concluded that there is only one role – the role of the educational interpreter. We can conclude that the teacher-interpreter paradox is not in fact an inconsistency but rather an expression of norm-directed behaviour in educational interpreting. The role of the interpreter in post-secondary education settings in South Africa is a complex and multi-faceted one. It is a

far cry from “just interpreting” and requires a great deal of preparation and conscious reflection in order to perform optimally. The “teacher role” in the educational interpreter’s performance is not to be misunderstood as the interpreter becoming a replacement for the lecturer. Rather, the education aspect of the interpreter’s role should be understood as one vital component of this multi-faceted position which guides the interpreter to consciously consider not only the words that are being said in the classroom, but also why they are being said and, ultimately, the aim of the education process.

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## **LEGAL INTERPRETING: A NORTH AMERICAN SURVEY**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents data collected on North American certified and non-certified, Deaf and non-deaf sign language interpreters relative to the provision of interpreting services in legal settings. The study examined strategies and approaches that interpreters incorporate into their work in legal settings, including working in teams consisting of Deaf and non-deaf interpreters, use of consecutive interpreting, preparation for interpreting in legal settings, and maintaining appropriate roles in the courtroom. Findings suggest that there are practices that support access to the judicial system, while there are others that create challenges for interpreters and consumers alike. A systemic training sequence that addresses many of the deficits in both knowledge and skill currently found in the field is necessary.

## **Introduction**

This paper reports some of the preliminary results of a survey that was conducted in North America, specifically in Canada and the United States of America, with interpreters working in legal settings. The impetus for the survey stemmed from emerging research about best practices in legal contexts, some of which has revealed there are practices in the field of sign language interpreting that may obstruct legal access for Deaf participants (National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers 2009). Interpreting in legal settings has been seen as an area that requires specialized skills and training (Gonzalez et al. 1991; Hale 2002, 2007; Lee 2009; Russell 2000, 2008). However, apart from this study, there has been little research about signed language interpreting in legal settings that would describe the demographics of interpreters working in legal settings or the training and practices for interpreters who work in legal settings. In an attempt to address this gap in the literature, we undertook a collaborative research project in North America to survey ASL-English interpreters<sup>9</sup>.

The intent of this study was to collect standard demographic information on certified and non-certified signed language interpreters relative to the provision of interpreting services in legal settings. We collected data on the practices that interpreters incorporate in their work in legal settings, with particular attention to working in teams with Deaf and non-deaf interpreters, using consecutive interpreting, preparing in advance for interpreting in legal assignments, and maintaining appropriate roles within the courtroom.

Interpreters also were asked to identify their past professional development and education related to interpreting in legal settings and their need for further professional development and education. Additionally, we explored the background of the interpreters who are providing interpreting services in legal settings (e.g., certifications held, years of experience in interpreting in

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<sup>9</sup> All references herein to interpreters includes Deaf and non-deaf interpreters. We specify when we discuss one or the other specifically.

legal contexts, amount of training in interpreting in legal contexts) in order to examine how their backgrounds influence the integration of recommended best practices into their work. We also collected data regarding the training of interpreters in preparation for the work, given the linguistic and cultural complexity of legal interpreting, and what training they would suggest as helpful in preparing them for legal discourse. This paper reports a small subsection of our findings, which were shared at the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) conference in South Africa on July 16, 2011.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Specialized Nature of Interpreting in Legal Contexts**

Studies in the field of interpretation and translation have offered insight into the specialized nature of interpreting in legal contexts in both spoken and signed language interpretation. Over the past two decades, several studies specifically addressed signed language interpreters and explored interpreting practices, interpreting performance, language transfer theories, and strategies that contribute to Deaf people's access to the legal system (Brennan 1999; Fournier 1997; Miller 2001; Miller & McCay 1994; Nardi 2005; Russell 2002; Stevens 2005; Tilbury 2005; Turner 1995; Turner & Brown 2001; Wilcox 2006). There are other studies which highlight the numerous struggles that Deaf people have in participating in the legal system based on effective interpreting services (Brennan & Brown 1997; Napier & Spencer 2008; Nardi 2005; Russell 2002; Russell & Hale 2008).

### **2.2 Interpreting Paradigms Leading to Effective Work**

Several authors have described interpreting as an act that requires linguistic and cultural mediation in order to produce effective interpretation (Gonzalez et al. 1991; Napier et al. 2006; Pöchhacker 2008; Roy 2000; Shlesinger 1991). However, applying this approach to providing meaning based interpretation

to interpreting work in legal settings may vary tremendously across regions and countries. Russell (2000, 2002, 2008) found that interpreters working in legal contexts were able to produce interpretations that were more appropriately linguistically and culturally framed when using consecutive interpreting strategies. In contrast, the simultaneous interpretation was less linguistically and culturally appropriate, heavily influenced with source language intrusions and dependent upon a verbatim or lexically based process. Hale (2002, 2004) found that interpreters vary tremendously in their strategies for handling courtroom discourse, and much of the variance in strategy choices depends on how interpreters view their role and understand the nature of linguistic and cultural mediation. These studies and others conducted over the past twenty years have invited interpreters to see their work in a sociolinguistic context where the interpreter is an active participant, co-constructing meaning in an interpreted interaction (Roy 1999; Russell 2002, 2005; Wadensjö 1998; Wilcox & Shaffer 2005) and to abandon the interpreter conduit model which can lead to misunderstanding and serious interpreting errors in legal settings (Hale 2004; Mikkelsen 2000, 2008; Morris 1993, 1995).

### **2.3 Qualifications to Practice**

In both the U.S. and Canada, interpreter organizations have been successful in promoting standards for interpreters working in legal settings. Both organizations stress the importance of holding certification prior to working in legal settings. However, despite the standards set forth by the two national professional bodies representing interpreters in the U.S. and Canada, namely the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) there are numerous jurisdictions that choose to employ interpreters who do not possess the qualifications recommended by the national bodies representing interpreters in North America.

Russell (2002) noted that legal professionals (e.g., judges, lawyers, court officials) often underestimate the level of language proficiency required in legal proceedings. Interpreters who lack the preparation, skills, and qualification to practice, yet provide interpreting services in legal settings, increase the risk of inaccuracy. Such inaccurate interpretation results in a lack of integrity of the judicial process (AVLIC 1996; Berk-Seligson 1990; Colin & Morris 1996). Vernon and Miller (2005:283) referred to this lack of integrity in their description of the risks that Deaf people experience in the American judicial system and suggested that the injustices “result primarily from a lack of understanding of Deaf people on the part of professionals working in the legal system”.

An emerging area of practice has interpreters in video relay services dealing with legal discourse. Mason (2009) conducted a study showing that video relay service interpreters are providing interpreting in courtroom settings when local interpreting services are not available. This growing model of service provision has not been subject to the same hiring practices that are commonly supported for interpreting in legal settings. Interpreters working in these contexts may possess little, if any, specific training for dealing with legal discourse, legal interactions, and legal consequences. Interpreters working in video relay services or in video remote interpreting may or may not hold even the general national certification from AVLIC or RID. The qualifications of interpreters hired to provide video interpreting services should take into consideration the ramifications of legal interpreting. In order to address standards and qualifications to practice in North America, it would be helpful to understand the demographics and backgrounds of the interpreters doing the work.



Russell (2002) discussed the importance of having skilled interpreters in the courtroom, due to the use of specialized language in legal settings. She noted that legal interpreters must understand legal jargon, complicated syntax, and features otherwise typically found only in written language. Berk-Seligson (1990) and Morrow (1994) posited that grammatical features, including passive constructions, unusual conditional phrases, numerous negations and overly compact phrases will further challenge interpreters in legal settings. These phrases may include a great deal of information in one sentence (Berk-Seligson 1990; Morrow 1994). There are additional nuances to consider from within a legal setting that have direct impact on the qualifications needed. Morris (2008) wrote about the dynamics of the courtroom and how apparent breaches of ethical conduct on the part of interpreters may be the result of interpreters responding to the complex use of English and multiple dynamics of the courtroom. This complex use includes long and rambling questions, overlapping speech, speed, and mixed instructions. It is evident from the literature surrounding court interpreting that the interpreters who have the appropriate qualifications and specialized training are better equipped and prepared to handle the complexities of language and the dynamics of the courtroom.

#### **2.4 Consequences of Errors**

Inadequacies of interpreters in legal settings obviously result in dire consequences for Deaf litigants and defendants. Brunson (2008) examined access to signed language interpreters in legal settings and how interpreters affected the experiences of twelve individuals in those settings. One of the notable findings of this study was the consistent theme of partial or failed communications occurring due to a lack of understanding on the part of the signed language interpreter and/or the lack of skills in this demanding setting (e.g., language, interpreting, legal discourse, stress management, intercultural communications). Several of the interviewees reported that the

interpreters had little knowledge of the person's case, and the individuals considered the interpreter ineffective because he or she "didn't know what I was talking about" (p. 88). Further, the study identified that some interpreters may act unethically and unprofessionally, with little consequence for their actions. Brunson recommended that Deaf people "begin [demanding] that courts, police, and other legal authorities videotape all proceedings in which there is a sign language interpreter. This will provide Deaf people and the courts with recourse when the interpretation is in question" (p. 91).

