WASLI 6th International Conference 2023

Shaping our World for a Better Future

Jeju Island, Korea

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Proceedings of the 6th WASLI Conference 2023

Message from WASLI President

Welcome, readers, to the proceedings of our sixth WASLI conference, our first in Asia. Our sincere thanks go to Drs Debra Russell and Lydia Koh as the Program Co-Chairs who brought us contributions at the conference from 23 countries, giving us a wider global perspective on our interpreting practice. Thanks also to Dr Anthony Chong and Lucy Lim as Conference Co-Convenors for organising the event with attendees from 72 countries at our first hybrid conference.

We are grateful to the contributors to the conference and to those who have provided us with manuscripts for these proceedings. We have stories that have never been told to a wider global audience by Hearing and Deaf authors who are interpreters, interpreter trainers, service providers and service users. Finally, thanks to our editor Dr Zubaidah Ibrahim-Bell who has co-ordinated the collection and editing of manuscripts. Well done all.

We hope that the breadth and depth of the knowledge and reflections shared here will help you on your professional journey.

In solidarity

Dr Christopher Stone

WASLI President

Message from Program Co-Chairs

This conference proceedings showcases some of the papers that were presented at the 6th WASLI conference, held at Jeju Island, Korea in July 2023. Each paper offers the reader current perspectives and experiences from several authors from a range of countries, building on our evidence-based research in the field of interpreting studies.

Lydia and I were fortunate to be part of the organizing committee who would be responsible to select the presentations for the conference. Our committee included Dr Zubaidah Ibrahim-Bell, Dr Sam Lutalo-Kiingi, Dr. Yim Binh Sze, and our Conference Co-Convenors, Dr Anthony Chong, and Lucy Lim.

Our call for presenters was answered by many and all abstracts were blindly reviewed by a review team that included people from all the WASLI regions. Thank you to all our reviewers for their thoughtful deliberation and marking per the rubric in selecting contributions from 23 countries. Sincere appreciation to Dr. Zubaidah Ibrahim-Bell who has worked with the authors to ensure the manuscripts are of the highest quality, to offer this collection of papers. Thank you to all the 350 participants in-person and 190 online, for their commitment to shaping our world for a better future!

With gratitude,

Debra Russell
Lydia Koh
Programme Committee Co-Chairs

From the Editor

Welcome to the Proceedings of the 6th WASLI Conference 2023, with the theme: Shaping our World for a Better Future. Welcome too to the beautiful Korean island of Jeju and to the first WASLI Conference ever held in Asia.

Ensuring a high-quality conference requires papers and presentations that have passed a rigorous review process. For this conference, a large number of abstracts (68) were submitted in August last year. These abstracts were subjected to a blind review by WASLI reviewers from several countries. We then made our selection and invitations were sent out to submit papers for the conference. We accepted 19 papers and gave presenters three months for the final submission.

The authors came from a total of 20 countries right across the globe – from Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Colombia, Ukraine, South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, Hong Kong, India, to Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia – on a wide range of topics, from the professional development of sign language interpreters, to the building of an app, creating glossaries and terminologies, to legal interpreting, conducting action research, and providing accounts of personal observations and experiences extending from interpreter traumas and guilt, interpreters working in a war-torn country and a rather intriguing account of being a male interpreter in what is frequently thought of as a female profession.

I would like to express my appreciation to the key note presenters, and authors without whose excellent contributions and hard work, preparing these proceedings would not have been possible. The significance of the research presented in this conference represents a step further towards creating a better future for all through sign language interpreting. It has also been a learning experience for me reading about the writers' activities, journeys and personal experiences while undertaking their job as interpreters.

Lastly, my deepest gratitude to WASLI 2023 Program Committee Co-Chairs for entrusting me with the preparation of the proceedings.

Best regards,

Zubaidah Ibrahim Bell

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Shaping a Resilient Future; Which Way Africa? Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreters and Deaf Community in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This presentation discusses the perspectives, gains and opportunities from sign language interpreters and Deaf National Associations in Africa in respect to what ought to be done to build a resilient future for the Deaf and interpreter communities. It describes the various efforts and milestones being made by the Deaf and interpreting communities in sharpening up the National Deaf Associations to deliver evidence-based legislative advocacy, enhancing recognition and awareness of sign languages and sign language interpreting as a profession and the nexus between Sign Language Interpreters Associations and National Associations of the Deaf. The presentation also highlights the state of sign language interpreting services in various sectors, the opportunities in sign language interpretation training, registration and accreditation. The presentation concludes by pointing out what remains to be done to build a better future for deaf and interpreter communities in the African context.

Keywords: sign language interpreters, African context, gaps, opportunities,

Background

The estimated total population of Africa as at 2022 is slightly over 1.4 billion which is equivalent to 16.72% of the total world population. It is considered the second largest and second most populous continent, consisting of 54 countries recognized by the United Nations. The number of people with disabilities let alone deaf people is yet to be established in Africa. With regard to languages spoken, there are about 1,250-3,000 native languages, and it is unclear if Sign language is considered among these reported languages. These languages are largely indigenous and not necessarily used as the official and/or national languages of communication hence further classification into Francophone with 24 countries, Anglophone with 24 countries while six countries are Portuguese speaking. There are also four Arabic speaking countries,

mainly in the northern part of the continent. The development of these languages was largely influenced during the scramble for Africa and has remained at the centre of language development policy and application of most African countries.

Although sign language has evolved significantly to its own capacity in most African nations, it is worth noting that there is very limited systematic research and literature being conducted to determine its place in African languages. It would be interesting to acknowledge how sign languages have been nurtured by various national and international players to date. The history and use of sign languages by indigenous deaf people needs to be documented for better understanding and its continuous growth. Despite the absence of this knowledge, there is emerging and growing recognition of sign languages in the national legislations as found in South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. No available data has been advanced to support such growth of sign language recognition in some African countries. Anecdotal evidence points to the increased awareness campaigns as a result of the signing and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities since 2006, increased global commitments such as Millennium Development Goals of 2000-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals. There is an urgent need to ensure that the place of sign language is defined and popularized in African countries. This can be done through numerous research initiatives, teaching programs, conduct of public awareness and provision of sign language interpretation services. This will result in increased enjoyment of basic and fundamental rights of deaf people in Africa.

Method

Using convenience sampling method, a simple questionnaire was developed and disseminated to available contacts of sign language interpreters and Sign Language interpreting associations of 26 countries. A total of 15 countries out of 26 responded to the questionnaire. They include; Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ghana, Burundi, Congo, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Liberia, Eswatini, Malawi, Namibia and Egypt. Data was qualitatively analysed and a follow up video-chat was done with a few countries to provide more information where clarification was required. Countries that responded to the questionnaire have English as one of the official languages save for Egypt which is an Arabic speaking country. None of the Francophone countries responded except Gabon whose response was the need to have the questionnaire administered in French. Moreover, almost all the non-English speaking nations were not reached as they do not participate in interactions involving interpreters from the region mainly due to language barrier. It should be noted that despite sending the questionnaire to multiple

respondents in various countries, all returned only one response except Ghana which had two responses. Most respondents referred the questionnaire to the president of the interpreter association for responses.

The simple questionnaire sought to establish the following:

- Whether the individual countries have an interpreters' association, its objectives and activities it is engaged in;
- The number of sign language interpreters in the country;
- How accessible sign language interpretation is to the Deaf;
- The challenges encountered by both the Deaf and interpreter communities;
- Whether sign language is recognized in the constitution or if there are any laws/policies that support accessibility for deaf people;
- Whether there are any advocacy efforts or programs between the national deaf and interpreters' associations;
- What Government efforts are in place to support accessibility;
- Which sectors deaf people are assured of accessibility;
- Remuneration of sign language interpreters;
- If there is an existing sign language interpretation program;
- What should be done to build a better future for deaf and interpreter communities in Africa.

Question to Ponder

Despite many other challenges individual African nations encounter in relation to accessibility for people who are Deaf, the lack of a shared language among the African nations is a challenge and seemingly a hindrance to engaging amongst the nations. This calls for reflection on the questions below:

(a) Is the diversity of language among African nations an obstacle to participate and exchange knowledge, ideas and experiences?

(b) What initiatives can be implemented to ensure countries are brought on board in discussions related to Deaf communities and the SL interpreting profession.

(c) What effective ways could be used to reach each country?

(d) Is one Africa regional representative in the WASLI board enough to represent the entire continent?

Statistic on Deaf People and Sign Language Interpreters

Evidently there are substantial gaps in data for deaf people and sign language interpreters in African Nations. The data provided below were sourced from the National Deaf Associations and Sign Language Interpreting Associations in line with the national census and available organizations database. As received from 15 countries, most countries are in agreement that it is extremely difficult to differentiate between qualified and non-qualified interpreters. There is no system that classifies interpreters according to their training and experience. A study by Adade et al (2022) on Factors Influencing Sign Language Interpretation Service in Ghana established that none of the interpreters had received relevant formal qualification in sign language interpretation. Seemingly this is the case for the majority of the countries in the region.

Although comprehensive data collection is required, the data below paints a rough picture of the situation on the ground in most countries.

Country	**Deaf Population (National Census)**	**Number of sign language interpreters**
Kenya	190,000 (2022)	300
Ghana	470,737 (2021)	200
Uganda	1,083,914 (UBOS 2014)	700
Rwanda	33, 471 (NHPC 2012)	40
Cameroon	Not available	150
Malawi	Not available	15
Namibia	Not available	150

While the above data may not represent the whole African countries, it indicates a considerable gap between the number of deaf people and sign language interpreters. It confirms the urgent need to train and support more sign language interpreters to offer sign language interpretation services.

Nexus between SLIs Association and National Deaf Associations

Large proportion of the Africa countries that responded to our questionnaire confirm the presence of the National Deaf Association and few sign language interpreting Associations. However, Countries like Egypt, Botswana, Lesotho, Rwanda and Malawi do not have sign language interpreter associations.

The functions of these deaf Association include advocacy for the fundamental and inalienable human rights and freedoms of deaf people in different sectors, promote the development and use of national sign language, conduct public education and awareness on the rights of deaf people and participate in the development of national and local policies affecting the lives of deaf people. On the other hand, the role of sign language interpreter associations in the Deaf Community is to provide quality sign language interpretation services and support professional development for its members. The interpreting association is also anticipated to support the advocacy initiatives of the National Deaf Associations. It is not clear if the various associations are achieving these functions at all as most are week and have no evidence of vibrant activities. Adade et al in the study of Ghana also highlighted weak interpreter association as a factor affecting sign language interpretation services.

There seems to be joint advocacy efforts in pursuit of the recognition of national sign language and efforts to influence existing and new legislation that affect the lives of deaf people. It is evident for instance that countries like Kenya, South Africa and Uganda have been able to conduct joint advocacy initiatives which have led to legal protection of the national sign languages. Deaf associations are involved in activities to ensure that the rights and freedoms of deaf people are respected and protected. Some efforts have been initiated around deaf specific legislation such as the South African Sign Language Billed passed in Parliament in May 2023, and the Kenyan Sign language Bill currently underway. All these are efforts aiming to increase enjoyment of fundamental rights and access to sign language interpretation service. National Deaf Association and SLI associations are encouraged to put efforts together in order to expand sign language interpretation services in different sectors in respective countries.

Legal Status of Sign Language in Select Countries

It is paramount to appreciate that most African countries require collective support to ensure that their national sign language is recognized in the national constitution and other written laws. Below are some of the few countries whose national sign language has been recognized or not.

S/N	Countries	Legal recognition of sign language
1	Kenya	Yes (2010)
2	South Africa	Yes, (2023)
3	Uganda	Yes, (2009)
4	Nigeria	Yes
5	Zimbabwe	Yes
6	Rwanda	No
7	Botswana	No
8	Ghana	No
9	Lesotho	No
10	Tanzania	No
11	Liberia	No
12	Eswatini	No
13	Namibia	No
14	Congo	No
15	Egypt	No
16	Burundi	No

Clearly there is need for regional level campaigns to push for the recognition of sign language by the governments of different Africa countries.

Significance of Legal Recognition of Sign Languages

The significance of sign language recognition in the national constitution cannot be underestimated. The recognition not only paves the way for the provision of sign language interpretation services but also is likely to resort to benefits such as compelling governments to fulfil her obligations as provided in the constitution and other subsidiary laws: With the recognition of sign language in the constitution the government will be held accountable in line with these obligations through national disability movement and Deaf Associations. It will form the basis for advocacy strategy and tools to monitor what measures and steps the government has taken in the realization of these rights. In addition, there will be a mechanism for legal redress in the court of the law.

The second advantage of the legal recognition is that more power and voice will be given to the Deaf people and sign language interpreters to advance deaf human rights: Legal protection of the national sign languages in the constitution provides critical force to deaf people and interpreters to negotiate for deaf specific programs and their budgetary support. Deaf people and interpreters in Africa have not been able to engage with the government in absence of any national legislation to support their advocacy efforts.

Thirdly, it is common understanding that the recognition of national language will result in an increased access to basic services through sign language interpretation: With a clear framework for promotion and use of sign language, there will be more access to sign language interpretation services for deaf people in any nation. South Africa, Kenya and Uganda have witnessed increased accessibility for the Deaf.

Increase accountability, budget and monitoring framework are also likely benefits. It cannot be underrated that recognition of national sign language will enhance accountability, budget support and a robust monitoring and evaluation systems for conducting both national and international reporting of deaf rights including the international human rights instruments.

Critical Gaps in Sign Language Interpretation in Africa

Despite lack of legislation supporting accessibility for Deaf people in various African nations there exists alternative legislative frameworks. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and various other protocols such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights to which several counties have already ratified are powerful for advocacy. According to Aldersey & Turnbull (2011), even though many nations have signed and ratified the UNCRPD, implementation remains a big

issue as reflected in their analysis of the disability policy of the United Republic of Tanzania. Further findings on a study of the implementation of the UNCPRD in Zambia by Zimba (2016) and Fernandez etal, 2017 echo lack of implementation and also highlights that though persons with Disabilities are aware about its existence and know it is good, they do not fully understand its local implications. This seems to be the case for several other countries as evidenced from these findings.

Despite crucial progresses witnessed in Sign language interpretation in Africa, some significant gaps in training remain. Save for Uganda and South Africa that have a well-structured program in a university, there are no reliable interpreter training programs in most of the countries. The study on Ghana by Adade (2022) found that none of the interpreters had received formal qualification as interpreters though those involved in the study were in the process of obtaining a Diploma in Ghanaian Sign Language Interpretation. Furthermore, most countries have sign language classes offered either at the Deaf Association or by private individuals with no standard curriculum and little or no component of interpretation in it. This makes it difficult to determine the qualification of the interpreters practicing and their level of skill. Mostly, practicing interpreters learn and grow from experience. Sandrelli (2015) observed that the right of deaf people is likely to be violated when there is lack of qualified interpreters, service providers, training curricula and institutions as well as the absence of a code of practice to encourage professionalization of the interpreting fields.

As it is currently, sign language interpretation is yet to be recognized as a profession hence not incorporated in the public service structure. In most cases, those employed in the public sector will be given a different job title as the job title "sign language interpreter" is non-existent in the public service structure. Consequently, the interpreters are assigned other duties while interpreting remains secondary.

There is limited appreciation by deaf people of the role of sign language interpreters in their communication requirement. Seemingly interpreters are viewed by the Deaf as part of the community and should not be remunerated for their service. Deaf people have very limited job opportunities, and some have the notion that interpreters get opportunities at the expense of the Deaf.

The lack of recognition of sign languages and interpretation as a profession has had a direct impact on opportunities for sign language interpretation. Most countries' responses showed limited sign language interpretation services in various sectors save for non-governmental organizations engaging and paying interpreters.

Power dynamics between the Deaf and interpreters seem to hinder progress of both deaf and interpreter associations. Moreover, in forums where participation of deaf people is required, some interpreters seem to patronize deaf people, taking charge to speak for the Deaf without giving them room for self-determination, resorting in conflicts.

Statistics of deaf people in Africa though scanty, compared with those of sign language interpreters point to limited access to interpretation services for the Deaf as the SLIs are few. Interpreters are also mostly found in urban areas meaning that the deaf persons living far and wide have no access to sign language interpretation services.

The important role of deaf interpreters facilitating communication is yet to be appreciated in the region as it is in western countries. In most cases interpreters are hired by hearing people who view it as a double expense due to the need for a feeder interpreter. This alienates the deaf interpreter from getting job opportunities and perhaps this may explain why it is not yet a popular career path among the deaf people.

Although a good number of countries who responded have Interpreter associations, those associations are weak and do not seem to achieve most of the objectives. There seems to be a lack of unity among the members and commitment to work for a common cause.

Some Opportunities for Sign Language Interpretation Growth

This presentation acknowledges that there are opportunities for growth of the sign language interpreting profession in Africa.

Firstly, establishment of Interpreter training programs will provide an opportunity for professional training of sign language interpreters. Deaf Associations have a key role in ensuring that these institutions meet the required standards. Upon establishing interpreter programs, universities and colleges will need to develop well defined test types such as written tests and practical exams and ensure well defined test administration processes. A certification mechanism is necessary to ensure only qualified interpreters provide services. Training will likely enhance quality control especially if the Deaf and interpreter associations work with various stakeholders to ensure only trained and certified interpreters are engaged for work.

Secondly efforts to pursue recognition of sign language through various legal framework should be enhanced. Ultimately, this will increase accessibility for deaf people in various sectors. There is a need for deliberate efforts to empower nations without interpreter associations to establish one and support those that already have to strengthen the associations.

Thirdly, though the needs of various countries may seem similar, all countries are at varied levels of progress thus the need for country specific interventions to build their capacity and meet their unique needs.

Fourthly, there is a need to create synergy between nations to learn from other jurisdictions and apply the learnt lessons in their unique situations. The various countries need to take the initiative of reaching out to western countries that are already ahead in the field of sign language interpretation, pick lessons and apply them in their various situations. The need for many nations yet to have a legal framework for national sign languages to continue with advocacy for recognition of their national sign language in the constitution cannot be underscored.

Status of Sign Language Interpretation in Different Sectors

This presentation appreciates remarkable milestones being made by a number of countries in providing sign language interpretation service to deaf people in various sectors.

Information, Communication, Television and Media Interpreting: Save for Cameroon, Congo and Liberia, the rest of the respondents confirmed that there is sign language interpretation on Television and media especially during the prime news time and important national occasions such as state functions and general elections. It is enforced by different laws in different countries, for example in Uganda the Persons with Disabilities Act 2006 provides that a television station shall provide sign language inset or sub-title in at least one major news cast program each day and in all special programs of national significance. While in Kenya, the similar disability law of 2003 obliges the government to ensure that all Television stations shall provide a sign language inset or subtitles in all newscasts and educational programmes and in all programs covering events of national significance. In other countries, it is at the discretion of the Television network. Two critical challenges have been observed in television and media sign language interpreting such as the quality of the display of the interpreter on the screen which is done with a separate box. Deaf viewers reported difficulty in accessing the display especially those with a small size television set. The second challenge is that there is no formal training available for sign language interpreters in media nor is there much information on the optimal provision of sign language interpreted media. It has generally been reported that interpreters seem to learn by doing while some are being mentored by senior colleagues and others have attended short courses in sign language interpretation. Wehrmeyer (2015) identified similar factors as limitations to comprehension of television news by deaf viewers in the southern Africa.

Education Sectors**:** With the growing campaign and demand for inclusive education at primary and higher education level, the need for sign language interpretation has recently began to expand. However, the challenges remain with respect to availability of qualified interpreters who are competent to understand classroom interpreting, knowledge of what deaf students want as well as cognition, learning and comprehension of interpreting. The problem has been compounded by the fact that most sign language interpreters in African countries are secondary school leavers. This makes it even more difficult for those interpreters to interpret for deaf students at universities. Napier (2002) observed that educational interpreting involves lexically dense content and to give consideration to the linguistic influences of the university discourse environment, interpreters switch between translation styles as a linguistic strategy to provide effective and accurate access to university lecture content. Interpreters can only learn these skills and techniques in a training program but are unavailable. Deaf students are more likely to experience poor academic outcomes due to limited support in their learning environment. Several interpreters including qualified ones expressed their concerns over long working hours without co-interpreters since their employers do not appreciate the working arrangement of sign language interpretation. They are also poorly paid for the work hence the job does not attract experienced interpreters.

Health Sectors: This sector has also seen an increased number of sign language interpreters due to the importance of access to healthcare services for deaf people. Access to healthcare is a basic right for citizens of any nation including deaf people. In some countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, the government has opted to train health workers in basic sign language in an attempt to enhance accessibility of health services where they are also tasked as sign language interpreters. This has therefore jeopardized the quality of healthcare service for the Deaf. The healthcare personnel acquire very basic signing skills and are incompetent interpreters hence unable to meet the communication needs of deaf patients.

Public Services: Employment of deaf people in the public sector and the requirement of public participation in the important national affairs call for qualified sign language interpreters in this sector. We have witnessed for example in Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya where there are senior deaf state officers. Despite this significant gain, many governments have not enacted a policy on remuneration of sign language interpreters. Moreover, the place of sign language interpreters is not adequately defined including in salaries and remuneration framework. Therefore, the performance and productivity of deaf workers in the public sector are likely to be low if their communication requirements are not adequately addressed.

NGOs and Other Sectors: Civil Society organizations seem to be most friendly in regard to accessibility for the Deaf. Respondents from all countries indicated it as the main sector that contracts and pays sign language interpreters mainly during workshops that involve the Deaf. It is this industry where sign language interpreters have been given an opportunity and avenue to thrive and improve their skills.

Recommendations

(i) Continued advocacy for legal frameworks that recognize sign languages and sign language interpreting as a profession. Recognition of sign language is an avenue to achieving wider accessibility for the Deaf and a basis for advocating for various benefits such as recognition, training and certification of sign language interpreters.

(ii) There is a need to establish interpreter training programs and ensure certification registration and accreditation processes are in place as well. This requires joint effort between Deaf and interpreter communities in finding the best approach to achieve. Each country has a unique process of incorporating interpreter training in higher institutions of learning. The western countries have advanced in education and research and adopting the best practices will be helpful.

(iii)Authentic statistics of deaf people in each country are basis Deaf communities may use to compel governments to provide budgetary allocations for improving the lives of deaf people not only in accessibility but in sectors such as education, information, health and judicial system.

(iv)Deaf Associations ought to continue with sensitization efforts to create awareness on the importance of sign language interpretation to ensure accessibility for deaf people.

(v) Robust advocacy for remuneration policies for sign language interpretation service to dispel the notion that it is a voluntary service.

(vi) Explore opportunities for exchange programs amongst countries and organize refresher courses for those already practicing.

(vii) Support countries establish interpreter associations and strengthen those that already have existing ones.

(viii) Create awareness about the need and promote the use of Deaf interpreters.

Conclusion

Majority of the African countries still need to continue with advocacy for recognition of the sign language and accessibility for the Deaf. Most countries are at varied levels of progress and therefore require support specific to the various needs of each nation. The task ahead seems daunting, and the obstacles also appear insurmountable but deliberate efforts from individual countries is a step at a time towards achieving a better future for both the Deaf and interpreter communities.

When everything feels like an uphill task, look at the view from the top (Wright Ella)

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2

ABC News: Auslan Interpreted News with Hearing and Deaf Interpreter Teams

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ABSTRACT

The landscape of Auslan interpreting in the Australian media has seen changes over the last three decades. Expression Australia established a specialist interpreting team for emergencies & media-related assignments, which has seen them interpreting for several emergencies such as the Victorian bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as significant media events with the Government. The need of increased access to news and press conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic became obvious with continuous public health messaging. A partnership was established with ABC News to provide the Deaf community access to the Sunday news bulletin which gave the specialist interpreting team an opportunity to further develop their skills in media interpreting.

Keywords: media interpreting; emergency interpreting; public health; pandemic; access

Introduction

In the 1980s, the Australian Deaf community was able to access news bulletins in Auslan for the first, thanks to Ms. Diana Ashley, a Deaf presenter who co-presented with a Hearing news anchor on SBS News. Diana was a trailblazer, as Australia was a relatively new nation with little knowledge of Auslan, which is the native language of the Australian Deaf community. At that time, Auslan was not yet recognised as a community language by the Federal Government, but it was eventually recognised in 1991 (Dawkins, 1991). Despite this recognition, Auslan has not had as many Auslan interpreted news bulletins as other countries, such as the BBC in the UK, which provides regular BSL interpreted news bulletins. The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into how the ABC News collaborates with Auslan interpreters to create accessible news content for the Deaf community in Australia.

Victoria experienced one of the worst bushfires on 7th February 2009, with more than 400 fires recorded which is known as Black Saturday. The disaster resulted in the highest ever fatalities from a bushfire, as well as many being left homeless. Several Deaf people lost their homes due to having little to no access to emergency information such as evacuation protocols in Auslan. The Victorian Government announced a public inquiry, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission where people gave evidence on their experiences with the Black Saturday bushfires. As a result of the recommendations (Teague et al, 2010), Expression Australia, formerly VicDeaf, established a partnership with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) which has been consistent since 2013.

Expression Australia

As part of the partnership with EMV, the Emergency Media Interpreting Team (EMIT) was developed to provide Auslan interpreted safety messages through the summer and bushfire season with the Fire Commissioner. Interpreters were regularly allocated for weekly bushfire updates and ad-hoc press conferences with the Premier and Ministers, as well as Fire Commissioner. This became the humble beginnings of on-site media training, which created an unprecedented pathway for interpreters selected for the ABC News team which began with two staff interpreters. All Auslan and Deaf interpreters are NAATI accredited.

In 2015, Expression Australia successfully applied for a grant from the Attorney General's Department to conduct a National Emergency Management Project (NEMP) which delved into the needs and requirements of Auslan interpreting in the media space for emergency broadcasts. As a result of the project, a partnership was created with Monash University to deliver a media interpreter training course for Auslan and Deaf interpreters from each state. The course allowed participants to increase their capacity and to build on their skills with interpreting in the media space. Due to lack of funding post-NEMP, this course has not been provided again which has created lack of training opportunities, particularly with the increase of media interpreting during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a great need for Auslan and Deaf interpreters to undertake further training to ensure they are properly equipped for media interpreting arrangements.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 saw an increase in media interpreting with press conferences with State Premiers across Australia. Melbourne went through the world's longest lockdown, totalling 246 days (The Age, 2021) which saw a further need to provide Auslan interpreters for daily press conferences with Dan Andrews, Victorian Premier (Simons, 2020).

Expression Australia also forged an on-going relationship with the Department of Premier & Cabinet during the COVID-19 pandemic through provision of Auslan interpreters for daily press conferences. Interestingly, Victorian interpreters have been the only ones able to receive private briefings with the Premier, Chief Health Officer and Ministers which has become best practice for press conferences organised by the Victorian Government.

Expression Australia successfully negotiated with ABC News in Sydney to provide Auslan interpreting during National Week of Deaf People in 2017, which then became an annual event. Feedback from the community has been around the tokenism and insignificance as it was only provided once a year during the National Week of Deaf People, particularly considering the requirements on access to Auslan in the news for the Deaf community around Australia.

Leveraging on the partnership with ABC News (ABC News, 2022), a regular Auslan interpreted news bulletin commenced for Sunday evenings in April 2020 in response to the national lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic. This originally had a three-minute segment towards the end of the bulletin with a Deaf person summarising news in Auslan with voice-over translation in English.

The Auslan interpreting team for the ABC News originally began with three Auslan interpreters working in tandem throughout 2020. In 2020, it was decided that the on-screen interpreting team would be expanded with an additional four Auslan interpreters to share the workload and to provide a variation of faces and styles on Sundays. In 2022, a pathway was created with observational opportunities for 2-3 Deaf interpreters to join the interpreting team for ABC News.

Expression Australia's interpreting team works from the ABC Melbourne studio while the Sunday news bulletins are broadcasted live from ABC's Sydney studio. The team in Melbourne receives the live feed with a delay of 1 to 2 seconds. To prepare for Sundays, the team members communicate with each other using WhatsApp, where they share important ideas and suggestions, including professional development opportunities. The on-screen team also uses WhatsApp to communicate with each other, sharing preparation materials such as news articles to enhance their knowledge and facilitate their sign choices.

When assigning interpreters for Sunday news bulletins, they are scheduled for three consecutive weeks. This is because it allows them to get familiar with the news content and synchronise with the news team in the studio, particularly if they have been absent for some time. However, we are aware that scheduling them for more than three weeks can be tiring, as most of our interpreters have full-time jobs and cherish their personal time on weekends. On

Sundays, the interpreters are booked from 3:30PM to 5:30PM, which takes up a significant portion of their day with preparation.

In other media spaces such as regular weekly updates with the Emergency Management Victoria and the occasional press conference, Deaf interpreters were increasingly engaged. This was in response to the growing trend of engaging Deaf interpreters in the media space around the world. Since this time, the EMIT has been expanded to include approximately 15 Auslan interpreters, three of which are Deaf interpreters.

EMIT continues to build on their capacity through provision of professional development opportunities to their members, including presentations from agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, Emergency Management Victoria, Victoria Police, ABC News on topics such as efficacy of vaccines, media/voice over training from an experienced anchor, and weather patterns training from an experienced news meteorologist.

It has been proven that professional provision of quality and accessible communication to the Deaf community by using highly experienced, qualified, and trained sign language interpreters and Deaf interpreters are paramount to ensuring the Deaf community are receiving information at the same time as the public. This is a fundamental human right, as well as in a timely and effective manner with potential to differ between life and death.

The spectrum of assignments allocated to the EMIT due to its expansion of members has increased, covering significant events such as:

- Weekly updates with Emergency Management Victoria with the Victorian Emergency Commissioner from October to April annually.
- Public events held in the City of Melbourne affecting the public such as the Bourke Street Terrorist Attack Memorial, Anzac Day Commemorations at the Shrine of Remembrance.
- Ad-hoc press conferences organised by either EMV or Department of Premier & Cabinet relating to emergencies affecting the public such as fires, floods, major health incidents. This also includes significant government announcements.
- Finals series for AFL & AFLW.
- Events at the Government House and Victorian Parliament House such as the Opening of the Victorian Parliament following the State Election.

Conclusion

The progress made by the Deaf community in Australia towards greater access to Auslan interpreted news bulletins since the 1980s is commendable. While partnerships such as Expression Australia's ongoing collaboration with ABC News have helped bridge the gap, consistent training and development of skilled interpreters remain critical. Funding is an ongoing challenge, with Expression Australia currently shouldering the burden of the costs of providing Auslan and Deaf interpreters for ABC News. Despite these obstacles, collaborations and partnerships have made significant strides in providing Deaf individuals with access to vital information, particularly during times of emergency and crisis. Nevertheless, the community must continue to advocate for equal access to information, to enable them to make informed decisions throughout their lives and to live as empowered citizens.

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3

Accessibility as a Human Right for Deaf People and the Involvement of Sign Language Interpreters

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ABSTRACT

Deaf people in Uganda face barriers in communication when they enter the criminal justice system. For a Deaf person, injustices can occur at every step of the legal process, beginning with arrest and throughout the consequences of interrogation, court room hearing, trials, acquittal, probation, incarceration and parole. These injustices result primarily from the lack of understanding of the Deaf, in particular the failure of criminal justice professionals to understand the linguistic, educational and cultural characteristics of the Deaf and even show indifference and hostility towards them. Access to information is a fundamental human right enshrined in a range of laws and declarations both national and international. Information is power because it has the potential to improve the quality of life by enhancing informed decision making and knowledge acquisition. The challenge faced by Deaf people in accessing information can be attributed to structural and attitudinal factors by those responsible for providing it. Therefore, in order for the Deaf to actively participate in all spheres of life, the right to access to information should be upheld by all players in the society.

Keywords: accessibility, human rights, injustice, sign language interpreters, barriers

Introduction

Accessibility

People with disabilities are entitled to access social services and this is a fundamental right enshrined in the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and upheld by the Government of Uganda. However, even though both national and international laws, conventions and policies guarantee this Human Right, its application is far from guaranteed in reality and practice. Persons with disabilities continue to be denied access to public services intentionally due to negative attitude towards them or otherwise due to inadequate knowledge to enable them enjoy these services. This lack of access can be attributed to barriers. Access in the Deaf community mainly refers to being able to communicate in their natural language without any barrier. This practically

implies access to professional Sign Language interpretation services or having a community where all people can use sign language!

Deaf people continue to be disenfranchised and denied access to these services due to communication barriers that deter them from active participation. Denying the Deaf accessibility to social services creates more dependency and vulnerability to exploitation, social disintegration and poor quality of life. This is violation of their human rights. Lack of access furthermore impacts on their health standards, social wellbeing and further entrenching them in the poverty cycle.

On the other hand, access can be looked at in the context of inclusive society where everyone is able to communicate in sign language. The absence or inadequacy of these two creates a barrier to human rights for the Deaf.

These barriers can be categorized into two namely; communication and attitudinal barriers:

Communication Barrier

Sign language is, for the Deaf, the medium through which they can express themselves and use it to communicate. Although sign language is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 under (Cultural Objectives Cap. XX1V (c), *The State Shall Promote the Development of a Sign Language for the Deaf*) and People with Disability Act 2019 article 15 (1) (a) the government shall promote the development, training and use of sign language, tactile and sign language interpreters, in all public institutions and at all government functions, in practice this provision has remained far from reality. Deaf people continue to have communication barriers and consequently their rights violated in hospitals, schools, and courts of law. These are largely social services which should be free of charge to the community of which Deaf people are a part – they should not pay for sign language interpretation services in government schools, government hospitals and in courts of law.

Attitudinal barrier

Whereas it is a fact that the Deaf face communication barrier which hinders them to access education, health care and judiciary services, it is more important to understand why this is the case. It can be attributed to attitude. Some service providers in these settings maybe aware of provision of sign language services as a human rights issue but are reluctant to do so because of the negative attitude and perception they have towards people with disabilities (due to some cultural beliefs, religious beliefs and personal attributes). Therefore, those having these attitudes may require a mindset change.

Essentially, a sign language interpreter works to translate spoken language to sign language and *vice versa*. Their professional role is to bridge the communication gap between the Hearing person and the Deaf individual. They do this guided by professional code of ethics which emphasizes fair and equal accessibility. So, I can arguably say that without a sign language interpreter, there is limited accessibility by Deaf people to social services.

Accessibility to Sign Language in Schools - Education

Education is a fundamental cornerstone in any child's life and regardless of the child's language skills or hearing abilities they need to be given an opportunity to excel in school. Sign language interpreters enable Deaf students to learn better and understand their school work. The most important assignment of an interpreter in educational setting is to ensure the child understands and comprehends the information given to them by the teacher. If educational institutions ensure that Deaf learners have access to sign language interpreters and teacher and pupils can interact in sign language, then there is no doubt that Deaf learners will be able to achieve the best educational outcomes. In Uganda, access to education by persons with disabilities including Deaf people has been made even more accessible by the enactment of affirmative action**.** the Constitution of Republic of Uganda 1995 Art. 32 (1) states; *Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the State shall take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them.*

Accessibility to Sign Language in Health Care

According to UNCRPD Article 25, access to health care is a universal right. Uganda is a signatory to this declaration which states that "*States Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. …"*

Studies have shown that the Deaf can be adversely affected by several barriers in accessing primary or advanced health care in public and private health care centers. Access to health care services by the Deaf is determined by social determinants like stigmatization, education gaps which results in health inequality. In Uganda most health literature is written in English. This is further complicated by the low vocabulary of signs in medical setting; hence comprehension of these health messages is limited due to barriers in attaining education and learning English. As a result, it is hard for Deaf people to understand their health conditions,

reduces their ability to manage their health and prevents them from making informed choices in avoiding potentially unhealthy life styles.

The challenges in health setting can be attributed to reluctance by the government and unclear policies on sign language interpreter recruitment due to bureaucracy and red tape in the Ministry of Health.

Accessibility to Sign Language in the Justice System (Police, Prisons, Court)

Deaf people generally face a lot of challenges accessing justice. This is more pronounced especially with those who are not well educated and who are at risk for serious injustices when they enter the criminal justice system. The present study describes these risks at all stages of the legal process, including arrest, trial, probation, prison, and release as being compounded by barriers both attitudinal and institutional to accessing justice by Deaf people. Unfortunately, police officers, judicial officers, prison officers, lawyers and prosecutors in the vast administrative posts in many developing countries can barely attend to aggrieved Deaf persons because of their inability to communicate using signed languages and the reluctance of their legal obligations towards the Deaf, their rights and entitlements.

Naturally, people in the Justice System come into contact with those from all walks of life during crime investigations, crime reports, court proceedings, and interviews. Naturally, many of the people will speak in different languages. To many Deaf people in many developing countries, interacting with justice officials can be stressful, regardless of whether they are a witness, a victim, a suspect or a convict. This is because anyone who is Deaf and has dealt with people in Justice System in many countries must have found communication a major problem besides other underlying but equally frustrating factors – negative attitudes and disrespect.

Accessibility to Sign Language in Social Interaction

Most Deaf and hard of hearing children are born in hearing families and hearing communities. Since deafness and hearing loss affect the child's ability to communicate, and communication is necessary for socialization many Deaf people will have socialization challenges hence have difficulties in developing relationships first with family members, immediate neighbors and the wider community. This further deprives them opportunities and benefits that are realized as a result of socialization, more so depriving them of self-esteem and social confidence.

Steps Taken in Uganda to Ensure Access to Sign Language Interpretation

In the effort to provide professional sign language services and also ensure equitable access of these services to all Deaf people irrespective of status, the following have been done in Uganda.

1. The government working with partners established a dedicated institution to train personnel in special needs and among these personals are sign language interpreters.
2. The government has created a conducive environment where professionals are free to associate and form associations. Deaf people and professional sign language interpreters were able to form an umbrella body called the Uganda National Association of Sign Language Interpreters (UNASLI) with the aim of ensuring provision and regulation of professional Sign Language interpretation services.
3. Similarly, the Deaf people in pursuit of their rights formed an umbrella body called Uganda National Association of the Deaf as an advocacy body to uphold their rights. Some of the remarkable achievements UNAD has done in area of litigation include having sign language enshrined in the constitution of Uganda as one of the official languages.

Conclusion

The human rights of Deaf people are violated across the board by not having adequate sign language services and inadequate signs for different settings where Deaf people relate or go for services, for example in health and justice settings there no adequate signs in relation to terminologies used, inadequate interpreter manpower in the police force for example mandatory initial police training course for any professional sign language interpreter who wishes to join the police force.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by the Deaf in accessing justice as a human right in Uganda can be attributed to institutional and structural challenges, community attitude and perception towards Deaf people. In order for this situation to be changed, strategic approaches should be adopted on a case-by-case approach to specific institutions.

Since sign language interpreting is a way of securing basic human rights of the Deaf, they must have adequate sign language facilities in order to uphold these rights and emphasis must be placed on having professionally trained sign language interpreters.

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4

Between Sheets - Ordering the Chaos of Sign Terminology

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ABSTRACT

All of us Sign Language interpreters start out with the best of intentions, scribbling down shorthand signs to somehow remember scores of new signs for various professional contexts. We fill notebooks and recorded signs first on VHS tapes, then digital video recorders, now on our smartphones. What we are left with is an unorganized heap of valuable but unordered vocabulary. Whatever we try and organize to show colleagues is bound to be either on paper or somehow online – and thereby possibly accessible to prying eyes. Sensitive vocabulary used by certain companies or developed “in-house” by institutions cannot be stored and accessed easily. A valuable solution is presenting on the horizon: Sign4all, a German government funded project aiming at assisting the Deaf in workplace situations through digital means, is developing customized online Sign Language dictionaries. Some of those developed with our partners will be professionally produced, present signs with variations that are linguistically vetted and are consistently used throughout the Deaf community within this profession. Other dictionaries will be private and sharable among teams of interpreters by invitation only.

Keywords: German SL dictionary, reverse search, private sign lexica

Introduction

The historical timeline leading up to the current project started in 2009 with project Delegs 1 (www.delegs.de/), which focused on “Digital support to further professional developments for the Deaf” and has been funded by the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Germany. The project team collaborated with partners like the University of Hamburg, University of Landshut, software development companies like WPS GmbH and currently Open Mind Software GmbH, the Academy of Professional Development (Fortbildungsakademie der Wirtschaft - FAW) with its networks. Our current project performs

under the administrative umbrella of Malt/Harms – Specialized services for labor market integration.

Project Sign4All

The courses organized by FAW taught by Deaf tutors concentrated on Deaf professionals, improving their skills in the German language in its written format via German Sign Language (DGS). Even with schooling and secondary education teaching German, there is room for improvement concerning written workplace communication.

The project's efforts are focused on developing a computer written sign language font (Sign Writing) to be used in teaching Deaf adults written German, which produced valuable results.

Throughout 2009-2021 the project proceeded with the development of the Sign Editor for Sign Writing pictures and production of teaching material contrasting DGS grammar with written German. The current project Sign4All www.sign4all.de now primarily aims at developing and promoting a more user-friendly Sign Writing font as well as building a dictionary platform for DGS terminology. In collaboration with the Max Planck Institute a flagship website www.sign2mint.de was set up. Their government-funded project collected, verified and produced academic German Signs for various STEM-related categories. The focus is and will stay on the Deaf community through involvement of many Deaf professionals at all levels of the project.

With the establishment of Sign4All the focus changed to coax the fledgling dictionary into a fully developed dictionary portal with several sign lexical for public and private use. The finalized Sign2mint project data from our partnership in the preceding project will be incorporated into Sign4all. Furthermore, we aim to broaden the scope of terminology from only the academic focus to a wider target group. We are onboarding several new collaboration partners at the moment in fields like the aviation industry (Airbus) or information technologies (IT), in which many Deaf professionals are working. Other fields of professional life will be added as we go along, we are preparing for new categories as diverse as book-binding terminology as well as signs used in religious contexts. Furthermore, we would like to include a plethora of "everyday" signs in future and are evaluating ways to achieve that goal without compromising sign quality control.

Sign Writing is still an integral part of the platform and is being overhauled at the moment. It does not have a raving following within the German Deaf community yet, but learning to intuitively use it does have great advantages.

In all publicized Sign dictionaries one can only enter a written word and be presented with a sign video. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to search the other way around? This feature makes our dictionary stand out from all others – reverse search options, which we call "Sign Search".

We rely on Sign Writing to provide all parameters for a reverse search from a sign to a written word. Many information videos in DGS are not fully accessible to every deaf person. If you don't know a sign, you cannot possibly understand the full meaning. In Sign4all you can enter sign parameters into the search mask (approximate hand shape, one-handed or two-handed sign, contact points, movements) and the dictionary algorithm will show you all signs with those features. You can filter down to find the sign you are looking for. Our search is done using fuzzy parameters, an approximation of a sign will already point you in the right direction. From an interpreter's point of view the greatest and long sought-after feature is the private dictionary function. It will be possible in future for teams of interpreters or user groups in general to build several private dictionaries. Our aim is to pour all terminological knowledge about signs pertaining a certain field of interest for a single client or company into lexicon entries with a signed video. Where our published dictionary entries are quality controlled and presented by native signers, in the private spaces any sign video is welcome by any presenter – video quality is of secondary importance in this first step. Afterwards, you invite your Hearing or Deaf colleagues working on the current assignment with you into your dictionary and the information will not be accessible for anyone but the chosen invitees. This will be valuable for signs not in general use like name signs, company or process inherent signs as well as preliminary agreed on signs only valid in this context. After signs have been in use for a longer duration they can be passed on to the "Sign Suggest" team. The sign can then be vetted for use by independent native signers and our staff linguists before a professional video can be produced and the sign may enter a published dictionary on our platform.

For our terminology partners, Open Mind Software GmbH has developed a mobile phone app to ease the data collection process. Users can record a video of the new sign into their camera, enter information about the German word it describes, context or other meta data, consent to us receiving their data and send it off to us as a sign or variant suggestion. Those videos are just used as templates for the sign and will not be published in any way. This app has been trialed in a Deaf Youth Camp with 500 attendees and will be available for download in the app stores for our beta testers sometime soon.

In its current state the technological backbones for our Sign4all platform are in place and ready to go and work on the sign suggestion app is proceeding as planned. The "lexicon

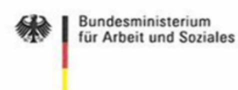
manager" as we call it is being built as we speak and is refined at the moment. The user concept for private dictionaries is at its conceptual phase and will be implemented online hopefully by the end of the year. We are depending on our terminology partners to feed new video terminology into our pipeline and hope to open up the doors for new categories soon. Currently we are hosting the video data from the Sign2mint project and are adding further IT terminology as it proceeds. It is the project's aim to open up the world of Sign Language dictionaries for wider target groups like teachers, scholars, vocational schools and professional development trainers as well as interpreters to push inclusion of the Deaf in their workplaces to a new level.

Future Plans

Future ideas for future projects branch out to lead deeper into technological advances. On a smaller scale we could imagine explanatory videos for the sign terms definition and correct use. Further thoughts utilize artificial intelligence to automatize Sign Writing by sign recognition software. Other ideas toy with co-opting a lifelike avatar to give a neutral face to a neutral lexicon entry. This would provide a way for everyone to sign your suggestion anonymously and shorten the process to have it validated and published for general use. Gamification could enhance Sign Language learning processes through personalized vocabulary training games, - the possibilities are endless.

For the moment and with regard to our funding by the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs the dictionary is limited to the German language market until the end of our project in 2025. Afterwards the technology will be available under an open-source license and could be used to include further spoken and signed languages in future projects.

- Malt|Harms – Specialised services for workplace integration
- Open Mind Software GmbH
- University of Landshut
- Fortbildungsakademie der Wirtschaft
- Workplace Solutions GmbH (supportive role)



5

"Deaf people should be on my committee": The Case of Engaging the Deaf Community in a Sign Language Translation

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ABSTRACT

In sign language interpreting research, Deaf people are often considered "consumers", who are at the receiving end of service provided by Hearing practitioners. As Wurm and Napier (2017) suggest, research projects should be designed to treat “stakeholders essentially as participants or co-researchers” (p. 106-7). This paper documents two Deaf translators’ involvement in a Hearing student’s Ph. D research at Gallaudet University. The research study began with a problem faced by Hearing practitioners in Hong Kong: How meaning can be negotiated from spoken Cantonese to Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL). The research design was based on the premise that the rich linguistic resources in the Hong Kong Deaf community could very much shed light on this problem. By analyzing data on Deaf people's translation work, this project resulted in detailed descriptions of translation strategies that could benefit all sign language interpreters in Hong Kong. A unique aspect of this journey was having the two Deaf translators join the Hearing candidate's dissertation committee, bringing the voice from the Deaf community to a space that is typically reserved for academics. This paper discusses various creative ways to spotlight Deaf people's potential contribution to sign language interpreting research.

Keywords: Deaf perspective, linguistics, translation strategies, Hong Kong Sign Language, written Chinese

Introduction

In the sign language interpreting profession, Deaf people are often considered “clients” or "consumers", who are at the receiving end of service provided by Hearing practitioners. Sheneman and Robinson (2020) pointed out that Deaf people have situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) - culmination of lived experiences and cultural competence - that are often excluded from the interpreting profession. The authors posited that Deaf people are experts in

interpreting services that they get and interpreters should be more open to listening from their collective experiences. The authors called for more Deaf involvement in interpreter training, interpreter organizations and service coordinations. They also asked scholars in different parts of the world to reflect and consider including Deaf people in interpreting research.

In the Hong Kong situation, deaf people face multiple challenges to get their voices heard in the field of sign language interpreting research. First, knowledge production, including that of interpreting, is typically housed in universities and research institutes (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Due to limited access to education and information, Hong Kong Deaf signers are much less likely than hearing people to have the required degrees and qualifications to work in these places. Sign language rights in Hong Kong are not protected by local legislation and scholars have reported that reliable and consistent interpreting service in the higher education setting is almost impossible to secure (Sze et al., 2022). We do not foresee the overall access to higher education by Deaf signers to improve in the near future. Secondly, a big bulk of research in sign language interpreting has originated from Europe and North America, as well as other countries where English is the dominant language. English is also the dominant language of academia. The majority of Deaf people in Hong Kong use Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL), written Chinese, spoken Cantonese (if they choose to use their residual hearing), among other linguistic resources to communicate. English is considered a second language for many. Taken together, Deaf people in Hong Kong are removed from interpreting research by their hearing status, geographic distance and language access.

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of scholars who incorporate Deaf people's linguistic and cultural capital into sign language interpretation research. There were studies on Deaf people’s interpreting strategies undertaken by non-deaf scholars (Stone, 2009), research teams consisting of both deaf and non-deaf scholars (Swabey et al., 2016, 2014), and scholars who are deaf themselves (Cole, 2019; Tester, 2021). In Hong Kong, sign language interpreting research is still at an early developmental stage. In this article, we present a personal testimony of the partnership between the three of us - two deaf HKSL signers, Yu and Wong (the second and third author), and a hearing researcher, Chan (the first author), as part of Chan’s doctoral dissertation in HKSL interpreting - *“Examining how deaf translators negotiate concepts that are not conventionalized in HKSL”* - at Gallaudet University, Washington DC. While one of the purposes of the dissertation is for Chan to demonstrate her ability to conduct interpreting research independently, it is vital to include Deaf people’s perspective and knowledge in an equal stance. In the following, we document the decision-making processes while we navigate between the ideals as recommended by Sheneman and

Robinson (2020), and the reality described in the above paragraph, where we currently find ourselves in. We argue that, while hearing people in Hong Kong (and in many other parts of the world) have more privileges in academic institutions, there are many opportunities to make the interpreting research projects as collaborative as possible and empower Deaf voices along the way. At the same time, there are lessons learnt and times to make compromises. We begin with a narrative of our backgrounds and dissertation study in the next sections.

Who We Are

Yu and Wong both come from Deaf families and are life-long users of HKSL. In their early years, they attended a Deaf school in Hong Kong where a strict oralist approach was adopted, i.e. sign language was prohibited during class. School curriculums were a simplified version compared to their hearing peers. Deaf students were expected to lip-read and use their residual hearing to understand the teachers' instructions during class, which was extremely difficult. As a result, they were deprived of the opportunities to achieve academically.

In the 2000s, Yu and Wong learned about the Center for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (the CUHK) being one of the very few academic institutions in Hong Kong that provided Deaf signers with linguistics training in HKSL. Yu began working there as a research assistant. She later received her diploma in sign language education and became one of the handful of Deaf people in Hong Kong who completed a professional diploma in sign language interpretation at the School of Continuing Studies at the CUHK. She is now currently in a B.A. programme in Professional and Vocational Education at the Education University of Hong Kong, where HKSL interpreting is provided only intermittently. Wong initially joined the Asia-Pacific Sign Linguistics Research and Training Programme offered by the CUHK, then went on to complete his BA and MA degrees in linguistics in the same university. All academic programmes mentioned above required a proficient level of written Chinese and English. Given that only 6.1% of people with "hearing difficulty" have received post-secondary education in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR, 2014), Yu and Wong's catching up on formal education are among some of the exceptional cases among Deaf signers in Hong Kong. They have a multilingual lived experience and have often negotiated meaning between written Chinese, English and HKSL as part of their studies and careers. Other than academic qualifications, both Yu and Wong have a deep connection to many Deaf social groups in Hong Kong and are familiar with sociolinguistic variations in HKSL. They have substantial experience with teaching HKSL and mentoring hearing interpreters. They have also worked professionally as Deaf interpreters in

Hong Kong and informally among Deaf peers.

Chan was an undergraduate student in linguistics at the CUHK when she first learned about HKSL and the Deaf community in Hong Kong. Shortly after graduation, she began working at the CUHK to support HKSL linguistic and educational research. As such, she became connected to the Deaf community and developed her fluency in HKSL. Yu and Wong were among her first Deaf coworkers, friends and HKSL role models. During the last decade, as Chan became increasingly involved in sign language interpreting and Deaf human rights advocacy work and in Hong Kong, Yu and Wong remained her mentors and collaborators. We participated in city-wide political demonstrations and co-taught workshops on topics related to interpreting and Deaf linguistic rights on a regular basis.

In 2012, Chan received her MSc in Deafhood Studies from the University of Bristol. In 2015, Chan decided to pursue her Ph.D degree in Interpretation at Gallaudet University. Her aspiration for becoming an interpreting scholar was backed up by the privileges that came with her hearing status - As a hearing Hongkonger, she has native fluency in spoken Cantonese and written Chinese; compared to Deaf people, she has had many opportunities to learn English and succeed academically. She also had the social and financial capital to find the means to study abroad.

In 2017, Chan completed her coursework in the Ph.D program and moved on to the dissertation phase. Based on a real-world problem in lexical non-equivalence between HKSL and Cantonese, Chan developed her dissertation with the premise that a linguistic and content analysis of Deaf signers' translation practices could become a crucial point of reference to interpreters. The following sections discuss how we highlight Deaf signers' contributions throughout different stages of the dissertation project.

A Deaf Take On a Hearing Interpreting Problem

One way to incorporate Deaf people's situated knowledge into the sign language interpreting studies is to adopt principles of community-based participatory research, which emphasizes on the scholars' own determination to bringing resources from players in different social positions to engage with the research projects, with the aims of social changes (Wurm & Napier, 2017). This requires scholars to formulate their research questions from real life scenarios and problems, and their ability to identify the bulk of relevant situated knowledge in the target community that often goes unrecognized.

In our case, Chan decided to examine an issue that has long been discussed among frontline Hearing interpreters and Deaf signers. HKSL is historically marginalized. Being a

“language of limited diffusion” (Johnston & Napier, 2010), HKSL has a modest lexicon - It has rarely been used in specialized domains such as medical, legal and educational. Moreover, fingerspelling in HKSL represents English alphabets, not Cantonese. Thus, Hearing interpreters anecdotally report challenges with working from spoken Cantonese to HKSL when encountered with concepts that do not have a lexicalized equivalence in HKSL. A sign language policy committee established by the government saw this as a problem. In a public document, the government announced their plan to build a standardized HKSL vocabulary repository and use it to support and assess interpreters’ work (Rehabilitation Advisory Committee HKSAR, 2020). To many members of the Deaf community, including Yu and Wong, this “problem” does not seem to be as challenging. As part of their natural linguistic practice, Deaf signers in Hong Kong utilize multilingual resources to express entities and ideas around them, with or without lexicalized signs available in HKSL. Yu and Wong are often asked to provide “signs” for non-lexicalized concepts by Hearing interpreters they mentor and second language users of HKSL. It is also very much part of their personal lives and careers as sign language teachers and interpreters to negotiate meanings between written Chinese and HKSL. What is unknown to us is their linguistic strategies and the associated cognitive processes. In other words, as opposed to the “top-down” approach such as a HKSL vocabulary list developed by a government committee, an alternative way to support Hong Kong Hearing interpreters’ work is a “reversal of power” (Wurm & Napier, 2017, p. 107) by foregrounding the rich linguistic resources in the Deaf community that have not been examined before. As such, Chan felt compelled to investigate this aspect of Hong Kong Deaf situated knowledge and make it available to the academic community through a doctoral dissertation. This project can be understood as a virtual dialogue between Hearing interpreters who report a struggle with their work from spoken Cantonese to HKSL, and Deaf signers who can provide a point of reference by showing how they render concepts in written Chinese into HKSL.

Project Design and Deaf Involvement

Wurm and Napier (2017) elucidate the different assets Deaf and Hearing people can bring to sign language interpreting research. While Deaf people have more linguistic and cultural capital to work with their own communities, Hearing people can contribute with their academic knowledge and English language abilities. In the case of Chan’s doctoral dissertation, Chan, her dissertation chair and committee members, together with Yu and Wong, formed a partnership with a similar philosophy (We provide more information about her committee in the next section). Chan remained the lead in the academic process of her dissertation, including

identifying the theoretical frameworks of the study, designing research methods, data collection, coding and analysis, with which Yu and Wong also participated with their understanding of the Deaf community in Hong Kong and their native HKSL proficiency. Yu and Wong took the lead when it came to the parts of the project that required knowledge and interaction with the Deaf community, including selecting research participants, explaining project objectives in a HKSL video and dissemination of research findings to the Hong Kong Deaf community.

As mentioned in the last section, our research project was based on the premise that Deaf signers can contribute to our knowledge about how to negotiate lexical non-equivalence between Cantonese and HKSL. The methodology design followed that Deaf people, bilingual in HKSL and written Chinese, be invited to perform a Chinese to HKSL translation task with concepts without lexicalized signs HKSL (We call the research participants "Deaf translators" in this study). The goal of subsequent data analysis was to devise a taxonomy of Deaf translators' linguistic strategies when they performed the task. We detail our collaboration as follows:

1) We designed three written Chinese passages, one of them was for warm-up purposes and two were for analysis. The topics of the passages were chosen because we considered them to be either familiar or important to Deaf people's lives in Hong Kong (one passage was about travel to Japan, a popular tourist destination for Hongkongers. Two were about basic medical knowledge). Also, these topics are conducive to people's name, place/site names and technical words that are not conventionalized - words with no lexicalized equivalence HKSL - which often post challenges to Hong Kong interpreters. Yu and Wong helped confirm that the target words in the Chinese passages indeed have no lexical equivalence in HKSL and therefore suited the study objective;
2) With inputs from Yu and Wong as experienced Deaf interpreters who understood the critical stages of the translation process from written Chinese to HKSL, we decided that data collection would include three segments. First, Deaf translators would be given time to read the Chinese passages and access to the internet if they wanted to look for photos, video or textual information about the passages. A video recording would be set up to capture this preparation process. After preparation, Deaf translators would render the passages into HKSL. Finally, Chan would watch the translation videos with the translators together and conduct a retrospective interview, during which translators would be invited to reflect on their translation strategies;
3) We conducted two pilot studies prior to the actual data collection task. The first one

involved Yu and Wong acting as Deaf translators and went through each of the data collection processes as designed. We adjusted the reading level of the Chinese passages to make sure it fits well with our potential Deaf translators. We also fine-tuned the logistics of the study. For the second pilot study, Yu and Wong suggested two deaf individuals participate in the translation task. We then spent time watching the preparation recording, translation and retrospective interviews together. We confirmed that the research design was able to capture the reality of language experience and practices in Deaf people (Forestal, 2015) and that the data sets provided ample opportunities for data triangulation to verify our observations;

4) For recruiting Deaf translators for the actual data collection, Yu and Wong led the process as community gatekeepers (Mckee et al., 2012) with their knowledge and network with different social groups of the Hong Kong Deaf community. They suggested a list of 10 Hong Kong Deaf individuals to invite to the research study. Following the judgment sampling method, Yu and Wong considered these individuals to have substantial experience with translation and metalinguistic awareness to discuss their translation process. Having also known these 10 individuals, Chan extended the invitation to them by WhatsApp, a messaging app popular among Hongkongers, including Deaf people, to which all individuals accepted;
5) Chan, being the doctoral candidate of this dissertation study, was the researcher present at the data collection task. The data collection took place at a local HKSL signing school co-founded by Wong. When each Deaf translator arrived, they were shown a HKSL video, signed by Yu and Wong, who welcomed the translator and explained the translation task. Chan then presented a video release consent form and a research participant consent form, in both written Chinese and HKSL video format. Once translators indicated that they understood the purposes and their rights as research participants, Chan invited them to sign the forms and moved on to begin the translation task. Each translator spent approximately two hours to complete all tasks, with plenty of breaks in between. Importantly, we made sure that the instructions and forms were available to Deaf translators in HKSL. By producing the introductory videos, we were also able to ensure all translators received one standard set of task instructions;
6) Chan coded and analyzed the data. The study adopted a qualitative approach that included content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and discourse analysis (Johnstone, 2009). She derived a coding scheme to label various linguistic strategies associated with each target Chinese word from the data set. These strategies were then examined and

compared to previous research and theories. Eventually, she was able to see patterns emerging from the data. Data at multiple linguistic levels were examined. For example, Deaf translators may employ specific non-manual features to accompany loan signs. They may also write Chinese characters on a paper and show it to the camera, while simultaneously producing manual signs, pointing and mouthing. During the process, Yu and Wong helped with confirming Chan's coding decisions and subsequent descriptions of linguistic features associated with each target word rendition. Many hours were spent watching and discussing data together as a team;

7) Yu and Wong took the lead to disseminate research findings to members of the Deaf community in Hong Kong and other events and workshops where Deaf people are present and signed languages are used. Chan took the responsibility of publishing the findings in English. For example, the dissertation, journal submissions and conference proceedings like this article. For all of our publications and presentations, we co-authored and presented as a team;
8) For our research publications in written English, Chan signed video summaries in HKSL and shared them with Yu and Wong. The videos introduced the writings with special focus on the linguistic and translation theories that supported the data analysis. As such, we were able to share an understanding of not just the translation data we collected in HKSL, but also the academic interpretations of the data which would have otherwise been inaccessible to Deaf people. We spent time discussing and learning about these theoretical concepts and clarifying questions if necessary. We also evaluated Chan's analysis of Deaf translation's strategies against Yu and Wong's world knowledge and linguistic experience as HKSL signers and interpreters.

