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# Our Work as Interpreters in these Unprecedented Times

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We hope this editorial finds you safe and well. When we started planning our first draft for this editorial, the world was just beginning to enter lockdown on a large scale due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we now come to publish issue 12(1) of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, the world is already a drastically different place to live in than it was just a few months ago. The pandemic has impacted interpreting in numerous ways. In some countries, signed language interpreters have become highly visible interpreting for heads of states, governors, mayors and public health officials. In others, communities are battling for access to vital information about the pandemic and government responses, such as can be seen in the #whereistheinterpreter campaign by the Deaf community in the United Kingdom.

As essential workers, both spoken and signed language interpreters have been on the frontline, working face-to-face as well as having to quickly adapt to providing services online. We would direct readers to Jemina Napier's recent blogpost on Acadeafic (https://acadeafic.org/2020/06/10/interpreting/), in which she considers the impact of the pandemic on signed language interpreters. She sounds words of warning, lest the suboptimal working conditions which have resulted from the pandemic response become the new normal, potentially eroding hard-fought gains regarding breaks and team interpreting. While Jemina Napier's comments are underpinned by the experiences of signed language interpreters specifically, there are many parallels for spoken language colleagues as well. We invite contributions to the Open Forum section of our next IJIE issue from interpreters and interpreter educators wishing to share their own perspectives on issues related to COVID-19 and on the creative strategies they have found to confront these issues.

As we have all seen in recent months, conferences and workshops around the world are being cancelled, postponed, or moved online during the pandemic. While unfortunate, this trend has also given rise to a great many online professional development opportunities for interpreters! The interpreting field seems to have responded by producing a wealth of high-quality free resources. We cannot include all, but would like to share a few examples we have come across recently:

- InterpretAmerica[1] had been wanting to organize a celebratory event to celebrate its 10th anniversary, but instead planned what it described as "a series of free, online meetings where our field can meet, take stock, and get unified to face the extreme disruption COVID-19 is causing to our profession and to the language access we make possible" (InterpretAmerica, 2020). It held its free online forum on March 26, 2020, at the start of the pandemic. The recordings can be accessed through the InterpretAmerica website.
- InterpretAmerica co-presidents Katharine Allen and Barry Olsen also announced plans to launch a special website called remoteinterpreting.info, in view of the heighted demand for this mode of interpreting during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Remote Interpreter blog series by Cross-Cultural Communications also provides information for spoken language interpreters having to adopt remote interpreting during Covid-19. All webinars are posted on the InterpreTIPS channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNjL_WcM4BIBw1L0X_ls63Q.
- We would also like to mention the Remote Simul Interpreting channel which was set up by a group of spoken language court and conference interpreters trying to think of the best ways to set up safe and quality sound and video for remote simultaneous interpreting. That channel can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWf3gSXwbZtt2p54MFmXsNw.

These are just a few examples of some of the newly adapted resources available to interpreters and educators in these challenging times. They are evidence of the spirit of collegiality and support shown by interpreters across the board, and we encourage our readers to engage in these discussions at a local and international level.

With the cancellation of the *Conference of Interpreter Trainers 2020 Biennial Conference* due to the pandemic, the CIT Board of Directors is looking for ways that accepted presenters can disseminate their research to a wide audience. The Director of Research and Publications, Dr. Danielle Hunt, is working on creating a special edition of the IJIE to highlight these presenters' evidence-based work. More information is forthcoming. If you have any thoughts about this upcoming issue, please feel free to reach out to her at publications@cit-asl.org.

The COVID-19 pandemic response has also had a huge impact on training, most notably resulting in educators struggling to quickly adapt to online delivery of teaching and assessment. While online delivery seems a sensible (or at least, the only) answer when on-campus classes are not possible, it has also brought significant inequities to the fore. Not all students have been able to use digital devices or access reliable internet (see Tommy, 2013, for exploration of these issues for Pacific Island students – written pre-COVID but extremely relevant to us all now). In our experience, which we assume echoes recent months for many readers, life in isolation and online means everything is a lot more demanding and time consuming. Our interpreting students need more care and flexibility, as they face the multiple challenges of mastering interpreting skills online, whilst dealing with their own sometimes very stressful circumstances.

Academics and students with young children have had to combine online teaching/learning with childcare and home schooling, and it is reasonable to assume that, around the world, it is disproportionately female academics and students who have been most affected. As Colleen Flaherty notes:

> …women already juggled more domestic and affective, or emotional, labor with their actual work prior to the pandemic. Female academics, as a group, also struggled more with work-work balance, as well: numerous studies show they take on more service work than men and are less protective of their research time, to their detriment. The coronavirus has simply exacerbated these inequities by stripping away what supports women had in place to walk this tightrope, including childcare. (Flaherty, 2020)

Researchers in our field who were or are at home with children during lockdown are thus likely to be producing less research and fewer publications than academics without these responsibilities, which could have long-term effects on research standing and career advancement. Flaherty's (2020) article on the Inside Higher Ed

[1] InterpretAmerica was established in 2009 to provide an open forum "where key players from all branches of interpreting can gather and foster greater connection among its many sectors" (InterpretAmerica, 2020).

website describes how journal editors are already noticing female researchers being less productive than male researchers during the pandemic. Although we have not yet noticed such a pattern for IJIE submissions, it will be telling to see who submits articles during the rest of 2020 and into 2021. Now, then, is the time for us as a collective to support each other and to speak out about this inequality in our workplaces and profession. We as editors would like to offer concrete assistance; if any readers feel they are being affected in this way and are finding themselves struggling to get a submission finished for publication, please contact us at citjournaleditor@gmail.com so that we can evaluate possible avenues of support.

While still coming to terms with the threat of COVID-19 pandemic and the risks of adverse outcomes to underserved communities in particular, the murder of George Floyd in the USA provoked wide-spread condemnation and international #blacklivesmatter protests. We would like to re-print the statement of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers, publisher of IJIE, here:

> The Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) greatly values diversity, respect, compassion, cultural awareness, and the acknowledgment of privilege. CIT is greatly dismayed by the abhorrent murder of George Floyd. The suffering of Black people has led to protests taking place around the United States and, with solidarity, the world.
>
> According to our mission statement, "one of our primary goals is to increase our students' knowledge . . . by fostering teaching practices and research that help educate compassionate, engaged professional interpreters . . . who are sensitive to issues of privilege." Now, more than ever, CIT implores interpreting students, interpreter trainers, and professional interpreters to be reflective in their reaction to issues of privilege beyond the dynamics experienced between Deaf and hearing people. With the goal of making change to society, CIT implores members to be mindful, thoughtful, and to take action during this tumultuous time. CIT is committed to work with each one of you across our organization to ensure we all make CIT a place that supports unity and continues to provide life-long learning opportunities.
>
> CIT expresses our heartfelt and deep condolences to George Floyd's family as well as to other families who have suffered intolerable acts of discrimination, racism, and inequality. We strongly stand in support of people of color and the fight to end systemic racism. To our members, this is a call to action.
>
> #BlackLivesMatter

Turning to issue 12(1) of IJIE, we are pleased to bring you range of contributions that emphasize the collaborative spirit that we are seeing in these unprecedented times. If the articles do not directly reflect the focus of this editorial, it is because the review process was completed before "coronavirus" and "George Floyd" became part of our global lexicon.

This issue starts with a research article by Rosie Henley and Rachel McKee: *Going through the motions: Participation in interpreter-mediated meeting interaction under a deaf and a hearing chairperson*. Interpreted multiparty meetings are increasingly common, yet what happens in such meetings, including how turn-taking is managed and mediated, has been under-researched. The authors examine how a deaf and a hearing chairperson respectively facilitate mixed meeting interaction and how this impacts both the interpreting process and deaf individuals' participation.

In his research article *Toward standard interpreter education program admission criteria*, Marc Holmes reports on a study which explored admission criteria for signed language interpreter education programs in the USA. Holmes explores which criteria were used, how they were measured and whether any particular configuration had a positive impact on student completion of IEPs and their time to credentialing.

Ineke Crezee and Lynn Grant follow up on their earlier research (Crezee & Grant 2013, 2016) when they take another look at the abilities of non-native English-speaking trainee interpreters to recognize and/or explain idiomatic language in their paper *An Achilles' Heel? Helping interpreting students gain greater awareness of literal and idiomatic English*. They provide a number of recommendations for interpreter educators wishing to help expose their students to naturally occurring idiomatic language.

We are also delighted to bring you several commentaries in this issue. Daniel Gile and Jemina Napier join forces in a commentary entitled *Spoken language interpreters and signed language interpreters: Towards cross-fertilization*. They trace the history of signed and spoken language interpreting, drawing parallels and commenting on points of difference, but above all emphasizing areas where the two fields can learn from each other in research, practice and training.

Maya de Wit has been the Sign Language Network Coordinator of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) since 2015. In her commentary, *Making It Work: Applying AIIC professional standards to conference signed language interpreters*, Maya considers the extent to which signed language interpreter education programs in Europe prepare students for conference interpreting.

Francesca Frittella presents a book review of *The next generation of research in interpreter education: Pursuing evidence-based practice*, edited by Cynthia Roy and Elizabeth Winston (2018). Frittella reviews the work of each of the five contributors and expresses the hope that all interpreter educators will be inspired to gradually replace common practices in the interpreter classroom with effective practices based on well-designed research studies.

The Dissertation Abstract section features the doctoral dissertations by Robert Skinner (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh) and Thu Thi Quy Do (Monash University, Melbourne) as well as Pamela Collins and Kierstin Muroski (both Gallaudet University, Washington, DC). This section is a great opportunity to share the work of emerging researchers in our field, and we invite our readers to send in relevant master's or doctoral dissertation abstracts for our next issue. We are looking forward to receiving submissions for all sections of the journal, from research articles to book reviews, commentaries, interviews or contributions to the student work section.

Above all, we hope you will remain safe and well. We think it appropriate to end this editorial with a quote by Tuli Kupferberg:[2]

> *When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge.*

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[2] As cited by Patrick Johnson, March 9, 2015, on https://beyondquarterlife.com/patterns-broken-new-worlds-emerge/

# Going Through the Motions: Participation in Interpreter-mediated Meeting Interaction Under a Deaf and a Hearing Chairperson

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**Abstract**

**In multiparty meetings involving deaf and hearing participants, sign language interpreters are tasked to render talk 'accessible' to all by mediating differences across languages, modalities, interactional norms, and cultural statuses (Roy, 1989, 1993; Mindess, 1999; Van Herreweghe, 2002). Although this context of work is relatively common for interpreters, their practices and the interactional outcomes for participants are under-researched. This case study compares chairing and meeting practices under a deaf chairperson and a hearing chairperson, respectively. The impact of chairing on interpretability and deaf participation are discussed. An interactional sociolinguistics framework informs analysis of meeting data and retrospective participant interviews. Analysis shows that deaf participation is qualitatively different and experienced as more accessible under the deaf chairperson due to temporal alignment with the deaf chair, reduced conflict between visual inputs, and more confidence to clarify information and bid for turns. Interactional features that limit or enhance deaf participation are worthy of attention by interpreters and regular participants of interpreter-mediated meetings.**

Keywords: multiparty interaction, interpreting, mixed meetings, chairing.

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# Going Through the Motions: Participation in Interpreter-mediated Meeting Interaction Under a Deaf and a Hearing Chairperson

## 1. Introduction

Multiparty meetings involving significant numbers of deaf and hearing participants and interpreters are conducted bimodally across two languages (a spoken and a signed language) and include a third modality: written texts. In such meetings (henceforth referred to as 'mixed'), sign language interpreters are tasked with mediating differences between deaf and hearing participants in language, modality, interactional norms (Roy, 1989, 1993; Mindess, 1999; Van Herreweghe, 2002), and subject positions. Although mixed meetings are a common work context for sign language interpreters, their practices in mediating meeting discourse and the interactional outcomes for participants are surprisingly under-described in the research literature. Research to date suggests that mixed meetings tend to follow spoken discourse norms, which presents challenges for interpreters and deaf participants (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Bristoll, 2011; Dickinson 2010). Such meetings are commonly chaired by a hearing person, with deaf members in the minority ― but not invariably so. Recognition of sign language (e.g. in New Zealand) has increased deaf representation in professional, governance and advisory group meetings, and seen more instances of deaf chairpersons leading mixed meetings. The practices of a chairperson directly affect whether interaction facilitates or inhibits the interpreting process and the direct participation of sign language users (Van Herreweghe, 2002). This case study breaks new ground by examining the different ways in which a deaf and a hearing chairperson respectively facilitate meeting interaction with consideration for deaf interactional norms and the interpreting process. We investigate how their differing chairing practices affect interpreting and deaf participation in mixed meetings. Two authentic meetings of the same governance group (chaired by a deaf and hearing chair respectively) were filmed and transcribed, from which samples of interaction are qualitatively analysed. Retrospective interviews with meeting participants captured their perceptions of accessibility and interpretability of the meetings.

In the next section, we review literature on key aspects of meeting interaction, including the role of a meeting chair, to situate the study in a wider context. Studies documenting challenges and strategies of signed language interpreters in mixed meetings are then reviewed as background to our study, which seeks further empirical insight into these interactional challenges.

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1. Meetings*

Meetings are an established way in which information is shared, decisions are made, and relationships built and maintained in organizational life (Asmuss & Svennevig, 2009; Angouri & Marra, 2010). Analysis of discourse in spoken language meetings has largely centred on critical discourse analysis of the discursive construction of leadership and identities in workplace meetings (e.g., Holmes, Marra, Angouri, Stubbe). Issues in intercultural meeting interaction have also been investigated (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1995; Chan, 2005), showing that pragmatic differences across cultures limit the extent to which some interlocutors contribute (Tannen, 1984), or may prompt overt challenges to dominant cultural norms in meeting structure (Holmes, Vine, & Marra, 2020).

Meetings of reference, advisory and governance groups represent a specific meeting type where time constraints and a task-based agenda leave little opportunity for rapport-building and knowledge-sharing between members (Gabrielsson, Huse, & Minichilli, 2007). In addition, as the purpose of such groups is to gather perspectives from different sectors of the community, there is usually inherent distance between the schemata of the group participants and that of government administrators or the institution they are advising. Groups concerned with deaf matters or services often include multiple deaf participants. In such groups, participants may possess very different levels of contextual knowledge related to the meeting content, and, significantly, differ in their understanding of the distinctions between deaf and hearing interactional norms and how to accommodate these. Without explicit opportunities to discuss and build inclusive meeting practices, these groups may default to 'standard' meeting practices, which inadvertently favour the interactional norms of the majority culture (Holmes, 2013).

### *2.2. The Chairperson*

Meeting-talk is created through the cooperative effort of two parties, the chair and the group (Bargiela & Harris, 1995). The role of a chairperson is a distinguishing feature of meetings and confers specific rights and obligations which are implicitly understood and discursively supported by interlocutors (Angouri & Marra, 2010). The chair is charged with managing the agenda and ensuring that the business of the meeting is achieved within the allocated time (Mitchell, 1997, p. 164). To this end, the chairperson generally oversees turn-taking; however, the style in which they do so can vary markedly. Some chairs allow speakers to self-select and intervene only when interaction becomes disorderly (Van Herreweghe, 2002, p. 89). Others exert more control by allocating turns to speakers using names and other indicators. This occurs most often in large or formal meetings (Larrue & Trognon, 1993, p. 181) where the authority of the chairperson tends to be heightened and they commonly initiate topic shifts, and bring about and articulate decisions (Bargiela & Harris, 1997, p. 207). The chair can also play a critical role in managing interaction in ways that mitigate potential power asymmetries between participants and allow for diverse or opposing perspectives to be heard (Lazzaro-Salazar, et al, 2015). This feature of the chair's role has, to date, not been explicitly examined in relation to how interaction is managed within the context of 'intercultural' or mixed meetings. The next sections will review evidence about turn-taking within unimodal, same-language, and within bimodal, bilingual group contexts.

### *2.3. Turn-taking in monolingual, unimodal meetings*

Studies of group discourse have found that different social and cultural groups manage overlaps, interruptions and turn-taking differently (e.g. Edelsky, 1981; Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001; Chan, 2005). Edelsky (1981) investigated spoken language turn-taking norms in small group meetings in America and found that interaction took two distinct forms. The first is the 'singly-developed floor,' in which one person speaks at a time (either through chair-allocated turns or self-selection), and overlaps are likely to be viewed as interruptions (Sacks & Schegloff, 1995). The second form, the 'collaboratively-developed floor,' was distinguished by speaker overlaps, and jointly-developed meaning. It tended to indicate a high level of interest in a topic or to build and maintain positive relationships between participants (Edelsky, 1981, p. 383).

When speakers self-select in spoken language interactions, they do so by responding to subtle linguistic cues such as pauses, hesitations, or changes in another speaker's pace or tone (Tannen, 1984). These linguistic features signal Transition Relevance Places (TRPs) (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, p. 730). TRPs are fleeting interactional moments when a new speaker can insert a turn and legitimately take the floor without it being considered an interruption (Holmes, 2013, p. 389).