Kolb and Pöchhacker (2008) also examined the quality of interpretation in asylum hearings. Their findings pointed to lexical errors, semantic inaccuracies, and the omission of tag question forms that would have allowed the applicant to explain his or her actions, if they had known that the opportunity had been there.

## **2.5 Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpreting**

Simultaneous interpreting refers to the process

*"whereby an interpreter begins the interpretation while another person is still speaking or signing overlapping the original message or source with the interpretation simultaneously [whereas consecutive interpreting is the process] whereby an interpreter waits until a complete thought or group of thoughts has been spoken or signed, in order to understand the entire segment before beginning the interpretation, resulting in a very high standard of accuracy in the interpretation."* Russell (2002:52)

Numerous studies have examined differences between consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, and the findings provide support for interpreters to use consecutive interpreting in order to realize greater accuracy in legal interpreting (Alexieva 1991; Bruton 1985; Russell 2002; Seleskovitch &

Lederer 1995). It is generally agreed that effective interpreting depends greatly upon the interpreter's awareness of which mode is more appropriate and accurate for the specific discourse and interactive demands in any legal event. The simultaneous and consecutive modes have been adopted into state and federal statutes and the court rules of many judicial circuits (NAJIT 2006), and research supports the practice of consecutive interpreting as more effective for certain legal events (Russell 2002). It is widely accepted that in any legal setting where an individual with limited English proficiency has an active role, consecutive interpreting should be used (NAJIT 2006). Such active participation would be required, for example, when a Deaf person takes the stand during either examination or cross-examination, to give testimony.

Specific to ASL/English interpreting in legal contexts, Russell (2002) conducted mock trials with interpreters, exploring the use of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. The results of this study showed that when the interpreter chose to use consecutive interpreting for direct witness testimony and expert witness testimony, the work was more effective and had fewer interpreting errors. Consecutive interpreting provided *significantly greater accuracy* compared to simultaneous interpreting. In the two trials utilizing consecutive interpreting, accuracy rates were between 95–98%, whereas, simultaneous interpreting accuracy rates were between 83–87%. Chi Square testing was performed on each of the discourse events of direct witness testimony, cross-examination of the same witness and expert witness testimony, and the results demonstrated that the consecutive mode of interpretation was superior to the simultaneous form, when used for all three discourse events. Some of the common patterns of errors made by interpreters in this study included omission of content and reduced answers for the court; inaccurate use of tense (mixing present tense for past tense); inaccurate use of register (more casual in ASL than indicated in the English

source message); deceptive ASL to English messages (message was produced in fluent English, but presented inaccurate content); dysfunctional grammar when representing English to ASL messages; source language intrusions which resulted in form-based or transcoding work; and interpreter-created utterances which were not attributed to the interpreter and not interpreted for all participants. As well, there were patterns of “hedging” in spoken English when the answer was definitive in ASL, and times when the interpreters linked previous utterances to separate utterances which resulted in an answer of “no” when the predicted response was “yes”. However, despite evidence from both spoken and signed language interpreting, and the NCIEC document on best practices (2009) supporting the use of consecutive interpreting, the predominant practice of ASL/English interpreters has been to provide simultaneous interpreting.

## **2.6 Team Interpreting**

There has been a trend to employ teams of signed language interpreters in a number of contexts in order to best address the needs of the interpreting assignment (Russell 2008). The teams tend to consist of two non-deaf interpreters, though there is a trend towards teams of Deaf and non-deaf interpreters whereby there would be a team of 4 interpreters. The rationale utilized for employing a team is often based on the complexity of the work, the importance of providing the most accurate work by reducing the cognitive and mental fatigue that occurs in these assignments, and the length of the assignment (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators 2007). In many North American contexts, these factors have shaped hiring practices and interpreter education practices.

Shaw (2003) and Cokely (2003) explored the nature of interpreters working in teams. Shaw (2003) examined how interpreters who have been hired to monitor the work of other interpreters working in legal settings function as

part of a legal team. Her findings revealed that the linguistic, cultural and analysis skills of the monitoring interpreters must be of an exceptional quality in order to be able to discern what constitutes an interpreting error and how to bring that to the attention of the attorneys. Her work also revealed the ways in which monitoring interpreters' interactions with teams of interpreters can affect the quality of the overall work in a proceeding. When major errors in the interpretation were brought to the attention of the appropriate personnel, there were numerous benefits that ranged from saving time in costly postponements and rescheduling to allowing proceedings to continue after the corrections were made in a way that was efficient and supported the judicial process.

The role of a team interpreter as a support in the interpreting process is critical to the success of the team. Cokely (2003) reported significant discrepancies between the behaviours interpreters believed that they would use to ask for support and the actual behaviours that they used to request support. His study showed interpreters in preliminary meetings mentioned seven behaviours that they would use to ask for support, but during the actual interpretation there were 16 different behaviours that they used to request support.

Finally, Russell (2008) reported on the preparation conversations held between team members prior to interpreting trials, and on interview data obtained from lawyers, Deaf consumers, and judges about their perceptions of the interpreter's work. In this study, lawyers reported that they anticipated that interpreters would ask them important questions about the content of the upcoming trial; however, the interpreters generally used the preparation conversation to review logistical matters of positioning or length of interpreter turns, versus preparing for the context and particulars of the trial at hand. This study revealed how the reality of working in teams is often in

sharp contrast to what interpreters purport to do especially in relation to monitoring the accuracy of the work or making decisions that support interpreting effectiveness. Based on studies that address interpreter paradigms, qualifications to practice, modes of interpreting, best practice approaches, and team interpreting, this study addressed the provision of teams for interpreting in legal settings, team roles, and ways in which teams provide support that leads to effective interpretation.

### **2.7 Best Practices**

In addition to the published available literature, The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) brought together a national team of experts to define and document best practices within the field of legal interpreting. This work occurred between 2005 and 2010. This team became the NCIEC Legal Interpreting Workgroup and developed a document, *Best practices: American Sign Language and English interpretation within legal settings*, that offers “an explanation and rationale for a series of practices that are deemed by expert practitioners to result in a desired outcome with fewer problems and unforeseen complications” (NCIEC 2009: 9).

While all of the studies described briefly in this section represent some of the research conducted with spoken and signed language interpreters, what is missing is a demographic picture of those who provide sign language interpretation in legal settings in North America and a descriptive approach to understanding the practices and perceptions of interpreters. This study is an attempt to address that gap in the literature, while gleaning information from the participants on a range of issues that may be critical in defining effective practices and training opportunities.

### **3. Intent of Study**

The purpose of this study was to collect basic demographic and relevant information on ASL/English interpreters relative to the provision of interpreting services in legal settings in North America. In addition, data were collected on the practices interpreters incorporate in their work in legal settings, the professional development they have had, and what they believe they need in the future related to interpreting in legal settings.

The research team, located at three educational institutions, was granted ethical approval for the study by each of their institutions. The researchers prepared a survey, which was then reviewed by a small group of interpreters who specialized in interpreting in legal settings and who are also experienced researchers. Feedback from these reviewers was incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

### **4. Participants and data collection**

Potential participants were identified from the professional organizations of interpreters in the U.S.A. (RID) and Canada (AVLIC). In the U.S., the entire certified membership of RID was invited to participate (the list was purchased from RID) along with non-certified Deaf interpreters throughout the country. In Canada, the entire AVLIC membership was invited, both certified and non-certified, to participate along with non-ALVIC-member Deaf interpreters in that country. All the participants were ASL/English interpreters in the U.S. and Canada. The study targeted current certified ASL/English and selected non-certified interpreters in both countries. The inclusion of non-certified interpreters in the U.S. allowed for the inclusion of Deaf interpreters. The decision to include non-certified interpreters from Canada was due to the fact that there are more working interpreters in Canada who are not certified than those who hold national credentials. Some

of the participants were currently providing interpreting services in legal settings while some of the participants were not.

The names and email addresses of all of the potential participants were entered into the online survey tool, *Vovici*. During May – October 2009, a total of 6,657 participants were invited to participate in the study via an electronic invitation sent by the survey system. Following a four-week period of initial responses, a follow-up email was sent reminding individuals who had not yet completed the survey about the request for their participation, stressing the value of their input. One additional follow-up contact was made two weeks after the first follow-up, six weeks following the initial contact. This last reminder was only sent to those who had not yet completed the survey. After six weeks, the survey was discontinued. In the end, 1,995 individuals chose to complete the survey. This represents a 30% response rate, which is a robust rate for survey research (Creswell 2002). All participation was voluntary and no payment was offered to those who completed the survey

## **5. Instrument**

The survey consisted of 64 questions that included closed, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The survey was divided into 8 sections including General Information, Experience Interpreting in Legal Settings, Training in Interpreting in Legal Settings, Practices Regarding Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpreting, Preparation Strategies and Approaches, Deaf and Hearing Teams, and Protocol. A concluding section requested additional information, final thoughts, and recommendations from the participants. The full survey is available upon request by email to the lead author.