This doctoral study investigated translation issues involved in a language pair (Chinese/HKSL) that has rarely been studied by academia. However, this project was still situated in an inherently imbalanced academic and societal structure, with Hearing and English being the dominating position, Deaf and HKSL being the marginalized. Reworking the knowledge production process and to include Deaf people's perspective and participation in this study requires "conscious awareness" as suggested by Wurm and Napier (2017). It also requires an intentional, concrete action plan. Throughout the research study, the team ensured the integrity of a doctoral dissertation. Chan remained the sole researcher, responsible for data collection, coding, analysis and the subsequent dissertation write-up. At the same time, we maximized Deaf involvement in major steps of the research process such as methodology design, data analysis and dissemination. Equally as important, we argue, is paying attention to

fine details, so as to bring the study as close as possible to the Deaf community in Hong Kong. For example, presenting Deaf translators with HKSL task instructions and research consent forms was not only a means to communicate with them in an accessible language, but also an outward respect for sign language which is typically not valued by hegemonic academia (O'Brien, 2017). Conducting data collection at Wong's signing school helped create a sense of Deaf space for the translators to perform the task. During most of the course of the study, Chan resided in the US, Yu and Wong lived in Hong Kong. We regularly communicated virtually through online conferencing platforms and messaging apps to maintain trust and keep each other informed of the research progress. The decision to co-author all research articles ensured ownership and shared accountability for the three of us.

Hong Kong Deaf People in a Dissertation Committee

A doctoral dissertation committee is typically composed of a chair, who takes a major role in supervising the candidate, and a few subject matter experts of the candidate's research topic. One of their roles is to provide academic consultation to the candidate. They also evaluate the quality of the candidate's work and make collective decisions whether the dissertation satisfies the academic level required for a doctoral degree. Chan's dissertation committee at the Department of Interpretation and Translation at Gallaudet University consisted of her chairs, two faculty members from the same university and one external member. The committee had both Deaf and Hearing members. To obtain her degree, Chan was required to defend twice - one for her dissertation proposal and then the dissertation itself. For each defense, committee members would hold a private evaluation before the result announcement. While members of Chan's dissertation committee provided essential support with their respective professions in American Sign Language linguistics / interpretation, Deaf Studies and Chinese linguistics, Yu and Wong were the only experts in Hong Kong Deaf translation. One challenge to include them in this setup was that dissertation committees were traditionally reserved for academics - only Ph.D. holders (or other higher degrees in some cases) could participate in supervising and assessing a doctoral student's work. This section discusses our efforts to empower Hong Kong Deaf presence in the current academic hierarchical structure.

Chan's defense for her dissertation proposal took place in November 2018, and her dissertation in February 2022. Both defenses were open to the public and were held onsite at Gallaudet University. The defenses were also available for virtual attendance through Zoom. The standard announcement flyers sent out by the department prior to the defenses contained information about the event and the candidate, dissertation topic and abstract, as well as the

committee members' names and titles. Yu and Wong joined both defenses from Hong Kong virtually. With the support from the dissertation chair and other members, Yu and Wong were listed as Chan's committee members, with a special designation "Hong Kong Deaf consultant". The defenses followed a standard schedule and their roles were the same as other committee members, including the following:

1) Attend Chan's presentation and the public question and answer session;
2) Participate in a private question and answer session where only Chan and the dissertation committee were present;
3) After the private session, participate in a committee member-only session to discuss suggestions for changes to Chan's work and cast a vote whether the defense received a "pass", "pass (with revision)" or "fail".

As Forestal (2015) commented, Deaf people have been involved in research, assisting in data collection, analysis and note-taking, however they are rarely given the appropriate credits for their work. Deaf signers from Hong Kong provided their unique experience and linguistic expertise in this dissertation project. The logic follows that they should also be given acknowledgement for their contributions in terms of how they are recognized within the project. The commitment of the dissertation chair and members to share power and include Deaf people from Hong Kong into the academic power structure and decision-making was evident and also crucial. Yu and Wong's becoming part of the close-door discussions allowed both community and academic perspectives to go into the subsequent evaluation of the research.

Summary and Conclusion

Chan's dissertation "Examining how Deaf translators negotiate concepts that are not conventionalized in Hong Kong Sign Language" was an attempt to incorporate Deaf signers' linguistic and translation practice as a resource to inform Hong Kong sign language interpreting research. The aim of the study was to devise a list of strategies used by Deaf translators in Hong Kong when they translated meaning from written Chinese to HKSL where concepts were not lexicalized. The study was based on the premise that Deaf translators from Hong Kong are able to negotiate concepts without a "common" or "standardized" HKSL lexicon and institutional intervention from the top-down. They do so by exploiting their linguistic flexibility as Deaf signers and cultural understanding of the Deaf community in Hong Kong. Hearing interpreters, who are often second language users of HKSL, may use these strategies and resources as a point of reference in their work from spoken Cantonese to HKSL.

As much as Chan needed to demonstrate her ability to conduct independent research in this dissertation project, it was vital to engage with members of the Deaf community for all stages of the study. Fundamentally, the keys to successful collaboration between Deaf and Hearing people were to recognize and respect the potential contributions we each could bring to the project. The process required patience and significant efforts. It was within all of our responsibility to maintain a high level of cultural competence and cultural humility (Mckee et al., 2012) in our work with the Hong Kong Deaf community. This should be reflected in how we approach potential research participants, the language and our sensitivity to Deaf cultural norms when we interact with them during the research process, as well as how to recognize Deaf people's participation in the academic structure where the dissertation took place.

In addressing sign language interpreting problems, acknowledging what Deaf people have to offer, and involving them to advance the service that matters to them, is at the heart of sign language interpreting scholarly work. It is hoped that more Deaf-Hearing collaborations like this one will be put in the forefront of future interpreting research.

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6

Exploring Interpreters' Guilt: Perspectives from Three ASEAN Countries (Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore)

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ABSTRACT

Interpreters often play a crucial role in the communication between Deaf and Hearing communities. Although interpreters working with the Deaf or hard of hearing in high stress environment are regularly confronted with emotionally stressful content, little is known about their work-related stress and psychological well-being. Primarily, qualitative and quantitative studies indicate increased emotional stress in interpreters and difficulties in handling the traumatic content from their clients. This paper attempts to define interpreters' guilt within the South East Asian context particularly within Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore and document professional experiences related to this. The papaer also identified the various impact of guilt on the work of interpreters, and how these professionals cope with it. Some of the notable impacts identified from the data collected were burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue. Guilt is defined as feelings of deserving blame especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy. Many sign language interpreters often experience this sense of guilt on the job; this is evident in issues concerning skills, compensation, community reputation, or ethical decision-making. These situations do exist within the interpreting profession; however, very little research has been done on interpreters' guilt. If any literature exists on this topic, it is limited to a western perspective. Finally, the findings support the need to incorporate preventative education in the curriculum for interpreters that not only addresses the potential risk and identify the symptoms of vicarious trauma but also focuses on the benefit of compassion satisfaction, mental and physical self-care.

Keywords: burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, self-care

Introduction

The question of burnout in sign language interpretation, as in many similar stress-filled professions, is now explored and remains a pivotal issue in the Deaf community. It certainly poses several questionable areas of concern as it has direct impact on the mental and physical health and well-being of interpreters. It significantly has a direct impact on the job satisfaction, effectiveness and indirectly can make or break budding interpreter's career.

Many sign language interpreters in South East Asian countries choose to enter the interpreting profession as they derive a sense of satisfaction from helping Deaf people and bridging communication gap with Hearing people. In most of the countries in ASEAN, interpreting is not seen as a career in the same capacity as social workers or medical professionals. Hence the training received were not adequate to prepare them for secondary trauma experience. Most of the young interpreters were not aware that working with vulnerable population may not only involve personal loss of time but also incur indirect impact of negative feelings acquired from work and inadvertently affecting their families. Interpreters who were involved in providing direct interpreting services related to social work, medical or legal services often experience the physical and emotional effects of chronic, vicarious exposure to negative life events of Deaf clients, placing these interpreters at high risk of acquiring compassion fatigue. (Adams, Figley & Boscarino, 2008)

Through survey and focal discussion groups, it was noted that many interpreters who were juggling between their full-time jobs and voluntary interpreters found it difficult to say no to the interpreter requests. They reportedly said that they were unable to help Deaf or hard of Hearing people as much as they wanted to, citing lack of competency to take up an assignment, insufficient access to resources to help them in their interpreting and feeling demoralized after completing an assignment.

Their professional aspirations and moral consciences have led them to reject requests for interpreting. At the same time, it is hard to deny that there is often a material component in the personal distress with which they have to deal.

"I left interpreting community because of the demands and caseloads; I felt I could not give a good service to any one individual or corporate because I never had the time."

The above comment, from a former full-time interpreter sums up the frustrations felt by the interpreters who took part in the survey. Due to the high demand for interpreting service, it was reported that in some cases, a few full-time interpreters had more than 20 assignments a week

and several voluntary interpreters had to juggle with a few interpreting assignments a week on top of their own full-time jobs

As a result, it led them to develop interpreter's guilt when they reject or decline requests for interpreting. They had witnessed the suffering and despair of those most in need. This situation triggers interpreters' emotions and feelings. These repeated working conditions, alongside the contact with the clients' suffering, have repercussions on the interpreters' mental well-being, causing stress, emotional discomfort and even vicarious trauma.

Several factors have emerged and identified as contributing to compassion fatigue among sign language interpreters in mental health, legal, education sectors. Interpreters in younger age/experience (Knight, 2010) appear to be at high risk of dropping out as interpreting in their cases is usually voluntary based.

To avoid compassion fatigue and maintain a healthy balance between interpreting service and personal self-well-being, interpreters are encouraged to incorporate mental and physical self-care into their daily lives and normal occupations (Moore, Perry, Bledsoe, & Robinson, 2011). In addition, as several modes of coping mechanisms supporting mental, physical and spiritual well-being, those in sign language interpreting or related professions should foster a healthy and positive feelings that come from compassion satisfaction, not compassion fatigue. Good management of interpreting requests and supervision are important to managing caseloads.

However, it is also important that individual interpreters should learn how to handle requests. Research shows that increasing compassion satisfaction through better quality of training (Gentry, 2002; Knight, 2010), helps significantly and potentially mitigate compass fatigue and increase better work experience. Therefore, training curriculum, close monitoring of younger interpreter through mentorship, field training would help to prepare younger, inexperienced interpreters to deal with the occupational hazards of compassion fatigue or burnout during onsite understudying or observation in the preparation of becoming interpreters. Intuitive information should be constantly emphasized throughout the training curriculum on both the risks and symptoms of compassion fatigue and the benefits of compassion satisfaction and self-care.

Literature Review

There has been a growing research in this phenomenon which in layman's term is known as compassion fatigue. McCann and Pearlmann (1990) first defined and identified the compassion fatigue or better known as vicarious trauma as underscoring its negative and

emotionally charging cumulative impact on the professionals who work directly with clients. Figley (1995) further described it as the natural consequent behaviours resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by another person. It is the stress resulting from wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.

The literature review reveals that there are several related terminologies such as burnout, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, indirect victimization and traumatic countertransference.

The study of stress and well-being at work is not novel as it was started off with research in trauma caused by the social and political segment of society. Due to high-profile crises such as attacks of September 11, 2001, genocides, war atrocities, interest in trauma research has led to a significant number of scholarly exploratory papers resulting in several shift-moving approaches in therapy and brunt address trauma as a fundamental dysfunction (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Iqbal, 2015).

Burnout is indirectly related to vicarious trauma. It has been documented that sign language interpreters who acquired vicarious trauma at work reported several episodes of nightmares, lingering phobic thoughts, suspicion of others' messages and consistently reading between lines or mentally exhaustion. Taking the above into consideration, the occurrence of vicarious trauma is noted to be frequently commonly highest work hazards for sign language interpreters' mental health.

Sign language interpreters are required to exercise empathy which is the ability to understand and share the emotions, thoughts, and behaviours of their clients. Through empathy, sign language interpreters are able to understand the client's internal frame of mind the emotional features associated with it. Hence, it results in sign language professionals' need to be immersed in their clients' framework of mind, thus driving themselves to exhaustion.

However, there is not much research in sign language interpretation when it comes to address vicarious trauma. This purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the existing literature in the area of vicarious trauma, while examining internal and external factors that may facilitate or hinder this phenomenon in the under-researched sign language interpretation.

Due to the insufficient research on this "white elephant in the room" topic, both qualitative and quantitative studies form as part of review, having the potential to compile valuable information from different perspectives. An overview of the most recent evidence-based research will highlight gaps that continue to exist, thereby providing practical sustainable recommendations and directions for future research. From this literature review, it is hoped

that professionals and organisations will become aware of this trend and the factors that contribute to it. (Anderson, 2011).

Results possibly reveal significant implications both on professionals' level of insight, as well as organisations' support strategies for professionals in their work with clients who went through familial crisis or trauma. This will further ensure effective safeguard professional sign language interpreters and clients' well-being, reducing staff turnover and sickness and enhancing customer-centric relationship with and gathering satisfaction from rendering goods or services. (Saakvitne, Gamble, Pearlmann & Lev, 2000).

The implications are crucial as they can gleam light on various issues such as research implication, prevention measures and predictive trends.

Burnout

There has been an increase in the issue of burnout among medical and mental health professionals. It is the product of poor environment, usually caused by inadequate administrative support, persistent staff turnover, poor morale, lack of opportunities for advancement, lack of appreciation and increased workload with minimal change in scope. (Sansbury et al., 2015)

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Figley (1995) first identified this mental stress as the secondary traumatic stress (STS) based on extensive research on the impact of professionals being psycho-logically emotionally and physically affected when they were helping and comfort to their clients going through first-hand of trauma and suffering.

Secondary trauma stress, a term that is often used synonymously with vicarious trauma, refers to the prolonged anxiety experienced indirectly by a helping professional witnessing or listening to first-hand trauma encountered by vulnerable or embattled clients. (Thompson et al., 2014). The symptoms of STS mirror similarly to those of post-traumatic stress disorder, which recognises emotions of self-inflicted withdrawals, irrational unaccounted fears, alienations and often related to sleep disorder.

Figley highlighted that STS is more appropriate and applicable to the following first responders, medical personnel, members of legal or social worker and other professionals who are in constant contact with persons who had undergone through grave trauma and personal mental and physical damage. It was prominently spotted among firemen and rescuers during September 11 attacks.

Definition of Vicarious Trauma (Compassion fatigue)

Pearlmann (2009) defines vicarious trauma in the negative light showing dismal transformation in the service provider (Sign Language interpreter) that occurs from empathic engagement/relationship with client who utilised the service provider's services.
Vicarious traumatization is coined as the motion made by a service provider's inner experience that results from demoralised beliefs regarding themselves, human relationships, and the world, which distinguishes it from the more acute phenomena of secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. (Mishori, Mujawar, & Ravi, 2014).

For example, sign language interpreter in high court or high-stress induced situations are therefore susceptible to vicarious traumatization through their experience over time with marginalized and underprivileged clients (e.g., as a result of hearing their real-life stories of violence, extreme poverty, witnessing or spotting the physical signs of abuse).
Through the intensive exposure, the sign language interpreters especially young interpreters may view the world as a less just and lose motivation or hope for their "charitable" work which is largely not recognised as a professional career in ASEAN and society.

Definition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

The term post-traumatic stress disorder was first identified and coined in 1980 by medical doctors working with Vietnam veterans (McKinney. et al, 2017). It was further defined as a psychopathological consequence of exposure to a traumatic event that threatens one's psychological and/ or physical integrity. It was noted that individuals with PTSD may have recurrent episodes of unpleasant memories, traumatic sensations, and emotions of a life-death event through repeatedly sensory flashbacks or nightmares. (Tarrier & Gregg, 2004) also identified other symptoms such as unconscious avoidance, irritability, hypervigilance, lack of proper sleep, weak concentration or emotional outburst. On top of that, PTSD is often associated with significant risk of suicide and suicidal ideation.

Definition of indirect victimization

Leenaars & Lester (2011) carried out research on indirect victimization among college students and young adults. They had explored the phenomenon of indirect aggression and victimization in emerging adults in a college setting. Indirect aggression was first coined in 1988 as the manipulation of people around the source and the social network in order to harm the victim (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). Several examples of indirect aggression involved social exclusion, ignoring, gossiping, talking behind someone's back, attempting to

persuade others to dislike or gaslighting someone, and becoming friends with someone as a form of revenge. The study of this form of aggression has been receiving more attention especially when young people are receptive to social media influences and greater attention by researchers with most of the research focused primarily on its prevalence in childhood and adolescence. It often leads to suicides among young children, high school and college students. Sign language interpreting in professional capacity is already considered to be demanding with high risk for stress and burnout (Kryiacou, 2015). Shanafelt (2000) highlighted that burnout defined as emotions manifesting into exhaustion, losing passion for work, treating people as non-living tools, and feelings of ineffectiveness, is an emerging pervasive problem for interpreters in South East Asia where demand for interpreter exceeds supply. Cimiotti et al (2012) concluded that burnout is largely related to job satisfaction and occupational safety. An increase in sign language interpreters' workload would result in possibility of burnout which will correlate to higher attrition in the interpreter pool (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Most importantly, Deaf customers or Hearing recipients might suffer serious percussions as a result of quality rendered by interpreters with burnout. It is essentially important for the interpretation service providers, association for interpreters and experts to monitor the attitudes from interpreters veering towards burnout.

Increased complexities around mental health within this profession lead to an emerging fatigue which is identified as compassion fatigue or better known as vicarious trauma. Fogel (2019) had acknowledged that the vicarious trauma was more prevalent when professionals in direct contact in a helping capacity would acquire the cumulative physical, emotional and psychological effect of exposure to the first-hand stories, combined with strain and stress garnered on daily basis.

Several research papers on the "helping" profession shows commonality – there may be an underlying cost pertaining to providing services such as developing secondary traumatic stress which is known to appear in most of the professions that are related to such as helping people who are facing or have acquired trauma. (McCann & Pearlmann, 1990). It is discovered that the effects of secondary traumatic stress in these serving professions can be felt in the clinicians such as police enforcers, firemen, lawyers, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers. They were exposed to all the emotions charged or visuals or trains of thoughts that the clients had shared or expressed. To mitigate all these secondary effects, these professionals are provided intensive comprehensive training in order to be prepared for these secondary consequences they would face in the midst of their professional career. However, sign language interpreters are trained to carry out their work in a variety of settings but not receiving the

amount of training in the same capacity as mental health or legal or frontline professionals with regards to handling secondary traumatic stress. (Daly & Chavoz, 2020)

Past extensive research on burnout, secondary trauma, vicarious trauma had been carried out in most fields such as teachers, lawyers, mental health professionals. And sign language interpreters were often overlooked. Hence in this paper, we are now examining on the effect of these trauma inclusive of severity, coping mechanisms on the quality of life of sign language interpreters. We also explore whether sign language interpreters' acquisition of secondary trauma had impacted on their other aspects of quality of life which is measured through compassion satisfaction.

Chovaz (2020) had noted that the significant exposure to traumatic material was more intense especially when there was a request for sign language interpreter in mental health settings such as accessing psychological services. On the same note, there was clearly a lack of competent interpreters familiar with mental health settings. There was a common finding among the experts (Fellinger et al, 2012) that there is a considerable number of Deaf and hard of Hearing members seeking mental health services compared to the supply of sign language interpreter or mental health professionals who are familiar with Deaf/Hard of hearing's needs. Hence it certainly revealed a glaring issue such as marginalization and difficulty in obtaining access to services in mental health settings. However, in those countries that had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they are bound by obligation to ensure that there should be at least a number of professionals remaining in the best possible capacity to render assistance or provide services. (Karjalainen & Ylhäinen, 2021).

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify symptoms and issues that are prevalent among sign language interpreters that the interpreter association or Deaf Community can consider taking appropriate actions to improve the resilience, further reduce the potential demoralisation, and, eventually, enhance the interpreter's mental well-being.

The current study focused on several questions

1. *After completing an interpreting assignment, do you hold debriefing session with your team? Why/why not?*
2. *After a stressful interpreting assignment, how do you usually de-stress?*
3. *Are you aware of your country's interpreting code of ethics? Does it help you during challenging situations?*

4. *Are you familiar with vicarious trauma? Have you experienced it in any of your interpreting work? How did you address it?*
5. *Are you open in receiving feedback for your interpreting work? Why/why not?*

The methodology is used to carry out this qualitative case study research which are both through a survey and focus group. Participants include those who are in the sign language profession and they are the instrumental choice of participants. This provides the framework that justifies the choice of participants, the research tools and how the data collection aids in obtaining the necessary and relevant data. It also highlights some of the limitation encountered by this research.

A mixed methodology of data collection was applied. The research was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was obtained from distributing an online survey to over 150 participants, 50 from each country. Responses from 80 respondents was obtained from the three ASEAN countries from where the three authors come from, namely Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore.

The online survey questionnaire form was done in two languages for Malaysia as most of the Interpreters are more comfortable in Bahasa Malaysia and English. For Philippines and Singapore, the online questionnaire was done only in English. From the result of the online questionnaire, Malaysia had 20 respondents (seven responded in Bahasa Malaysia and 13 responded in English), Philippines and Singapore had 26 and 34 respectively. The online questionnaire was answered by both Deaf and Hearing interpreters. We believe that both Deaf and Hearing interpreters would have had experiences in the survey and be able to relate to the questionnaire.

In addition to the online survey, two focus group discussions were carried out with 14 interpreters over two weeks and formed the qualitative data. They comprised Group A for interpreters below 10 years of interpreting experiences and Group B comprised interpreters who have 10 years and above. Specifically, the discussion covered the inputs from two groups i.e., Group A, those with interpreting experience of 10 years and below and Group B, those with Interpreting experience of 10-20 years

The topics discussed in the focal groups were

1. Definition of vicarious trauma
2. Support within/outside community
3. Coping mechanism during conflict

4. How to retain or mitigate interpreter attrition

The Approach

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative one. The qualitative study is defined as a multifaceted approach that investigates culture, society and behaviour through analysis and synthesis of people's words and actions and is concerned with social and personal processes and relations (Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly, 2009). It is a "broad approach to the study of social phenomena" as the approach is "pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Qualitative research tends to focus on small sample sizes (Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2011). This is suited for the current study which featured sampling in qualitative research is generally purposive, that is, the participants, or cases, selected for examination are chosen specifically, due to some characteristic of interest to the researcher and the research topic and tend to be intimately involved in the research process (Yin,2011,)

Number of Participants

There were 52 females (65%), 23 males (28.75%), one non-binary (1.25%), three (3.75%) prefer not to disclose their gender and one (1.25%) gender not available. From each of the three ASEAN countries, there were more female than male interpreters.

The number of respondents according to their interpreting experience in years showed that 34 have interpreting experience between 11 to 20 years while 46 respondents had less than 10 years. From the online questionnaire, sixteen (16) respondents, agreed to be called for the focus group discussions. However only 14 participated in the focus group discussion. Group A had seven followed by group B had seven members who participated via online zoom discussions that went on for almost 2 hours.

The online zoom sessions were moderated by the lead colleague, Jarn May in International Sign. However, for Group A of which the seven participants who had less than 10 years of interpreting experience, voice over in Spoken English and IS interpretation was provided for those who wish to use spoken English to share their thoughts during discussion. Group B comprising mostly those who had 11 years and above of interpreting experiences did not require any spoken English nor IS interpreting support. They were very comfortable to answer and receive the information via International Sign.

Selection Criteria for the Study:

The online questionnaire was carried out in Google form and sent to sign language interpreters randomly from the three ASEAN countries. This includes sign language interpreters who are both freelance and those who are working with Deaf related Associations. No age criteria and gender were limited. Respondents were free to submit their responses.

Designing the Interview Protocol

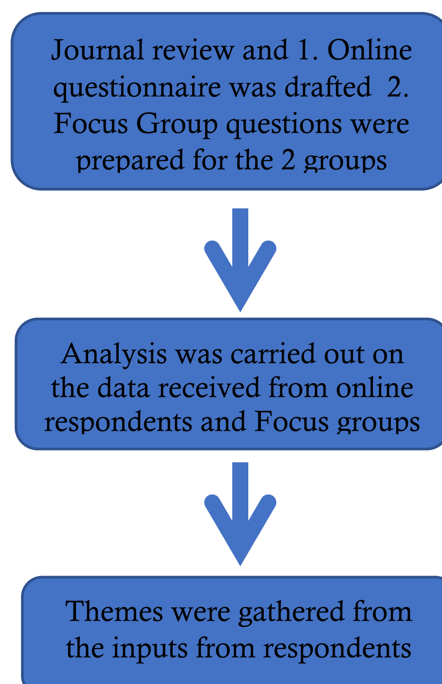
Besides having the respondents answering the online questionnaire, they were also asked if they were willing to participate in the focus group according to their interpreting experience level.

Settings

The present study was carried out in the 3 ASEAN countries – Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore due to the 3 Authors who were actively interpreting in their respective countries and being Senior Interpreters had a large networking of Sign Language interpreters. Thus, with personal and NGO contacts, the online questionnaire was distributed via emails and WHATSAPP.

Data Collection

It is imperative that a research design is created to essentially ensure that each of the "links" are connected from one stage to another beginning with the research questions, the raw data from the participants and developing stages in analysing the data (Yin,2011).
In order for a systematic approach, the following stages were used in the collection of the data (Wathum-Ocama & Rose, 2002).



Results from Data Analysis

The focus group discussion session was recorded via online zoom and response from participants are shared here. Inputs from participants in the focus group B – Those with 11 Years of experience and above.

> "I was not prepared for the interpreting assignments. There was insufficient information about the assignment and because of that we were unable to interpret efficiently and we felt guilty about it"
>
> *Input from 2 participants of Group B*

> "The clients or organisers should provide the speaker(s) script so that we can do our prep work to find out about the signs, terminology and words/ signs that we are not sure of before the assignments"
>
> Input from Group B

> "I should learn to say NO and not take extra assignments due to being kind hearted and wanting to help. Over load of work has made me tired physically and mentally".
>
> Shared by an interpreter from Group A

> "Regardless if you are a Deaf Interpreter and working with a Hearing Interpreter, we should know the importance of being well prepared for any interpreting assignments"
>
> shared by an experienced Deaf Interpreter from Group B

> "I experienced interpreting in a court for a deaf person who wasn't well educated and couldn't understand much of what I was interpreting. I wasn't informed earlier about the case or the client thus wasn't prepared ahead either. The three hours session was tiring and I fell ill after that "
>
> Recalled by a participant from Group B

> "I once had broken a rule as an interpreter, just to go the extra mile to help deaf people, although I am aware of the code of ethics"
>
> shared by a Deaf Interpreter from Group B

> I interpreted for a Deaf person who was diagnosed with a HIV. The interpreting service was done pro bono as I was aware that he had financial difficulty. During the consultation session with the Doctor, the doctor advised the patient that he

should change his current medication and start taking another drug which was really expensive of which the Deaf patient had to buy it on his own. I really felt sorry and heartbroken for the patient because I knew the patient won’t be able to afford it.:

Shared by a participant from Group B

“Some court cases especially those involving deaf children affected me the most – I get more emotional and the ongoing proceedings made me cry”

Shared by an Interpreter from Group B

Summary

A qualitative approach is employed in this study to solicit an in-depth experiences and information from the participants. The participants were ideal as most of the respondents were Sign Language Interpreters specifically with the online questionnaire and the four Focus group questions. The interview protocols consisting of a list of open-ended questions, supplemented with prompts were carried out to enable the participants to explore and share their experiences. Data presentation, data analysis and the results will be presented and discussed in the following chapter.

Findings

The present study examined the relation between the sign language interpreters’ experience with burnout, secondary trauma and vicarious trauma and their para-professional quality of life.

Directly or vicariously traumatised interpreters would naturally go through a process that requires them to reflect on the trauma experience and create new understanding, rebuilding a collapsed view of the world (Zeligman et al., 2019). This process is naturally known as growth.

Similarly, the relationship between years of experience and growth was found to be positive for those with more diverse work, compared to young interpreters who had limited scope in interpretation. (Stamm, 1995) These findings demonstrate that more diverse work could continuously provide new learning opportunities that in turn promote growth and development. Mentorship is another suggestion to help young interpreters grow.

Implications of Findings

The integrative model of stress and coping suggested by senior interpreters supported Schaefer and Moos (1998). Positive change can be controlled by the following factors:

- Access to Resources, such as toolkits or materials offered by WASLI or country associations and surrounding support,
- Identifying the characteristics of the trauma, such as the severity and length of the exposure, and post-trauma factors, such as coping strategies and professional peer support groups offered by senior interpreters or staff at Association.

Several commonalities among all the 14 interpreters during focal discussion group were examined: fatigue and compassion satisfaction. The participants indicated that they had years of experience in a variety of settings such as medical, mental health, emergency, legal, education and sports. 50 of 80 participants identified themselves as member of a professional interpreting association.

A quantitative analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between chosen demographic questions, compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction and vicarious trauma. The correlation between the demographic question "What is your age?" shows no significant relationship based on age. However, next question on the length/period of interpreting shows up an interesting point and indicated that the longer the interpreter was in the para profession, the higher their compassion satisfaction scores are. Interpreters with more than 10 years' experience had demonstrated better management of compassion fatigue through exercise, des-stressing through chatting and to the extent of seeing a psychologist whereas interpreters with less than 10 years' experience tend to drop out citing familial issues, priority of their full-time job over voluntary interpreting.

Table 1: Determining the nature of interpreters' occupation

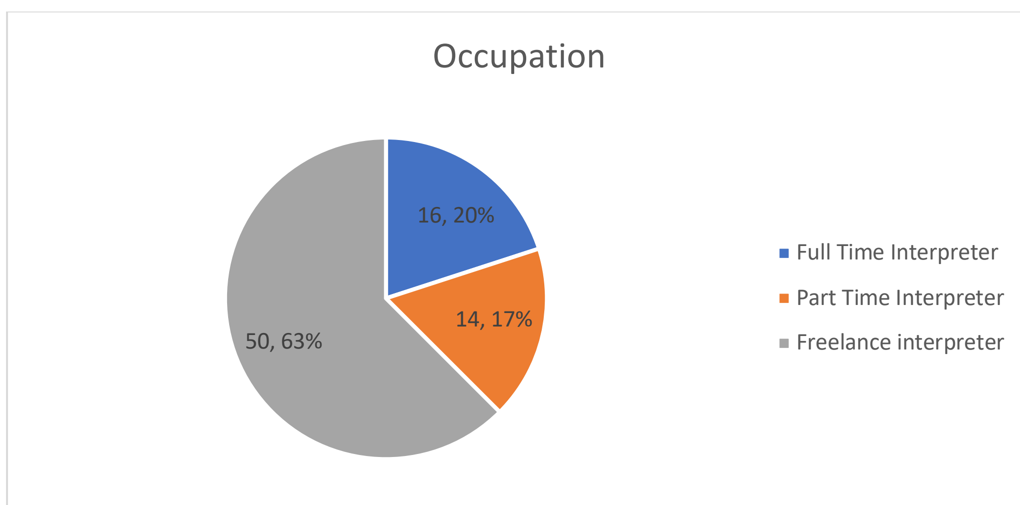
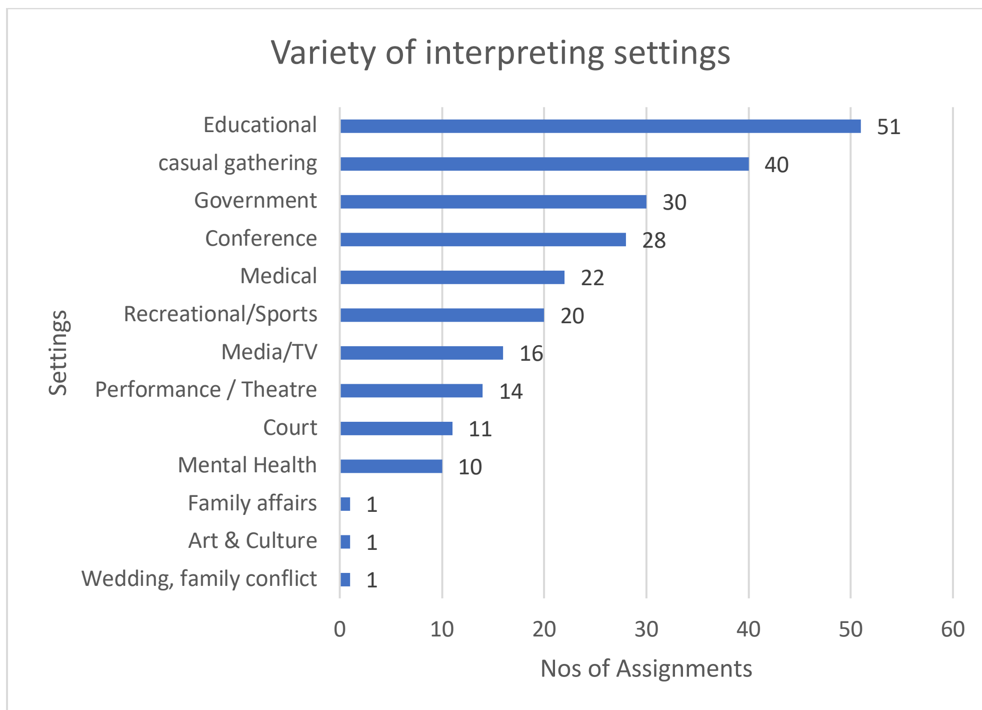


Table 2: Type of settings interpreters are exposed to



The finding in Table 2 shows the various settings the interpreters are exposed to. Educational, Government, medical settings are usually more intensive compared to Art & Culture setting.

Table 3: Findings whether interpreters have received formal training

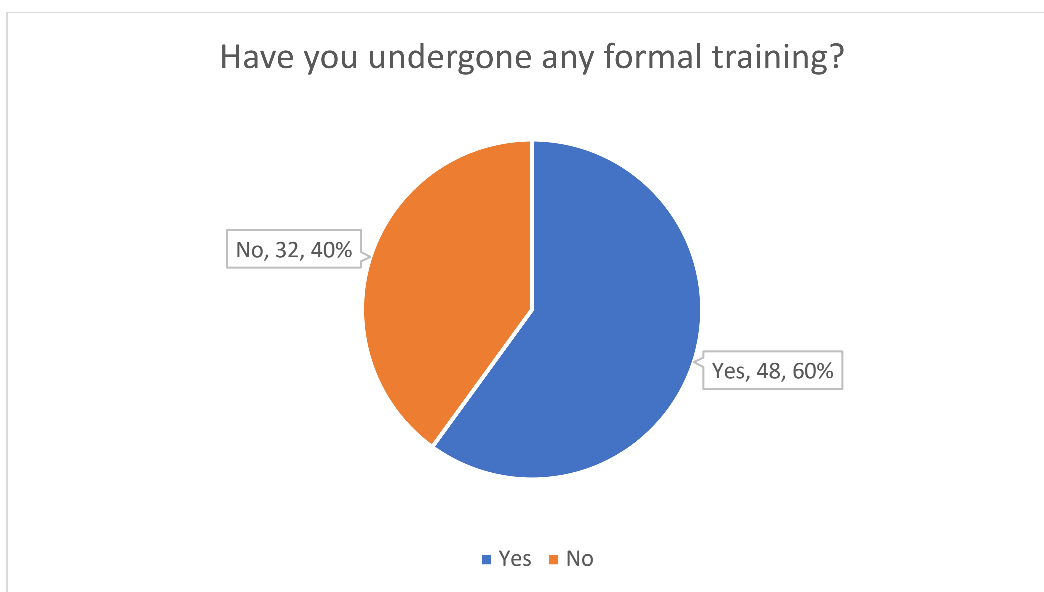
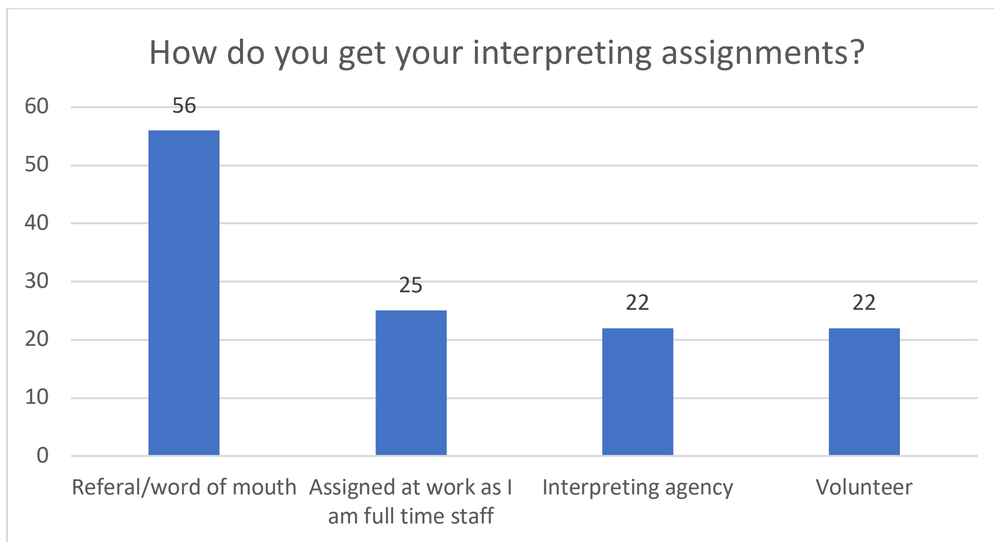


Table 3 shows 40% of the 80 interviewees did not receive formal training prior to their appointment as interpreters.

Table 4: Interpreters and their sources of assignments



Findings from Table 4 shows that most of the interpreters receive the requests via words of mouth more than through interpreter agency.

Table 5 : State of interpreter's mind when he/she rejects the assignment/request?

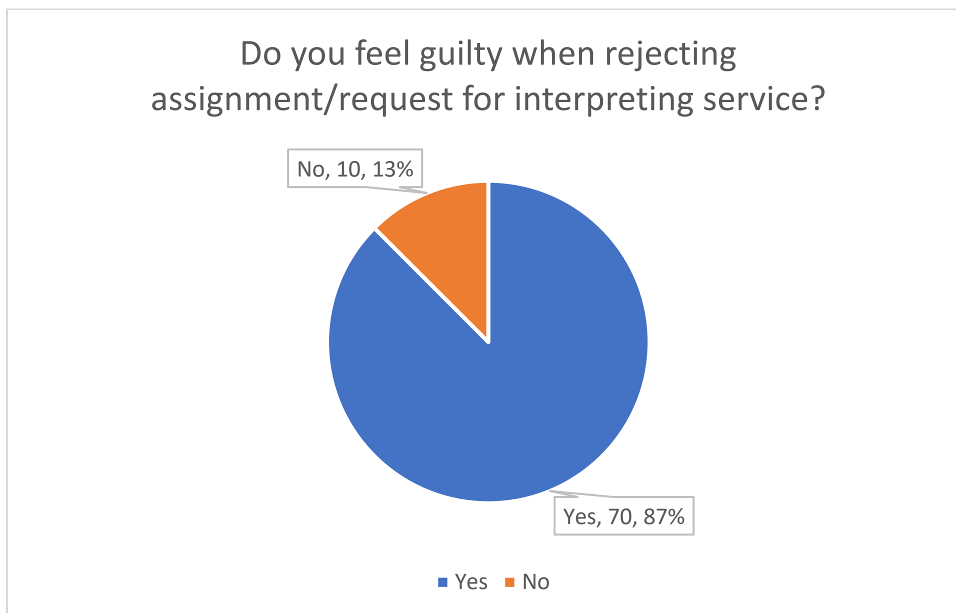


Table 6 : Reason(s) for rejecting interpreting assignments/requests

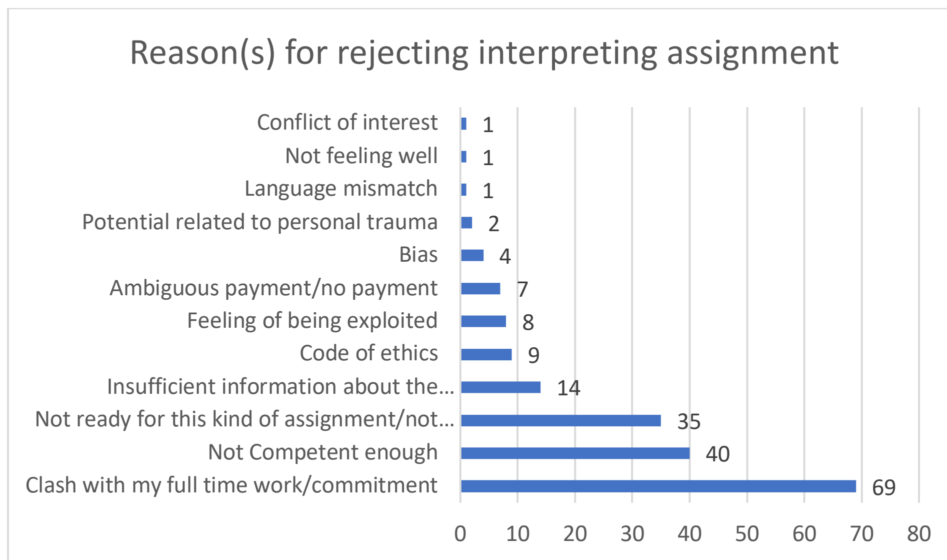
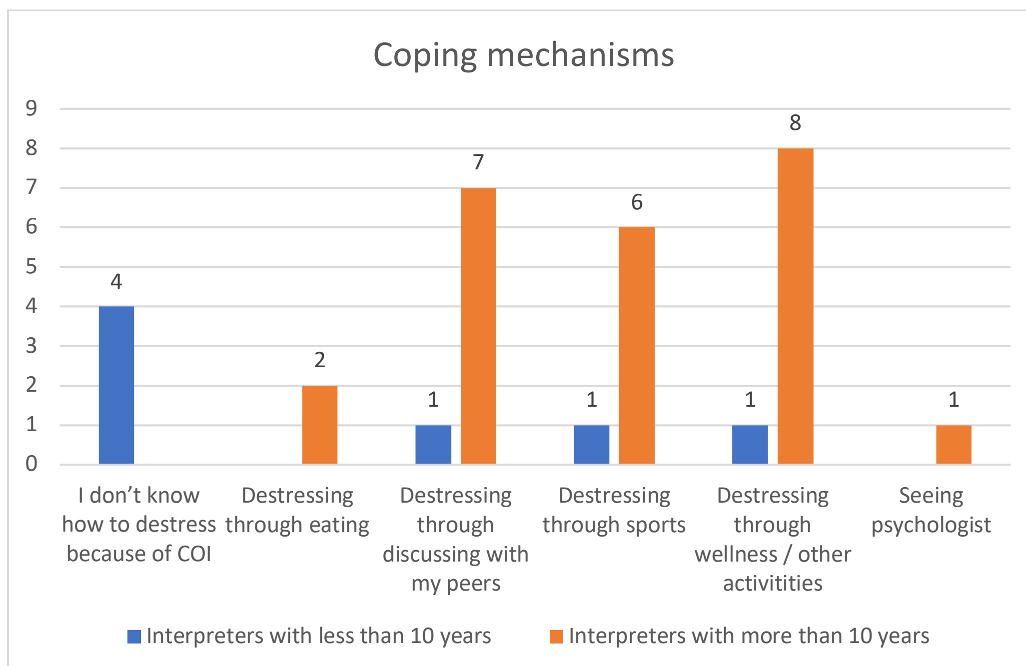


Table 7: Coping mechanisms (findings from focal discussion groups)



These findings above, regarding compassion fatigue, should prompt the interpreter associations and agencies to look into the compassion satisfaction and fatigue during review or development of training programmes before new batch of interpreters start training. The results of this study show that the interpreter students together with clear cut interpreting curriculum help them to experience more levels of compassion satisfaction than compassion fatigue. It is worth noting that the students with lower levels of compassion fatigue experience significant higher levels of compassion satisfaction. These findings support the theoretical hypothesis put up by Stamm (1995). Although more conclusive research is needed on the nature of burnout in

the sign language interpreting area in ASEAN, the findings of this study show potential possibility that compassion satisfaction helps mitigate the impact of compassion fatigue for young and more experienced interpreters. (Khatri & Assefa, 2022). With this said, compassion satisfaction acts as a motivator for interpreters for continued commitment to the lifelong profession together with proper self-care, provides balance and improve quality of service as well as improve quality of life for interpreter. In other words, the service for interpreting usage will be improved and reduce barrier for Deaf customers or Hearing users of interpreters. (Harr, Rice, Riley & Moore, 2014).

During focal discussion group, it was noted that interpreters with more than 10 years' experience offer constructive suggestions such as:

1. Fatigue management plan should be drawn up based on the extensive commonalities across senior interpreters. The interpretation association should establish fatigue management plan, investigate the interpreter's level of fatigue and come up with preventive and proactive program for self-well-being. (Hulme, Safari, Thomas, Mercer, White, Linden, Moss-Marris, 2018). A toolkit is another suggestion to educate Hearing and Deaf customers of interpretation services to mitigate the burnout rate among the interpreters especially high-intense settings such as legal, medical and palliative care. (Pastor, 2018)
2. Development of training such as the provision of specialist training on vicarious trauma and access to self-care programmes customised to different categories of interpreters, the availability of regular peer or supervisor who is trained in trauma management.

Adopting a growth-based mindset may help to empower young interpreters who had less than 10 years' interpretation, increasing their well-being mental as well as resilience, and contributing effectively to employee satisfaction and staff retention. Various stages of growth can be incorporated into training, peer or individual supervision and sending young interpreters to professional conferences. In turn, this may mitigate the relationship between one's work and vicarious trauma.

It is vital that interpreters and professionals should be educated to identify the signs of vicarious trauma, without compromising the loss of various opportunities to reflect within safe space, as well as becoming aware of their potential for growth through this work, and being consistently encouraged to actively reflect on their positive experiences, mitigating less on demoralising episodes.

Discussion

This study has five major recommendations to mitigate burnout, secondary trauma stress and vicarious trauma.

First, the interpreter agency providing service or association for interpreters should establish a long-term service system plan to prevent and mitigate the possible causes from either the organization or individuals that might lead to the decrease of service productivity. In doing so, interpreters can work, knowing that there will be a safe space for them physically and psychologically to reduce professional malpractice or professional errors that may affect the Deaf customers for life such as legal. It will also help to establish a good relationship between the agency service provider, association and the profession. Long term system plan should ideally cover a few layers such as job including the work matching or adaptation, adjustment of occupational change, improved work-life balance, career (retirement) planning, offering legal advice and financial advisory (such as tax treatment, insurance planning, etc), and conducting health talks/courses including mental health (such as stress adaptation, anger management, workplace interpersonal communication, the major crisis response and management during the various stages of the career, etc) and lastly, health care (such as providing the health care measures and health care resources information).

Second, the service providers or association can provide mindfulness-based stress reduction programmes in collaboration with mindfulness service providers to the interpreters. Mindful-based Stress Reduction (Jain & Swanick, 2007) therapy is a meditation therapy, though originally designed for stress management, it combines western medicine/psychology and traditional eastern meditation to assist participants in the mindfulness view of dealing with stress, pain, and illness. In the past 3 decades, MBSR has been proven to be an effective group training courses and it is being used for treating a variety of illnesses such as depression, anxiety, chronic pain, cancer, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, skin and immune disorders.

Thirdly, interpreters should be encouraged to cultivate and to build up their positivity resilience Maintaining a positive outlook would help to improve mental well-being. By creating positivity resilience, it can help to reduce anxiety, also reduce illness symptoms, improve the quality of sleep, and, ultimately, lead to greater personal resilience.

By being more positive, senior interpreters would influence younger interpreter to maintain positive resilience This in turn creates a positive feedback loop the internal resilience is increased and strengthened by the actions of others.

Fourthly but not the least, mentorship programme should be established. This is a model that can be used to encourage new budding interpreters to feel safe and ask questions related to stress management. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) stated that appreciative inquiry is the coevolutionary and encourage the contribution from people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. By attempting to praise the interpreters who had been providing high quality of service to encourage interpreters enthusiastically to enhance resilience and positive psychology, which will become the driving force for the organizational development.

Fifthly, the association or service providers should consider the fact to address the implication of vicarious exposure to negative events for all interpreters' mental well-being, drawing example from the other research papers on social work which emphasis on the calls for more efforts in preparing future interpreters for the rigor of working with traumatized clients. One suggested approach to the problems faced in the interpreting field is by increasing awareness of the risks and costs of working with those who are vulnerable and undergoing traumatic events and by teaching interpreters' preventative methods to counter the implication inflicted from ongoing exposure to trauma. (Schwenke, Ashby, Gnilka, 2014). A call for a holistic curriculum should comprise of training including self-care and prevention of compassion fatigue must be addressed for all new interpreters (Moore et al., 2011).

Another important angle of prevention is the implementation of through screening procedures for interpreters-to-be application or admission into interpreting program or before budding interpreter's placement. Such screenings are crucial to determine the budding interpreters' resilience and awareness of the demands of the para profession. Interpreting students should be taught the importance of mental well-being and physical self-care in maintaining the overarching physical, mental and emotional health and recharging themselves.

With thorough comprehensive understanding and identifying interpreters who are most empathetic and successful in engaging with vulnerable customers or customers who are undergoing trauma may be susceptible to compassion fatigue, the interpreters should be taught or trained to set appropriate professional boundaries with vulnerable customers and service users. It cannot be denied that compassion fatigue will always exist, interpreting service providers or interpreter association should work collaboratively with interpreters, professionals who use sign language interpretation service towards developing tools to reduce and prevent symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout.

Access to resources offered either by WASLI or Interpreter Associations

WASLI or Association for the interpreters should establish a range of resources such as toolkits and self-care workshops to prevent and resolve the possible emergency of burnout or vicarious trauma.

Establishment of Mentorship

Through focal discussion group, young interpreters had indicated the need for mentorship and affirmation of work done with mentors.

Review of Work-life Balance

It is noted that most of the interpreters who quit their vocation as interpreter have indicated that the career was thankless and long. It is suggested that the service provider should look into work adaptation, adjustment of organizational change, work-life balance, career planning, and health including mental health (such as stress adaptation, interpersonal communication, the major crisis response and management during the various stages of the career, etc) and health care.

Self-care Support Group

This study suggests that the self-care support group should be set up to focus on those employees with high burnout to improve their resilience

There are multiple causes of burnout including both personal and system factors. Personal factors include not engaging in good self-care and healthy lifestyle behaviours, such as making time for regular physical activity, engaging in healthy eating, getting adequate sleep, and practicing daily stress reduction.

System factors include poor staffing management that result in imbalanced interpreter—client ratios, long shifts and no alternate/backup interpreters.

Limitations of Findings

When conducting research on specific areas such as burnout, secondary trauma stress, vicarious trauma, it may be difficult to decide whether results should be reported separately for each type of trauma or whether all the types should be combined. In other research papers, specific types of traumas are often presented separately. This approach respects the multidimensionality of the concept of types from burnout to post-traumatic stress disorder and helpful for future research such as underlying factors that lead to each type. From a theoretical viewpoint, it is important to note that many researchers have called for proposals to address

burnout as a specific syndrome, thereby underlining the overarching importance on burnout and its impact on quality of life and service.

However, the research sample is too small compared to the larger population of consumption of service such as the opportunity sample, and the heterogeneity of the group of interpreters with respect to their studies, their training, their years of experience, and the sections they serve. For example, interpreters' frequent assignments with legal, medical settings may be more prone to experiencing burnout.

The study needs more data on other variables such as interpreters' personal history of encountering work trauma. It has the potential influence on the quality of life and teach interpreters on how to cope with trauma on best practices gathered from different interpreters. Another suggestion is to carry out a study on new and young interpreters and factors that affect them most would be useful to determine which interpreters are more prone to compassion fatigue and as well as customising training programme and field placement or internship and matching senior interpreter under mentorship.

Research into the effectiveness of models borrowed from other research papers on mental stress and customisation to complement interpreters' needs (emotional, physical support and mental well-being) in ASEAN context would be a focus for future studies.

Conclusion

First and foremost, it is crucial to build up a multi-component comprehensive holistic strategy as well as to build up a culture of healthy mental well-being in which healthy choices are encouraged.

Future research is needed to refine and differentiate the types of traumas and measure used to assess each type in sign language interpreting field. More research examining more sign language interpreters in depth especially their personal encounters with different types of traumas and their coping mechanisms is needed to provide a broader scope of understanding of this understudied forgotten population.

More qualitative research on factors that affect sign language interpreters' ability and coping mechanisms with regards to burnout and increase compassion satisfaction such as participation in network of interpreters on wider scale i.e., outside their home country would be a good additional literature study.

Associations of interpreters should provide a safe space for interpreters as well as leaders to lead by example i.e., leaders should "walk the talk" and ensure that resources together with a proper infrastructure established in place are amply ready.

Instead of focusing only on the negative consequences of the trauma-related situations or circumstances interpreters may encounter, association or trainers should consider assisting interpreters by developing a proper curriculum including the successful interventions that help interpreters reduce or mitigate trauma inflicted stress. As young interpreters venture into interpreting call, there should be an opportunity for them to develop a broader perspective of growth and change as part of lifelong learning. Interpreters must develop realistic professional expectation based on the common understanding that they cannot help or rescue every one along the way.

Current research has highlighted that the interpreters with either positive sense of empowerment or more than 10 years' experience have shown that they had experienced lower levels of stress trauma from their work (Choi, 2017).

Research studies and group discussion also demonstrated how the senior interpreters' increased adaptability and resilience pivoted them to adapt well to life's challenges. This can be identified as 'vicarious resilience'.

Finally, interpreters regardless of number of working experiences, are encouraged to put more attention and value on their interpersonal relationships internally and externally (Hyatt-Burkhart,2014).

Lastly, future researchers may look into feasibility studies or comparison studies exploring how South East Asian interpreters working in high intense or trauma-related areas like legal, mental, medical and social work are being trained and supported, and more importantly what kind of training and support would be efficiently and effectively beneficial in helping sign language interpreters to manage the different types of trauma they are indirectly and directly exposed to.

To help the next generation of interpreters with balanced quality of life achieve longevity and productivity throughout their journey as interpreter, they must be well prepared to deal with the challenges of compassion fatigue.

This study definitely will provide in depth insights if more research is carried out. Ultimately, it will lend the fundamental basis in strengthening support systems within and for the interpreting community which includes peers, Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities, and Hearing allies.

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7

Irish Sign Language (ISL) Access in the Houses of the Oireachtas: The creation of an ISL glossary of parliamentary terminology

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ABSTRACT

The Houses of the Oireachtas (the Republic of Ireland's national parliament) employs a team of two Hearing Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English interpreters in 2020 to provide greater access to political proceedings following the passing of the ISL Act 2017, which recognises ISL as the native language of the Irish Deaf community. This paper will give an overview of the ISL team's roles and responsibilities with a particular focus on the development of the ISL glossary of parliamentary terminology. Parliamentary interpreting brings with it many challenges, one of which being the use of English parliamentary terminology where an ISL equivalent has not yet been established. The ISL team recognised the opportunity to develop a glossary of parliamentary terms in ISL to be incorporated into their practise. The ISL team collaborated with twelve deaf interpreting students from the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin to create eighty new signs for parliamentary terms where previously an ISL equivalent was not formally established. The Deaf Interpreting students consulted with the Deaf community as part of the development process. In April 2022 an interactive online survey to capture the views of the broader Deaf community and other ISL users was launched. This feedback informed a final glossary that will be accessible on the Oireachtas website. As language evolves and changes so too will this glossary. It is hoped that this co-designed open access parliamentary English – ISL glossary will ensure greater accessibility to politics for ISL users.

Keywords: Irish Sign Language, glossary creation, neologism, sign language interpreting, parliamentary translation.

Introduction

Irish Sign Language Act 2017

Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the indigenous language of the Irish Deaf community used by 5000 deaf people in Ireland as their first/preferred language and approximately 40,000

people in general to communicate (Irish Deaf Society, 2023). In 2017, following a thirty-year campaign for ISL recognition by the Irish Deaf community, the Irish Sign Language Act was passed and signed into law by President Michael D. Higgins on the 24th of December. Under this act the State "recognises the right of Irish Sign Language users to use Irish Sign Language as their native language and the corresponding duty on all public bodies to provide Irish Sign Language users with free interpretation when availing of or seeking to access statutory entitlements and services." It recognises the right of the community to use, develop and preserve Irish Sign Language (Irish Sign Language Act 2017).

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service, which is the parliamentary administration that provides advice and support services to the parliamentary community strives to be a leader in adopting this new legislation (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2023). Their Strategic Plan 2022-2024 commits to creating an open, engaged, and sustainable parliament. It outlines the importance of improving accessibility of its media content through increased emphasis on subtitles and ISL (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2022, p.18). Under the ISL Act 2017, public bodies must engage qualified interpreters who are part of the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI) to provide interpreting services. For an interpreter to remain on the RISLI register they must complete an annual mandatory 24 hours of continued professional development (CPD) through structured, unstructured, and Deaf community engagement learning opportunities. Currently there are 113 qualified Deaf and Hearing interpreters listed on the RISLI register (RISLI, 2023).

