

The Heart of Interpreting from Deaf Perspectives

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For the ASL summary of this chapter, go to https://youtu.be/I4wSbXprh_M

At the 22nd International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Greece in July 2015, Kim Kurz was enjoying her stroll in the Syntagma Square in front of the Old Royal Palace when she encountered a group of Deaf colleagues who were also taking a break from the conference. At any other moment, this should be a happy occasion, but their faces told her otherwise. Their request to discuss an important matter conveyed the feeling of urgency. After sitting down at a nearby outdoor café, her colleagues began to vent their frustrations about the lack of highly qualified interpreters and accessibility at the conference. This discussion confirmed for Kim that this was not a unique situation. It was the moment she realized the importance of documenting and sharing Deaf individuals' perspectives on interpreting.

ALTHOUGH THERE have been countless discussions over the years among Deaf professionals about the qualities they want to see in sign language interpreters, the discussions remain largely anecdotal and not well-documented. This is the motivation that led Kim to recruit her co-author, Joseph Hill, to work on the project of documenting insights and expectations from a group of Deaf professionals about the language and interpreting qualities they consider “the heart of interpreting,” hence the title of this chapter.

BACKGROUND

Before sign language interpretation was established as a profession, Deaf people were naturally a big part of interpreters' development. Translation work was often done by individuals who were intimately familiar with the language and cultural practices of the Deaf community. They were teachers of Deaf children, educational administrators, religious workers, rehabilitation counselors or had Deaf parents.¹ These individuals often followed a helper model approach, whereby interpreting services were provided voluntarily, motivated by a desire to help Deaf individuals' conversational exchange with nonsigners.²

Over the years, there have been several changes to the conceptual paradigm of the interpreting model. The helper model was discarded in favor of a more professional delivery of work.³ The professionalization of interpreting services began in the 1960s and initiated the shift from the helper model to the current bilingual-bicultural and allyship models. However, this shift resulted in a disconnect between interpreters and the Deaf community.⁴ Further compounding the problem is the increasing number of interpreter education programs at academic institutions.

An unintended consequence of this shift to academic preparation for careers in interpreting was a reduction in budding interpreters' exposure to Deaf community members with their perspectives and insights on interpreting.⁵ Under this new paradigm, individuals who desired to become interpreters often had minimal contact with Deaf people and were not vetted by the members of the Deaf community.

Given the wide access to academic offerings of ASL today, interpreting students are now less likely to be natural bilinguals, and their involvement in the Deaf community has become increasingly difficult to establish.⁶ With this diminished exposure to the Deaf community, interpreters entering the profession today often lack a substantial knowledge of the capital of Deaf community cultural wealth.⁷ To interpret as effectively as possible, they need to be aware of the linguistic and social capital through which linguistic resources, communication resources, and social networks are shared and maintained in the Deaf community.

More critically, the authors have noticed that interpreters and interpreting students today often lack sufficient linguistic and social capitals that could support their interpreting work. To identify exactly what the necessary capitals are to become effective interpreters, the authors undertook a qualitative study to document Deaf people's perspectives on critical linguistic and discourse features for effective interpretation or the "heart" of interpreting for Deaf people.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study involving personal interviews and focus groups was conducted to gather information from Deaf participants regarding their perspectives on effective interpreting. Qualitative inquiry is "primarily naturalistic, interpretive, and inductive . . . if you want to study context, analysis must be in-depth and focused on only a small sample or a few individuals' situations."⁸ The authors chose this approach because personal interviews and focus groups have been demonstrated to be useful for collecting data on a subject that is still largely unexplored and not extensively researched. According to Wadsworth, "It is the interaction between people that generates a range of responses to only one or two key focus questions. . . . Groups are most valuable and exciting when you are utilizing the group dynamics to generate new ideas, collect a wider range of perceptions and experiences, or find innovative solutions to persistent problems."⁹ Focus groups have been used successfully in interpreting research projects because they provide insights and experiences from which common themes may be drawn through content analysis using the grounded theory.¹⁰