## **6. Data Analysis Approaches**

Once survey data were gathered, a statistical analysis was performed using SPSS and the statistical processes built into *Vovici*. Qualitative data were analyzed using the computerized software program Nvivo 8. This allowed for the content to be analyzed for themes that emerged in the data and for the participants' perspectives to be retained in their original words.

## **7. Results**

### **7.1 Participant Demographics**

The majority of participants were female (85%), with only 15% of the research participants being male. With regard to the age of the participants, 58% fell into the range of 30-49 years old, thus making this the largest age category. The second largest age group was those participants who were between 50 and 64 years old, with 29% of the research participants falling into this group. The two smallest groups were those participants between the ages of 18 and 29 (11%) and those older than 65 years of age (2%). Deaf participants made up 3% of the sample, hard-of-hearing participants were 2%, and the largest group was non-deaf (95%).

In Canada, the majority of responses came from the provinces of Ontario (4%), British Columbia (2.5%), and Alberta (2.1%). In the U.S., the three states in which the most research participants reside were California (9.4%), Florida (7%), and New York (6.8%).

### **7.2 Years of Interpreting Experience, and Academic Degrees**

One-third of the research participants (33.3%) had between 11 and 20 years of interpreting experience. Nearly a quarter (24%) had more than 26 years of interpreting experience, and 4.9% of the research participants had more than 35 years of experience. In addition, the data indicated that 43% of the research participants had a four-year degree as their highest academic

degree, and 27.6% had a graduate degree as their highest degree, with 24.1% holding a Master's degree and 3.5% holding a doctorate degree.

### **7.3 Legal Interpreting Experience and Training**

The results showed that 45.7% of the research participants were currently providing interpreting services in legal settings. Of those who indicated that they currently provide legal interpreting services, 20.4% had only been doing so for 1-3 years, and over half (55.6%) had only been doing so for 10 years or less.

Some 54.3% of the participants did not provide interpreting in legal settings. These individuals were asked to indicate the reasons why they did not choose to interpret in legal contexts. The most frequent response was lack of training, followed by a lack of knowledge of legal discourse and concern for the consequences of potential errors.

In terms of training, 13.3% of the participants had taken one or more credit-earning courses in interpreting in legal settings or legal studies and 86.7% had taken no courses for credit. Participants were asked if they would be interested in receiving training for interpreting in the legal setting if it were offered for college or university credit (e.g., a "certificate" program in *Interpreting in Legal Settings*), and 72.3% indicated they would participate in such training. Participants were asked to identify topics about which they needed additional training. Topics most frequently identified included legal vocabulary and terminology, courtroom procedures and protocol, how to interpret the reading of legal rights before being arrested and formally charged, criminal law, legal proceedings, working with Deaf/non-deaf teams, family law, and witness interpreting. Each of these areas is critical to the effectiveness of an interpreter's work, and the results support that interpreters recognize the need for further preparation in these areas.

#### 7.4 Interpreting Practices in Legal Settings

Participants were invited to respond to a series of questions that examined the extent to which they incorporate certain best practices into their interpreting work. The results showed that interpreters use consecutive interpreting in several key events with varying frequencies (see Table 1). For example, during the direct testimony of a Deaf witness, interpreters reported that 15.6 % of the time they *always* use consecutive interpreting, and during the cross examination of a Deaf witness, they *always* use consecutive interpreting 15.5% of the time. This is an interesting finding in that standard, recommended practice for direct testimony of a witness with limited English proficiency is that the testimony be interpreted in consecutive mode (Court Interpreters Act 1978; Gonzalez et al. 1991; NAJIT 2006). Some interpreters reported that they *rarely* or *never* provided consecutive interpreting for direct witness testimony (combined total of 8.1%).

Table 1

*Frequency of consecutive interpreting use with a Deaf witness (as percentage of total response)*

Event	Always	Usually	Occasionally
Direct testimony by a Deaf witness	15.6	21.9	11.2
Cross examination of a Deaf witness	15.5	20.5	9.6
Testimony of a Deaf expert witness	11.8	12.7	7.7
Direct testimony by a hearing witness	3.3	8.6	17.0
Cross examination of a hearing witness	3.4	8.5	15.8
Testimony of a hearing expert witness	3.1	8.0	15.5

In addition to the reports about courtroom interpreting, participants indicated the frequency with which they use consecutive interpreting in legal

events outside of the courtroom which included forensic assessments, attorney-client meetings, domestic violence complaints, child protection investigations, immigration/naturalization events, law enforcement interactions, notary public interactions, examinations for discovery/depositions and aboriginal justice systems interactions. Table 2 shows that the highest report of *always* using consecutive interpreting occurred for child protection investigations (9%) and law enforcement interactions (9%), followed by examinations for discovery/depositions (8%), and attorney-client meetings (8%). Of particular interest is the number of settings in which discourse often is framed around questions and responses (which lend themselves to consecutive interpreting), yet the participants in this study chose not to use this method.

Table 2

*Use of Consecutive Interpreting in Legal Settings (as percentage of total response)*

<b>Event</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>
Working in Deaf/non-Deaf Team	17.7	18.1	10.4
One-to-One interviews	9.6	25.9	24.7
Forensic Assessment	6.9	10.4	8.6
Attorney Client Meetings	7.7	24.3	27.1
Domestic Violence Complaints	6.2	22.8	18.1
Child Protection Investigations	9.1	21.7	17.9
Notary Public	1.8	4.9	8.3
Immigration & Naturalization	5.7	11.4	9.2
Examinations for Discovery & Depositions	8.7	18.7	18.5
Law Enforcement	9.1	25.1	19.0
Corrections Meetings	3.0	12.3	17.9
Video Relay Services	2.6	8.3	21.4
Video Remote Interpreting	0.9	3.0	4.4
Aboriginal Justice Systems	1.4	5.0	3.7
Evidentiary Hearings	2.7	10.9	15.9
Opening Statements	2.0	3.9	13.2
Closing Statements	2.0	3.6	13.8
Jury Instructions	1.9	5.5	11.8
Court Ordered Education	2.5	7.3	21.4
Parole / Probation Meetings	4.2	15.8	20.8

After participants reported frequency of consecutive interpreting, they identified the factors that influence their decision to provide consecutive or simultaneous interpreting. The three most often cited influential factors were complexity/density of the information (46%), type of discourse lending itself to consecutive interpretation (44%), and potential consequences of errors (40%). Other factors were interpreting in a Deaf-non-deaf team (24%), one's personal confidence in using consecutive interpreting (21%), interpreting for children or youth (20%), government requirements to use consecutive interpreting for direct witness statements given in languages other than English (10%), lack of experience in the use of consecutive interpreting (6%), and lack of training in the use of consecutive interpreting (5%). These factors that influence interpreters' decisions to provide consecutive or simultaneous interpreting may be a partial explanation for the reason consecutive interpreting is not used by some interpreters and has implications for the training needed if interpreters are to enact best practices.

### **7.5 Preparation for Working in Legal Settings**

Participants who indicated that they interpret in legal settings were provided a list of preparation strategies and asked to indicate which ones they use in their interpreting practice. Fifty-one percent (51%) of all research participants indicated that they receive preparation information from the referring agency. Forty-one percent (41%) indicated that they conduct preparation meetings with other interpreters on the interpreting team, 38% conduct preparation meetings with experienced interpreters who are not involved in this interpreted interaction, and 38% conduct preparation meetings with interpreters who have previously worked the assignment (i.e., with the same client). Participants also reported conducting preparation meetings with the attorneys (32%) and the Deaf individual(s) prior to the event (32%), and some include the training they have taken as a form of preparation in their work (34%). Participants reported that they conduct

preparation meetings with the involved non-deaf person prior to the event (24%); however, those who meet with attorneys did not specify whether the attorneys are non-deaf or Deaf, nor did they specify what role the non-deaf person played in the event, (i.e., an attorney or a legal assistant, police officer). Only 27% of the participants said that they prepared by reading case files; however, not all legal events are case related or have files. Participants reported using online dictionary resources 27% of the time. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the participants reported that they observe legal situations as a form of preparation, and 23% reported observing interpreters in legal settings as a form of preparation.