Houses of the Oireachtas Report of the Working Group on ISL Strategy 2019 – 2021

Following the passing of the ISL Act 2017, a working group was established to report on an ISL strategy 2019-2021. This group was made up of nominees from within the Houses of the Oireachtas (HoO) with responsibility for various areas relating to the Deaf Community. They were tasked with examining ISL supports for witnesses/visitors to the Houses for committees and debates, viewers of Oireachtas TV, visitors to the website/social media, visitors on tours, political members and staff. The group consulted with representative groups including the Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI), Irish Deaf Society (IDS), Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), and Chime. Additionally, services that provide access to the Deaf community in other parliaments and government departments were considered which included consultation with a sign language interpreter who had worked in the European Parliament for a Deaf MEP. The Chair also met with a deaf member of staff from within the Houses on several occasions. Following these consultations, a list of eight recommendations were included in the final report (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2018).

In-House Interpreters

The first recommendation was the recruitment of two in-house ISL interpreters, with one interpreter having background knowledge and experience of working in broadcast and parliamentary settings who can mentor a second less experienced interpreter throughout their work. The in-house interpreters would be recruited to provide high standards of interpretation for Oireachtas platforms such as the website and increase levels of daily ISL coverage on the TV channel. It was also envisioned that this would ensure a continued supply of interpretation and provide interpretation for visitors to the Houses (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2018). Following this recommendation, in 2020 two ISL interpreters were recruited and began their roles forming the ISL Team which is based in the Broadcasting Unit of the HoO Service. Prior to the ISL team being in place, ISL interpretations were provided by freelance interpreters through an interpreting agency. This access was provided mostly in post-production apart from major events such as Budget Days and the Debate on the ISL Act 2017 which carried live ISL interpretation on the Oireachtas TV channel.[1]

Broadcasting Access

Since their recruitment, the ISL interpreters' duties continue to expand and develop. ISL access includes live interpretation of parliamentary business on the Oireachtas TV channel and website. The Oireachtas TV channel broadcasts the business of the national parliament providing unprecedented public access to over 1.1 million homes across Ireland (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2023). The ISL team began their roles during the Covid-19 pandemic while restrictions in the workplace were in place. As a consequence, they interpreted daily proceedings live rather than in post-production in order to reduce the amount of broadcast engineers/operators on site. This meant that Deaf audiences had access to the proceedings at the same time as Hearing audiences. The National Parliament consists of the President and two Houses: Dáil Éireann (House of Representatives) and Seanad Éireann (the Senate), (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2023). There are core business items that always carry live ISL interpretation during a parliamentary sitting week including Leaders' Questions, Questions on Promised Policy and Legislation, Taoiseach's (Irish Prime Minister) Questions, Commencement Matters and the Joint Committee on Disability Matters. This ensures consistency of regular ISL access that is offered by the Oireachtas TV channel.

[1] Budget Day: The day on which the Government's annual financial plan is announced.

Under the Broadcasting Act 2009, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) set rules and targets based on a five-year timeframe for broadcasters to follow to "promote the understanding and enjoyment of programmes by persons who are deaf or hard of hearing…" BAI (2019, p.3). Recommendation Five of the working group report refers to these broadcasting access rules and guidelines on the provision of ISL content. The ISL target to reach by 2023 set for the Oireachtas TV channel is 6%. The Oireachtas TV weekly ISL output is calculated on a 24-hour broadcast day and for July – December 2022 was 23.95%, exceeding the set target.

Figure 1: live interpretation on the Oireachtas TV channel during Leaders' Questions.

Additional live interpretation is provided on debates of matters concerning the Deaf. Live interpretation is provided for events of national importance such as the annual Budget Day coverage and international delegation visits. Recent interpreted events include the address by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in April 2021, the President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen in December 2022, the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola in February 2023, and the President of the United States of America Joe Biden in April 2023.

Figure 2: live interpretation of President of the United States, Joe Biden's address.

ISL interpretation is also recorded on other programming in post-production and is made available on the Oireachtas TV channel and ISL archive on the Oireachtas website.[2] This includes documentaries, debates, and monthly programmes. ISL access was provided for the Machnamh 100 seminar series hosted by the Irish President which reflected on the decade of centenaries and commemoration in Ireland.

Live and recorded interpretations take place in a bespoke ISL greenscreen studio using chroma key, the interpreter is overlayed on the broadcasted image in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. The image of the interpreter is at least one sixth of the picture area as per the BAI access rules which state that "all movements of the full upper trunk together with arms, hands and fingers, shoulder, neck and all relevant facial movements and expressions" (BAI, 2019, p.52)

Figure 3: interpretation in the bespoke ISL studio.

[2] https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/oireachtas-tv/oireachtas-tv-productions/isl-videos/

Houses of the Oireachtas Website

Recommendation Six of the Report of the Working Group on ISL Strategy 2019-2021 states that “the Oireachtas website should develop and maintain a dedicated Oireachtas TV ISL page and should integrate ISL on static content pages where possible” (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019, p. 17). As mentioned, an Oireachtas TV ISL page has been created where all interpreted content can be viewed. The daily ISL content is posted on this page. A separate dedicated Irish Sign Language in the Oireachtas page has also been created.[3] This page details the roles of the ISL team, ongoing ISL projects, the weekly Oireachtas TV schedule including when ISL and subtitles versions of content are available, videos of ISL interpretation and other ISL services. The ISL team collaborates with the web team to translate the HoO website. To date forty pages of the HoO website have been completed. The ISL translation can be viewed through the ‘Watch in ISL’ button on the top right-hand corner on static pages of the website. This is an ongoing piece of work which requires regular revision as information and text are updated on the website.

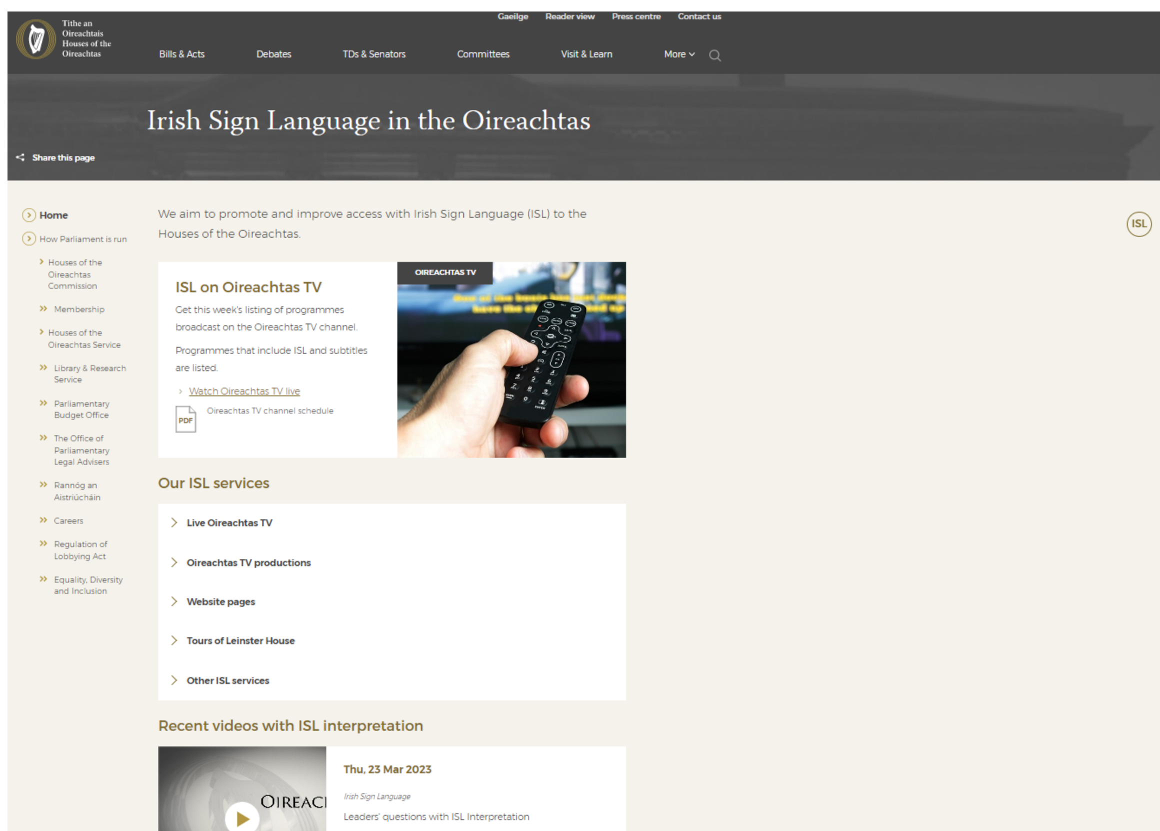


Figure 4: The dedicated Irish Sign Language in the Houses of the Oireachtas webpage.

[3] https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/how-parliament-is-run/houses-of-the-oireachtas-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/irish-sign-language-in-the-oireachtas/

Visitors & Tours

Recommendation Two of the Report of the Working Group on ISL Strategy 2019-2021 accounts for the provision of regular ISL tours. The ISL team provide accessible interpreted tours to Georgian Leinster House, the home of the Irish parliament. Tours have also been interpreted for Deaf individuals and groups that have been invited to visit by a member of the houses. ISL tours are provided for annual public events such as Culture Night and Open House Dublin. In 2022 the Houses welcomed their first Deafblind visitor on a public tour. Interpretation was relayed through the Deafblind person's personal assistant, and they were specially permitted to have tactile access throughout the tour of the Houses. Additionally, ISL interpretation is provided for Deaf witnesses appearing at committees. Since the ISL team have assumed their roles, Deaf witnesses have appeared before committees on three occasions. The ISL team worked with the committee clerk and their team to ensure full access for all members of the meetings. Witnesses have appeared both remotely and in person.

When appearing in person the ISL team have been in the same committee room as the witnesses. When the witnesses have joined remotely, the ISL team worked from a studio via MS Teams to provide access. Where there is a Deaf witness appearing at a committee and interpretation is required within the committee meeting, the broadcasting unit strives to provide an interpretation of the proceedings livestreamed simultaneously. To achieve this, freelance interpreters are hired to interpret the committee proceedings from the studio for live broadcast. However due to the shortage of interpreters in the country it is not always possible to provide this, in this circumstance the ISL team interpret the meeting again in post-production which is then published on the website.

Educational Outreach

Within the HoO the ISL team have worked with the Education Outreach Officer to provide access for Deaf secondary school students to the "Exploring Democracy" educational program. This was the first time a parliamentary outreach program had been delivered to the Deaf school. The aim of the program was to promote awareness of parliamentary language, citizenship, and Irish politics. It also aimed to develop ISL access towards equality, diversity, and inclusion in the HoO education outreach program. This took place in 2021 with Covid-19 restrictions in place and so this program was delivered remotely via MS Teams to the students in their classrooms. The program concluded with an online visit from the then Cathaoirleach (chairperson) of the Seanad, Senator Mark Daly who was involved in the passing of the ISL Act 2017.

Student Placement

Under Recommendation Seven of the Report of the Working Group, educational placement opportunities have been identified for students in the Leinster House Complex. To date eight undergraduate students from CDS, TCD have taken part in a placement program with the ISL team. All students were completing their Bachelor of Deaf Studies, four of the students were specialising in ISL/English interpreting while the other students were pursuing the general Deaf Studies strand of the course. From 2020-2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions the placements took place virtually. Students met with the ISL team twice per week to discuss a weekly schedule which included research tasks and content to watch on Oireachtas TV. Each week the student focused on a different theme or specific skill. In 2022 the Houses offered a hybrid placement combining both virtual and on-site opportunities for a student interpreter to take part in over a twelve-week period. The ISL team met with the student each week to plan the placement schedule and discuss specific topics. The student attended on-site to observe the interpreters at work in the studio, practised interpreting video clips in the studio, attended parliamentary events and ISL interpreted tours. It is hoped that the experience the students receive as part of this placement will help prepare them and develop the skills for broadcast interpreting when they qualify.

Deaf Community Engagement

To ensure content of interest to the Deaf community is being provided, the HoO regularly invites feedback on its programming and content. The broadcasting unit in collaboration with the web team conducted an online survey across its social media platforms to collect feedback on Oireachtas TV programming. This anonymous online survey was accessible, with ISL translations on each question. It was directly corresponded to organisations within the Deaf Community to encourage responses. A total of 36 responses were collected, this feedback will inform future decisions regarding ISL accessible content. Recommendation Three of the Report of the Working Group on ISL Strategy 2019-2021, emphasises the importance of training supports to increase awareness of the Deaf Community and to engage in undertaking ISL training. This prompted some staff members with a previous knowledge of ISL to approach the ISL team to set up an informal ISL conversation café which now takes place fortnightly providing a space to practise their ISL skills.

The ISL Glossary of Parliamentary Terminology

One of the demands of interpreting in a parliamentary environment is the use of specific terminology within proceedings. The HoO have created an English language glossary of parliamentary jargon and made it accessible to the public on its website. This glossary served as a source for the ISL glossary as the ISL team did not know of an equivalent ISL sign for many of these parliamentary terms. These lexical gaps present an interpreting challenge for the ISL team particularly when there are phrases which are regularly repeated within parliamentary proceedings. The interpreters can use various strategies to overcome this such as those listed by Pöchhacker (2004 in Heyerick 2021) including fingerspelling, paraphrasing and substitution. The use of nonce signs which Leeson (2005) describes as a sign that is created in a context where an established lexical sign does not exist but can only be used within this context and not outside of it. Wang (2021, p.51) lists "strategic additions" also known as expansions used by interpreters to narrow cultural gaps for both the source and target languages.

As the ISL team's interpreting takes place in a live broadcast environment there is no opportunity to clarify, ask for repetition or make lengthy repairs to interpretations in the moment. Demands which carry political meaning are also placed upon the interpreter such as interruptions which could be classified as an environmental demand and side comments and overlapping speech which could be labelled as paralinguistic demands according to Dean & Pollard (2013).

At times the interpreter cannot hear clearly what is said due to multiple voices speaking at once or member's microphones not being activated in the chamber, the fact that these instances take place contribute to the overall political meaning and do need to be included in some form in the interpretation. Another characteristic of interpreting in a parliamentary environment is the high volume of information delivered at a high pace during proceedings. In relation to this and conference interpreting in general, AIIC (the international association of conference interpreters) explains that time constraints affect interpretation especially when speakers choose to read a pre-written statements which means the interpreter must "receive, understand, process, and reconstruct information at extreme speed in real time" (AIIC, 2023).

Despite using various strategies available to the ISL team, from their experience of managing the demands of interpreting in this setting while dealing with lexical gaps, the ISL team recognised the need for an ISL glossary of parliamentary terminology. Reagan (2001, p.150 in Vermeerbergen & Van Herreweghe 2018, p. 181) defines this as lexical modernisation

which refers to a controlled and directed attempt to expand a language's lexicon to deal with new terminology including political and social developments and concepts.

McKee & Nilsson (2023) examine how sign language interpreters have become both agents of language planning and instruments of accessibility. They point out that although sign language interpreters are seen as representing the language of the Deaf in public arenas, they are often non-deaf individuals who are members of the majority language and cultural group. Similarly, Lenihan (2018 in Vale & McKee 2022, p. 267) states that "interpreters and translators may be agents of language change by introducing and disseminating neologisms to the target language community through their renditions". Conscious of their role when interpreting in public environments, the ISL team recognised the creation of these new ISL signs could not be done in a vacuum or without the co-design of the Deaf community. In November 2020 the ISL team approached the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) which at the time was facilitating an "Introduction to Deaf Interpreting" programme funded by the Citizen's Information Board and Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) (Trinity College Dublin, 2023). A total of twenty-four students took part in the programme, representing a cross section of the Deaf community in terms of age and linguistic background. CDS agreed to collaborate on a parliamentary terminology glossary project which would form part of the Deaf Interpreting (DI) student's coursework. At the same time another glossary project, the Justisigns2 project which focuses on empowering people who experience domestic, sexual & gender-based violence, also decided to collaborate with the same cohort of students to co-construct terms in ISL. The class of students was split into two groups of twelve by the course co-ordinators using a random selection generator which allocated students to each project. After this the co-ordinators made some changes in group allocation based on students' prior knowledge of the subject area to ensure equal participation and balance within each group. This group was then further divided into groups of three and the construction of signs for both glossaries took place in parallel as part of the Sign Language in Action module of the course.

Age Range	Female	Male
20s	2	
30s	3	
40s	3	2
50s		1
60s		1

Table 1: demographic breakdown of the DI students involved in the project.

Methodology

Initial Stages of the Project

The ISL team compiled a list of phrases used in parliamentary proceedings that did not have an established ISL equivalent known to them. This list was based on the HoO online English glossary and phrases which the ISL team felt they were regularly challenged with. The ISL team then went through a shortlisting process and agreed upon eighty (which later in the project expanded to eighty-two) parliamentary terms. In January 2021 the students were given an outline of the project and its aims. The twelve students assigned to the project worked in groups of three on respectively twenty items each (eighty in total). Their first task was to brainstorm potential ideas to formulate signs for the parliamentary terms. The groups then had an opportunity to meet with the ISL team to discuss the meaning of the terms, the context in which they are normally used, and possible ways in which these terms could be translated into ISL. Out of the four groups, three met with the ISL team to discuss the first stage of their draft signs. In the next phase of the project the students engaged with Deaf community stakeholders to discuss the draft signs and ask for thoughts and feedback. Stakeholders included RTE News for the Deaf presenters, teachers for the Deaf, Deaf students at secondary school level, Deaf students studying politics at third level, ISL teachers and other members of the Deaf community.[4]

In April 2021 the students finalised their draft signs and presented their conclusions on the sign development process with the Justisigns2 glossary project groups. The draft signs were submitted as part of the student's coursework assignment to CDS for the Language in Action module. It was understood that once the assessment process was completed the draft signs prepared by the DI students would be submitted to the HoO project leads (the ISL team) and pending consultation with stakeholders, the vocabulary may be then used by them.

[4] Deaf ISL presenters for the news for the Deaf shown on RTE (Ireland's national television and radio broadcaster).

Once the ISL team received the finalised version of the draft signs these were reviewed and divided into a traffic light system, resulting in three lists of signs. A red list comprised of signs that were considered unlikely to work in the context, signs that the groups themselves were unsure about, or signs that would require further development. An orange list consisted of newly created signs that had the potential to be included in the new lexicon. A green list reported the signs that were considered already established signs or "highly conventionalised signs in both form and meaning" (Vermeerbergen & Van Herreweghe, 2018, p.169) that can easily be added to a glossary.

Feedback Process

The next stage of the project was to collect feedback from the wider Deaf community on the newly drafted signs to feed into the creation of a finalised ISL glossary. It was discussed and agreed with HoO management that this feedback would be collected through an online interactive survey. This was housed on the HoO website which was developed by the HoO web and ISL teams. This collaboration led to an interactive online survey in ISL and (written) English. The webpage hosted eight videos in which approximately ten of the collected signs were proposed. There was extensive discussion as to how each of these videos would be formatted to (1) display the signs collected through the project, (2) explain the meaning, and (3) the context of use of the terms. The goal was for the wider Deaf community to provide their feedback on the signs. It was decided that each video should contain (1) the fingerspelled version of the term, (2) a written and ISL explanation of what the term meant (derived from the HoO parliamentary glossary and dictionaries), (3) repetition of the fingerspelled version, and (4) the proposed draft sign. The ISL team made careful linguistic choices on the signs used within the ISL explanation so as not to influence a bias towards the suggested sign. Below each video the written English term related to each of the ten signs were listed. Participants could indicate if they agreed with the proposed sign or not. If not, they were prompted to submit further feedback/suggestions in a text box or to provide their feedback in an ISL video to the ISL team's email address.

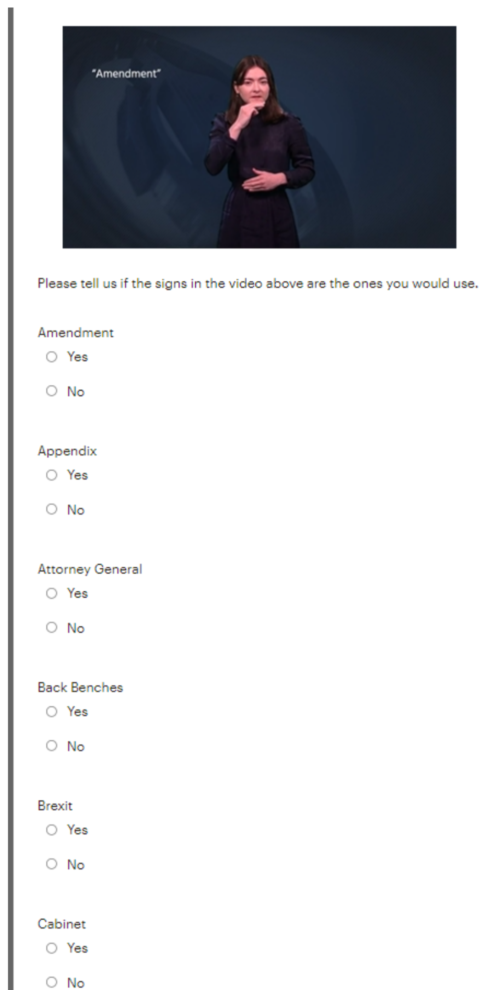


Figure 5: the format of the online survey part 1.

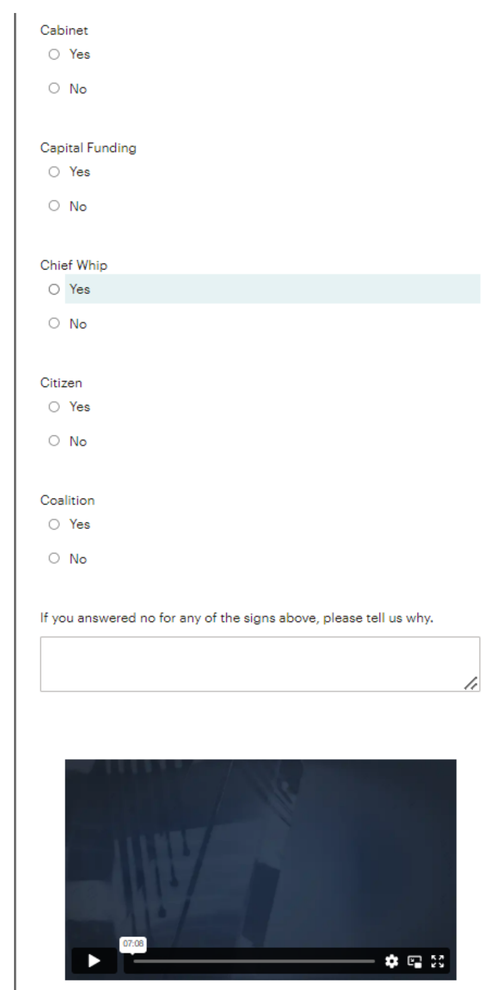


Figure 6: the format of the online survey part 2.

The ISL and web team were aware that this was quite a lengthy survey (estimated completion time one hour) and that responses may be focused mostly on the beginning of the survey and beginning to wane towards the end. Anticipating this, the decision was made to place signs that had been put on the orange and red lists, which required the most feedback, towards the beginning of the survey. Consequently, signs from the green list were placed towards the end of the survey. If a participant did not complete the entire survey at least feedback had been received on the signs that were perceived as requiring further development or confirmation. The survey was given its own dedicated webpage with a full description of what was involved in ISL and (written) English.[5] In March 2022 the Ceann Comhairle Séan Ó Fearghaíl (chairperson of Dáil Eireann) officially launched the glossary survey with a call for

[5] https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/how-parliament-is-run/houses-of-the-oireachtas-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/isl-glossary/

all ISL users to respond. The ISL team worked with the HoO social media team to publicise the online survey on various social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The survey was disseminated to the Deaf community through Deaf organisations as well as being sent to the Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI) and CDS, TCD to share with their members and collect feedback from ISL users. Feedback was received from sign language interpreters working in the Northern Irish Assembly (the devolved legislature of Northern Ireland) on specific parliamentary signs relevant to each team's work. Although the survey was widely shared with ISL users, there was a total of only ten responses captured online.

Outreach Sessions

Due to the low survey response, the ISL team hosted a series of outreach feedback sessions with targeted groups. In June & September 2022 the ISL team held such sessions with the Deaf Senior Citizens Day Centre based in the Deaf Village Ireland (DVI) in Dublin, with the support of the HoO web team, committee staff, and staff from CDS, TCD. The aim was to collect feedback from those who may not have access to technology to complete the online survey and to capture feedback due to the linguistic variation of older members of the Deaf Community. The participants present were aged between fifty-five to eighty-five years old and included three Deafblind persons. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to collect feedback on all the eighty-two draft signs. Once again it was necessary to place draft signs from the red and orange lists at the beginning of the session. All participants were given a red and green card. The same video clips of each sign from the survey were shown to the participants and they were asked to hold up a green card in agreement, a red card in disagreement, or no card to abstain from the vote. All votes were recorded, and participants were asked to share any comments, feedback, or suggestions on the proposed signs. There was a camera set up to record any new suggestions that were offered during the session, which assisted in finalising the signs to be included in the glossary. Although the response to the project was widely positive, a comment from a Deaf senior citizen who was participating questioned the value of the feedback from those in attendance as they may not have interest in Irish politics. In line with McKee and Nilsson (2023) this project sought to broaden accessibility and therefore Deaf people should not have to "weigh the importance of their own needs and wishes against those of others" (p. 16).

In November 2022 another outreach feedback session was held with both Deaf and Hearing ISL/English interpreters to garner their feedback on the proposed signs. This was hosted on MS Teams and followed the same format as the previously described feedback sessions. Additionally, the interpreters were invited to complete the online survey afterwards to offer any additional feedback on signs that were not covered during the session.

Online Survey	**Senior Citizens Outreach Session**	**ISL Interpreters Outreach Session**
10	69	13

Table 2: the number of responses in each stage of the feedback process.

ISL Expert Group

As a last step towards finalising the ISL glossary a balanced expert group comprised of experienced ISL users, interpreters, academics, and linguists (six in total; three deaf and three hearing) was created. The remit for this expert group was to evaluate collated feedback and alternative suggestions received on the DI students draft signs. The expert group evaluated each draft sign for meaning, linguistic accuracy and political context. The group discussed possible amendments to the draft signs and considered signs already in use in the Deaf community before arriving at a final agreed version of the sign. The ISL expert group met on five occasions, before each meeting the list of signs to be discussed and the feedback received was circulated to the members of the group. The meetings took place over MS Teams and followed the format of watching a clip of each draft sign, sharing the feedback received and opening the floor to discussion. The group was cognisant of the fact that in doing so decisions arrived upon for some of the signs through group consensus, may result in a sign no longer resembling what was submitted as part the DI students course work or resemble suggestions received through the outreach feedback process. That said, the group could opt to render a draft sign to a list of signs labelled “in progress” for now. In some cases, for a term, several different versions of a sign were agreed for inclusion in the glossary. At the time of writing this paper it is intended that the agreed versions of the draft signs will be included in a final version of the parliamentary glossary which will be published on the HoO website.

Data Analysis & Results

The DI students constructed a total of eighty-two parliamentary terms in ISL. After the feedback process and consultation with the ISL Expert Group a total of eighty-one terms will be included in the finalised glossary. It was agreed that some draft signs require further

consideration or were too contextually broad to be finalised. As the lexicon continues to develop it is intended that this glossary will develop and adapt over time.

The draft signs were categorised into a traffic light system where green signs were somewhat in existence in ISL, orange signs were newly created and had the potential to be included in the final glossary and red signs listed as newly created but viewed as unlikely to work in the context.

Below are examples of green, orange, and red listed signs and how they evolved through the processes of the project.

Table 3: the number of signs per colour coded list.

Green	**Orange**	**Red**
26	47	10

Example from the Green List: Democracy

The sign for *democracy* is already established in ISL. The DI students included this in their finalised draft signs. Through all stages of online feedback and outreach the sign was accepted. The ISL Expert Group agreed on this sign being included in the final glossary without any adjustments.

Figure 7: the sign DEMOCRACY

Example from the Orange List: Commencement Matters

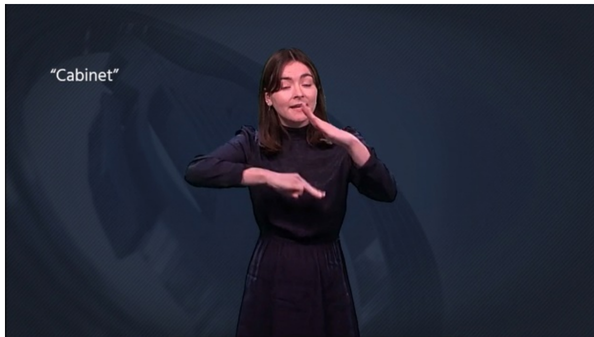
The sign for *commencement matters* was newly created by the DI students and previously did not exist in ISL. The term refers to a matter for discussion which is raised in the Seanad (upper house of parliament) by a Senator (a member of the Seanad) to which a government minister responds. The draft sign the DIs created was the compound sign SEANAD^QUESTION^MINISTER. The majority of those that responded during the feedback

process accepted this new sign and no alternative sign suggestions were received. The ISL Expert Group agreed to include this new sign in the glossary without any changes.

Figure 8: the sign COMMENCEMENT MATTERS

Example from the Orange List: Cabinet

The sign for *cabinet* was newly created by the DI students. In this case the term refers to ministers within government. The draft sign proposed was a compound sign consisting of the sign MINISTER followed by a classifier handshape to depict people facing opposite each other along a table. The second part of the sign was influenced by the appearance of the traditional government cabinet table at which ministers sat for meetings. Through the feedback process, from another version of the sign being used by some members of the Deaf community, and through deliberation of the ISL Expert Group it was agreed that the classifier handshape needed to be amended. Instead of a static hold, the hands needed to depict a semi-circle path towards the body.



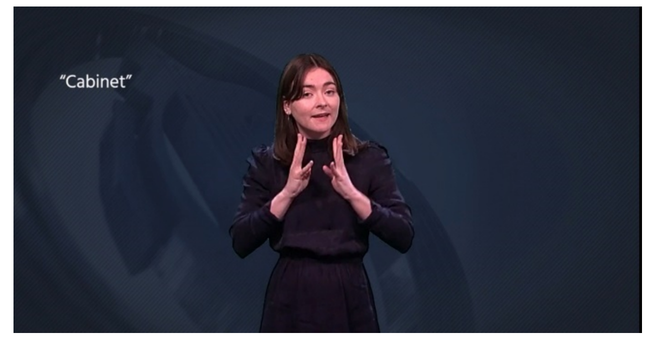
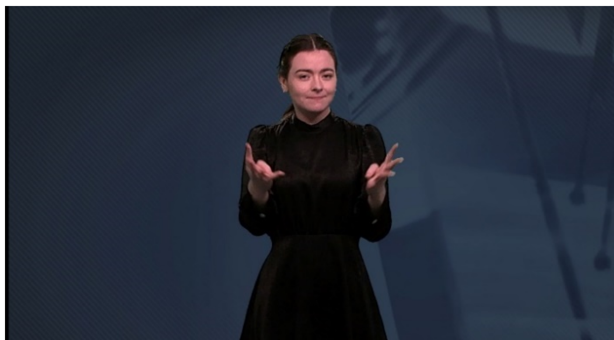


Figure 9: initial proposed sign CABINET.



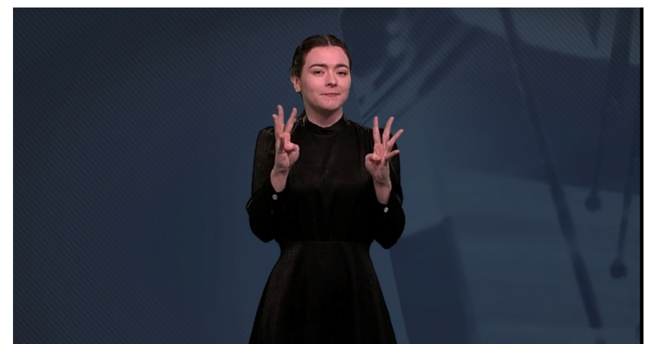


Figure 10: final sign CABINET

Example from the Red list: Front-Bench

The draft sign for *front bench* was newly created by the DI students. This term refers to the position of the seats where government ministers and party spokespersons sit in the Houses of the Oireachtas. The draft sign created was a compound STAND^PRESENT. This sign was placed on the red list as it did not fully match the meaning of the term as regardless of where an elected representative sits in either chamber of the Oireachtas, they are entitled to stand and contribute. There were no alternative suggestions received during the feedback process. In the ISL Expert Group's discussion the sign was compared to another draft sign for *back bench* where members sit if they are not ministers or spokespersons for their political party. For this draft sign a classifier handshape representing people is placed at the shoulder and moved outwards to depict members sitting at the higher level of the tiered seating in the parliament.

The ISL Expert Group came to the agreement that the sign for *front bench* would use the same handshape but placed lower to depict a member sitting in the front benches of the tiered seating in the parliament. This sign was approved to be included in the final glossary.

Figure 11: Shows the tiered seating of the Dáil chamber on which this sign was based.

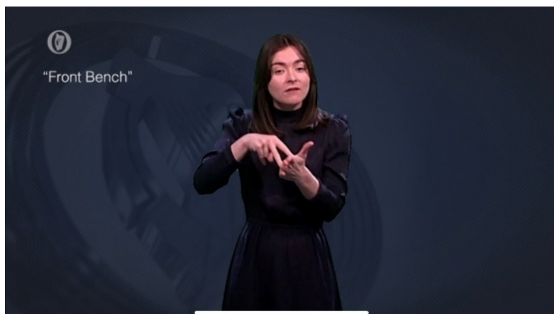


Figure 12: initial sign FRONT BENCH

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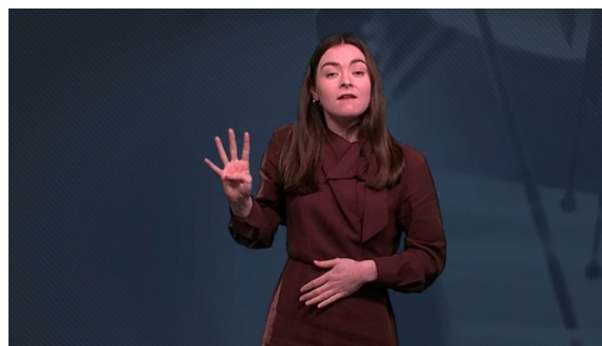

Figure 13: final sign FRONT-BENCH

Figure 14: final sign BACK-BENCH.

The DI students used a broad range of linguistic features available to them to create these draft signs. This included the use of borrowed signs or loan signs from another sign language. Reagan (2010, p.164) states that "natural sign languages meet new lexical needs by borrowing from other languages, both spoken and sign". An example of this was the sign for

House of Lords a term which refers to the second chamber of the British parliament. The DI students decided to borrow the sign that already exists in British Sign Language for this term. During the feedback process this sign was met with a mixed reaction. Some felt that a borrowed sign should not be used in an ISL glossary others felt the ISL sign LORD (although usually used in a different context) should be used instead. Throughout the discussion it was noted that the ISL sign for the term *landlord* encompasses the sign LORD but using a smaller movement to differentiate it from use in a religious context. The ISL Expert Group came to the agreement that the borrowed BSL sign should be included along with the other sign using the ISL sign LORD as this is what is used by the community.

A feature of ISL which the ISL Expert Group specifically wanted to ensure was preserved and documented in the glossary was the use of fingerspelling. In ISL, fingerspelling is most likely to be used by older male signers over any other ISL user group, one of its functions is to help bridge lexical gaps where there is no equivalent in the target sign language (Leeson et al, 2020). This is the function which fingerspelling serves within this glossary. Reagan (2010) writes that through a process of borrowing a fingerspelling from a spoken language it evolves and becomes a standard sign by way of lexicalised fingerspelling. Signs such as C-I-T-I-Z-E-N, PUBLIC-B-I-L-L, and HEAD -OF-S-T-A-T-E are specific examples where fingerspelling is incorporated into the finalised sign to ensure the preservation of ISL features. The term is either entirely represented using fingerspelling or an element of the term uses fingerspelling. It is envisioned that these will become part of the parliamentary lexicon over time.

Conclusion

The HoO sought to be an early adopter of the ISL Act 2017, having fulfilled most of the recommendations set in the Strategy of the working group 2019- 2021. A review is underway with HoO senior management towards developing the next ISL strategy. The Broadcasting Unit continues to develop ways to consult and engage with the Deaf community to enhance ISL access on the channel and improve programming for Deaf audiences. The ISL team is established and recognised by other business units in the HoO which in turn has raised awareness of both ISL and the Deaf community's access to Irish politics. The ISL team will continue to collaborate with the Centre for Deaf Studies in providing annual student placements in the broadcasting unit, it is hoped this will build interest and introduce students to responsibilities and skills necessary for live ISL interpreting for broadcast.

The aim of this project was to create a glossary of parliamentary terms which had no equivalent sign in ISL known to the ISL team who faced lexical gaps in their daily interpreting work. This was achieved in collaboration with CDS and DI students and there are now eighty-one ISL parliamentary signs. This project could not have been achieved without the involvement of the Deaf community and DI students who brought a broad range of linguistic variation and provided feedback on draft signs gleaned from their local Deaf Communities. From this the ISL team were able to publish the draft glossary and online survey to gather feedback. Outreach feedback sessions also took place with stakeholders. If this project was to be repeated, there are several things which the ISL Team would do differently. At the outset of this project an ambitious eighty-two parliamentary terms were selected and divided amongst groups of DI students to create a bank of signs, however the feedback process of the project revealed that such a large number of signs made collecting feedback on each sign difficult. The online survey required a lengthy amount of time for responders which may have been off putting, it is suspected that this the reason for the low number of respondents to the online survey. While outreach sessions were more productive in gathering feedback, time constraints meant certain draft signs were prioritised over others. The ISL Expert Group met five times, each time for sixty to ninety minutes to adequately discuss each sign, the feedback received and making possible amendments before agreeing a final version. If this project were to be repeated, the ISL team would consider selected a smaller number of English parliamentary terms to create ISL equivalents for and allocate more time to outreach opportunities with the wider Deaf community as this generated the most feedback. The ISL Expert Group's process was essential and efficient in reaching definitive conclusions on each sign. At the time of writing this paper it is intended the ISL team will record a final version of the glossary, demonstrating each new sign and provide an explanation of each for publication on the Oireachtas website. The glossary is anticipated to be a living dictionary maintained as a permanent resource for the Deaf Community, ISL users, researchers and learners to use and raise awareness of parliamentary proceedings. As these signs come into broader use, feedback will be welcomed, and signs may be amended. The ISL team invited DI students who had completed the course in CDS to consider providing regular feedback on the HoO interpreting work and monitor the use of new signs, to date this offer has not yet been taken up however the ISL team are still open to this as a possibility.

The ISL team recognises that they are at an advantage in having access to resources across the HoO and with their management's support could undertake the ISL parliamentary glossary project as part of their roles. Resources included access to the web team for curation

of online content, to a broadcast production crew to assist with filming video content, the social media team to promote the project and the endorsement of the Ceann Comhairle (chairperson of Dáil) added vital support to the project. The ISL team's existing links within the Deaf and interpreting communities allowed for outreach opportunities to be arranged to capture feedback and sign suggestions pertaining to the glossary.

To conclude, this glossary hopes to achieve greater accessibility and enhanced understanding of political discourse through ISL. This project has created a culture of collaboration with Deaf interpreters which will continue to be fostered within the ISL team's work. As a direct result of the development of this glossary, lexical gaps which previously presented a challenge to the ISL team are now being bridged within parliamentary interpretations. It is hoped this new ISL glossary of parliamentary terminology will increase knowledge of the work and proceedings of the HoO.

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Appendix

List of ISL parliamentary glossary terms:

1	Amendment
2	Appendix
3	Attorney General
4	Back Benches
5	Brexit
6	Cabinet
7	Capital Funding
8	Chief Whip
9	Citizen
10	Coalition
11	Commencement Matters
12	Committee
13	Standing Committee
14	Select Committee
15	Joint Committee
16	Special Committee
17	Constituencies
18	Council of State
19	Councillor
20	Cross Border
21	Customs Union
22	Delegation (EU etc)
23	Democracy
24	Dignitary
25	Directive
26	Division
27	Engagement
28	Estimates for Public Service
29	Fiscal
30	Framework
31	Front Bench
32	Governance
33	Guillotine
34	Heads of State
35	House of Commons
36	House of Lords
37	Houses of the Oireachtas
38	Implementation
39	Initiative
40	Judiciary
41	Laid Documents
42	Left Wing
43	Legislation
44	Leinster House
45	Manifesto
46	Motion

47	No Deal Brexit
48	Northern Ireland Assembly
49	Nomination
50	Opposition
51	Oversight
52	Political Party
53	President Elect
54	Prime Minister (UK)
55	Priority Questions
56	Private Members Bill
57	Public Bill
58	Programme for Government
59	Protocol (Northern Ireland)
60	Provisions
61	Referendum
62	Regional Group
63	Regulation
64	Right Wing
65	Rural Independents
66	Quorum
67	Seal of Office
68	Seat (TD’s)
69	Secret Ballot
70	Secretariat
71	Senator
72	Solidarity
73	Stakeholders
74	Standing Orders
75	Statutory Instrument (SI)
76	Submissions
77	Teachta Dála (TD)/Deputy/Member
78	Topical Issue
79	Terms of Reference
80	Trade Deal
81	Unconstitutional
82	Withdrawal Agreement

8

Journey of Deaf Interpreters in Asia

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ABSTRACT

Deaf Interpreters in Asia are invisible and often forgotten and called as 'less confident or less resilience". However, we would like to show our reasons and experiences being like that because of less awareness and exposure on the definition of Deaf interpreters and the extreme different languages and cultures in Asian countries; less opportunities to achieve professional sign language interpreting training and to work. We also collaborate with Deaf Associations in order to show the importance of the role of sign language interpreters and of the relationship between SLIs and NAD. This leads us to collaborate and provide some training and workshops to train ourselves in the past year, such as International Sign workshops, the definition of interpreter, code of ethics, and team interpreting. However, those training and workshops are very limited and not enough, so to find out our needs and problems, we collect data from at least 5 countries by interviewing at Zoom Meeting. We expect to see some possible solutions, for example, to add the Deaf interpreter views and roles to be included into the sign language interpreting course and to involve Asian Deaf trained interpreters into real practices (skills, knowledge, and attitude) so that they can be qualified interpreters.

Keywords**:** Asian, Deaf Interpreter, Deaf Communities, Training

Introduction

This paper was initiated by five Deaf interpreters in Asia to share our journey, to voice out our perspectives, and to contribute a number of articles written by Deaf interpreters in Asia. Collins and Walker (2005) states that the issues faced by Deaf interpreters should be dealt with by Deaf interpreters themselves. The statement is in line with our thoughts. We, as Deaf Interpreters in Asia (DIA), are often invisible and labelled 'less confident or less resilient'. Those stereotypical views lead us to show the possible reasons and experiences we faced. We believe this is due to the lack of awareness and exposure to the definition of Deaf interpreters

and inadequate opportunities to achieve professional sign language interpreter (SLI) training. It is also due to the extremely different languages and cultures in Asian countries.

In 2018, the World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat in Asia (WFD RSA) and World Association of the Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) Asia collaborated in providing the training and workshops for both Deaf Interpreters (DIs) and Hearing Interpreters (HI) in Macau and again in Japan in 2019. The impact of the training is huge for National Associations of the Deaf (NAD) and National Associations of Sign Language Interpreters (NASLI) since they are now more aware of the importance of the role of sign language interpreters and of the cohesive relationship between SLIs and NAD.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they did not stop the training and workshops instead continued to build more sign interpreters' skills in Asia, such as International Sign workshops, the definition of interpreter, code of ethics, and team interpreting. However, the training and workshops are still very limited and inadequate. The insufficient gaps motivate us to find out our needs and problems.

This study covers the situation of the Deaf in each country, the previous studies on SL interpretation in Asia, the methodology and the findings from interviewing 25 Deaf interpreters from Hong Kong (HK), Indonesia (ID), Japan (JP), Republic of Korea (KR) and Thailand (TH). The study explores their experiences, challenges and possible solutions for documenting our journey of Deaf interpreters in Asia. This paper will also share several recommendations for the sign interpreter community.

Overview

Studies referring to SLIs in Asia are very small, including linguistic issues in interpreting. Shimotani (2015) did prosodic analysis among native Deaf Japanese signers, native Japanese speakers and Hearing JSL interpreters through narratives and found that the Deaf signers consistently nodding to signify intonational phrase boundaries in Japanese Sign Language (JSL). It means that Hearing signers need to learn how and when to nod to be close to native signers. Fung (2014) surveyed the sign interpreting situation in Hong Kong (HK), which called for the urgency of the increase of the professional SLIs and DIs. Suwiryo and (2018) conducted a case study for teaching English to a Deaf student through a SLI. The latest one in Asia was carried out by Sze et al who did a survey in 20 countries. Since there are very few of studies on sign language interpretation in Asia, Sze et al conducted the survey and collected the data and situation on sign interpreting in the 20 countries including the five countries stated earlier. Even though 20 countries were involved, the researchers were only

able to interview Deaf interpreters in eleven countries. In fact, five of the eleven interviewees are the authors of this paper. The study covered the situation in each country, varied interpreting qualities, limited access to services, coverage of services, and other latest information of SL interpreting services in Asia.

Several questions in this paper were first posed by Sze et al. (in press). It gives us the opportunity to response as well. This paper answers two of the questions:

(1) Most of the Asian countries reported in this chapter are developing countries. Their SL interpretation developments lag far behind many developed countries in the West. In what ways can western expertise contribute to and support the development of SL interpretation in Asia?
(2) Team interpreting involving Hearing and Deaf interpreters is still a novel idea in many Asian countries. What can SL interpreters do to promote this practice?

Methodology

Study Design

This study consists of a cross-sectional qualitative research design (Seidman, 2013). The research team comprised individuals from five countries - Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea and Thailand (see Figure 1). We used semi-structured interviews after designing the open-ended questions to ask what their experiences, achievements and hopes/expectations as Deaf interpreters are to maintain the uniformity.

Participants

We invited five deaf interpreters in each country and they voluntarily consented to be interviewed via Zoom Meeting due to time and distance. Participants need to have been working as Deaf interpreters for more than two years. As we stated above, five countries and five DIs from each country were involved, which comes to 25. You can see the year of interpreting of the DIs in table 1. The age range of the participants were 29 to 67 years old. Participants included 12 female, 11 male, and 2 preferred not to say, and they were experienced interpreters working for more than two years. Only seven of them were native signers (3 HK, 3 JP and 1 KR). The others had acquired sign languages as second languages.

We can also see that experience in interpreting was varied, from two to more than 18 years (see Table 1). It is interesting that Japanese and Korean DIs have the longest experiences

in interpreting and other three countries are shorter. It can be noted that Japanese and Korean DIs have more experiences in sign interpreting.

Table 1

Personal backgrounds of Deaf interpreters

Country	Code	Year of Experience
Hongkong	HK_001 - HK_005	2 - more than 4 years
Indonesia	ID_001 - ID_005	2 - more than 4 years
Japan	JP_001 - JP_005	more than 6 years
Republic of Korea	KR_001 - KR_005	12 - 18 years
Thailand	TH_001 - TH_005	more than 6 years

Procedure

This study used interviews first through Zoom Meeting and recorded with cloud recording so it enabled us to review and analyse. We conducted the interview within two months by appointments ahead. Two countries (Thailand and Korea) facilitated the groups at the same time and others interviewed individually (see figure 2 to 5). It was conducted in this way due to our time limitation, yet all the participants gave their consents to be interviewed in a group or individually.

Before the interview, we sent the consent forms with the International Sign version in the QR code stated in the form (see appendix 1.) and the personal background (see appendix 2). We opened the options for them to sign the form via Zoho Forms or PDF file and since all forms and questions were in English, they were asked first if they prefer these to be translated to their native sign languages or to fill in the forms directly on their own.

We asked about their journey as Deaf interpreters. their experiences, challenges, solutions or achievements that they learned while working with Hearing interpreters, Deaf community, Deaf association and interpreter association, if any, and their hopes or recommendations for world sign interpreting, especially in Asia. The average duration of the interview took about 20 minutes per participant.

Ethics

We obtained consent forms and personal background with the IS version from all participants in this study (see the sample of the form in the appendix 1 and 2). To assure participants' confidentiality and anonymity, we removed all identifying information from the transcripts, and we referred to participants according to identification codes. These codes included the two-digit country code of participants and series number (e.g., HK, TH, JP, KR, ID; HK_001, ID_001), which are used in the Results and Discussion section to identify the source of quotations. The study received ethical approval from each participant individually. Some wanted to be anonymous and some gave it freely including their facial images.

Content Analysis

The responses were recorded, collected and categorized based on our three research questions. We rewatched the recording to transcribe to our written language before translating to English. After that, all materials were uploaded to Google Drive, and we analysed and summarized the responses. Each quotation from the participants will be provided in the next section.

Results and Discussion

Our findings are stated below to discuss the experiences, challenges, solution if any and recommendation for all Deaf Interpreter. One of our participants who has deaf parents, HK_002 signed that "... I have already interpreted for my deaf mother since I was a child". The statement is linked to several authors' thoughts on Deaf interpreter definition. Collins and Walker (2005) also remarked that "… and has revealed confusion amongst both Deaf BSL users and Hearing people as to what is Deaf interpreting." Therefore, we wonder if the term Deaf interpreter has a deeper definition than a sign language interpreter as previous studies have no exact answer since several roles may be involved in the term Deaf interpreter.

Experiences and Challenges

Motivation to be a Deaf Interpreter

According to the data, there was only 4 DIs (3 HK and 1 ID) who went through formal training (more than one year). Most of them learnt interpreting from self-motivation and self-participating in any training or workshop related to sign interpretation either online or offline. It is interesting that Japan and Korea have longer time in interpreting experiences, but no formal training yet for Deaf Interpreters. One of them was motivated to be one because of deaf children

since he has experience as a Deaf teacher in a Deaf school. ID_004 said that, "I am a DI due to deaf children who do not understand the adults signing style." Moreover, many of them take the role because of the lack of linguistic competence and low literacy skills of Deaf people. In addition, there are only a few Deaf who know IS.

Working With Hearing and Deaf Interpreters (Team Interpreting)

Bentley-Sassaman and Dawson (2012) wrote about the Deaf-Hearing team interpreting and we found that our informants have experienced similar situation in their findings.

> Unfortunately, there are some Hearing feeders who assume they understand Deaf culture and the Deaf community well but actually not. There are also some Hearing feeders who may apply their experience as a Hearing interpreter (e.g., community interpreting) to a field of a feeder. While their interpreting experience is important, it does not always apply to the field of a feeder, and that may cause Deaf interpreters and Hearing feeders to take time to build a relationship of trust. As a Deaf interpreter, it is important to keep in mind that there are such Hearing feeders and what we can do with them as a team. (JP_004)

Stone and Russell (2011) found that DI tends to work with the Hearing interpreter who understands their native language. This links to one of our responses:

> I think it is good that Hearing interpreters and Deaf interpreters work as a team. However, it is rather easier to work among Deaf interpreters. In the case of Hearing interpreters, it depends on who they are and where they come from. For me, I feel more comfortable to work with a Hearing interpreter from the same region so that we can support each other. With interpreters from the same region, we can clearly express our opinions with each other, but from other regions, it seems more difficult to work together because our culture is more reserved. (JP_002)

However, other DIs have experienced negative attitude from Hearing Interpreter toward DIs such as not accepting the feedback and not respecting them. Though KR_005 needed more DIs because he was at the police station and interpreted for the Deaf criminal from 9 am to 10 pm, he felt that the number of DIs specialized in legal settings needs to be increased so that he can "... change with another Deaf interpreter because it was overtime."

Most of them interpreted in television, mental health, court, international and national events, but they still need more trainings to see if they did appropriately since there were the sparse opportunities for training (Bentley-Sassaman and Dawson, 2012) for Deaf Interpreters. Since the awareness of DIs roles are low, it affects our job and mostly called us to work in limited areas, such as legal, mental health and International Deaf tourists, signers or events which uses IS. Some examples of international events are church meetings, Deaflympics, Deaf

Sport Events, and World Federation of the Deaf events. However, Asian DIs are rarely seen in the international events due to very few opportunities, lack of exposure in IS and training from IS - English and with Hearing interpreters. Although Bentley-Sassaman and Dawson (2012) mentioned that “the participants noted that often they were trained in isolation; meaning Deaf interpreters took training with other Deaf interpreters and not with Hearing interpreters.”, one of participants need a separate training for Deaf Interpreters in Asia as most trainings are for Hearing interpreters.

One consideration to discuss, in legal or court settings, it is important to work thoroughly from preparation to the end.

> I should suggest the provincial court to hire Deaf and Hearing interpreters and discuss first before ready to work in the provincial court. However, I did not know who the Hearing interpreter was, so I have to introduce myself to them and know each other first. I also had to ask if they had experienced working with this and could share with me what happened and will happen in this case. We need to look through the materials and study the case so that we are prepared to interpret and work together. (TH_001)

Though both interpreters are ready, one of the responses demonstrated that:

> I was flustered when a deaf woman victim asked for a change in interpreter because the Deaf did not want a male interpreter but a woman interpreter because of her trauma on sexual assault. (KR_002)

Most of them suggested that they undergo mental health trainings for sign language interpreters.

Challenges Faced by Deaf Interpreters

Most of them faced similar challenges, such as language competence, Hearing interpreters’ attitude in the team, Deaf consumers’ misunderstanding, high competition due to insecurity and unstable profession.

Lack of Awareness on Deaf Interpreter Role

There is a lack of awareness on the DI definition and its roles, which can work for Deaf-blind, Deaf-rural, home-signers and different settings with team interpreting to create one interpretation as Russell (2011) defined below.

> Team interpreting refers to interpreting situations where two or more interpreters are working together with the goal of creating ONE interpretation, capitalizing on each other's strengths, and supporting each other for consistency and success. At the time of the original article, teams were often composed of interpreters who were both Hearing. However, increasingly, we see Deaf and non- Deaf interpreters working in teams.

Though the definition by Russell (2011) said Deaf interpreters are increasing, one of our participants mentioned:

> Whenever a judge and a Deaf ask why a 'Deaf interpreter' came, I have to explain it. It is tiring for me that they not recognize the Deaf interpreter in the court. (KR_004)

This means that DIs have to explain their role with Hearing interpreters. Once the explanation and the work done, the DIs tend to not get paid after work as mentioned by HK_001.

Lack of Opportunities to Study and Work

According to the data, only one country provided a professional diploma in SLI, that is Hong Kong. Even if there is a formal training in the country, not many Deaf apply to be one due to the unaffordable tuition fee. One of Indonesian DIs has got the Certified in Deaf Interpreting in the RIT/NTID and yet most of them only studied by themselves by participating in trainings and workshops. However, one of them said:

> I learnt to be the DI through WASLI Asia and it is very basic and I hope we can meet in-person and longer time so that it would be helpful and satisfying. The workshop needs to be provided more critical understanding and not only basic. (ID_001)

The other participant (ID_005) said that "... hopefully in the future to have the varied trainings and not general one, such as court and mental health training." The Korean and Japanese DIs also required the same. DIs are supportive when the settings are in court, police, health and even mental health due to the linguistic competence. As stated above, DIs have to work to explain their role to get accepted both in study and work equally.

Linguistic Competence

Indonesian DIs strongly emphasized that they love being a DI because they felt pushed to learn Indonesian or IS every time before interpreting. Other countries also need to learn IS and English if they would like to interpret in international events. In addition, all participants feel the urge to improve their knowledge of jargons especially on the subjects of law and mental health and recommend several actions stated below.

Recommendations

Most participants recommended the following to all sign interpreters, agents, NAD and western experts, that:

1. All need to provide Deaf interpreters equal job opportunities as Hearing interpreters;

2. Training and workshops on sign language interpreting including ethics, linguistic competence, especially International Sign and spoken languages, and team interpreting need to be available and held regularly and permanently as possible and need to be provided by professional and experienced ones to increase the numbers of qualified Asian Deaf interpreters in both international and national level;
3. Standard evaluation or assessment for Deaf interpreters is needed;
4. Online platform is needed to share knowledge, survey, scenario or case studies collection among Deaf interpreters in order to improve the quality and competency of Deaf interpreters better;
5. Role Models as Deaf interpreters should be provided to Deaf young people so that they can expand their capabilities to be one;

Conclusion

In our interviews, we noted that the National Association of the Deaf plays a huge and important role in supporting and promoting Deaf interpreters. Deaf interpreters tend to work as interpreters by hands-on experience and self-study without any feedback or formal training. Though there is a formal training, the professional trainers in Asia are still very limited. To have quality training, we have to look for financial support so that we can hire more Western professionals who understand Asian culture well. We hope that we can have both formal training and appropriate assessment for Deaf Interpreters in Asia.

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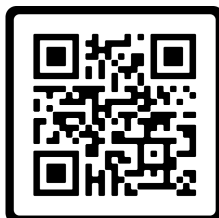
Appendices

Appendix 1. Consent Form for Asian Deaf Interpreters

Consent Form

YouTube link in IS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7TeqSBBKEQ



Consent form in IS version

We are the Asian Deaf Interpreters team now doing a small survey for our paper presentation in the WASLI Conference which is held from 4 - 9 July 2023 before the 19th World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Jeju Island, Korea. In order to find out the similarities and differences among ADIs experiences, challenges and achievements, we would like to collect them from you. Your signing will be recorded to future analysis and useful archives. The video recording will be used as our internal reference and for academic purposes only. Images of your face will not appear in our paper.

You can withdraw from the interview at any time for any reason without any penalty and you can have a copy of the recording and our published paper. If you have any questions, you can contact us at asiadeafinterpreter@gmail.com.

I, ________________ (full name), have read the above description and understand the purpose of the interview. I agree to participate in this interview described above. I understand that the recording of my signing will only be used for academic purposes. I also understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the interview at any time.