Parallel studies of sign language turn-taking norms in group interaction are rather scarce. In dyadic signed conversation, eye-gaze plays a critical part in interlocutors seeking and yielding turns (Baker, 1977; Martinez, 1995). Building on this, Coates and Sutton-Spence (2001) investigated informal interactions between small groups of deaf friends and found that signers occasionally adopted a collaboratively-developed floor but for the most part, sought to establish eye contact with interlocutors before beginning their turn, as the visual modality of signed language makes it difficult for interlocutors to attend to two speakers at once. They did so by waving towards or making eye contact with a current speaker, or tapping them on the shoulder, knee, or arm. Some interlocutors claimed the floor by strategically holding or repeating the first sign of their turn until sufficient attention was on them to begin in earnest.

To our knowledge, only one empirical study has described turn-taking in unimodal signed meetings. As part of a larger study, Van Herreweghe (2002) investigated a small deaf meeting and observed that in addition to previously described strategies, head nodding and the holding up of an open palm were further means of claiming a 'speaking turn' in this meeting. Participants collectively facilitated a singly-developed floor with speakers yielding turns by making eye contact with a new speaker. New speakers were found to pause before beginning their turn, to allow time for interlocutors to look at them. The chairperson intervened just once in the meeting to organise turns when speakers overlapped, implying that signed interaction is facilitated collectively rather than hierarchically. In addition, Van Herreweghe noted that input to group discussion was actively solicited from all participants, demonstrating the value that deaf culture places on full participation (p. 94).

## *2.4. Challenges of interpreter-mediated meetings*

In contrast to the turn-taking norms shared by a 'same-language' group as described above, interpreter-mediated interaction context is complicated by factors that have been identified in previous studies, which we review below. These challenges relate to the temporal coordination of talk, and competition between visual and aural modalities.

A fundamental challenge in interpreted meetings is the temporal delay between a message being uttered by a speaker in one language, and delivered, via an interpreter, in another. A two- to four-second delay represents the optimal processing time for interpreters to properly understand a source message and render it coherently in the target language (Cokely, 1986). Lag time can create unnatural interactional pauses and disrupt turn-taking as interlocutors waiting for interpretation cannot discern and respond to TRPs as they occur (Roy, 1989). This can result in speakers overlapping, which is problematic for interpreters who can physically only interpret one 'voice' at a time (Roy, 1993, p. 54). Roy's (1989) investigation of turn-taking within a dyadic interpreted interaction between a deaf university student and his hearing professor found that beyond relaying the content of interlocutors' turns, the interpreter played a critical role in the coordination of turn exchanges between participants. The interpreter dealt with overlaps using four strategies: stopping one or both speakers, holding onto the content of an overlapping turn until the current speaker had finished and then producing it, first interpreting one utterance and then asking the other speaker to repeat what they said, or completely omitting one overlapping utterance. Roy noted the tendency of interpreters to give preference to the spoken word when signed and spoken turns overlapped but found that, in general, the interpreter managed speaker overlaps in ways which considered the role and status of each participant (Roy, 1993, p. 49).

Interpreter-mediated multi-party meetings have been little studied but are sites of communication inequity for deaf individuals in professional settings (Foster & MacLeod, 2003, S130, Bristoll, 2011). Dickinson's (2010) ethnographic investigation of workplace interpreting found that meetings within largely hearing organizations tended to follow the interactional norms of the hearing majority. She found that rapid turn-taking caused the interpreters to work fast, which reduced their ability to convey subtle cues which could indicate TRPs within the interpretation. This, compounded with the delay incurred by the interpreting process, limited the deaf participant's ability to contribute to the meeting. Furthermore, meetings frequently adopted a collaborative floor with speakers overlapping, leading interpreters to frequently omit whole turns, particularly contributions affecting rapport, such as back channelling, banter or small talk (Dickinson, 2010, p. 218).

Van Herreweghe (2002) studied two mixed meetings which occurred in a deaf context and involved significant numbers of deaf and hearing participants who interacted via interpreters. Although the hearing chairpersons knew some sign language, the meetings were run using spoken language. Van Herreweghe found that discourse leaned towards spoken interactional norms, with hearing speakers frequently self-selecting. This was problematic for deaf participants as interpreter processing (lag) time limited their ability to interject at TRPs (Van Herreweghe, 2002, p. 94). The interpreters managed speaker overlaps by employing the same strategies observed in Roy's (1989) study (described above), as well as an additional strategy in which the interpreter stopped interpreting and announced in sign that she could no longer do her job. This handed responsibility to deaf participants and/or the hearing Chair to resolve the issue of overlap, implying that the demands on interpreters in mixed meetings cannot be resolved by the interpreter alone, as might occur in dyadic interactions.

2.4.1 Speaker attribution

Knowing who is speaking contributes to our understanding of meaning, which can be challenging for deaf participants of interpreter-mediated multiparty interaction who perceive the voices of all hearing participants through the single voice of the interpreter (Metzger, 2000, p. 91). Hearing people can look at speakers and/or identify them by their voice, but deaf participants must watch the interpretation, which is slightly delayed, making it more difficult to visually identify changes of speaker (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Dickinson, 2010). Thus, in multiparty interactions interpreters often assume responsibility for indicating speakers. They do so by using participants' names, pointing and body shifts. Their choice of strategy depends on the interactional context, the time pressure on interpreters, and whether deaf participants can see the other interlocutors (Metzger, Fleetwood & Collins, 2004).

2.4.2 Written documents: A third modality

Documents are commonly presented at meetings to supply participants with auxiliary or last-minute information. Hearing people commonly skim relevant written information while listening to discussion or verbal presentations, particularly if the words that they hear align with what they see on the page. In contrast, deaf people perceive sign language visually and so cannot easily read a document and follow group discussion simultaneously (Dickinson, 2010, p. 234). Van Herreweghe (2002) found that participants in an all-signed meeting paused discussion so that documentation could be read. This did not occur in the mixed meetings or in the meetings in Dickinson's study (2010) in which frequent references to documentation competed with deaf participants' need to watch the interpreter and forced a choice between one source of input over another. As 'managers of intercultural interaction' (Roy, 1993, p. 61), Van Herreweghe suggests that interpreters in mixed meetings have a responsibility to speak up when cross-cultural, (or, in our view, cross-modality), issues such as these occur (2002, p. 96).

## *2.5. Chairing practices in bimodal meetings*

The chairperson plays a pivotal role in moderating talk in interpreter-mediated meetings in order that deaf interlocutors can participate equitably (Van Herreweghe 2002). The mixed meetings in Van Herreweghe's study followed interactional 'rules' where speakers raised their hands to visually indicate when they wished to contribute and were allocated turns by the chair (2002, p. 79). Van Herreweghe's study concluded by recommending that chairpersons of mixed meetings should: a) closely control turn-taking so that only one person speaks at a time; b) pause to allow for interpretation when responses are called for from participants; c) frequently scan the room to see who wishes to speak; d) monitor that deaf participants are watching the interpreter and that time is given for documents to be read before group discussions continue (2002, p. 103).

The recommendations that Van Herreweghe makes for interpreters and chairpersons of mixed meetings make no explicit reference to whether collaboration between them should occur, or what function this might serve. Data transcripts do, however, suggest that the interpreters used discourse markers to communicate discreetly and directly with the chairperson when deaf participants were struggling to gain the floor (2002, p. 87). Our study expands previous work by explicitly examining collaborative interactions between the chairperson and the interpreter and considering how chairing practices, (including those recommended by Van Herreweghe), take into account the challenges that both interpreters and deaf participants navigate in mixed-meeting interactions.

## 3. Method

Building on existing literature about interpreter-mediated multiparty discourse, this case study examines data from a meeting chaired by a deaf chairperson and a hearing person in order to contrast deaf participants' experience of meeting 'accessibility' when the meeting is facilitated directly in their language, versus when meeting facilitation is mediated by an interpreter. Retrospective interviews with participants give us access to their perspectives on aspects of the meeting interaction upon which we could otherwise only speculate (Talmy, 2010). The aim is to shine a light on specific interactional features that are problematic in mixed meetings in order that interpreters and meeting participants may be better prepared to cooperatively address them.

This study takes an inductive reasoning approach to answer the research questions: How do a deaf and a hearing chairperson, respectively, facilitate mixed meeting interaction in ways which take into account the interpreting process, and what are the impacts on deaf individuals' participation?

### *3.1. Context, Participants and Data Collection*

The context for data collection was a series of meetings of a governance group in the deaf sector. This group was selected because they were experienced in working together as a mixed deaf/hearing group and they were known to the researchers. Participants specified that only the first hour of two separate full-day meetings could be filmed due to the sensitive nature of the meeting content. 'Meeting A' was run by the nominated hearing Chairperson, and 'meeting B' by the deaf Deputy Chairperson. Collecting data from the same meeting group allowed comparison of interaction under a deaf and a hearing chairperson in a parallel context. These meetings were standard governance meetings in which the opening sessions followed a standing agenda and was closely controlled by the chairperson (Bargiela & Harris, 1995, p. 209). They took place at a conference venue not connected with the institutional identities of members represented in this group. Meeting time was tightly constrained, as most participants had flown in from different locations for the meetings. The group was comprised of deaf and hearing professionals, community representatives, consumer representatives and observers. Hearing participants had varying levels of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) competence. The group had been meeting together regularly for over two years, however the interpreters in these meetings varied.

Participant information is presented in Table 1. Limited demographic information is included in order to maintain anonymity.

*Table 1: Participants*

| | *Deaf participants (D#)* | | *Hearing participants (H#)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* |
| *Meeting A (Hearing Chair)* | *1* | *2 + 1 observer* | *3* | *7 + 1 observer* |
| *Meeting B (Deaf Chair)* | *1 + 1 observer* | *2 + 2 observers* | *1* | *5 + 1 observer* |

Not included in the numbers above are the two interpreters who were engaged for each meeting. INTERP1 and INTERP2 worked at meeting A and INTERP2 and INTERP3 worked in meeting B. None of the interpreter participants had worked regularly with the group.

*Table 2: Interpreters*

| | Years of interpreting experience | Gender |
|---|---|---|
| Interpreter 1 (INTERP1) | 4 | F |
| Interpreter 2 (INTERP2) | 12 | F |
| Interpreter 3 (INTERP3) | 22 | F |

The first author set up the cameras and left the room during the period of recording. Recorded data was reviewed and two excerpts that exemplified interactional problems were selected for close analysis. These were translated (in the case of NZSL utterances) and transcribed using ELAN annotation software which allows for data to be chronologically presented. Nine meeting participants (five deaf and four hearing) were available to participate in phone or video interviews to discuss their experiences and observations about the meetings. Two hearing participants provided written responses to the interview questions.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and responses categorized thematically. For the purpose of illustrating examples of the discourse, transcripts presented in this article are simplified to show only the content of speaker turns and some relevant non-manual features (such as eye gaze) where they serve a specific function in an exchange. NZSL signs are glossed in upper case, and speech is in lower case. Transcripts show the chronological order in which utterances occurred.

### *3.2. Analysis*

Analysis in this study was exploratory and data-driven (Hale & Napier, 2013, p. 83). Video excerpts were analysed using an Interactional Sociolinguistic approach to discourse analysis (Marra, 2012, p. 5) to identify interactional features including practices around speaker attribution, speaker changes, temporal coordination of turns and competing sources of visual input, such as written documentation. The scope of analysis in this study was kept deliberately wide and includes elements over which interpreters had no control. This aligns with Interactional Sociolinguistic tenets which consider meetings as 'collaborative endeavours' (Marra, 2010) and allow us to examine how meaning is negotiated and co-created by participants, taking into account interlocutors' social, political and cultural positions (Holmes, 2013, p. 373).

We take a qualitative approach to fine-grained analysis of interactional features that emerge in the meeting discourse, which is then used to support findings about how deaf agency and participation differed between the two meetings. Observations of the overall recordings of meeting interaction inform analysis of the excerpts we analysed more closely.

Data from retrospective interviews was analyzed thematically and is presented alongside analysis of discourse data as a way of illuminating specific interactional features and the ways which meeting participants experience these. The insights of participants (from retrospective interviews) are used to warrant and triangulate analysis of meeting discourse.

Both of the authors are practicing interpreters, and our experience working in similar contexts is a filter that informs, but possibly biases, our understanding of the processes and participant positions identified in this study.

## 4. Findings

Findings are presented in subsections, each of which relates to specific interactional features that affected deaf participation and/or the interpreting process, as follows: turn-taking and allocation, asking questions, motions and voting, timing of discourse, managing written documents and visual attention, and deaf sense of agency. Collaboration between the interpreter and the meeting chair is also addressed. Excerpts of data are presented in transcript form to illustrate qualitative analysis. Relevant excerpts from participant interviews are included in each section, as applicable to the topic. Quantitative data is reported to illustrate how deaf participation differed in the two meetings.

### 4.1. Turn-taking and turn allocation

In these meetings, participants generally raised their hand when they wished to speak and were allocated turns by the Chairperson. The Chairpersons in both meetings allocated turns to speakers by stating their names. This is a documented feature of hearing meeting discourse (Larrue & Trognon, 1993), but turns are conventionally allocated differently in deaf small group meetings, using combinations of eye-contact, facial expressions, pointing or an open palm gesture rather than participant's names (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Metzger, Fleetwood and Collins, 2004, p. 133). Example 1 (meeting B) shows the deaf Chair allocating a turn to D2 using her name sign[2] and then pointing towards her with his eyebrows raised:

*Example 1*

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair: | GOOD/OK. ANY MORE MATTERS-ARISING? HAND-UP (D2 NAME-SIGN)*(points towards D2)* |
| INTERP3: | *(eyebrows raised)* great . . . any other matters arising? (D2 name) ? *(points and nods at deaf Chair)* |
| D2: | *(hand up looks at Chair)* |

Whether name signs are regularly used to allocate turns in face-to-face signed-meetings or other formal group contexts remains unresearched. The potential advantage of this strategy is that it specifies exactly which participant is being given the floor, which may be effective in a large group such as this, particularly when they are seated around a rectangular table and cannot easily see one other. It also could allow economy of effort by the audience as names identify speakers immediately, whereas pointing is indirect – the viewer must still look in that direction to identify the referent. In spoken language, it is considered polite in this context to allocate a turn by name, rather than to simply point, or to say "Yes…?". The fact that the deaf Chairperson pointed as well as using D2's sign name could be evidence of him adopting a bicultural chairing style incorporating both deaf and hearing discourse norms. It is also possible that he used name signs in order to accommodate the interpreting process, as it signals explicitly to the interpreter both who to focus on as the next speaker and their language identity, as well as enabling them to verbalize a name rather than an indexical point. By stating a participant's name to allocate a turn, the chairperson simultaneously covers the speaker attribution which relieves the interpreter of this duty.

Analysis of data from meeting B showed deaf participants beginning their turn immediately in response to the chairperson's use of this turn allocation strategy, rather than waiting for the group and the interpreter to look at them before beginning to sign as might be expected (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). It was interesting to note that those hearing participants who were familiar with visual interactional norms, such as H1, also responded immediately to the chairperson's use of their name sign. This suggests that this strategy could potentially be adopted as an effective means of turn allocation in mixed meetings. It must however be noted that this direct interaction between the deaf Chairperson and H1 resulted in some interactional confusion on the part of the interpreter who appeared surprised and stopped interpreting, looking swiftly away from the deaf participants to ascertain who was speaking and what she had missed. How interpreters respond to unexpected participant codeswitching in mixed meetings has not been explicitly researched but is worthy of further investigation. Strategies such as the use of name signs in turn allocation should potentially be explicitly discussed with interpreters so that they may be prepared.

[2] Individuals known to the Deaf community are referred to by personal name signs which may index a personal trait or relate to an individual's written name. Name signs are not generally used in direct address or to gain an addressee's attention, but rather as third person reference, (McKee & McKee, 2000).

### 4.2. Asking questions

In their follow-up interviews, three of the deaf participants expressed a feeling that deaf participants asked fewer questions in hearing-chaired meetings. D5 observed that having direct and immediate interaction with the deaf Chairperson left less room for misunderstandings:

> When the meeting is facilitated in NZSL, I know what I am dealing with, and the questions that I ask make sense in the context of what the facilitator has just said. So then I'm not worrying about whether I am saying things that the hearing people in the room think are wildly off-topic or completely obvious . . . I definitely hold back at times when a meeting is chaired in spoken English. (D3)

Analysis of the video data does not show a marked difference between the meetings in this regard. Deaf participants raised their hands six times in meeting A and seven times in meeting B. These comments may then signal that when a meeting is run in spoken English, deaf participants have more unanswered questions either due to a lack of clarity in the interpretation, or from the additional cognitive effort they must make when following frequent speaker changeovers through the single 'voice' of one interpreter. The outcome of deaf bids for the floor are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

*Table 3: Failed turns*

| *Hearing-chaired meeting A* | *Deaf-chaired meeting B* |
|---|---|
| *D1 and D3* | *D2* |

D1 and D3 each raised a hand and then lowered it in meeting A. This might be because spoken discussion had moved on and deaf participants perceived that the appropriate moment to raise their point (the TRP) had passed. Interpreter processing time potentially contributed to this. In meeting B, D3 raised her hand and began to sign her turn, but INTERP2 continued with her English-to-NZSL interpretation and did not give voice to D3's utterance. This may be due to the fact that each interpreter in this study alternately worked fifteen minute shifts 'actively' interpreting in both language directions rather than dividing the work so that each interpreter worked in one language direction (sign-voice or voice-sign) for the duration of the meeting, which could have enhanced deaf participation (Van Herreweghe, 2002).