Participants were asked to identify benefits of conducting preparation for their legal interpreting assignments. They reported that preparation helped them increase their confidence and reduce their nervousness prior to assignments. They also reported that preparation allowed them to produce interpretations that are processed at the contextual level, versus only a lexical or phrasal level. They reported that preparation enhanced their understanding of the event, allowing them to interpret with a greater degree of accuracy. Other themes that emerged from this qualitative data included message delivery with appropriate affect, increased prediction skills, improved receptive understanding and expressive production of messages, and better vocabulary selection. The following comments sum up many of the themes:

*“The kind of preparation I would like to have is often not available, but I do the best I can with what people provide me.”*

*“It’s imperative! Without the preparation I would not have the confidence to do the work.”*

*“I am as prepared as I can possibly be. Because I have as much information as I can get, my interpretation is smoother and more accurate.”*

Participants reported that lack of preparation has a negative impact upon the interpreting work, creating a sense of nervousness and adding to the stress of working in legal environments. They indicated that they feel more intimidated, uncomfortable, and unqualified to do the interpreting without appropriate preparation. They also noted a direct relationship between the lack of preparation and increased interpreting errors that could potentially mar a legal proceeding. When the interpreters lacked the scope and context of the case, they reported there was an increased need for clarification and interruption of the proceedings. Additional themes addressed the quality of the interpretation and the overall fluidity of both the interpreting product and the process and the very specific ways in which the Deaf consumer is affected. For example, participants reported that when the interpreter is less than fully prepared, Deaf consumers may become nervous, agitated, frustrated, and confused. All of those emotions can lead to misunderstandings and can have legal implications for the Deaf consumer.

### **7.6 Composition of Interpreting Teams**

The data revealed that interpreters feel it is beneficial to have input regarding the composition of the team and selecting the interpreters with whom they will work. This includes input about how the team approaches the work and how the complementary skill sets of the interpreters can meet the needs of the assignment. Table 3 shows the frequency with which participants had a vote in choosing their team interpreters on legal assignments. Only 9.4% said they *always* have a choice, while 30.2% said they usually do, which indicates only 40% of the participants are or consider themselves to be in a position to do so on a regular basis.



Table 3

*Ability to Choose the Interpreter Team*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Always	9.4%
Usually	30.2%
Occasionally	22.6%
Rarely	16.2%
Never	10.4%

These data raise the question of whether the participants in this study realize the benefits of selecting their teammates (e.g., similar approaches to the work, qualifications that meet the needs of the assignment, complementary skill sets) and whether they see the team composition as a working condition that is negotiable when being hired for an interpreting assignment in legal settings.

### **7.8 Deaf and non-deaf teams**

Given the increased use of Certified Deaf Interpreters in many North American interpreting settings, participants were asked to identify factors that influence the decision to work in a Deaf/non-deaf team. They identified the top four factors as language issues, the availability of a Deaf interpreter, the complexity of the case, and the Deaf consumer's linguistic needs. When asked to identify the individual factors of the Deaf consumer that influence the decision to work in a Deaf/non-deaf team, participants cited age of the consumer and cultural complexity as the two top reasons. Participants also cited the following factors as they relate to the Deaf consumer, signing style, level of familiarity with legal processes, level of education, cognitive ability,

and mental health issues. Table 4 illustrates the frequency that the participants work in Deaf/non-deaf teams in legal settings.

Table 4

*Frequency of Interpreters Working in Deaf/Hearing Teams*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Always	0.5%
Usually	3.4%
Occasionally	15.1%
Rarely	21.2%
Never	26.8%

Given that 48% of all participants never or rarely work with a Deaf interpreter, it is important to explore *who* makes the decision that there is a need for a Deaf/non-deaf team. Participants indicated that more than 53% of the time, it is either the non-deaf interpreter or the contracting agency that makes the determination most frequently that a Deaf/non-deaf team is, or is not, needed (see Table 5). This is an area that warrants further discussion in our field.

Table 5

*Decision Maker on Deaf Interpreter*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Individual non-deaf interpreter	29.5%
Contracted agency	23.7%
Deaf consumer	14.8%
Court Personnel	13%
Attorney	10.2%
Monitor Interpreter	7.1%
Law enforcement personnel	3.2%
Expert Witness	2.1%

The following quote exemplifies the challenges that face non-deaf interpreters wishing to work with Deaf interpreters on a regular basis. The comments also point to the need for education about the need and efficacy of working with Deaf interpreters.

*“I refuse to do the job if the client is minimal language [sic], or foreign language, without a deaf team. However, there are times I feel a youth or certain deaf person would definitely benefit from a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), but since I live in a remote area and they come from 3 hours away, I have reserved the request for the most dire cases. (My request was declined by a court before for a youth). I feel it is going to take time for the courts in these rural areas to be more open to CDIs. Availability of CDIs in the rural setting is an issue.”*

### **7.9 Recording interpretations**

The data revealed that 65% of interpreters responding to the survey have never been video recorded in the course of their work in legal settings. The data also revealed that interpreters who are always or usually recorded in specific contexts such as police interviews, examinations for discovery/depositions, courtroom proceedings, child protection matters, and forensic assessments, are by far in the minority. For example, 53% of research participants reported they are never recorded for police interviews, with another 10% indicating that they are rarely recorded. Recording in courtroom proceedings showed similar results with 68% of participants indicating they are never recorded, and 15% are rarely recorded. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of interpreters reported they are never recorded while working in forensic assessments and 65% reported they are never recorded while working in child protection matters. Finally, some 62% of research participants say they are never recorded while working examinations for discovery or depositions. When asked how often the interpreter initiates the recording, only 11.6% of participants indicated that they always initiate the recording. Another 12% report that they usually initiate recording. Twelve percent (12%) report they occasionally initiate this process, while 10% rarely do, and 54% indicate that they never initiate the procedure.

### **Video Relay/Video Remote interpreting**

Participants were asked if, in the course of their work in Video Relay Interpreting Services (VRS) or in Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) centers, they handled calls that were of a legal nature. Forty-nine percent (49%) indicated that they do not work in VRS or VRI environments. Of the remaining participants who do work in such settings, 46% indicated that they take calls of a legal nature, and 5% indicated they do not take such calls. When asked if they feel prepared and/or comfortable taking calls of a legal nature, 61.7% responded that they do not feel prepared and/or comfortable.

Additionally, 32.1% indicated they pass legal calls on to another interpreter if they feel unprepared or uncomfortable and another 5.4% report they do not pass calls on to another interpreter. What is not known is the level of training that VRS interpreters have for identifying calls of a legal nature or that have a legal consequence, or whether or not they have any training for interpreting legal matters. Given the pressure to use the simultaneous interpreting mode in an environment where the interpreter has no specific assignment preparation, this should be an area of concern for our field.

## **8. Discussion and Recommendations**

The results of this study have a number of implications for practitioners as well as educational institutions and professional organizations. One of the key implications from the review of data is that interpreting in legal settings is not appropriate for all interpreters. As a specialization within the field, interpreting in legal contexts requires not only specialized, focused training but also unique vocabulary and skill sets. Access to training and education in these areas is another key factor to consider. In terms of practitioner implications, there are a number of themes that address the consequences of preparation for the work (or lack of preparation), the need for consecutive interpreting training, and how best to work in Deaf and non-deaf teams. As well, the issue of initiating video recording of legal events is one that deserves attention. Finally, the issue of working in video relay settings and handling calls of a legal nature is one of grave concern that warrants attention from all stakeholders involved.

There are also recommendations for interpreter educators to consider based on the findings of this study. It is clear that specialized training is needed for those who are interpreting, or intend to interpret, in legal settings.

Interpreter educators, including those who primarily provide professional development training, need to develop and deliver effective trainings that are

drawn from best practices. The participants in this study indicated that training is needed in topics such as the use of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting in legal settings, message analysis and correction, effective case preparation, legal discourse and interaction, and awareness of how the system works and the protocols it uses. An additional need in the field is for trained, credentialed interpreters working in legal settings to serve as mentors for new interpreters in an effort to model best practices and engage in on-going dialogue about the effective provision of legal interpreting services. There is also a need for training in identifying the need for working in Deaf-non-deaf teams.

Likewise, the data from this study have implications for educational institutions and professional interpreter associations. A critical component of effective change in the specialty field of interpreting in legal settings will be the delivery of training and education that is grounded in current and best practices and is accessible to interpreters throughout North America. Though not discussed in this article, data from this study strongly suggest that weekend trainings and blended (online and face-to-face) training opportunities are most desired by interpreters. Institutions should consider alternative delivery models that will reach across North America and not just to a local area. Additional models of certificate programs, both graduate and undergraduate, in interpreting in legal contexts should be developed and implemented to meet the need of further education in the specialization. As noted earlier, 72% of the participants indicated that they would participate in such a program, if it were available.