Full Name: ______________________________ Signature: ___________________________

Date: ______________________________

Appendix 2 Personal Background of deaf interpreters

NUMBER_____

1. NAME ____
2. COUNTRY____
3. PHONE____
4. EMAIL ____
5. DATE OF BIRTH __________________ 6. GENDER _______________
7. AGE BECAME DEAF
   0-2 YEARS _______ 3-6 YEARS ______ OLDER THAN 6 YEARS _______

8. AGE LEARNED TO SIGN
   0-2 YEARS _______ 3-6 YEARS ______ OLDER THAN 6 YEARS _______

9. TYPE, NAME OF SCHOOL, AND YEAR
   1. MAINSTREAM SCHOOL
   SCHOOL ___________________________________ YEAR ____--____

   2. DEAF SCHOOL (DAY) ____
   SCHOOL ___________________________________ YEAR ____--____

   3. DEAF SCHOOL (RESIDENTAL) ____
   SCHOOL ___________________________________ YEAR ____--____

10. COMMUNICATION BY TEACHER
   1. SPEAK ONLY ____________
   2. SPEAK AND SIGN ____________
   3. SIGN BY WORDS ____________
   4. SIGN LIKE DEAF ____________

11. AMOUNT OF INTERACTION WITH DEAF PEOPLE (using scale 1 2 3 4 5)
MOST OF THE TIME _____________ A LOT ________________

SOMETIMES __________________ A LITTLE _______________

12. CHECK THE FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE DEAF (HAVE OR NONE)
FATHER _________ MOTHER ________ ELDER SIBLING _________
YOUNGER SIBLING ________ OTHER _________

13. CHECK THE FAMILY MEMBERS WHO SIGN (SIGN OR NONE)
FATHER _________ MOTHER ________ ELDER SIBLING _________
YOUNGER SIBLING ________ OTHER _________

14. WORK EXPERIENCE
YEAR OF INTERPRETING WORK ________
WORK PLACE: TV, MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, COURT, OTHER_________

15. TRAINING (short answer)
WORKSHOPS? ANY CERTIFICATION?

IF NO TRAINING, HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERPRETER?

NOTES:

9

LSC SIGNS AT THE REACH OF A CLICK

Sara Costa Segarra
Judit Murguía Combalía
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ABSTRACT

Documentation and resources for Catalan Sign Language (LSC) signs in specific fields are scarce if not non-existent. Most professional sign language interpreters (SLI) have no reference material in specific fields for preparing their work ahead of time due to this lack of information. The Association of Sign Language interpreters and guide-interpreters of Catalonia (ACILS) believed that developing a mobile application (Signapp) would be the best approach to provide the signing community with a daily use tool that includes LSC signs in specific fields. The application also includes a 'Suggestion' tab that allows users to submit their own unique sign, making it an even more useful tool. Our long-term goals include increasing the number of signs and improving the user experience. These enhancements will be driven by our team as well as direct user feedback. However, we see Signapp as a tool not only for assisting SLI in their daily tasks, but also for spreading LSC knowledge beyond the signing community and for raising the Hearing community's awareness of sign languages.

Keywords: SLI; LSC; glossaries; specific terminology; useful tools; technology

Introduction

Our Territory and its Nuances

Catalonia is located in northeastern Spain by the Mediterranean Sea, and it extends 32,108.2 square kilometers. According to the Department of Social Rights (2021), there are 7,722,203 inhabitants, 34,675 of whom are Deaf People. LSC is the sign language used by Catalan and Menorcan Deaf and Deafblind People. Despite its small size, the richness of LSC is diverse. LSC variations exist throughout the territory, as do dialects within spoken languages in many parts of the world. Within the Catalan and Menorcan territory, we can differentiate three large regions with their own dialect variety: Lleida variety, Menorcan variety and the rest. It must be said, however, that there are other smaller varieties, as well as domestic signs, that

Deaf and Deafblind people use in their daily lives. Despite this, most of the interpreting services are concentrated in Barcelona, resulting in interpreting service gaps that skew towards the Barcelona LSC variation, which is the most used.

The Need

At present, the LSC situation is somewhat precarious. On the one hand, it has a research department within Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) that investigates the LSC linguistic behaviors, which is very good for the status of the language. However, on the other hand, LSC lacks a dictionary that specifies what is normative and what is not. There are many resources and tools available for learners, such as websites and apps, but they are insufficient for expert users. Yet, over the years, groups of Deaf People and Deaf experts have collaborated on LSC terminology projects, creating glossaries in various formats in specific fields. Nonetheless, many of them are already out of date, difficult to access, or not extensive enough. We will go over it more in depth later.

Due to the lack of information, we estimate that there are approximately 200 active sign language interpreters (SLI) in Catalonia and Menorca, who are LSC expert users in need of more exhaustive reference material. Depending on the field, LSC resources and documentation for expert SLI are actually very limited, difficult to access, obsolete, or even nonexistent. Because of this information gap, most sign language interpreters can only learn LSC and its nuances while studying, working, or directly interacting with Deaf people. As a result, we frequently find ourselves in situations where we need additional resources to ensure accuracy, fluency, and professional growth, but no place to go to find these answers.

Furthermore, the number of Deaf young people enrolling in university is steadily increasing. Most of the terminology in their fields of study is often specific or less common, forcing both Deaf and SLI to devise a 'transitory sign arrangement' that may even vary throughout the study term. When there are multiple Deaf students in the same field at different universities, multiple proposals are inevitably made. In some cases, these sign arrangements become a sign that is then used by other Deaf and SLI people until it is accepted by society. However, this is not always the case, and the signs simply vanish due to disuse.

ACILS

Before we get into the specifics of the project, we would like to explain what ACILS is and what it has accomplished since it was founded. ACILS was born in 1991 as the first territorial SLI Association in Spain. Its foundation came in response to the SLI's need for an

entity to represent them, as the profession grew gradually. These SLI were mostly children of Deaf signer parents who had done interpreting tasks due to a lack of professionals and had learned their interpreting skills by assisting them in communicating with the hearing world. By that time, SLI had been accredited by the associative movement of Deaf People from its different associations and federations who were the only institutions that professionally trained and formed SLI. Some SLI also obtained a non-regulated accreditation by INCANOP (Catalan Institute of New Professions).

With the establishment of ACILS and its subsequent rise in memberships, the entity was able to participate and collaborate in many significant SLI achievements. A Royal Decree in 1995 established a Higher Technician in Sign Language Interpretation Associate Degree, and ACILS was involved in its development. An Association of Spanish SLI was founded in 1990, a year before ACILS. Later, in 1995, it started the process of becoming FILSE (Spanish Federation of Sign Language Interpreters and Guide-Interpreters), which was founded in 2001, with ACILS as a founding member. Following that, it contributed to creating the first university degree that included a sign language plan, which began in 2008. Furthermore, ACILS has organized, participated in, and/or hosted national and international congresses, conferences, meetings, seminars, forums, courses, workshops, and projects.

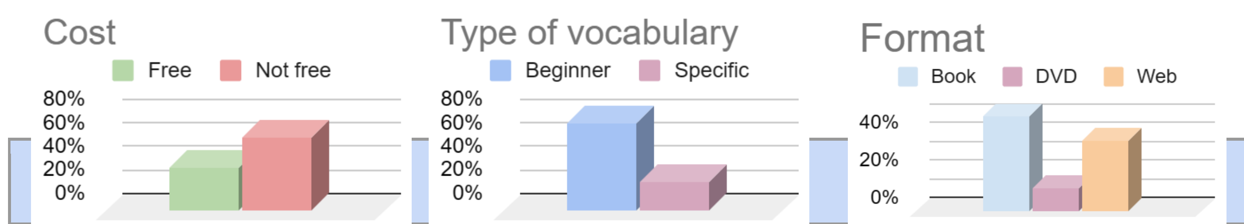
The Project

Some Research

When we identified a need, we did some preliminary research into what had been done in the past, both in LSC and in other sign languages. We looked for applications and websites that used specific and uncommon terminology.

LSC resources				
Resource	Cost	Type of vocabulary	Format	Notes
Basic vocabulary Catalan Government Department of Culture	Free	Beginner	Website	Incomplete and very general.
Primer diccionari general i etimològic de la llengua de signes catalana (Ramon Farrerons)	Not free	Beginner	Book	No images.
Aprenem LSC! Llibre 1	Not free	Beginner	Book	

LSC resources				
Resource	Cost	Type of vocabulary	Format	Notes
Aprenem LSC! Llibre 2	Not free	Beginner	Book	
Medicines i salut LSC	Not free	Specific	Book	Obsolete.
Sematos	Free	Beginner	Website	297 signs. Categories. Search for signs A-Z. Search for grammatical categories.
Mira què dic	Free	Beginner	Website	Old or obsolete signs.
DVD	Not free	Specific	DVD	Non-accessible. Scarce and obsolete regarding format and signs.

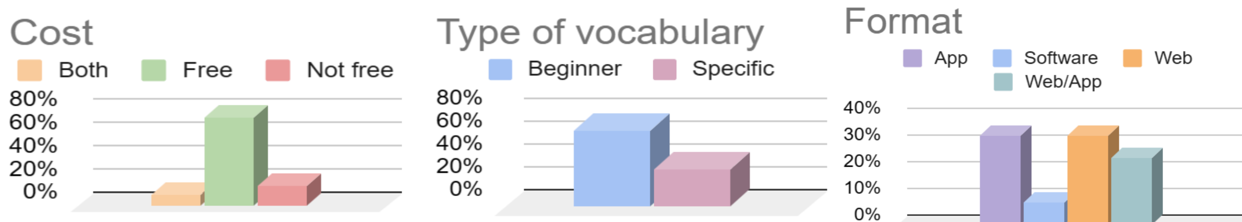


Resource	**Language**	**Cost**	**Type of vocabulary**	**Format**	**Notes**
Spread the sign	All SL	Free Not free	Beginner	Website App	Fast charging videos. Easy use. Non-homogeneous. Many missing signs
DILSE	LSE (Spanish SL)	Free	Beginner	App	Includes definitio[n] Slow but useful. 3500 signs. Sign of the day. Favorites. Sharing is possibl[e] Picture and video.

Other languages resources					
Resource	**Language**	**Cost**	**Type of vocabulary**	**Format**	**Notes**
Sematos	LSE (Spanish SL)	Free	Beginner	Website	6076 signs. Categories. Search for signs A-Z. Search for grammatical categories.
Singschool app	ASL (American SL)	Free	Specific	Website App	Includes definitions. Useful and easy. Categories. Sign of the day. Download available. Search by handshape. Games for practice. Fast charging videos. Slow motion.
ASL BSL Pro (Flashcard S)	ASL (American SL) BSL (British SL)	Not free	Beginner	App	Non-homogeneous. Signs are repeated by different singers. Not easy to search. 20,000 signs No categories Includes written definitions. Includes tag with the source.
Auslan Dictionary	Auslan (Australian SL)	Free	Specific	Website App	Includes definitions. Not very extensive. Feedback allowed. Non-homogeneous.

Other languages resources					
Resource	**Language**	**Cost**	**Type of vocabulary**	**Format**	**Notes**
NGT Dictionary	NGT (Dutch SL)	Free	Specific	Website	Search by handshape and other parameters. Includes examples.
Dictionary on Psychological Terms	DGS (German SL)	Free	Beginner	Website	Website not-working.
Dictionary	DGS (German SL)	Free	Beginner	Sofware	Currently unavailable. 18,000 signs. Over 100 categories. Search for signs A-Z. Search by handshape. Slow-motion.
Sematos	LSF (French SL)	Free	Beginner	Website	3605 signs. Categories. Search for signs A-Z. Search for grammatical categories.
LeDicoElix	LSF (French SL)	Free	Specific	App	Many signs are missing. Includes definitions in sign language. Sharing is possibl 15,300 signs.
Dizionario LIS	LIS (Italian SL)	Not free	Beginner	App	3300 signs and 600 frases. Search by handshape. Slow-motion.

Other languages resources					
Resource	**Language**	**Cost**	**Type of vocabulary**	**Format**	**Notes**
DEP Dictionari	African SL	Free	Beginner	App	5000 signs. Categories. Not useful for interpreters.
MAL KVK	KSL (Korean SL)	Free	Beginner	App	Games for practice. Very beginners.
Sign Language Station	JSL (Japanese SL)	Free	Beginner	App	Very beginners. Explanations such as the origin of the expression.



As previously stated, the first thing we found in LSC were many basic tools for new learners in various formats, mostly websites, books, social network profiles, or YouTube videos created by either individual (Deaf or Hearing), students, or Deaf People associations. Most of the time, such basic tools are unsuitable for experts, whereas SLI requires less common terminology glossaries. Due to a lack of reference and normative material, the basic ones may be useful only in some cases or situations where SLI need to reassure simple signs or compare them across different regions.

The specific reference material in LSC tends to be in book format. The issue with books is that when signs fall in disuse, they cannot be updated as fast, so they swiftly become obsolete. The same is true for DVD formats and websites that are no longer updated due to a lack of funds.

We looked for reference material in other sign languages to see if other countries had the same problems as Catalan SLI and, if so, how they solved them. With the exception of American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL), the results were very similar, as many more sign languages have similar situations as LSC, so what we found were

essentially the same kinds of tools for beginners. We were able to find a plethora of additional resources with specific signs in ASL and BSL, including cell phone apps, though some of them were not free. Finally, we discovered that most sign languages have an online basic dictionary, either in website or app format, some of which also included specific signs.

The Idea

For all the aforementioned reasons, an efficient tool that addresses these terminological requirements was critical. Some institutions are already working to develop various types of resources based on a corpus of Deaf people's language usage, and as a result, normative sign dictionaries may be published in the future. However, these processes can take years to complete, and we believed that there had to be a better and faster way. At ACILS, this prompted us to develop a resource that is open to the public and accessible to all. In our current era, we thought that developing a mobile application would be the best approach because it would provide users with quick access to any sign at any time. Not to mention that it simplifies updates as our LSC database grows over time and we accept user suggestions.

Methodology

Shaping the Product

We contacted a company that develops cell phone applications after we had roughly decided what we wanted and entrusted them with the development of the application. We explained our requirements, and they made several suggestions from which we eventually chose one. One of the most significant issues we encountered was that the technicians had little knowledge of sign language and the Deaf community, so it took them longer than expected to understand the purpose of the application. As a result, we had to make numerous changes and arrangements in terms of color, usage, and interface until it met our expectations.

We had numerous meetings, and the process was lengthy. It took over two years to make all of the decisions and finally find the best design, the best logo, and the colors we wanted to use, among other technical features, to create the app itself and launch it. We wanted a very good tool from the beginning, so we hired a good company to handle the project because we wanted an excellent result, which meant spending more money. That was the other issue we faced. Because the application was very expensive, we had to divide the budget into two years rather than one. We designed the app first while recording signs, then built it and finally launched it.

It is worth noting that, due to our lack of knowledge and experience in such projects, we designed the methodology as we went along. As a result, we have been forced to make changes in many areas to avoid becoming stuck at certain points during the process. As a result, we have been and continue to be very open to new proposals and recommendations with the goal of improving our way of doing things and avoiding potential future mistakes.

Funding

The funds for this project were provided by the Catalan government, which has supported us over the years through a grant from the Department of Linguistics Policy for the promotion and dissemination of Catalan sign language. This type of project is covered by 80%, with ACILS providing the remaining 20%. This is why we value our members' contributions so much; without them, the project would not exist today.

We consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have the Catalan Government's support, as we are a non-profit organization with limited resources. We are aware many Deaf communities around the world lack government support. As a result, we are deeply grateful that we can rely on such grants to protect and enhance LSC and our work, thanks to projects like this, and we hope to do so in the future. We certainly believe that this is an important issue that must be addressed.

Glossaries Gathering and Collaboration with The Deaf

Deaf people provide all the signs in the application. We began by contacting all Catalan Deaf Associations and asking if they had any sign glossaries that they would like to include in the app. We began working with some associations that lend us their material after receiving a positive response. We are currently collaborating with four Deaf Associations and five Deaf Individuals, who have generously shared their materials with us. This figure will rise as the project moves forward.

At the same time, we created and continue to create lists of concepts in various fields using an Excel table and organizing them by topic. To find specific terminology in each field, we look for online Catalan dictionaries, glossaries, and specific resources, and from these concepts, we create Excel tables that will help us control the status of signs later.

When the concept lists are complete, we share them with associations or Deaf individuals who we know are experts in a specific field, or who are involved in the Deaf educational community and know more signs than others. They then send us videos, books, or

whatever format their material is in, and save the signs given in files that are ready to be recorded.

We make collaborative agreements with the organizations and work together to ensure maximum sign accuracy. This work is ongoing because the creation of glossaries never ends. There is still much to be done in terms of specific terminology, and Deaf people are constantly preparing new material, albeit slowly. As a result, we anticipate that our collaborative work with associations will continue over time, allowing us to keep the app constantly updated. As what we do is entirely voluntary, and Associations have limited funding and time to devote to us, the process is slow but never ceases.

Finding Deaf experts has been and continues to be a rather challenging task. The Catalan Deaf Community is quite small, and those who commit to terminology are very few. Furthermore, Deaf people primarily work in telemarketing, administrative tasks, collection management, production, cleaning, or gardening. This means that finding experts in certain fields is difficult because they have never been in these environments and thus have never needed to use that terminology. Recently, the number of SL courses for Hearing people has increased significantly, so many Deaf people have begun to pursue teaching qualifications, and the number of SL teaching position jobs has increased significantly. Nonetheless, because these lectures they specialize in are intended for beginner-level learners, specific terminology remains a difficult problem to solve.

Finally, because an LSC dictionary containing standardized signs never existed, different Deaf individuals have many different signs to designate one concept. A good example is the 'Food' category, where many different signs appeared unexpectedly, and we ended up with four different signs for one concept. However, since our goal was never to create a sign dictionary, but rather a collection of current language usage, we solved the problem by including all the signs we were given. We will then leave the sign distinguishing part to Deaf experts for further research and the possible LSC dictionary creation.

Recording

We begin recording once we have enough signs for a glossary. All the actors and actresses in the app are Deaf and have LSC teacher certification to ensure that sign handshapes are performed correctly. Furthermore, the fact that they are LSC users and teachers allows us to be more precise with the correctness of the signs.

A recording session requires at least four people, though we are considering increasing this number. There is the actor/actress, the camera operator, and at least two board members; sometimes there are three of us.

Figure 1. Shooting session

The shooting session takes place in Barcelona, in a room rented from a Deaf Association thanks to an agreement signed at the start of the Project. When we arrive, the cameraman sets up the equipment (lighting, green screen, position, room temperature, and so on). The actors/actresses then take their places as directed by the camera operator. Actors and actresses all wear the same black T-shirt that we purchased for them, so that they all look similar in the videos and the app maintains a minimum of coherence. These sessions can last up to 8 hours, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour break in between, and are usually held on weekends.

The board members require two computers for the recording session. In one of them, we have a sheet with the signs that are being recorded and we number them as they are already recorded, and the same person tells the Deaf actor/actress which sign needs to be recorded. The other person checks the correct Catalan word spelling and how the sign should be done (handshape, movement orientation, etc.) using the other computer and the glossary provided. At the same time, this person double-checks the recorded video and ensures that the actor/actress performed it correctly. We have confirmed that when we are three, a third person must complete this last task for us to work more diligently and avoid future mistakes.

Figure 2. Shooting set

In general, shooting sessions go smoothly and we can record up to 400 signs per session, which is a significant number. Nonetheless, we anticipate that we will improve as a result of practice and session organization, allowing us to increase the number of signs recorded each time.

Organizing, Editing, and Reviewing

Once recorded, the cameraman, who also edits the videos, uploads the videos with the recorded signs to a cloud that we all share to manage all of the data. The videos are unnamed and unedited in the first step so that we can name them and separate those that are ready to edit from those that need to be repeated. Then we file them in the appropriate category, and the editor can download them again to edit.

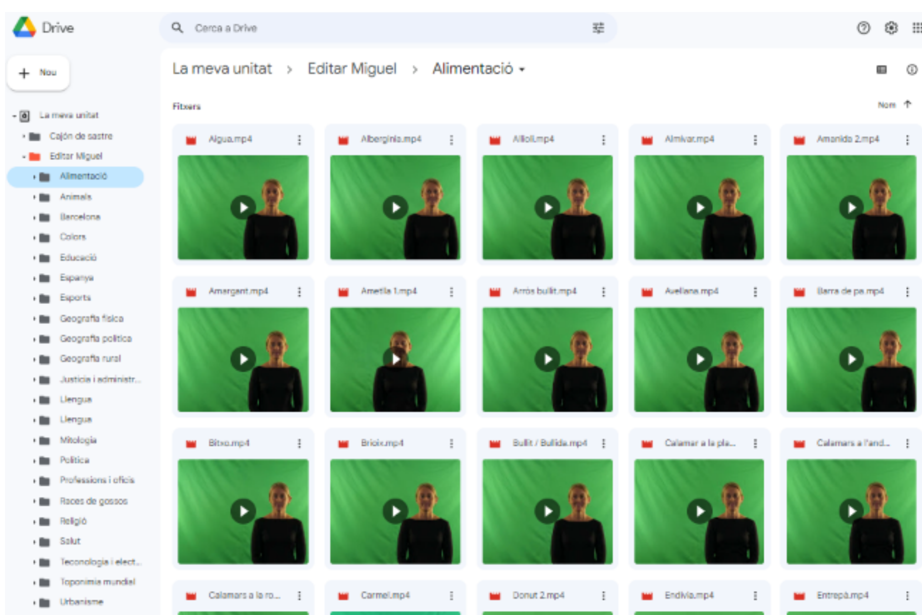


Figure 3. Unedited signs drive

At this point, we update the sheets with check boxes that contain all the concepts we have, and we check whether the videos have been recorded, edited, revised, or published, as well as who signed them and to which category they belong, for example. Hence, when we go over the videos again, we can uncheck the ones that need to be moved back to recording, if that is the case, and all the information we need to know for each sign is unified in one table.

Signapp

Fitxer Edita Mostra Insereix Format Dades Eines Extensions Ajuda

Comparteix

B1 fx Signe

	Id	Signe	Revisat	Editat	Imatge	Push	UPF	Data de p
68	58	Calamars a la romana	☑	☑	Vanessa	☐	☑	29/12/2
74	64	Carbassó	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	17/02/2
92	82	Col	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☑	17/02/2
581	571	Monument a Colom	☑	☑	Vanessa	☐	☑	29/12/2
665	655	Encantados	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
930	920	La Rioja 2	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
1393	1383	Davantal	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
1433	1423	Pinta	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
1434	1424	Pis	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
1563	1553	Amnistia 2	☑	☑	Vanessa	☐	☐	29/12/2
1664	1654	Estat 2	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
1948	1938	Conserge 1	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
1949	1939	Conserge 2	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
1954	1944	Degà / Degana	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
2044	2034	Paleta	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
2095	2085	Tinent d'alcalde / Tinenta d'alcalde	☑	☑	Sancha	☐	☐	29/12/2
2307	2297	Parroquià / Parroquiana	☑	☑	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
2346	2336	Artrosi	☑	☐	Pau	☐	☐	29/12/2
2444	2434	Ciutat del Vaticà	☑	☑	Vanessa	☐	☐	29/12/2
2446	2436	Copenhagen	☑	☑	Vanessa	☐	☐	29/12/2

Resum Taula Rocket Base — Es mostren 42 de 2.769 files — Explora

Figure 4. Excel

The editor knows that the actor/actress must be in the center of the image and the ACILS logo must be in the upper right-hand corner of the video during the editing phase. Concerning the background, the technician presented us with several ACILS logo blue options, and we chose the one that seemed gentler for the eyes and would provide a more pleasing contrast with the signer.

Figure 5. Sign video

As soon as the videos are finished, the editor uploads them to the cloud, and we move them to their final files, where we go over them one by one. Then we check the edited box in our table, and the videos are ready for review by the Pompeu Fabra University sign language department's group of Deaf experts.

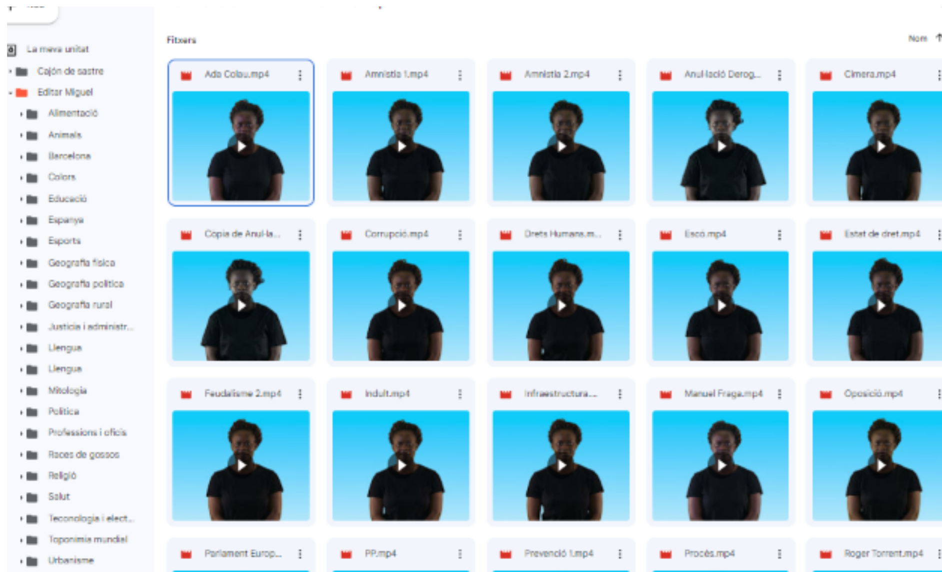


Figure 6. Final signs drive

We have another shared file with a category Excel sheet and a folder with all the videos for the reviewing team. They go through each one individually, noting on the sheet whether the sign is well made in terms of linguistic parameters and whether it is a valid LSC sign. If any signs need to be recorded again, we place them in the appropriate folder so that we know which ones need to be filmed again. We also uncheck the edited box in our table, and this category is now ready for publication in the app.

Figure 7. UPF Revision

Publishing the Signs in the App

The developers of the application taught us how to manage the video publication. On the one hand, they created an easy Excel interface for us to control the video naming. This interface enables us to specify which videos can or cannot be viewed in the app, which signs are popular or recently added, and to which category the signs belong. In this table, we can organize and name the signs that users see in the app and tell the program to enhance it with a specific video name.

Figure 8. Naming signs Excel

On the other hand, they showed us how to use another program called Filezilla to add or remove videos from the app. In this program, we add video files that must be in mp4 format, and the naming must match what we wrote in the previous Excel table. If the name does not match, the program will not recognize it and will not display it.

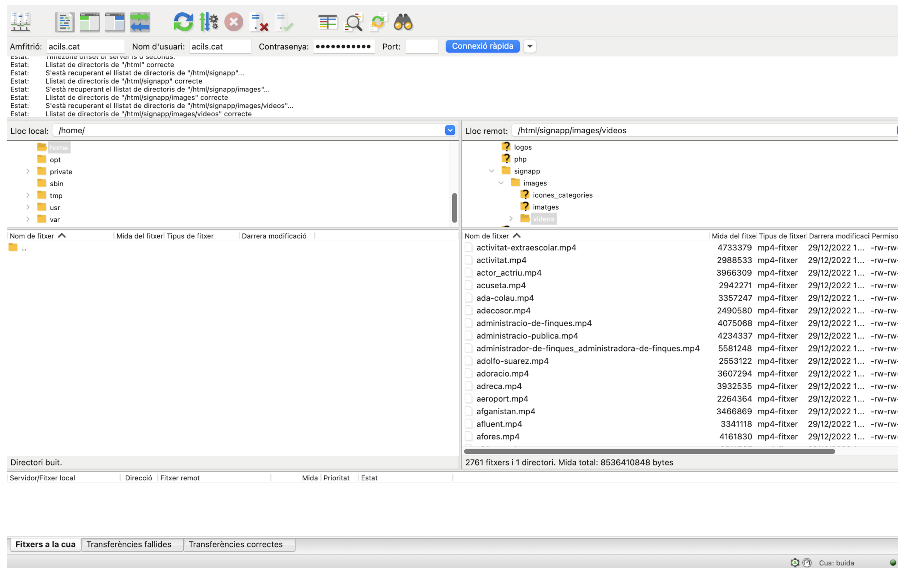


Figure 9. Filezilla

Changes, Inconveniences and Solutions

The sessions appear to be going as smoothly as they possibly can. However, we learned that some issues arose following the recordings. When we use a computer to name and organize the videos, and the image is much larger, we can see more clearly what signs must be repeated because something is not clear enough for them to be in an app.

We find either technical issues, such as light, which causes the video to be too dark, or sign issues, such as handshapes that are difficult to understand due to fast signing, signs that are too small, or signs that are incorrect, among other things. It wastes our time and money. That is why we decided that it would be better to have three board members or ACILS members at least for future recordings, because we realized that there are too many things to be aware of during the shooting, and we can hardly handle them with just two of us. Thus, better task distribution among us resulted in better outcomes and work.

Signs are another major source of consternation for us. It is difficult to determine whether the sign we were given is the 'correct' one, or at least accepted by the Deaf community. When the signs are revised, many of them must be removed because there is no agreement among the Catalan Deaf Community that those are the signs most used for the concepts. It occurred to us that adding a 'Suggestion' tap that allows users to send videos, photos, or text of

their opinion, just to let us know the sign they use or tell us if it is valid or not, would be a possible and plausible solution.

The Result: Signapp

Final Decisions

For us, the most important thing was to create an app that was simple, intuitive, and easy to manage. Users become quickly fatigued when they must click too many times to visualize what they require. As a result, preventing users from becoming stuck on a screen was a top priority. Another important consideration was that the app had to be accessible to Deaf people, so that any text that appears in it is interpreted in LSC. For the time being, the app is entirely written in Catalan and signed in LSC, as most users will be from Catalonia. Regardless, we intend for anyone to be able to download the app, so we will have all texts translated into Spanish and English, though the signs from the glossaries will remain in LSC. We would also like to have videos of each text interpreted to LSE (Spanish sign language) in the Spanish version and to IS (International signs) in the English version if we have enough time and money. The category icons were also carefully chosen. We wanted them to be clear, understandable, and visually appealing to capture the attention of users.

The app's name and logo were also difficult to choose. Concerning the name, the board made several proposals with various names, but we could not agree on which was best for the app, so we put it to a vote among ACILS members via a simple survey, where they could either vote for an option or make their own. We received 40 responses, and it resulted in the following:

ACILSCat: 6 votes

LSCapp: 0 votes

GLOSSILS: 5 votes

SignILS: 1 vote

ACILSsign: 2 votes

ACILSC: 5 votes

LSCsign: 2 votes

LSCgloss: 4 votes

LSCat: 3 votes

Signapp: 9 votes

LSCatApp: 1 vote

<u>Member proposal</u>

ACILSgloss: 1 vote

None: 1 vote

Tria una opció o afegeix la teva idea
40 respostes

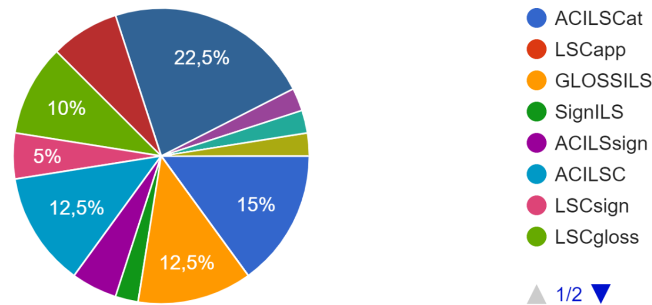


Figure 10. Response graph

We had many reservations about the logo. We requested that the company present us with some proposals, but none of them piqued our interest. Then, we decided to start with a sign for the app to help us visualize how the logo could look. We knew from the start that we wanted to combine the Catalonia sign with the Signapp sign. However, nothing appeared to be what we desired. We set the sign aside and continued requesting proposals from the company. We also wanted to avoid ACILS blue, and since turquoise is the 'official' color of LSC, we decided that this would be the one, but fused with ACILS blue because it is an appealing color for an app. We had something to offer the company at this point: use the four vertical bars that define Catalonia, as well as a turquoise blue. They then made some better proposals, from which we were able to select one that was acceptable to all board members.

Figure 11. Signapp logo

We finally decided to ask Deaf People about the Signapp sign because they are always more inventive, in the sense that they can create signs for people or things much easier. We sent them our logo, and proposals started pouring in. We desired a non-bimanual sign so that we could begin to discard some suggestions that were too long, complex, or inaccessible. After

about a month of deliberation and discussion, we all agreed that Signapp would have the following sign.

Figure 12. Signapp sign

Screens Description

When users download Signapp, they see a 'Welcome' screen for the first time, but they can recover it at any time by going to the 'Who we are' screen. As previously stated, all text-containing screens are signed in LSC, and this one is no exception. Our president is the signer who appears in it, welcoming new users to the app and providing a brief explanation of what the app is about. Users can already access Signapp by sliding this screen.

Figure 13. 'Welcome' screen

Users can see the home screen as soon as they enter the app. There are four icons on the bottom bar: 'Home,' 'Categories,' 'Favorites,' and 'Who we are' with the Signapp logo as an

icon. This bar remains constant regardless of which screen users are on, allowing them to switch to another at any time.

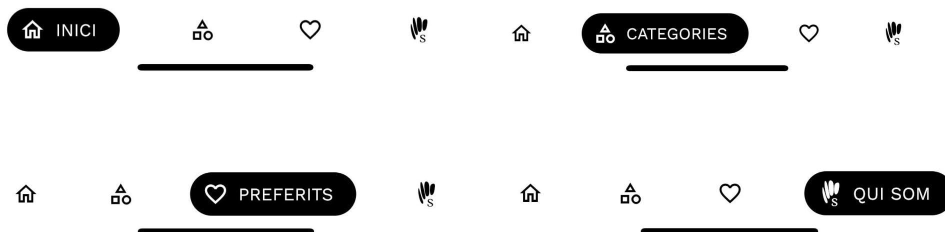


Figure 14. Bottom bar

There are three rows on the 'Home' screen. The first one shows a portion of the app's various categories, and users can swipe the row to see the rest of them. The signs that were recently added are depicted in the second row, and the most popular signs are found in the latter. These three rows can be swiped independently, which means that one can slide while the others remain stationary. Finally, in the upper right-hand corner, there is a magnifying glass that, when clicked, allows users to search for signs by word in any category.

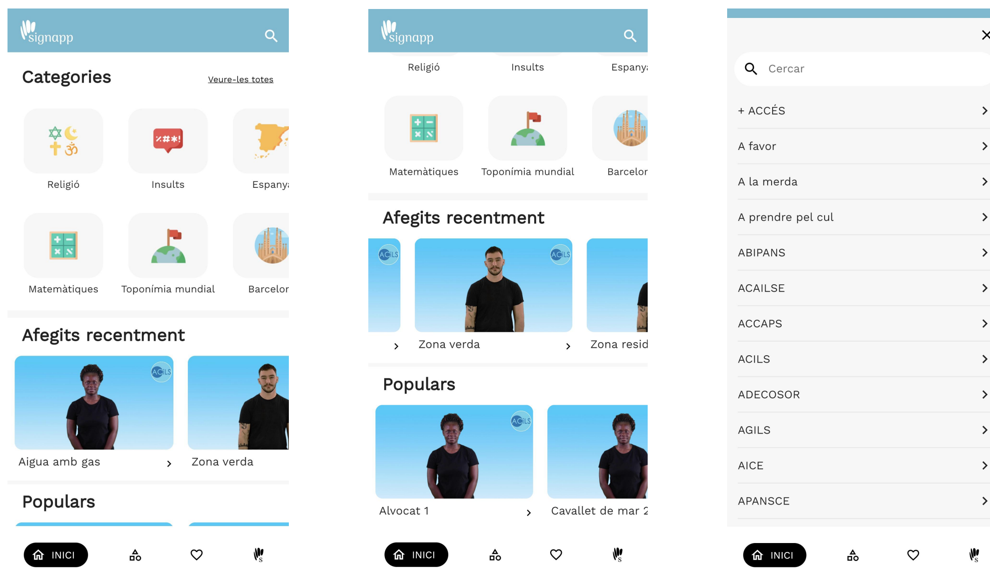


Figure 15. ‘Home’ screen

The 'Categories' screen displays the 32 categories with which we began the app. They each have their own icon that corresponds to the category. Twelve of them are visible on the screen, with the rest visible by scrolling down. Categories can be sorted by most recent or alphabetically in the upper right-hand corner. When users click on a category, another screen appears with a list of all the concepts from that category. Users can then click on any concept

or type a word into the search bar, which will only look into the category they are in. When they are written or selected and clicked, they are directed to the sign screen.

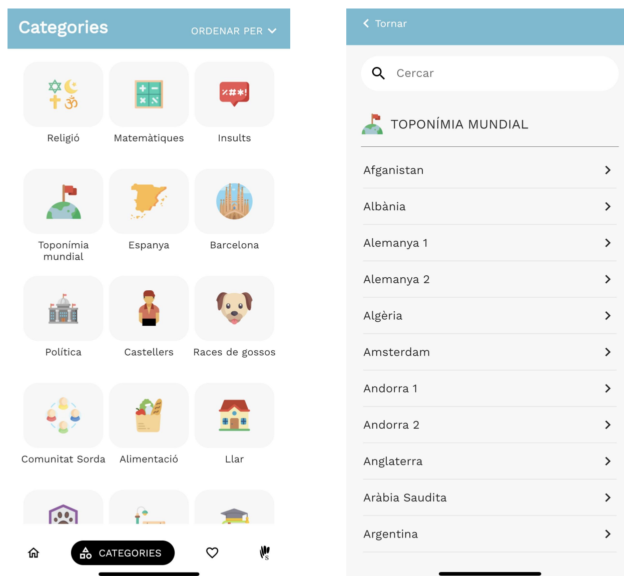


Figure 16. 'Categories' screen

From top to bottom, the sign screen displays the sign name and the video associated with the sign. Underneath the video, there are two buttons side by side: 'Mark as favorite' on the left and 'Share' on the right. When users mark it as a favorite, it is added to their 'Favorites' list. If they want to share it, they can use any app downloaded on their devices to send it to someone or share it on social networks.

Below is a speed control, which allows users to move the bar left or right to make the video run slower or faster. Videos can be paused, rewound, or fast forwarded in full screen mode at any time.

Below, there is text on the left and a video in LSC on the right explaining that if the user does not agree with the sign, has another suggestion, needs clarification, or simply wants to contact us, they can do so by clicking on the 'Suggestion' tab and sending us a video, picture, or text. Finally, there are videos related to the concept chosen further down.

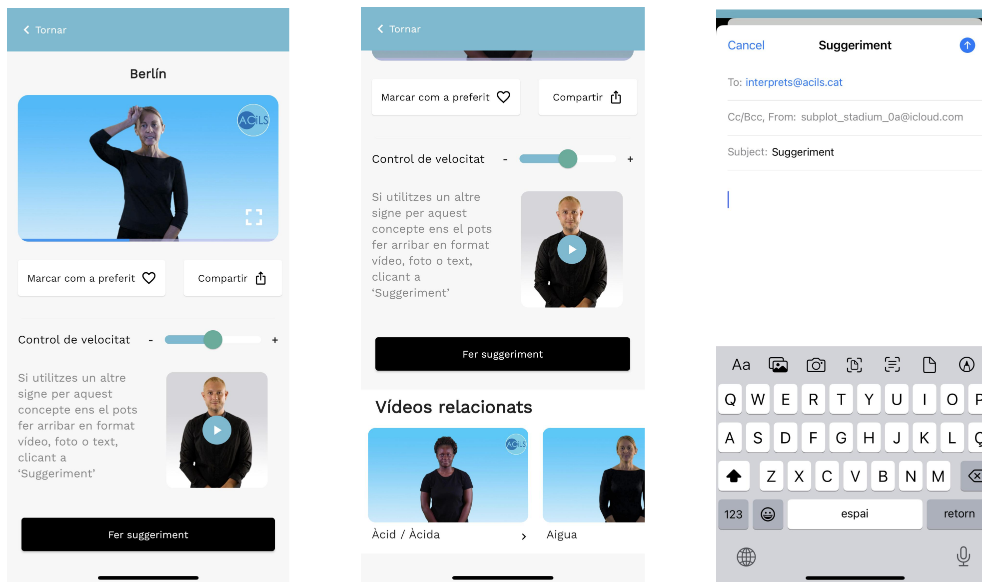


Figure 17. Sign screen

The 'Favorites' screen displays the signs that users have marked as favorites one after the other. These signs can be sorted in the upper right-hand corner by most recent or alphabetically. There is also a search bar at the top for any concept that the user has marked as a favorite. In addition to the video, there is a written concept, an icon of a trash can in case they want to remove that sign from Favorites, and a 'Watch' button that, when clicked, takes users to the Sign screen. Users can also play the video by simply clicking on it.

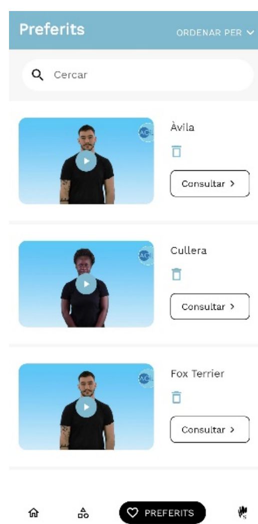


Figure 18. 'Favorites' screen

Lastly, there is a 'Who we are' tab all the way to the right at the bottom bar. This screen contains four buttons with information written and signed on them. 'About Signapp' is the first button. Here is an explanation of what the app is, why it was created, and who it is intended

for. It also states that the actors and actresses are Deaf and that the videos are produced by the ASU association (United Deaf Artists).

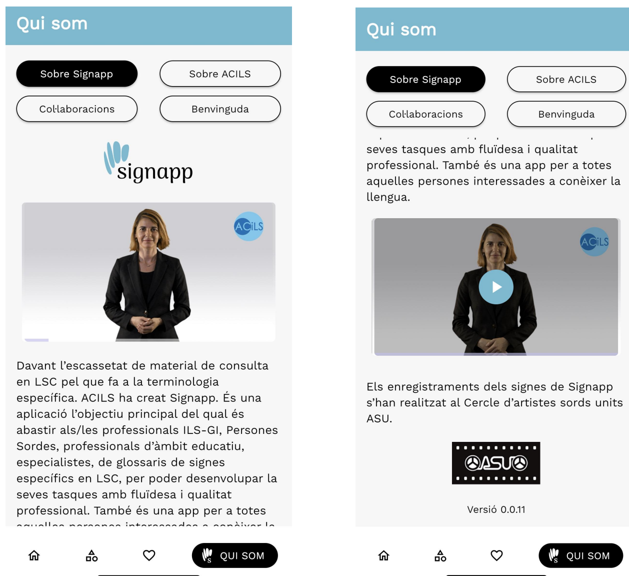


Figure 19. 'About Signapp'

The second button is labeled 'About ACILS'. This screen introduces ACILS briefly and provides users with relevant links, such as the website, a tab that takes users to the form to become an ACILS member, the email, and links to our social media profiles (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook).

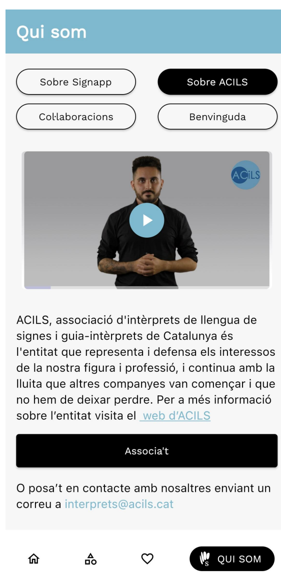


Figure 20. 'About ACILS'

'Collaborations' is the third button. The entities and people without whom the app would not have been possible, as well as the ACILS members, are mentioned here. This screen will be updated whenever a new version is released to keep the collaborators' mentions up to date.

Figure 21. 'Collaborations'

The final button is the 'Welcome' tab mentioned earlier, which you can recover in this section.

This section was signed entirely by ACILS board members who worked tirelessly and endlessly to bring this project to fruition.

Signapp Future

Signapp was introduced to the market on February 18th, 2023, and has been well received since then. Users appear pleased, and ACILS has received numerous compliments on this tool. People are already contacting us through the 'Suggestions' section, and we are saving these suggestions to go over later this year. They are either adding new proposals or making changes to the ones we already have, which do not appear to be sufficiently standardized. With the number of responses, we have received thus far, we can conclude that, as we hoped, Signapp's content is created by and for everyone, which makes us very happy, as one of our main goals has been met.

This year, we are recording new signs to expand existing categories as well as to create new categories that are currently lacking, and we will continue to do so in the future. We were able to use Signapp, which is already on the market, to identify issues that leave room for improvement. We expect to be able to carry out the next update by the beginning of 2024, once we have detected everything we can.

We've already determined that, as soon as the budget allows it, a faster and better program will be required to make internal changes and retire the Excel table. Once the number of signs has grown significantly enough, a backend and a dashboard will be rather indispensable for managing the application content in a much easier and diligent manner. This will save the board members time and effort, as we have many other matters to attend to and goals to achieve for Catalan SLI aside from Signapp.

ACILS foresees Signapp's future as promising, as we have the impression, we will be able to rapidly expand the signs in the app. As a result, we will be able to meet the needs of SLI and the Deaf Community that require immediate solutions to imminent matters.

Furthermore, an app like Signapp can be downloaded by almost anyone on the planet. It is a tool that serves as a portal to sign languages. SL awareness for the Hearing community is unquestionably an issue that must be addressed. We, as SLI, understand how unsettling it is to arrive at work and discover that the other professionals who share space with us, awkwardly have no idea of what kind of professionals we are or what our job is. This makes our job more difficult to complete and, on occasions, truly exhausting. Hence, increasing the number of SL apps, in our opinion, can help society raise awareness and attention to Deaf people and sign languages. That is why we sincerely hope that Signapp is a step toward a brighter future. Signapp is already contributing to the cause, which makes ACILS very proud of the work we are doing, and above all, it makes us believe, beyond question, that it was worth the effort.

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10

Male Sign Language Interpreters: Motivations and Experiences Within a Predominantly Female Profession.

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ABSTRACT

Sign language interpreting is a predominantly female profession in most countries around the world and there is growing recognition of the impact of gender within interpreting. In 2016, I embarked on part-time PhD research examining the motivations for men in the United Kingdom to become sign language interpreters and their experience in the profession. I conducted 25 semi-structured 1:1 interviews and 13 men took part in a closed Facebook group[1]. The aim was to gather data regarding their initial exposure to British Sign Language (BSL) and how that lead to them becoming an interpreter. This paper gives an overview of three parts of the data analysis. Firstly, the three main themes linked to their initial exposure to BSL: via a person, an activity, or an event/observation. Secondly, the motivations to become an interpreter which were categorised as extrinsic or intrinsic. The third part focuses on the further thematic analysis which exposed several themes relating to the experiences of the interpreters. Within this paper, I discuss six main themes which were split into two main categories. The first category explores the experience of men working within BSL interpreting and focuses on any preference for the interpreters to work with other male interpreters versus female interpreters, whether they perceive interpreting to be a linguistic or caring profession, and remuneration. The second category covers experiencing BSL interpreting as a man which includes male status within interpreting, gender norms, and sexuality.

Keywords: Gender, interpreters, exposure to BSL, motivations, experiences

[1] The participants who took part in the 1:1 interview and featured in this paper are Archie, Alfie, Arlo, Bobby, Carter, Charlie, Edward, Elijah, Ellis, Freddie, George, Harley, Harrison, Harvey, Hugo, Jacob, Jenson, Joshua, Jude, Noah, Oliver, Riley, Theo and Toby. Only one participant who took part in a 1:1 interview is not featured in this paper (Henry). The participants who took part in the Facebook group and featured in this paper are: Arthur, Isaac, Jake, Louie, Ollie, Reggie, Rory, Sebastian, Teddy, Zachary. Three participants who took part in the Facebook group are not featured in this paper (Albie, Ethan and Jaxon).

Introduction

My motivation for embarking on this PhD research is strongly rooted in personal experiences of being drawn to the sign language interpreting profession initially, because my niece is deaf. Also, my journey to qualification, experiences in the role of a qualified (hearing) British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, and earlier academic study in the field. Given this context, I was keen to focus on exploring men as a minority within the profession. This research aims to further understandings of the motivations and experiences of men in BSL Interpreting, a predominantly female profession (PFP). In doing so, seeking to answer these research questions:

1. What are the motivations for men to become BSL Interpreters?
2. What are the experience of men in the predominantly female profession of BSL interpreting?

This is the first study of an unexplored topic and will make an original contribution to the existing literature on men in PFPs by focusing on the sign language interpreting profession in the United Kingdom (UK) and providing a platform from which other studies may follow.

We know that the numbers of BSL interpreters in the UK are predominantly female based on the 2021 Census of Sign Language Translators and Interpreters (SLTI) in the UK (Napier et. al., 2021). It was identified that the typical profile of an SLTI is 'a Hearing, straight, white, British woman, 44 years of age, non-religious, with caring responsibilities, self-employed, from England, working predominantly as an interpreter (more so than translator), qualified either through the academic or vocational training system (or combined), registered with the NRCPD[1] and a member of ASLI[2] (p.60).

The objective of this paper is to give readers a sense of the major themes which emerged from the data, achieved by bringing to life the voices of the male interpreters themselves. There is little opportunity to cover in detail the full content of my PhD thesis and so information related to the literature review and methods is omitted. However, if you are interested in exploring this topic further, please email me and I will send you a copy of the thesis once completed.

Exposure to BSL

The first study question sought to uncover the reasons for men to become BSL interpreters. The various events and experiences in which the research participants were

[1] National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People. (www.nrcpd.org.uk).
[2] Association of Sign Language Interpreters (www.asli.org.uk).

initially exposed to BSL had diverse degrees of influence on them and contributed to what eventually drove them to pursue additional education to qualify as an interpreter. There were three main types of exposure identified: a connection with a deaf or Hearing person, an activity or event related to the Deaf community, and the observation of people signing or interpreters at work.

To begin, a relationship with a Deaf or Hearing person in the Deaf community included a deaf family member, a hearing family member who could sign, or a family friend who was deaf or hearing and could use BSL. Harrison remarked that, “My mum was deaf. I lived in a house with my hearing grand-parent's downstairs who didn't use sign language at all and my mum who pretty much only used sign language”. Arthur's father is deaf, and he wrote that "I acquired a foundation of fluent BSL in my youth via family and family friends". This illustrates that it is not just family members impacting young people growing up with deaf parents, but also their broader network with whom they have contact. Hugo had a deaf elder brother and explained his exposure to BSL by saying, “Because I was the youngest sibling… I was thrown into it… I had no choice (laughter). I had to learn this crazy language just to communicate with me brother”.

Secondly, some participants were initially introduced to BSL through an activity or event related to the Deaf community including religious activities, employment or volunteering, and a hobby, course, or chance contact with a deaf person. Teddy attended a sign language class at his grandmother's church, and Edward's mother's church friend's parents were deaf. Similarly, Joshua's mother would sign to people in church, and he recalls that "my mum sort of struggled with learning sign language but I found it relatively easy, so I just carried on and then just really, from there, I just kept learning".

Work and volunteering were additional ways for some participants to become acquainted with BSL. Carter learned BSL while working in the care sector. He said, "I spent 15 years working in care, housing and homelessness services and I just happened to pick up sign language it was just one of my interests and I went to college, and I ended up working with a couple of people, so my skills were slightly over the normal college attendance type skills". Noah started in care work by first taking a holiday job. Toby, on the other hand, worked in the financial industry, and some of his clients communicated through exchanging notes rather than using BSL and he thought “This isn't equal service… So, that was my motivation to start to learn sign language”.

Being interested in learning BSL simply out of interest or as a hobby was also identified in the data. George was at university and saw “a poster on the noticeboard advertising sign

language classes… went along… enjoyed it, and…once finishing university I immersed myself in the Deaf community".

Thirdly, observing signing or BSL interpreters at work was one way that a handful of participants expressed how they were interested in learning BSL. Charlie was unemployed and had no other plans, so he went to a conference with his mother. He remembered, "I was looking and listening to some things they were saying, and I just looked to one side, and I saw some people signing and I gathered they were doing interpreting but became a bit fascinated by it". Another event was an LGBT+ Pride event where Zachary described how he was watching an interpreter who was a man and was "Transfixed how the woman singing moved his hands". BSL users and interpreters on TV was another way some participants saw BSL used. Jenson remembered being a young boy and watching See Hear[1], "So, I guess I had this kind of unknown interest in sign language through watching maybe 'See Hear' or whatever was on the television as a kid, catching it on a Sunday, I don't think I set out to actively view it but when it was on, I would always try and watch it".

Edward remembered "seeing a group of Deaf teenagers at Blackpool pleasure beach signing together and I remember really staring at them and being quite fascinated". Similarly, Theo explained: "I happened to go to a nightclub with some friends, saw some people signing in the nightclub and people were going "oh, that looks really interesting, oh, why don't we learn that?" and decided to enrol at an evening class.

What is highlighted from the data related to initial exposure to BSL is the lack of influence of gender being the key motivator for the men to begin to learn BSL. It was the family or friend relationship or the environment in which the men met Deaf people, which influenced the need or desire to learn BSL, rather than the gender of the Deaf person.

Motivations to Enter Sign Language Interpreting

The data revealed two types of motives: extrinsic (for the good of others) and intrinsic (for the good of oneself) (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These motives, like exposure to BSL, are not mutually exclusive, and findings demonstrated that BSL interpreters can be driven to become interpreters by both reasons.

[1] See Hear is a monthly magazine programme for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the United Kingdom. See: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006m9cb

Extrinsic motivations

An extrinsic motivation is when 'an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p60) which could be an activity that is done for the good of others rather than for the self or in other words, you are doing something because you think you will avoid something unpleasant or will get something in return. These included:

- Providing access to information
- Providing a better service to Deaf people
- Enabling advancement for Deaf people
- Facilitating social justice
- Improving language skills
- Remuneration

An example of an extrinsic motivation was the commitment to equality and empowerment of the Deaf community by providing both formal and informal access to information, thereby reducing barriers that the Deaf community persistently face. Freddie appreciated the many layers to the role and encapsulated the feeling of many of the participants by expressing, “For me my job is to assist with communication. Communication and interaction. And that's it. That's primarily what I'm there for”.

Also, wanting to provide a professional service was highlighted. Archie said, “I am passionate about providing a professional and valuable service to my clients whether they are hearing or deaf”. This in turn enabled enhancement for Deaf people who use interpreters in the workplace and Harrison shared that, “In my life I've seen Deaf people move from very mundane jobs to being able to be in professional roles, initially in Deaf organisations but now in mainstream society”.

Recognising the inequality some Deaf people face motivated Alfie to readdress that imbalance and said, “I'm trying to create opportunities for people on a level playing field for them to get stuff done which other people take for granted.” Archie described this as “making sure everybody has the same bite at the cherry”.

Intrinsic motivations

An intrinsic motivation is ‘the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p56). In other words, you are doing something because of some internal

drive instead of external reward and the behaviour or activity itself becomes the reward. These included:

- Desire for a career change or progression
- Personal skills development
- A desire for interaction with Deaf people
- Enjoying the flexibility, variety, and amount of work available

Many participants had previous careers before becoming interpreters. Carter shared, "rather than it be a chosen career… I think anybody - any male interpreter I’ve met, possibly with the exception of one, they've all just kind of fallen into interpreting". However, some realised the need for skills development and part of this was to become more involved in the Deaf community. Riley said, "I realised that I couldn't just sustain my skills with just one person and that I needed to sort of, you know, get involved in, you know, the wider Deaf community".

The continued interaction with the community was important for participants who had grown up with Deaf family members. Charlie described the feeling of being "emotionally invested" in the Deaf community and Harrison, Oliver, Jude, and Hugo, who all grew up with a deaf family member, felt that interpreting was not simply a job they did for money but connected them on a personal level to the Deaf community, which was something they had grown up in.

Several research participants recognised that an appealing aspect of the role was the flexible working patterns, the variety, and the volume of work available. There were sentiments of delight at the degree of control they had over their time and the interpreting tasks they accepted. Freddie likes interpreting theatre shows because it allows him to spend more time at home with his children, while preparing for the show. He said, “I kind of want to throw the old-fashioned 'man goes to work, woman stays at home and looks after the child' view out the window”. He wants to home-school while his girlfriend goes out to work, thereby bucking the trend of expected masculinities of work. Charlie also saw the value in flexibility and variety when he expressed, “I think the job lends itself to be able to look after your family well and to be able to pick and choose work and really shape your, your income around what you need in terms of your family commitments”.

Joshua highlighted the volume of work available to male interpreters specifically and said, "People told me that there weren't very many male interpreters and so we'd be a lot more in demand, so that just motivated me more I think, than anything else". Bobby remembered being told there was a “lack of or a demand for male interpreters" and went on to say, “I didn't decide

to become an interpreter then, but that made influence at that time". However, this demand resulted in Charlie expressing that "sometimes the hardest thing to do with the job is to say "no" to jobs because you've got to commit to doing other things with your family".

The Experience of Men Working Within BSL Interpreting

The data answering the second research question, which explores the experiences of men working as BSL interpreters in the UK, is presented considering three main themes including 'Working with men vs women' 'Linguistic or caring profession', and 'Remuneration'.

Working with men vs women

Research participants expressed opinions as to whether they would prefer to work with interpreters who are women or men. Rory wrote, "When I create a team for conferences, I will approach the best people (in my circles/opinion) for the job at hand". He is not gender biased and the best person could be a man or a woman. Carter echoed this by sharing, "I don't have a preference based on gender; I have a preference based on skill sets".

The additional support the co-interpreter provides was expressed by Ollie when he wrote, "My preferences are based on the competence and supportiveness of the co-worker rather than any gender divide". Hugo shared, "I don't have a preference. I just want the person that I'm working with to be able to back me up". Harvey felt that interpreters who were women were more supportive than interpreters who were men. He said, "The differences I have noted in my experience is that female interpreters tend to be much more up for working collaboratively. There are those conversations about "How shall we do this?" and there's more of an element of support and working as a team." He later described this as working on "equal terms".

This relates to the dynamics and personal connections the interpreters have with their co-interpreter. Charlie said, "If I've worked with an interpreter that I know a number of times and they're booked, I quite look forward to that because I know what I'm going to get from that person as a co-worker and they know what they're going to get from me and that hopefully it's going to run smoothly because it always has done in the past".

Some of the interpreters talked about the nature or setting an assignment takes place. Bobby initially stated that working with a man or woman would depend on the nature of the assignment, but later changed his mind and stated that even when the subject matter was sensitive, such as a course on a specific cancer only impacting men, the gender of the interpreter

might prove irrelevant. Jake explained a situation in which, “There was the issue of a male misogynist electrical tutor who terrorised one of my female colleagues who was the only female in the room”. He questioned whether it would be advantageous to have a male interpreting in that situation in relation to the interaction, class dynamics and welfare of the female interpreter.

Theo described how familiarity with the deaf client and their workplace was more important to consider compared to the gender of the co-interpreter he was working with. This relates to the circumstances in which the interpreter is booked, and he shared that he would rather work with a regular interpreter over an ad-hoc one, regardless of their gender. However, some of the interpreters preferred to work with a female interpreter. Alfie described being generally "more comfortable with women" than men. He said most of his friends are women and had “a lot of anxiety around men” and “did not have good experiences growing up socialising with other boys”. Harrison described the comfort of generally being around women as “emotionally comfortable”.