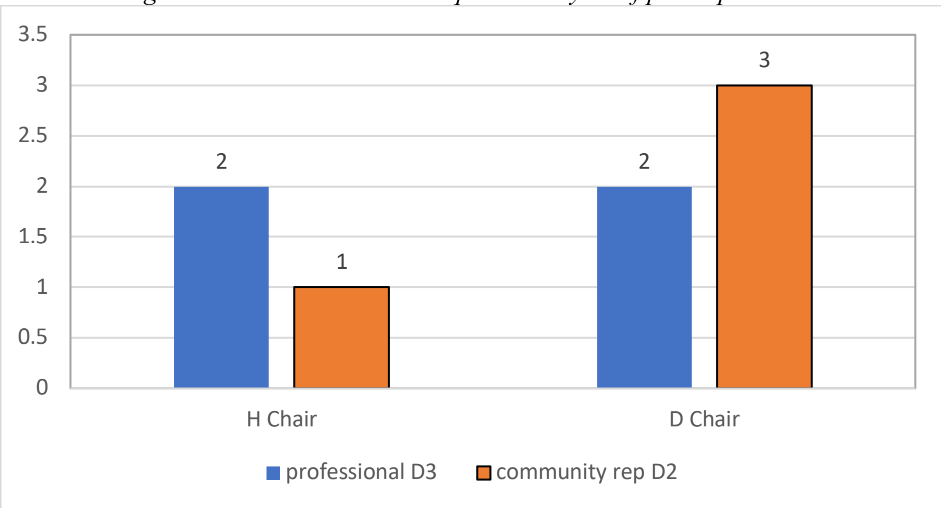
Of note is the content of deaf participants' turns in the two meetings. Table 4 represents requests for clarification by deaf participants.

*Table 4: Requests for repetition or clarification*

| *Hearing-chaired meeting A* | *Deaf-chaired meeting B* |
|---|---|
| *D1 requests clarification*<br>*D1 asks for repetition* | *(none)* |

Deaf participants only clarify or ask for repetition in meeting A, implying that information was more comprehensible in meeting B. The deaf community/consumer representative also asked more substantive questions when the chairperson was deaf, as shown in Figure 1.

*Figure 1 : Substantive content questions by Deaf participants*




Furthermore, in meeting B, the deaf professional representative employed in the sector directly asked hearing speakers to add background information to contextualize their discussion for the benefit of deaf community participants. This suggests there is perhaps more scope assumed within deaf meeting norms for communication to be collectively moderated in ways that promote deaf participation, by allowing for clarification of contextual information.

## *4.3. Managing motions and voting*

Both chairpersons worked to ensure deaf and hearing participation when calling for members to raise a hand to move, second or vote on group decisions. They built in pauses after making each formulaic request to create time for the interpretation to be produced and for all participants to respond at the appropriate time before discussion moved on.

Analysis of meeting A showed an interesting pattern whereby deaf participants frequently responded to these requests before the chairperson had finished their utterance, as we see in example 2 below:

*Example 2*

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR: | agenda sorry in those minutes (*looking at D1)* yes (D1 name) |
| INTERP1: | -IN-DOCUMENT MINUTES from me just um one small minor thing. I was<br>*(pointing to D1* *leaning forward)* |
| D1(*hand up looking at INTERP1)* ONE VERY-SMALL-THING ME NOT-SURE I-THINK CONFUSING | |

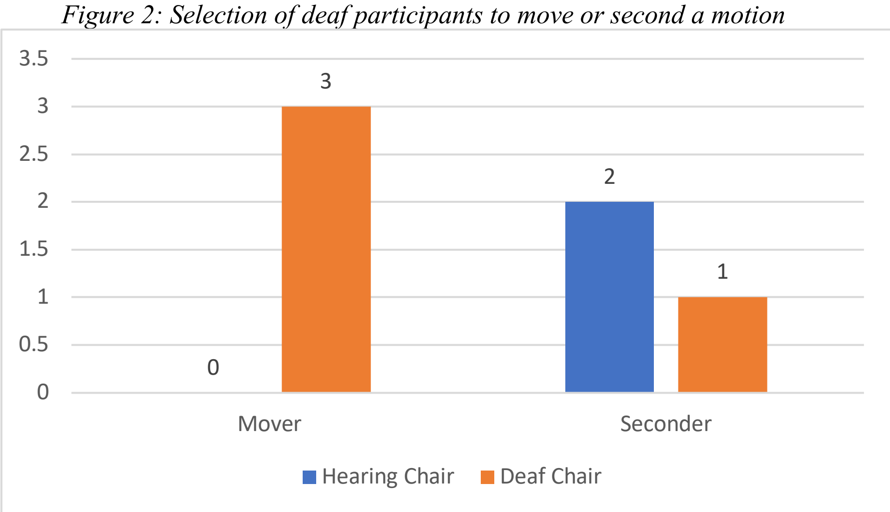
In example 2 we see that D1 begins his turn while the interpreter is still signing. Such an assertive move could be motivated by his awareness that interpreting processing time puts deaf participants at a disadvantage in terms of claiming a turn. D1 summarises this recurring experience:

> When the hearing Chair says something, it has to go through the interpreter before it comes to us. And by that time other people might have their hands up to say something. So, we are always a bit behind. (D1)

In contrast, the hearing participants in the meeting directly perceive the chairperson's calls for information and can respond immediately. During formal decision-making in meeting A the hearing participants appear more relaxed than the deaf participants, raising their hands more slowly and holding them lower. Deaf participants frequently raised their hands before the interpretation of calls for response was complete. This did not occur in meeting B, which may have been due to differences in content and group makeup, but could provide evidence that deaf participants' familiarity with meeting protocols are key to ensuring that they can participate more equally with the hearing people present. This knowledge also affects whether they can contribute to ratifying the chairperson's role by responding in the expected ways at the right time. What is evident is that deaf participants are making conscious effort (Haug et al., 2017) to compensate for temporal misalignment in the interpreted interaction.

Within the formulaic opening sections of both meetings, deaf participants reported being able to participate equally. The video data shows that deaf participants raised their hand on three occasions in each meeting when the chairperson called for individuals to move or second a formal decision. Figure 2 shows that under a deaf chair, there were three instances of a deaf participant being selected as a mover and once as a seconder, and two instances of seconding under a hearing chair. (Deaf observers in these meeting did not have voting rights, and numbers should be read with this in mind.)

*Figure 2: Selection of deaf participants to move or second a motion*




In both meetings, the deaf and the hearing Chairpersons appear to alternate between choosing deaf and hearing participants as movers and seconders. This suggests that they are cognisant of their obligation, as chair, to oversee turn-taking and decision-making in a fair and democratic manner that considers power differences between interlocutors. (Lazzaro-Salazar, 2015). In meeting A, deaf participants are recorded as seconding rather than moving proposals, potentially due to interpreting time lag. In meeting B, the deaf chairperson chooses deaf participants as mover and seconder of the first motion. Thereafter, while deaf participants are recorded as moving the next two motions, the deaf chair visibly looks towards the hearing participants to second decisions. Interestingly, while deaf participants seemed to raise their hands almost before the interpretation was finished in meeting A (hearing Chair), they seem to hold back in meeting B (deaf Chair). On several occasions in meeting B, deaf participants do not raise their hands at all but look towards the hearing participants as if to give them an equal chance to respond. This suggests that deaf participants are highly aware of the temporal disjunction created by differing language modalities and interpreter lag time and that they work harder to monitor and compensate for this under a hearing chairperson. It also provides evidence that participants use their meta-awareness of interactional constraints to construct participatory meeting practices.

## 4.4. *Timing of discourse*

Time constraints around the meeting were mentioned by most participants in the follow-up interviews. Hearing participants observed that time was a limited resource which added urgency to group discussions. For some deaf participants, time pressure was seen as a cultural setting, with the group described as following 'hearing time' where speed was valued over collective understanding.

Analysis of video data from meeting A showed that the hearing chairperson took time to respond to questions from deaf participants and built frequent pauses into the interaction. However, four deaf participants commented that it was the rhythm of the meeting which differed under a deaf chairperson. Analysis of meeting B showed that the deaf chairperson paused after each agenda item to look around the room. He accompanied his eye-gaze with other discourse markers, jutting his chin slightly forward and raising his eyebrows. These NZSL features signal that he is checking participants' understanding of the discussion and is opening the floor for further discussion if needed. The deaf chair also tended to look towards the deaf participants more often than the hearing participants, perhaps because they returned his gaze while hearing participants frequently looked down at their papers. Deaf participants reported this direct engagement between themselves and the deaf chairperson as increasing their alignment and their ability to participate:

> The chairperson runs the meetings, so when the deaf chairperson was chairing, I felt I could relate to him directly and that I could participate well because we understood each other. With a hearing chairperson, I don't feel like I relate or connect directly with her because she speaks, and everything goes through a third party, so we don't really have that direct relationship because we interact through the interpreters rather than with each other. (D4)

Interestingly, the hearing chairperson made a similar observation:

> One thing in running a meeting that is quite difficult . . . Is um . . . trying to keep morale up. You know, because you don't get a lot of feedback from deaf people. You know, like, I can't hear if their voice is happy. Does that make sense? Or I can't hear if they are, like, "Oh really (rolling eyes/resigned)". I can't hear that stuff, so that's quite tricky. (Hearing Chairperson).

Loss of information about prosody and affect in interpreted discourse (Stone, 2009; Llewellyn-Jones &Lee, 2014) may contribute to the hearing Chairperson's sense that deaf participants did not give much feedback. In theory, speaker tone should be present within the interpreted message, yet the interpreters reported finding the meeting-talk fast and challenging to interpret. This may have limited their capacity to reflect speaker tone.

Analysis of meeting data also suggests that pauses between utterances may have felt longer in the source language as they were more naturalistic, creating a momentary sense of ease or rest. In contrast, within the interpretation, interpreters appeared visibly alert and focussed during these pauses, often looking down or towards a new speaker while waiting for the next utterance. This behaviour may also account for the perception of deaf participants that the deaf Chairperson paused more than the hearing Chairperson to check for group understanding. The lack of eye contact offered by interpreters during pauses within spoken turns potentially denied deaf participants the opportunity to bid for a turn in meeting A, given that deaf people generally seek to establish eye contact before beginning to sign (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). In contrast, the deaf Chair in meeting B made direct eye contact with participants during pauses as if checking for understanding and inviting possible questions or clarifications. Deaf participants' sense of 'hearing time' may, therefore, be coloured in part by the way in which interpreter-mediated interaction is perceived and produced, and by who is in control of interactional timing, rather than the actual pace of the talk.

## 4.5. *Written documentation and managing visual attention*

Our analysis confirmed that the visual-spatial modality of signed language has a profound impact on the participation of deaf participants in group interactions. While hearing participants in an interpreted meeting can look at each speaker, deaf participants largely train their gaze on the interpreter to follow the talk, with only peripheral access to other visual cues occurring (Sandler and Lillo-Martin, 2006). Participants in spoken language meetings use eyegaze and other non-verbal markers in their communication repertoire (Huisman, 2001). Evidence of this is seen in meeting A, where, on four occasions, the hearing Chairperson unsuccessfully attempts to allocate D1 a turn or to signal that his comments have been noted by nodding and looking pointedly at him. D1 seems oblivious to these visual cues as he busily looks between his papers and the chairperson, demonstrating that bi-modal interpreted meeting discourse – especially under the time pressure of a meeting - loses some layers of contextual, or pragmatic meaning. This reduces the coherence of the interaction for those who are primarily relying on the interpretation (McDermid, 2015). It is also challenging to chairpersons.

References to written information in meetings are problematic for deaf participants and potentially require the interpreter to intervene if discussion continues while documents are read (Van Herreweghe, 2002). Both Chairpersons in this study paused group discussions when documents were tabled or referred to, as seen in example 3 from meeting B:

*Example 3*

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair: | WHICH PAGE *(points to D2)(looks down at document)* |
| INTERP3: | have there been an update or a decision around those? what page are you on? Page 3 *(pointing at D2) (points at chairperson)(points D2)* |
| D2: | DONATION UPDATE? DECISION? THREE |

Within this example, it is evident that, as a deaf person, the chairperson cannot initiate discussion until he himself has finished reading. In contrast, the hearing chairperson established a silent-reading rule in meeting A, not for her own benefit, but to accommodate for the competing visual demand that written information represents for deaf participants. In her interview, the hearing chairperson commented that she was often unsure when to resume discussion as deaf people often looked up from their reading but then looked down again. Several deaf participants in their interviews reported feeling rushed in meetings and noted that functional differences between a deaf and a hearing chair such as around the need for dedicated reading time were also symbolic, with visual interactional norms elevated under a deaf chairperson.

## *4.6. Deaf participants' sense of agency*

Most of the meeting-talk in this study occurred in spoken English as the members who delivered reports, presented information, and answered questions in the meetings were mainly hearing professionals. As a result, hearing participants could immediately comprehend, respond and relate to these speakers while deaf participants were not only slightly distanced from this level of participation by their roles and statuses (largely representing the community/consumer voice), but also by relying on interpretation for substantially more of the interaction.

Analysis of the discourse certainly suggests that deaf participants were more agentive under a deaf chairperson. It must, however, be noted that this comparison is based on a tiny sample and the two meetings differed in content and membership. In the deaf-chaired meeting, there were six deaf and seven hearing participants, while at the hearing-chaired meeting there were four deaf and eleven hearing participants. Group make-up was seen to influence interactional choices, as D5 commented: "If there are more hearing people in the meeting, you tend to have to bow to the hearing way of doing things." It is, however, interesting to note that H1 responded immediately to the deaf chairperson's turn allocation in meeting B, but in meeting A, resisted attempts by other deaf participants to give her a speaking turn using visual discourse markers, deferring instead to the hearing chairperson to allocate turns. This implies that having a deaf chairperson in meeting B 'authorizes' the privileging of NZSL discourse norms. It also reinforces the significant role the chairperson plays in shaping accepted meeting norms and culture.

Several deaf participants reflected that having a deaf chairperson potentially put hearing participants at a disadvantage:

> So, the tables are turned, and THEY have to wait until the deaf people have finished. They maybe get to see what it is like for us to be always a bit behind the speaker. (D5)

Only one of the hearing interview participants attended both meetings. She reflected that having a deaf chair did not make a difference to her personally and observed that:

> A deaf person knows how to manage an interpreter and the group better. They seemed to pace things differently and if they needed to take the time to fully listen and understand something, they made the space to do so rather than diving onto the next person who had their hand up. So, they made sure that the conversation didn't move on until they and everyone around the table had understood the full message. When the meeting was chaired by a deaf person, I observed that the deaf participants had a greater level of confidence. (H1)

These observations suggest that the deaf Chair is following signed meeting norms whereby collective understanding and participation is actively solicited by the chairperson (Van Herreweghe, 2002). The deaf Chairperson's skill in running interpreter-mediated interaction no doubt stems from experience. Deaf people use interpreters more frequently than hearing people and tend to have an awareness that their participation via an interpreter is limited. They often collaborate more overtly with interpreters, moderating interaction in ways that complement the interpreting process (Haug et al., 2017; Napier, 2007). In contrast, the hearing Chairperson had not worked with interpreters before joining this group. With no formal guidance, she professed to learn 'the rules' around how to interact with deaf people via interpreters 'on the job.'

### *4.7. Interpreter contributions to coordinating interaction*

If the chairperson is the rightful manager of turn-taking in meetings, it is interesting to consider how easily they can retain control of this function in interpreter-mediated meeting talk. Interpreters in these meetings appeared to subtly 'coordinate' interaction (Roy 1993) so that deaf participants could get the floor. In example 2 INTERP1 ends her signed interpretation of the chairperson's request for amendments and leans forward, pointing briefly at D1 who has his hand up for a turn and is beginning to sign. INTERP3 does a similar thing in example 1 meeting B, briefly pointing and nodding at the deaf chairperson with her eyebrows raised to indicate that he can take a turn. One could argue these interpreters were simply 'relaying' (Metzger, 2000) information about TRPs to deaf participants. Alternatively, the interpreters may be signalling to those deaf participants who are poised to take the floor that they, the interpreter, is ready and available to interpret their turn. Or, more likely, this is, in fact, an interpreter-initiated turn-allocation signal: "You can talk now". This kind of strategy has been documented in the interpretation of prepared monologues by deaf speakers (Napier, 2007). Our data reveals that at times in these meetings, deaf participants and interpreters collaborated directly with one another to manage the timing of bids for the floor.