There are several recommendations that emerge from this study for practitioners. The most urgent of these recommendations are the following:

Interpreters need to concentrate on gaining linguistic fluency and cultural adeptness required for interpreting in legal contexts and work that has legal consequences. This will require that interpreters appropriately assess their own qualifications and skills to deal with the nature of the work, including the linguistic demands, protocol knowledge, and the processes of effective teamwork. Linguistic fluency and cultural adeptness should be a prerequisite skill set to develop early in the process of specializing.

Interpreters providing services in legal settings should have a clear understanding of the work that needs to be done and have the necessary knowledge and experience to facilitate the provision of best practices. The incorporation of a Deaf interpreter or the determination of when to use consecutive interpreting are two examples of key aspects of the work within legal settings that are not used as much as they should be.

Serious consideration should be given to the development of a systematic training sequence that would address many of the deficits in both knowledge and skill currently found in the field. We suggest that such a structured developmental sequence would include orientation to the legal system; legal discourse; types of law; self-assessment and analysis of interpretations; discourse, interaction, and text analysis-based translation, sight translation, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting training; preparation in general and specific to legal settings; team processes, specifically D/n-D teams; protocol – video recording, qualifying, conflict of interest checks, preparation strategies; case preparation; message analysis and error correction. Although at least one such systematic sequence is available in the United States at the University of Northern Colorado, more training programs are needed. This area is one where we envision international collaboration to create a model curriculum of interpretation in legal settings that would serve as a common starting point for developing legal interpreter

training. Though legal systems and interpreter education differ around the globe, the need for effective and accurate interpretation and translation in legal settings does not. In an area where consequences for people's lives are grave, it would behoove us to work in collaboration across countries to improve the services we provide in this area. This research and the best practices discussed in North America can be applied and steps be taken to standardize our teaching and approaches globally.

Personnel in the legal system need significant education about the practices presented in this study. Collaboration is needed between interpreters, Deaf clients, agencies and the legal entities that hire interpreters to facilitate a greater recognition of the need for minimum qualifications for legal interpreters to include both specialized training and credentials. Few requirements exist that require interpreters who work in legal settings to have specific training in legal work.

## **9. Conclusions**

This article has described some of the major findings of this North American survey of interpreters in legal settings. The aim of the study was to offer demographic data about interpreters working in legal settings in North America and to explore the use of effective practices in this specialized area. Quantitative and qualitative processes were used to analyze the data. What also stands out in the data is a need for advanced training of interpreters in legal settings, and that more interpreters may choose to provide interpretation in such settings if they had the foundational skills and knowledge. The data show that there is the need for discussion about the composition of teams working in legal settings, and the strategies teams use to manage legal discourse. While the findings are drawn from North American interpreters there are several aspects that are salient for



interpreters throughout other countries. The data will continue to be analyzed and reported in future publications.

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## **INTERPRETING IN INTERNATIONAL SIGN: DECISIONS OF DEAF<sup>10</sup> AND NON-DEAF INTERPRETERS**

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### **Abstract**

The professional use of Deaf Interpreters (DIs) is increasing in several countries and across several contexts. However, there have been few studies that have explored the nature of the work when it involves a Deaf and non-deaf interpreting team. The current study examined the work of two teams of Deaf/non-deaf interpreters providing service in a conference setting. The participants were videotaped while providing service in order to examine the linguistic decisions made by non-deaf interpreters acting as a natural signed language feed, the linguistic decisions made by Deaf interpreters working into International Sign (IS), as well as the meta-communication strategies the team used while constructing the interpretation. The data suggest that interpreting teams that are more familiar with each other rely on different strategies when chunking information, asking for feeds, and for making accommodations. There also appear to be significant differences in the work

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<sup>10</sup> The participants in this study are either Deaf members of the Deaf community (Deaf) or hearing interpreters who are not native members of the Deaf community (non-Deaf).

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when the two interpreters share a common natural signed language. All of the data analyzed thus far offer insight into the nature of the relationship and may provide guidance to those arranging interpreting services for international events.

Keywords: Deaf interpreting, team interpreting, Deaf-hearing team, linguistic decisions, chunking, feeds, accommodations, interpreter educators.

### **Introduction**

This paper reports some of the preliminary findings of a collaborative study of the work of Deaf and non-Deaf interpreters.<sup>12</sup> The professional use of Deaf Interpreters (DIs) is a relatively new development (Boudreault 2005) and as such there have been few studies about the nature of interpreting by Deaf interpreters. However, what is clear is that interpreter organisations such as the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf are recognizing the importance of training and standards, and have developed processes to certify Deaf interpreters. In Canada, Deaf interpreters have provided interpretation between two signed languages, American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue de Signes Quebécoise (LSQ). Additionally, we see increased work opportunities for Deaf interpreters providing platform interpretation at international conferences, or providing interpretation of televised news broadcasts, as in the case of the United Kingdom (see Stone 2009). As well, in the US, Canada and the UK many of the interpreters working with Deaf-blind consumers have been Deaf.

Boudreault (2005) addresses the numerous roles that Deaf interpreters perform, and his chapter emphasizes the need for increased research about Deaf interpreting. While there is research on language contact between users

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<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Ricky Ferracuti for coding the data during his research internship.



of different signed languages, and attempts to examine the structure and lexicon of International Sign (Allsop et al. 1994; Suppalla & Webb 1995; Rosenstock 2008) and International Sign interpreting (McKee & Napier 2002), to date there have been no studies which have explored the use of Deaf/non-Deaf teams and the approaches used by those teams in order to provide interpreting services in IS (see Ressler 1999 for an analysis of ASL/ASL non-Deaf/Deaf teams in 'lab' conditions with no audience present).

### **Objective of Study**

The objective of the current study is to provide insight into the phenomena of how Deaf/non-Deaf teams of interpreters work together to provide effective IS interpreting services. This exploratory study will highlight the assumptions, preparation approaches, decisions and strategies made by team members working at an international conference. Based on these findings, the analysis tools and interview protocols will be refined and then applied to a larger sample of teams of interpreters. Several research questions guided the study, and for the purposes of this paper, we have drawn data that stemmed from the following questions:

*What are the linguistic strategies used by the feed interpreter when processing spoken English to British Sign Language (BSL) or American Sign Language (ASL) for the platform interpreter working from BSL or ASL to IS?*

*What are the linguistic strategies used by the feed interpreter when processing spoken English to IS for the platform interpreter working from IS to IS?*

*Across teams, are there similar strategies used by both feed interpreters?*

## **Methodology**

This qualitative study used a purposive sample technique (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:78) to select two teams of international sign interpreters, each comprised of a Deaf interpreter and a non-Deaf interpreter. Interpreters were videotaped in order to explore the interpretation from the stance of discourse-based and pragmatic-based decisions, interpreter presence and influence on the service user experience.

Interpreters were recruited from a pool of interpreters working at an international event in Canada during July 2010. All of the interpreters recruited from that event have at least 10 years of experience of providing IS interpreting for international events. A total of 4 IS interpreters were selected.

## **The Participants**

For this paper we specifically focus on the two pairs of Deaf Interpreter (DI) with non-Deaf co-interpreter (CI) working as a team from spoken English into IS in an international setting. These interpreters had different levels of experience working as interpreters and working within teams of this kind. The interpreters also had different language backgrounds: one of the pairs worked with BSL as the feed language and the other worked with ASL.

The international conference setting had English as the language of spoken communication with speech to text reporting (STTR) provided, alongside interpreting into the national sign language and IS. In addition to the team of interpreters working with IS (the object of this research), there was also a non-professional French/English interpreter and a team of two sign language interpreters working from spoken English into the national sign language (non-Deaf interpreters – nDI). Among the conference participants there were non-English speakers.

The sign language interpreters worked in a simultaneous mode and the non-professional French/English interpreter worked consecutively via microphone from the conference floor (as opposed to working via an interpreter booth). This gave further time for the teams to ensure clarity of production and is worth bearing in mind when considering our findings.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Data Collection Approach**

We video recorded the interpreting performance of both the DI and CI using a zi8 Kodak HD pocket video camera because of its good audio quality. For this analysis we examined 25 minutes 32 seconds of work from team 1 (DI1 and CI1), and 23 minutes 15 seconds of work from team 2 (DI2 and CI2).<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, we conducted semi-structured interviews with each interpreting team after the interpreting event.

We imported the video footage into ELAN<sup>15</sup>, free open source software commonly used for sign language and gesture analysis. ELAN allows the user to create complex time-aligned annotations of several audio and video streams. We imported the video of the DIs and the CIs, ensuring the footage was adjusted to start at the same time and then annotated the video data using time-aligned tiers to make note of the strategies the interpreters used within this assignment.

### **Findings**

In the following sections we will detail the findings from our data. This will include strategies used by CIs and then those used by DIs. It is worth noting

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<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Bo Hårdell for a clarifying question at the WASLI conference 2011.