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Age	26-35	36-45	46-55	Over 66
	5	1	3	1
Gender	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>		
	4	6		
Race/Ethnicity	<i>Black</i>	<i>Latinx</i>	<i>White</i>	
	3	1	6	
Audiological Status	<i>Deaf</i>	<i>Hard of Hearing</i>		
	9	1		
Education	<i>Bachelor's</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Ph.D.</i>	
	1	7	2	

Participants

The study involved a total of ten Deaf participants. Focus groups and one-to-one interviews were arranged based on the participants' availability. All participants lived in Rochester, New York, but they were not native to the region. Five of the participants were ages 26 to 35, whereas the remainder were older than 36. Six of ten participants identified as male. Of 10 participants, 6 identified themselves as white, three identified as black, and one as Latinx (this term is used as a gender-inclusive way to refer to people of Latin American origin). Nine of the participants identified themselves as Deaf and one self-identified as hard of hearing. All of the participants had higher education backgrounds, with the majority either holding or studying for master's or doctoral degrees (see table 1).

As for the language experience of the participants, six of them acquired ASL as their first language, whereas the others considered English as their first language. One participant viewed herself as bilingual since birth. Six participants were exposed to sign language immediately after birth and one learned the language when she was between the age of three and five years. These seven individuals had developed their native language during the critical age period of language development.¹¹ Three other participants learned sign language after the age of six. All participants use ASL on a daily basis and have been consumers of ASL interpreters for more than 16 years (see table 2).

A focus group of six Deaf participants, a group interview with two Deaf participants, and two one-to-one interviews were held over a period of several weeks. In the focus group session, a high-definition camera was used to record the conversation among the six Deaf participants. The data the participants provided in ASL was translated into written English. In the one-to-one interviews, the authors transcribed the data produced by the four participants and verified the transcrip-

Table 2. Language Data Provided by the Participants

First Language	<i>ASL</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Both</i>	
	6	3	1	
Age of Acquisition	<i>Birth</i>	<i>3-5</i>	<i>6 and after</i>	
	6	1	3	
Interpreter Consumer	<i>16-20 years</i>	<i>21-25 years</i>	<i>26-30 years</i>	<i>30 years+</i>
	4	2	2	2

tion by reviewing the transcribed comments with the participants. In both cases, the transcription followed the standard English orthographic principle.¹² The participants were identified only by number, and their numbers were associated with their responses on the transcript.

Interview Questions

In the one-to-one and focus group interviews, the participants were asked ten open-ended questions regarding their preferences and expectations of ASL interpreters:

1. What skills would you like to see interpreters possess?
2. What skills are frequently missing in some interpreters?
3. Describe the “best” interpreter’s skills.
4. What skills do the best interpreters have that other interpreters might not have?
5. What skills are considered “eye candy” from Deaf people’s perspectives?
6. What do you wish interpreters would include in their interpretation?
7. What do you want to see less of from interpreters during their interpretation?
8. What would you suggest to interpreters as the best way to learn various registers?
9. What about language attitudes of interpreters?
10. Any additional comments?

Two of the questions included terms that prompted a number of participants to ask for clarification: “eye candy” in question #5 and “language attitudes” in question #9. “Eye candy” refers to aesthetically pleasing attributes in interpreting or signing that are attractive to Deaf consumers. “Language attitudes” was a new concept for the participants. The concept was explained to them as a psychological tendency involving affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects that is expressed by evaluating language and language users with some degree of favor or disfavor.¹³

Content Analysis

The frequency of responses was computed for the open-ended questions and content analysis was performed on the responses collected during the focus group and one-to-one interviews. The summative content analysis approach was employed to identify and calculate the frequency of themes mentioned by Deaf participants.¹⁴ A sample of quotes for each theme is provided in the results section below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Finding a number of themes in the analysis, the authors classified them into two main categories: *linguistic competence* and *discourse*. The linguistic competence-related themes identified were bilingual skills, fingerspelling, and depiction. The discourse-related themes were identified as audience engagement, message equivalency, communication situations, and pragmatic enrichment. The results of the

interviews may be beneficial to interpreter educators interested in pedagogy as they provide insights and directions for future curricula and research.

Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence encompasses bilingual skills in both ASL and English, fingerspelling, and depiction. These features were frequent themes in the conversations among the participants in the focus group. The content analysis identified several sub-themes under depiction—surrogates, constructed action and dialogue, and signing space.

Bilingual Skills

Participants in the interviews generally agreed that interpreters need to be equally proficient in both ASL and English in order to provide effective interpretations. One participant commented,

What is frequently missing from interpretation is the grammatical part. If interpreters do not have a strong foundation in either ASL or English, for me that is what makes their interpretation weak. A successful interpreter must be bilingual and have strong skills in both English and ASL. Being strong in just one language and weak in the other language is not enough. An interpreter cannot get by with just one strong language.

Another Deaf participant, an ASL tutor, made a similar remark regarding the importance of using his source and target languages effectively.

When I tutor student interpreters, I frequently find that they do not even know what nouns and verbs are. It terrifies me because if they want to become future successful interpreters, they need to know what nouns and verbs are. They might make some good sign choices, but that doesn't help if they do not know their own grammar rules. Some of them go on to graduate without knowing grammar rules.

The two participants in the above examples echoed a similar concern raised in Witter-Merithew and Johnson's 2005 study. In that study, a Deaf professional discussed her interpreter's flaws in sign-to-voice interpreting, attributing them to a lack of self-monitoring and preparation.¹⁵ By comparison, participants in the present study observed that too many interpreters do not have a solid meta-linguistic knowledge in their primary language, English. If they do not have a good linguistic foundation in English, it is likely to be true for ASL as well, especially given their limited exposure to ASL. One Deaf participant offered this observation regarding the difference between two groups of hearing signers—those who are Deaf-parented (i.e., children of Deaf adults [CODA]) and those who are not:

I think that, like young Deaf children who grew up in Deaf families, those CODAs were given opportunities to play with their ASL skills and were raised in a safe environment where it was ok to make mistakes with their ASL skills and learn from them. They were able to learn from grammatical mistakes at a

very young age. Now that they are older and working as interpreters, they have the ability to worry more about the content and make sure their information is accurate. Other interpreters who are not CODAs probably need to worry about making sure their grammatical features are correct in addition to the message content. Most interpreting students are not ready for that level of work. Most of them are still at the vocabulary and grammar level. I think there is a big difference between those two groups—interpreters who grew up with ASL being their first language and the other interpreters who grew up with English as their first language.

Another aspect of bilingual skills is knowledge of culturally specific form and meaning in both languages. Interpreters should recognize that not all English words have exact translation equivalents, as this Deaf participant pointed out:

A fund of information and knowledge is the key. For example, I have an interpreting intern in my company who frequently signs SICK!; SICK! as if someone were ill. It took me a while to finally realize that she really meant “cool” or “awesome.” I provided feedback to that intern related to the semantics of the sign and helped fix his/her signing error. Interpreters constantly need feedback.

It is evident that this young intern incorrectly assumed that the ASL sign SICK has a direct correspondence to the American slang use of “sick” to mean “cool” or “awesome” (see figure 1).

Slang is a nonstandard lexicon of popular words and phrases that are usually limited to a specific generation. So, while “this is sick” may be interpreted as “awesome” by her English-speaking peers in the same generation, this may not translate well in ASL in which the conventional sign SICK (an open handshape with the extended middle finger that touches the forehead) does not follow the similar trend. Her lack of understanding of semantic range in ASL contributed to an inaccurate and confusing translation, but this may be resolved by fingerspelling the English



Figure 1. SICK! SICK! (incorrect)



COOL! or AWESOME! (correct).

word “sick” and expanding the meaning of awesomeness. Some would argue that fingerspelling is not part of ASL; nevertheless, it was one of the most frequent themes that the Deaf participants brought up during their focus group discussion. Many of them mentioned that they feel fingerspelling is part of bilingualism and thus important to overall discourse, which is discussed in the next section.