The role of chair also includes 'sanctioning inappropriate conduct' (Angouri & Marra, 2010, p. 619). Theoretically this is potentially undermined when interpreters intervene to remind speakers to speak one at a time, in order to be able to interpret. Such interventions occurred in both meetings, however the fact that it was done politely and respectfully seemed to mitigate any perceived challenge to the Chairperson's authority. In fact, both Chairpersons commented favourably on these interjections, viewing them as appropriate and helpful:

> It's a good reminder to me to take stock and check around the room as to what's . . . you know . . . what's actually going on. It probably means I have got distracted from everybody. (Hearing chairperson.)

However, the hearing Chair reflected that being interrupted was unnerving at times. This is evidence not only that interpreter-generated interventions should be timed and expressed in ways which promote a sense of collegiality between the interpreter and the speaker (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014), but that this is particularly relevant to interaction with a chairperson.

Through the practices outlined above, interpreters may intentionally or inadvertently subvert or support the authority of the chair to allocate turns, as a by-product of mediating visual and spoken norms for turn-taking (Henley, 2017).

## 5. Discussion

The most obvious difference between the two meetings was the prevailing language and modality in which each meeting was facilitated, with the deaf Chair using sign language and visual discourse norms, and the hearing Chair using spoken English and modified aural discourse norms. Analysis of discourse and participant reflections indicate that the linguistic, cultural, and temporal alignment between deaf meeting participants and a deaf Chairperson enhanced their sense of agency and involvement in the meeting, compared to their experience with a hearing Chairperson. Central to this was the deaf Chair's management of interaction according to visual discourse norms, and his awareness of the effects and requirements of the interpreting process. For example, the third modality of written text typically presents difficulty for deaf participants in interpreted meetings run according to hearing discourse norms. In the case of the deaf-chaired meeting, suitable pauses for reading were built in, as the chairperson himself read the meeting papers. Furthermore, his use of visual discourse cues (gaze, pointing, name signs) to allocate turns and to direct attention towards various speakers or documents, gave deaf participants immediate (in fact, advantaged) access to the flow of interaction. Deaf participants described a subtle but significant difference in interactional timing under the deaf Chair which contributed to a perceived difference in accessibility. Even though a significant amount of floor time was allocated to hearing speakers by a deaf chairperson, deaf participants asked more substantive questions, clarified less, and reflected that they participated with more ease and confidence (i.e., agency) under a deaf chairperson.

In contrast, analysis of a meeting with a hearing chairperson showed deaf participants to be making more effort to visually track interaction, frequently shifting their gaze between the interpreters, the hearing chairperson, other participants, and the meeting papers. They also expended effort to anticipate requests from the hearing chairperson during formulaic decision-making (motions and votes), often raising their hands before the interpretation of these utterances were complete, to offset the expected interpreting delay. Overall, findings showed that deaf participation in mixed meeting interaction facilitated by a deaf chairperson is qualitatively different, and experienced as more accessible, than under a hearing chairperson. One participant suggested that a more equitable balance of participation across a series of meetings might be achieved if they were facilitated alternately by a deaf and a hearing chairperson.

All participants expressed the belief that meetings should be conducted in ways that are inclusive, participatory and embracing of deaf cultural norms, given the group's mandate for governance of deaf-related services. Several participants noted that chairing and meeting practices which incorporated visual interactional cues had evolved in their group over time and had improved the interpretability of meetings and accordingly, deaf participation. Furthermore, our analysis shows that when the chairperson took more responsibility for coordinating turn-taking, explicitly identifying speakers (for example, using name signs), and ensuring that deaf participants had time to read, the interpreters' burden of coordinating or mitigating misaligned turns was reduced. Effective chairing practices observed in this this study focused on managing temporal and visual (mis)alignment within the discourse, and support Van Herreweghe's recommendations (2002).

Although this was a small study, our findings suggest that deaf participation in mixed meetings may be compromised by issues such as lack of eye contact with the interpreter, which occurs when an interpreter is managing tasks in addition to relaying content, such as indicating speaker changes or a bid for a turn, or looking away to hold the floor for a continuing speaker. Additional demands arise for the interpreter when participants read aloud (in English or in signs), or simultaneously listen and read written information. It is in the interests of deaf participation that interpreters be conscious of these layers of interactional/modality management work in meetings and consider which coordination tasks or accommodation strategies could be shared with a meeting chairperson.

## 6. Conclusion

The features, challenges, and outcomes of interpreted interaction in formal meetings involving deaf and hearing participants are under-documented in the research literature. One likely reason is that multi-party bilingual interaction is complex to capture and analyze. For this reason, our study took a case-study approach to describing and comparing features of discourse in two meetings chaired by a hearing and a deaf Chairperson respectively. Our analysis addressed how chairing practices impact interpretability of interaction and the contingent effects on deaf participation (i.e., accessibility). In addition to micro-analysis of discourse, we elicited participants' retrospection on their experiences of the meetings. We found that both deaf and hearing Chairpersons adopted strategies to mitigate temporal misalignment created by interpreting and the disjunction between visual and aural participation cues, especially in relation to turn allocation, speaker attribution and reading texts. Under a deaf chairperson, analysis showed that deaf participants asked more frequent and substantive questions, and they described feeling more comfortable asking for clarification and following the flow of interaction - since they could directly follow the deaf Chairperson's gaze (without watching an interpreter), and utilize his natural pauses for looking at documents. Under the hearing Chairperson, deaf participants made more obvious effort to visually track speaker and activity changes, and they compensated for anticipated interpreting delay by raising a hand to second or vote on motions before the hearing Chair had finished uttering invitations to do so. Both deaf and hearing participants expressed an awareness that facilitation by a deaf chairperson increases deaf participants' sense of agency in the meeting. While findings of a case study are not necessarily generalizable, our findings suggest that the language, mode and manner of chairing a mixed meeting impact deaf participation and the scope of the interpreter's role in meetings. A deaf, signing chair flips the prevailing cultural order in meeting interaction, which, as also described in other mixed ethnicity workplaces, is felt more acutely by participants of minority cultural status who are more sensitive to the socio-pragmatic norms that are operating at any given time (Holmes, Vine, & Marra, 2020, p. 20).

With respect to interpreter practices, we observed that interpreters in this context collaborated implicitly or overtly with the Chairperson to regulate the floor and mitigate potential miscommunications. Both Chairpersons regarded interpreter interventions to alert them to signed/spoken overlaps as helpful and within the scope of their role. In addition to relaying talk, interpreters collaborated with deaf participants to optimize the timing of bids for the floor, through the use of gestures, eyegaze and non-manual signals; in parallel, they used averted eyegaze to maintain the floor for, or direct attention towards, hearing speakers.

Little attention has been given to investigating interpreters' potential cooperation with a chairperson and participants in facilitating mixed deaf-hearing meetings. Empirical evidence from discourse analysis articulates specific interactional practices and their effect on deaf participation, and this can inform both interpreters and meeting participants about the practical dynamics of 'accessibility' beyond just engaging interpreters. It also highlights the need for interpreters to be prepared to perform specific additional interactional management tasks in ways that contribute positively both to the chairperson's role and to group dynamics (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014). We discuss interpreter-participant cooperation in more detail in a subsequent article based on this study (Henley and McKee, in preparation). Although interpreters cannot independently resolve the challenges of mixed meeting interaction, our findings underline the premise that all parties contribute to the construction of interaction. We suggest that close attention to discourse processes is an important foundation in the training and practice of interpreters. In the interpreting workplace, explicit dialogue is needed between sign language interpreters, chairpersons and meeting participants to share their differing knowledge about strategies that enhance accessible interaction in this context. Indeed, we found that meeting participants and interpreters in this study were keenly interested in the aims and outcomes of this analysis.

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# Toward Standard Interpreter Education Program Admission Criteria

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**Abstract**

**In the United States, signed language interpreter education programs (IEPs) must strike a balance between attracting a sufficient number of students and admitting only high-quality applicants who possess foundational language skills, can graduate in a timely manner and acquire professional credentials expediently. The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (2014) asserts that all students entering U.S. IEPs should have strong language skills in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English before beginning to acquire interpreting skills. One way to measure a student's readiness to enter a program of instruction is through the use of admission criteria. I examined online documents and surveyed 52 baccalaureate-granting IEPs in North America 1) to identify their admission criteria, 2) to assess how these criteria were measured, and 3) to investigate which configuration of criteria, if any, had a positive impact on program completion by students and their subsequent time to credential.**

Keywords: interpreter education programs, admission criteria, student success, path to graduation, readiness gap

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# Toward Standard Interpreter Education Program Admission Criteria

## 1. Introduction and background

In 1974, the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration established the National Interpreter Training Consortium. As a result, the number of signed language interpreter education programs (IEPs) increased dramatically across the country. Since that time, interpreter educators have been seeking ways to ensure that students are able to succeed during and after their preparation. To that end, a number of researchers investigated the requisite knowledge and skills interpreting students need to learn including: Anderson & Stauffer (1990), Winston (2005) and Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005); while others such as: Baker-Schenk (1990), Anderson & Stauffer (1990) and Shaw, Collins & Metzger (2006) created curricula. Despite these efforts, Patrie (1995) and Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005) identified a long-standing "graduation-to-credential gap" (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). Godfrey (2010) examined what curricular factors might aid in shortening that gap, but only identified extra-curricular activities. She found that students who participated in service learning and/or practicums had the shortest graduation-to-credential gap. Other facets of interpreter education have not yet been examined for their potential impact on the graduation-to-credential gap. One such area is the criteria that programs use to admit students, some combination of which might help to ensure program completion and post-graduation outcomes. This study will help identify the expectations that the IEPs in the U.S. have of prospective students and determine if there are any admission criteria that are predictive of the time it takes for a graduate to earn a credential. It is assumed that there is a positive relationship between admission criteria and the time to credential post-graduation.

A number of other practice professions have examined the effectiveness of admission criteria in predicting both a student's ability to successfully complete a program and to achieve necessary post-graduation outcomes. For example, research led to the development of a standardized entrance exam that all U.S.-accredited nursing programs now use to determine a students' academic preparedness for coursework. Miller-Levy, Taylor, and Hawke (2014) identified that while some of the teacher preparation programs in Texas were using admission criteria, they were doing a poor job of identifying the professional dispositions of future students.

This paper describes a two-stage explanatory study of admission criteria for baccalaureate-granting signed language interpreter education programs (IEPs) in North America. The first stage involved an examination of IEPs' admissions criteria that are provided online. The second stage collected data from a survey of the same programs, first to ensure the stated online admission criteria were current and accurate, second to collect IEPs' admission criteria that were not available online, and third to determine what post-graduation outcomes the programs track. The survey data were also used to assess the relationship between admission criteria, graduation rates and post-graduation outcomes.

### *1.1 Theoretical framework*

Although the CCIE standards state that accredited interpreter education programs must both have admission criteria for American Sign Language (ASL) and English skills and must define how the admissions criteria are used in accepting students, at the time of this study, only 13 IEPs in the U.S. were accredited. To date, no comprehensive content analysis of those admission criteria has been completed. As a field, interpreter education needs to know what should be expected of students so they can be successful in IEPs and in achieving post-graduation credentials. These credentials are defined as a state-level qualification (e.g. VQAS, BEI), or a national qualification such as the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or the National Interpreter Certification (NIC). Training as an interpreter is known to be a highly complex and demanding endeavor. Therefore, one may wonder whether it is possible to continue to learn a language while at the same time learning to interpret using that same language and still be expected to achieve graduation and post-graduation results in a timely manner.

Professions have examined admission criteria for professional education programs at all levels in a number of ways. Fields that have some level of research on these criteria include medicine, dentistry, general and specialty nursing, radiography, psychology, counseling, social work, occupational and physical therapy, as well as education and business. In translation and interpreting studies, the primary focus for spoken languages has been on determining what personality traits and dispositions are most likely to make a person successful as an interpreter (Longley 1978; Moser-Mercer 1985; Gerver, Longley, Long & Lambert 1989; Longley 1989). Keiser (1978) described discussions at the Paris Symposium in 1968, where conference interpreting trainers in spoken languages debated the usefulness of entrance exams and aptitude tests for entry into training programs. Not much has changed in conference interpreter training in the intervening years. Timarova and Ungoed-Thomas (2009) suggest that despite creating admission criteria, the pass rates for conference interpreting program final examinations at one German university vary between 20% and 80%.

In signed language interpreting studies, both Humphrey (1994) and Monikowski (1994) framed the underlying language and professional skills necessary for success as an interpreter. Later, some adaptation of the dispositional work in spoken language translation and interpreting studies for sign language interpreter preparation was done by Shaw and Hughes (2006), as well as Bontempo, Napier, Hayes, and Brashear (2014). These studies explored the personality traits that would potentially predispose an individual to successfully complete an interpreter preparation program. Shaw and Hughes (2006) identified that students and faculty believe that the most important personality traits are self-confidence, self-motivation and the ability to accept instructor feedback. Bontempo, et. al. (2014) found that globally, competent interpreters have higher self-esteem, are more emotionally stable, and are moderately inclined toward perfectionism. Additionally, Gómez, Molina, Benítez, and deTorres (2007) sought to “identify which perceptual-motor, cognitive and personality factors underlie both the acquisition of a signed language as a B language and the development of signed language interpreting skills.” (p. 71) They found that perceptual-motor coordination and cognitive verbal skills, rather than personality traits, are predictors of signed language interpreting proficiency.

A number of studies have explored admission criteria for signed language interpreter education programs. Petrino and Hale (2009) examined a single IEP with two sites where the admission criteria “at both sites included an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher, a passing score on a reading test administered by the IEP, and a minimum grade of C in all of the prerequisite courses (ASL 1-4, ITP 215: Professional Ethics and Issues in Interpreting, and ITP 220: Processing Skills for Interpreters)” (p. 49-50). They found a “combination of factors that, together, created an intense immersion-like type of learning environment that led to higher success” (p. 57) at one site over the other. Godfrey (2010) briefly mentioned that, in the five programs she studied, either the program or university admission criteria were so rigorous that a majority of students accepted were successful in the major (p. 48). Carter (2015) conducted a survey of 151 IEPs and based on responses about entry requirements (n=45) determined there was no standardized process for establishing baseline skills and knowledge for acceptance into programs. Garrett and Girardin (2018) investigated one admission criteria, pre-program ASL screening results, for two groups of applicants (n=250) to the University of Northern Colorado IEP and determined that transfer students with a two-year interpreting degree have expressive ASL skills similar to students with four semesters of ASL instruction instead of “junior-level expressive skills.” (p. 390)

The body of research on and use of admission criteria in other professions is dependent on the length of time and number of studies that have been conducted in that field. In highly competitive fields, such as medicine and nursing, research has advanced beyond descriptive measures into cross-validating multiple criteria. Some other fields are examining what admission criteria are being used and for what purpose, while still other fields are exploring the ability to predict student persistence, student performance or post-graduation outcomes.

## 1.2 Use of admission criteria primarily for program entry

In a chapter discussing research on gatekeeping in bachelor-level social work (BSW) programs, Kropf (2005) described how admission criteria have developed over time and serve a role in this gatekeeping. In the 1970s and 1980s, most BSW programs were accepting all applicants but, as student interest in these fields increased, programs had to find ways to determine “goodness of fit” (p. 64). To do this, programs selected admission criteria that were “a mix between those that are more ‘scholastic’ in orientation and others that tend to measure more ‘personal’ characteristics and experiences of the applicants” (p. 63). Kropf (2005) warns that some studies have shown that faculty can use admission criteria to support their own perspectives about candidates and will tend toward using academic and scholastic criteria over those that measure personal attributes (p. 63).

In a related study of nursing admissions criteria, Jarmulowicz (2012) found that for associate and baccalaureate programs in one Southeastern state, a total of 35 different admission criteria were being used in differing configurations (p. 159) to select students. Of that initial set, 23 were in use by baccalaureate programs, with each individual programs using between 8 to 13 of those admission criteria. Only three criteria (grade point average, SAT/ACT scores, and ‘C’ or better in course grades) were required by all baccalaureate programs. Due to the variability and complexity of admission criteria, Jarmulowicz grouped the 35 admission criteria into five categories: 1) cognitive (e.g., GPA, standardized test, placement testing, minimum course grade); 2) curricular (e.g., required high school or college prerequisites, faculty advisement, priority placement); 3) professional (e.g., interview, essay, references writing sample); 4) time-limited (e.g., 2-10 year requirement to repeat prerequisite courses, standardized test or other requirements); and 5) other (e.g., health care experience, residency, motivation, age requirement). (p. 159). An attempt to correlate the complexity of these admission criteria with the teaching philosophy of program faculty failed to reject the null hypothesis that there was no relationship (p.170), which implies that sets of admission criteria and teaching philosophy likely go hand-in-hand.

Miller-Levy, Taylor, and Hawke (2014) conducted a document review of the admission criteria for 19 teacher preparation programs in Texas. All programs required the minimum admission criteria identified by the state: minimum GPA; minimum number of credit hours in the content area; passing content area test; basic reading, writing, oral and math skills; application; and an interview. Additionally, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has several accreditation standards that set expectations for admission criteria. The NCATE standards include professional dispositions, defined as “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors” (Miller-Levy, Taylor, & Hawke, 2014, p. 6). Three of the programs studied by the authors were accredited and two were in the process of becoming accredited. The authors stated that “it appears as though most programs are doing a reasonable job of screening for academics. However, most programs have difficulty screening for actual teacher behaviors that should make up the majority of a teacher’s day” (p. 6-7).