<sup>14</sup> We also recorded the work of the nDI working between English and ASL although this article will not contain an analysis or comparison of their work with the DI/CI teams.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/>.

that although many of the features described are also found in Ressler (1999), our findings categorize these features into their functions within the teams and with an audience present, placing intra-team communication within an ecologically valid context.

### **CI strategies**

Thus far in our analysis we have identified three different areas where strategies emerged:

Chunking indicators

Accommodations

Affirmations

These strategies for working as *feed interpreters* with DIs appear to ensure that the DI has full access to the information and to ensure the team is functioning well. All of these were interpreter contributions that were not attributable to the source language (SL), i.e. interpreter generated (Metzger 1999; Wadensjö 1998; Berg-Selgison 1990). We will now give further explanations of these strategies and specific examples of their use within this setting.

### **Chunking indicators**

We defined chunking indicators as elements in the interpretation that functioned to clearly identify a completed piece of information or *chunk* as decided by the CI. These were labeled holds, pauses or drops. The holds were extensions of a final hold of a sign and the holding of a sign, an index or the initial letter of a fingerspelling:



Figure 1 Extensions of a final hold

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There were two types of pauses and these were manual pause markers with one hand on the other hand or hands up pauses (fig. 2):

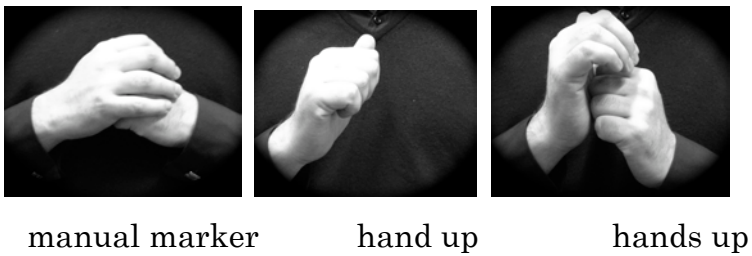


Figure 2 Pauses

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There were hand drops at the end of the sentence (fig. 3):



Figure 3 Sequence showing dropping hands

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We then noted the number of chunk indicators of each CI (table 1):

Table 1 CI chunk indicators

	CI1 (25'32")	CI2 (23'15")
Extended: sign	21	4
Extended: index	7	
Extended: fingerspelling	2	
Pause: marker	28	3
Pause: hands up	36	7
Drops	17	72
Total	111	86

Here we see that CI1 used proportionally more chunk indicators implying each chunk was a shorter unit of text for DI1 to work with and conversely CI2 used proportionally fewer chunks implying that each chunk was a longer unit of text for DI2 to work with. Team 2 (DI2 and CI2) have worked together more frequently than team 1 (DI1 and CI1); this was team 1's first time working in this manner and might account for the difference.

### Accommodations

These elements indicate that information the CI is delivering was in process (not complete), (i.e. the opposite of the chunk indicators), and they were used to ensure that the DI was aware of the continuing nature of the information while allowing the CI to receive a complete chunk of information. Again we saw holds (i.e. extensions of the final hold position of a sign) being used; we also saw repetitions of manual signs.

Table 2 CI accommodations

	CI1 (25'32")	CI2 (23'15")
Extended: sign	52	63
Repetitions	14	3
Total	66	67

If we compare the chunk indicators and the accommodations, we see that CI1 and CI2 have different styles when working as feeders to DIs. CI1 uses

extended signs both as chunk indicators and as an accommodation, whereas CI2 predominantly uses drops as a chunk indicator and extended signs as an accommodation. As there appears to be no difference in the production of extended signs for these two different functions, the use of different manual indicators for two different aspects of intra-team communication may also be an indication of experience within team 2.

### Affirmations

These elements in the interpretation were used to support the DI and affirm the IS rendering of information while also indicating the continuation of the SL. As such this could be considered a subtype of accommodation, although we treat them separately. In the main these manifested as head nods: rapid, slow, or slow to rapid; although on occasion there was a short interaction (e.g. CI1 asking DI1, “Am I ok for you?”). The affirmation head nods predominantly co-occurred with other elements.

Table 3 CI affirmations

Head nods	Co-occur with	CI1 (25'32")	CI2 (23'15")
Rapid	Alone	4	
	Signs	4	
	Fingerspelling	2	
	Manual Pause	9	
	<i>Total</i>	19	0
Slow	Signs	1	13
	Manual Pause	14	
	Drops	7	11
	<i>Total</i>	22	24
Slow to rapid		1	
	<i>Total</i>	42	24

The rapid head nods only manifest in CI1's interpretation and specifically to indicate that further information is coming; CI1 uses slow nods for affirmation of DI1's work. CI2 specifically manifests slow nods during

manual signs to indicate further information is coming and slow nods during drops for affirmation. We will now detail the strategies of the DIs.

### DI Strategies

We have identified two strategies from the DIs so far in our data analysis. These are the chunking of the IS and specific feed requests from the CIs. As with the information delivery and management strategies of the CIs, these are interpreter generated.

### Chunk indicators

These elements manifested in similar ways to the CIs in that we saw holds, pauses and drops. They function as clause, sentence or discourse boundary markers for the audience. In table 4 we compare the chunk indicators of the DIs and the CIs.

Table 4 DI and CI chunk indicators

	DI1	CI1	DI2	CI2
Extended: sign	27	21	10	4
Extended: index	7	7		
Extended: fingerspelling		2		
Pause: marker	72	28	163	3
Pause: hands up	31	36	3	7
Drops	18	17		72
Total	155	111	176	86

The most common strategy employed by the DIs to indicate a clausal or discourse boundary is a manual pause marker, which has been called handclasp (Nicodemus 2009), although there is a clear preference with DI2 for using this solely. Similarly DI2 overtly chunks far more frequently than DI1, especially considering we have almost two minutes more data of team 1 than team 2.



We also see that the DIs have more audience orientated chunk indicators than the CIs provide in the feed interpretation, (155 vs 111; 176 vs 86). We see that the DIs are therefore able to chunk the target language (TL) differently from the feed interpretation; although the teams work well together the CIs do not exert influence on the DIs in terms of when and where to chunk information.

### Feed requests

These elements occur when the DI explicitly requests the CI to continue interpreting or to repeat an interpretation. Although interpreter-generated these are transparent elements to the Deaf audience and inform them of the interpreting process.

Table 5 DI Feed requests

	DI1	DI2
Extended: sign + gaze	16	17
Pause: marker + gaze	7	56
Nods		68
Total	23	141

If we now look at both the chunk indicators (C Ind) and the feed requests (FR) that co-occur with them, we gain a greater understanding of the different approaches DI1 and DI2 take when undertaking IS interpreting.

Table 6 DI strategies

	DI1		DI2	
	C Ind	FR	C Ind	FR
Extended	34	16	10	17
Pause: marker	103	7	166	56
Nods				68
Drops	18			
Total	155	23	176	141

We can see that DI1 requests more feeds when indicating a chunk by an extended hold of a sign. DI2 not only requests significantly more feeds, but these either occur during a marked pause or by nodding. For both DIs gaze is important as a request for the CIs to continue interpreting.

### **Discussion**

We will now explore the relevance of the findings and some of the factors that may help to explain the difference in how the strategies manifest in the different teams. We will then discuss the implications for interpreters and for interpreter educators.

### **Team dynamics**

The two teams are different in a number of ways. Although team 1 has worked on the same interpreting team before, CI1 has never worked as a feed interpreter for DI1; they are less familiar working with each other in this way and have different first sign languages. CI1's first sign language (ASL) is the language used when teams 1 and 2 talk within the larger team and is the feed language CI1 uses with DI1. Team 2 has worked together in a number of situations before in this way, including working with another spoken language via an interpreter, they have the same first sign language, which is used as the feed language by CI2 with DI2.

When looking at the different types of indicators (chunks, accommodations, affirmations, etc.) used by team 1 there is a much more even spread of types when compared with team 2. Table 7 shows the number of types of elements used within each team with team 1 using over double the number of types within each strategy compared to team 2.

Table 7 Strategy types (10% and above)

	Types	
CI strategy	Team 1	Team 2
C Ind	4	1
Acc	2	1
Affirm	2	1
<i>Total</i>	8	3
DI strategy	Team 1	Team 2
C Ind	4	1
FR	1	2
<i>Total</i>	5	3
<b>Total</b>	13	6

We would suggest that this difference is due to team 1 becoming accustomed to each other with CI1 employing a variety of types to ensure that DI1 is comfortable with the feed; this is confirmed in the interview data. This could also result in DI1 being influenced by CI1 when producing IS.