Fingerspelling

In addition to knowledge of grammar and semantics, effective interpreters understand that fingerspelling is an essential component of ASL; however, it is a difficult task for ASL learners to acquire.¹⁶ While interpreters who exhibit linguistic competence incorporate effective use of fingerspelling in their interpretations, in general, Deaf participants in our study recognized that fingerspelling was often not a comfortable choice for interpreters. One of the Deaf participants made this point with the following comment:

Oftentimes interpreters avoid fingerspelling and try to sign everything. I would prefer that my interpreters fingerspell so I can see the [English] vocabulary and connect it to the sign itself.

Another Deaf participant made a similar comment on the topic of fingerspelling about how she wishes she knew the English words for technical terms and becomes frustrated when the interpreter decides not to fingerspell them but uses technical signs instead:

Sometimes I want to know the English word for the signs the interpreter used and I have to ask the interpreter for the words.

This indicates that fingerspelling is a necessary skill that interpreters should acquire and be comfortable using when they need to make a specific reference or provide clarification. Interpreters should also be familiar with the discourse structure in knowing when and how fingerspelling should be used; for example, discerning whether fingerspelling occurs before, after, or at the same time as depicting a person or an object. Depiction, which will be discussed in the next section, is another aspect that is difficult for some interpreters to acquire and use skillfully.

Depiction

Compared to the other topics in the interviews, participants in our study engaged in an extensive discussion regarding interpreters’ use of depiction in ASL. Depiction is an expression of iconic mappings of mental and real spaces.¹⁷ Mental spaces are imagined entities and events constructed by a narrator who then maps the mental spaces onto physical spaces, which include body and spatial locations. The narrator encodes the physical forms—handshapes (including classifiers), movement, location, and facial expressions—with the imagined entities and events in a grammatical manner. For example, a signer uses a classifier 3 handshape (with the thumb upright, the index and middle fingers extended, and the other fingers closed) to represent a car and moves the handshape 3 in a way that depicts the car’s movement—in a straight line (see figure 2), in a zig-zag pattern (see figure 3),

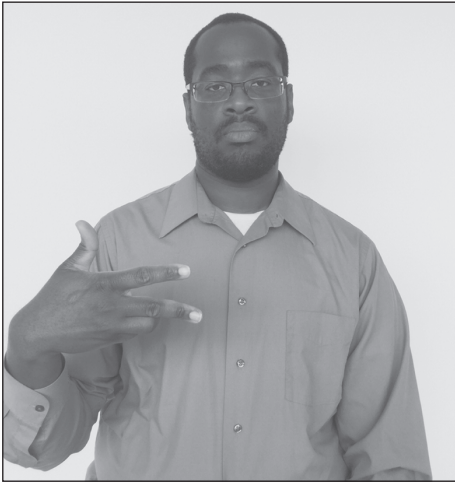


Figure 2. Depicting verb of a vehicle in a straight line.

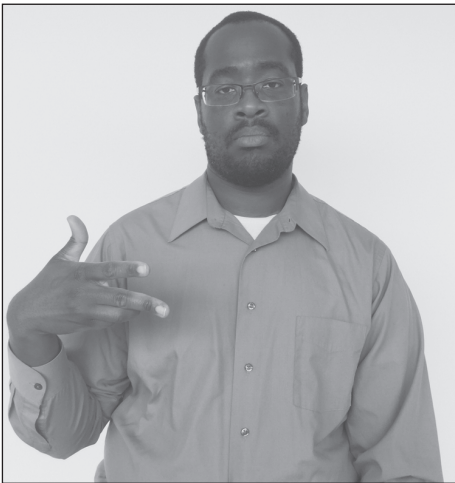


Figure 3. Depicting verb of a vehicle in a zig-zag line.



Figure 4 Depicting verb of a vehicle on a bumpy road.

or in a shaky motion as if the car is moving across a rough road (see figure 4). The 3 handshape occupies the physical space, but the image of a moving car exists in the mind of the narrator, which is the mental space. The mapping is not visible to a listener so the narrator is able to encode the mental image by depicting the moving car with the 3 handshape. This handshape is a conventional classifier handshape for certain vehicles and the listener is able to decode it and produce the same mental image as the narrator's.

