

## Understanding the Interpretation ... It Is How You Sign It!

Nicodemus, B. (2009). *Prosodic Markers and Utterance Boundaries in American Sign Language Interpretations*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. 112 pages. Hardcover. \$65.00.

As a nonnative user of American Sign Language (ASL), there are those moments when I get a confused look from individuals who are Deaf when I am communicating with them. The challenge is my ability to appropriately use some of the subtle nuances of ASL, which after 20 years as a second language learner still proves difficult. This book provides individuals, Deaf and hearing alike, an opportunity to explore research findings critical to the continued understanding of sign languages and prosody. The use of sound research methodology identifies data that contribute significantly to the body of knowledge in our profession.

The author provides a succinct overview of the use and features of sentence boundaries and prosody in spoken languages. The use of pauses, intonation, emphasis, stress, and volume are all features of prosody in spoken language.

There is an extensive review of the literature on the importance of prosody in sign languages and the implications for the interpreting profession. Without the use of proper boundary markers by interpreters, the meaning of the conversation or source language is convoluted.

The methodology and design of the research study include the use of native ASL users as coders of data. Ten Deaf individuals identified the sentence boundaries used by one ASL interpreter using predetermined

source material. One limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size of five sign language interpreters. Additionally, interrater reliability of signed discourse analysis could strengthen the research design rather than utilizing 50 Deaf individuals as research participants. Future research may include a design that compares native signers' production of prosody and the use of prosody by an ASL interpreter using the same source material.

There is an obvious need for interpreters to appropriately utilize accurate linguistic features to provide cues for Deaf consumers. Ultimately, an interpreters' ability to correctly emphasize the prosodic markers has a profound impact on how comprehensible the message is in the target language. Similarly, for the message to be rendered accurately from ASL to English, an interpreter must be able to recognize the boundary markers in ASL. Undoubtedly, this book provides significant data for practitioners and educators of interpreters to increase the accuracy of interpretations. The findings indicate four primary categories of prosodic markers. The research findings need to be incorporated into interpreter training programs to increase practitioners' ability to faithfully and accurately render the message into the target language.

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