Recognising that women perform the lion’s share of BSL interpreting in the UK, men recognised that they rarely had the opportunity to co-interpret with other men. Freddie amusingly compared male interpreters to a rare, fabled creature when he remarked, "I'll probably co-work with a male maybe once a year maybe less than that because it's quite difficult to get us... We're like unicorns sometimes, you know, it's difficult to find them. Getting us together is quite difficult". As a result, it was a refreshing shift for men to work with other men, and because it is uncommon, may be something that men look forward to. Archie said, "I get excited working with another bloke because it doesn't happen often. So, if another bloke turns up, I'm like "Oh great, another bloke, fantastic." It's a novelty".

Linguistic or caring profession

It is frequently debated among interpreting colleagues whether interpreting is a linguistic or caring profession. Isaac was emphatic that it is a linguist job. He wrote, “If someone shows an interest in what I'm doing, I will describe the process as equivalent to spoken language interpreting”. By describing the role like spoken language interpreting, he is giving the hearing person something to base his argument on, as people would not generally view spoken language interpreters as carers. Riley argued from a process perspective and said, “We are interpreting between two separate languages and making sure everybody is on the same page and understanding each other. So yeah, I think I'd lean more towards the linguistic description of the profession really”.

However, many participants still held the view that there was a significant 'caring' element to the profession. Jacob expressed, "I think from the little caring elements that I put into it [interpreting], it makes the linguistic side work better". The adaptability of the role was advocated by Rory who wrote, "I want to be seen as a linguistic professional and allowed the flexibility to show a caring side when needed". Archie examined this from a different perspective which was that of being privileged to be a part of someone's life. He said, "You have to be a person who can show empathy and care. It is linguistic but you've got to care for the people around you".

It is because interpreters show caring elements within their role that contributes to the perception by others that BSL interpreting is a caring profession. Ellis described interpreting medical situations where he said, "Rarely are you seen as the linguistic person, you're seen as a caring person. In a sense you are kind of caring because that's what the doctor and nurses are doing so you become an extension of that". So, the medical professionals view the interpreter through their world vision. To frame his role, Ollie wrote, "I usually let them [other professionals] know that I am there to provide access to all parties in the room and never say that I'm there to 'help' or 'support' the deaf person".

Toby recognised times he may become an ally to the deaf client by saying, "Where I see something is not going right, I will probably become an ally for the deaf person. So, in that way you could say it's caring for that deaf person but it's not caring. It's about evening things out or saying that something is going wrong and stepping in to stop it". This form of 'caring' can lead to empowerment. Harrison described this as 'enabling' and said, "I absolutely think it's an enabling profession and it's both enabling because there are people with different language groups doing stuff and different cultural knowledge and different knowledge gaps and you're, kind of, helping that happen". Arlo said, "It's about inclusion". However, there is a fine line between empowerment and dominance. Jacob saw that taking over a situation or handling everything for the deaf person might not be in their best interest. He said, "To take over and be an advocate would be to do them a disservice. It might solve the issue quickly but actually, that little journey of their issue is going to give them more life lessons than me taking over. So that natural caring side has to be pushed down. It's tough at times".

Some participants reflected on women in the field being predisposed to caregiving responsibilities. Joshua expressed, "I find that women will be more sort of caring, or they'll feel like they need to do things for the deaf person as I think I'm much more… I don't know if it's because I'm a man, but I just think they're deaf, they're not disabled. And so, you know, they can do things themselves and I do think they should." Riley believed that females would

be more drawn to interpreting because of the role's perceived caring aspect, and he appreciated that BSL interpreting is regarded as caring. He said, “You know, the 'caring' in inverted commas professions tend to attract the females more than males”.

Remuneration

When asked if they believed they earned more, less, or the same as their female colleagues, there was an intriguing mix of responses, with the majority stating they earn the same. Arlo said, “I've never been in the situation where I got paid more”. Zachary wrote that because of the nature of most of his work, "I don't think gender affects the amount per booking we get. For the most part my work is ATW[1] so it's dictated by the client's budget." Reggie further stated that most of the time, organisations decide rates. He wrote, “It's the agencies or ATW that set a budget not gender”. Jude, recognising he was not particularly business minded, explained, “I've never even thought of a gender pay gap within interpreting so that's my initial reaction to that. I certainly don't get paid or charge more than female counterparts. I've usually been really crap at charging anyway”.

In contrast, Jude could think of a few men who would charge more for interpreting than women and said, "If I think of some of the names inside my head that I know that I know charge quite a lot, they do actually tend to be men, I suppose. Like, the two off the top of my head that I know who tend to charge more than anybody else around. They are men”. Harvey previously worked in an interpreting agency and saw some quotations provided by one woman and three men for an assignment and was startled at how much the male interpreters were quoting. He recalled, “I was genuinely gobsmacked as to the fees that were been quoted… the male fees for a one-day job were astronomical compared to the one woman who came forward”.

Two of the interviewees had a contrary opinion, claiming that male interpreters were paid less. Harvey said, "I'd like to say I don't think it's a gender thing, but I know it is. I think for the [geographical] area that I work in, that I probably earn less than female interpreters who follow NUBSLI guidelines”[2]. Harrison shared that “Genuinely in the last few months I've had a conversation with deaf people who said "You really should be charging me more” or I found

[1] Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support grant scheme in the UK that aims to support disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for people who have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers#:~:text=Access%20to%20Work%20is%20a,physical%20or%20mental%20health%20condition.

[2] The National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI) produce a fees guidance based on a survey of its members. See: https://www.nubsli.com/guidance/interpreter-fees.

out that the woman is charging more than me. I suspect that I'm quite exceptional…I think it's quite unusual".

What does appear to be more normal is aiming for parity in fees, from an ethical perspective. Rory wrote, "In the few instances that I am negotiating prices and able to converse with colleagues about that (male or female) I would aim for an equal rate". Arlo explained he would feel uncomfortable if he was paid more than any other interpreter and when discussing charges he said, "I'm pretty careful about that anyway, and I don't like to get paid more than anybody else that I'm working with."

Three of the interpreters I interviewed acknowledged that because men were potentially more available for work than women, they may earn more over the course of a year. Sebastian alluded to this when he wrote, "Only difference is annual income and that's depending on hours worked, which vary from terp to terp [interpreter] depending on their commitments and how much they choose to work". Such commitments would include childcare which impacts interpreter's availability, as was highlighted by Ollie. He wrote, "As I am currently free of childcare, then I can work 24/7/365 and therefore earn as much as I choose. However, as mentioned elsewhere, I was a full-time then part-time house husband, and therefore my wages were, at that time, impacted by childcare responsibilities". This would likewise apply to a woman with identical obligations. Again, with relation to gender stereotypes of female childcare providers, Edward noted that his family unit consisted of two working interpreters and one child, and he commented, "I earn more simply because she does more childcare, but we charge the same fees. Whenever we work together, we charge the same fees."

Edward touched on the gender pay gap when working for an organisation. He said, "I just don't think our profession's that kind of profession where we would, we as men, would get paid more". Louie wrote "'I've always been an in-house interpreter and all the interpreters who start are on the same salary regardless of their gender - which is complete fair and equal."

Although Jude said he had "never even thought of a gender pay gap within interpreting", he later reflected on this saying, "I do think that men might be… more assertive about pay, potentially". Teddy was to the point when he wrote, "I think I sometimes I get more, because I have the bottle to ask for more" and was alluding to the fact that, in his opinion, women do not have the confidence to ask for more money. However, as Theo experienced, "I currently work with a small group of interpreters with one particular client. I would go and negotiate my rate for my work and then he would just apply it to the other two, who are both female interpreters. And then one year I said to one of my colleagues "You know, I feel bad because I go and negotiate a rate and then you just get told that's your rate, you're not given a chance to negotiate

it". And they didn't particularly want to, I have to say. Anyway, last year one of the other two did it and we got a decent raise again and it all worked fine”. Toby noted, "I think that probably it would be easier for male interpreters to be paid more because of UK societies perception of males that they listen to the male voice more when you're arguing about fees”. Because of the social norms around gender and pay/finances, men may have belief in their self-worth and that may be a reason they charged more. Charlie asked, “Are men more like, "This is what I'm charging, and I'm not worried about what you think, I’m worth it!” and are women going “I can’t charge that, I’d be worried it would be too much!”.

Recognising the length of time that he had been an interpreter and felt this justified charging more for his services when offering a quote, Charlie said, “I'm prepared to try and put a bit more down because I think to myself "Well, I've been qualified 20 years"”. Theo referred to a mixed gender supervision group he participates in and said, "I think also people have tended to work in specialist areas, maybe they've been around longer and sort of work in legal all the time and charge accordingly." Rory reflected on being appropriately remunerated for taking on positions of responsibility and wrote, “If I accept more responsibility (coordinator of a conference team for example) then I expect to be paid for the time/responsibilities that come with it". As a younger interpreter qualifying recently, Harley recognised people with more experience undoubtedly charging more than him. He said, "The only people that I've talked to about pay really have been the women and from what they've said they probably charge a lot more than I would. But they've also been doing it for like 30 years."

Additionally, Harley shared he would not be confident to discuss fees. "I've not talked about pay very much to anyone. I'm always a bit shy about that." Jenson recognised that as a group of mostly freelance interpreters, we do not discuss fees openly. "We are closed bunch of people, aren't we? Trying to find someone that's willing to discuss pay in a fully open way, I've found quite a rarity. I've not blatantly asked everyone what their pay structure is."

However, sometimes interpreters undertake assignments that they will not charge a fee for “because you develop relationships with clients and, you know, if you make a friend and so on, then they’ll ask you to do something, you'll feel harsh to turn around and say "No" if it's something small” (Joshua). Similarly, Charlie felt offering to work for a client without charging depended on the situation and the existing relationship. He said, “I do think all of us do a little bit of pro bono now and again and I think it depends on what the situation is and if you know the person well, you've known them for a long time, and they're in a particularly sticky situation and you can do it, you're prepared to do it and you go and do it. I think it's just understood."

Experiencing British Sign Language Interpreting as A Man

Data collected exploring experiencing BSL interpreting as a man is presented considering a further three main thematic titles of 'Male status' 'Gender norms', and 'Sexuality'.

Male status

Harrison expressed some general thoughts about intersectionality within society and the status given to men when he said "I think men have perceived status that's higher than women. I think white men have a perceived status that's higher than white women." Arlo felt this status was not exclusive to the interpreting profession when he said, "I think this is less about male interpreters and more about how we are as men. How we function in society." Status was not on Noah's radar at all and was oblivious to any status which may have been ascribed to him. He said, "You see what you look for don't you and I don't suppose I look for it." This emphasises how men are privileged in society and often don't recognise privilege. Archie described being in court settings where he will "use this deep voice with big words… and I've often been told by some of my colleagues "We'd rather you do that because it gets things done quicker". Now I don't know if that's the male thing or just, being able to hold those conversations." This is a misogynistic comment that perpetuates the patriarchy, particularly in the eyes of hearing people who perceive that women cannot speak with authority and use "big words".

Hearing people appear to ascribe more status to interpreters who are men than they do to women. Toby reflected that when co-interpreting with a woman, "people are perceiving you as being a manager who's normally in the office and coming out doing work in the field… if you're a male then you are automatically the one in charge." This is something Toby experienced and shared, "Sometimes people will make an automatic assumption that because I'm the male, therefore I am the boss, the lead… I don't do well with that kind of thing where somebody looks at me as being the person with power, the status, I don't deal well with that. I get very uncomfortable."

Napier et al. (2021) found that men were significantly more willing to engage in high status work (such as in-vision television work, conferences, mental health, court work, and politics) compared to their female counterparts. Edward reflected that even though the BSL interpreting profession is predominantly female, the men in the profession were often given higher status jobs and felt it was down to the "sexist society that we live in and the glass ceiling". Edward considered this from a gay man's perspective and suggested that "we are

probably a little bit more savvy than other men in other professions… more cognisant of the fact that there's a propensity for that to happen, whereas there might be other professions where your average men might, you know, at best clueless and at worse downright, you know, perpetuating all of that.”

When participants did experience an imbalance of assigned status, some described how they often made efforts to redress the balance. Ollie felt the imbalance was "uncomfortable and unjust" for both him and colleagues who were women. Ellis shared an example where he referred a colleague who was a woman for a vacant in-house job, when he felt he had previously been successful in getting a job, that they had both been interviewed for, simply because he was a man. This referral was born out of an element of "guilt".

Gender norms

There were discussions regarding the participants thoughts on the personality types and gender norms of interpreters who are men and how that affects their experience of working as an interpreter. Harvey thought that “there is an element of confidence that maybe comes with having a thicker skin that, that you wouldn't necessarily go through the same thought process as to looking for reasons why you shouldn't do something but there's more reasons why you should do something so… maybe I'm confusing confidence and arrogance.” Harrison felt he had always been confident to declare that he did not understand something a person was saying or signing. This was challenged by a female interpreter he was talking to who said, “Yes, but you can do that. But if I did the same thing as a new career, younger woman, I wouldn't last five minutes, they'd think I was rubbish. You can do that because you're a bloke and you’re 54 and you have some reputation.” He went on to deny that it was anything to do with reputation because he explained he had always been like that. Harley recognised that society contributed to the belief that men can do anything they want to. He said, "I think through society they're [men] more likely to be told "you can do whatever you want" kind of thing.”

Riley reflected on how he felt more confident when going to work wearing a suit. He said, “I think if I am wearing a suit then I do feel more confident in, kind of, stopping a doctor or interrupting and sort of saying, “Hang on a second, can you just clarify this?" or "What does that mean?", you know”. His thought process is that dressing in a suit enhances his confidence to be able to assert power and control and arguably, the wearing of a suit reinforces the male status and credibility he is afforded by the clients he is working with.

Jude had a considerable amount to say about the ego of male interpreters. He is an interpreter who has a reputation for working with high profile Deaf people attending and

presenting on Deaf and interpreting communities at international events. He described how he had observed the difference between men and women willing to work with one such individual and said, “I think there are certain male IS [International Sign] interpreters that have made it a bit about me as the interpreter, "I work with [deaf person], I, look at me[1]". [Deaf person] is a bit [signs DUMP THEM].”

Harvey’s earlier comment related to confidence and wondered whether he was confusing confidence with arrogance. However, he did also describe how he had encountered what he felt was arrogant behaviour from fellow interpreters who were men. He said, “It's almost like "Okay, we're in the same space but I'm doing my bit and you're doing your bit. I’ll let you know when it's my turn". But other than that, you might as well be sat either side of the room or have a screen between you. There isn't that sort of collaborative support.” However, this behaviour could simply relate to the way the men were taught to work when undertaking training. Harrison also experienced this behaviour and said, “As a percentage, if people are talking to me about colleagues, they are much more likely to describe a male interpreter, I think it's not a huge number, as being arrogant or not paying attention to their colleagues needs, than they would be of a female colleague.”

Sexuality

Without significant evidence, there has been a long-held belief among interpreters and the Deaf community that most male interpreters are gay. There is difficulty in confirming this belief because sexuality can only be self-reported and therefore reliant on self-disclosure. The perceived high number of gay male interpreters was highlighted by a few of the participants. Harvey reflected on the number of gay male interpreters he met and said, “The males were very few and far between and half of them seemed to be gay men.” Joshua’s experience was similar and said, "I find that even though there are so very few male interpreters, but even on top of that is you'll find that there's even fewer than, let's say, heterosexual male interpreters." Elijah made a direct comparison between nursing and interpreting and said “the number of those male nurses who are gay and the number of those male nurses who are straight, you're talking to minority within a minority. And I think interpreting is similar.” Reggie remembered being told that there was an "instant assumption… that male interpreters were gay” and this came from the perception that “it was a job that only women did as it was a 'caring role'."

[1] The 'Look-at-me' phenomenon that had been discussed in spoken language interpreting (Zweig, 2014) was explored within signed language interpreting by Best (2017) when she reported on a study on the perceptions of promotion of signed language interpreters on Facebook.

Alfie was one of the participants who was openly gay and admitted to being very effeminate. He shared, "I'm used to being really out to everyone, or assuming I don't need to come out because they just assume as soon as they see me." He further discussed how he approached that open-ness with new clients who are deaf and said, “I say "Well, you know, I'm gay (laughter), you need to know that" and the response was generally people have just shrugged their shoulders and say, "Well, I don't care. That shouldn't make a difference" or "That doesn't matter".” As a straight interpreter, Harrison observed that, “there was a sense in male interpreters being gay was not a thing, it was not a bad thing, it was not a negative thing.” It is impossible to categorically confirm that there is a general acceptance of gay men in the profession, but Harrison's comment does allude to the possibility that, from a straight male perspective, gay men who are interpreters may not face prejudice from Deaf people and interpreters, which they may experience if they were working within another professions or communities, which are not so accepting.

Bobby referred to the minority status of straight male interpreters when he said, “I often say "I'm a minority, in a minority, in a minority" because I'm a sign language interpreter, it's a minority profession, I am a male, and I'm straight (laughter).” Jake wrote, "For a while, I believed that I was part of a small club of non-gay-men interpreters." Harrison reflected that in the number of years he has been an interpreter, "more often my gender would be discussed in the fact that I wasn't gay, more than the fact that I wasn't a woman. Certainly, in the early years, not now. Well still now occasionally." Members of the Deaf community commenting on his sexuality and gender was something Jude had experienced. He said, "The number of times that I've been told not only "Oh you're a man" is also "You're a straight man". From Deaf people. From Deaf people! Which is interesting. "Nice to have a straight male". What?" These comments seem incredulous to Jude, but do reflect similar experiences to other men within the profession.

There were instances shared where straight male interpreters were assumed to be gay, by their future wives. Harrison shared, “She thought I was gay and there were two reasons for that. One is because most of the male interpreters she had, if not all of the male interpreters she had, were gay. Secondly, because I didn't behave in stereotypical gendered ways and so I was quite nice (laughter) and so she assumed, that reinforced the idea that I might be gay, until I started to fish to find out if she was in a relationship and then she realised I might not be.” Ellis had a similar experience where his now-wife assumed he was gay because of his style of using BSL. He shared, “I can get really camp when I'm signing. I couldn't give a monkeys, you know,

I quite happily get on with it.” This could be because most BSL teachers are women and therefore men might pick up their more feminine signing style.

Edward shared a story which related to a Deaf gay man not wanting him to interpret for him because of the perceived familiarity between gay interpreters and Deaf gay men in the Deaf community. The Deaf man wanted Edward to explain this to the healthcare professional. However, Edward was uncomfortable in interpreting this as said, “What about my right to my confidentiality and my identity as a gay man? Maybe I don't want to be outed by my client at work." After Edward explaining that he had no vested interest in using the information discussed in the appointment, the man was happy to have him as his interpreter.

Toby recognised that, "Predominantly, I've worked with more gay male interpreters rather than straight male interpreters" and Jacob identified the different experience working with gay interpreters compared to straight interpreters. He said, “co-working with a straight male is different. I think there's less banter, there's less, you know, professional banter, not unprofessional banter.” He went on to say that with gay colleagues and females, “there’s a nice relationship. You can bounce off each other, just a little bit more.” He also expressed how he enjoyed working with female co-interpreters. He said, "As a gay man I love women, I love working with them, there's a really good rapport."

Conclusion

The empirical data demonstrated the challenge in determining how men first become exposed to BSL and how this relates to more direct motives to seek professional BSL interpreting as a career. Participants in the study fit into various combinations of these factors and incentives, with no clear model emerging. The most important findings from the study related to experiences fall into four categories: i) Gender preferences in the workplace, ii) Sign language interpreting as a linguistic or caring profession, iii) remuneration and iv) sexuality with two further themes being ‘male status’ and ‘gender norms’.

This study shows, interpreters were more likely to consider the nature of each interpreting assignment and choose the appropriate co-interpreter for the job, regardless of gender, to provide the best service possible. However, a significant proportion of the participants stated they preferred to work with co-interpreters with whom they had a personal connection and in whom they felt confident in terms of the support they would receive during the assignment to achieve the best outcome for the clients involved.

While sign language interpreting is involved with linguistics, many participants believe that it also requires aptitude for a 'caring' career, analogous to nursing and primary

school teaching. BSL interpreters generally aim to empower the Deaf community by giving access to information from which Deaf people are frequently excluded. BSL interpreting differs from other predominantly female professions in that most interpreters who work within the profession are freelance, which has obvious consequences for remuneration.

According to the data, some men believe they perceive status in their work differently than women do. Men have recounted being given assumed status due to their gender and age. Some men thought that the fact that some female interpreters are unwilling to take on high-status jobs perpetuates the issue. As a result of the women not taking on such tasks, the males are more likely to take on these roles, furthering the scenario.

The study looked at the widely held perception among sign language interpreters and the Deaf community that most male interpreters are gay. Some participants maintained that the majority of BSL interpreters are gay, while those who had been in the profession for a long time expressed opposing views, with some claiming there was less discussion about their sexuality by Deaf clients and co-interpreters than in the past, and others referring to their previous and present experiences working exclusively with straight colleagues. It did acknowledge that a higher number of LGBT+ persons work in the BSL interpreting profession in the UK compared to the general population. That being stated, we can no longer presume that just because an interpreter is a man, he is gay. What has been discovered is that BSL interpreting appears to be a profession that is accepting and is widely regarded as a safe place to identify as a member of the LGBT+ community.

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11

Order in Court or Lack Thereof: Challenges in Legal Interpreting in India

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ABSTRACT

An interpreter in India, has the freedom to choose a career as a community interpreter, educational interpreter, or legal interpreter. Many interpreters including CODA's and SODA's active in the field, but not certified, choose to work in stable workplaces, with NGOs or offices with Deaf employees. There are numerous reservations and apprehensions surrounding the career, because interpreters are called on at odd hours by unfamiliar people, requested to show up at strange places for indefinite periods of time. This leaves a relatively small number of interpreters available and willing to provide interpreting services in police stations and courtrooms, due to the demands that the situations mandate and the level of skills and competency that it requires. The words 'legal' and 'interpreting' are not usually heard in conjunction, in the Indian judicial system, owing to lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility needs of Deaf persons. After wading through the ignorance of the judiciary system and the disguised barriers of the legal system, the interpreter meets the "deaf" person, for whom representation is required and finds that the so-called deaf person is language-deprived and cannot communicate by any means. Another common experience that an interpreter faces, is the lack of understanding and clarity of the code of ethics required to follow when dealing between lawyers, Deaf parties and their parents. Interpreters are faced with numerous stressful and conflicting situations, while their very role and competence is questioned and concepts such as "role definition" and "power balance" seem to be completely non-existent.

Keywords: sign language interpreter, legal interpreting, Indian judiciary, Deaf client, ASLI

Introduction

Thirty years ago, Sign Language as a career sprang into existence in India. While a sign language interpreter was a credible career choice in other countries, it was virtually unknown here. An interpreter qualifies as an individual who is bilingual, i.e., they can understand a spoken language (usually the language spoken in that region) and Sign Language, allowing

them to serve as a facilitator for communication, and bridge the communication gap between deaf individuals and their family members. Through numerous Deaf interactions and the establishment of various associations, interpreting grew in popularity. The profession was regarded as a service for the community and hence an interpreter was treated with immense respect and lauded "for the great service to humanity". As Deaf people started requiring services of "interpreters" outside of their families in the early 1990's, their domain spread to public places. The first onstage interpreting, as recalled by Arun C. Rao, parent of a Deaf child and an interpreter, was in 1993, at a Government Function (Rao, 2023). Interpreting occurred only where Deaf people gathered, and with payment being none or minimal.

Legal Provisions for Deaf People

The earliest disability law and the first in the country for persons with disabilities was the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) PWD Act 1995. While it was a significant step in the direction of ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, it did not mention Sign Language or accessibility for Deaf persons. The ACT aimed at providing barrier-free environment which included access to buildings and public places but missed the aspect of access to "facilities". Affirmative action meant distribution of assistive devices and allotment of land at concessional rates and had nothing to do with conveying information to those who were deaf and for whom Sign Language is their first language (India, 2016).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted in 2007 as the first major instrument of human rights in the 21st century and called on nations to accept, facilitate, and promote the use of Sign Languages with the goal to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. India having ratified the UNCRPD, the Parliament enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2016 with the intent to fulfil its objectives (UN Convention Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) 2021).

Gradually, advocacy and need for legal compliance were insisted at disability forums, resulting in an increase in visibility of interpreters at disability-related events. Media interpreting was initiated and subsequently interpreters were seen at government programmes and occasions as a token of accessibility and were considered as "reasonable accommodation" for persons with hearing disabilities. Governments were reminded of their obligation to ensure accessibility for the Deaf, in any field, ranging from education and jobs to medical treatment and other services, and fully support their equal inclusion in society.

The Advent of Sign Language Interpreting

Interpreting, looked upon as a profession, is fairly young in India, dating back to only about 10 years. Similar to conventional professions, interpreters require systematic training to become professional interpreters. The first Interpreter Training Program (ITP) in India started with Sign Language Learning Course in 2001 in levels and there were no "qualified" interpreters to provide accessibility for Deaf persons in any domain per se. Interpreter training took on a Level C, a few years later with certification, as a 3-month training with modules such as Code of Ethics. Role of Interpreter and Interpreting Strategies, and developed later into a diploma course. Interpreters were certified and in the next 10 years, India saw the mushrooming of interpreters in various parts of the country. However, with only a basic 10-month course in Indian Sign Language and Interpreting, the interpreters lacked practical training and exposure in the various domains of interpreting. With only a handful of interpreters, they were called upon to fill the need wherever and whenever required. With no licensing authority, there was no monitoring of the interpreters' actions and behaviour. Interpreters worked in isolation in their particular locations and fields in their own way. Though interpreting associations were formed, they were not licensing bodies, but membership organisations (Hajee, 2014).

The UN Guidelines on access to social justice outlined principles stating that all persons with disabilities have legal capacity and, therefore, no one shall be denied access to justice on the basis of disability. Services such as interpretation must be accessible to ensure equal access to justice and legal information. The legal capacity of PwDs and the redressal mechanism for any violations outlined in the RPwD Act, 2016 paved the way for Persons with Disability to enter into a previously inaccessible space (DePWD, 2019).

Legal Interpreting in India

Legal Interpreting was an unthought of, and untouched domain in the initial years of "informal" interpreting in the country, which was about 20 years ago. This was primarily because Deaf people lacked education and awareness of their rights with regard to the filing of lawsuits and other legal provisions and procedures. There were no certified interpreters to handle legal matters for the Deaf community. Initially, officials made use of underaged CODA's & SODAs to interpret divorce matters or rape cases in many instances, because they were users of the language and easily available, and because they came from the same family. They had no knowledge of "interpreters" outside of Deaf families. Since they were not trained interpreters, they did not follow a code of ethics with regard to confidentiality and lacked professionalism. Due to absence of sensitization or awareness among the judiciary, legal cases

became complicated, with instances of Deaf individuals being instructed to refrain from using sign language, being denied interpreters, or being coerced into settlements instead.

For example, in 2000, Ian Stillman, was arrested on charges of drug possession in North India during his research work and was denied a Sign Language Interpreter while his trial went on for two and a half months, in the national language, which he couldn't understand, and had to rely on lip reading his lawyer's English, the outcome of which, was his sentence to 10 years of imprisonment. This was seen by human rights activists "as one of the worst miscarriages of justice based on disability" a violation of basic human rights due to the lack of accessibility and presence of an interpreter (Daily Telegraph, 2003). This was a major milestone in snowballing the importance of accessibility for Deaf persons in courts and for legal proceedings in India.

Legal literacy sessions were conducted as part of Legal Awareness & advocacy, post RPWD, and the Deaf community started to gain awareness, explore the legal arena and exercise their legal privileges. Certified Interpreters were thrust into the legal field with no background or knowledge of legal terminology and procedures, since, with the rise in awareness, there was a drastic increase in legal cases filed by Deaf persons. There were cases of family disputes, property issues, domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse. Each interpreter had to learn by themselves, from their own mistakes, with no mentor, guide, or manual. There was also clarity regarding the role of the interpreter when the protocol changed from police officials reaching out to volunteers or special educators to contacting an interpreter to facilitate the legal proceedings for Deaf clients.

Review of Literature

Since Sign Language interpreting has only been recently accepted as a requirement in official processes, there is little or no literature with regard to Sign Language interpreting at a legal capacity, or in a judicial context in India. Most literature has been taken from a western context, where the licensing body, competency requirements and code of ethics is more well-established. The existing literature, while meagre, does provide a set of requirements for court interpreting, and promotes dialogue regarding accessibility, and the provision of rights and their protection for the Deaf through interpreting. All literature is in agreement regarding the numerous misconceptions, misunderstandings and lack of awareness that results in dissatisfactory interpreting, questionable interpreting standards, and challenging situations for the interpreter.

According to the 2007 Critical Link Conference, it is necessary for all participants of interpreted interactions to assume some responsibility for the quality of the interpretation and the success of the communication. This implies that, contrary to common belief, it is not the sole fault of the interpreter in case of miscommunication, interpreting errors or lack of proper communication. This is because the interpreter does not perform a mechanical function, and the interpreting process is not devoid of thought, judgement or effort, and therefore cannot remove the main speakers of the interpreted stimuli from accountability. All participants involved must make an effort to assist the interpreter to understand and render the message accurately, to facilitate communication.

The justice system is dependent on the involvement of citizenry, and can only be effective if all participants involved have the capacity to participate completely in the proceedings, and without various accommodations like an interpreter, the Deaf are unable to participate (Miller & Vernon, 2001). Within the US legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) addresses the issue of access for disabled individuals, and defines the accommodations that should be made. It states that accommodations must be neutral and transparent, such as guide dogs, wheelchairs and interpreters. These accommodations must ideally be unobtrusive extensions of the focal individual, to facilitate interaction. However, when it comes to Sign Language interpreters, human agency is a major part of the interaction, and their presence has an impact on the dynamics of the situation, and counter the ideology of a neutral accommodation (Brunson, 2007).

Most countries do not have proper accreditation or certification systems to provide a benchmark for competence with regard to Sign Language interpreting, and yet competence is expected when it comes to interpreting in a legal context. Since there is no compulsory training for interpretation before practice, it is quite common for the officials in some countries to use bilingual volunteers or collaborators in the interpretation process, due to a lack of understanding of interpreting issues, resulting in forensic error (Berk-Seligson, 2000, Hale et al., 2009). Furthermore, interpreters are not put under the same scrutiny as expert witnesses, or other legal facilitators, and there is no enforcement of adequate standards for legal interpreters, but high expectations for competence. Since volunteers are used in the investigative processes, governments are apprehensive regarding the payment of qualified interpreters, based on fears regarding the potential for misinterpretation and the consequences it will have on the administration of justice (Hertog et al, 2007)

Interpreters at Work - The Cases

Interpreting is a fast-paced, demanding job and interpreters must possess bilingual proficiency and literacy in order to do their job correctly. India has about 300 certified Sign Language interpreters spanned across primarily urban areas. A lack of Sign Language interpreters and information in accessible formats hampers access to public services and courts (Kozik, 2019). India has strong cultural constructs, and it is highly inappropriate for women to be seen making rounds to courts and police stations, at odd hours, especially young unmarried women. Hence, many female interpreters do not enter the legal domain, for the reasons that it can be spontaneous, time-consuming, in unfamiliar places, with strangers and most of the times, unsafe as well, posing a threat to one's life and reputation.

Interpreters improved at their role with each of their experiences, and became familiarised with the process with each time at the court. It was a journey of self-discovery because there was no protocol to follow, no mentor to reach out to, no fellow interpreter to lean on to for help, support or guidance. Due to the high level of competency required, very few interpreters were seen in the courts. It was a learning process, where the professionals had to learn where to stand, what documents to sign and what not to, and various other accommodations in order to ensure efficient facilitation of communication. Exploring the path of a legal interpreter, with regard to protocol, defining their role and establishing a code of ethics was a tough task, as neither the lawyers nor the Magistrates and/or Judges had a comprehensive understanding of the role and responsibility of an interpreter.

Some Case Studies have been included to throw light on the challenges faced by interpreters in a Courtroom.

Case Study 1

The earliest example of legal interpreting was cited by Arun C Rao, in 2004, of a case of a Deaf woman who contested her late husband's will. The Deaf woman had very little sign vocabulary and it was a challenge for the interpreter to understand her home signs and relay her intentions. There were numerous misunderstandings and the defence lawyer misrepresented the claims being made by the woman (Rao, 2023).

a. In order to eliminate any misunderstanding, the interpreter communicated the various challenges being faced in that specific situation with the Sessions Court Judge.
b. He had to convey that it is extremely difficult for an interpreter to communicate with Deaf people who are not Sign Language users, and suggest alternative means of

facilitating communication, such as visual aids, images of places, people or objects since they are more visually oriented.

c. According to Mr. Rao, that first-hand experience made him realise that in such instances, the interpreter had to step out of the confines of the role and educate the court step-by-step on how to improvise for a Deaf person, so that justice can be fair.

Case Study 2

A Deaf man filed for divorce, after having discovered his Hearing wife cheating on him. As was common practice at the time, a 'volunteer' was called to translate the issue, which was usually a special educator, or in this case, the Head Mistress of a Deaf school was called to "translate" for the Deaf petitioner. Since this was a divorce case, the Deaf man described the day he caught his wife cheating, with vivid descriptions of her in a compromising position, and this information was omitted during the interpretation. Since the 'interpreter' was a senior woman, she failed to relay the facts of the matter in its entirety, and diluted the intensity of the details by using less effective terminology, due to cultural inhibitions. The result of which, the judgement was pronounced in favour of the wife, the divorce was not granted to the Deaf person, and the couple were directed by the Court to live together with their two sons, despite their differences. The result was that the wife continued her extra-marital affair, with the assurance that her Deaf husband's "voice" can never be heard. The Deaf individual appealed at a higher court and reopened the case, after being ensured of the commitment towards the availability of a certified interpreter for all court hearings, but this process was extensive, and posed a new set of challenges**:**

a. The interpreter had to relay the information by the Deaf person without interruptions. As the lawyers and the Magistrate were shocked to hear the extremely detailed description of events, there were many interruptions and internal discussions, which made it difficult for the interpreter to focus on the voicing, a skill that requires high levels of concentration.
b. The interpreter was questioned regarding the procedure through which the information was obtained and the interpreter had to inform the legal fraternity that since she is bilingual and understands both languages, she understands what he is conveying in his language and is translating it in the regional language for the understanding of all present.

c. The continuous interruptions/clarifications delayed the whole process and the case went on for 3 years, which was disadvantageous to the interpreter as she could not move around or take up other work assignments.
d. The interpreter had to manage the bicultural mediation effectively when the Deaf person was getting impatient with repeated questions and interrogations.

The victory was however, that the Deaf person ultimately received divorce and his wife was ordered to pay monthly maintenance.

Case Study 3

A deaf woman in a rural district was raped over 10 years ago and the case remained pending since no interpreter was found. When a male Deaf school teacher was summoned by the Court to give a written statement of the narrative, very little could be extracted from the victim, and after a few attempts, the teacher sent in a requisition to withdraw from this responsibility, stating health reasons. Finally, when an interpreter was found, it was seen that the so-called Deaf person had zero "language", and could not communicate meaningfully.

a. The interpreter had to improvise and follow alongside the narration done in a theatrical manner, enact the story and relay the findings based on gestures, actions, movements and expressions of the Deaf woman.
b. The interpreter also felt a huge responsibility to deliver in spite of the challenges, when ideally, the role of the interpreter should be limited solely to facilitation of communication and an interpreter is behoved to aim for a favourable and positive outcome, but is in no way to be held accountable for the outcome.
c. The interpreter also expressed concern that the individual may have other neurocognitive disorders, such as autism, based on her observations, but was not considered authoritative on the subject.

Case Study 4

An interpreter was made to handle a case regarding the repeated sexual assault of a 6-year-old girl. The child could hear but could not speak, and therefore, retrieving information was a challenge as she was not deaf and relied on gestures for communication. She was used to taking instructions from her parents and siblings and following them and letting them know of her needs in her own queer way of speech. In spite of letting the police personnel know that a special educator or a speech therapist may be the right person for this purpose, it was not accepted, and only the interpreter had to be involved. The child was playful and communicated

with the interpreter using photos on her mother's phone and pointing to the person in question and then pictures of her bruised private parts that her mother had taken to file a police complaint. However, a mobile device was not allowed inside the private chamber of the Magistrate where the video recording was going to take place in the presence of the interpreter.

a. The child spent a whole hour laughing and playing with the interpreter, who, by now, had become comfortable with the interpreter and was communicating with her, but just not in the presence of the Magistrate.
a. The child did not respond to any of the basic questions such as name, age, location, parents' names and number of siblings asked by the Magistrate and relayed in a friendly manner by the interpreter.
b. The interpreter tried to explain that the child had no expressive verbal language, but that did not make any sense to the Magistrate. The questions were repeated and the girl was insisted to speak and answer or sign, which was a futile exercise, in spite of repeated explanations and convincing by the interpreter.
c. It was felt that there was no role for an interpreter to play in this particular scene, as there was no signing involved, yet an interpreter is what the whole case was managed with.

Case Study 5

A case of sexual abuse of 3rd generation 5-yr old girl was filed by the Deaf mother under Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act 2012 (POCSO) (Mohanty & Banerjee, 2021) and involved the interpreting services of a certified interpreter #1. This was a complex matter because interrogation of immediate family members also meant provision of access through interpreter #1. Since the First Information Report (FIR) was made in ISL (Indian Sign Language), and relayed in English and written in the regional language by a third party, the name of the interpreter was taken as a witness and thereafter that particular interpreter was not allowed to interpret for the Deaf woman.

A Male interpreter #2 was engaged to facilitate deposition with the Deaf mother and daughter and a statement was drafted at the end of a long and arduous day. It was later found that key elements were missing in the deposition from the statement filed initially. The opposing lawyer was vehement about involving interpreter #1, even going to the extent of saying that interpreter #1 had vested interest in the 1st party as there was payment involved. Interpreter #1 explained to the court that interpreting is a profession just as any other and interpreters are bound by a code of ethics and follow neutrality and are to be unbiased in

relaying information expressed by Deaf persons. Interpreter #1 also had to insist that she was not a witness to the act, and therefore cannot be stopped from interpreting for her client and requested for another interpreter to offer validation to ensure that she is doing her job unbiased and offering full access to her client. Search for another interpreter was another hurdle to overcome, which in due course proved to be of no success, for reasons cited above and finally all parties accepted the fact that interpreter #1 was doing the job right all along, and in order to continue the trial, it would be in the best interest of all, that interpreter #1 continues to provide accessibility the way her profession has taught her to.

a. There were times the interpreter was yelled at for interpreting all the conversations between the lawyer and the Magistrate. The interpreter had to assert that as a professional it is her job to provide complete access to the Deaf client.
b. The interpreter faced animosity, reluctance, and animosity from the second party and other lawyers.
c. The recording of trial sessions would go on for hours even into the late hours stretching into night time.
d. The case prolonged for 3 years, and the interpreter had to play the role of an Advocate, Educator and a Solicitor.

The accused was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and justice came through providing access for the Petitioner at every stage (TOI, 2020).

Case Study 6

A Deaf couple filed for divorce on mutual consent. A petition was given to have an interpreter in the courtroom and the Magistrate seemed to be clueless as to what was going on while what was being spoken was being interpreted. It seemed to have amused the person in authority and a few words were mumbled in local language within earshot of the interpreter, as “We don’t know what she is doing, she is flailing her hands and then she is speaking and telling us something. There is no way to find out if she is telling us the truth. Only God knows what is happening here.” And then he burst out laughing and so did the whole bench of lawyers, assistant lawyers, staff and people in attendance.

a. This became very unsettling for the interpreter, despite attempts to give the judiciary an understanding of the communication mode and method of Deaf people, and that Sign Language being a visual-gestural language works in three dimensions. While it cannot be compared to spoken languages, it is still considered to be on par with any verbal

language, and fulfils all the characteristic features of a language possessing the same standards for accessibility.

b. The interpreter also had to interpret the whole scene playing out in front of them to the Deaf persons present, and they felt very offended too.

Since it was a matter of mutual consent, it was a brief session and the Judge signed the papers, and the couple received their divorce document 6 months later.

Case Study 7

A high-profile case where the complainants as well as respondents were all deaf, caught the public eye. As names of many Deaf people were mentioned in the FIR, it became headlines and interpreters and teachers from Deaf schools were all required to be hands on deck as multiple interrogations were being held simultaneously. It was very taxing, as the interpreter was required to accompany the Police to make arrests and to question the accused. Time was of essence and there was political pressure to speed up the case and so a single interpreter was on duty a whole day and for days thereafter, as teachers could not spare much time. When arrests were made and the accused had to be subjected to remand, the legal formalities were a long ordeal, to the extent that some days, the interpreter would be dropped off home at 3.00 am, to again be picked up by 7.00 am, to start the process all over again.

a. The Police expected the interpreter to work overtime just as they were putting in extra hours following immense pressure from the higher authorities.
b. The lack of remuneration for the duration of the proceedings, despite stressful circumstances was extremely frustrating.
c. The interpreter's physical and psychological well-being was completely ignored because the authorities were unable to empathise with the taxing nature of the interpreting process.

From the collective experiences shared by members of ASLI India, some of the challenges are being highlighted here:

a. The interpreter would be asked to sign documents as a witness, pass documents around, write out the FIR and statements, give instructions to the Deaf person, coach them.
b. There are instances where the interpreter was asked not to use sign language, asked to stand in the witness box, told not to stand opposite the Deaf person while being questioned, etc.,
c. If after coaching the Deaf person, if he/she had not performed as per the coaching, the interpreter was blamed for not doing the job right.

d. In some cases, the interpreter was made to sign as witness and then summoned for hearings. The particular interpreter had moved from the location and hence could not appear in court as notices were not received. The interpreters received a final notice, ordering them to appear in court; failure to do so attracted legal action such as an arrest or a fine of a certain amount.
e. In case of a non-signing Deaf person, a Deaf interpreter (DI) would be able to provide intermediary interpreting, so that communication is clear and the Hearing interpreter (HI) would be able to relay the information accurately. But this concept is difficult to convey to the judiciary. For two interpreters to be involved in the scenario, is too much to handle and hence outrightly rejected and very rarely has that format been accepted, sometimes it has been seen that upon insistence, a DI has been engaged in the police stations, but never in court.
f. When two Deaf people file a case, two interpreters are required as is the norm to provide access to each Deaf person individually. This is not understood and one interpreter is only allowed to interpret in most cases, as the issue of payment crops up and who pays the interpreter comes the question.
g. Deaf people also face difficulty in understanding the legal process, terminology, and the pace at which the defence lawyer poses questions and corners the plaintiff.
h. With a small pool of interpreters available in the legal setting, there is no way or method of team interpreting or validation.
i. Oftentimes the interpreter is asked by lawyers to represent the Deaf person and speak on behalf of them, meaning, "saying something which is not signed by the Deaf". This is a clear violation of the code of ethics of interpreters.
j. In instances when the testimony of the Deaf client is changed, the responsibility falls upon the interpreter and is seen as a lapse on the part of the interpreter and the work of the professional is put to question.

Suggested Protocol for Legal Interpreting

For lack of guidelines and norms for legal interpreting, ASLI has prepared a protocol in support of its members for clarification of interpreters' boundaries and also detailing a few methods by which the interrogation/hearing process could be made much smoother for the judiciary's understanding, which is as follows:

1. An interpreter is a person providing a service and as such not a witness.

2. The interpreter may be given a minimum of 72 hours' notice before a court room appearance and is free to refuse in case he/she is otherwise engaged.
3. The interpreter shall be transported to/from the court by the vehicle of the police station in which the case was filed.
4. Evidence especially with regard to names and places will be provided visually. Photos of individuals and photos of houses or places relevant to the case. This is for clear and definitive ID since Deaf persons use name signs and may refer to the person by a sign that is not known to the interpreters.
5. Lawyers and other parties may not coerce or attempt to intimidate the interpreter.
6. A deaf person may bring their own interpreter to the court. The testimony will be recorded on video.
7. The Court-appointed interpreter will be paid by the Court and will be available to validate other interpreters in the Court proceedings as well as Police proceedings.
8. An interpreter may not be bound to a single case. Certified interpreters are often freelancers and may have engagements that conflict with court dates. Change of interpreters does not interfere with the proceedings. A new interpreter may be provided prior to testimony and information.
9. Standardized rates for court interpreting should be established across the country.

Conclusion

Interpreting in India has always been a widely misunderstood subject, and court interpreting is no different. Ideally, Sign Language interpretation should be the facilitation of communication between a Deaf individual, and one or more persons with whom they wish to communicate. When it comes to court interpreting, the role should be similar, but in the current context of legal interpreting in India, it is usually not so. Surprisingly, legal interpreting as a branch of interpreting is still quite a new domain, and there are very few interpreters who engage in legal interpreting due to the challenging requirements and demanding nature of the role. There are no necessary qualifications or credentials, or a specific training program either available or required for interpreters to interpret in court, and it is mostly a self-taught career, where they usually learn through experience, with each case that they accept to interpret. The interpreters put in time and effort to understand legal terminology and learn sign vocabulary out of their personal interest and as Continuing Professional Education (CPE), if they wish to grow in this domain and also to be able to explain to the Deaf persons as most of them are not familiar with meaning and signs for legal terms.

The various case studies that have been explained in detail in the paper serve to describe the plight of interpreters in a legal context in India. The case studies range over several legal scenarios, and the role of the interpreter in each case, along with the dilemmas faced at each level of legal proceedings. These descriptions highlight the challenges faced by the interpreters with regard to their code of ethics, legal protocol and other accommodations that should be made to ensure effective facilitation of communication to result in perpetuation of justice within the legal system. The case studies also reveal lack of knowledge on the part of the judiciary and the importance of education in the said areas, which is mostly carried out in the midst of a hearing. There is a great need for training for interpreters in the legal field to enhance their skills and become more proficient. There is also an equally pressing need for advocacy and awareness, understanding and education among the judiciary which will ensure better accessibility to justice for Deaf persons.

ASLI has recommended a general code of conduct for better understanding of the role, boundary, and ethics of an interpreter in legal context, along with strategies that could be adopted during hearing process. ASLI has also held a series of webinars for its members with panel discussions and experts' input on legal processes involving Deaf persons. Interpreters anticipate drastic reforms to streamline interpreting process in courts with training, sensitization and advocacy.

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12

Participatory Action Research as a Tool for Change and Self-Improvement: Experiences from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The development of sign language interpreting in Indonesia is still in its nascent stage despite the ever-increasing demand and provision of communication access for deaf people such as captioning and signed interpretation in news broadcasts and events hosted by government, civil society organizations, corporate and private sectors. Despite abundant literature on research on ethics, sign linguistics and evaluation of sign language interpreting programs, less is known about sign language interpreters' own experiences in both personal and professional development in less-resourced countries. A cohort of Indonesian-based Hearing and Deaf sign language interpreters with diverse skills and experiences undertake a collaborative participatory action research (CPAR) for a year to understand factors that support and inhibit them in improving their own interpreting skills and practices in the context of non-existent formal skills training and limited mentoring opportunities in Indonesia.

Keywords: participatory action research, sign language interpreters, self-reflective practices, effective skills development

Introduction

Due to the increasing demand for sign language interpretation services in educational, legal, healthcare, and public settings, sign language interpreters (SLIs) find themselves confronted with an unprecedented workload. This workload, combined with the pressing need to enhance their proficiency, highlights the importance of continuous skills development. It is essential for interpreters to meet the evolving needs of the Deaf and hard of Hearing community, ensuring accurate and effective communication between Deaf and Hearing individuals.

In Indonesia and the Asia Pacific region, significant gaps persist in the availability and quality of sign language interpreting services, adversely affecting the majority of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who rely on interpreting services for crucial aspects of life such as education, employment, healthcare, and social services. One major challenge for sign language interpreters in these regions is the absence of standardized training and certification programs. While some countries have established national certification systems, many lack such frameworks, leaving interpreters without clear pathways for professional development and advancement (McKee and Napier, 2013; Sze et al., in press).

Moreover, the quality of training programs varies widely, with limited opportunities for practical experience and mentorship in some cases (Yeo, 2018). Another significant issue is the shortage of qualified interpreters. Many countries in the Asia Pacific region struggle to attract and retain interpreters due to factors such as low pay, limited career prospects, and inadequate public awareness of the importance of sign language interpreting services (Mingzhen, 2019). This shortage leads to lengthy wait times for interpreting services, thereby hindering the full participation of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the gaps in sign language interpreting services, particularly in the provision of remote interpreting. The sudden shift to online learning and telehealth has left many Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals without access to critical services, exacerbating the existing challenges (Yeo, 2021). Nonetheless, addressing these gaps in sign language interpreting services requires the implementation of formal training and certification programs to increase the availability of qualified interpreters and improve the accessibility and quality of interpreting services.

Gaps Identified in Literature and The Need for Participatory Action Research

Our scoping review on recent research and current gaps sheds light on various aspects of sign language interpreters' professional development:

1. The importance of ongoing professional development

According to Napier et al. (2019) and Roberson and Russell (2020), ongoing training opportunities, workshops, and conferences help interpreters stay updated on linguistic and cultural changes, emerging technologies, and specialized domains. However, interpreters often face barriers such as limited access to training programs, financial constraints, and time commitments, which hinder their ability to engage in professional development activities.

2. Reflective Practice and Self-Evaluation

Frederiksen and Malcolm (2019) emphasize the importance of reflective practice as a crucial component of interpreter professional development. It enables interpreters to critically analyze their work and identify areas for improvement. Utilizing tools such as video recordings and feedback from colleagues, interpreters can enhance their skills. However, interpreters often lack dedicated time and structured opportunities for self-reflection, limiting their ability to engage in this essential practice (Hauser et al., 2021).

3. Insufficient Research on Interpreter Training and Practices

Despite the crucial role of sign language interpreters, there is a dearth of research focused specifically on interpreter training and practices. Existing studies often concentrate on the experiences of Deaf individuals or the outcomes of interpreted interactions, rather than exploring the perspectives and needs of interpreters themselves. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of the challenges faced by interpreters and hinders the development of evidence-based best practices (Dean and Pollard, 2013).

4. Mentoring and Supervision

Mentoring and supervision programs have proven effective in supporting interpreters' professional growth (Humphrey et al., 2019; Stone, 2022). Mentors provide guidance, feedback, and support, helping interpreters navigate complex situations and develop strategies for improvement. However, the availability of structured mentoring programs and qualified mentors remains limited, creating a gap in the support provided to interpreters.

5. The Role of Technology

Advancements in technology have the potential to significantly impact sign language interpreting practices (Manresa-Yee et al., 2021). Utilizing video relay services, remote interpreting platforms, and augmented reality tools can enhance access and improve interpreter performance. However, further research is needed to explore the implications of technology,

including ethical considerations, training requirements, and the impact on interpreter-client dynamics.

6. Intersectionality and Inclusion

Emerging research emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing the intersectional identities of sign language interpreters (Burns et al., 2021). Factors such as race, gender, disability, and culture influence interpreters' experiences, challenges, and opportunities for professional growth. Understanding the intersectionality of interpreters can inform the development of inclusive professional development programs and promote equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Photo 1

A group of SLIs brainstorming on ethics of engaging in participatory action research

A cohort of sign language interpreters (SLIs) based in Indonesia recognized the existence of similar issues and gaps in their practice. To address these challenges and enhance their skills, they embarked on a voluntary action research project. The objective of this research initiative is to delve into their individual interpreting journeys, tackling specific issues and challenges they encounter and strategies they use. By adopting a collaborative and participatory approach, along with self-reflection practices, the SLIs aim to improve their abilities and knowledge while keeping up with the latest trends and changes in the field (Kemmis and

McTaggart, 2015; Dangerfield and Napier, 2016; Swabey and Napier, 2016; Frederiksen and Malcolm, 2019).

Research Methods and Data Analysis

In May 2022, a group of ten sign language interpreters (SLIs) convened to explore the *why and how* of action research, as well as research ethics and the need for safe and non-judgmental space that allows SLIs to freely express their thoughts and emotions. In the second meeting, the discussion highlighted topics such as active listening, team interpreting dynamics, and the conscious and unconscious processes that occur during interpreting. The group also reviewed charts that outline the development and progression from novice to expert levels. Short reading materials (essays, opinions and video clips) with relevant concepts in sign language interpreting were assigned to the SLIs prior to online and/or face to face discussions.

For our third session, we introduced written journals as a space and tool for SLIs to critically document their experiences, observations, insights, and reflections throughout the research journey. Following Janesick's insights, journal writing helps deepen understanding, explore biases, and access tacit knowledge. It fosters researchers' introspection, allowing them to reflect on their thoughts, assumptions, and perspectives (Janesick, 1998). This approach aligns with our commitment to transparency and reflexivity in our research process specific to Indonesia context.

Using guided reflexive prompts enhances the rigor and richness of our data and enables participants to share meaningful insights and increases the depth and relevance of our research. Drawing on the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Nash and Viray (2013), we recognize the importance of reflective questions and personal narratives.

In order to understand factors influencing SLIs' skills and practices and its impact on SLIs' growth and practice, we designed a set of seven reflective questions as follow:

1. Reflect on your experience as a sign language interpreter and describe the most challenging situation you have encountered. What did you do to overcome this challenge, and what did you learn from the experience?
2. Recall the 8th Years Climb article you read before. Define what competency means to you as a sign language interpreter. Describe the skills and knowledge required to be a competent interpreter, and explain how you work to maintain and improve your competency.
3. Describe a time when you had to navigate a difficult ethical situation as a sign language interpreter. What ethical principles did you rely on, and how did you ensure that you acted in the best interest of your client?

Photo 2

SLIs shared personal experiences related to competency and personal journey from novice to expert

4. Write about your approach to ongoing professional development as a sign language interpreter. What strategies do you use to stay up-to-date with changes in the field, and how do you ensure that you are continually improving your skills?
5. Reflect on a time when you received feedback on your interpreting skills. How did you use this feedback to improve your performance, and what impact did it have on your overall competency as an interpreter?
6. Write about your experience working with Deaf or hard-of-hearing clients. What communication strategies do you use to ensure that your clients understand your interpretation, and how do you adapt your interpreting style to meet the needs of different clients?

7. Describe a situation where you had to navigate a cultural difference between yourself and the Deaf or hard-of-hearing client you were interpreting for. How did you approach this situation, and what did you learn from the experience?

These prompts aim to explore various aspects of SLIs' experiences and professional development. They cover topics such as challenging situations, competency definition and maintenance, ethical dilemmas, ongoing development strategies, feedback utilization, communication strategies with deaf or hard-of-hearing clients, and navigating cultural differences. By engaging with these questions SLIs can provide valuable insights into their journey, including how they overcome challenges, adapt to diverse client needs, uphold ethical principles, utilize feedback for improvement, and foster effective communication and cultural understanding.

Due to conflicts with work schedules, other commitments and reasons we did not probe, there was a reduction in the number of SLIs in CPAR. Three out of ten individuals were unable to participate after the second session, leading to a smaller sample size than initially anticipated. The limited availability of SLIs affected the research process, potentially impacting the diversity and breadth of perspectives represented. However, efforts were made to ensure that the remaining SLIs were engaged and actively involved in the research activities, including data analysis and interpretation.

The data analysis of personal narratives was conducted using Saldana's three-level coding approach. At level one, initial open coding was employed to identify and label key themes and concepts within the narratives based on reflective question prompts detailed in Table 1. Level two involved axial coding, which focused on exploring relationships and connections between the identified themes. Finally, at level three, selective coding was applied to determine central themes that emerged across the narratives. This three-level analysis allowed for a deep understanding of the narratives and facilitated the identification of significant patterns, insights, and implications within the data. Saldana's coding approach provided a systematic and rigorous framework for analyzing the personal narratives and deriving meaningful findings (Saldana 2013).

Table 1

Categories and Themes Identified During Data Analysis

	Categories guided by Research Questions	Level Two Coding	Level Three (Final Coding)	Implications for Training Program
1	Challenges in Interpreting process/ situations	Message complexity (perceiving complex messages and getting complex message across) Language variety Vague concept by the signer/speaker Different and unfamiliar settings	Multitasking /capacity to understand complex messages from speakers or signers & to convey complex messages with consideration of setting	Developing better and varied coping strategies to quickly adapt with different & unfamiliar settings
	Insufficient Organizational supports, facilitation and evaluation	Lack of understanding regarding SLI's roles and needs (facility, handouts, etc) Lack of evaluation and feedbacks (from peer and mentor)	Weak/non-existent role of sign language interpreting agency to mediate or facilitate understanding in clients requesting services	Foster role and understanding of interpreting as advocacy depending on situations; Self-reflection on ethics during first/ second and final years of the training program
	Strategies	Address the needs directly Familiarize self with speaker/signer background (more preparation prior to assignment) Open to constructive feedbacks from colleagues and clients	Pro-active to resolve situations Continuous learning Accepting feedbacks	

2	Defining Interpreting Competence (Characteristics)	Language skills Communication skills Interpreting skills	Language aspect/ Aptitudes	Continuous practice and refinement of sign language skills Engaging in ongoing professional development & training opportunities
		Openness Self-awareness Appreciation of deaf culture/ sign language/ other cultures	Non-language aspect/ Attitudes	Building a strong foundation of cultural competency and sensitivity
	Strategies to maintain/ enhance competency	Self-reflection Acceptance of constructive feedback	Intrinsic motivation	Seeking mentorship and guidance from experienced sign language interpreters
		Mentoring Fostering connection with D/deaf, trusted colleagues, and psychologist	Extrinsic influence	Actively participating in immersive environments to enhance language fluency Exploring concept of interpreting as emotional labor
		Keeping up with changes in the field	Adaptability (and Use of Technology) to better deliver service to clients	Ongoing self-directed learning and being adaptable Utilizing technology and resources for self-study and skill enhancement

3	Ethical Situations	Communication ethics (incl. Confidentiality, Privacy, Boundaries) Impartial (in message delivery and not representing D/deaf voices) Multiple roles (Communicator, Advocacy, Educator)		Foster role and understanding of interpreting as advocacy depending on situations; Self-reflection on ethics during first/ second and final years of training program

Preliminary Findings and Discussions

Based on data analysis conducted and preliminary findings, our research reveal key insights and possible implications for training approach in Indonesia:

1. Majority face a range of challenges when adapting to new settings, languages, and contexts

SLIs often encounter challenges when adapting to new settings, languages, and contexts. Their role requires them to swiftly adjust and accurately convey information and communication exchanges between Deaf and Hearing individuals. Many SLIs expressed the difficulties they face in familiarizing themselves with the environment, including the physical space and the people involved, often with little time for preparation. A female SLI with 11 years of experience shared her approach:

> "[...] I make quick decisions by using my logic to determine how to convey the message in both sign language and spoken language. I also rely on my instincts. If I'm unsure about a specific term or vocabulary used by the source, moderator, or messenger, I opt to spell it out or verbally articulate the word. If I have a tandem partner, their ability to keep up with the fast-paced environment becomes crucial. [...] It is essential to communicate the need for interpretation facilitation to the client, tailoring it to the specific location or activity. This requires active communication with the organizer or person in charge."

The SLI emphasizes the importance of thinking quickly, using logic, and relying on instincts to ensure effective communication. They also highlight the significance of clear and active communication with the client and organizers to facilitate the interpretation process.