The keyword is “conventional” because if one does not use the handshape, movement, or location in a conventional way when describing an object, this may interfere with the listener's decoding process. The response below exemplifies the

expectation that one Deaf participant had about interpreters' ability to depict an object.

The interpreter must know how to effectively use signing space, especially when establishing the setting. The organization of the information and cohesion of the message is as important as the delivery of the message. Excellent use of classifiers also makes a huge difference in the interpretation process. There are some interpreters who do not use correct forms of classifiers. I remember one time there was an interpreter who was at one of my medical appointments. The interpreter was trying to sign UTERUS but did not use the appropriate classifier for it. The interpreter used a classifier that looked more like an opened bent-5 with wrists touching each other (looks more like someone is holding a big bowl and carrying it carefully; see figure 5).

This participant valued effective use of classifiers, which are called “depicting verbs” in the research and practitioner literature on sign language. Deaf participants also discussed such complicated linguistic features as constructed action and constructed dialogue, which are types of depiction in a discourse. Constructed dialogue is also known as “role shifting,” a form of character representation through the use of language in spoken or signed modality.¹⁸ Constructed action is similar to constructed dialogue except that it involves the use of nonverbal gestures to represent a character. The Deaf participants agreed that constructed dialogue and action are linguistic features that are challenging for interpreters, especially when interpreting a storytelling session. A Deaf participant shared this perspective:

Most interpreters play it “safe.” They do not want to take risks with their interpretations. Frequently, I notice that interpreters use listing (on their fingers) instead of actually using the signing space in front of their bodies. I do not see enough use of role shifts or constructed action among interpreters. Those skills are probably one of the most important linguistic features that are frequently missing from interpretation work.



Figure 5. Incorrect classifier for UTERUS.

Constructed action and dialogue are pragmatic features that are typically used by skillful ASL signers when they want to re-create an impression or a message produced by a person. Like classifiers, the signers use their heads and bodies in the physical space but the impression or message exists in their minds, whether it is based on a real or imagined event, and they encode it by constructing a meaning with their body shifts and nonmanual signals. The instances of depiction can occur frequently,¹⁹ and depictions must be constructed and used in a way that is conventional in an ASL discourse.

Discourse

The second thematic category that emerged from the data involved comments relating to discourse. Discourse is typically defined as a communication situation involving how language is used between people in a particular setting, how words or sentences are combined to make sense in this setting, and how people communicate in a way that engages or disengages one another. Discourse is not just about language itself; it goes beyond language and involves “ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity.”²⁰

Interpreters create a different dynamic in a communication situation between two parties in which both parties, not just the Deaf participant, need an interpreter in order for the communication exchange to occur. In addition to language concerns, interpreters must also be cognizant of (1) how people engage one another and how they present themselves; (2) the use of language in order to make sense of the messages; (3) appropriate behaviors in communication situations; and (4) the appropriate amount of information to convey when expanding on a concept.²¹ Next, audience engagement, message equivalence, communication situation, and pragmatic enrichment will be discussed as part of ASL/English discourse, which address the concerns raised by the study participants on interpreters’ relationship with Deaf consumers.

Audience Engagement

Similar to depiction, audience engagement was another topic that was extensively discussed by the participants. Various comments were related to the concerns about the relationships between interpreters and hearing and Deaf consumers, environmental and discourse cues, sign-to-voice interpreting, expression of personality, and identities. In order for successful communication to occur, the relationship between two communication actors must be present and must include the elements that make the relationship work. Appropriate facial expression and use of space facilitate the establishment of connections between interpreters and Deaf audience members. A Deaf participant eloquently shared his perspective on these elements:

It’s important that the interpreter has a relationship with both the presenter and the Deaf consumer. It is not ideal when the interpreter chooses to maintain a relationship with only the presenter and excludes the Deaf consumers. This could

lead to a feeling of disconnect between the interpreter and the Deaf audience. When the interpreter tries to connect with the Deaf audience, I feel that the interpreter is interested in providing clear information to us. When an interpreter puts extra effort into making sure the message is clear, I feel like that interpreter cares about the Deaf consumers and their ability to understand him/her. If the interpreter is disconnected from the Deaf audience by not showing much facial expression (in other words, stone-faced) and uses less space, I feel like I cannot connect with that interpreter. In other words, the interpretation can become really dry.