In a study of accredited undergraduate business programs, Morgan, Tallman, and Williams (2004) identified two general classifications for admission criteria in public and private institutions. One classification is freshman admission, in which students are admitted to programs based on university admission with or without additional criteria. The other category is professional program admission, which is based on university GPA, minimum grades in a set of prerequisite courses, or both.

## 1.3 Focus on student retention and program completion

Some programs utilize admission criteria to determine the likelihood that a student is sufficiently prepared to remain in the program until successful completion. For example, Dolinar (2010) investigated whether course prerequisites could be used to determine if students would successfully complete their associate degree program in nursing. This subject was of interest because only 50% of admitted students were graduating from these programs (p. 68). Dolinar found that grades in prerequisite courses correctly predicted completion or non-completion for 85% of students (p. 69). Dougherty (2017) examined the relationship between the admission criteria and program completion of one associate degree program in radiation therapy. They found that of GPA, admission interview, writing sample and pre-admission testing, only the admission interview correlated positiviely with graduation. Similarly, Michael (2018) examined whether program admission criteria in a single bachelor of science in radiography program could be used to predict successful program completion. Four individual program admission criteria were tested across eleven years of admitted students: pre-admission testing score, pre-admission college GPA, introductory course grade, and prerequisite course GPA. All four were found individually to be predictive of program completion. Michael developed a "Probability Prediction Tool" that allows program faculty to enter a student's admission criteria to predict whether a student will complete the program or not.

### *1.4 Alignment with program outcomes*

Program admission criteria are also commonly used for predicting in-program or post-program outcomes. Programs want to predict these sorts of outcomes for a number of reasons including competitive student recruitment and retention, attempting to ensure available seats are filled with students most likely to succeed, maintaining academic rigor, accreditation requirements, and resource management.

For programs with open admissions policies, Shulruf, Wang, Zhao, and Baker (2011) examined which nursing program admission criteria were the best predictors of first-year undergraduate GPA. This examination was conducted because while enrollment in the program is not competitive, retention in the program is dependent on undergraduate GPA. In testing a number of the admission criteria for the University of Auckland nursing program, the New Zealand equivalent of high school GPA was found to be the strongest predictor of undergraduate GPA. Bathje, Ozelie, and Deavila (2014) examined the alignment of the admission criteria of one occupational therapy master's degree program with fieldwork evaluations for students in eight semester-long placements. Findings indicated a relationship between undergraduate GPA and evaluations of student performance in their second-year first-semester fieldwork placement . There was also a relationship between evaluations of student performance in second-year, second-semester fieldwork placement and GRE written scores. However, no relationship was found between the two sets of variables. This result may indicate that while no individual admission criteria will predict overall program success, they can provide indicators of where a student may demonstrate strength.

Another way to align admission criteria is to examine post-graduation outcomes. This approach allows programs to report not only retention and graduation rates, but professional attainment as well. Wambuguh, Eckfield, and Hofwegen (2016) justify researching this alignment because educating nurses, "is resource intensive and the attrition or failure of any students represents a loss of invested resources" (p. 92). It also means that another applicant lost their opportunity to enter the program and possibly succeed and represents one less successful nurse in the field. It is in the interest of nursing programs to examine the "contribution of admission criteria to student success" (p. 92). Wambaugh et al.'s investigation explored five admission criteria: pre-admission science grade, score on the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS), experience in healthcare, previous baccalaureate degree, and college transfer versus original university admission. They evaluated each criterion's ability to predict any of three potential nursing program outcomes: graduation, nursing coursework GPA, and passing the national licensure examination in nursing (NCLEX-RN). The authors found that students with higher pre-admit science GPA were more likely to have a higher nursing GPA and more likely to pass the NCLEX-RN on their first attempt. The same was true for TEAS score, that is, those students with a higher TEAS score were more likely to have a higher GPA and were more likely to pass the NCLEX-RN on their first attempt.

## 2. Methodology

In this exploratory study, I have investigated three topics: 1) describing the admission criteria used for baccalaureate-granting IEPs in the U.S., 2) the potential correlation of certain admission criteria with higher IEP graduation rates, and 3) the potential correlation fo certain admission criteria to a shorter time to post-graduation credential. Understanding the lack of substantive research on admission criteria for baccalaureate-granting IEPs and the need to determine what admission criteria are currently in use, I applied a two-phase process for data collection and analysis for this study.

To describe the admission criteria used by baccalaureate-granting IEPs in the U.S., I conducted a review of IEP materials available online, seeking to identify IEPs that met the study inclusion criteria: 1) listing as a baccalaureate program by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), 2) provision of a baccalaureate degree, and 3) listing of valid contact information. RID maintains a listing of IEPs at the certificate, associate, bachelor and master's level. At the time of my review (2019), the RID database contained 56 bachelor IEPs with links to their program websites. I used these college or university websites to examine information on admission criteria for each program. I reviewed both program web pages and university catalogs for statements of admission criteria. Further, I gathered contact information for the program chair, director, coordinator or other program faculty. I documented the collected information in a spreadsheet for analysis and for use in the second phase of this study. Of the fifty-six programs listed on the RID website, one was a duplicate, and at least two, although tagged as baccalaureate programs, were identified incorrectly. One was an associate degree program that had no information on their website about any formal articulation agreement with a university. Another was a program that appeared to be offered from an individual's home and promised that some universities would offer credit for courses taken there. A third program did not have current contact information in the RID database nor on their webpages. Attempts to email individuals listed as faculty were returned as undeliverable. In the end, fifty-two programs were identified for potential inclusion in this study.

For phase 2, I then sent a survey to these 52 baccalaureate programs, regardless of whether or not they provide admission criteria on their site. For those programs for which criteria were identified in phase one, the survey included the information uncovered in the website review and elicited additional information. The survey asked 1) whether the information on the web was accurate and complete; 2) if not accurate, what information was missing; 3) how the IEP measures whether a student meets the admission criteria; 4) if the IEP had alternate admission criteria; 5) the graduation rate of admitted students; and 6) the average length of time after graduation that a student achieves a state or national level interpreting credential. Additionally, the survey elicited the following information: 1) whether the programs measure students' English language skills; 2) methods used to assess English language skills; 3) minimum requirements for English proficiency; 4) students' ASL skills; 5) methods used to assess signed language skills; 6) minimum requirements for ASL proficiency; 7) course prerequisites; 8) placement test and/or screening tools used; and 9) grade point average of students at program entry. Programs for which admission criteria could not be found in phase one received the same survey but without having any fields pre-populated. An additional question on these surveys was about how admission criteria are communicated to potential students.

The survey was conducted using Google Forms with a unique link created for each IEP that allowed for the pre-population of fields using the information uncovered in the online document review. These unique links were then shortened using Google's URL shortener so that programs would only see the prefilled information in the survey. Each unique survey's URL was disseminated via email to the program director/coordinator for those IEPs in the US and Canada that qualified for inclusion in the study (n=52). Two follow-up emails were sent to encourage survey completion. With a well-defined population, voluntary probability sampling had the possibility of gathering the highest possible response rate.

## 3. Results

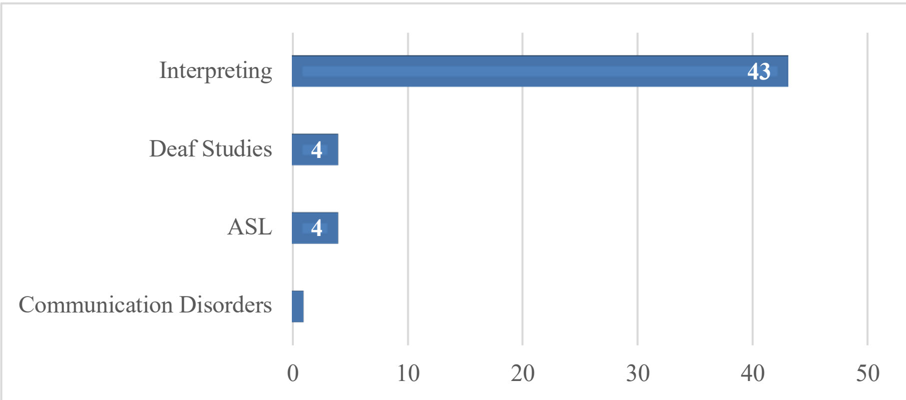
In this section I will present the results from the two phases of the study. First, I will discuss the data collected in the document review of the fifty-two programs identified from the RID list as meeting the inclusion criteria. This phase of the study sought to describe what admission criteria were provided on program websites. Second, I will discuss data collected in the survey distributed to those same programs, which sought to determine admission criteria for programs that did not list them on their websites as well as answer the other two research questions. Those research questions focused on whether there was any correlation between admission criteria and program graduation rates and/or post-graduation credential attainment.

The document review identified five major categories of admission criteria: ASL fluency, English fluency, course prerequisites, preadmission interviews, and other. In the survey, programs were asked to confirm the accuracy of data uncovered in the document review, to fill-in missing information, or expand on how the criteria were measured or weighted. Sub-sections of section 3.2 will discuss each type of admission criteria in turn.

### *3.1 Phase One - Document Review*

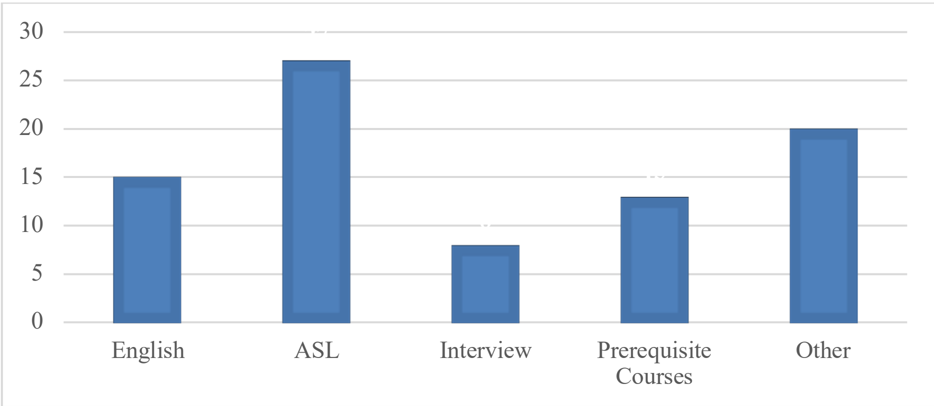
During the website review process, I collected and coded information regarding the type of degree awarded. In IEP programs, both Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees are offered, however, I noted that not all programs are specific degrees in interpreting. Four of the programs were degrees in ASL, four were Deaf Studies programs, and one was a degree in Communication Disorders. Each of these programs offered specializations in signed language interpreting. The remaining forty-three programs were all degrees in interpreting specifically. Of the fifty-two programs in the document review, ten offered a Bachelor of Science, nine offered a Bachelor of Arts, two offered the option of one or the other, and the other thirty-one did not specify in the materials that were reviewed.

*Figure 1: Type of program*




Thirty of the fifty-two programs listed some admission criteria, either on the program web pages or in the college/university course catalog. Of those, 50% specified English competence, 90% specificed ASL competence, 26.7% required a pre-admission interview, 43.3% laid out course prerequisites, and 66.7% had other criteria. The English competence criteria varied from high school English grades, prior college/university coursework or general education requirements, written and/or spoken assessments during the interview, to essays or video submissions. The majority of criteria related to ASL addressed the successful completion of ASL courses, while a few programs utilized standardized ASL tests or their own assessment processes. Eight programs required admission interviews, but very little was said about the content of the interviews. Course prerequisites were identified for thirteen programs. The most common prerequisite was some form of introduction to interpreting (n=8), followed by ASL coursework (n=7), and introduction to Deaf culture (n=5). Three programs required some form of linguistics, one program required biology and one required a course on the history of interpreting. Other admission criteria included things such as: cumulative GPA, an application packet, a prior degree, essays, letter(s) of reference, video submissions in one or both languages, a willingness to engage in out-of-classroom activities, a police background check, and standardized test scores.

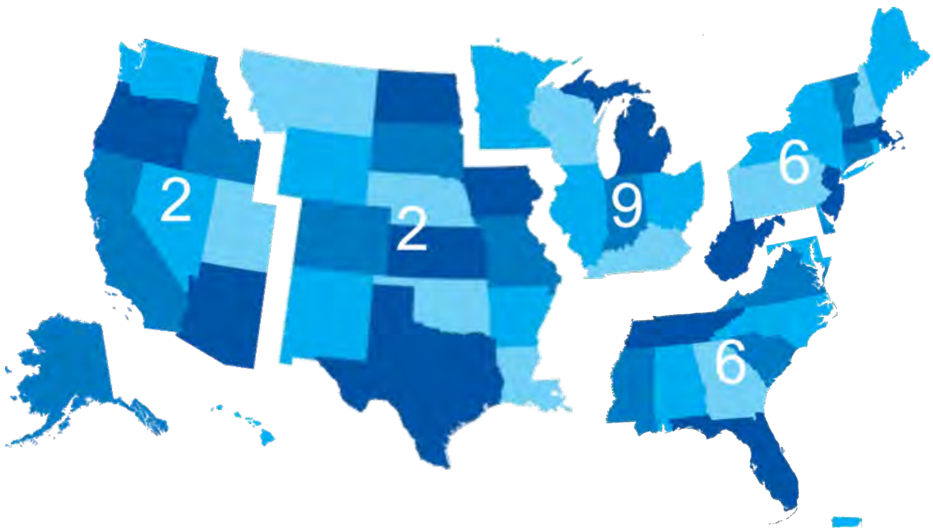
*Figure 2: Number of programs with each type of admission criteria in document review*




## *3.2 Phase two - Program Survey*

Of the 52 surveys distributed 25 responses were received for a total response rate of 48.08 percent. Proportionally, the Northeastern U.S. (6, or 24%), Southeastern U.S. (6, or 24%), and Upper-Midwestern U.S. (9 or 36%) were overrepresented among respondents, while the Central U.S. (2, or 8%) and Western U.S. (2, or 8%) were underrepresented. Nineteen programs were Bachelor in Interpreting programs, with six interpreting specializations; three were in an ASL program, two were in Deaf Studies programs, and one was in a program for "professions working with Deaf people."

*Figure 3: Number of survey responses from programs by RID region*




The programs that responded to the survey either admitted students annually (n=16) or had rolling/open admissions (n=9). The average number of students being admitted into programs was 14, but this number ranged from 5 to 40 per admission period. In terms of when students were admitted into a program, 10 programs admitted students upon acceptance to the university, four during the sophomore year, and 11 after the sophomore year. University graduation requirements were mostly standardized with 22 of the universities requiring 120 credits or more. However, the number of credits required to complete programs ranged between 15 and 120. Eighteen of the programs reported graduation rates averaging above 50% while the rates of 10 programs were greater than 80%.

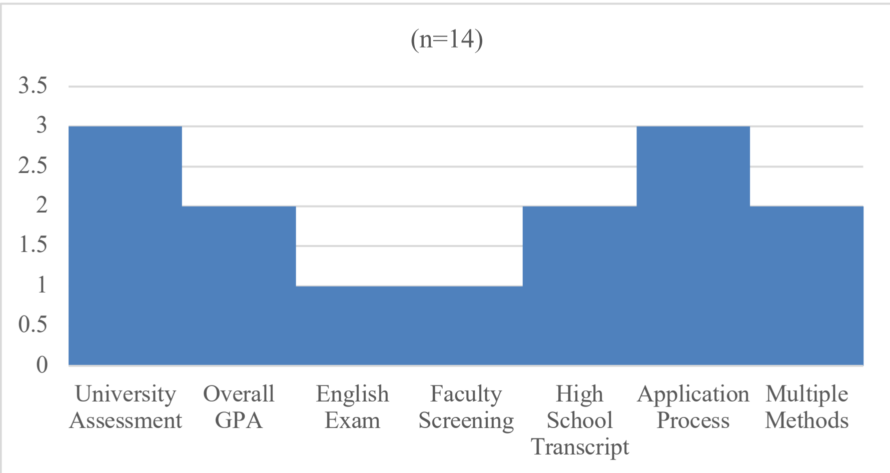
Overall, 18 of the programs tracked post-graduation outcomes for their students. The seven programs that did not, cited the following reasons: 1) they were either too new and did not have any graduates yet; 2) they did not have the resources to track students; 3) they had not been charged by their university to track students; or 4) did not receive responses from their graduates. Ten programs track whether students achieve state-level credentialing; six of those reported that this process took six months or less, and the other four programs reported a maximum of two years. Thirteen programs reported the average time to achieve national-level credentialing , with two reporting credentialing in less than six months, one reporting 1-2 years, four reporting 2-3 years, four reporting 3-4 years, one reporting 4-5 years and one reporting more than five years. Approximately half (n=9) of the programs that tracked post-graduate outcomes included some measure of employment, whether a graduate was working as an interpreter, the settings in which graduates were working, or the settings in which graduate were employed.