An additional complication may stem from the feed language of CI1 being ASL, which is both the majority sign language in Canada and also a 'dominant' world sign language (so dominant that ASL has been described as a killer language - see Skutnabb-Kangas 2008 for a full description of high status killer languages, such as English). ASL's status in the 'Deaf-world' appears to be different from that of other sign languages and, although not the same, is akin to English in the mainstream (see Hiddinga and Crasborn 2011 for further discussion). Although DI1 is fluent in ASL with this being the feed language it may well be that ASL discourse norms are influencing the number of different types of indicators produced (i.e. its lingua franca status ultimately influences the team and the intra-team communication). Alternatively, as DI1 is an experienced and well respected IS interpreter well practiced in producing a TL tailored to the audience, this may have led to a greater variety of indicators to make the IS text as clear as possible. This may have been a minor factor, but one worth bearing in mind.

Team two was more consistent using a single indicator type for a single strategy. DI2 uses manual pause markers to chunk for the audience; CI2 uses drops to chunk for DI2. CI2 uses extended signs for accommodations and slow nods indicate affirmations. DI2 uses gaze and nods for feed requests. Rather than negotiating strategies, as team 1 appear to be doing, team 2 appear to judge the information flow required according to DI2's interpreting process. Much of the team interaction is subtle but it does appear that teams getting to know each other may use a greater number of types and that this may depend upon the language combination of the team.

### **Implications for Interpreters and Interpreter Educators**

The first implication for interpreters working in such teams is to examine the conversations they have with each other prior to interpreting. For example, this data set show that the interpreting team that had less experience working with each other appear to be working out strategies while they are interpreting. In contrast, the team that had a common signed language and had experience with each other, appear to be operating with much greater consistency of signaling and intra-communication that resulted in a target language construction that appeared to meet the linguistic needs of the audience. Again, the data reveal the team were making decisions about chunking the information based on the DI's cognitive preferences for managing the interpreting process. The length of time and the nature of the chunked information appeared to work very well within the team so that the interpretation was delivered in a manner that reflected simultaneous interpreting. The DI2 uses pauses to chunk the information while the CI2 use pauses and drops to signify chunks.

When we interviewed the teams after gathering the interpretation sample, we asked them to identify how they had prepared for the work. Both teams

reported reading the conference material. Team 2 reported that because they have worked together on numerous occasions that they have worked out the signals that work well for them, and by continuing to use the same signals, they have refined them in a way that they are subtle and purposefully not obvious to others. Team 1 also reported that they held a conversation about how to support each other, however they did not hold an explicit conversation about chunking, affirmations or accommodations.

Team 1 used many more noticeable signals to communicate to each other, and these were also visible to others watching. As well, they were using several strategies within the interaction to determine chunk size, which may be indicative that they were trying to determine what would work best for them to manage the information. One of the strategies of note was the rapid nods used by CI1, used to indicate the continuation of the SL and suggesting a negotiation of information management whilst being highly visible to the audience. This head nod did not however seem to have consistent shared meaning within the interpreting team, which may motivate the question being asked.

Ultimately, if interpreters are assigned to such teams, it would be helpful to have an explicit conversation about feeding preferences, process management strategies and preferences of each interpreter, signals to use when requesting feeds, affirmations and approaches to error management (see Russell 2008).

The second implication we draw relates to the need for interpreter coordinators to examine the decisions they make about team composition. The impact on the audience viewing the interpretation of team 1 was that the work was “busy” and less relaxed as a team when contrasted with team 2. This may have led the audience to make incorrect assumptions about the competence of the team and the fidelity of their interpretation from the

different indicator types within this setting, for example, when the CI1 was using head nods for affirmations. This could lead to an unsatisfactory conference experience. We suggest that the DI and CI need to share a common sign language and to gain team experience with each other that contributes to the development of trust. The data reveal that the team that had more experience working together were much more able to produce work that was effective with the CI providing feeds that enabled the DI to manage the cognitive process and language production well.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations stem from the data

- a. DI and CI teams need to have explicit conversations with each other, before working together, about how the feeding will happen and the nature of the feedback that is needed between the partners in order to produce effective work.
- b. When at all possible, teams need to be able to meet the audience members who will be accessing the interpreting services in order to determine how best to target the interpretation.
- c. Conference planners need to bring teams together that have experience working together as a team, prior to the conference event.
- d. When developing professional development opportunities about working in DI-CI interpreting teams, curriculum should address the ways in which interpreters can prepare together, and the specific strategies the team will use to manage the interpreting process including the strategies that emerged in this study, i.e. chunking information, affirmations and accommodating.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this paper we have described the initial results of our pilot study of DI and CI interpreting teams providing service into International Sign. We highlighted three strategies that emerged from the data and contrasted the work of two teams. This study is an exploratory study that has yielded interesting data and allowed us to pilot the technical aspects of data collection, data analysis and interview protocols. It will be useful to now extend the study to a much broader group of participants working in similar conference venues.

This case study approach has produced preliminary findings based on monologic discourse, however we do not know whether these findings would hold true for other dialogic settings. These data do however suggest that useful guidelines could be developed for DI and CI teams working in settings broader than the provision of International Sign, such as working into a second natural sign language and potentially in community settings and that the above recommendations may well be applicable. Further research of successful DI and CI teams where the process, product (via videoing of output) and thoughts regarding the process (via interview) are analysed along with the audience experience could be very fruitful.

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## **JOINT CO-OPERATION: THE ONLY WAY FORWARD**

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### **Abstract**

In Europe there are approximately 750,000 Deaf sign language users and 5,500 sign language interpreters, who are respectively represented by the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli). In the last decade several important changes took place in relation to the recognition of the needs of Deaf people. The 2007 United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons With Disabilities was ratified by many European countries, and the Council of Europe launched the Disabilities Action Plan 2006-2015. In addition, more European countries have recognized sign language as an official national language, and the number of interpreters and educational programmes has increased.

These new developments have had a positive impact on the accessibility of Deaf sign language users in European society, but there is still a need for further improvement. In order to expand the participation of Deaf people in European society, the number and quality of sign language interpreters needs to be increased. The EUD and efsli came to an official agreement of collaboration in May 2010. With this collaboration the EUD and efsli will cooperate on increasing awareness of the right to the use of a sign language interpreters, how to use interpreting services, how to set up independent interpreter organisations, and the necessity of government support in establishing interpreting services and raising the quality of interpreters through (continuing) education. Only with qualified and educated

interpreters will it be possible for Deaf sign language users to access society in employment, education, and social events.

This paper is from our joint EUD and efsli presentation explaining the steps taken to come to the joint agreement, description of the statistics on Deaf sign language users and interpreters across Europe, and discussion of future actions to achieve the set goals. This serves as a best practice example of co-operation between Deaf and interpreter associations in achieving greater awareness and quality services for Deaf sign language users and interpreters.

### **Introduction**

In the last few years the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) intensified their co-operation through several actions, including developing a working agreement. This cooperation has led to more insights and understanding for both organisations. The EUD and efsli envision this co-operation not only at a European level, but also at a national or regional level between interpreter and Deaf organisations and other stakeholders. With their own cooperation as a best practice model, EUD and efsli hope to spark similar developments across other countries.

There are no reliable statistics in each Member State for the population of Deaf sign language (SL) users. An estimate for the European Union is 750,000 Deaf sign language users. On average, Deaf sign language users make up about 0.1% of the whole population in any given country. This does not include people learning a sign language as a second language or children of Deaf parents or other family members. In Finland there are for example an estimated 5,000 sign language users, in France 100,000, and in Romania 20,000-30,000.

### **European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters in Europe**

In Europe there are approximately 5,000 to 7,500 sign language interpreters (Wheatley & Pabsch 2010; de Wit 2008). In each European country there are varying numbers of sign language interpreters. The number of interpreters can be related to a variety of factors such as the existence of one or more interpreter training programmes, an interpreter association, payment for interpreting services and the acceptance of the use of sign language in educational systems or in legislative measures. However, it must be noted that the legal or constitutional recognition of a national sign language does not lead automatically to a greater number of interpreters or interpreting services (de Wit 2008).

Although the total number of sign language interpreters in Europe increased during the last decade, there are still insufficient numbers of interpreters. This is especially true in the eastern and southern parts of Europe.

The European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) was established at the end of 1992; the announcement of this organisation was formally published in the Belgian state paper in January 1993. As an umbrella association, efsli has several aims and goals, such as sharing experience and information, improving the standards of sign language interpreters, providing advice and support and representing the interests of sign language interpreters in Europe. National associations in countries that are members of the Council of Europe can apply for efsli membership. Currently efsli has 26 full members, national associations of sign language interpreters. In addition, efsli has 16 associate members and nearly 300 individual members. Membership is an essential part of efsli; it provides direct support to many interpreters across Europe and it is at the same time a major source of income for efsli.

The efsli board consists of five members who have been nominated by their national associations and who have been elected by the efsli full membership. The efsli board is supported by two part time staff, an administrative support person and a project coordinator.

### **European Union of the Deaf**

The European Union of the Deaf (EUD) is the only supranational organisation in Europe concerned solely with advocating the rights of Deaf people. Founded in 1985 as the "European Community Regional Secretariat" (ECRS) it was renamed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 1994 and formally recognised as an association under Belgian law in 1996 (EUD 2006).