In connection with this point, another Deaf participant expressed appreciation for interpreters who take the time to get to know their Deaf consumers in order to make their relationship successful. I like it when my interpreters talk with me before the assignment to discuss my preferences. Everyone is different. Some Deaf people prefer their interpreters to fingerspell, while other Deaf people prefer their interpreters to use less fingerspelling. I've noticed that those interpreters who prepare in advance tend to do a better job of being able to adapt to the Deaf consumer's language skills.

Another Deaf participant discussed her experience as a behavioral health professional in a mental health setting where she had to consider the entire context, including her hearing client's physical and verbal behaviors and noises. She stressed that interpreters should not ignore those cues inaccessible to her, which might be important in her client evaluation:

Interpret a person's behavioral sounds, such as foot tapping or clearing the throat. These sounds may be important for certain settings, such as mental health interpreting. Include environmental sounds in interpretation.

In addition to audience engagement and environmental sounds, another Deaf participant emphasized that interpreters should pay attention to the discourse cues relative to turn-taking provided by a hearing speaker's vocal inflection.

I feel that it is the interpreter's job to get the attention of the presenter on behalf of the Deaf consumer. Hearing people in the audience usually know when it is a good time to interrupt the presenter, especially when the presenter's voice begins to lower or slow down. The hearing people in the audience can use their voice to interrupt the presenter. However, Deaf people in the audience usually do not use their voice to get the presenter's attention. Also, the Deaf consumers depend on interpreters to use their best judgment regarding when it is a good time to interrupt the presenters to let them know that the Deaf consumer has something to say.

Participants also discussed their experiences with interpreters who inaccurately portrayed personality through use of incongruous verbal or signing mannerisms. A Deaf participant shared the following story about an interpreter's representation of a hearing phone caller's personality:

I made a phone call through video relay service (VRS) to a plumber whom I have never met before. The way the interpreter used facial expression and exaggerated her interpreting work indicated to me that this hearing plumber was an outgoing person who was maybe an Italian. However, when the plumber

actually showed up, he was nowhere near the way the interpreter had portrayed him. It is very possible that the plumber's voice may be more animated when he is on the phone, but in person he was not as outgoing as I thought he would be.

A Deaf participant discussed how racial identity can influence the communication dynamic between the interpreter and Deaf consumer. The impact of racial identity has also been explored by Shambouger.²² This participant expressed a preference for interpreters being racially compatible with presenters.

I like it when my interpreters are clear in their messages and context. When the presenter is a black person and the interpreter is a white person, I would feel uncomfortable. If the presenter is a black person and the interpreter is a black person, I would have felt more comfortable.

Another Deaf participant shared a similar perspective regarding gender identity and its impact on the relationship between the interpreter and Deaf consumer (a relationship which is also discussed in Morgan's 2008 essay on the intersection of interpretation, conversation style, and gender).²³

If the presenter is a male and the interpreter is a male, that would be an ideal situation. It's important that both the presenter and interpreter are culturally compatible and a good fit for each other and the audience.

Both participants' comments highlight the importance of recognizing Deaf consumers' identities and their impact on the relationship between interpreters and Deaf consumers. In addition to relationships, interpreters must also be aware of how they appear to their Deaf consumers and how interpreters' judgments and evaluation of the Deaf consumers could impact the relationship. One Deaf participant expressed the view that interpreters should respect Deaf consumers' background and focus on mediating the message:

In my opinion, interpreters should faithfully mediate the message without passing judgment. For example, suppose the Deaf person grew up as an oral student or used cued speech or some other communication system such as home signs or even a foreign sign language. In that case, the interpreter must accept the Deaf person's background and focus on making sure the message is being interpreted clearly. That is the primary job of an interpreter. However, if the interpreter has problems with the Deaf person's background or has an attitude about it, then that interpreter has no business being in the interpreting field.