Of the 25 programs that responded to the survey, 84% (n=21) had some configuration of admission criteria, which leaves four that did not. Two-thirds of those programs (n=14) had had admission criteria for four or more years, while four had had criteria for two or three years, and one established their admission criteria within one year of data collection. Programs with admission criteria also reported reviewing the criteria on a regular basis, with 11 reporting an annual review and three reporting a biennial review. The four programs that did not have admission criteria admitted students at university acceptance, and report that coursework rigor and benchmarks helped to ensure that students were an appropriate fit for the major. Three of the four did not report post-graduation outcomes.

As noted earlier, the document review identified five major categories of admission criteria: English competence; ASL competence; prerequisite courses; admission interview; and other criteria. The survey asked about each of these, and the responses to each question will be described in turn.

### 3.2.1 Criteria measuring English language competence

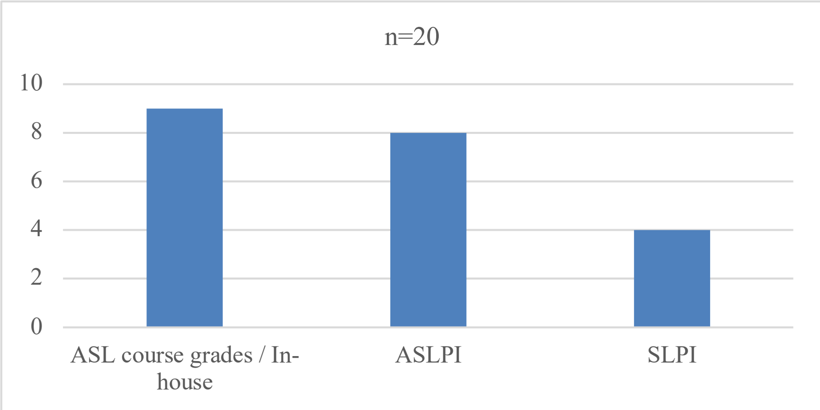
*Figure 4: Type of English admission criteria*




Fourteen programs identified having an admission criterion that measured English language skills and reported varied methods of assessing those skills. Three programs use a university assessment or general education requirement, two programs use the candidate’s overall GPA, one program administers an examination, and one program conducts a faculty screening. Two other programs review the candidate’s high school transcript for English readiness. Three programs have some type of English assessment built into their application process, requiring the student to complete an application essay and/or spoken English presentation. Finally, two programs use a combination of admission essay, general education course requirement, and an English assessment tool administered either by the university or the program.

3.2.2 Criteria measuring ASL competence.

*Figure 5: Type of ASL admission criteria*




Twenty respondent programs reported having an admission criterion that measured ASL skills, but the criteria themselves were mixed. Nine programs identified grades in ASL courses and/or an in-house language assessment as a part of their evaluation of a student's ASL skills. Most programs that used course grades set a minimum of a B-. Eleven programs used either the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) (n=8) and/or the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) (n=4). All the programs that used the SLPI required a score in the Intermediate range, which requires a candidate to be:

> …able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally, 3-to-5 sentences. Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed. (Newell & Caccamese, 2007)

For the ASLPI, the most common score required is an ASLPI:2 (n=6), which is defined as follows:

> Signers at this proficiency level are able to express uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward practical and social situations. They demonstrate the ability to elaborate on concrete and familiar topics (e.g., current events, work, family, autobiographical) with some confidence. They can also discuss with hesitancy some unfamiliar topics, relying on learned phrases, recombinations, and circumlocution. Sentences are discrete and are influenced by language patterns other than those of the target language with noticeable errors, ranging from occasional to considerable, affecting clarity. They may display self-repair ability. They are able to respond to simple, direct questions or requests for basic information. Their responses are short and may leave sentences incomplete. If asked to handle a variety of topics, accuracy cannot be maintained. Comprehension is good with familiar topics, but frequent repetition and/or rephrasing are needed with unfamiliar topic. (ASLPI, n/d)

One program required an ASLPI:1 and another required and ASLPI:3.

3.2.3 Prerequisite course criteria

Seven of the programs with admission criteria identified specific course prerequisites. Five of those programs require ASL prerequisite courses that are also noted as part of their ASL admission criteria, and two programs identified these coursework requirements even though the program did not state that it had an ASL admission criterion at all. Other prerequisite coursework included a Deaf Culture course (5 programs), an Introduction to Interpreting course (5 programs), and an ASL Linguistics or Introduction to Linguistics course (4 programs). The remaining eight prerequisite courses are required by one program each, and half of those belong to a single program which has an entire associate degree program among the course prerequisites.

#### 3.2.4 Admission interview criteria.

Twelve of the respondent programs require an admission interview. Eight provided some insight into the content of the interview. They mentioned an interest in learning about the candidate's: ASL and oral English interview skills, cultural and community involvement and knowledge, attitude towards interpreting, ASLPI scores, areas of interest and strength, an understanding of the student's objectives in the field of interpreting, other fields of interest, reason for wanting to major in interpreting, understanding of linguistics, and understanding of overall time commitment for the major. Several programs identified that they set aside time during the admission interview for the student to complete specific activities, such as an English Processing activity, an ASL comprehension activity, and ethical case study discussions.

The program which provided the most in-depth description of their interview process offers their students a guide to their interview. The website states:

> In this section of your screening you will meet an interview panel. The panel is made up of 3 (deaf and hearing) individuals. The goal of this interview is to explore, with you, your readiness for the program. Keep in mind, the panel is interested in establishing a good rapport with you so that they can see you at your best – we are looking for what you can do, your potential – and are eager to identify individuals who are ready to enter the program. So please try to relax and enjoy your interaction with the panel. Feel free to ask questions if you don't understand something. The panel may also provide some prompts to help you better demonstrate what skills you have.

This interview included a casual conversation in ASL, an paraphrasing activity in ASL, an storytelling activity in ASL, an description of a picture in ASL, an ethical case discussion, a discussion in English of strengths and weaknesses, as well as a reading comprehension / written response activity.

#### 3.2.5 Other admission criteria

Fourteen respondent programs identified having some other type of admission criteria. A majority of these criteria were completion of the formal application process, provision of letters of recommendation, or minimum university GPA. One program emphasized their inclusion of service learning in ASL coursework, to ensure students were aware that the program has in- and out-of-classroom expectations.

#### 3.2.6 Weighting of admission criteria

Four of the programs that responded had some method of weighting their admission criteria. Two of these programs use a panel process to screen the applicant's entire admission packet but did not actually define how the criteria are weighted. One program provided the following as their weights: "GPA 15%, English Assessment 15%, ASLPI 35%, Personal Statement 15%, and Interview 20%." The other stated they put the most emphasis on ASL coursework GPA and only admitted students with a 3.0 or better, with some attention paid to possible "academic or other issues that suggest the student might not be suitable for interpreting".

## 4. Analysis

While the raw data provides interesting details of what individual programs were doing, further analysis has the potential to inform whether there is any relationship between admission criteria and program outcomes. Initially it was hoped that some statistical analysis could be run, but due to the small sample size and variations in how programs responded to the individual questions, no conventional method would have provided valid results. Instead, in order to test the initial hypothesis that some combination of admission criteria might predict graduation rates and/or post-graduation time to credential, those criteria were visually compared. The analysis of those comparisions are shown below.

### *4.1. What admission criteria are in use for baccalaureate IEPs?*

No uniform admission criteria were found among the IEPs. Rather, each program reports its own set of standards and measurements reflect what they believe to be most effective. The most frequent admission criterion is some specific level of competence with ASL, with 80% of programs having some requirement. This is followed by 56% of IEPs requiring competence in spoken English, and 25% requiring an interview.

### *4.2. Is there an optimal set of admission criteria that lead to higher degree completion rates?*

As seen in Table 1, which is sorted from highest graduation rate to the lowest, the most important factor predicting higher graduation rate is the use of multiple criteria to screen admissions. All but two (80%) of the programs with graduation rates higher than 80% for the prior five years use three or more criteria to screen applicants, whereas fewer than half (47%) the programs with lower graduation rates do so. More successful programs have at least an ASL admission criterion and an English admission criterion, as well as requiring an admission interview. However, since there are programs with lower graduation rates with similar configurations of admission criteria, it appears that admission criteria are not the only factor leading to high graduation rates.

*Table 1: Highest to lowest university five-year graduation rate with admission criteria*

| | University Code | English | ASL | Interview | Prerequisite | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >91% | B | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | H | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 81-90% | A | ● | ● | | | |
| | E | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | K | ● | ● | | ● | |
| | N | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| | P | | ● | ● | | |
| | S | ● | ● | | ● | |
| | U | | | ● | | |
| | V | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 71-80% | D | ● | ● | | | ● |
| | G | | | | | |
| 61-70% | F | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | T | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 51-60% | C | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | J | | | | | |
| | M | | | | ● | ● |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Y | | | | | |
| <50% | I | | | | | |
| | L | | | ● | | |
| Not Reported | O | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Q | ● | ● | | | |
| | R | ● | ● | | | ● |
| | W | ● | ● | | | |
| | X | ● | ● | ● | | ● |

### *4.3. Is there an optimal set of admission criteria that contribute to a shorter post-graduation time-to-credential?*

Seventeen programs reported tracking the time that it took program graduates post-graduation to earn either a state or national interpreting credential. Table 2 provides a comparison by university between the time to state credential and the program admission criteria. Table 3 provides the same comparisons for time from graduation to earning a national credential. Very few programs identify a time to credential of less than six months (n=6). Of the ten programs that track state credentials, seven have at least three admission criteria. Six of those seven have an English criterion, an ASL criterion, and an admission interview. Many of the programs that do not track or did not report time to state credential have the same number or combinations of admission criteria.

*Table 2: Shortest to longest university time to state credential with admission criteria*

| | University Code | English | ASL | Interview | Prerequisite | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| < 6 months | M | | | ● | ● | ● |
| | O | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | P | | ● | ● | | |
| | Q | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | S | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| | V | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 6-12 months | A | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | U | | | ● | | |
| | Y | | | | | |
| 1-2 years | B | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Not Reported | C | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | D | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | E | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | F | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | G | | | | | |
| | H | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | I | | | | | |
| | J | | | | | |
| | K | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| | L | | | ● | | |
| | N | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | T | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | W | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | X | ● | ● | ● | | ● |

Nine programs (B, M, O, P, Q, S, U, V, and Y) track both time to national credential and state credential, while four (D, E, I, and K) report only time to national credential. All but three of these thirteen programs have three or more admission criteria, with the most common admission criteria (n=8) being English, ASL, and an interview. However, an equal number of programs do not currently track time to national credential but have the same number and types of admission criteria, so it is difficult to determine what the impact of admission criteria has on time to credential, if any.

*Table 3: Shortest to longest university time to national credential with admission criteria*

| | University Code | English | ASL | Interview | Prerequisite | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6-12 months | E | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | P | | ● | ● | | |
| 1-2 years | M | | | ● | ● | ● |
| 2-3 years | D | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | I | | | | | |
| | Q | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | Y | | | | | |
| 3-4 years | B | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | K | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| | S | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| | U | | | ● | | |
| 4-5 years | V | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| > 5 years | O | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Not Reported | A | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | C | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | F | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | G | | | | | |
| | H | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | J | | | | | |
| | L | | | ● | | |
| | N | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | R | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| | T | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | W | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | X | ● | ● | ● | | ● |

## 5. Discussion

The online document review uncovered that, at the time of the study, approximately 40% of the IEP programs surveyed (n=26) did not publish their admission criteria online, although some of these do have such criteria and shared them in their survey responses. This lack of transparency may make it difficult for applicants to compare programs based on which skills the programs expect them to have prior to program admission. At the same time, rolling or open admission programs are often not permitted to screen students before program entry and rely instead on progression requirements (requirements necessary to advance through the program) in order to maintain program standards. For example, students may be screened out when they do not achieve a minimum required grade in foundational courses. While this practice does not meet the letter of the stated CCIE accreditation requirements, it may meet the spirit of the requirement since it provides programs with a means to ensure that students meet minimum competency (requirements) in both ASL and English prior to taking advanced coursework. If interpreter educators truly want to understand how students can be successful in achieving an interpreting credential within a reasonable time frame after graduation, they must take steps to ensure students are adequately prepared for their coursework when they are accepted into their IEP.

Even though the survey achieved a response rate of nearly 50%, many survey questions were either left blank or marked as unknown. This made a statistical analysis of the responses impossible. While seventeen programs track post-graduation credential achievement, it was not possible to determine which if any constellation of admission criteria would predict a shorter post-graduation time to credentialing. Reported data does suggest that having admission criteria ensures higher rates of graduation. Programs should be encouraged to track student-by-student admission criteria through post-graduation credential achievement to provide the field with better visibility into the efficacy of both admission criteria and curriculum in producing desired outcomes.

With that said it does appear that there may be some relationship between the use of multiple admission criteria and good outcomes. Nearly all of the programs with the shortest time to state or national credential have admission criteria for ASL, English and a pre-admission interview. However, the same holds true for the programs with the longest times to credential. Further investigation is needed to determine if there is something in the content of the admission criteria or some other factor that has a stronger relationship to the time to credential. The same is true for graduation rates, the schools with the highest graduation rates have all three as well, but so do some of the programs with lower graduation rates. This means that the study was able to meet its aim to describe admission criteria, as well as identify the likelihood there is some relationship between admission criteria and graduation rates and time to credential, but further study is needed to clarify the nature of that relationship.

A surprising number of programs (n=12) require a pre-admission interview, but the content and format of the interviews are highly variable. While some programs ask a few questions about the applicant's language learning history, others require practical skills evaluations in addition to open dialogue. The program with the most structured interview reports an 81-90% graduation rate and an average post-graduation time to national credential of less than six months. This finding suggests that the constellation of admission criteria used by this program may have the potential to ensure success, but more research would be required to confirm the accuracy of the reported time to credential, to delve into which of the program's admission criteria are causing these results, and to ascertain whether these results might be replicable in other programs.

In general, this study of interpreter education programs demonstrates that currently, these programs are tracking individual student progress information with little consistency between schools.. Other professional fields have advocated for the creation of more uniform student-level data tracking for preparation programs. Tracking post-graduation data anonymously may allow interpreter educators to better understand the ability of admission criteria to predict students' ability to successfully complete IEP coursework and achieve post-graduation credentials. Using a process similar to that of Michael (2018) for one radiology program could allow for the creation of a "Probability Prediction Algorithm" for IEPs. What Wambuguh, Eckfield, and Hofwegen (2016) reported about nursing programs may also hold true for interpreting, that educating interpreters is very resource-intensive, and every time one student is selected who does not persist or succeed in a program, it deprives another possible student of access to training. Having the ability to predict the likelihood that a student will succeed would benefit the field greatly.

The large number of open-admission schools suggests that an adjustment to the CCIE standard requiring admission criteria might be warranted. Offering programs the choice between admission criteria or progression criteria would remove this barrier to accreditation for IEPs that are prohibited by school policy from implementing admission criteria. As mentioned above, the fact that so few baccalaureate programs are accredited means that there is no universal standard for admission. The variability in responses from open admission programs can likely be attributed to the fact that the CCIE standards are a barrier to accreditation.

In considering limitations of this study, the principle difficulty was atrophy in the sample size. At first glance, the response rate seemed substantial, leading to hopes that the results would be generalizable. Unfortunately, fewer than two-thirds of the programs that responded actually track post-graduation outcomes, and then only half of those programs track the achievement of a state or national credential. That reduced the sample from 52 surveys sent to 25 overall responses to only ten to thirteen responses with useable data. Additionally, due to the high variability in the responses it was not possible to test the correlational hypothesis between admission criteria and graduation rate or time to credential, though there is some evidence of a relationship that needs to be tested with more consistent data.

## 7. Conclusion

Unlike other professional fields such as nursing, radiology, and social work, research on program admission criteria has been extremely limited for signed language interpreter education. Most prior work in translation and interpreting studies has focused on personal and professional dispositions that make students more likely to be successful as interpreters.

Using a two-phase study design, this study examined the online information provided by fifty-two baccalaureate IEPs for evidence of admission criteria and then surveyed those same programs to confirm and further elicit information on admission criteria, as well as gather data on program outcomes. It sought to describe current admission criteria and identified that thirty programs publish some information about their admission criteria online. While CCIE recommends language admission criteria, the form in which that recommendation is applied varies greatly from program to program. Additionally, the study sought to uncover any relationship between admission criteria and program completion rates and/or post-graduation time to credential attainment. Due to limited survey responses and variability in how programs responded to the individual questions, no direct correlation could be calculated. Visualizing the data, however, provided some insight into the relationship between admission criteria and higher graduation rates as well as shorter time to credential.

This study has uncovered some patterns in IEP admission criteria that merit further investigation but require more detailed documentation and tracking of student application, progression, graduation, and post-graduation data. There is a need for better data on individual student outcomes in a more consistent way. Some of the findings point to combinations of admission or progression criteria such as minimum language competencies along with a robust interview process, as being predictive of student program completion. Finally, CCIE (2014) recommends language assessment admission criteria, but this requirement may actually be a barrier to accreditation for programs in universities that are required to admit all students, leading to the potential need for programs to either have admission or progression criteria.