Additionally, they are required to understand specific communication needs and preferences of the Deaf individuals they will be working with, as well as any cultural nuances that may impact the interpretation process. This can be challenging as requests for sign language interpretation services submitted by event organizers or institutions do not always include information about specific communication needs of deaf individuals. Language variation is another key factor. Different sign languages exist worldwide, and some interpreters do not get exposed to a new sign language or home-based gestures when working in different provinces and remote areas. The linguistic nuances, vocabulary, and grammatical structures unique to that sign language are repeatedly mentioned by SLIs.

> I have encountered a Deaf client who never had formal education and rely solely on home gestures for communication. Initially, I attempted to utilize various communication modes and failed at getting the messages across. Then I decided to meet with the client's family to observe and better understand how they communicate with the Deaf client. (Male SLI, 11 years of interpreting)

Interpreting in various specialized contexts, such as education, law, medicine, or business, can be challenging for interpreters without formal training and ongoing mentorship. Limited exposure to these contexts makes it difficult to acquire the necessary knowledge and understanding for accurate interpretation as a male SLI with 5 years of experience expressed his concern:

> Lack of role models, whether Hearing or Deaf are challenging for me. When it is difficult to find role models to follow, we do not know the standards to meet and how to develop better signing and interpreting skills. Also, lack of evaluation and constructive feedback from colleagues add to difficulty in building good relationships with colleagues and in meeting established professional standards.

To address these challenges, several SLIs recommend engaging in self-directed learning and seeking opportunities for ongoing professional development. This includes participating in workshops, training sessions, and self-reflection to enhance knowledge and language skills, as well as staying updated with industry changes.

2. On competency and strategies to maintain and improve own competency

> When I reflect on the 8th Year Climb article, the concept of Impostor Syndrome and self-doubt arises. On one hand, we feel the need to constantly improve our abilities, and it often feels like we can never do enough. To address this, we must maintain our language skills and knowledge, seek additional training or certification, actively seek feedback from peers or clients (both Deaf and Hearing), engage in networking and

> professional growth activities, and adapt to changes that occur. (Male SLI, 5 years of experience)
>
> [...] Personally, I make an effort to continually improve my understanding of sign language and its diverse nuances by frequently chatting with Deaf individuals. Also, I regularly engage in discussions with trusted colleagues. On another note, I regularly seek support from a psychologist to address my mental well-being, even though the psychologist may not fully comprehend the Deaf world or interpretation. In essence, I try to balance all aspects of my being – physical, mental, and professional. (Female SLI, 8 years of experience)

The quotes above offer valuable insights from SLIs, highlighting the multidimensional nature of being a proficient sign language interpreter. Competency in this field extends beyond language skills and encompasses various non-language factors, including attitudes, self-awareness, and cultural appreciation. This expansive understanding reflects the complexity of the interpreter's role, which goes beyond mere language translation.

The recognition of intrinsic motivation and external influences as contributing factors to competency development is noteworthy. SLIs emphasized the importance of self-reflection and accepting feedback from Deaf individuals and colleagues, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement. By actively seeking feedback and being open to constructive criticism, interpreters can identify areas for growth and refine their skills.

It is interesting to note the role of external influences, such as psychologists or mentors, in supporting SLIs' competence development. This highlights the significance of mentorship and guidance in the interpreter's journey. Having a mentor or seeking professional guidance can provide valuable insights, guidance, and support, enabling interpreters to navigate challenges and enhance their professional competence.

The mention of Impostor Syndrome and self-doubt reflects the psychological aspect that SLIs may encounter in their pursuit of competency. The field of sign language interpreting requires a high level of skill and adaptability, which can lead interpreters to question their abilities. However, the proposed strategies, such as maintaining language skills, seeking additional training, and engaging in professional activities, serve as proactive approaches to counteract self-doubt and reinforce professional growth.

As a whole, the discussion highlights the ongoing commitment of SLIs to maintain and improve their competency, which has important implications for the field of sign language interpreting. The recognition that competency is more than language skills and includes attitudes, self-reflection, and cultural appreciation indicates the need for a supportive environment for SLIs and training approaches that foster a holistic approach to their

professional development. This has implications for training programs and professional organizations to consider incorporating these aspects into their curriculum and ongoing professional development opportunities.

The significance of seeking feedback from Deaf individuals, colleagues, and mentors emphasizes the importance of peer learning for continuous growth in the field. This highlights the need to establish a supportive and collaborative environment within the interpreting community, where professionals can actively engage in constructive feedback and benefit from mentorship relationships. This aligns with the principles advocated by scholars of adult learning. Peer learning not only facilitates the acquisition of specialized knowledge but also fosters the development of transferable skills, including communication, teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal skills. These skills hold substantial value in real-world professional settings, contributing to lifelong learning and career success (Falchikov, 2001).

The mention of adaptation to changes underscores the dynamic nature of sign language interpreting and the need for SLIs to stay current with evolving practices and technologies as highlighted by following quote:

> We also need to understand that while the core principles of being an SLI rarely change, the reality is that the technical aspects of the field and technology are constantly evolving. As SLIs, it is essential for us to adapt, network, and continue learning to keep up with these changes. (Male SLI, 5 years of experience)

Consequently, ongoing training and professional development need to consider emerging trends and changes in the field, ensuring that SLIs possess the necessary skills and knowledge to provide effective and relevant interpreting services. Active participation in various competency development areas is crucial for SLIs to achieve and enhance the quality of interpretation services they offer to clients.

3. Client-centered approach in dealing with difficult ethical situation

When facing difficult ethical situations, for example lack of awareness about presence and roles of SLIs in meetings or public events and awkward situations where event organizers have no clear ideas how to best work with SLIs, almost all SLIs mentioned they ultimately prioritize a client-centered approach. By focusing on effective communication delivery between Deaf and Hearing clients, SLIs ensure that the primary objective of facilitating understanding and accessibility is met.

Many SLIs stated that raising awareness about the role and importance of sign language interpreters is a crucial aspect of their work. Many people may not fully understand the role of SLIs or the impact they have on communication access for Deaf individuals.

Many have stepped up to inform and educate others about the importance of communication access and advocate for the Deaf community, promoting understanding and preventing misunderstandings. In such cases, SLIs must carefully choose their words, tone, and intentions to create a positive and trusting atmosphere. Two quotes highlight the importance of a client-centered approach in different situations:

> In difficult situations, putting the interests of Deaf clients first should always be a key principle. As SLIs, we must realize that we act as a bridge of communication and not steal the show or seek attention. Our clients' interests should always be our priority, and we must ensure that we maintain their confidentiality and privacy, as well as our own, in a professional and appropriate manner while adhering to ethical principles. (Male SLI, 5 years of experience)

> When facing challenging ethical situations as an SLI, one common issue I encounter is dealing with Hearing clients who have little to no understanding of the SLI's role and position. It requires patience to repeatedly explain our role to them. As SLIs, our work extends beyond interpretation; it encompasses advocacy. Therefore, it is crucial for us to engage in meaningful discussions and effectively convey the purpose and significance of our work to clients. Providing explanations about the Deaf community and highlighting the importance of SLIs for the Deaf community is essential. (Female SLI, 11 years of experience)

Some SLIs highlighted the significance of impartiality and confidentiality as crucial etiquettes to uphold. They recognized the importance of maintaining a neutral stance in delivering messages, understanding that they do not represent the Deaf community. Strategies shared among SLIs included exercising self-control, acknowledging their role as intermediaries, and finding appropriate ways to address their own thoughts and the needs of the Deaf individuals without overstepping boundaries. Additionally, SLIs emphasized the value of having a supportive tandem during team interpreting, which enhances successful communication and discussion in challenging situations. A female SLI shared her perspective on professionalism and teamwork:

> In my work, I prioritize professionalism by maintaining a respectful attitude when conveying intentions beyond the actual content being delivered. As an interpreter, I recognize the significance of teamwork and collaboration. This involves coordinating with various stakeholders such as event committees, equipment providers, resource persons, and moderators. Building strong cooperation among team members is crucial to deliver appropriate and satisfactory services to our clients. By upholding

> professionalism and fostering effective teamwork, we strive to provide high-quality interpreting services. (Female SLI, 11 years of experience)

The quotes so far highlight the significance of reflective practice as a critical link to ethical decision-making for SLIs (Humphrey and Alcorn 2020). By engaging in reflective practice, SLIs can analyze the ethical dilemmas they encounter, explore their values, and make informed decisions that align with the ethical guidelines and principles of the interpreting profession.

Conclusion

Sign language interpreters face significant gaps in their experiences when it comes to improving their interpreting practices and skills. Limited professional development opportunities (Napier et al 2019; Roberson and Russell 2020), lack of mentoring and supervision (Humphrey et al 2019; Stone 2022), insufficient reflective practice (Hauser et al 2021), and a scarcity of research focused on trainings and practices of sign language interpreters (Dean and Pollard 2013) contribute to these challenges. Participatory action research offers possibilities to address these gaps by empowering interpreters to actively engage in their own professional growth. Through collaborative and participatory action research (CPAR) initiatives, we can foster a supportive and dynamic environment that facilitates continuous improvement in sign language interpreting practices.

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13

Public Discourse and Public Discord: Insights from Canadian Media Interpreters

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ABSTRACT

This paper shares insights from a Canadian research project of Deaf and non-Deaf interpreters who interpreted government media updates starting in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data set includes qualitative interviews with 20 interpreters and contrasts the interviews with the views of 100 Canadian Deaf consumers. The findings reveal the challenges of working media broadcasts involved dealing with medical, legal, and political discourses in ways that were unfamiliar to interpreters. While 6 out of 20 interpreters had training in how to interpret during public emergencies, there was no way to anticipate that training would require skills necessary for a global pandemic, which led to very different levels of quality interpretation across the country. The findings showed that interpreters found ways by leveraging technology to support each other in acquiring terminology and knowledge about the content. The working strategies developed by co-interpreting teams varied across Canada and impacted how some of the Deaf community viewed Deaf interpreters. While the Deaf community appreciated having access to information, there was no consistent view to having Deaf interpreters as the public faces of interpreting in ASL and LSQ. Several recommendations are provided regarding standard contractual conditions and the kinds of ongoing training needed.

Keywords: media interpreting, accessibility, broadcasts, COVID-19, pandemic, language access, Deaf community, Deaf interpreters, strategies, demands

Introduction

This paper describes the experience of providing sign language interpreters for COVID-19 media updates during 2022-2022. The public presentation of information, translated or interpreted into the signed language(s) of the country, includes access to daily broadcast news, political debates and election debates, specialized programs (e.g., travel documentaries), and/or emergency announcements regarding health or public safety or natural disasters. They could

also include the translation of local, state/provincial, national, or international government information available in video, DVD, or, more recently, online formats.

The field of interpreting has undergone extraordinary growth, and within the past few decades, practitioners are now interpreting in a variety of sectors including public service, conferences, and high-level political meetings (Russell & Nicholson, 2021). However, with the increase in the need for urgent national broadcasting due to disasters and catastrophes, we have found ourselves on the cusp of a new era where interpreters are faced with an unprecedented demand of working within multiple discourse genres, such as the overlay of medical, political, and legal discourses all merging into one COVID-19 government update. Furthermore, trained interpreters who may have worked solely in the community, or in a specific sector (legal, medical, video relay services [VRS], mental health, video remote interpreting [VRI]) are now being challenged to respond to and provide interpretation for media outlets, which often includes information describing the nature and severity of the disaster and instructions that civilians are directed to follow (Russell et al., 2018).

Civil management authorities and/or emergency management organizations (EMOs) often assume that providing emergency information in a text or subtitled form broadcast either municipally, provincially, or nationally is sufficient in reaching the Deaf and Deafblind community. While Internet-streamed content and/or text messages to a person's mobile device may be viewed as a key tool for information dissemination such tools are not as effective as live, captioned televised broadcast news accompanied by signed language interpreting (McKee, 2014). Indeed, information that appears either in oral form or a text-based format increases the risk of misrepresentation of the urgent message being shared (Wood & Weisman, 2003; McKee, 2014; Russell et al., 2018). Snoddon & Wilkenson (2023) have analyzed current Canadian language policy trends and sign language ideologies in Canada and the provision of interpreters for media briefings designed to provide safety information. Their critique of the institutionalization of the interpreting profession reveals several problematic decision-making about representation in the provision of sign language interpreting services.

The Canadian Landscape of Public Policy

The presentation of information by local, state, or provincial, and national government bodies to the public is something that Deaf people must have access to as citizens. This is sometimes provided on a whim or goodwill, yet in other contexts it takes active and hard lobbying and becomes a legal requirement (Stone & Russell, 2022). In Canada, the right to sign language has been frequently tied to the right to an interpreter (Paul & Snoddon, 2017).

Viewing Legislative Frameworks on our National Landscape

Adjacent to Canada being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), there are five legal decisions and/or legislation that Canada provides to ensure an inclusive society for Deaf and DeafBlind Canadians. The first piece of legislation requires the Canadian government to offer equal protection and benefits under the law without discrimination as stated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (McKee, 2014; Russell et al., 2018).

Secondly, in 1977 the Canadian Human Rights Act was enacted to ensure Canadians have equal opportunities without discrimination (Government of Canada Justice Laws, 2021). The third contribution took place on October 9, 1997, when the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in the Eldridge case regarding the provision of sign language interpreters for medical treatment to ensure equal access and adequate health care (Tate, 2001). The fourth federal court decision was reached in 2006 in the matter of *Canadian Association of the Deaf v. Government of Canada* which reaffirmed the Eldridge decision (Canadian Hearing Services, 2020). It is important to recognize these decisions that emphasized the fundamental right for an inclusive society (McKee, 2014; Russell et al., 2018).

The last piece of key Canadian legislation is the Accessible Canada Act, a recent piece of legislation. Built upon the frameworks, the Government of Canada introduced an act to ensure a barrier-free Canada, which received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019 (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2020). The Accessible Canada Act went into effect on July 11, 2019, which now provides a "proactive and systemic approach for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility" (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2020, Preamble section). However, as Snoddon & Wilkenson (2023) point out, the Accessible Canada Act excludes public service domains of broadcasting and telecommunications, which is at the core of Article 31 of the CRPD about sign languages. This policy gap has not been addressed by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). During COVID-19, interpreters were provided for public media briefings and the question Snoddon & Wilkenson (2023) ask is whether it was effective or rather symbolic in nature? Constantin et al (2020) submitted several outstanding issues to the CRTC that related to broadcasting accessibility during the pandemic, ranging from the placement and visibility of interpreters to the lack of interpreters, and the lack of signing deaf people in Canadian public broadcasting.

An aggregate of all these legislative frameworks and legal decisions frames the right to access information in the state of an emergency within a Canadian landscape. Therefore, there should have been full access, including the provision of Deaf and Hearing sign language interpreters, in the conveying of critical and accessible information to the Deaf and DeafBlind communities in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant global crisis.

Existing International Legislative Frameworks and Policies

According to Engelmen et al. (2003), national and international disasters have demonstrated that Deaf and Deafblind communities are underserved and vulnerable, specifically in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. One of the biggest barriers in establishing accessible content with sign language interpreters is the need for policy development at all levels of government and recognition from civil management authorities (McKee, 2014; Russell et al., 2018).

Legislative frameworks, policies, and other tools implemented by governments can be examined on an international and national level. An example of this is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which entered into force on May 3, 2008 (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d). According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UNCRPD was the culmination of decades of work in changing attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities, evolving from being objects of charity to subjects who have rights as active members of society. from an 'object' of charity, to 'subjects' with rights who are active members of society. Stone and Russell (2022) stress the importance of the UNCRPD and its social development dimension (the reaffirmation of human rights and fundamental freedoms) and provide an example of a court case filed against the United Kingdom government regarding the lack of sign language access during nationally broadcast COVID briefings. The court case (R versus Minister for the Cabinet Office) was one of the successful ways the Deaf community lobbied for better access to information (Stone and Russell, 2022). Although there are 50 articles that embody the UNCRPD[1] seven articles encapsulate signed language provision during emergencies (World Association of Sign Language Interpreters [WASLI] and World Federation of the Deaf [WFD], 2015). Based on these seven articles, WASLI and WFD provided seven recommendations to all national governments through national country membership, including the need to consult with Deaf communities and provide access to: emergency telecommunications; emergency

[1] For further information on the UNCRPD, see n.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html

preparedness information; emergency information during natural disasters or other mass emergencies; Communication with emergency workers and at emergency shelters and recovery communications.

Furthermore, the WASLI and WFD guidelines also included information for broadcast media organizations clearly delineating how television and radio stations can make their information more accessible to the Deaf and DeafBlind communities.

When broadcast media organizations are not consistent with providing accessible media, the Deaf and DeafBlind communities are historically left to their own means to understand the current protocols and directives given by the government, typically through a collective sharing of video media. Stone and Russell (2022) suggest that the growth of social media usage throughout society in general has also prompted a preferred video medium for the sharing of sign language vlogs, tweets, posts, etc. These mediums are easy to use, can be posted in real time, and allow for posts in sign language. It is also interesting to note the frequency of Deaf people filling in any information gaps to ensure that members of their community have access to information. Such Deaf individuals are often interpreters or translators, or more traditional news relayers or information givers (Adam et al., 2011; Stone, 2009; Stone & Russell, 2022).

Interpreting Provision Models

Stone and Russell (2022) describe how media and emergency interpreting services are provided in various ways, often with either Deaf and/or non-deaf interpreters in teams. In some countries, Deaf and non-deaf interpreters work collaboratively in teams *in situ* to provide access, with non-deaf co-interpreters providing the pivot language for the Deaf interpreter. Three countries using this model are Fiji, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In Fiji, Deaf interpreters work with Hearing co-interpreters in teams, which in turn affords the opportunity to operate in a Deaf-centered way as the Deaf interpreter works with a Hearing co-interpreter to produce a clear and consumable message for the Deaf community (Stone and Russell, 2022). As highlighted by Stone and Russell, the decision to provide the news using a Deaf-centered approach was the most accessible method for Deaf community members who had little or no formal access to education; they needed this vital approach to absorb and comprehend government updates and directives.

The United Kingdom provides the example of a mixed team of Deaf and non-deaf interpreters working from spoken English into British Sign Language (BSL), which according

to Stone (2019) is produced in a remote studio that is then superimposed onto the news broadcast.

In Canada there are mixed approaches to the delivery of interpreting services. Canadian teams have varied from province to province including consistent Deaf-Hearing teams, to other provinces only booking Hearing interpreters or Deaf interpreters who have not acquired the specialized skill of interpreting in the media (Stone and Russell, 2022). Those who can recall the Paralympics 2021 coverage and the 2022 Winter Olympics will recognize the Deaf translation norm: the interpreting team was composed of Deaf translators with media experience, demonstrating seamless insider knowledge with an accessible product (Stone & Russell, 2022). Deaf interpreters are reported to not only deliver a more advanced linguistically and culturally competent interpretation, but they are also perceived to have higher effectiveness (De Meulder and Heyerick 2013; Russell and McLaughlin, 2018). In Russell and McLaughlin's report, the expert panel noted that training and resources for Deaf and nondeaf interpreters were highly recommended, and when considering service provision for emergency broadcasts, the "first choice of interpreters must be Deaf interpreters…" (Snodden and Wilkinson, 2023). Unfortunately, at this time, there is no current screening in place for Deaf interpreters in Canada to become certified (Snodden and Wilkinson, 2023).

The Role of the Deaf Sign Language Monitor

The role of a Deaf sign language monitor is a second service delivery option that has been exemplified in Canada. This includes the monitor (typically a native language user) supporting non-deaf interpreters by providing lexical alternatives to concepts, providing feedback, monitoring for content accuracy and affect, and backchanneling while the non-deaf interpreter is working (Stone & Russell, 2022). One example of a Deaf sign language monitor supporting interpreters working with ASL and French Sign Language (LSQ) can be found during the 2021 media briefings by the Canadian Prime Minister (Stone & Russell, 2022). The sign language monitor provided support during preparation meetings and was present during the live studio broadcast. According to Folino (2021), the sign language monitor can help in preparation meetings by providing political context and background information for the interpreters to understand the full meaning of texts along with the tone of the government messages to ensure appropriate interpretation (Stone & Russell, 2022).

Factors Affecting Deaf Viewers' Access to Information

Intent Vs. Impact: The Intention of Providing Quality Interpretation & Impact on Viewers' Understanding.

Considering the breadth and scope of the contextualized information presented during a broadcast combined with the logistics of the pace and technological demands, interpreting on television is quite demanding. The interpreter's intent to provide a quality interpretation is not always correlative to the impact of understanding by the Deaf viewer. The speed and pace at which the broadcast is delivered can be another challenge. For example, if the news anchor or government official is reading from a script, the pace is often quick and may not necessarily follow the natural prosody of a non-scripted speaker (de Wit et al., 2020). A quick pace may influence the interpreters' degree of fluency in providing an utterance grammatically intact with the appropriate syntax (Xiao et al., 2015). For example, in ASL, facial expressions serve grammatical and expressive functions (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991). Moreover, prosodic boundary markers are also required for Deaf consumers to readily process what is being interpreted (Nicodemus & Smith, 2006; Brentari & Crossley, 2002).

However, in a study from China, interpreters reported that although facial expressions were essential components of the language, sometimes the speed of the utterances were so quick that they could not think about facial expressions at all (Xiao & Li, 2013). Interpreters must seek and practice strategies to help maintain source message integrity if they are interested in media interpreting. Providing preparatory materials to interpreters/interpreter teams is also very beneficial. Interpreters who can access materials in advance can then research concepts, specific lexicons, and stay current with new, unfolding information. In most cases, preparatory materials are not often given in advance, nor is the necessary preparation time remunerated (de Wit et al., 2020). Most non-deaf viewers may be under the assumption that inclusivity of interpreters in broadcasts means that the information has been prepared in advance and what is being conveyed is easily understood by Deaf viewers. Indeed, according to Xiao & Li (2013), Deaf people have the "appearance of access" to information. Interpreters working within media often cannot clarify or confirm with the audience and can only assume that the interpretation is understood (de Wit et al., 2020). A 2021 study from Korea by Yi et al. highlights the ways Deaf people view interpreted media and the importance of the interpreter's visibility (small area on the TV as opposed to full screen), the lack of traditional backgrounds (ovals or squares in plain colours), and caption placement all contribute to accessing the content effectively.

Lack of Media Training and the Absence of the Deaf Voice

One of the ways in which to assuage the demands of interpreting in the media is to have formalized media training to increase the number of trainings for interpreters willing to work within multiple discourse genres that merge into government updates or new directives mitigating emergency situations. As of November 2020, there is no formalized training in Europe; most interpreters learn to work on television by being booked or by being mentored by a colleague, and Deaf interpreters receive even fewer opportunities for training (de Wit et al., 2020). According to Stone and Russell (2022), Australia was one of the first countries to provide media training for seasoned interpreters by collaborating with the Deaf community. This was emulated by a region in Canada in 2019. Although the training covered natural disasters that had historically inflicted other countries such as Australia, the United States, and Canada, it did not include information on interpreting pandemic conditions (Stone & Russell, 2022). This lack of systematic training was expeditiously brought to light in 2020 with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic where interpreters were being placed and expected to work without specialized training and without support in place from broadcasters. This left the interpreting community to try their best under excruciating circumstances and oftentimes led to confusion among Deaf viewers. This meant interpreters were acquiring information as circumstances unfolded as they themselves learned about COVID-19, the modelling of patterns of community transmission, and the state of emergency orders, etc. (Stone & Russell, 2022). There is an urgent need to develop specialized training for interpreters to work in media, especially to provide comprehensible messages to the Deaf and Deafblind community (de Wit et al., 2020; Russell & Stone, 2022; Xiao & Li, 2013).

After reviewing the limited research on media interpreting and the strategies used by Canadian ASL-English interpreters and recognizing the emerging experiences of interpreters facing the complexity of interpreting the COVID-19 pandemic, this research study was designed to serve as a preliminary step in drawing upon the insights of Canadian interpreters.

Research Position

All three authors are interpreters and interpreter educators. Nigel is a Deaf interpreter and educator with a great deal of media experience and international experiences training Deaf interpreters. Deb and Jeanette are both Hearing interpreters and educators. Deb and Nigel both provided interpreting services for government updates during the pandemic, and Jeanette works for an interpreter agency that also provides video relay services. She is also an educator who continues to prepare interpreters for dealing with the ever-changing linguistic context of

COVID-19-relevant content during video relay calls. We approached this project as one that we were intensively curious about, because we were concerned about the quality of information that the diverse Deaf communities of Canada received during interpreted broadcasts.

Research Approach

The research question that framed this study was*: What has been the experience of Canadian sign language interpreters providing media interpreting for government-related broadcast media during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The participants for this study were recruited via an email distributed to a group of interpreters specifically known to offer interpreting services during the government updates in the first year of the global pandemic. Due to the public nature of the televised broadcasts, this purposeful sample was assembled from professional networks and recommendations from interpreter referral services contracted to provide services. This qualitative study was conducted with 20 interpreters who were actively providing interpreting services in media contexts. One additional interview was conducted with a representative and advisor from the Government of Canada who worked with interpreters at the federal level. All participants provided informed consent prior to being interviewed. The study also drew on the findings of a public survey of Deaf Canadians views of media interpreting (Bomack 2021).

Results

The analyses yielded five major themes: 1) Convergence of Health, Disability & Human Rights, 2) Crisis and Gatekeeping, 3) Public Decisions — Public Scrutiny, 4) Technology and Language Evolution, and 5) Compassion Fatigue. Several sub-themes within each major theme were identified, further supported by direct quotes from participants. Table One describes our themes and subthemes.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-Themes Yielded from the Analysis

Theme	Sub-Theme	Consequences
Convergence of Health, Disability & Human Rights	Lobbying from Deaf communities/interpreter referral agencies using rights-based arguments. Unintended consequences: growing awareness of sign language accessibility. No consistency in a model of service provision.	The first hearing interpreter appeared on a televised news broadcast on March 15, 2020 in Newfoundland, and on March 23, 2020, the first Deaf interpreter appeared in British Columbia.

	Discord among the Deaf community about Deaf interpreters	Members of the public created fan clubs and would question, "Where is the interpreter today?" when one was not present on government sites. Stress levels increased in the composition of co-interpreting teams. Some areas did not use deaf/hearing teams.
Crisis and Gatekeeping	Discourse centred on the qualifications needed for broadcast media work. Variations of interpreter skills became visible. The impact of gatekeeping and lack of training.	A pilot of eight interpreters (4 Deaf, 4 hearing) participated in an emergency training hosted by Alberta between September and October 2020. Absence of training for a global pandemic. Division in the community (50% wanted only hearing-certified interpreters. Deaf interpreters are provided few opportunities for success in this setting, some hearing interpreters being ill-prepared for the work with pressure to accept the work regardless of skills.
Public Decisions and Public Scrutiny	Increase in visibility (television, broadcast apps (Facebook and YouTube etc.) Discord in perception of readiness	Interpreters report feeling pressured to accept work and being asked to participate in media interviews as interest in sign language interpreters increased. Interpreters felt they were appropriate for work, but not viewed the same way by the Deaf

		community.
	Discord on the positioning of interpreters during a broadcast.	Interpreters placed in separate studios and lack of consistency on how the interpreter was framed on screen impacted accessibility.
	Discord in the lack of preparatory materials.	Lack of preparation notes to prepare made work difficult. Pace of the content delivery (i.e., statistics /data spoken quickly) made work much more difficult.
Technology and Language Evolution	Need for collective support.	Video app was leveraged to allow everyone to communicate in sign language to prepare specific concepts and emerging interpreting practices.
	Emergence and representation of new terminology	Initial conversations exposed significant gaps in skill sets. Interpreters likely influenced Deaf community's signs for concepts in some communities.
Compassion Fatigue	Weariness of interpreters	The importance of self-care (physical exercise, yoga, meditation, crafts, spending time with friends, family, and pets, and taking a break from media work
	Capacity-building	Long-term implications of the expansion of interpreting pools via training and mentorship opportunities.

Theme One: Convergence of Human Rights, Disability Rights & Health Rights

During the very early stages of the pandemic, no interpreters were present on public broadcasts which led Deaf community members, organizations representing Deaf communities, and interpreter referral services to lobby their respective governments and/or local broadcasters with the demand that interpreters be provided. The result of this lobbying using rights-based arguments was that the first hearing interpreter appeared on a televised news broadcast on March 15, 2020, in Newfoundland. On March 23, 2020, the first Deaf interpreter appeared in British Columbia and very soon after, other provinces followed suit. However, the model of service provision that emerged for the geographically large Canada, where healthcare is a provincial responsibility, was anything but consistent. As these rights and lobby efforts converged, they also created stress for some participants. Six of the ten provinces and two territories implemented a model of co-interpreting teams (De Muelder & Heyerick 2013; Russell & McLaughlin, 2018; Stone & Russell, 2014), where Deaf interpreters were the public face of the sign language (ASL or LSQ) while three provinces and one territory utilized interpreters who were hearing.

One of the unintended consequences of the general community seeing interpreters present during media updates was a growing awareness of sign language and the role it played in accessibility. Some interpreters had random strangers stop them on the street and thank them for their work. Other interpreters soon realized that members of the public had created "fan clubs" on Facebook to celebrate their work. A positive outcome of working with interpreters was the outpouring of support from members of the community when the interpreters were not available, with comments posted on government sites like "Where is the interpreter today?" Despite all these positive aspects to the provision of service, there was also discord experienced among Deaf community members about Deaf interpreters.

Theme Two: Crisis & Gatekeeping

One of the conversations that surfaced quickly within the Deaf and interpreter community centered on the qualifications needed for broadcast media work. During September to October 2020, a pilot group of eight interpreters (four Deaf and four Hearing) participated in 24 hours of training, including working at a mock emergency training hosted by the Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA). While this training focused on emergency broadcasts, there was no training for a global pandemic included. This type of training was not available to others across the country; however, within the pool of interpreters interviewed for this study, six had experience with interpreting media broadcasts for emergencies such as

hurricanes on the Eastern coast of Canada, ice storms in Quebec, as well as non-emergency broadcast such as election debates at the provincial and federal government levels. The variation of interpreter skills that became visible in the televised broadcast led some Deaf communities to express a desire for only certified Hearing interpreters. One local Deaf leader from Manitoba conducted a survey of 100 Deaf Canadians, seeking input on the preference of Deaf or Hearing interpreters for these media contexts (Bomak, 2020). The results showed a divided Deaf community; 50% loved seeing Deaf people represented by Deaf interpreters if the interpreters were well-trained. The other half of participants believed that the Deaf interpreters lagged too far behind the speaker and that they were simply mirroring the co-interpreter (personal communication, R. Bomak, May 23, 2021). This issue of gatekeeping by interpreters, whether individuals or interpreters who have companies providing interpreting services, was a significant theme amongst the participants in this study. In the words of an interpreter team (Deaf and Hearing):

> Who decides the model of service delivery? If the initial calls or contracts are held by individuals or agencies that generally prefer to work with Hearing interpreters, that may be who they dispatch for the assignment. For agencies that underbid to obtain the contracts, they may be forced to use staff interpreters to not exceed the contracted financials, but those interpreters may or may not be suitable for the work.

Yet other provinces, at the agency level and the Deaf community level, embraced Deaf interpreters with very little debate, seeing the messages coming through in natural ASL from well-qualified interpreters who appeared to have the capacity for managing the complexity of language and interaction demands of the settings.

Gatekeeping continues to be a matter of discussion, especially for some Deaf interpreters who feel they have fewer opportunities to learn to do this work well, and among Hearing interpreters in reference to agencies and policies that may be placing ill-prepared interpreters in media assignments.

Theme Three: Public Decisions and Public Scrutiny

Given that media interpretation was visible on television, on broadcast apps, via Facebook and YouTube and other social media platforms, it meant that interpreters and each of their decisions were being viewed by large audiences of both Deaf people, other interpreters, and society. In the early stages of the pandemic, it was clear that some interpreters who believed they were appropriate for the work were not viewed in the same way by the Deaf community. Interpreters reported feeling pressured to accept the work given the importance of

information needed to keep communities safe and informed, while other interpreters stepped forward, confident in their ability to interpret well. At the same time, the public interest in interpreting was growing, which meant that media outlets were approaching interpreters to participate in media interviews. The decision taken by some interpreters to grant interviews was one that most interpreters in this study did not support. For those in the study that did participate in interviews, they came to regret it. In contrast, other participants stood their ground and deferred interviews to Deaf community organizations or Deaf representatives. The subject of media interviews and interpreters being carried away by the public attention as "stars" was something that the research participants returned to when identifying the attributes and training needed for interpreters working in this specialized setting.

As the pandemic shifted and continued, interpreters were placed in separate studios with technical support in place, and broadcast on the mainstream screen image. The size of the interpreter's onscreen presence also varied from one-third to half of the screen. This lack of consistency in framing the interpreter and the background meant that interpreters working the events were in a constant cycle of educating and negotiating with the media and technical coordinators with varying degrees of success. Later, interpreters were deployed from their home studios and were often only visible via a Facebook or YouTube link. This was far less accessible for Deaf communities in that the feed was often delayed and difficult to find, and this resulted in family members who were Deaf viewing the broadcasts on separate devices while their Hearing family could access it on a single television. The discrepancy between forms of accessibility created confusion among Deaf communities and interpreters.

One of the consistent aspects of discord mentioned by all of the interpreters in the study was the lack of preparation notes and how having no context or background information then made their work so much more difficult, especially if speeches were read quickly and filled with statistics of how many people had contracted COVID-19, how many were hospitalized and/or in ICU, where there were outbreaks in congregate living settings and the deaths for a specific region and time period.

The next theme addresses some of the ways in which technology and language evolution occurred during the pandemic and what role interpreters may have played in that linguistic evolution.

Theme Four: Technology and Language Evolution

As communities across the country compared provincial updates, there was discussion among interpreters about how best to support each other. This led to two interpreters, one from

British Columbia and one from Alberta, to create a group on Marco Polo, a video app that allowed everyone to communicate in ASL and/or LSQ about the signs chosen for concepts and to share emergent interpreting practices that shift daily. The group quickly grew to include over 45 interpreters, Deaf and Hearing, from coast to coast, all of whom were working in the stressful and fast-paced environment of media updates.

The initial focus of the conversations focused on signs suitable for specific health-related descriptions of the coronavirus. Many of the Deaf interpreters as well as the more experienced and certified Hearing interpreters, some of whom were raised in Deaf families, were seen as the "go-to" sources for appropriate ways of signing the concepts where there was little time to contextualize them. However, these initial conversations also exposed significant gaps in some of the interpreters' skill sets related to understanding the meaning of the English and therefore conventional ways of describing something in ASL or LSQ. This demonstrates some overlap with Theme Two in that the interpreters were doing this media work they were ill-prepared for, but somehow, they were the ones chosen or who claimed the work.

While generally interpreters do not see themselves as active participants in shaping linguistic choices in the Deaf community, as the COVID-19 language evolved, so did the sign choices used by interpreters, and by default it is likely some Deaf communities adopted signs that were first used by interpreters. Some of the interpreters addressed how they kept in contact with Deaf ASL instructors or ASL mentors who could advise them, and others talked about having a core group of diverse Deaf community members (senior citizens, people who were not fluent in ASL but used other signed languages, children, etc.) who they relied upon for honest feedback. At one point, the Marco Polo group engaged a Deaf physician in the discussion to understand the meaning behind several concepts; this was viewed by the group participants as incredibly helpful. Some of the interpreters also reported that they began following that Deaf physician's social media accounts to stay updated on regularly posted ASL messages about COVID-19 topics.

As the months went by, interpreters in the study interviews addressed another aspect that had emerged: compassion fatigue.

Theme Five: Compassion Fatigue is Real

The participants addressed how difficult the work was day in and day out at the beginning of the pandemic. As described earlier, media events involved high-level elected officials and provincial health officers, all of whom brought forward discourses embedded with medical, legal, political terms and often in obscure ways of framing matters. As

hospitalizations and deaths increased, the interpreters reported how weary they were becoming of relaying heartbreaking news. The interpreters were all long-time practitioners as well, which meant several had family members affected by lockdown measures in nursing homes or senior facilities, and all of them worried for the most vulnerable members of their local Deaf community.

The elements of self-care that the interpreters identified as using included physical exercise, yoga, meditation, crafts, spending time with friends, family, and pets, and taking a break from media work. However, in some provinces with very small teams and limited capacity, this scheduled break from media interpreting was more difficult or impossible. This obstacle also speaks to the long-term implications of communities needing to expand their interpreting pools via training and mentorship opportunities.

Strategies: Learning on the Fly

Table Two describes the strategies that were identified by the participants as having the greatest impact on their ability to do their work well while coping with internal and external sources of stress.

Table 2. What Worked Well and What Didn't?

What Worked Well?	What Didn't Work Well?
Established working relationship prior to the pandemic	Deaf interpreters unable to select their preferred co-interpreter
Access to a Deaf monitor or policy advisor	Having limited or no exposure to media training
Daily review of national, provincial, and local news	Introspection of the interpreter to realize what setting their skills are best-suited
Teams advocating for preparatory materials	Deaf interpreters feel additional stress due to a potential ineffective interpretation which could be publicly scrutinized.
Placement of the television monitor showing the co-interpreter	Deaf interpreters concerned for the Deaf communities when dissatisfied with the quality of interpretation.
A dedicated team of media interpreters that shared	Deaf interpreters felt conflicted about supporting

schema	agencies and/or interpreter colleagues while acknowledging the impact of the quality of the information in the interpretation
Debrief among interpreters (colleagues in or outside of their province)	Quality of internet speed and bandwidth for those interpreters working remotely from home.
Well-developed stress management strategies	
Separate media teams for coverage of other emergencies that may be happening locally in that province.	

What Worked Well?

Among the teams composed of Deaf-Hearing colleagues, what worked well was having an established working relationship prior to the pandemic, making it easier to adapt to the setting-specific demands. For those interpreting for the federal government, having access to the Deaf policy advisor or Deaf monitor on matters related to accessibility was viewed as very helpful. Across the country, participants identified that having a dedicated team of media interpreters as they developed a shared schema for both the core content and the typical process of interactions required of the speakers during question-and-answer media scrums. One of the provinces experienced two more natural disasters amidst the pandemic, including extreme heat waves, out of control wildfires and flooding. Having three media teams provided sufficient coverage for both COVID-19 updates as well as the daily emergency updates about the wildfires and a few months later, the catastrophic floods.

All the teams adopted a strategy of starting each day by reviewing national, provincial, and local news for insights that might shape the update they were scheduled to interpret. Teams continued to lobby for tools such as speaker notes, markers, and flip charts and/or white boards that could be used to visually note key concepts and names, places, and numbers in highly visible ways during the filming. For Deaf-Hearing teams with interpreters in different locations, ensuring the placement of the television monitor showing the co-interpreter was crucial to having eye gaze remain on the camera.

Debriefing among interpreters, whether with colleagues in or outside of their province, provided a forum for encouragement and support, especially for events where there were technical difficulties or where criticism existed of the interpreting product and process.

Well-developed stress management strategies enabled interpreters to cope with complex content and challenging work demands.

What Didn't Work Well

Several of the Deaf interpreters had little or no choice in the selection of their co-interpreters, which resulted in interpreting teams that simply could not effectively work together. Other interpreters commented that it was such a stressful time, which then was made more stressful when they had to get to know each other and learn how to work together.

Interpreters, Deaf and Hearing, who had limited or no exposure to media interpreting, found the work incredibly challenging. There were some who quickly came to realize that they were effective interpreters in the community for one-on-one appointments, but not for simultaneous interpreting with such difficult content. For some Deaf interpreters, they felt the additional stress of knowing the interpretations they delivered were not effective and were publicly seen by the Deaf community.

Some of the Deaf interpreters expressed concern for Deaf communities that were dissatisfied with quality of interpretation, regardless of whether the interpreter was Deaf or non-deaf. They also, as community members, felt conflicted about supporting agencies and/or interpreter colleagues, while also acknowledging that the access to quality information via interpretation was dramatically affected by using interpreters not suited to this environment.

During the pandemic when the numbers of infected people were rising, some provinces moved to remote interpreting that was streamed live online. This created new challenges for interpreters who worked from their homes, where sometimes Internet speed was slow. This resulted in a time delay in processing the interpreting stream, or delays on the phone for interpreters having to access the media event.

Another interesting and somewhat surprising aspect discussed in the participant interviews was the nature of the co-interpreting arrangement for arriving in the studio and using that time to connect with others. During the set-up times and/or when there was a delay waiting for a Minister to arrive, the Hearing techs and other staff asked the interpreters questions about sign language, interpreting, life in the community and so on. These interactions were interpreted by the Hearing interpreter and the Deaf interpreter responded, thus forming a stronger bond with the Hearing interactants. However, it was also a place where the Hearing interpreter began to feel that their contributions were diminished and the Deaf interpreter was highlighted, versus an equal chance for both interpreters to create relationships.

Discussion

This study uncovered the perceptions and experiences of the interpreters faced with interpreting during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency broadcasts. While the provision of interpreting services has varied across the country, some media broadcasters and governments also seriously addressed how best to provide access for Deaf citizens to information, creating advisory panels and seeking best practice approaches.

The increased exposure of interpreting and sign language through COVID-19 media briefings has certainly raised the profile of ASL and LSQ. There has been increased societal interest in learning about the languages, as reported by those offering ASL classes to the community (personal communication, Brian McKenzie, January 25, 2022). Several Canadian universities that offer ASL for credit have seen a steady increase in registrations and longer waitlists for students to obtain a seat in an ASL class (personal communication, Burton Strang, January 24, 2022). The participants who shared examples of complete strangers reaching out to them via social media to comment positively on their work and the very specific example of a family that had shifted their view of their Deaf child are pieces that show the ripple effect of seeing interpreting in such public ways is impacting Canadians positively.

On the other hand, the elements of discord and the debate continue across the country about whether the media work and whether the forward-facing interpreter should be Deaf. The political rationale of having a first-language user of ASL, and a person who is living the experience of being Deaf, supports the argument that representation matters. Snoddon and Wilkenson (2023) stress that the disparities in the representation of Deaf people and interpreters impacts the quality of sign language access, and this requires further investigation of interpreting as an institution. For the Deaf community, seeing themselves represented by other Deaf people can be very satisfying. However, when the Deaf interpreters are not sufficiently prepared for the work, is it fair to the Deaf community and is it fair to the Deaf interpreter? This is an area of specialization and most Hearing interpreters in this study had access to a natural career trajectory of community-based experiences, leading to conference level work, interspersed with knowledge of how to handle prepared written texts to be read with complicated discourse structures.

Recommendations

DI Pathway to Credentialing:

Our study points to the pressing need for consistent training for Deaf interpreters. We note that several of the Deaf interpreters indicated that they realized that their work was suitable for many community assignments, but that media requires different skills and strategies. The

question for Canada to address is what training pathway can be collaboratively created that allows for Deaf interpreters to pursue credentialing without having to complete a 3- or 4-year program of study. All the DIs in this study desire more training but none of them wish to enrol in a full-time interpreter training program.

Co-interpreting Training:

There is also a huge need for training that can allow deaf-nondeaf teams of interpreters to learn how to effectively work together in media environments, and that learning these strategies needs to occur via mock media events and simulations in broadcast centres so that the interpreters are better prepared for the assignments that may emerge.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated some of the experiences of the Canadian interpreters providing media interpreting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The model of interpreting service in these media spaces is not a consistent one, and nor has there been a systematic approach to training both Hearing and Deaf interpreters for this specialized work. If Deaf and Hearing interpreters are going to be accepted by the broadest aspects of the Deaf communities, there must be sufficient training pathways that set them up for success. However, there is also a need for conversation about the role of Deaf people in media and the need for Deaf-hosted programming that may reduce the number of interpreted media events. There are significant opportunities for the development of practices and strategies that can support effective media interpreting.

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14

Through the Eyes of a Deaf Specialist: Activities of Sign Language Interpreters During the Russian-Ukrainian War

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the activities of sign language interpreters through the prism of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which directly or indirectly affects the quality of life of Deaf citizens of Ukraine. We have specifically divided the period of war into two stages: from 2014 to 2022 and from 02/24/2022 to the present. This way, we can trace the changes that have taken place both in the legislation of Ukraine and in the real life of the entire Ukrainian Deaf community. We have identified groups of Deaf people who need sign language interpreter services: a) "local deaf" who stayed in their local area, b) Deaf refugees who settled abroad, c) internally displaced persons who settled in another safe area of Ukraine. At the same time, we have also identified different categories of sign language interpreters to understand the specifics of their work, taking into account the emergence of new vectors in their activities: Ukrainian sign language interpreters, local (foreign) sign language interpreters, Deaf interpreters and local spoken language interpreters. The article contains proposals based on the bitter experience of the war.

Keywords: research, sign language interpreter, Ukrainian sign language, Deaf refugees, Deaf internally displaced person, UTOG.

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has been going on since 2014, when the second major Maidan took place during the rule of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, triggered by the president's refusal to join the European Union, which millions of Ukrainian citizens had been waiting for. After the president fled, the country was essentially left without leadership, which allowed Russian troops to begin occupying Ukraine. That is, the war is now in its ninth year. Before 2022, fighting took place locally in only a few eastern regions of Ukraine. After February 24,

2022, the entire territory of our country, both cities and small villages, was attacked with almost the entire arsenal of weapons available to modern armies.

Today is the second year of the full-scale war, and I want to share with you the conclusions we have drawn from the experience of living in the realities of one of the largest wars in the world over the past few decades.

My goal is not to tell you about the horrors of war, about the emotions and experiences of people who have suffered and continue to suffer because of it. Today, I want to discuss with you purely rational things: the challenges that the Deaf community and sign language interpreters have faced as a result of what has happened and is still happening.

Part 1: The Situation of the First Eight Years of the War (2014-2022)

If we talk about the first eight years of the war, when it was localized in several eastern regions of Ukraine, the country was solving the challenges associated with the war on its own.

Speaking on a mundane level, a fairly large number of Deaf people have become internally displaced persons who have moved from the occupied territories to other peaceful regions of Ukraine. The situation is the same with Ukrainian sign language interpreters. During this time, people found homes, jobs, and enrolled their children in kindergartens and schools. In general, they were able to establish their normal lives. The sign language interpreters continued to work as interpreters, meaning they did not change their profession.

If we raise the issue of the status of the Ukrainian sign language and note the changes that have taken place in Ukraine over this time, we have something to be proud of. Despite the challenges faced by a country at war, a draft law on the Ukrainian Sign Language has been developed and is being discussed in parliament and the government. This law provides for the regulation of issues, including the training and professional activities of sign language interpreters. This law is still under discussion and it is not yet known when it will be adopted. However, there were changes in two laws:

- In 2017, the Law of Ukraine "On Education" was adopted, where Article 7 states: "Persons with hearing impairments are guaranteed the right to study in sign language and to learn Ukrainian sign language."
- In April 2019, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language," where a separate Article 4 is devoted to the recognition of the Ukrainian sign language, which has received official status and is equal to the Ukrainian spoken language.

It is also important that within the framework of this law, we specifically defended the position that Ukrainian sign language is a means of communication for sign language speakers. That is, not only Deaf people, but also all those who speak this language as their main language or one of the main languages in their lives. In this way, the Law also deals with the rights of sign language interpreters, for whom sign language is the language of their profession and, accordingly, In this way, the Law also deals with the rights of sign language interpreters, for whom sign language is the language of their profession and, accordingly, one of the main languages of communication.

In addition, the Law clearly states that the specifics of the functioning of the Ukrainian sign language should be regulated by a separate law. So, the Law of Ukraine "On Ukrainian Sign Language" will eventually be adopted.

Also in 2019, the professional standard of "Sign Language Interpreter" was approved, in which the essence of the work of a sign language interpreter is actually translation, defined as communicative support for interaction between sign language and non-sign language speakers. This is definitely a step forward for us, because until now, our description of the sign language interpreter profession (State Classification of Professions, No. 24320, profession "Translator and fingerprint specialist of educational institutions") has included a number of responsibilities that are not typical for specialists in this profession. For example: "...to perform the functions of a class teacher of a group of persons; to develop the necessary long-term and current plans for mass and individual educational, extracurricular, rehabilitation, cultural, educational, health and other activities; to provide comprehensive assistance in carrying out medical and social and labor rehabilitation of persons with hearing impairments; to study and analyze the intellectual level of persons with hearing impairments, to submit relevant proposals to the administration of the educational institution; to monitor the attendance and results of training of persons with hearing impairments, their performance of industrial practice...".

It is worth noting that 2019 was a very favorable year for Ukraine in terms of the adoption of a number of regulations on the work of interpreters and the recognition of the status of sign language in Ukraine in general. But this was preceded by several years of hard preparatory work by the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf, representatives of the interpreter community, and many others.

Part 2. Challenges of Russia's Full-Scale Military Aggression Against Ukraine (2022-2023)

For a complete picture of sign language interpreters as of February 24, 2022, it should be noted that:

- Territorially, 22 regions of Ukraine remained intact without administrative changes;
- The total number of deaf people in Ukraine was 37,591;
- The total number of sign language interpreters was 244. Of these, 129 were employed by the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf (UTOG), 79 by other organizations and institutions, and only 20 were actually freelancers;
- The qualification level, which was confirmed by relevant documents, was as follows: out of 244 sign language interpreters, 22 had the highest category, 35 had the first category, 116 had the second category, 36 had no category but a document that allowed them to work in their specialty, and 35 sign language interpreters did not have documentary evidence of passing the exam for the specialty (although they provided interpretation services);
- In Ukraine, the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf has been training sign language interpreters since 1933. The period of sign language training lasts 4.5 months, with 6-8 hours of daily training. Almost 95**%** of the current sign language interpreters received their qualifications at the UTOG Training and Rehabilitation Center, while the rest received their certificates of sign language interpreters at other educational institutions licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine;
- There are two valid documents. *The first* is a certificate of qualification as a sign language interpreter, and *the second* is a sign language interpreter's certificate, which is a permit to work as an interpreter with a salary that corresponds to the category indicated in the certificate. The certificate is analogous to a diploma, and the sign language interpreter certificate is issued after certification (once every five years). The certification is held once a year. There is a regional certification of interpreters, where they receive or confirm the second category or "no category" qualification, and a central certification of interpreters, which is held at the Central Board of the UTOG, to obtain or confirm the first and highest categories.

Speaking about the challenges we face after a full-scale military invasion; it is worth separately considering the challenges that arise in different circumstances. First, the challenges faced by Deaf refugees abroad. Second, the challenges faced by internally displaced persons, and third the challenges posed by the growing number of Deaf people due to mine and other injuries.

On Deaf Refugees.

After February 24, 2022, a significant number of Deaf people (6,199), as well as sign language interpreters **(32)**, who are usually representatives of CODA in Ukraine, left for other countries.

Among the problems that can be identified from the experience of receiving Deaf refugees in the first months of the war are the following:

- There is a problem in understanding two sign languages. However, a deaf Ukrainian refugee can contact a Ukrainian sign language interpreter via video chat at the UTOG Service. Another issue is whether two sign language interpreters who speak other verbal languages understand each other;
- There is also a problem with Deaf refugees not understanding other sign languages. However, with the frequency of communication, the problem decreases, and the refugee gradually learns a new sign language: either by communicating on their own or at language courses created for Deaf refugees in European countries. It is clear that a Deaf refugee cannot be without an interpreter of any language;
- The overwhelming majority of national associations of the Deaf believe that Ukrainian refugees also need the services of a local sign language interpreter into Ukrainian sign language and vice versa.

The problems faced by sign language interpreters from different countries when providing translation services to Deaf Ukrainian refugees and their vision of the overall situation:

1. There are communication problems between local sign language interpreters and Deaf Ukrainian refugees. The use of Deaf local sign language interpreters will not solve this problem, as Deaf interpreters, as well as volunteers, can only speak international sign language.
2. The problem of ignorance of international gestures by Ukrainian Deaf refugees is highlighted.
3. However, problems arose when Deaf interpreters were not involved in the design and preparation of documents.

Since it is the volunteers who are close to the Ukrainian refugees, the volunteer should keep the contacts of call centers or sign language interpreters with them. It was Deaf volunteers who could list the problems that refugees from Ukraine had. These are:

- failure to provide Deaf Ukrainian refugees with a sign language interpreter, even in cases of unclear situations and mismatches between requests and actions, which is discrimination in communication;
- incorrect recording of the refugee's name on documents due to the Deaf not knowing the local language and not being able to use oral communication,
- incorrect orientation of Deaf people at railway stations or refugee camps in terms of boarding to a particular city or country. As a result, Deaf people were forced to travel to other cities and countries.
- any information in places where refugees congregate is announced orally and is aimed only at Hearing people. As a result, Deaf refugees had to search for a particular object on their own or take a long time to find out something using the translation tool in their smartphones, which caused dissatisfaction among others;
- In the process of clarifying the status (in order to enter data into an official document), as a result of a language misunderstanding, an adult family member who had permanently lived separately from his or her parents in Ukraine was included in one family. This had a negative impact on the receipt of temporary housing for all and the amount of financial support in the future. Simply put, an adult family member was forced to reunite with his or her parents and could not be employed, as his or her salary would negatively affect the parents' social assistance. This could only happen because the fact of joint or separate residence of relatives in Ukraine was not specified at the beginning of the paperwork;
- Failure to take into account the needs of the Deaf, such as the availability of a school, a medical center, etc., which led to the settlement of refugees in places where there is no special school for Deaf children, etc;
- misunderstanding of the procedure of paperwork, the essence of health insurance and settlement in general.

According to a survey, the need for an interpreter with knowledge of Ukrainian sign language was extremely high, 91.5% of Deaf people had this need. At the same time, almost everyone recognized that there were practically no interpreters of this category in the country.

Among those who provided services were interpreters of Russian nationality, and some of them openly expressed solidarity with the policy of the Russian Federation (in Germany), which further traumatized the psyche of Deaf Ukrainians. Many refugees turned to the UTOG translation service, hoping to find a foreign language expert in Ukraine. In Poland, refugees stated that a Ukrainian sign language interpretation service was opened, but the connection

with the service was of poor quality. In Romania, the Association of the Deaf was able to find a suitable sign language interpreter in its neighboring country, Moldova. In France, Ukrainian refugees hoped for the arrival of Ukrainian sign language interpreters, which later happened.
In general, as emphasized by Deaf refugees from Ukraine, they sincerely accepted the help of local sign language interpreters, and 88.26% of them needed it. However, there was a tension in the process of understanding the local sign language, which caused a "reverse positive effect": Deaf refugees developed a desire to learn the local sign language.

Deaf Interpreter of Local Sign Language.

As for the services of a Deaf interpreter, this is a new phenomenon for Ukraine: although information about this category of interpreter was available before the war, Ukraine had no experience in training Deaf interpreters. Therefore, although many Deaf refugees had no actual knowledge of the work of a Deaf interpreter, 72.5% of Deaf Ukrainians needed their services. This figure is based on the conviction of Deaf clients themselves that a Deaf speaker of a particular sign language can easily find understanding with a speaker of another sign language. Therefore, we can talk about the wide involvement of interpreters of this category to meet the communication needs of Ukrainian refugees.

Translator of the Local Verbal Language.

As it turned out, he was also useful for Deaf refugees: 20.19% of Deaf people from Ukraine felt the need for such an interpreter. It is clear that we are talking about refugees with a slight hearing loss, poor sign language skills, and, at the same time, a fairly good command of a mini-dictionary of the local spoken language.

In the absence of interpreters in the first three categories, a certain proportion of Deaf Ukrainians could resort to Google translations, provided they had a good knowledge of verbal Ukrainian and an appropriate technical device with a high-speed Internet connection (the lack of Internet connection is a separate global problem).

There is also the issue of payment for translation services: most refugees did not know whether the services of a particular interpreter were paid or not. They were also concerned about the amount of payment for translation services (according to the majority of respondents, in France, one hour of interpreting costs between 40 and 80 euros). In Slovenia, translation services were paid for by the sponsoring group. At the same time, refugees staying in Austria, Canada, Poland, and the Czech Republic said that translation services are free under the laws of these countries, and they received them.

Almost all of the respondents have the UTOG Service application installed on their smartphones and solve various issues through this service. Half of the respondents did not have phone numbers for the call center of the local sign language interpretation service. Also, about 50% of respondents stated that there was no person nearby who could help them in case of emergency. Among those who could provide such assistance and were nearby or not far away, they named their relatives and friends with knowledge of English, hotel and hostel staff, and Deaf volunteers.

It is interesting that the information about the convenience of Deaf refugees receiving interpretation services is in different formats: 1) via video communication, 2) in person, and 3) in a mixed form (i.e., services are provided in two formats). As a result, the information obtained in the course of the rapid study shows that in Poland, sign language interpreters work mainly through video chat, in France, interpreters work only in the first format (despite the fact that the Internet is of poor quality), and in the Czech Republic, the first format is absent. Thus, the third format of service provision, the mixed format, prevailed.

There was a need for sign language interpreters for Ukrainian refugees in all areas: legal (92%), medical (94.2%), educational (72.04%), employment (69.3%), and social (68.7%). The service sector was also mentioned, but these were isolated requests. The rather low need in the educational sphere is explained by the knowledge of sign language by teachers of special schools for Deaf children (Ukrainian parents were shocked, because the situation in Ukraine is different), the request for a sign language interpreter was based on the issue of placement of Hearing children. As for the lower number of needs in the area of employment, the explanation is based on the practical absence of job offers for Deaf people in the first months of the war (for example, in Romania, so there was no need for a sign language interpreter in that country).

Internally Displaced Deaf People and Sign Language Interpreters.

As mentioned above, 32 sign language interpreters were forced to emigrate abroad for various reasons in search of a safe place for their families. These are CODA specialists. It was felt. As a result, they were forced to mobilize in terms of providing translation services.

In the work with internally displaced persons from the UTOG directly on the territory of Ukraine participated specialists who have the appropriate certificate of interpreter, in total, 72 people. These are: heads of regional organizations - 4 persons, heads of local organizations - 14 persons, directors of the House of Culture for the Deaf - 3 persons, instructors in Deaf affairs - 12 persons and the interpreters of the ASL made up 39 persons.

Interpretation services were also provided by competent specialists from the UTOG (without the appropriate interpreter's certificate) from among the Deaf in the number of 21 people.

BAll interpreters from the UTOG operated in almost all cities in the format of "live communication," that means offline. And online assistance was provided to Deaf people throughout Ukraine through the regional and central " UTOG Services". "The hotline and the Forum of the Central Board of UTOG. Many groups appeared in social networks.

In the first months of the war, interpreters were forced to work mainly with refugees and internally displaced persons 24/7. In the process of working with them, sign language interpreters faced the following problems:

• *when applying for registration and receiving assistance, during services in medical institutions* - long standing in long queues, poor organization of registration, refusal to accept internally displaced persons with a Deaf interpreter;

• *the problem of mobile communication* is the lack of Internet or its poor quality,

• *when traveling in public transport* - lack of a document of preferential travel for internally displaced persons, forced to call a taxi for a sign language interpreter due to a transport collapse at the expense of the interpreter.