As these comments have shown, participants appreciated interpreters who put forth the effort to get to know their Deaf consumers; employed linguistic features, discourse cues, and affect that foster social engagement; and demonstrated respect for Deaf consumers' communication preferences. Interpreters who do not successfully engage Deaf audience members run the risk of alienating their Deaf consumers and even skewing the message. In summary, Deaf professionals want to feel they are equally involved in communication with the hearing person and that the interpreters are representing them well as professionals. This leads to the next

topic which Deaf professionals also felt is important—the importance of message equivalency.

Message Equivalence

When an interpreter focuses primarily on linguistic forms, he or she may lose sight of the message meaning. Interpretations should deliver equivalent meaning in a register (discussed next) that is appropriate to the situation. According to the study participants, interpreters can improve message equivalency by negotiating meaning, learning to think nonlinearly, and knowing how much additional information to convey. For example, a Deaf participant explained how interpreters and consumers can negotiate meaning.

Sometimes interpreter(s) will ask me what is the sign for a word. Oftentimes, I tell the interpreter that it is not important. Most important is the meaning of the message you are trying to convey, rather than focusing on individual words and signs. The interpreter's definition of the word might be different from my definition. I would ask interpreters to tell me what the word means to them; then I can show the sign that fits the meaning of the word and is conceptually accurate. It's more important to be able to interpret the messages accurately in presentations/interpretations.

Another Deaf participant shared her opinion that linear thinking contributes to ineffective use of space:

Based on my experience, most interpreters think linearly instead of fluidly. A good interpreter knows how to effectively use space to deliver the content and message. An interpreter who provides information in a linear fashion is more concerned with sign vocabulary than with conveying information by appropriate use of signing space.

Such linear thinking may lead interpreters to process at the lexical level rather than to conceptualize the overarching framework of the message. The resulting interpretation may not effectively communicate the intent of the message in a manner that is clear and appropriate.

Language Register

An additional problem noted by study participants relates to the use of register, which is the level of formality that is determined by different situations. Participants asserted that some interpreters demonstrate a limited range of registers and are, therefore, unable to convey the message in the manner most appropriate for a particular communication situation. During the focus group discussion, one participant remarked:

Some interpreters are stuck with interpreting in academic settings and they do not do enough community interpreting to be exposed to a variety of signing registers and variations. An interpreter must become familiar with and accustomed

to the setting he/she is interpreting in order to become a better interpreter. For example, talking with a doctor might be a little more formal compared to talking with a nurse. That type of interactive information is critical for interpreters. It's really important for the interpreters to study the setting and determine which register is appropriate for a specific setting.

Interpreters who are now attending or have gone through interpreter education programs are usually restricted to few discourse situations, especially with the reduced input from the Deaf community and the lack of opportunities to interact with the Deaf community on a regular basis. This suggests a need for additional training and practice with diverse Deaf consumers in a broad range of communication situations so that interpreters will be exposed to various registers and deepen their pragmatic skills. In addition, the interpreter should be able to use pragmatic enrichment as part of the discourse and by providing additional information related to concepts.

Pragmatic Enrichment

Pragmatic enrichment, as described by Sequeiros, is a “pragmatic process whose function is to develop the vagueness found in many natural language utterances in order to arrive at fully determinate thoughts . . . the development of a source text into its fully determinate conceptual representation by carrying out an enrichment and, secondly, the translation of this fully enriched thought into another language.”²⁴ Another term that is similar to “enrichment” is “expansion”; that is, a contextualizing technique that provides additional information related to terms or concepts.²⁵ Even though *enrichment* and *expansion* can be used interchangeably, the latter term is one of the pragmatic processes of enrichment so the former term is used in the discussion of contextualizing techniques. However, the Deaf participants in this study explicitly mouthed the terms “expand” and “expansion” during their focus group discussion, so for this purpose the term is preserved in the quotes that follow. As Deaf study participants discussed their perspectives regarding the use of enrichment, it was evident that pragmatic enrichment requires skill on the part of interpreters to know how much, when, and with whom it should be used. For example, a Deaf participant explained that the contextualizing technique for information access may be different for hearing and Deaf people:

Should interpreters give information that hearing people don't have—for example, the term photosynthesis, which is the energy from the sun. I would expand on the term photosynthesis and provide clarifying information to the Deaf students. The hearing students would not have access to that additional information. Is it fair to hearing students if the interpreters decide to expand on the vocabulary by providing Deaf students with additional information?

Access to additional information may be appreciated, but one Deaf participant cautioned against the overuse of enrichment technique:

Overexpansion! I hate it when interpreters exaggerate during their interpretations. That includes overuse of classifiers. For example, describing a human

heart by overuse of classifiers. Sometimes expansion is not necessary. Yes, appropriate expansion and use of classifiers are required in good interpreters—but they should not overuse them. For example, I already know that a heart beats. The interpreter doesn't need to describe how a heart beats. This is common knowledge that we all know.

Given the level of education of the study participants, it is possible that their perspectives on the use of enrichment do not reflect the wider views of the Deaf community. Just as interpreters need to thoroughly evaluate each communication situation to determine which register is most appropriate, they also need to take the initiative to know their Deaf consumers' preferences to determine whether enrichment is necessary in the interpretation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this study may be limited in generalizability due to the fact that all participants were conveniently sampled and lived in the same region, which encompasses two universities with a large number of Deaf professors, researchers, and alumni. Because the participants were highly educated professionals, this sample did not reflect the characteristics of the general Deaf population in the United States. The bilingual Deaf participants were fluent in ASL and English and considered themselves to be active bicultural members of the Deaf community. Given this background, it is very possible that these Deaf participants' perceptions and issues may differ from the diverse experiences of the general Deaf population. Due to the presence of two local universities with a significant number of Deaf professionals, many interpreters in the area are more experienced with interpreting in academic and professional settings than most interpreters are. Naturally, expectations of interpreters may be higher than for interpreters in other regions with fewer educational opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the testimonies from Deaf participants in this study reaffirms the importance of fluency in both English and ASL. Interpreters who desire to reflect the heart of interpreting should cultivate skills that enable them to ascertain the purpose of each interpreting assignment, assess their audience, and familiarize themselves with the content. Armed with this knowledge of the discourse situation and Deaf consumer preferences, they may be better able to make their work more accommodating for Deaf people by constructing their own nonlinear conceptualization that enables them to successfully encode the communication while matching the message intent. This is the heart of interpreting for Deaf people.

The "heart" of interpreting is often seen in the work of Deaf interpreters. The Deaf interpreters who are in high demand are the ones who possess the essential linguistic features as discussed in this chapter. With the natural incorporation of these features so valued by study participants, Deaf interpreters frequently render the "eye candy" that participants find comfortable and easy to watch and

understand. When the heart of interpreting is well portrayed, Deaf consumers find it easier to cultivate relationships with other parties in the discourse situation and concentrate on the content of their messages rather than being distracted by the form in which messages are delivered. Thus, increased use of Deaf interpreters may be one strategy to enhance the delivery of effective interpretation. Furthermore, the incorporation of strategies used by Deaf interpreters among hearing interpreters can help them become more successful in their work.

It is for this reason that interpreter education programs play an important role in helping future interpreters understand better what the heart of interpreting is all about. A big part of this is self-analysis skills. The ability to self-analyze in evaluating assignment parameters and the appropriate use of register will go a long way in interpreting effectively and satisfactorily for Deaf people.

Clearly, there is a need for additional qualified interpreters, both Deaf and hearing, who have a good grasp of what the Deaf community wants in interpreted work. Developing specific skills that reflect the heart of interpreting requires self-analysis and healthy dialogue with the Deaf community.

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