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# An Achilles' Heel? Helping Interpreting Students Gain Greater Awareness of Literal and Idiomatic English

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**Abstract**

**This research paper reports on a study involving the use of literal and non-literal or idiomatic language in a multilingual interpreter classroom. Previous research has shown that interpreters are not always able to identify and correctly interpret idiomatic language. This study first examined student interpreters' perceptions of the importance of idiomatic language, then followed by assessing their ability to identify phrases that were literal, idiomatic or both. Lastly it looked at student interpreters' ability to correctly identify and explain idioms in short phrases and dialogues. Findings showed that, after this exercise, students' awareness of the difference between literal and non-literal language increased, however their ability to correctly identify it did not. Furthermore, their previous focus on 'specialized terminology' led them to believe that language other than this was hardly worth learning. The article concludes with recommendations for incorporating the findings of this research into interpreter education.**

Keywords: Idiomatic language, non-literal language, multilingual interpreting classroom, cultural equivalents, pragmatic equivalents

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# An Achilles' Heel? Helping Interpreting Students Gain Greater Awareness of Literal and Idiomatic English

## 1. Introduction and background

Interpreters are required to be proficient in both their native language and at least one other language. At the Auckland University of Technology interpreting students must have achieved an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 7.5 academic to be accepted into the undergraduate interpreting courses. Interpreting course applicants who do not have a recent IELTS result, have their spoken and written proficiency skills as well as their listening comprehension in English assessed by lecturers. Interpreters need to reach this high level of proficiency in both languages to prepare them for interpreting for clients in a range of situations. One especially challenging aspect of interpreting is that of dealing with non-literal or idiomatic English. Obviously, this issue is not exclusive to interpreters, as translators face similar challenges.

This article reports on a study of student understanding of written idioms in a multilingual interpreter classroom. In a previous study (Crezee & Grant, 2013), students had been asked to paraphrase authentic idiomatic language from brief television dialogues. The term 'idiomatic' in this article refers to language that is non-compositional and cannot be accurately understood by adding together the meanings of the individual words involved (Chomsky, 1980; Fernando & Flavell, 1981; Fernando, 1996; Fraser, 1970). One thing that emerged from the previous study was the difficulty these advanced interpreting students had at actually identifying the idiomatic language. In other words, if they were presented with idiomatic language that was highlighted and used in a written or spoken text, they were generally able to use context to guess the meaning. However, if they were asked to themselves identify the idiomatic language in a written text by circling or underlining it, they were often unable to do so. This implies that were they interpreting this language, they would quite possibly give a literal rendition of the idiomatic language, thereby potentially misinterpreting the meaning. This assumption was born out by a subsequent study (Crezee & Grant, 2016) where student interpreters incorrectly interpreted idiomatic language used by paramedics featured in authentic audiovisual interpreting practice material. Hence, student interpreters' inability to correctly distinguish literal from idiomatic language may not only affect the accuracy of their input monitoring (cf. Liu, 2008), but also prevent them from considering pragmatic and culturally-appropriate equivalences. This is of concern, as interpreting such language verbatim may result in inaccurate or culturally and pragmatically inappropriate outputs (cf. Darwish, 2006; Hale, 2014; Issa, 2018; Crezee, Teng & Burn, 2017), as demonstrated in these examples cited by Mikkelson (2017, p. 69):

> "When a Colombian says *'¿que más?'* is it 'what else?' or 'how you doin'?' When a Dominican says '*dímelo, tigraso*,' is he actually talking to someone called '*tigraso'* [big tiger], or is he saying something more akin to 'talk to me, big guy'?
>
> (Palma, 2004, as cited in Valero-Garces, 2014, p. 163)

Interpreters must be able to correctly identify that the speech they are hearing contains idiomatic language, as that is the first step in ascertaining the meaning in the context or to asking for clarification.

At the time of this writing, the three main District Health Board interpreting and translation services in the Greater Auckland area in New Zealand cater to the communicative needs of migrants and refugees representing 190 or more different languages, including some languages of limited diffusion. At the Auckland University of Technology, interpreter education is non-language specific, with English as the medium of instruction. Among other goals, this program aims to improve students' awareness of different facets of English language use in a range of settings. Such awareness is essential in order for students to develop appropriate interpreting strategies aimed at accurate conversion of meaning.

This study reports on a quasi-experimental study (cf. Hale & Napier, 2013) carried out in the training of a small cohort of multilingual undergraduate interpreting students attending courses over two 12-week semesters. As noted, earlier research (Crezee & Grant, 2013) showed that interpreting students are not always able to recognize idiomatic language themselves. Not recognizing idioms means students will be unable to convey the illocutionary intent of the original text (Morris, 1999, p.6), thereby running the risk of 'betraying the meaning' of the original message. In a sense, this study relates to both input monitoring (cf. Liu, 2008) and students' ability to consider culturally and pragmatically appropriate renditions when interpreting (Hale, 2014). The study, therefore, had two aims. The part of the study conducted during the first semester tested the interpreter students' awareness of and attitudes towards idiomatic language. Obviously, the ability to recognize idiomatic language constitutes a precondition for being able to either ask for clarification or find a culturally and pragmatically appropriate manner to convey the underlying meaning.

The part of the research conducted during the second semester assessed interpreting students' aptitude for identifying where a phrase had a literal meaning, an idiomatic/non-literal meaning, or both. This included their ability to identify and explain idiomatic language when it was used in brief written dialogues. Television and soap opera dialogues were chosen because earlier research (McCarthy & Carter, 1994; Grant, 1996) has shown that these tend to employ a high density of colloquial and idiomatic language. In short, we wanted to know how familiar the interpreting students were with the idiomatic phrases used in this study and to test how accurately they could categorize and explain them.

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1. Idiomatic language, literal and non-literal language, and interpreting*

Let us first define the term "figurative and idiomatic language". There are many ways to describe idiomatic language, but traditionally these have been defined as expressions whose meanings are 'non-compositional' and therefore cannot be understood by adding together the meanings of the individual words that make up the idiom. However there are other definitions; indeed, as Columbus (2013) noted, idioms appear to be the most thoroughly described but least clearly defined type of multiword unit. According to McPherron and Randolph (2014, p.2), "idioms stubbornly resist easy classification and are some of the most difficult vocabulary terms to teach", which compounds the problem. Previous research has shown that learners struggle with both the comprehension and production of idioms (Irujo, 1986; Fernando, 1996; Kövecses & Szabo, 1996; Cooper, 1999; Liontas, 2003). As Zyzik (2011) found, despite different ways of promoting awareness and retention of idioms, we are only beginning to understand how non-native speakers actually acquire idioms. While not testing the acquisition of idioms by interpreting students here, we wanted students to understand the challenge and necessity of learning them and encourage self-study in this area.

In this study, we used the 'non-compositional' aspect to define an idiom, as well as another aspect often used to describe idioms: their fixed form. However, Moon (1998) showed that almost 40% of what she termed FEIs (fixed expressions and idioms) allowed lexical variation or transformation. In other words, an idiom such as *adding fuel to the fire* might have multiple variations, such as these British National Corpus (BNC) examples: *adding more/considerable/further/ substantial fuel to the fire*, *add fuel to these fires/her suspicions*, *added fuel to the flames*, *fan the flames and add fuel to them*, *add/adds/adding fuel to the theory /processes /conviction / debate /drive /controversy / Republican debate /alarmist law and order fire*. Even interpreting students who have already gained a high level of English may be challenged by language such as this, and increasing their awareness of it is very useful to their future careers.

Non-literal language is pervasive in everyday speech (Deignan, Littlemore & Semino, 2013, p.xi), a fact not often recognized by interpreting students. It has been argued that collocations, idioms, and lexical patterns make up as much or more of vocabulary competence than individual words (Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2002; Lewis, 1993). For example, Martinez & Murphy found that that students overestimated how much they understood these multiword expressions, although they did not even notice many of them. Martinez and Murphy concluded that "not only are multiword expressions much more common than popularly assumed, but they are also difficult for readers to both identify and decode – even when they contain very common words" (2011, p.268). The same could be said to the interpreting students in this study. Most often, understanding depends on the 'familiarity' of the expression, in other words the frequency with which the idiom has been previously encountered in its spoken or written form over a person's lifetime (Columbus, 2013, p.26). We wanted to know how familiar the interpreting students were with common idiomatic phrases and to assess how accurately they could categorize and explain them.

With regard to a possible literal or figurative meaning of idioms, previous studies (Cieślicka, 2006; Zyzik, 2011) have found that non-native English speakers usually give priority to the literal meaning over the figurative one during idiom comprehension. One explanation (Kecskes, 2000; Samani & Hashemian, 2012) for this phenomenon may be the lack of understanding of conceptual metaphors and the lack of metaphorical competence in the learners' L2 (second language). The argument is that L2 learners encounter an idiom, they are already familiar with the words that make up the idiom. Since the literal meaning of these words is more firmly established in their mental lexicon, they are more likely to access that literal meaning than try to retrieve the figurative meaning of the phrase (Kecskes, 2000). Another explanation suggests that it is only when the literal meaning of the phrase is processed and does not make sense that the figurative or idiomatic meaning is considered (Tabossi, Fanari & Wolf, 2008). But in order to consider the idiomatic meaning of any phrase, learners such as the interpreting students in this study have to be 'familiar' with the expression and aware that it can have both literal and non-literal meanings.

There has been a dearth of studies exploring interpreting students' awareness of and ability to correctly interpret idiomatic language, although there are a few studies that approximate this issue. Crezee & Grant (2013) showed that interpreting students were able to deduce the meaning of idiomatic expressions occurring in dialogues taken from reality television programs. They also found (2016), however, that their group of student interpreters often misinterpret the idiomatic language used by professionals in Australia and New Zealand as a means of reassuring patients. The study reported on here reports on student interpreters' awareness of the importance of this type of language and presents recommendations for interpreter educators. In the next section, we will outline the methods used for both phases of the study, before describing the findings.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Research questions*

Phase One of this study first examined student interpreter perceptions of the importance of idiomatic language. Next it assessed students' ability to identify phrases that were literal, idiomatic or both. Phase Two examined participants' ability to correctly identify and explain idioms in short phrases and dialogues. The study ran over the course of two semesters.

## *3.2. Participants*

Because of the language-neutral nature of the interpreting classes at our university, these classes contained both native English speakers (L1) and English language learners (L2) from a variety of backgrounds and language groups who were interested in health interpreting, court interpreting and general interpreting. However, as the study load for the program was very high and as participation in this research was voluntary and done while students were having a 15-20 minute break from their interpreting class, only a small number of the L2 students participated. The first semester class involved 12 students in their first year of study. In the second semester class only 10 of the 12 students, still in their first year of study, consistently volunteered to participate. Table 1 provides information about the participants in both phases of the study.

*Table 1: Interpreting student participants*

<table>
<tr><th>Participants</th><th>Languages</th><th>Language level</th><th>Gender</th><th>Age range</th></tr>
<tr><td>Phase One<br>1st semester (N=12)</td><td rowspan="2">Russian, Farsi, Samoan, Tongan, Spanish, Thai, Korean, Chinese</td><td>IELTS 6.5</td><td>Female: 9<br>Male: 3</td><td rowspan="2">20s-50s</td></tr>
<tr><td>Phase Two<br>2nd semester (N=10)</td><td>IELTS 6.5</td><td>Female: 10</td></tr>
</table>

As can be seen, participants in both studies worked with a range of language-pairs, were mostly female and aged from their early twenties to their mid- to late-fifties.

In each phase, the research was conducted during a 15-20 minute break in a community interpreting classroom session attended by participating students. Since few students were able to attend every class, in the end, only a small number of students (10) consistently participated during the five weeks in which the research was done. While we did not inquire as to why students chose to participate or not, we can speculate on a number of possible reasons:

- The community interpreting classes they were taking involved a considerable study load already.
- The students valued their 15-20 minute during classes to relax and not participate in the research
- Some students felt comfortable with their knowledge of literal and non-literal language and so did not feel that they would learn anything.
- Students recognized the difficulty of completing the required research tasks accurately each week
- Students chose not to risk the embarrassment of revealing their lack of knowledge in this area.

## *3.3. Methods*

### 3.3.1 Phase One: The importance and awareness of idiomatic language (first semester)

Phase One of the research focused on gauging students' awareness of idiomatic language as well as their ability to correctly identify whether expressions were literal, idiomatic or both. In the first phase of the research similarly worded brief pre- and post-tests were given to students to gauge their perspectives before and after a quasi-experimental intervention. In the first week, students were given a list of 25 phrases for which students were asked to indicate whether the language was 'literal', 'idiomatic' or 'both' (see Appendix 1). However, after the first week, it was clear that we had misjudged the length of time needed, as the students were not able to make decisions about the 25 phrases in the fifteen to twenty minutes available. For this reason, in the following weeks the students were given only 10 phrases to evaluate. Secondly, the students were given a brief written dialogue, either from a television interview with a celebrity guest, a dialogue from a local soap opera, or a BNC spoken corpus conversation. Here students were asked to circle any examples of language they identified as idiomatic and then give a written explanation of the idiom's meaning. A sample dialogue was provided, with the idiomatic language highlighted and explained, to show students what was expected of them (see Appendix 2).

3.3.2 Literal, Idiomatic or Both (second semester)

Phase One of the research was conducted during the following semester with some of the same and some different interpreting students, again during a 15-20 minute break. Part one of this phase took place during six Monday classes of the 12-week second semester, while part two took place over the final five weeks of that semester. In part one of the second phase, students who volunteered were given a table of idioms taken from the Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms (1998) during a short break in the middle of their class session. Idioms were randomly taken from the sections of the dictionary in which idioms started with an A or a B. The authors chose to select idioms in this way in order to introduce a degree of randomization. In the second part of the second phase, students were asked to identify and explain idioms that were taken from dialogues.

Ethics permission was granted for the study, so students were given the Participant Information Sheet to read and those who wished to participate signed the Consent Form from the university's Ethics committee. In order to guarantee no inadvertent harm would accrue to students who chose to participate in this research, the researcher interacting with the students in both Phase One and Phase Two was not in any way involved with the teaching. The lecturer was therefore unaware of which students were participating in the various phases of the research.

## 4. Results

4.1.1 Phase One: Pre- and post-test regarding awareness of idiomatic language

Phase One of the study involved examining student interpreters' awareness of idiomatic language, as this was not something they had explicitly focused on in the classroom. Students were given a pre- and post-test. For each question in the pre- and post-tests students were asked a series of questions designed to measure their attitude regarding idiomatic speech. Responses were measured via a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Not at all', 'A little bit', 'Quite', 'Very' to Extremely'(see Table 2). Not all of the students answered all of the questions. Examples of these questions, and some of the responses are presented below. It should be noted that only 6 of the 12 students completed the post-test questionnaire, and that all comments are rendered in the students' exact words. While Question 1 can be judged to be 'leading,' we wanted to get some indication of just how important interpreting students judged knowing idiomatic from literal language to be, as some had stated that they only wanted to focus on vocabulary related to their area of interpreting.

1. Importance of idiomatic language

On a scale from 1 to 5, how important do you think it is for interpreters to be aware of the difference between idiomatic language and literal language?

*Table 2: Importance of knowing idiomatic from literal language*

| | *Not important at all* | *A little bit important* | *Quite important* | *Very important* | *Extremely important* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Pretest* | *0* | *0* | *1* | *3* | *8* | *n=12* |
| *Post-test* | *0* | *0* | *0* | *0* | *6* | *n=6* |

The pre-test results showed that all students felt it was important to know idiomatic from literal language. Pre- and post-test comments included:

Extremely important (S1), Very important (S5), (S10) because:

- It can change the meaning of the message or the whole message itself (S1, S9, S10),
- To interpret accurately (S3, S4, S7, S11),
- To be familiar with the difference between literal and idiomatic and develop their expertise, every bit of the meaning is important (S4, S10).

2. Awareness of idiomatic language

On a scale from 1 to 5, how aware do you think you are now of the difference between language that could be literal, idiomatic, or both?

*Table 3: Awareness of the difference between idiomatic and literal language.*

| | *Not aware at all* | *A little bit aware* | *Quite aware* | *Very aware* | *Extremely aware* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Pretest* | *0* | *1* | *3* | *4* | *4* | *n=12* |
| *Post-test* | *0* | *0* | *3* | *1* | *2* | *n=6* |

Pre- and Post-test comments included:

Extremely aware (S12), very much aware (S2), quite aware now (S9) because:

- Easy to spot when is a literal or idiomatic language (S7)
- Over the years I understood more idioms, when I have time I will look for a book with idioms to fast track learning more idioms (S11)
- The more practice I have and the more experience the greater improvement and awareness I will be given (S1)
- It's been established in my long learning process of which to build up this awareness, in order to improve the language barrier (S10)
- Most of the time can only make educational (sic) guess (S4),
- If not familiar with idiomatic (sic) used, tend to fall into literal interpretation (S2)
- I am only aware of idiomatic language restrictively and desired to improve it (S5)
- Sometimes, it is a little bit difficult for me recognize whether is the literal or idiomatic (S9),
- actually, it depends on many factors: level of confidence, mood, physical state, the chosen answer applies to listening only as I may miss some elements and have to make up to guess about the meaning (S12)

Feedback from the interpreting students shows their increased awareness of the difference between literal and non-literal language, but perhaps not their increased awareness of language that could be both. This prompted the second phase of the research which is described next.