• *time spent on resolving the issue of military unfitness* in the military committee in connection with Deaf men going abroad: at that time, there was a requirement to undergo a commission even if they had state documents on hearing disability.

• *there were problems with the employment* of a Deaf internally displaced person.

Due to the war, sign language interpreters working in the UTOG system have been working irregular hours (as have other employees of UTOG regional branches). "Daytime" interpreters in different cities start working from 8-9 a.m. and have to finish no later than 5-6 p.m. This is official. In practice, the picture was different due to volunteer work, which could last from 2 hours to 8 hours every day. There were cases of round-the-clock activities, especially in the first months of the war.

It should be emphasized that the main vector in the activities of sign language interpreters was information. Information, information, information... Because the absence or half-heartedness of information affected the quality of life of Deaf people. Information was and is provided during the addresses of the President, Ukraine, the General Staff, high-ranking officials, city leaders, etc., information is delivered during air alerts regarding missile danger and emergency messages...

In terms of interpreting services, most Deaf displaced persons receive them directly from regional UTOG organizations or via video chat (81.8%). Others receive assistance from their relatives and friends who speak Ukrainian sign language at a primitive level (18.2%). The overwhelming majority of IDPs said they received translation services free of charge (90.9%), while others received them for a fee (9.15%).

Interpretation services by sign language interpreters were provided offline and online, and through the free round-the-clock " UTOG Service". However, internally displaced persons needed interpretation services mostly offline: due to problems with mobile communication, its availability, change of place and gradual adaptation to another UTOG center.

Before the war, the fixed salary of UTOG employees ranged from UAH 2864 to 8160 per month (an average of 73 euros to 209 euros per month).
With the outbreak of hostilities, the salaries of UTOG employees were further halved, despite the fact that the state had actually reduced financial assistance (salaries) to UTOG before the war. This also applies to sign language interpreters: during the war, they were forced to switch to 0.25-0.75 salary (which is no more than 100 euros) due to financial instability. Although the reduction in salaries did not affect the quality of services for local Deaf people and Deaf internally displaced persons, in particular, as mentioned above, interpreters work in a mode of intensified activity every day.

Thus, before the war, the salaries of sign language interpreters and all UTOG employees were financed partly by the independently earned funds of the regional organization of UTOG and partly by funds from the budget of the Central Board. Currently, these components have undergone significant changes. It should be emphasized that sign language interpreters and UTOG employees were paid at the expense of the Canada-Ukraine Foundation CUF and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). In addition, the Association of the Deaf of Romania provided a sum of 3 thousand euros in 2022.

In the second year of the war, we have to acknowledge the outflow of interpreting staff and their burnout syndrome, which may become a global staffing crisis in the future if not overcome now (it is clear that the crisis will affect the quality of social services for Deaf people in Ukraine in general.

Increase In the Number of Deaf People as A Result of Injuries and Military Operations.

As a result of various injuries and consequences caused by the hostilities in Ukraine, the number of Deaf people is rapidly increasing. These are both military and civilian people who have suffered some kind of hearing loss and belong to the group of late deafened people. However, we have no official information. At the same time, there are requests from various public organizations for methods of working with the military and civilians, which indicates an increase in the number of people with hearing disabilities as a result of hostilities. We are convinced that in the near future there will be so-called "military" Deaf people, and working with them will have different specifics. We are currently working to ensure that people who have lost their hearing can be taught Ukrainian sign language.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on our research, we see a set of measures.

1. Creating a training program for sign language interpreters that would be international (several different educational institutions in different countries), where interpreters would study several sign and verbal languages in parallel.
2. Creating a series of courses in Ukraine for Ukrainian sign language interpreters to master both the international sign language system and ASL.
3. Create a register on the basis of the International Association of Translators with a list of organizations and individuals providing translation services. That is, to have one website with information by country, where refugees can find clear information on how to obtain translation services in a particular country.

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15

Reflections on Professional Development for Interpreters in Ghana: A Hybrid Approach to Better Shape the Future

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at sharing research conducted to better understand leadership successorship in the implementation of professional development experiences of interpreters in Ghana and the US. By examining reflections by leaders on our experience facilitating professional development, recommendations are made to provide future training that aligns with the Ghanaian context and may inform approaches to offering professional development in other contexts, as well.

Keywords: Interpreter, leadership, training, sign language, Ghana

Introduction

There are few established signed language interpreter education programs in Ghana and West Africa. Since 2016, we have collaborated with Ghanaian students, educators, and interpreters, both Deaf and hearing, and American students and professional interpreters, on short-term training for interpreters. The *Leadership Summit* was designed to develop leadership practices with the students, educators, and interpreters who have participated in the trainings

since 2016. We hope to build capacity for future training and development of interpreters to ultimately address access for Deaf people in Ghana.

We will share the hybrid professional development model for leaders we collaborated on and the subsequent research that was conducted to better understand our experience as co-facilitators of professional development experiences for interpreters in Ghana. The hybrid *Leadership Summit* began online and culminated in a two-week professional development opportunity for interpreters and signed language students in Ghana. All leadership participants work as signed language interpreters and/or interpreter leaders in Ghana and in the US. By examining reflections on our experiences, we make recommendations for leaders to provide professional development that aligns with the context where they live and work.

Hopefully, the synthesis of what the participants experienced will provide insight for the global profession of interpreting and interpreter preparation. The findings from a study in this region may provide the global profession with information necessary for them to determine how they might support and prepare interpreters in other contexts. The Canvas shell, the online portion of this hybrid model, is provided in Appendix C. We will share our experience in the online *Leadership Summit* and facilitation of the subsequent professional development opportunity for Ghanaian interpreters.

Literature Review

Identifying a Training Model

Since interpreter education was formalized, interpreter mentors, trainers, and educators have been trying to develop effective and efficient training techniques (Hunsaker, 2020). Sources (see, for example, Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Volk, 2014) also report that the struggle to standardize interpreter education program, curriculum and to prepare interpreters have continued for decades. This may be demonstrated by the graduation/completion-to-certification gap and work readiness seen in the US (see Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Godfrey, 2011; Intelligere Solutions, 2017; Volk, 2014; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) wrote that many basic aspects of interpreter preparation have yet to be examined or standardized. Key to this circumstance is the dynamics of educating and training interpreters who belong to other cultures with education and working conditions starkly different from that of the educators and trainers. There exists therefore a core dilemma of how to deliver a culturally relevant, sustainable educational program to interpreters in a different cultural environment. To attempt to solve this dilemma, some educators and trainers have recruited international assistance to train professionals and practitioners through

professional development programs to increase the latter's awareness and skills to respond to challenges related to their work and with the intention to empower individuals to transfer attitudes that may drive the intended behavior change (Qasseras, 2023). Over the years, modules such as leadership (from behind), Interprofessional Education (IPE), Training of Trainers (TOT), utilization of knowledge-bearer/interpreter, and hybrid, have been experimented with by trainers and educators.

In considering what to include in such interpreting training models, it is imperative to carefully consider aspects such as fluency, cultural competence, and an understanding of ethical boundaries. Hugman (2010) suggests that those teaching social work internationally must first consider what to include as core values and ethics in the curriculum. In their program of social work education in Vietnam for instance, Hugman, Nguyen, and Nguyen's (2007) curriculum included human rights, ethics, and empathy- themes that are core to training individuals who work within social and educational environments. Similarly, interpreter trainees needed to be introduced to concepts such as Demand Control Schema (DCS) where interpreters are made aware of their options for deciding what 'control options' they desire to employ under each circumstance, while, at the same time, being mindful of ethical principles that guide their work as interpreters.

Leadership

Employing a leadership approach or module is one of the key ways to promote professional development programs. In identifying, selecting, and training interpreter leaders to take on training roles, there should exist a mindset of transformative learning among prospective leaders (Qasserras, 2023). Without such a mindset, progress cannot be made. One notable, if not the most popular, educational training approach under a leadership module is the Training of Trainers module also known as TOT, Training-of-Trainers or TTT, Train-the-Trainers module (Orfaly, et al., 2005). TOT or TTT is marked as a significant sustainability training intervention in addressing professional development in non-formal education, especially in health, youth work, and community development. Due to their flexibility and time efficiency in reaching a large number of people in limited time, TOTs have been effective in carrying out and achieving professional development goals. TOTs for example help to identify needed qualities that would endear such leaders to their followers. Ridwan (2022), identifies two key areas related to leadership qualities which include that the leader must be patient, loyal to their partners, able to control pertaining atmospheres within which they work, avoid disgraceful actions, respect others, have a gentle nature, dare to accept risks, and must not prioritize

personal interests. This indicates that interpreter leaders who were to play leadership roles in training interpreters in Ghana must be individuals who possess requisite qualities like patience, tolerance, and knowledge, and must be able to communicate well with the interpreting community to ensure that the aims and objectives of the professional development of interpreters are achieved.

The Interprofessional Education Module

One other training module that is adapted for professional development training is Interprofessional Education (IPE). The IPE is a well-established teaching activity in the health sciences and is now becoming established as a feature of training in interpreting (Krystallidou et al., 2018; Ozolins, 2013). IPE refers to educators and learners in either pre- or post-qualification settings working together to "jointly create and foster a collaborative learning environment. The goal of these efforts is to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that result in interprofessional team behaviors and competence" (Buring et al., 2009, p. 2). Reeves (2016) writes that in addition to the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, IPE provides facilitators knowledge and experience with working with other fields, group dynamics, and confidence and flexibility working with professionals outside of their field of expertise. IPE is used as a practice to help novice professionals enter the workplace with baseline competencies and confidence for interacting and communicating to improve their work (Buring et al., 2009). To achieve the aims of a hybrid training project, joint learning exercises and shared learning classes are adopted to promote learning under an IPE model.

The Knowledge-bearer/Interpreter

In trying to represent community voice, communities often point to individuals from amongst themselves that are bearers of knowledge, and tradition, and are a part of the system of reality in that community. In many cultures such as in indigenous and African communities, an elder or community advocate or community researcher from that community often fulfills the role of a 'knowledge-bearer' (Shaikh et al, 2022), interpreter, and or transmitter of needed information. To represent community voice in cross-cultural training and education situations also mean that the local community is to be allowed to be 'knowledge interpreters' to interpret existing research and content so that they can transform and contextualize information in a way that is recognizable to them as part of their own experience (Spivak, 1988; Alatas, 2013; Weiler, 2009). The role of a 'knowledge-bearer/interpreter' requires a person to be rooted within the knowledge system of their own community while being able to translate and

interpret their experience into another episteme to the extent possible, often best a community leader who is also a researcher (Collins, 2002).

The Hybrid Module

Arguments can be made against the utilization of virtual technology to engineer training and education, but made for face-to-face teaching and training. In spite of this, some studies have also found positive effects of the use of virtual platforms (webinars) for education and training purposes, especially in hybrid situations. For instance, Gegenfurtner and Ebner (2019), reported a meta-analysis of 12 carefully screened randomized controlled trials in a medical and health sciences setting. They compared learning outcomes (pretest-posttest) in synchronous webinars to those in face-to-face teaching. After analyzing 15 data sources (involving a total of 1414 participants) with 36 effect sizes, they found webinars to be slightly more effective in promoting student achievement than face-to-face classroom environments. The need to adopt hybrid modules for interpreter training cannot be overemphasized because most professionals in the community of interpreting researchers and trainers will have had ample exposure to distance teaching and online learning as a result of on-site meeting restrictions imposed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2019 and 2022. Thus, while remote participation in a learning event is, therefore, anything but a novelty, the effort to assess its effectiveness in the context of a series of training workshops, seminars, and forums catering to experienced interpreter educators is clearly relevant to all stakeholders.

There is evidence to show that there are a number of limitations associated with remote teaching and learning and hybrid modes of training. For example, in a Training of Trainers study conducted by Olsen and Pöchhacker (2021) to obtain qualitative feedback on a hybrid-mode seminar organized by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in Washington, D.C., the researchers noted that remote participants were less able to "connect" and less engaged in the discussion, partly because of reduced "visibility" and partly because of constraints on turn-taking arising from acoustic and proxemic conditions, even though the moderator made efforts to monitor and encourage online participation. Despite these criticisms, however, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants (across all groups) shows that the hybrid mode of delivery not only is feasible for events of this kind but also offers unique advantages. Most obviously, it facilitates participation by colleagues in faraway locations. The resulting diversity of cultural and professional backgrounds, working languages, and institutional environments was in turn perceived as one of the assets of hybrid-mode training. A hybrid module of training, where face-to-face and virtual methods are merged not

only connects trainees and trainers from different locations, whose diversity of experience and insight enrich learning experiences, but also provides a platform for professional development and growth. This kind of learning environment, populated by 'reflective practitioners' (Schön, 1987) and experienced teachers, lends itself very well to an educational process that relies not so much on the transmission of information, but very much on the interactive co-construction of knowledge ensuring that individual experience, personality, motivation, and group dynamics are thus played out in a specific situational context.

Methodology

We conducted this research to better understand how to facilitate professional development experiences for interpreters in different contexts. By examining reflections on their leadership experience, we hope to develop recommendations to provide professional development that aligns with the context where they interpret and facilitate training.

Participants were recruited from a group of interpreters and interpreter leaders who have been participating in professional development opportunities online and in person in Ghana since 2016. After the professional development experience ended, the interpreter leaders were asked if they would like to participate in a study designed to reflect on their experiences.

Participants completed a digital questionnaire in Google Forms (see Appendix). The questionnaire included seven open-ended reflective questions about the participant's experience, nine questions about their experience with language and interpreting, and four demographic items. The questionnaire took 15-30 minutes to complete depending upon how many items and how much detail the participant chose to provide. Participant responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis methods.

The questionnaire was sent to 13 people who had facilitated and/or participated in the leadership summit and/or professional development in Ghana at the University of Education, Winneba. The email prompted them to take the survey and send the survey to other interpreters they knew who had participated in the leadership and/or professional development activities. In this paper, we will focus on the leaders who facilitated the training activities.

Findings

In this section, we will provide demographic information about the participants who took part in the *Leadership Summit* and their experience working as interpreters. This will be followed by a discussion of the hybrid *Leadership Summit* experience.

Participants

Eight leader participants took part in the *Leadership Summit*. Six of these interpreters were from Ghana and two were from the United States. They ranged in age from 28 to 62 years old. Four of the participants identified as male and four identified as female. Two participants have doctorate degrees, three have master's degrees, two have bachelor's degrees, and one has some tertiary education.

Language and Interpreting Experience

The working languages of these interpreters are Twi (6), Ghanaian Sign Language (6), Fante (2), Ga (1), Ada (1), Ewe (1), American Sign Language (4), and English (8). The participants have been using these languages from a range of nine to sixty-two years and interpreting from a range of nine to thirty-eight years. These languages were primarily acquired through a combination of community engagement and formal education with one participant listing "from the Deaf and the hearing trainers" that was unclear of the setting and one describing "missionaries affiliated [with their] religious denomination" as their language instructors.

Six of the participants described becoming interpreters through formal educational channels while two listed starting due to immediate community need, one in an educational and one in a religious setting. The participants interpret in medical (7), educational (8), social service (7), legal (4), religious (8), theatrical (1), and political (1) settings. The participants shared that compensation for their interpreting work ranged from never being compensated (1), sometimes being compensated (6), being compensated with goods (3), to being compensated financially (4).

When asked what challenges they face as interpreters the main themes that emerged were stress, insecurity in interpreting skills, and lack of professionalization. Stress related to the demands of the work, such as "varied language abilities of clients," "long working hours," or technology concerns, were not as common as insecurity in the responses. Four participant comments related to stress due to the demands of the work while six related to personal insecurities such as "sometimes, I find it challenging to communicate an idea as clearly as I

should," "Frequent feelings of not giving accurate, detailed and equivalent message to my consumers," and general insecurity in meaning-transfer work from a signed language into a spoken language. Five comments related to the lack of professionalization focusing on the perceived low status of the work and languages, working conditions, inability to receive appropriate compensation, and power dynamics. Examples of these comments include, "low recognition of the language, stress, disrespect and no financial support," "not having an evaluative model," and "sometimes late invitation, at times do not receive payment."

When asked how they address the challenges they face as interpreters the participants shared responses with the themes of individual strategies, seeking community wisdom, and advocacy. Individual strategies included self-care such as "strategizing my working hours to get enough rest in order to regain strength," "spending my own money to execute duties," and to "engage in reflective practice activities." Seeking community wisdom included strategies such as engaging in DC-S Supervision, debriefing with colleagues, seeking community input, reading research about interpreter practice, and attending professional development trainings. Advocacy to improve systemic issues included comments such as "creating awareness by educating those around who shows [sic] no recognition to the language," and "I sometimes discuss with the organizer [sic] politely for payment."

Leadership Summit Experience

Participants shared overwhelmingly positive responses to the Leadership Summit Experience. When asked what aspect(s) of the training made sense in their context, participant comments highlighted the collaborative flexibility of the training design. One of the participants from the US shared: "The training we provide is flexible. We have an overarching plan and when we get together, we determine what we will cover and in what order. The process is dynamic, exciting, engaging, and spontaneous. This structure works very well for me in any context. I have a lot of knowledge, experience, and resources to share and I am a bit of a sponge, picking up more knowledge, experience, and resources whenever I work with a new group of people." This was echoed in comments from Ghanaian participants who mentioned that "The training was full of interactive [sic] and all participants were allowed to make inputs," and that "viewing leadership in different contexts and different perspectives yet converging into a common achievement of goals" most resonated with them. Other participants highlighted "ethical supervision," stories from the Deaf community, and professionalism as content that resonated with them.

When asked what should be added, deleted, or changed for future trainings only three participants responded. Their ideas included adding supervision in the virtual portion of the training as well, focusing on soft skills such as emotional intelligence and personality, an increase in technical skills such as linguistics and "mock" practice opportunities, and a focus on professional practices such as "interpreter communication with recruiters." No comments recommended deleting or changing the content that was included in the training.

In response to the question "How have you changed since you began the professional development opportunity?" participant responses suggest growth in technical skills, confidence, ethics, professional practices, and personal paradigms. The US participant responses focused on personal growth such as an increased humility, openness, patience, and invitational engagement, and sharing "my mind is now open to other contexts, cultures, practices, traditions, norms, ways of communicating, ways of making decisions," and to considering the work of interpreting. Ghanaian participant responses focused on an increase of confidence in their skills and specific changes they noticed such as, "I have used a lot of descriptive/non-evaluative language since I began this professional development opportunity. This I did not do prior to the trainings. I have also changed in my ways of supervision especially considering more ethical dynamics than i [sic] used to;" "I have now been able to voice out meaningfully and confidentially. I have also been able to use/apply better solutions to most interpreting demands relying on the demand control options;" and "I have changed positively especially in the aspect of team working."

When asked what aspect(s) of the training they will use in their future work and how they will use them, participants responded with clear themes of non-evaluative language, Demand Control-Schema Supervision, collaboration and flexibility, and continued leadership. Two participants mentioned the use of "non-evaluative language" specifically. Four participants mentioned Demand Control-Schema or elements of the framework directly such as "Going through proper pre, during and post-assignment preparations to better anticipate and handle as much demands as i can [sic]." Three participants shared responses focusing on collaboration and flexibility. These responses included a focus on learning from colleagues through collaborative brainstorming, planning to share "in an invitational way and consider flexibility options for when/how people can engage," and "I will use the same overarching plan, fit to the people I am with, and let things unfold in dynamic, engaging, and spontaneous ways." Five participants mentioned or described continued engagement in leadership in the field. These responses included statements such as "I will continue to use lessons learned from

ethical ways to supervise trainees as an interpreter leader," and "I like how this opportunity has trained me to be able to train others."

Participants were also asked what aspect(s) of the training were not applicable in their context and why. Seven participants responded to this question, with six stating that everything from the training was applicable. One participant shared that the idea of leaving an interpreted interaction before it was completed was not applicable to their cultural context, sharing: "Walking out of duties when the need arises. In our context, that would be considered disrespectful to a lecturer that is when interpreting during academic setting and even with the non-academic environment."

When asked what, if anything, participants would you like to share about their experience the responses were overwhelmingly positive. One participant responded with "N/A" and six participants responded with positive statements. These responses focused on the interpersonal aspects of the training and the themes were general enjoyment, personal benefit, and learning from others. For example, comments under general enjoyment included: "It was a joy to learn more about the Ghanaian context and what challenges and innovations my colleagues there are exploring," and "I really enjoyed the varied and rich experiences from our facilitator and the participants." Comments under personal benefit included: "I actually benefited a lot [sic] from the program and would be part of every program that you would be organizing," and "I always benefit from learning with and from others." All of the participants held high admiration for each other. Comments under the theme of learning from others included: "I admire the in-depth knowledge, understanding and methods of teaching/training that was exhibited by the lead trainer and team," and "This summer, 2022, was special for me. The Ghanaian interpreter leaders facilitated the training with my support. I appreciated the opportunity to watch them take on the leadership naturally, confidently, and with grace."

Participants were asked what kind of interpreter training they would like to have in the future with the opportunity to select all that apply from the list of short-term professional development, a bachelor's degree in interpreting, and a master's degree in interpreting. Five participants selected short-term professional development. Three participants selected a bachelor's degree in interpreting. Six participants selected a master's degree in interpreting.

The final question on the questionnaire stated: "You may use this space to add anything else you would like to share about you and/or your experiences as an interpreter." Only three participants responded in this space and their comments shared a desire for more scholarship, education, and professionalization. One participant commented that they wanted "further scholarship in interpreter research." One commented that they desired a program "to create and

open job opportunities for us as interpreters in this part of our country." The final participant commented that "Since I became a sign language interpreter, I have wanted to upgrade to have a degree or master's certificate but could not do that in Ghana."

Discussion

The personalities and relationships of the leaders involved in this summit, some developed over years, no doubt contributed to the mindset of transformative learning (Qasserras, 2023) shared by all. Indeed, the leadership qualities described by Ridwan (2022) of patience, loyalty, respect, gentleness, willingness to take risks, and not prioritizing personal interests were displayed in comments by every participant. These qualities were possibly present to such a degree because of the shared trust that has been built over time with one another and the lead trainer in particular, who is named in multiple comments. It is clear from participant responses that they were able to "jointly create and foster a collaborative learning environment" as well as achieve the goal of developing increased "team behaviors and competence" (Buring et al., 2009, p. 2). Buring et al. emphasize that the use of Interpersonal Education (IPE) as a pedagogical approach to prepare students for health professions results in the provision of improved patient care when health care professionals work together collaboratively. This is applicable to our context such that interpreter trainers and trainees worked in collaborative ways to ensure that trust is built between and among them while increasing and improving team behavior. The mutual admiration expressed by participants demonstrates that all were viewed as a "knowledge-bearer" in their context (Collins, 2002) and invited to be co-constructors of knowledge (Schnellert et al., 2006; Van Schaik et al., 2019) within the space. Participants especially expressed confidence and pride *as* and *in* the Ghanaian leaders.

When asked the specifics about the training, participants primarily shared specific areas of professional growth. However, when asked an open-ended question about their experience, the comments focused on interpersonal elements of the training. These comments paint the picture that the relationships and flexible collaborative design became a catalyst for participants to make leaps in their professional growth, including their leadership.

Conclusion

Leaders who intend to facilitate professional development opportunities for interpreters must be willing to commit long term. We have been working together in person and online for seven years. We have built trust with each other, which has led to trust with our communities

of practice. The work that has been done to train leaders since the inception of the professional development project has inspired and enabled Ghanaian leaders to subsequently establish ongoing capacity building training workshops and networking in Ghana for interpreters.

Epilogue—Stories from Ghanaian Interpreter Education Leaders

Joyce Fobi: The summer professional development activities in Ghana (i.e., workshop and training on Professional Development for the University of Education, Winneba, Sign Language Interpreters, and other sign language interpreters from across the country) was first organized in 2016 and every year since by a team from the United States, specifically Western Oregon University, in collaboration with the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Winneba. This training seems to be one of the most significant training programs aimed to equip sign language interpreters with knowledge and skills about interpreting: what it takes to be a professional interpreter, the dos and don'ts in interpreting, how to develop as a professional sign language interpreter, amongst many others. As a sign language interpreter, I had the opportunity to be part of this Professional Development for Sign Language Interpreters from 2016 to 2022 and this program has contributed a great deal of interpreting knowledge to myself and, I believe, many other sign language interpreters.

Phinehas Dzeani: In 2022, the Ghanaian leaders organized four main capacity-building training workshops for interpreters. The first training was held virtually in April 2022 and was focused on sharing best practices and strategies in interpreting within healthcare settings in Ghana. There were six presenters, all of whom were experienced interpreters. They have all worked in Ghana for many years and had much to share from their experiences working in healthcare settings. An American interpreter offered immense technical support for the success of the event.

Again, in May 2022, leaders organized another virtual event, which focused on interpreting within educational settings in Ghana. The training aimed at refining knowledge among the National Association of Sign Language Interpreters, Ghana (NASLIG), members who work within the educational arena. An American interpreter delivered the keynote address and emphasized the need for NASLIG members to develop a community of interpreters rather than aim to work in isolation. There were four additional speakers and one from the US.

In July, the Western Oregon University (WOU), University of Education Winneba (UEW), and Ghanaian leaders collaborated to organize a two-week professional development training for sign language interpreters in Ghana. Participants were taken through an

introduction to DCS, use of non-evaluative language, working in teams, ethics, translation practice, and case conference supervision.

Joyce Fobi: In the 2022 training for interpreters, I had the opportunity and the privilege to be one of the facilitators handling some of the topics for. I was paired with other facilitators for different training sessions. During the parathion stage, I met with my co-facilitators to discuss and share ideas on how to get literature and other information on the topic we planned to discuss. We also planned who would talk about each subtopic.

During the preparation session, I had a lot of thoughts in mind about myself and how to organize my ideas to deliver as expected. It was my first time in an event for sign language interpreters who are the most experienced and longest serving professionals. It was not an easy task for me, but I said to myself that with proper preparation and determination, I would be able to do it and do it well. I met with the senior facilitators to discuss with them what I was supposed to do and I was given some materials to support what I had to talk about. In addition to these materials, I did some personal research and extensive reading to gain more ideas and knowledge on the subjects. Searching for additional information and reading for understanding some of the things was also a bit challenging. Sometimes, I had to consult more experienced persons than myself for some explanation and clarification. I also practiced at home to train my voice, practice delivery, brainstorming and anticipating questions that could be asked by the audience, and possible responses to address those questions. Preparation helped in building my confidence. Even with adequate preparation, I felt nervous for the first session. After a few minutes, I gained full confidence and courage. In the subsequent lessons, I could present without any feeling of nervousness.

After every session, I met with the other facilitators to discuss what went well and what needed to be improved. I diligently took all comments and suggestions into account and applied them to my work. This gave me more confidence to do more. I also had time for self-reflection; after every session, I wrote down what needed improvement, and what needed to be omitted or added in the next sessions.

With the experience and knowledge gained, I and the other facilitators under the mentorship of the lead facilitator have successfully established a non-governmental organization named Interpreter Trainers, Ghana (ITG) aiming to reach out to all of the 16 regions in Ghana and beyond Ghana to provide training workshops online and in person to sign language interpreters, both beginners and experienced, to develop their professional practice as sign language interpreters. So far, ITG has organized two online capacity-building training

sessions and one face-face training session for some sign language interpreters in Ghana. With resourceful and knowledgeable facilitators, we yielded positive feedback from participants. The organizers intend to do more of these workshops and training in the subsequent days, months, and years ahead of us.

Phinehas Dzeani: Another virtual capacity building training was held in October 2022. Leaders once again collaborated with the 'Interpreter Trainers' a private interpreting training organization registered under the business name Felike Language Consult to organize the training on Facebook Live. The presenters include Clement Sam, NASLIG President, Dr. Daniel Fobi, Coordinator of Deaf Education, UEW, and Dzeani Phinehas, Executive Secretary of the national interpreter association/ Programs and Training coordinator for the 'Interpreter Trainers.' They presented "Facilitating inclusion…," "Business practices of hiring an interpreter," and "why the sign language interpreter must be mindful of their grooming." The event was moderated by Joyce Fobi while Isaac Abakah provided technical support.

Aside from these events, leaders facilitated and sought sponsorship for five interpreters to take part in two different online trainings that focused on interpreter theory and performing Deafblind interpreting, respectively. Two trainings have been organized in January and March of 2023. The first was a virtual event on 7th January 2023. Topics discussed for the event included repetitive strain injuries and hazards, and the need for Collaboration. The second training was an in-person event that took place in the Western Region of Ghana–Takoradi on the 7th March 2023. There were 22 participants who were active with a lot of questions. The presenters presented their parts with passion and were very grateful to share what they had learnt from their interpreter experiences, and from previous training. Participants were taken through presentations, discussions and supervision on professionalism, specialization, ethics, omission taxonomy, and team interpreting. The regional leaders who helped to organize the event expressed their appreciation for the training in these words "...both participants and presenters engaged in fruitful discussion with many questions and answers on best practices and strategies in the profession. We hope to have more of these workshops regularly to help us all in our various interpreting assignments" *(Western Region Coordinating Committee -RCC, 2023).*

I was touched by many of the stories interpreters had to share during the in-person event. For instance, I was surprised to hear that female interpreters in certain settings were prevented from interpreting because of their gender and for the fact that certain religious beliefs of some recruiters did not permit females to interpret information across to the audience. Again, some interpreters worked extended periods without breaks, putting their health at serious risk,

which also contravened the labor laws of Ghana. I noted that opportunities to interact with interpreters during virtual events were not available especially after the event. Many participants quickly logged out. In-person trainings created room for face-to-face and well-meaning communication and interactions. Leaders are completing plans to organize and replicate the training in the Northern, Central, and Asante Regions later in the year. We hope to complete the 2023 trainings in six of the 16 regions in Ghana.

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Appendix A: Consent form and survey

Anonymous Survey Consent Form

Reflections on Professional Development for Interpreters & Leaders: Consent (2022)

Dear Interpreter,

My name is Professor Elisa Maroney. I am a professor of interpreting studies at Western Oregon University. I am conducting a study seeking to better understand professional development experiences for interpreters and interpreter leaders in different contexts. By examining reflections on your professional development experience, recommendations may be made to provide professional development that aligns with the context where you interpret.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve completing a questionnaire that includes several open-ended reflective questions about your experience. In addition, you will be asked to respond to a few demographic items.

Participation in this digital questionnaire will serve as your consent. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-30 minutes depending upon how many items and how much detail you choose to provide.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. All data is untraceable to you or your computer. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to taking a questionnaire. In addition, you may end your participation at any time. If you choose to withdraw, none of the data associated with you will be used and incomplete data will be destroyed.

You will have an opportunity to share anonymously about your experience free of judgment or prejudice. You will have a chance to provide insight for the global profession of interpreting and interpreter preparation. The profession as a whole will benefit by having access to information about the profession in this region. This information will provide the global profession with information necessary for them to determine how they might support and prepare interpreters in their contexts.

All data will be maintained in my password protected laptop, which will either be in my possession or will be in a locked office. Any data associated with you will remain anonymous. Should you choose to provide any identifiable information, the information will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public. The results of this study may be used in publications, reports, or

presentations. Your name will not be known or used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Dr. Elisa Maroney at maronee@wou.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you may contact the Chair of the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

Thank you,

Elisa M. Maroney

Western Oregon University

By clicking on the link below, I verify that I am 18 years of age or older and that I agree to participate in this research. (Check only one.)

Mark only one oval.

Yes, I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate in this research.

Skip to question 2

No, I do not agree to participate in this research.

Which professional development experience did you participate in? Please select one of the options below.

Mark only one oval.

Leadership Summit

Professional Development for Interpreters (2022)

Both

I did not participate in a professional development opportunity in summer 2022

Reflections on Professional Development

Please complete any or all of the items in this section related to your experience with professional development in July and August 2022.

1. What aspect(s) of the training made sense in your context? What should be added, deleted, or changed for future trainings?
2. How have you changed since you began the professional development opportunity?
3. What aspect(s) of the training will you use in your future work? How will you use the aspect(s) in future work?
4. What aspect(s) of the training are not applicable in your context? Why?

5. What, if anything, else would you like to share about your experience?

6. What kind of interpreter training would you like to have in future? (Check all that apply.)

Check all that apply.

Short-term professional development. ☐

Bachelor's degree in interpreting. ☐

Master's degree in interpreting. ☐

Other: ☐

Language and Interpreting Experience

Please complete any or all of the following items related to the languages you use and interpreting.

7. What languages do you most frequently interpret between (for example, Ghanaian Sign Language and Twi, English and Ghanaian Sign Language, English and Twi; or Kenyan Sign Language and English; ASL and English)?

8. How long have you been using each of the languages?

9. How did you learn the languages?

10. How long have you been interpreting?

11. How did you become an interpreter?

12. In what settings (for example, medical, educational, social service, legal, or religious) do you interpret? Please list all settings you work in or have worked in.

13. What challenges do you face when working as an interpreter?

14. How do you address challenges or problems in your work as an interpreter?

15. Please comment on your experience with compensation for your work as an interpreter. Check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

I am never compensated for interpreting work. ☐

I am compensated sometimes and not compensated sometimes for interpreting work. ☐

I am compensated with money for interpreting work. ☐

I am compensated in goods for interpreting work. ☐

I am compensated in some other way for interpreting work. ☐

I have never been compensated for interpreting work. ☐

Other: ______________________ ☐

16. Please add any other information about your experience interpreting.

Demographic

Questions

Please complete any or all of the following demographic items.

17. What is your age?

18. What is your gender (Male, Female, Other – please specify)?

19. In what Country and/or Region do you live currently?

20. What educational and/or professional credentials do you have (for example, Secondary Education, Tertiary diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctoral degree)?

21. You may use this space to add anything else you would like to share about you and/or your experiences as an interpreter.

Appendix B

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Leadership Styles
Who is here? Introductions
Brainstorming: Why are we here?
Brainstorming: Who else could be here?
Leadership collection

Interpreting & Leadership Resources
Reading material: Interpreting in Ghana

Developing & Facilitating Professional Development Activities
Goals of Short-Term Professional Development for Interpreters
Sample of previous training at UEW

Reflective Practices
Professional Development Evaluation

Appendix C: Leadership Course Content from Canvas

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Course Modules

Leadership Styles

1. Who is here? Introductions
2. Brainstorming: Why are we here?
3. Brainstorming: Who else could be here?
4. Leadership collection

Interpreting & Leadership Resources

1. Reading material: Interpreting in Ghana

Developing & Facilitating Professional Development Activities

1. Goals of Short-Term Professional Development for Interpreters
2. Sample of previous training at UEW

Reflective Practices

1. Professional Development Evaluation

Leadership Styles

1. Who is here? Introductions
2. Brainstorming: Why are we here?
3. Brainstorming: Who else could be here?
4. Leadership collection

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Who is here? Introductions

Let's use this discussion to introduce or reintroduce ourselves to each other. Many of us have met before, but the pandemic has kept us apart. What is your name, where are you from, in what contexts do you provide leadership, the last book you read for recreation, and whatever else you would like to share. Also, if you have questions for us or want to know something particular about us, please ask that in your introduction.

Provide your goals for this experience engaging with other leaders.

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Brainstorming: Why are we here?

In this discussion, let's talk about why we are here, how we can support each other, what we need from each other, what support we need, what we can offer others, and anything else that comes to mind.

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Brainstorming: Who else could be here?

This Summit will be open from the 5th of July to the 8th of August. All sessions are in our own time. Let's invite more leaders to join us, including women and Deaf interpreters/leaders.

Use this discussion to brainstorm names and email addresses for others who might join us.

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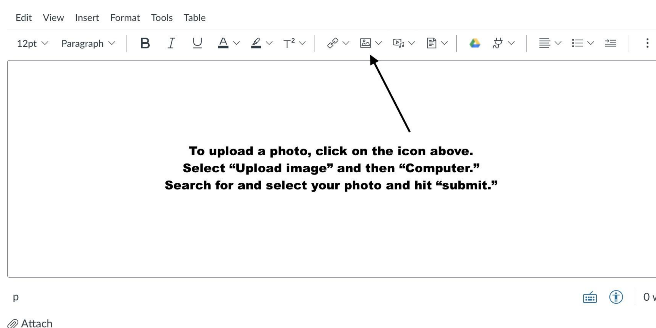
Leadership collection

This professional development experience focuses on our leadership roles. Make a collection of 3-5 items that represent your leadership beliefs, values, and behaviors.

1. Find actual things/items that belong to you (not items or images from the Internet).
2. Take a photo with your camera or other device.
3. Upload in a response to this discussion.



4. Explain what each thing represents.

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Interpreting & Leadership Resources

1. Reading material: Interpreting in Ghana Back to Table of Contents

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Reading material: Interpreting in Ghana

Read chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6 from *Signed languages, interpreting, and the Deaf Community in Ghana*.

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Developing & Facilitating Professional Development Activities

1. Goals of Short-Term Professional Development for Interpreters
2. Sample of previous training at UEW Back to Table of Contents

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Goals of Short-Term Professional Development for Interpreters

Let's begin with the end in mind. We are planning to offer a two-week professional development experience for interpreters and interpreter interns.

Who will be participating in the two-week professional development experience?
What skills and knowledge do you want them to have at the end of the two-weeks?
What are realistic goals for a short-term professional development experience for this population?

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Sample of previous training at UEW

Why reinvent the wheel? Below you will find a document that has a plan and activities we have

used in previous years. Please review the document and respond to the prompts. You do not have to answer each question. Write what comes to mind as you read the prompts.

Which activities appeal to you?
How would you adapt an activity to fit your style and the context where you provide training and/or leadership?
What resources do you need to facilitate the activity/activities? What other thoughts came to mind as you read the outline?

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Reflective Practices

1. Professional Development Evaluation

Please complete the evaluation form found here.

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See It from Hong Kong: Human Rights of Deaf People and Interpreters' Self-Advocacy

Chan Yi Hin
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Li Kar Man
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Cat H.M. Fung

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, members of the Hong Kong Deaf community, together with Deaf and non-Deaf interpreters, have been working towards advancing Deaf linguistic human rights in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This paper outlines the developments of the Hong Kong sign language interpreting field, with a special focus on activism by Deaf and non-Deaf interpreters who have been informed by the linguistic human rights discourse. These initiatives contain advocacy, educational and research components. Some examples include: (1) A piloting project to introduce video relay interpreting service to members of the Deaf community; (2) Human rights workshops that targeted Deaf audiences; (3) Campaigns to raise awareness that interpreters are paid professionals rather than volunteers; (4) Working with Deaf people to fundraise fees for their interpreters in higher education. If sign language interpretation is one of the basic factors of human rights for Deaf people (Haualand & Allen, 2009), then it follows that interpreters' actions are of paramount importance to the fulfilment of these rights. This paper is a testimony to this statement. Lessons learned from these self-advocacy initiatives will also be discussed.

Keywords: Advocacy, human rights, equity, allyship, Hong Kong

Introduction

Members of the Deaf community in Hong Kong, who are users of Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL), often share images from other countries among each other. Some of these images are of television shows with sign language interpreters and live captions, or screenshots of video relay interpretation, taken by those who have traveled abroad. Envious comments and laments would follow: "the interpreter on TV is so big and clear", "too bad that we do not have this in Hong Kong". Images from overseas alike help create a vision of what deaf people's lives can be, which then inspires a mission to mobilize changes locally.

In this article, we provide a narrative account on our activism in Hong Kong that was informed by Deaf linguistic human rights lens as set out by the World Federation of the Deaf (Haualand & Allen, 2009), while highlighting our collective identity as *sign language interpreters*. We draw much insights from international anti-war activist groups such as Babels, Translators for Peace and Translators Tlaxcala. These groups were made up of translators and interpreters who chose to engage in social actions *professionally*. For example, they selected and translated anti-war messages into marginalized languages and disseminated them online. Some of them also provided pro-bono interpreting services for international peace forums. Baker (2013) commented that these groups "...use their linguistic skills to extend narrative space and narrative opportunities for resistance, and to empower voices made invisible…" (p. 25). In our case, we invest ourselves in Deaf human rights activism by opting into interpreting pro-rights events, making value-driven decisions in our interpreting work, and providing human rights education targeting members of the Deaf community. Examples like these reflect our intention to not function as neutral conduit, but proactive agents in making the world we would like to live in.

This is a personal narrative of our actions, stories that allow us to make sense of our lives and orient our behaviour and judgment (Boéri, 2008). By making it public, we hope it will become a point of reference for those who examine how sign language interpreters can become a vital force in Deaf human rights movements. In what follows, we will begin by describing the background with which our actions take place and who we are.

The Hong Kong Context

Hong Kong is a former British colony and was handed over to China as a Special Administrative Region in 1997. Cantonese is the most commonly spoken language. English and Mandarin are also used in some educational, legal and political settings. In 2007, China signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Upon ratification in 2008, the Convention also became effective in Hong Kong. However, the UNCPRD has not been transposed to Hong Kong law. Wu (2022) reviewed disability discrimination litigation cases in Hong Kong. She noted that courthouses did not read local law in line with CRPD, which was described by judges as "promotional and aspirational" (p. 20). At domestic law level, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) prohibits discrimination acts against a person in areas such as employment, education, provision of goods and access to premises. Nonetheless, the denial of reasonable accommodation, including sign language interpretation, does not constitute disability discrimination in the DDO. Currently,

Hong Kong does not have any local legislation that mandates sign language interpretation or other forms of accommodation for Deaf and hard of Hearing individuals. Although there is limited support from a legal perspective, Hong Kong has a strong presence in terms of its civil society activism. Disability groups, including members of the Deaf community, often participate in events such as human rights lobbying meetings and disability forums.

Current population of Hong Kong is 7.4 million. Official statistics reported that the number of Deaf HKSL signers is 3,900 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR, 2014). Lawmakers and members of the Deaf community in Hong Kong have gathered efforts to push for language planning related to HKSL. One of the notable examples was a former legislative council member (Similar to a member of the Senate in the U.S. Congress) initiating the motion "Striving to make sign language an official language of Hong Kong" in January 2017. Deaf people and sign language interpreters joined an online campaign to support, and gathered onsite on the day of the debate at the Legislative Council. The motion did not receive enough votes in favor and was negatived.

Sze, Wong, Lo, Chew, Sun and Yanai (2022) surveyed sign language interpretation service provision in 20 cities/countries in Asia, including Hong Kong. We resonate with their report that interpreters are generally seen as volunteers or charity workers in these regions, i.e., interpretation service is considered a privilege rather than rights. Some interpreters in Hong Kong work for government-funded Deaf social welfare organizations, who provide free sign language interpretation services to their Deaf members. However, their availability is limited. A private social enterprise established by a local university provides interpretation services at a cost to the requesting party. A handful of interpreting service contractors provide services to some police stations, some public hospital admissions and doctor's visits. In recent years, a number of television news broadcasts and government press conferences are being interpreted. Interpretation service provision, in general, relies on decisions made by individual authorities in question and can be overturned anytime. Sign language interpretation service provision in Hong Kong is regulated by a task force under the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee at the Labour and Welfare Bureau (a Hong Kong government department), which members join on a voluntary basis. In terms of training provision, Sze et al (2022) documented two professional sign language interpreting training programs whose standards are monitored by the government, along with other short-term interpreting classes.

Hong Kong has no professional organization or accreditation system for sign language interpreters, except a public "registry" kept by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. This registry consists of a list of names of those who can and are willing to provide proof of at least

200 interpreting hours in the past two years (as of late 2022, this registry has 56 interpreters). The above sketch of the current trend echoes Sze et al's (2022) comment, "Hong Kong lagged behind in the provision of training, the level of assessment and the provision of [sign language] interpreting services for Hong Kong citizens" (p.489). In other words, sign language interpretation is not yet professionalized in Hong Kong.

Who We Are

The Deaf authors of this article (Li and Yu) have been a HKSL signer since a young age. The non-Deaf authors (Chan, Wu and Fung) first learned HKSL when they studied linguistics as undergraduates. They then were employed at the Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and became connected to the Hong Kong Deaf community. They became interpreters, for the most part, because interpreting service was so limited that Deaf people around us had to resort to our pro-bono service. Chan and Fung went to graduate school at Gallaudet University to study sign language interpretation. They co-taught the Professional Diploma programme in Sign Language Interpretation offered by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Wu was one of the students of this programme, who later went on to complete her Master of Laws in Human Rights at the University of Hong Kong. Li is a LGBTQ+ advocate at a local and international level, and has worked as a Deaf interpreter in Hong Kong. Yu is a HKSL teacher, Deaf interpreter and a mentor to many hearing interpreters. Currently, Chan lives permanently in the US where she works as an American Sign Language interpreter. Fung, Wu, Yu and Li reside in Hong Kong. Apart from working as HKSL interpreters, they are also a university lecturer, programme manager of a non-government organization, and a chef respectively.

Based on a vision shaped by the education and experiences described in the above paragraph, we share a sense of commitment to advance interpreting practice and spread the human rights message to the Deaf community in Hong Kong. In 2017, Chan began to organize an informal network of Deaf and non-Deaf freelance interpreters in Hong Kong under the name "WeSign". There are 12 interpreters in this network, who collaborate regularly to provide interpreting workshops, targeting members of the Hong Kong Deaf community and interpreters. Fung co-founded a sign language teaching and interpreting referral agency named "Brainfood" in 2018. Wu co-founded "Deaf Classroom" in 2019, a human rights education initiative that targets the HKSL population.

At the beginning, we organized the above-mentioned initiatives based on what we thought were our strengths, without much conscious coordination among each other. In the last

couple of years, the commonality in our actions became clear - Despite having other occupations, we all choose to identify as sign language interpreters in our respective activism. Deaf Classroom's narrative on their mission on social media illustrates the previous statement:

> "Deaf Classroom is an *initiative by a group of sign language interpreters*. It is also a registered association in Hong Kong. Aiming to raise the civil awareness and public participation level of the local Deaf and hard of hearing community and connect them to the broader society, *we* invite guests to offer talks and sharings on different social issues, and organize activities to raise the civil and human rights awareness within the community." (Emphasis by the authors)

Deaf Classroom's description of themselves as a sign language interpreters' *initiative* shows a shift from the traditional view of translators as neutral and detached to an agent of change. We also notice the use of the word "group" and the pronoun "we" - a collective sense of "activist interpreters" (Baker, 2013) seemed to emerge. In this article, "we" does not only mean Chan, Li, Wu, Yu and Fung (the authors). Rather, it encompasses other interpreters in Hong Kong who share a similar approach to interpreting work.

In the following narrative, there are actions and decisions *within* our interpreting role that are informed by human rights and advocacy values. These include how we navigate the type of events and activities to provide interpreting service for, initiating new services with the goal to mobilize social changes, and engaging Deaf clients in rate negotiation. On the other hand, we have undertaken activism *outside* of interpreting, such as fundraising and organizing educational activities. We focus on actions in the last five to ten years, noting that there may be earlier works before us.

Interpreting Is Our Choice

Starting from the early 2010s, we began joining Deaf Hong-Kongers in city-wide marches and political rallies, sit-ins for bilingual education for Deaf children, disability rights forums and hearings, UNCRPD lobbying meetings and workshops, and press interviews. In these events, we interpreted between deaf, hearing activists, government officials and journalists. It is important to note that we made the decision to interpret these events, often on a volunteering basis, specifically because of their pro-human-rights nature. Our agenda is to use interpreting "as a means of engaging in political activism" (El Tarzi, 2016, p. 92). Working as freelancers also allows us the autonomy and flexibility to choose assignments that align with our values.

Interpreting coordination for the events described in the last paragraphs is organic and spontaneous. There is no particular form of leadership. In a city where deaf access is not

mandated by the law, interpreting needs arise often because entities learn about sign language interpreting through knowing us personally and make interpreting requests for their events. For example, an interpreter in WeSign has a connection with a local Christian church, with whom she often shares about her work as an interpreter. Eventually, the church began to ask her to help coordinate interpreters for their social justice forums. In some other cases, Deaf people find themselves taking an active role in coordinating interpreting services in order to be able to attend events. For example, when planning to participate in a LGBTQ+ rally, Li would contact her preferred interpreters, and together they would come up with the rest of the interpreting team. Human rights advocacy events, rallies and meetings in Hong Kong often require interpreters to have experience with highly multilingual settings, specialized political jargons and voicing for Deaf participants' addressing the audience in HKSL. It also requires a high level of devotion to the cause as many of them were pro-bono assignments. The size of the interpreting community in Hong Kong is relatively small compared to that of the US and UK. Thus, it was easy for like-minded interpreters to find each other. We were able to form a close network and share interpreting workloads.

Interaction Management Through A Deaf Rights Lens

Halley (2019, 2021, 2022) conducted archival research and interviews to investigate the roles, experiences and organization of sign language interpreters at the Deaf President Now protest (DPN) at Gallaudet University in 1988. A part of his research was based on the interpreter role-space model (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014), which posits three components: participant alignment, interaction management, and presentation of self. Halley's (2021) analysis indicated a strong interpreters' alignment and identification with Deaf protesters, interaction management between Deaf and Hearing parties was done in a way that "supported the ability of Deaf people to participate more fully and meaningfully" (p. 180), and a low presentation of themselves as interpreters. Halley's work is relevant to our narratives not only because we interpret for political rallies and marches in Hong Kong, but also we find resonance in his analysis of interpreters' role-space as a function of the relationship between Deaf protesters and interpreters. We will offer a discussion below.

Similar to what Halley found with interpreters in DPN, our activism in Hong Kong involves working with Deaf people who already have prior friendship with us. Some of them are our co-workers, business partners, fellow-schoolmates and students. Sometimes we make interpreting decisions collaboratively. One example occurred when Chan and a group of Deaf people showed up for a public television closed caption lobbying meeting with representatives

of the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) at their office. Despite the meeting having been scheduled in advance and representatives of EOC were notified that Deaf people would be present, they did not arrange sign language interpretation, assuming that Chan and other Hearing signers who were also attendees would help interpret the meeting. After a brief discussion, Chan refused to interpret, and the Deaf attendees demanded the EOC officials to immediately call their interpretation service provider. What Chan agreed to interpret while waiting for the phone calls to be made, was an interview between the Deaf attendees and a Hearing journalist, who was there to cover a story about Deaf people and accessibility, now interested in writing about this unexpected episode.

We see the above story an example of the term "pre-aligned interpreter" coined by Llewellyn-Jones & Lee (2014) - an interpreter who identifies more strongly with Deaf than Hearing people due to pre-existing connection. To Chan and the Deaf attendees, there was a sense of comradery shared among them at the time when Deaf linguistic rights were at stake. Chan's decision not to interpret for the EOC meeting was supported by the group's belief that Deaf attendees had the rights to service provided by the meeting venue. Interpreting for the media helped spread the Deaf accessibility message for advocacy and public education purposes. Both decisions were informed by human rights values.

Creating Space for Advocacy Through Translation and Interpreting

In some cases, we initiate to create space for human rights advocacy and education through the act of translation and interpretation. Fung, for example, works with Deaf interpreters on selecting local and international human rights literatures, and producing their HKSL translations. Examples include a Covid-19 education document originally produced by a local disability advocacy organization, and a social justice classic titled "On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century" by an American historian named Timothy Snyder. She shares these translation videos publicly on a web page she called "HKSLized", a platform dedicated to making mainstream rights-based messages available in HKSL, a minority language. Her activism is similar to a film subtitle translation network discussed by Pérez-González (2021), "a self-appointed translation commissioner that choose what is to be [translated]" (p. 71). HKSLized's own narratives on its website explicitly link their translation work with activism: "the translation texts on this web page were produced by a group of sign language interpreters in their own free time…Your donation will support HKSLized's operation and us, *Hong Kong interpreters who want to do the right thing, in our path of human rights advocacy*" (Translation and emphasis by the authors)" .

In another example, we use interpreting itself as a way to introduce a form of accessibility service which was new to the Deaf community. In Hong Kong, video relay service that provides instant sign language interpretation is not available at a city-wide level. There are Deaf welfare organizations that would make phone calls on behalf of their members. However, their availability is limited and requires advanced booking. In June 2020, four non-Deaf members of WeSign (an interpreter network formed by Chan) initiated a video interpreting pilot campaign. Messages were spread on social media that during a designated time frame, these interpreters would take calls from Deaf people from their homes, using video conference technologies of their own, like smart phones and Facetime. Chan has worked in a video interpreting setting in the US. Her experience made it possible to provide pilot service resembling video relay service (VRS) as much as possible, despite the make-shift technology. The campaign was short-lived, lasting only one month. WeSign was unable to expand the service due to a lack of sustainable source of funding. But to many Deaf people who tried the service during the pilot month, it was their first time to experiment with making a phone call, which is instantly answered and interpreted in real time. Some reported feeling more informed and empowered, especially after they learned that Deaf people in some foreign countries have access to this kind of service.

Both campaigns above were launched on the premise that social changes can be inspired by new information and personal experiences (Massey, 2015). It was our goal to make them available to members of the Deaf community by performing the required acts of translation and interpreting. HKSLized boosted public attention to right-favoring messages by making them accessible in a signed language. The video campaign helped create a novel experience of linguistic access among Deaf people. Both acts of translation/interpreting had an activist dimension.

Deaf People and Interpreters' Partnership

As sign language interpreters in Hong Kong, we often find ourselves caught between the dynamics of societal perception of interpreting as a type of welfare ("it should be free") and our aspiration to professionalize this field in our city. Some characteristics of an established profession include credentials, systematic training and public recognition (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). In this article, we focus on compensation, with a "range of salary and benefit options" (p. 4). Generally speaking, hospitals, courthouses, theatres, schools and television stations in Hong Kong pay interpreters for their service. However, many interpreting works, including those we described in this article, were unpaid. Currently, sign language interpreting

in Hong Kong does not provide a stable career prospect and income. We would like to see more new interpreters to devote their time to this field in generations to come. Plus, we have our family and bills to pay. Our task, then, is to navigate when to accept pro-bono interpreting assignments and when to negotiate a professional rate. Decisions to decline unpaid assignments could be at the mercy of Deaf people's rights to access. At the same time, less change is likely to happen if we continue to play into the social welfare ideology by working for free. We see it as an ethical dilemma that arises where activism and professional interpreting intersect (Boéri & Luchner, 2020). To reconcile, we engage in both advocacy with Deaf people and "self-advocacy" - To articulate our own needs as interpreters. This process only supports accessibility but also ourselves and the interpreting field as a whole.

In our experience, interpreters' self-advocacy works best when Deaf people are part of it. An example is Deaf activists receiving requests from the media to share their lived experiences as Deaf people. When Li gets such invitations, she often finds the journalists oblivious, and sometimes reluctant, about their responsibility to pay interpreters for the interviews. On the other hand, Li sees the opportunity to speak to the media a vital part of her advocacy. Educating Hearing parties alike about sign language interpreting as paid professionals, but not to "turn them away", became a tricky task each time. Li and her interpreters find it most effective when they work in partnership - By text, Li would introduce the journalists to her preferred interpreter, who would then offer the journalist a special reduced rate, citing the social impact of the assignment as the reason. We also found the "educational" message ("interpreters are paid professionals") much easier to be accepted if it comes directly from a Deaf person rather than the interpreters themselves. As such, Deaf people and interpreters join forces in supporting the interpreting field.

Self-advocacy: Interpreters are Not Volunteers

As mentioned above, there are situations when we would choose to negotiate interpreting fees with our potential clients. In some other situations, for example, UNCRPD conferences, urgent hospital and police station visits and meetings with legislators, the values of providing accessibility in these circumstances are more important to us than the values of professionalism by negotiating a fee. We would compromise the latter, but were also exploring ways to send a public message that we would like to see interpreting as a profession rather than social welfare. At the same time, we needed to keep our pro-bono service financially sustainable. We do this outside of our interpreter's role. In 2017, Chan created the phrase "Interpreters are Not Volunteers" (translation from Chinese) in a slogan-like style in her

writings and talks. She also printed the phrase on t-shirts, which she then sold to her friends as a way to compensate for her pro-bono interpreting work. In 2018, Brianfood (a company co-owned by Fung) began producing and merchandising t-shirts and pins with the same phrase. Now the products have a wider spectrum of customers, which include interpreters, Deaf people, sign language students, teachers of the Deaf, and their friends and family. Brainfood uses part of the revenue from the t-shirt sales to hire interpreters for their clients who hosted human rights events. The t-shirts were also featured in a few other news articles about Deaf access rights. In June 2022, Wu was invited to write an article for a newspaper opinion column to introduce the sign language interpreting profession. She wrote the following to explain the slogan:

> "'Sign Language Interpreters are Not Volunteers'. Interpreting is not just a hobby. Rather, it is a profession, with its own set of ethics codes and labor values, to which we would like to devote ourselves in. Through this profession, we, sign language interpreters, hope to participate in a society where Deaf and Hearing people have full and equal access." (Sky Post, 6/24/2022, Originals in Chinese)

The t-shirt campaign and the stories described above highlights the urgent need for Hong Kong sign language interpreting to professionalize. Local sign language legislation is not within our sight, and we do not foresee the government will become a main driving force of our field. Still, we believe there is much one can do at a personal level to raise public concern about sign language interpreting, support Deaf linguistic rights and our own career and financial prospects at the same time.

Interpreters' Actions to Access Inequality

As interpreters, we constantly explore our roles in addressing the imbalance of power between policy authorities and Deaf people, whose lives are affected by decisions made by the former. The following discusses two of the recent examples in Hong Kong and our responses.

In Hong Kong, obtaining long term and recurrent HKSL interpretation service in higher education is "almost impossible" (Sze et al., 2022). There were local universities that provided limited funding to hire interpreters for their Deaf students' classes. However, it is more common for Deaf students to find themselves being asked to pay for interpreting fees or even their interpreters' tuition. Some decided to drop out of school for this reason. Only 6.1% of people with "hearing difficulty" have received post-secondary education in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR, 2014). Currently, there are only a handful of Deaf signers in Hong Kong who have received or are pursuing university degrees.

We decided to take actions to fill service gaps when two deaf people (one of which was Yu), who were students of a local university and have been receiving its on-going interpreting service, learned that the university's interpretation funding would cease near the end of August, 2021, about one week before the beginning of that academic year. The university was one of the very few higher education institutions that provided sign language interpreting, and the Deaf students were caught unprepared by such a short notice. A few interpreters who heard about the incident were ready to provide pro-bono service out of altruism. However, we felt compelled to take actions to compensate these interpreters for their work. In early September that year, we launched fundraising campaigns for this purpose. Chan, Yu and the other Deaf student raised money by offering to co-teach an 8-week online introductory seminar to Hearing HKSL learners who were interested in becoming interpreters. Wu started a charity sale of handmade ILY-handshape stamps and aromatic stone. Revenues from both campaigns were donated to the two Deaf students, who then paid interpreters for their classes throughout their study programs. In mid-November 2021, Wu and Fung set up a sales stall at a weekend market organized by a local disability advocacy network. They sold stickers and postcards with pro-rights messages, and t-shirts and tote bags with sign language. The revenues were donated to a few other Deaf students who were in higher education who did not receive any interpreting support by their schools. Wu's own narratives on social media, "the revenue from this charity sales goes to Deaf education and supports the work of sign language interpreters" reflects the two dimensions of her activism - to support both Deaf linguistic rights in higher education and interpreters who would otherwise have provided service as volunteers. Further educational work was possible when interpreters had the opportunity to host a stall and communicate directly with members of the public about the nature and challenges of their own work.