Based in Brussels, Belgium, it is a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) comprised of National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). Being one of the few NGOs to represent associations in all 27 Member States of the EU, it aims to “establish and maintain EU level dialogue with the European Union institutions and officials in consultation and cooperation with its member NADs” (EUD 2001:2). EUD has established strong links with other European NGOs and is a member of the European Disability Forum (EDF). Furthermore, EUD has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE) and is part of the ‘Committee of Experts on Participation of People with Disabilities in Political Life and Public Life’ of the Integration of People with Disabilities Division. In order to successfully tackle issues of global importance, it is a co-operating partner of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD).

EUD’s main objectives are threefold:

- (1) Recognition of the Right to Use an Indigenous Sign Language
- (2) Empowerment through Communication and Information
- (3) Equality in Education and Employment

It is EUD's aim to recognise the national sign languages across Europe as a prerequisite to ensuring other (human) rights.

### **Situation of sign languages in the EU**

Sign languages vary greatly between countries and ethnic groups (Krausneker 2009). Although some countries might have the same spoken language, this does not necessarily mean the same sign language is used. As an example, the French-Belgian community uses French-Belgian Sign Language and Deaf people in France use French Sign Language. Overall, there are currently thirty native sign languages in the EU: 26 for each Member State excluding Luxembourg, which uses a dialect of German Sign Language (DGS), and an additional sign language for Belgium (Flemish/French-Belgian), Finland (Finnish/Finland-Swedish), Estonia (Estonian/Russian) and Spain (Spanish/Catalan). Many countries already have provisions in place to facilitate equal access for Deaf people. Most notably, Finland, Austria and Portugal have recognised their sign languages at the constitutional level. Other countries have mentions of sign language in disability legislation, language laws or educational laws. Some countries, such as Hungary, have separate sign language acts, protecting the rights of Deaf people and recognising the national sign language.

### **Status of sign language interpreters in Europe**

The profession of sign language interpreters in Europe has no official status (de Wit 2008). Any person who claims to be an interpreter can carry out interpreting services. In some countries there are registration bodies with specific criteria in order to become and stay registered. These registration bodies aim to uphold a certain standard of quality of the registered interpreters. In Europe there are several countries that have a registry for sign language interpreters. Again, the criteria vary by country, where one country requires all interpreters to be registered in order to receive payment

for their services from the government, and in other countries the client is free to choose either a registered or non-registered interpreter.

The sign language interpreters working in the European parliament also had to undergo an initial struggle to be professionally recognised. This issue now has been resolved, although none of the national sign languages in Europe are recognized as a formal working language in the European parliament. Thus, the status of the spoken and signed languages in the European parliament is not equal. The first law in the European Union which gives rights to have an interpreter was adopted in October 2010 by the EU Council of Ministers<sup>16</sup>. This directive provides the right to an interpreter in criminal proceedings. This is the only law at a European level that ensures the right to an interpreter.

### **Sign Language Legislation in Europe**

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the European Union in January 2011 was a landmark achievement for the Deaf community and is one of the main tools in recognising sign language and linguistic human rights of Deaf people. Furthermore, the new EU Disability Action Plan 2010-2020 is an important means in fighting for equality at all levels. It is hoped that the new European Accessibility Act, which is part of the EU 2020 strategy, will be useful in improving accessibility in every aspect of private and public life.

The Brussels Declaration, a non-legislative document that was adopted in November 2010 at the landmark conference 'Implementation of Sign Language Legislation' at the European Parliament together with MEP Ádám Kósa and representatives from all European Deaf Associations, postulates

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/116913.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/116913.pdf)  
(accessed 9.11. 2010)

the rights of Deaf people, which are needed to fully participate as equal citizens. It contains demands regarding education, sign language interpreters and other areas such as employment. It states that the right to sign language is a human right and as such should be respected.

### **Agreement**

For many years the European Union of the Deaf and the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) did not actively work in close co-operation. Representatives from the associations met occasionally, but no regular meetings or joint strategies were planned or carried out. This slowly changed and the associations' boards began drafting a working agreement. This was finalized in May 2010 when the presidents of EUD and efsli signed the agreement at the EUD general assembly in Madrid. The agreement provides the basis for further intensified cooperation between the two associations, such as regular meetings, joint policy development and cooperation in European projects.

Current European legislation has not had the desired effect for the improvement of Deaf people's language rights. Although there have been a number of reports and recommendations, a legal instrument has not (yet) been implemented at the European level. Joint collaboration between EUD and efsli has never been as important as it is now to influence future policies concerning sign languages at the EU level.

### **Training sign language interpreters**

The professional training of sign language interpreters is a prerequisite for the development of the profession. In the past sign language interpreters were often children of Deaf parents who were fluent in sign language and were taught interpreting during a weekend course. Currently there are over 50 educational programs for sign language interpreters across Europe,



varying from a two-year to a five-year education. This variety brought efsli to organise a working seminar in November 2011, bringing together educators from across Europe to take a first step in designing a best practices curriculum for the training of sign language interpreters.

Following the formal education of sign language interpreters it is essential that working interpreters enrol in continuing education programs. Sign language interpreting is a relatively young profession that is continuously undergoing changes. In addition, there are few interpreters who have been able to specialise in certain domains such as the medical or legal interpreting setting. It is important that interpreters are offered these forms of continuing education as well.

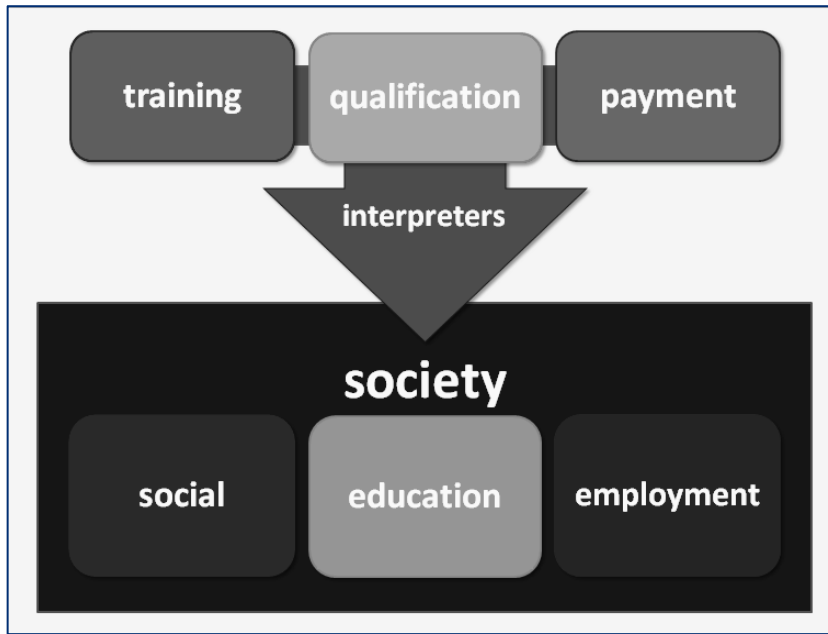
The stage is now set for creating awareness for the Deaf community in working with sign language interpreters, as this gap will have to be addressed.

### **Establishment of interpreter associations**

As an umbrella organisation of sign language interpreters in Europe, efsli offers support to those countries where no national interpreter association has been established yet. In the past it was usually the national Deaf association that established an interpreter association or had a section within their association for interpreters. efsli tries to encourage the establishment of independent interpreter organisations, which is part of the growth and development a profession must undertake. In addition, when the interpreter association is an independent body this brings new opportunities forward such as the professional demands on interpreting services that Deaf associations can request from the interpreter associations. Unfortunately the survival of a newly established association may not always be guaranteed due to the absence of regular income for interpreters in a country. As a result

the interpreters might turn to other sources of income, leave the profession and the association would fold as a result.

Figure 1. Joint co-operation between Deaf & interpreter associations



### **Conclusion**

The EUD and efsli believe that the only way to achieve successful co-operation between Deaf and interpreter associations is not to focus on points of disagreement but to find the issues of agreement. This co-operation is essential in order to achieve common aims for professional interpreting services, higher education and training for interpreters and reasonable payment proposals. Training, qualification and payment will then lead to greater accessibility and participation for Deaf people in social, education and employment arenas and give the members of the European Deaf communities the opportunity to influence relevant policies, such as sign language legislation, which affect them directly.

Shared interests and common agreement between all stakeholders can make us a powerful group. Responsible authorities stimulate cooperation and mutual understanding in order to improve the lives of all people in society. As Deaf and interpreter associations we must therefore acknowledge that we might have different views on issues, but that we mutually respect these views. If Deaf and interpreter associations do find common ground for agreements, then they can move forward and invest their time and energy in constructive development and jointly lobby for better conditions at their national and regional governments.

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