Another example involves sign language interpreters and their activism as petitionists. In the last decade, we regularly write and collect signatures for petitions, calling for the public's attention to Deaf accessibility and sign language rights. These petitions are often a response to policy makers' decisions and (in)actions that affect sign language interpreting services. One of these examples occurred in October 2021 when a local government-funded television station decided to permanently cancel a daily morning news program, which was one of the four shows in the whole television station that included live HKSL interpretation. Wu co-authored an open letter as a response, and noted her positionality as a sign language interpreter in the letter. It was subsequently published on the Hong Kong CitizenNews, a former Hong Kong liberal online news platform. The letter included a criticism of the government failing to improve access to public information through HKSL interpretation, and thus not following their

obligations as stated in the UNCRPD. The letter also appealed to sign language interpreters, Deaf and Hearing signers to translate current news into HKSL and share them within the Deaf community - By suggesting to offer the very interpreting service that has just been canceled by the authority, the authors made the point that bottom-up initiatives are as important as changes from the top-down. This letter is an example of interpreters making a public statement that adopted a discourse of engagement and partisanship (Boéri & Luchner, 2020), moving away from the expectation of interpreters being "impartial" from their socio- and political context.

Human Rights Education by Interpreters

Studies on education of human rights to Deaf people have been scarce. Scholars have mostly focused on the theoretical construct of human rights and its application in the sign bilingual education setting (Enns et al., 2021; Grosjean, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016). A rights-based concept, self-advocacy, has been used in the work of teachers of the Deaf, vocational trainers and Deaf non-profit organizations. Luckner and Becker (2013) contended that one main component of self-advocacy in Deaf individuals is "knowledge of rights", including knowing their own rights as citizens and persons with disabilities. In Hong Kong where access to education and public information through HKSL is limited, Deaf people often reported that they never learned about their rights until they had the opportunity to participate in international Deaf events like Deaflympics or World Deaf Association conferences. As sign language interpreters who consider human rights a crucial value in our work, we often find ourselves one of the very few accessible sources of information (sometimes the only one) to Deaf people regarding their rights. Apart from opting into UNCRPD lobbying meetings and pro-rights workshops as interpreters, we also invest ourselves into direct education - offering education about human rights.

Starting from 2017, interpreters from WeSign have given educational workshops and panel discussions in topics around Deaf linguistic rights in the light of the Hong Kong context, namely Deaf self-advocacy, Deaf patients' rights to interpreting service in a medical setting, access through virtual interpreting, and the Deaf LGBTQ+ community. WeSign chose these topics based on what were considered to be current of the time. For instance, the Covid-19 pandemic inspired a workshop on access in the virtual world, during which interpreters shared with Deaf participants on how to navigate online conference platforms when an interpreter is present. Also, interpreters would initiate to share their own expertise through these workshops. For example, during a workshop on Deaf patients' rights, an interpreter who had in-depth

knowledge of the healthcare system shared tips on how to jump through bureaucratic hoops when Deaf participants request interpreters for their medical appointments.

Deaf Classroom, on the other hand, endeavored to promote self-advocacy by connecting Deaf people with members of other marginalized communities in Hong Kong. Having received funding support from a non-profit, pro-social justice organization, Deaf Classroom ran a series of educational workshops for young adults from the Deaf, transgender and South Asian minority communities, during which they shared personal stories with each other and their experiences of fighting social bias and oppression. These youths also hosted most of the activities in the workshops, honing their leadership and communication skills. Participants reported feeling inspired and empowered through learning from each other, along with an increased sense of cross-identity solidarity. The three founding members of Deaf Classroom were the organizers of these events, and they often interpreted the events themselves.

The above sections summarize the actions undertaken by us, a group of Hong Kong interpreters, when we attempted to adopt a human rights approach to our work. At a personal level, our activism were critical events that transformed how we see interpreters should best work with the Deaf people given the context of the city we live in. Our work lies in the intersection of social movement, public communication and linguistic/cultural mediation. There has been constant reflection on our part about what is beneficial and what is not, in regards to the Deaf community, to ourselves and our field. The following and final part of this article offers some of these reflections and learned lessons.

Reflection and Conclusion

One of the biggest struggles in our activism stemmed from the general lack of reference in the ethics of interpreting and social justice movements. Some of us have received formal training in sign language interpreting, either locally in Hong Kong or overseas. Many of us are familiar with established guidelines for interpreters' decision-making processes such as the codes of ethics. We learned that the notion of neutrality has been refuted and that interpreters are very much an active participant in communication encounters (Metzger, 1999; Roy, 1999; Wadensjo, 1992). Yet, advocacy and education are typically not considered to be part of an interpreter's job description, especially since the "helper model" of interpreting being criticized as paternalistic and seeing Deaf people in need of help. On the other hand, scholars have well acknowledged that oppression experienced by Deaf people is systematic and discursive (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1992). Interpreters' role in face of such injustice is sometimes described within

the notion of an “ally” (Baker-Shenk, 1991). In general, however, research that analyzes sign language interpreters’ decisions and actions at times when there is a perceived breach of Deaf linguistic human rights has been sparse. Even fewer studies have been carried out in countries/regions where linguistic rights of Deaf people are not legally recognized, and where interpreters are on their own, together with the Deaf people with whom they have a close social proximity, to decide their collective course of actions.

As such, we rely on various alternative sources to guide our activism. First and foremost is Deaf people’s own experience as members of a marginalized community and their preferences of working with interpreters. This in itself is not without complexities. As Halley’s (2021) studies of the DPN at Gallaudet University has shown, how Deaf people and interpreters saw their own roles (and that of each other) in social actions tended to greatly vary. In our case, it changes daily and is context-dependent. There are moments when we, interpreters, see ourselves as friends and advocates. In other times we present as professional onlookers. In the activism described in this article, Deaf and interpreters sometimes find themselves having different, or even opposite expectations. We need regular discussions and reflections to align. Typically, when we assume the role of linguistic mediators and are perceived as such, we make decisions so that the advocacy space is reserved for Deaf participants. An example is interpreting a Deaf activist’s speech at a public disability forum. Outside of interpreting assignments, we invest into the sphere of direct actions while calling attention to our interpreter’s perspective and positionality. We also recognize that there are both activist and interpreting dimensions in our work and it may be difficult to separate one part from the other, like HKSLized’s work. Sometimes, we see immediate outcomes of our decisions. In other cases, we are not sure when our actions would come to fruition. Apart from closely working with and consulting members of the Deaf community, human rights values constitute much of our “moral self-concept” (Washbourne, 2013). Although it does not eliminate the complicated and unpredictable nature of our work, right-based values such as respect, autonomy and equal access helps us articulate the minimal standards of interpreted interactions and interactions with other members of civil society in general.

Finally, we have the desire to professionalize our interpreting field. Sign language interpreters in other Asian regions have reported experiencing burn out because of a lack of career and income prospects (Sze et al., 2022). Thus, it is as important to choose actions that support Deaf linguistic rights as it is to support ourselves as interpreters. We formulate self-advocacy messages and stage them publicly. Examples discussed in this article are the “Interpreters are Not Volunteers” t-shirt campaign, as well as the weekend market stalls that

supported interpreters in higher education. This process, known as the “claim-making” activity (Lindekilde, 2013), was acted out by ourselves as sign language interpreters. An international translation group known as Tlaxcala pioneered this form of activism by publishing their manifesto online, which included a declaration of their political stance. But this is a contrast from the DPN interpreters in Halley’s (2021) study, who refrained from speaking for themselves because the movement was led by Deaf people. To the DPN interpreters, “weigh[ing] in too heavily with their perspectives would undermine the movement as a whole” (p. 181). In our case, there were both Deaf people and non-Deaf interpreters that were equally invested in sign language interpreting professionalization in Hong Kong. Deaf people wore their “Interpreters are Not Volunteers” t-shirts during photoshoots at media interviews. They also supported Wu and Fung’s market stall by donating. In many political marches, Deaf people and non-Deaf interpreters held the same placards of access and equality for all. Within the Hong Kong context, it seems, Deaf people and interpreters have been able to find a common space in both of their claims-making activism. On many occasions, we were seen as unity and acted as such.

In the wider scope of human diversity and social inclusion, interpreters stand with the values of bringing together different ideologies, identities and frames of reference. Our work is a vehicle to mediate meaning from the marginalized to the center, and vice versa. The goal is to promote a fair and pluralistic city where citizens find where they belong. Our work provides a sense of purpose which is beyond altruism, or as Basalamah (2020) puts, “a form of education with a social-justice inspired democracy project in mind” (p. 239). In Hong Kong where freedom and equality are becoming a rare sight, we shall recognize our positions and duties as linguistic mediators and human rights advocates. Together, we will continue to pursue the values we hold tight, and the many meanings of being a sign language interpreter.

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What's Missing? Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training for Interpreters, Pre and Post Qualification.

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of George Floyd's murder in May 2020, a global movement became the catalyst for change and an acknowledgment of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) space. However, Translation and Interpreting Education Programmes (TIEPs) in the United Kingdom (UK) rarely, if ever, include EDI training. Post-qualification or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities, often cover a small range of topics, focusing on linguistic components, specific domains or interpreter well-being, and are often delivered by the same group of trainers. Is there an assumption that interpreters are not in need of specific EDI training, and if there is, why is this? Is it because the profession is made up of those who are largely white, heterosexual and who conform to societal norms? (Napier et al., 2022). The Deaf and Hearing communities we work with are diverse, yet the demographic of interpreters is homogenous, so it is important interpreters have knowledge of difference. This paper uses practitioner observations to advocate that EDI topics should be included in interpreting standards, qualifications and training curricula, and that CPD sessions should also cover these areas. Furthermore, it proposes that space should be made for trainers from the global majority and other under-represented groups to be involved in delivering interpreter training. It is hard for a minority to make a difference, allies are required to provide opportunities and step back, to allow diverse language service professionals to come forward.

Keywords: equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), interpreting education

Introduction

What EDI Means Today and How We Can Work Collaboratively for A Better Future.

Currently, EDI is a topic that is gaining momentum within society. In the UK it has always been there, but has now come into clearer focus (Davis, 2022). However, in the domain of interpreting and translating, it is less well addressed. Research in this area is limited and only focused on certain aspects, e.g., the linguistic differences and needs of Deaf people / BSL and Hearing people and English. Other differences are rarely mentioned. Jacques (2021)

commented that taboo topics need to be discussed because they affect how people view themselves and other participants within an interpreted event.

2020 was a watershed year, firstly in March due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic and in May the brutal murder of George Floyd, which went viral and started a global movement. Many wanted to show their support for Black Lives Matter (BLM) by posting pictures of black squares on social media. However, true allyship means more than just posting a black square on your profile page. It is also not enough to change your company logo to Pride rainbow colours only during Pride month. Individuals and organisations need to be more proactive, take action and actually support these marginalised communities.

In May 2020, I noticed gaps and started asking some uncomfortable questions. Initially focused on race and interpreting, this was an awkward topic that no one was talking about, maybe because it was too difficult. It soon became clear that race was not the only seemingly forbidden topic, other under-represented groups and intersections were also not spoken about.

The Deaf community we work with are diverse, so interpreters should have a good knowledge of difference. This knowledge of others and different perspectives is important; however, it has been found that these kinds of topics are not always included in interpreter training programmes or in CPD sessions once interpreters have qualified.

In 2021 ASLI commissioned a census of sign language interpreters and translators, providing evidence of what some had already known was true; as a profession in the UK, we are majority White, female and conform to societal norms (Napier *et.al.*, 2022).

This paper will look at EDI, what it is and how it relates to interpreting. As well as highlighting some observations and making recommendations for the profession. It should be remembered that EDI is a journey and will not happen overnight. If we individually make a commitment to increase awareness of our behaviours and attitudes, we can become a profession where everyone feels welcome, valued and included, regardless of their background or personal circumstances.

What is EDI and Why it is Important?

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can be described in various ways. Some of the terms used are Equality, Equity, Accessibility, Acceptance, Social Justice, Belonging and Wellbeing. Equality involves treating everyone the same: giving everyone the same opportunities and resources. Equity is about giving people the individual help that they need to have a fair chance at being successful. Diversity is a collection of unique traits and characteristics that make up individuals, e.g., values, abilities, beliefs, behaviours, background and preferences. Inclusion

is when people feel valued, encouraged and empowered to fully participate as themselves (Davis, 2022).

It is important to celebrate how we are different and capitalise on it. This leads to having a greater diversity of ethnicities, thinking styles, beliefs and ways of working. Everyone brings different lenses or frames of reference and unique experiences that inform their decisions. Our frame of reference or individual filter on reality, is the shield or lens that we see the world through. This means that when we look through it, it affects how we see the world; our values, experiences, and beliefs, and how we act and make decisions. This can lead us to make judgements about people and their situations, which can affect how we work with clients and coworkers. However, if we notice when this happens and try to understand its origins, they do not have to cause any issues (Schiff & Schiff, 1975).

EDI Related to Interpreting

Interpreting should mirror real life. There are a lot of changes happening in the world and EDI is at the forefront. For example, after the resurgence of the BLM movement in 2020, the topic of power, privilege and social justice was highlighted. Specifically for people of the global majority (those who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Colour) their lived experiences were being highlighted and anti-racism strategies considered at many levels in society. Similarly, around this time in July the UK, interpreters and translators who identify as people of colour, formed a network to support and celebrate each other in a safe space. The group also aimed to address the under representation of 'people of colour' in the profession which will in turn meet the needs of the wider Deaf community (Beckford, 2021).

With change comes opportunities to grow, reflect and act, as a profession and as individuals. The lack of diversity within the profession as practitioners, also extends to those who lead in the field of interpreter training. For a true cultural shift, commitment is needed at every level, where everyone is treated with respect, valued for their contributions and able to grow and thrive in the profession. We need knowledge of difference because the communities we work with are diverse, as are the interpreters who work in those communities. It is important to remember that diverse does not always mean 'visibly diverse', other aspects such as cognitive ability, neurodiversity and communications styles all influence our unique skills and experiences.

It is not enough to have a few interpreters from under-represented groups dotted around. We need to go beyond representation and visibility and make sure people feel welcome, included and like they belong. Research by Beal (2021) reflected on experiences from Black

or African American interpreting students, and found that the needs of marginalised populations were not being met which led to negative outcomes for them and other diverse professionals. Our industry needs to respect differences, or we risk losing professionals. We need to make sure everyone has a voice, is invited and feels included. Everyone at the table has value. You can only have true diversity of thought when you have people who look, behave, think, communicate and see the world differently.

My Observations Within the Interpreting Profession

The area of EDI is quite new to the interpreting and translation profession, resulting in limited research in this domain. My aim was to highlight some gaps within the TIEP curriculum and post qualification CPD. I used my experiences as a practitioner and reflected on conversations with colleagues and institutions, to make observations and later some recommendations for the profession and individual practitioners.

Observations

a) Translation and Interpreting Education Programs (TIEPs) do not often integrate EDI topics into their taught sessions.
b) Post qualification training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities rarely cover EDI topics.
c) There is a lack generally, of those from minorities and under-represented groups leading in interpreting training and CPD activities.

TIEPs - Academic and Vocational

In the UK IEPs are either academic via a university degree or vocational through an NVQ or Diploma. The awarding bodies for the vocational awards (Signature / iBSL) set their qualifications criteria against the National Occupational Standards for Interpreting. In 2023 however, iBSL will no longer be continuing to run interpreter training, which will limit centres where interpreters can go to train. The curricula content is determined by the individual training providers. Currently cultural differences are often limited to Hearing (English) and Deaf (BSL). Obasi (2013) also found that power and discrimination generally focus on the ‘deaf/hearing interface’. However, other differences and cultures are not explicitly mentioned in any of the qualification criteria. I wanted to find out how difference is taught on these interpreting courses.

As the interpreting profession is becoming more diverse, this needs to be acknowledged

and the theory, guidance and practice that is based on majority culture, needs to be readdressed. The continued focus on the majority culture or what is thought of as 'the norm', can have a damaging and exclusionary effect on students studying to become an interpreter or translator. As much as educators will try not to let their own frame of reference influence their teaching, Maloney (2018) commented that educators teach in the same way that they were taught and often teach what they know. Beal (2021) supports this as the Black or African American interpreter students in her study wanted peers and educators that were like them because they felt their culture and way of thinking was not represented in the TIEP. It was also noted that having euro-centric peers and educators limits perspective; perspective is key to the role and development of interpreters.

To validate some of my observations, I contacted some interpreting education providers, and include some of their comments about their current practice.

> "Our teaching team and guest lecturers are all from diverse backgrounds. So, our students can see themselves in the people who teach them which has a positive influence on them." (Participant A)[1]

> "EDI is built into our programmes and lecturers share their own experiences, so students feel comfortable to share theirs. We start off as a general discussion, drawing out what they already know and add theory later." (Participant A)

> "I am aware that we are all different and have different life experiences. These can influence us in our work. I challenge my students to be autonomous in their decisions and be able to justify them." (Participant B)[2]

> "I give students the tools and skills and require them to be reflective about their own attitudes and how this can affect their work." (Participant B)

These responses are positive and show lots of good practice, but this may not be the case for all interpreting providers.

EDI topics and CPD in the UK

In the UK interpreters are required by their registration body, NRCPD (National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People), to complete 24 hours of CPD activities annually, to keep their professional skills and knowledge up-to-date, which is outlined in the Code of Conduct (NRCPD, 2023).

I looked at the CPD activities advertised on British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting

and translation association websites, interpreting networks and interpreting training provider websites, in the UK in 2020, 2021 and 2022. Although we were in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, many sessions were still being taught remotely rather than face to face. I found that these sessions often focused on the same topics. These included improving voice-over techniques, fingerspelling, domain specific vocabulary such as court or medical settings, interpreter well-being, business sessions on tax or being self-employed.

The small number of sessions I found linked to EDI and interpreting included interpreting in religious settings, a neurodivergent perspective, interpreting in LGBT+ settings, mastering menopause naturally, unconscious bias for interpreters, ethnic diversity and interpreting and appropriate casting for public events.[3] This is a very limited list for a 3-year period, especially as many of these EDI sessions were only ran once and not repeated.

Fuelled by the BLM protests and noticing a lack of training linked to race, in 2020 I started delivering sessions on 'Race and Interpreting'. Since then, I have delivered this session to over 100 interpreters in the UK and Europe. In this session I shared my experiences of being an interpreter of colour, highlighting both the positives and negatives. This was an uncomfortable topic to discuss, especially with a majority white audience. However, all who attended my session enjoyed it, found it informative and wanted further sessions. Many had to stop and think as they were made aware of life through the lens of an interpreter of colour, and ultimately Deaf people of colour who they all work with.

I wondered, if this subject matter is of such interest, why have there not been more sessions delivered like this in the past, to interpreters in training and post qualification? Recent global events have meant an awakening, realising that not everyone experiences the world in the same way, and a shift, specifically looking at privilege and power. Obasi (2013) also found in her research that the topic of race and ethnicity is rarely mentioned in interpreter training or in practice.

CPD Activities Outside The UK

I have spoken to a few interpreters from different countries to find out what their experiences were of CPD and interpreter training linked specifically to EDI, in their respective countries.

France

While some Interpreter training courses in France include themes linked to EDI in their

programmes, they are not core subjects that all students must take. They are additional elective modules. Some interpreting students from the global majority have experienced difficulties around topics they want to research for their final year projects.

> "Several black female students have wanted to write their dissertations on the issue of identity, but the dissertation directors refused to allow their dissertations to go too deeply into racial issues." [4]

Some students of colour and females have felt discriminated against within their education institutions.

In France interpreters do not have to continue with any training after they graduate. It is optional for interpreters to continue learning after graduation and gain further knowledge by attending training courses. Even within these specific training courses there is limited content and the lived experiences of marginalised groups (e.g., those with disabilities) is not widely shared.

Italy

In Italy there is no training linked to EDI topics, as a generalised or more specialised topic. Some universities have a training course called 'Disability Manager Training', but this is more focused on general managing and disabilities and is not a mandatory course.

Holland

Similarly in Holland there is no specific training for interpreters linked to EDI. However, the topic is gaining popularity among the Deaf community as the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is being discussed. Groups of Deaf people with multiple social identities are creating documentaries and resources to share, which focus on the multiple layers of discrimination they face. Although this provides useful insight into the Deaf community's experiences, it does not include interpreters viewpoints yet.

USA

In the USA, however, their interpreters were concerned about the lack of these EDI related topics in interpreter's knowledge and skillset. So, in 2015, 64 percent of the RID (Register of Interpreters for the Deaf) membership voted in support of introducing the requirement for 1.0 of USA interpreters 6.0 CEUs (Continuing Education Units) to be related to the topic of Power, Privilege and Oppression (PPO).

A working group was established to define the new area and develop the criteria for

meeting this new standard. During this phase of research and development the definition created for the PPO category, refers to members of society who are unfairly advantaged and are unaware or do not recognise that advantage. This results in bias at all levels (individual, social and systemic) which can lead to societal and systemic oppression (Weems, 2018). They agreed that topics could include, but are not limited to, respecting and valuing diversity, challenging injustice, cultural competence, social justice, identity and systems of oppression (e.g., ableism, audism, sexism, racism and classism etc.).

RID showed their commitment to this new category at their 2017 conference, by including more conference activities focusing on the topic and each session ended with a discussion linked to PPO and how to establish meaningful and sustained change on an individual and organisational level. This meant implementing more sessions in the future on cultural diversity, inclusion, cultural sensitivity and competence.

Who Currently Leads Interpreting Training and CPD Activities in the UK?

Whether it is on TIEPs or on CPD activities, those who lead these sessions are again from the majority culture and often the same tutors or trainers. Jacques (2021) commented that she was often the only interpreter of colour in meetings and training. Leading her to wonder why there was no one like her represented within the profession as students or educators. From speaking to interpreters and looking on interpreting training websites, again in 2020, 2021 and 2022, I could not find many sessions lead by someone from the global majority or an under-represented community.

RID members in USA also found this and during discussions in their 2017 conference they '*proposed that RID leadership become more reflective of its diverse membership and the communities we serve'* (Weems, 2018, p 1). This recognised what many have noticed, the communities we work with are so diverse, as are interpreters, yet why when it comes to leaders, in many countries, things become more homogenous?

Discussion

Next Steps

Although a small number of institutions were contacted for comment and a small sample size was used for interpreters in other countries, the importance of EDI was very evident. Following are some proposals and recommendations as a result of my observations.

Recommendations

Integrating EDI into TIEPs

A review is needed of the current content of the interpreting standards, qualifications and training curricula. Theory and guidance should reflect the current profession and its members and not be based on the majority culture. All relevant parties, awarding bodies and training providers, should work together on this. Consideration should be given to who teaches these sections of the course, and a range of diverse trainers or guest speakers could be used. EDI could be involved as part of 'evaluating or principles of professional practice', 'managing behaviour' and 'planning and implementing CPD'. Topics such as privilege and power, unconscious bias, stereotyping, intersectionality, micro aggressions, cultural competence and inclusive interpreting could be included. As well as, in the UK, specific awareness of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Working in the EDI space means being aware of all differences and how they can affect people. In the UK the Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and The Equality Act 2010, outline nine protected characteristics. They state that no-one should receive less favourable treatment (directly or indirectly) for any reason, not restricted to, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Discrimination and victimisation because of any of the aforementioned characteristics is unlawful, unfair and unacceptable. Some of these characteristics come together in the concept of intersectionality.

Beal (2021) found that the Black/African American interpreter students thought that having cultural competency would be a great benefit and impact everyone. She further found that students recommended having a few lessons on diversity while studying, as this would benefit the field in the long run and give interpreting students a foundation in EDI that is often lacking by some.

As seen by my conversations with institutions, some naturally integrate EDI into parts of their curriculum and are considering some of the recommendations from the census in 2021. However, a more collaborative approach needs to be taken. There are not many TIEPs in the UK, so they should be working together with the awarding bodies to include some universal aspects of EDI within the interpreting curriculum.

Mandating EDI Within Interpreting CPD, Implications for Practice

How do interpreters currently select CPD activities? Are they topics of interest or areas

they need to improve in? If they do not know they have gaps in their knowledge however, how do they address these weak areas? This may not be a popular suggestion, but should CPD linked to EDI be made mandatory? Similar to other professions that make certain topics mandatory e.g., health and safety or General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). I have found anecdotally, that those who really need these types of EDI sessions do not often attend. So, by making them mandatory this would help.

As mentioned earlier, interpreters in the USA have to attend a certain number of Power Privilege and Oppression activities, to be able to recertify with RID, following their 2015 conference. Initially there may have been some negativity towards it, but it shows that it can be done.

In a world where technology is advancing quickly, we all have devices that force us to accept updates regularly, which will benefit us. These updates are usually for security reasons. Similarly, by mandating EDI topics within interpreting CPD, it would ensure that every year, interpreters are exposed to the perspectives of others. As interpreting is a public facing profession, we need to always have an awareness of the many intersections that make us unique. This will positively affect how we interact with the Deaf community and other colleagues.

Napier et al, 2021 recommends Registration bodies (NRCPD, RBSLI, SRLPDC) to require interpreters and translators to evidence some level of engagement with diversity and inclusion issues as part of their annual Continuing Professional Development requirements.

A session linked to EDI does not have to be a taught course or workshop. It could be a peer discussion about a dilemma or writing a review or reflection of a book or journal. I also think it would be beneficial and would recommend people do a 'privilege exercise'. This activity can put into focus and help you reflect on the privilege and power you have in your own personal and working life.

As mature practice professionals, we need to be more responsible about our CPD. The world and language are constantly changing and evolving, we need to keep up to date. These types of EDI conversations are not easy. If it feels uncomfortable, you are probably learning something!

It is important to remember it is not one and done. You do not attend one session and know all there is to know about that subject forever. For example, there are still important and relevant conversations continuing about Black Lives Matter, Asian hate crime and inclusive language, within society and in the interpreting and translation profession.

Some trainers use various forms of self-reflection for learners. They recommend

meeting with the training group again after a few months of doing the session, to check back with yourself and others. What did you take away, what did you decide to focus on, did you? What will you work on in the next few months? This is a good approach.

If you have never been marginalised, excluded or oppressed because of a certain characteristic you have, it can be hard to empathise, no matter how good an ally you are! It is always useful to learn from other people's perspectives. It should not have to happen to you, for it to matter to you. Uncomfortable conversations need to continue so we are comfortable with the discomfort.

Encouraging More Minorities to Get Involved in Interpreting Training

The under-representation of those from the global majority and other marginalised groups involved in interpreting training needs to be investigated and space made for more of them to get involved. How can we better support this group to (if they want to), come forward and share their lived experiences and lead sessions? If there are barriers linked to skills or confidence these need to be addressed. It is important that more diverse people are supported to help train and assess the next generation of translators and interpreters, so students see people who look like them. Representation is important in helping people feel they belong (Diversity & Ability, 2019) and know that they too can succeed in a given profession.

Obasi (2013) found that a lack of representation in sign language study and training as well as a lack of visibility within the curriculum, can have a negative effect on black interpreters. She also thought that the lack of representation from minorities in the profession could deter those from those communities to get involved. In a chicken and egg situation, minorities are discouraged from getting involved because there is no one who looks like them, but if they do not get involved, then there will never be anyone who looks like them!

A minority cannot make a difference, sharing experiences as an interpreter of colour in a profession where your differences are not always acknowledged is hard. But we need to work with allies who amplify our voices to improve representation and visibility. A good example of positive allyship is with the Unconscious Bias training that has been delivered to some interpreters in the UK in the time of my observations. The trainers drew on shared diverse perspectives. They were open to feedback about inviting guest speakers (in person or video) to contribute. This offered opportunities to people from minority groups to be more involved in a direct way.

Interpreters need to think about the CPD they do each year, the topics that they select

and who leads the session. Be open to be challenged. If it is easier, once you have done some self-reflection, start asking the difficult questions in your own circles first. Recognise your own privileges and any positions of power that you hold and your biases. Can you use it to support others?

If you are a training provider, think about how you can embed or add EDI into your sessions. Either via discussions or by explicitly mentioning certain topics and terminology. Training centres should think about who they approach and where they source their trainers or Quality Assurers from. As well as making use of interpreter networks that are rapidly forming in the UK, e.g., Interpreters of Colour Network (IOCN), Muslim BSL Interpreters Network (MBSLIN), LGBTQIA+ interpreter group, Neurodivergent group, Christian Interpreters Network and others.

Continuing the Progress for More Positive Change

In Kelly Holmes' recent documentary called 'Being Me', she talked about her army and athletics career. It is sad that she lived her life closeted and unhappy. She felt held back as it was illegal to be gay in the army and she chose not to disclose her sexuality while she was competing. Now she has retired she is more comfortable opening up about her true identity and is much happier. During the documentary she interviewed Lauren Price and Kariss Artingstall who are partners, Olympic boxers and one served in the army. Both were shocked at Kelly's experiences when she was serving and competing. Athletes and service people today are able to be themselves and do the job they love. Many are unaware of the previous laws which would have affected how they lived and the choices that they made. This is a sign of real progress.

Similarly, a whole generation of young people from ethnic minorities were inspired and knew anything was possible, during Barack Obama's two terms in office as America's first African American president. In the same way, in 2022 girls from the UK, saw that it was normal to watch women's football on TV and have the whole country get excited when England's women won the European Football Championship. They were able to witness and feel the respect for females in a male dominated sport and see unlimited career opportunities.

Representation and visibility matter. Even if it starts with a single person, such as a Black lady interpreting the BBC News over 15 years ago, Jacqui Beckford literally inspired a generation. Many IOCN members commented that her presence on screen gave them the confidence to enter the profession and know that they too could work in this area.

> “…when I saw this beautiful woman of colour with amazing deadlocks on the TV, interpreting the BBC News. It was then that I knew that black people could be sign language interpreters and that I myself, as a black woman, could also be an interpreter like Jacqui.’ (Francis, 2022, p. 17).

Conclusion

The vast area of EDI is becoming more visible and needs to be acknowledged within the interpreter and translation profession. Interpreter awarding bodies and training providers need to work together to modernise curriculums and standards, so content reflects today’s society and the individuals within it.

Intersectionality is something that needs to be kept at the forefront of everyone’s mind. To show that differences are truly respected by ensuring when we as practitioners work in our various domains, we are well prepared with current knowledge. Those who are from under-represented groups need to have more opportunities to be visible and share their knowledge and experiences with the majority.

The USA has shown that it is achievable to make topics linked to Power, Privilege and Oppression mandatory for re-registration. There is a hope that this will have a positive impact and benefit many people and be a model that other countries can replicate. Beal (2021) found that many students commented that improving representation would provide a benefit to everyone, not just the marginalised group and encourage more inclusivity in the practice of students and educators.

This paper hopefully starts the conversation about the gaps linked to EDI content, within some TIEPs and post qualification CPD activities in the UK and other countries, found through observations within the field. The aim of the recommendations is to encourage fellow practitioners to become more self-aware, particularly about the space they take up and the power and privilege they have. Change will take time, but awareness is a great place to start and will hopefully ensure that in the future, interpreters and translators will feel that they can fully participate in the profession as themselves!

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Notes

1. Participant A – from Interpreting Education Provider 1.
2. Participant B – from Interpreting Education Provider 2.
3. Interpreting CPD activities between 2020 and 2022 found on the following websites: ASLI – Association of Sign Language Interpreters, VLP – Visual Language Professionals, linguistpd, deaf-jobs-uk, E-NEWSLI – Interpreter email group in the UK.
4. Participant C – Interpreter from France.

18

Interpreter Training in Colombia

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ABSTRACT

This presentation highlights the milestones that sign language interpreters have had to experience since the recognition of the Colombian sign language through Act 324 of 1996 until 2023. The efforts and the interests to provide a quality service to the Deaf and Hearing community include among others, short courses, workshops, which arise either from the public or private sector, and the associative movement. In this way, the Deaf community is opening up access to fields such as political, academic, religious, workplace, where the interpretation service is fundamentally required. After making this historical tour, several proposals were submitted, initially from universities and the National Learning Service- SENA, but it is not until the end of 2019, just before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, that the qualified registration of resolution 9828 of August 28, 2019 with a validity of 7 years is given to the Universidad el Bosque, Bogotá for the opening of the program of professional interpreter training of Colombian sign language-virtual. In addition, the Universidad del Valle offers the Interpretation program for the Deaf and interpretation guide for DeafBlind-face-to-face through the SNIES code 109921 of February 19, 2021 with validity of 7 years. The academic institutions hence are involved in providing qualifications, research, preparing profiles, functions and forms of contracts contributing to the first grades in the year 2024-2 of professional sign language interpreter training and research for which I am involved in developing a degree program, with the support from the SABILES research seedbed "knowledge, values and practices of the LSC/Spanish interpreter from the Humanities".

Keywords: Colombian sign language, SL interpreter training, academic programs, Colombian SL recognition.

Introduction

In the midst of the pandemic, the opportunity arose which enabled me to study interpreting in Colombian sign language professionally. I began my training process at El

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Bosque University in the second semester of 2020, with great expectations as it was the first program for professional interpreting, and that even the majority of teachers were listeners, as we were in the middle of a pandemic and were not able to leave home. However, the virtual format encouraged us to take on this great challenge within the context of the academia, being aware that what there was of fundamentals, research was very minimal, and that we could end up doing as we say in Colombia “Guinea pigs” which means, that we would be the group of students where the university would do its trial and error pilot project.

Without a doubt, those of us who have yearned for this academic space had enrolled willingly. The first group of interpreting students was made up of interpreters with extensive experience in the field of interpreting and translation from Spanish to sign language. The members were recognized as having different positions in social, regional, religious and cultural contexts of the country.

I had satisfactorily passed six semesters of the university program and only missing two semesters. I became one of the founding members of the group “Investigation Seedbed called SABILES” which focuses on the construction of knowledge, values and practices of the interpreter of Colombian / Spanish sign language from the Humanities”. These and in addition, having other responsibilities in my work, made me focus on reflecting at first on what would be my contribution to the profession of Colombian sign language interpretation? What would be the functions of a professional interpreter of Colombian sign languages? What will be the scope of the certified interpreter at a technical, technological, professional, specialized and empirical level?

I began gathering information from the stories told by the interpreters with more years in the field, and before long a ‘before and after scenario’ since the emergence of Law 324 of 1996 can be clearly seen. The Colombian sign language is recognized as a cultural heritage, with other supplementary regulations, defining what the sign language interpreter is. Before the enactment, interpreters were untrained volunteers - s/he could be a brother, son or family member of Deaf people, or the person who, within their religious belief or religious identity, sees the need to transmit the preaching and other activities to the Deaf person who needs it.

There are two groups, one that is very close to the association movement of the federation called FENASCOL, and the other, who has not had the need to get closer or that the federation does not accept due to its internal decisions. In this way, when the law came into effect, it makes all who are involved including the State pay attention to Deaf people, and interpreters became a group of great importance. From there, incidents of both Deaf and Hearing people can be known, such as the story of Patricia Ovalle together with Margarita

Rodríguez. Since then, short courses have been added, either from FENASCOL as a complement to the teaching of Colombian signs at the intermediate level, or from interpreter associations. In addition, I have also added the international perspective thanks to the updating events and congresses carried out by WASLI. Some of the courses that have been carried out by FENASCOL in agreement with the Universidad el Valle, Congresses in FENASCOL, are theoretical and practical workshops from ASIBOC, in agreement with ASIBOC and the Universidad El Bosque.

After more than 10 years, through the National Institute for Deaf People INSOR, which serves as a state entity from the Ministry of Education, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of endorsing the creation of a professional interpreting program. This is crucial in order to attend to the need of the community, to have greater daily participation, demonstrating that accessibility is needed. One of the educational institutions that responds to this call is the El Bosque University, through the qualified registry of resolution 9828 of August 28, 2019 with a validity of 7 years.

The question now arises regarding those who do not wish to study and instead remain only at empirical level, or who only want to study to be a technician instead of being a qualified professional.

This is the goal of the current undertaking - to be able to collect the experiences of other universities and to carry out the analysis within each subject studied, interviews and tools used within the SABILES research hotbed. To know what is SABILES, please watch the following video https://view.genial.ly/6496648c61da73001204ac25/presentation-sabiles-si which is currently made up of Teachers: Javier Moreno, Alex Barreto. Students: Angélica Patiño, Carlos Gómez, Lina Flórez, Lina Mejía, Luis Cubillos and Santiago Parra.

Dialogues are currently being carried out to facilitate co-operation with El Valle University, for which this would be our first experience of an institution that passes a technical program to a professional one with special characteristics as we can see below in the following video https://youtu.be/9qjVLcK7ADY.

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Infusing Critical Lenses in the Interpreter Education and Professional Development: Reflections of a DeafDisabled Interpreter Educator

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ABSTRACT

Sign language interpreter education and professional development have been largely dominated by able-bodied, non-deaf, heteronormative white individuals. Marginalized voices are frequently ignored and excluded from many arenas of the sign language interpreting profession. This is a direct result of professionalization. There is a significant gap in critical lenses (Critical Race Theory, DisCrit, and DeafCrit) in interpreter education, professional development, mentoring practices, and assessment. Despite this gap, there is a real possibility of pushing for a paradigm shift in the infusion of critical lenses. This paper is based on my reflections as an interpreter educator for more than 23 years. I worked with various educational institutions, national/local interpreter development grants, and NGOs that offer interpreter development opportunities to see that it is possible to close the gap if we do the work.

Keywords: SL interpreter education, critical lenses, professional development, mentoring practices, assessment.

Introduction

While this paper is largely based on the context within the United States where I have been working within this profession, parallels do exist with other countries. I offer some observations that I have picked up in my 23 years in the field. One clear parallel is tied to how this field is shaped by those in majority power. The aim of this paper is to offer my insights as an interpreter educator and researcher, as well as offer ideas on how transformations can happen in the curriculum and assessment design, as well as teaching/mentoring practices. Change must happen to benefit diverse deaf people and their communication access.

Sign language interpreter education was rooted among Deaf communities that raised their own. However, due to legal mandates for access, the demand for sign language

interpreters has increased exponentially, taking this out of community-based educational practices (Cokely, 2005; Wilson, 2011). This is called professionalization. Professionalization serves as a site of power (Kent, 2007). Systemic power in this field is granted to able-bodied, non-deaf, heteronormative white individuals, placing minoritized perspectives on the margins. This systemic power has been maintained for many years. It is through the able-bodied, non-deaf, heteronormative white individual's frame of reference that seeps into pre-career education and professional development. Marginalized voices are frequently ignored and excluded from many arenas of the sign language interpreting profession.

I worked with various educational institutions, national/local interpreter development grants, and NGOs that offered interpreter development opportunities. There is a significant gap in critical lenses (Critical Race Theory, DisCrit, and DeafCrit) in interpreter education, professional development, mentoring practices, and assessment. I worked with a national grant program in the United States, Project CLIMB, which was a legal interpreting training program designed for color interpreters, heritage signer interpreters, and deaf interpreters. Through this program, as well as several years of learning about critical lenses through my research work that gave me ideas on how transformations can happen in those areas in the development of sign language interpreters. In my current work with a new national grant program, the IRIS Project, which focuses on training rural interpreters across the United States, I took innovative and transformative approaches to developing curriculum and assessment tools. However, in recent years, I have witnessed an increasing desire to infuse critical lenses in interpreter education and professional development.

Critical Lenses

Kennedy (2019) argues that the use of critical lenses "provokes us into paying attention who is included and who is not included", (p. 526). It is time for us to pay attention to who is included and who is not included in the sign language interpreting profession. In the sign language interpreting profession, we see the emergence of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and DeafCrit lenses. However, I argue that we need to incorporate DisCrit rooted in Disability Studies. CRT is an analytical framework that investigates issues surrounding races within a field. For so long, we have not sufficiently discussed race in our profession. The world was shaken by George Floyd's death, spurring conversations on race and racism (Tedam & Cane, 2022). Educators who incorporate the practice of critical reflection recognize the impact of historical and cultural influences on their teaching practices and take steps to challenge existing assumptions to change their current actions (Cranton, 1996).

My Journey in this Profession

I grew up in the state of Colorado in the United States as a deaf child of deaf parents. I attended mainstream education system. I identify as deaf and disabled. Unfortunately, I am not comfortable sharing my disability other than my deafness because of the ongoing stigma towards disability by deaf people as well as interpreters. The local interpreter education program was led by a deaf-parented interpreter and a deaf interpreter. Because of this early exposure, I assumed that this was the norm, meaning that there were deaf and non-deaf teachers teaching interpreting. I learned that this was a rare case.

Even though I was exposed to this program, I had no desire to get into this field. This occurred through a series of events that were purely by chance. In the summer prior to my senior year in college, I went on a month-long study-abroad trip offered by Gallaudet University. In this class, there was a DeafBlind woman. At that time, Gallaudet University did not consistently provide accommodation for DeafBlind students, and this study-abroad-trip was not considered a necessity. The woman's sighted husband accompanied her on the trip to provide communication access. I felt bad for the husband for working non-stop. A couple of classmates and I decided to give the husband a break by interpreting for her. This was my first stint with interpreting. While I found it challenging, I also found that I enjoyed the work.

During my graduate school studies 24 years ago, rubrics became a new way of conducting assessments. My class assignment was to develop a rubric relevant to me. I was inspired to create rubrics for assessing sign language interpreters. They have been a part of my life since the age of three, when I started attending pre-school. I have observed varying competencies. Marilyn K. Mitchell who was running an educational interpreter training grant for the state of New York saw this rubric and offered to join forces to create something for the grant. This rubric was eventually published in a book on mentoring (Sheneman & Mitchell, 2005; 2005). This collaboration led me to become actively involved in this grant program, providing mentoring, education, and assessment of interpreters. This was how I entered the interpreting profession. It was not planned. I just fell into it. I have been repeatedly asked by some deaf individuals who had a short stint in this field why I am still here. I feel a sense of duty to serve my deaf people by teaching interpreters. I also continue to hold hope that things will change.

In the 23-year period, I have been an adjunct or temporary faculty member for six different interpreter education programs in the United States. All were led by non-deaf interpreters who were trained by another generation of white, non-deaf interpreter educators. I

have noted with interest that the coursework in those programmes typically includes only one Deaf culture course, along with heavy emphasis on language and interpreting skills. The problem with the Deaf culture course is that it is often based on white Deaf culture, excluding the cultures of diverse deaf people. Some programs are courses in sign language linguistics and ethics. There is nothing about the human-to-human relationships based on the principles of disability justice. Are students taught what it means to be deaf-centered interpreters? Are they taught how to work with diverse deaf people, including people of colour, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, and LGBTQIA+?

As I share my story as a single individual, the exclusion of deaf interpreter educators remains globally true. Since 2000, I have been an adjunct/temporary faculty member teaching specific interpreting courses for various colleges and universities. I also worked with numerous state and federal grant programs that provided training for interpreters. These are short-term opportunities. It was not until 2023 that I finally landed my first full-time faculty position teaching interpreting. I waited 23 years for this job, which I wanted so much since I discovered that I enjoyed working in the sign language interpreting profession. It is difficult to see that my perspective as a DeafDisabled person did not matter in interpreter education programs. Many interpreter education programs still prefer non-deaf educators. I saw non-deaf candidates hired over me, even those without a doctorate, and with fewer publications and presentations. I have been asked to teach sign language courses instead of interpreting. I rejected jobs that only allowed me to teach sign language courses because I knew I wanted to be an interpreter educator and I was going to find my way to get there. Earlier, in my career, I wanted to know how I could teach full-time interpreting. I was told that I needed a doctoral degree. I earned my Ph.D. degree from the world's only doctorate program in sign language interpretation and translation. I was still not good enough. This is a typical experience of minority professionals (Wyche, 2009). Minority individuals face barriers in getting jobs they dream of despite having done the right things, and they have to work much harder than white and able-bodied individuals do to achieve their dreams (Wyche, 2009). Academic ghosting is a phenomenon that occurs in marginalized individuals, as described by Andrzejewski (2023) as, "Perhaps the cruelest incarnation of academic ghosting is enacted on those with little power in the academy" (sec. 4).

I teach interpretation at the University of Houston as of August 2023, which represents a full circle for me. My journey was finding my way to what I knew as a youth that it is possible for non-deaf and deaf interpreters to collaboratively teach future interpreters. This program is led by a non-deaf Black woman, Dr. Sharon Hill, and I joined her to teach diverse interpreting

students. Dr. Hill is one of the few colour-leading interpreter education programs in the United States. It feels like I got a dream team because Dr. Hill and I are committed to teaching critical lenses to our interpreting students, so they are able to relate to diverse deaf consumers that they will eventually work with.

I see that we are at the tipping point of a major paradigm in the field of interpreting. We are seeing the growth of deaf as well as diverse interpreters. We are seeing more professional development opportunities, focusing on power, privileges, and oppression. Since my beginning in this field, I have been shocked and hurt by how deaf interpreter educators continue to be rare.

Consequences of Professionalization

Although there are some good merits of professionalization, it has consequences, as Kent (2007) argues: "professionalization is a raced, gendered, and classed endeavor" (p. 200-201). It is often led by majority power (namely, white, non-deaf/hearing, able-bodied, straight women in the sign language interpreting context).

Having a narrow lens is already consequential in itself, as a finite number of perspectives are streamlined through instruction. Next, I highlight five different consequences of professionalization that I have observed in the following areas over the years of working in this profession: interpreter education, professional development, mentoring, assessment and evaluations, and lack of cultural humility.

Consequence #1: Interpreter Education Programs

The first consequence exists in interpreter education programs. The exclusion of and distance from marginalized voices is the result of professionalization. This means that pre-service and working interpreters are taught through the narrow lens of sign language interpreting. Interpreter education programs, namely BIPOC, Deaf, and Coda, are often not designed for marginalized students (Decker et al., 2021). Representation matters. The dominance of white, non-deaf individuals in the profession results in educators who are also white and non-deaf without any representation to support BIPOC, Deaf and Coda students (Decker et al., 2021; Deaf Interpreter Academy, 2022; Isakson, 2016; Sheneman & Robinson, 2020; West Oyedele, 2015; Williamson, 2015; Williamson, 2016). Since curriculum development and program instruction are primarily led by white, hearing non-deaf individuals, Coda and Deaf interpreters do not receive their pedagogical needs primarily because they have already acquired sign languages long before their non-deaf classmates (Deaf Interpreter

Academy, 2022; Williamson, 2015). Situated knowledges of non-deaf deaf-parented interpreters[1] and interpreters of colour are minimized, resulting in unhappy and marginalized learners due to oppressive practices by hearing able-bodied educators. Shandomo (2010) describes this as the division between educators' comfort zones and students' cultural identities.

The low number of deaf interpreter educators means that the deaf situated knowledges are being excluded in the education and professional development of interpreters. Deaf-centered interpreter education and professional development were consistently rejected. Most deaf people who teach at the university level teach sign language courses, rather than interpreting. Many programmes are led by neither deaf-parented nor deaf interpreters or deaf sign language teachers. The United States has an accreditation system for interpreter education programs. One of the requirements for this accreditation is that the program must be led by a certified interpreter (CCIE, 2019). This easily excludes deaf sign language teachers who are not certified interpreters from leading those programs. Additionally, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) which had a moratorium on the certification tests for deaf interpreters starting in 2016 lasted for a few years (Rizzolo, 2022). This accreditation standard created a barrier for non-certified deaf interpreters who may have the desire to take on this leadership role.

Due to the lack of exposure to situated knowledges of marginalized groups in their instruction, novice interpreters are often not prepared to work with diverse deaf populations, including deaf people of colour, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, LGBTQIA+, and foreign-born deaf people. Diverse deaf individuals are compelled to endure interpreters who are unfamiliar with the unique needs of those particular populations. In the absence of critical lenses, combined with the vocational mindset of interpreting work, training focuses on hard rather than soft skills. Hard skills are technical and soft skills are interpersonal (Lamri & Lubart, 2023). Interpreting skills are hard skills. How much soft skills are taught in these programs? How much focus is placed on connecting with deaf people and ensuring that their communication access is optimized?

Consequence #2: Professional Development

Professional development, until George Floyd's death, did not offer marginalized perspectives (Tedam & Cane, 2022). Interpreters have the privilege of picking whatever

[1] Non-deaf deaf-parented individuals are also known called Codas not to be confused with the international organization, Children of Deaf Adults (CODA).

professional development offerings that appear interesting to them rather than what they need the most. Interpreters that especially need critical lenses do not show up. They believe that they did not require this information. For example, I recently presented a remote workshop via Zoom in the United States, discussing the forms of oppression that deaf people experience from sign language interpreters. A non-deaf white interpreter showed up and was constantly using her voice to ask why nobody was speaking. She learned that I am deaf. She claimed that nobody told her that the presenter was deaf and that this workshop would be conducted in American Sign Language (ASL). This scenario represents a problem that has existed in the field for a long time. It is automatically assumed that workshops would be taught by non-deaf individuals in a spoken language. While the workshop advertisement did not indicate that this workshop would be in ASL, my bio indicated that I was deaf. How many interpreters purposefully select workshops taught in spoken language over those in sign language? How many interpreters purposefully select workshops presented by non-deaf interpreters? Those who need professional development training from marginalized individuals would most likely form more aware interpreters, which in turn would improve the quality of their diverse deaf people's communication access. This professional development promotes attitudinal adjustment by those in positions of power. Interpreter certification systems across the globe require a certain number of hours to maintain certification. This requirement further encourages the practice of selecting workshops that are in the majority language and taught by those in the majority power.

Consequence #3: Mentoring

There is a lack of standardization in mentoring approaches. Some mentoring experiences are positive for interpreters, while others are negative, which leads to the question of how mentoring should be performed. What critical pedagogical approaches should we incorporate in mentoring and teaching? Mentoring is often seen as a relationship between an expert and a novice. The expert tells the novice what to do and what not to do without promoting critical thinking skills. Ultimately, this gives the mentor the power to shape novice interpreters into specific molds. This dynamic prevents novice interpreters from unpacking and critically engaging in self-introspection/self-reflection. The traditional approach is based on the assumption that mentees know nothing whereas mentors have a wealth of knowledge (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000; Raija & Sirpa, 2015). The novice needs to discover answers on their own, with the mentor serving as a guide.

Are there mentors of marginalized identities available to mentees? Again, representation is important. Those with similar experiences can support novice interpreters in developing tools to navigate the profession (West Oyedele, 2015; Williamson, 2015).

Consequence #4: Assessments

Assessments and evaluations were norm-referenced for those in the majority power, namely hearing and white. Certifying bodies struggle to recruit diverse raters for more equitable scoring (Colonomos and Decker, 2022). Given that the majority of interpreter education programs are dominated by white, non-deaf individuals, assessment tools are more likely to develop with that mindset. Colonomos and Decker (2022) challenged interpreter educators in their presentation to consider whether assessments in their programs are equitable, stating that assessments are inherently biased. Interpreter assessments used in interpreter education programs or during interpreters' careers often lack critical lenses and end up traumatizing marginalized individuals. Students leave interpreter education programs because assessments make them feel shamed as if they are impostors; students who remain in the field are stuck with the trauma from those assessments which stick with them from post-graduation into the profession, promoting deficit-based thinking (Colonomos & Decker, 2022). Isakson (2016) argues that assessments are incompatible with non-deaf and deaf heritage signers[1]. Deaf interpreters who shared their experiences with interpreter education programs reported that they often did not receive substantial feedback. They often get "good job" from non-deaf educators who do not help them grow. They feel that Deaf interpreter educators would offer them more constructive feedback (Deaf Interpreter Academy, 2022). Language variants are considered deficits, which is problematic because variants can be tied to race and disability (Hill, 2012; Henner & Robinson, 2023).

Consequence #5: Lack of Cultural Humility

Foronda et al. (2016) define cultural humility as the willingness to be open, aware of one's own actions, person-centered, promoting supportive interactions, and practice self-reflection and critique while interacting with diverse people and minimizing power imbalances. This skill is not developed overnight but is a lifelong effort (Foronda et al., 2016). Marginalized individuals can tell if they make conscientious efforts to dismantle different -isms, as demonstrated through their actions that reflect their cultural humility (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Massaquoi, 2023; Robinson, Sheneman, & Henner, 2020).

[1] Heritage signers refer to those who have deaf parents. They can be non-deaf or deaf.

The lack of cultural humility prevents interpreters from developing relational sensitivity to diverse Deaf groups and from being able to connect them at the human level by seeing them eye to eye. Without teaching future interpreters, the value of interpersonal skills within a transformative framework creates a power dynamic in which interpreters believe that they are doing benevolent work in providing access needs while oppressing the Deaf people they serve (Robinson, Sheneman & Henner, 2020). There are three types of cultural humility that interpreters need to develop: disability cultural humility, Deaf cultural humility, and racial cultural humility.

As mentioned earlier, I am concerned with the lack of disability justice principles. Historically, this gap is largely due to deaf people's desire to align with whiteness (Robinson, 2010). Deaf white people deny their disability status to connect with whiteness. Deaf exceptionalism has excluded deaf people of colour, DeafBlind, and DeafDisabled (Robinson, 2010). White deaf people's ableist rhetoric created the belief that deaf people are not disabled. This creates a ripple effect, impacting how interpreters are taught about deaf people. Deaf culture courses do not necessarily teach about the cultural humility that is needed for interpreting students to develop soft skills in working with diverse deaf people. Disability cultural competence is needed for able-bodied individuals to respectfully engage in relationships with people with disabilities while simultaneously recognizing them as experts because of their situated experiences (Garland-Thomson, 2017).

With disability cultural humility as the foundation, Deaf cultural humility can be incorporated (Sheneman & Robinson, 2020). Racial cultural humility requires individuals to recognize their white and light-skinned privileges and to work on unpacking their own biases, as they continually work on dismantling the system of racism (Massaquoi, 2023).

A Paradigm Shift

The profession is divided into two camps: those who remain traditional and those who want to be progressive. Where are we going? The second disability justice principle states, "leadership by those most impacted," (Sins Invalid, 2015). Deaf, DeafBlind, and DeafDisabled people are the most impacted by the sign language interpreting profession, and they should lead. Joseph Murray, the World Federation of the Deaf president presented in the opening ceremony of the 2023 WASLI conference, emphasized that it is the deaf people who should lead the sign language interpreting field, by allowing them to lead; that is, by taking a progressive step. This requires humility. I recognize that the current status in some countries in the world has set us backwards with conflicting political agendas. For example, two states

in the United States (Florida and Texas) have banned diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in public education institutions (Yenor, 2023).

However, I have seen some positive movements in recent years that give me a glimmer of hope that progressivism will continue to shift the sign language interpreting profession. There was a transformative federal grant programme during the years–2017-2021 that provide legal training to interpreters in the United States incorporating the use of Critical Race Theory and DeafCrit in their training programs. This was Project CLIMB (Cultivating Legal Interpreters of Minority Backgrounds). This project was instrumental in supporting interpreters of BIPOC, Deaf interpreters, and Coda interpreters. This project changed how interpreters approach legal interpreting by infusing critical lenses, emphasizing the importance of a dialogic relationship between interpreters, and between interpreters and consumers. They developed a pool of marginalized facilitators and mentors to support marginalized interpreters. Their learning and mentoring framework is based on the participant-centered Vygotskian framework and Process Mediation (Colonomos & Moccia, 2013), which challenged participants to grow through self-discovery if they were given the space to reflect on their own work.

After Project CLIMB's resounding success, the hosting site, the University of Northern Colorado, received a new federal grant program for the years–2021-2026, the IRIS Project (Improving Rural Interpreters Skills). This program incorporated the DisCrit, DeafCrit, and Critical Race theory lenses. As the developer of the program curriculum, I recognize the challenges of training rural interpreters who are mostly white and live in areas dominated by white people with less awareness of critical lenses. The program has two cohorts so far, with one coming in the next year. Each individual has a different learning progress, but the information is getting to them in the hope of cultivating interpreters who possess disability, deaf, and racial cultural competence. For interpreting skill development, the IRIS project uses a non-evaluative cognitive decision-based framework for participants to analyze their interpreting process rather than focusing only on the product.

As a new full-time interpreting faculty at the University of Houston, guided by Dr Hill, a Black woman, I find this a historic partnership because the program has a non-deaf Black woman and a DeafDisabled woman working together to educate tomorrow's interpreters. A Black woman based in Texas, who is participating in the IRIS Project, remarked to me how she did not know that a Black woman was running an interpreter education programme in the same state. This information needs to be more transparent so that prospective interpreters and educators can go where they feel a sense of belong. Both Dr. Hill and I are fully committed to

infusing all critical lenses in the entire program to develop different kinds of interpreters. We hope that other programs follow our model.

Impact of Transformative Programs

There are numerous benefits of transformative programs. Interpreters became more aware of their biases and prejudices. They have ongoing self-introspection practices. They strive to connect with deaf and marginalized communities to understand their self and their positionality in the deaf world and profession. The traditional approach involves learners who are expected to be taught. The transformative/progressive approach has learners challenge themselves in understanding why they are not evolving or improving. Interpreter education and professional development are not only concerned with improving language and interpreting skills. Rather, it demands accountability on their part in their hard/soft skills as they move towards interpreting mastery. We need to focus on strength-based systems that support diverse interpreters, giving them tools to be reflective of their own work and positionality in this field.

Conclusion: Moving Forward, not Backwards

It is my hope that the sign language interpreting profession continues to move forward rather than backward, despite the existing polarizations across the globe. Kennedy (2019) recognizes that despite the history and social issues that have long existed, it would be unfair to expect an educator to go into a classroom to "overturn centuries of racial, gender, and class exploitation" (p. 526). However, Kennedy (2019) argued that we can and should aim to consider ethical and just teaching practices that incorporate diverse perspectives. Change must happen now, especially with the interest in and desire to infuse critical lenses in interpreter education and professional development. It begins with YOU, *unpacking* power, and privileges. Ultimately, you need to be willing to let go of your majority power. This is how cultural humility can be demonstrated. Take opportunities with potential educators who have marginalized backgrounds, especially Deaf people. Granted, those with marginalized backgrounds are more likely to have less experience than white, non-deaf able-bodied individuals, largely because of systematic barriers. By investing in them to provide representation, you are investing in increasing the number of marginalized interpreters. Invest in potential marginalized consultants that can transform the design of your programs and assessment tools. Recruit marginalized voices for professional development opportunities. Encourage your colleagues to attend training by those individuals, including being thankful to

receive information in sign language rather than in spoken language. Ultimately, ask the following questions:

- What kinds of interpreters do you want to see in this world?
- What steps are you taking to invest in marginalized voices in your country?
- What barriers exist for marginalized individuals from entering this profession?

By authentically considering these questions, you are developing the cultural humility needed to promote change in this profession. If changes do not occur, diverse deaf people in this world will suffer as a major consequence.

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