## *4.2. Phase Two: Literal, idiomatic or both*

Phase Two of the research first examined students' ability to identify phrases that were literal, idiomatic, or both. This was tested in weeks one and two of the second semester. Over weeks three, five, seven, nine and eleven, students were asked to correctly identify and explain idioms in short phrases and dialogues.

In Phase Two, student participants were given a table of idioms randomly taken from pages of the Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms (CIDI) (1998), that included idioms starting with the letters 'A' or 'B'. In addition to the Cambridge Dictionary idioms, students were given phrases containing idioms. These phrases were taken from television interviews and dialogs. The authors felt it was important that interpreting students did the exercises in class, rather than take them home, to determine what they knew at that point in time, rather than what they could look up or get help with answering, as in their jobs as future interpreters they must be able to access and use their knowledge of this as the need arises. Results from the 22 participants of the first exercise of 25 dictionary idioms and 6 idioms in the interview are given in Table 4. Some of these idioms were less familiar than others, but those which were consistently avoided or incorrectly explained by the majority of students are shown in Table 4.

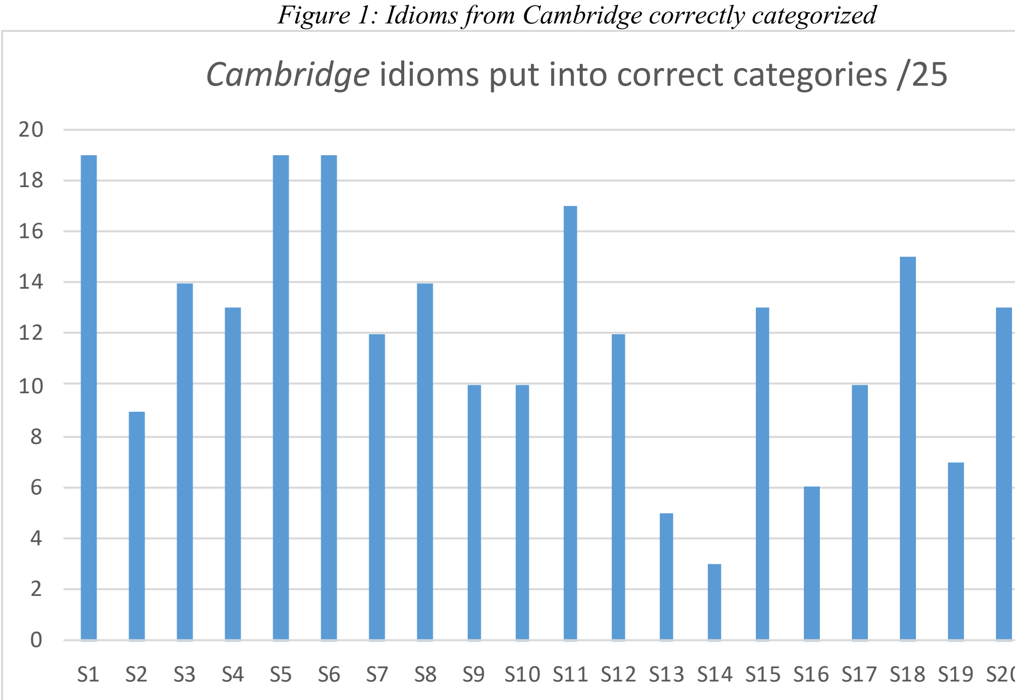
*Table 4: Identifying and explaining phrases as Literal, Idiomatic or Both, Week 1*

| *Percentage correct* | *Cambridge idioms /25 correctly identified* | *TV Interview idioms /6 correctly identified* | *TV Interview idioms /6 correctly explained* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *100%* | *0 students* | *3 students* | *1 student* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *75-99%* | *3 students* | *6 students* | *2 students* |
| *50-74%* | *8 students* | *8 students* | *5 students* |
| *30-49%* | *7 students* | *2 students* | *2 students* |
| *0-29%* | *4 students* | *3 students* | *12 students* |

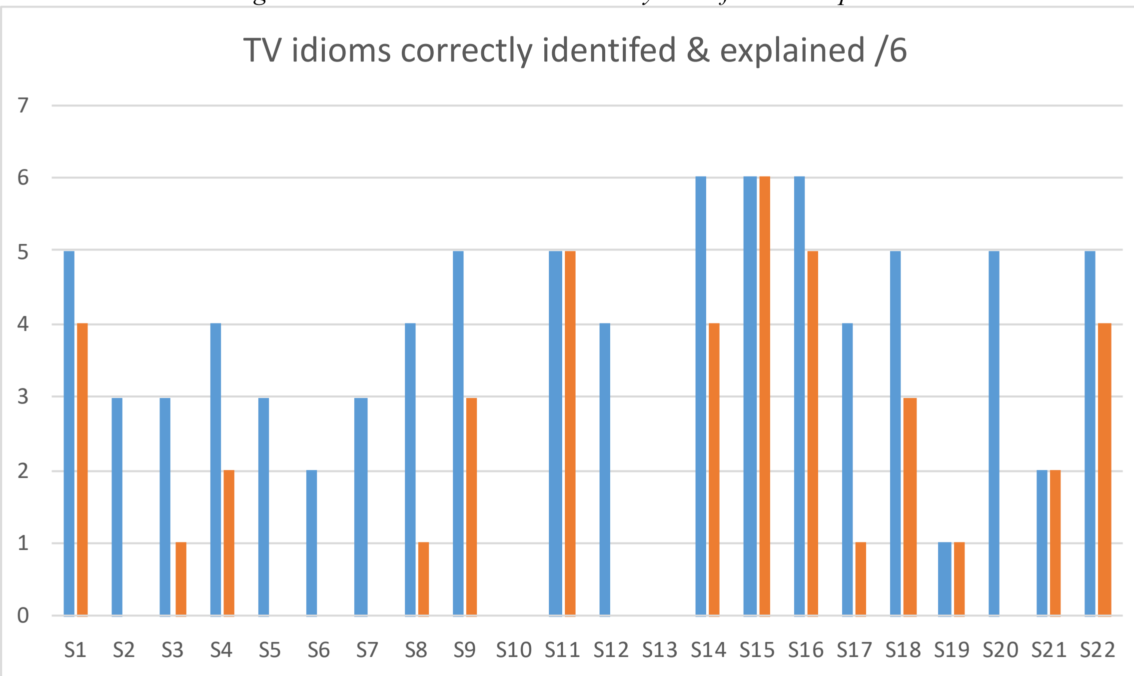
These results show how challenging the 22 students found this exercise. Sometimes they would indicate that all the phrases were idiomatic, or either idiomatic or literal, or they would avoid marking any box for particular idioms showing that they had no idea and did not wish to hazard a guess. And while they were more successful at recognizing and identifying idioms in the television interviews, they were less successful at correctly explaining them. The graph in Figure 1 gives visual results of the Week 1 phrases that were correctly identified by the 22 interpreting students (S1, S2, etc.) as being idiomatic, literal, or both.

*Figure 1: Idioms from Cambridge correctly categorized*




As noted, some students (S1, S5, S6, S11, S22) were better at correctly distinguishing the literal from the idiomatic/non-literal language than others (S13, S14, S16). However, as many as nine of the 22 students correctly categorized only 50% or less, showing that more work is needed in this area. Figure 2 shows how successful the 22 students were at correctly identifying the idioms they found in the interviews and then explaining the six idioms used in the TV interview.

*Figure 2: TV interview idioms correctly identified and explained*




In the figure above, the first bar indicates how many idioms each student could correctly identify (by circling it), while the second bar indicates how many idioms each student could correctly explain. As shown, most students were better at identifying idioms than explaining what they meant. Any missing columns for particular students (S2, S5, S6, S7, S12, S20) indicate a 0/6 score for either identifying or explaining the language or sometimes for both (S10, S13).

Table 5 lists the idioms that students found most challenging over the course of Phase Two:

*Table 5: Language consistently incorrectly identified as literal, idiomatic or both*

| *Phrases most often incorrectly identified* | | |
|---|---|---|
| *do an about face* | *hold all the aces* | *a piece of the action* |
| *on somebody's account* | *caught somebody in the act* | *be out of action* |

Tables 6 and 7 show the results during the second part of Phase Two, which took place over weeks three, five, seven, nine, and eleven of the second semester. In Table 6, the ten participating students were asked to first identify whether the phrase had a literal meaning, an idiomatic meaning or could have both meanings. The number of those who could do this each week with percentages of accuracy are given below.

*Table 6: Correctly categorising idioms, Weeks 3 to 11*

| *Percentage correct* | *Week 3 Idioms* | *Week 5 Idioms* | *Week 7 Idioms* | *Week 9 Idioms* | *Week 11 Idioms* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *80-100%* | *2 students* | *1 student* | *1 student* | *0 students* | *1 student* |
| *60-79%* | *5 students* | *3 students* | *3 students* | *6 students* | *1 student* |
| *40-59%* | *3 students* | *3 students* | *6 students* | *3 students* | *4 students* |
| *0-39%* | *0 students* | *3 students* | *0 students* | *1 students* | *4 students* |

The idiomatic phrases from the interviews and dialogues, familiar to native speakers in New Zealand but not to some of the interpreting students, are given in Table 7.

*Table 7: Correctly identifying and explaining idioms, Weeks 3-11*

| Week 3 (7) | Week 4 (5) | Week 7 (8) | Week 9 (3) | Week 11 (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *the face of ___* | *it's a doosey* | *squeaky clean* | *...like that (very quickly)* | *get back on your feet* |
| *looked like a stick insect* | *bend the rules* | *goes both ways* | *get...sorted* | *...in the book* |
| *gone mad* | *Bring it on!* | *for my own good* | *haven't the foggiest* | *ditch the self-pity* |
| *a fairy godmother* | *I'll kick your butt!* | *are a train wreck* | / | *easy for you to say* |
| *baby boomers* | *In your dreams!* | *got ___'s ear* | / | *sort yourself out* |
| *I thought I'd died and gone to heaven* | / | *always there for me* | / | *have your work cut out for you* |
| *quite grounded* | / | *giving you an out* | / | / |
| / | / | *kept in the dark* | / | / |

Figure 3 below gives a visual indication of the students' strengths and weaknesses in these exercises in weeks 3,5,7,9 and 11 of the semester. It was challenging for them to indicate whether the language was literal, non-literal (idiomatic) or could be both. As we can see, some students (S1, S2, S4) were more successful than others (S9, S10).

*Figure 3: Identifying phrases that were literal, idiomatic or both*

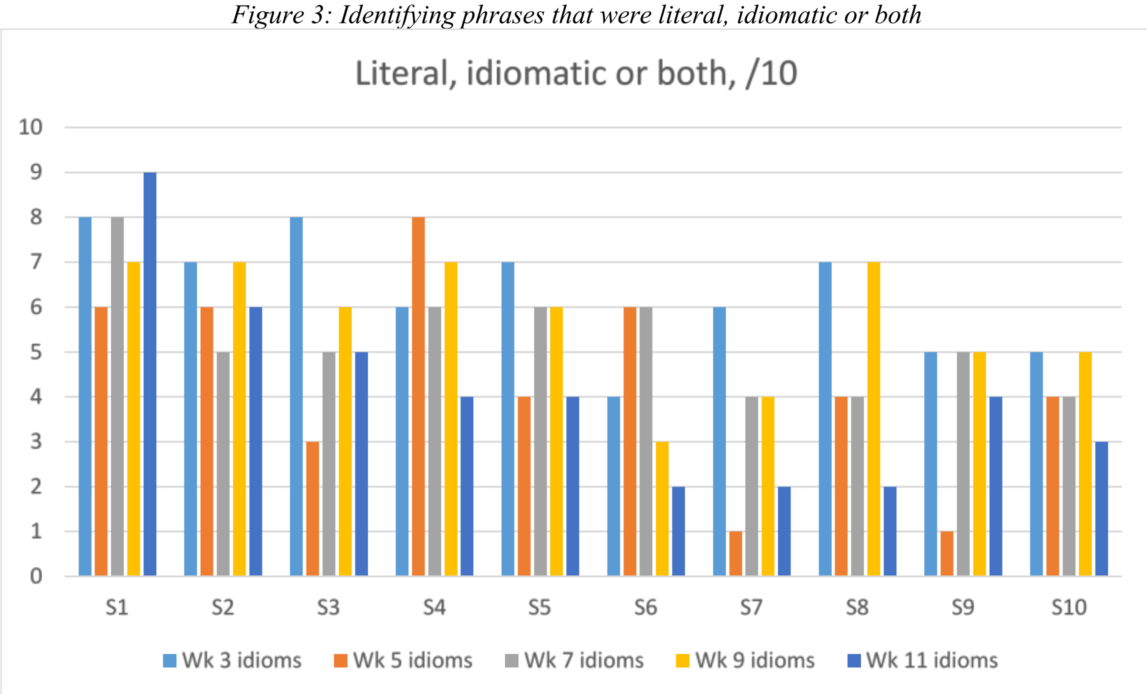



Figure 4 illustrates visually how challenging students found this part of the exercise over the remaining 5 weeks. Some (S2, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10) were able to identify the idiomatic language in some weeks but not explain it, others (S2, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10) were able to identify or explain fewer than half of the phrases and one (S6) was unable to identify or explain any of the idiomatic language found in these interviews or dialogues. Only one (S1) of the 10 students was able to identify and attempt to explain the idiomatic language every week.

*Figure 4: Correctly identifying and explaining idioms*

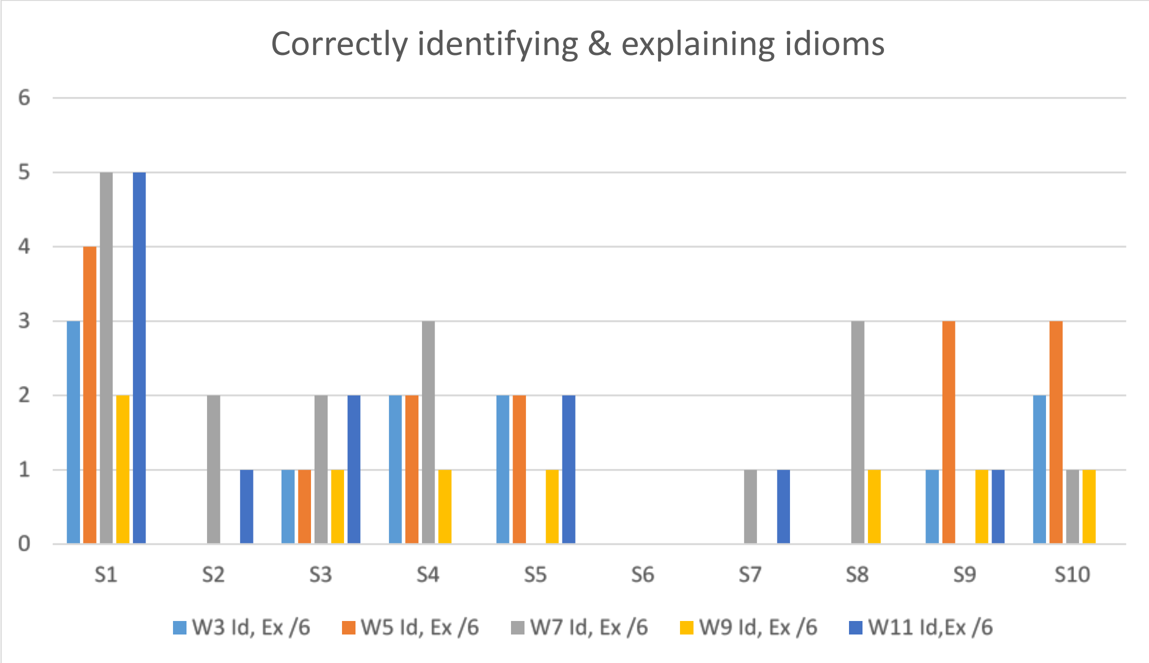



Table 8 shows the results of identifying and explaining the idiomatic language used in the short interviews or conversations. The number of idioms in these varied each week. Sometimes students would circle and correctly identify the idiomatic phrases but not attempt to explain them, other times they would circle or explain only some of the phrases or none at all. Fewer students were able to identify and explain most of the idioms this time, again giving some indication of how challenging the idiomatic language was to them, some weeks in particular.

*Table 8: Correctly identifying and explaining idioms from the dialogues, Weeks 3-11*

| *Percentage correct* | *Week 3 Idioms /5* | *Week 5 Idioms /5* | *Week 7 Idioms/8* | *Week 9 Idioms) /3* | *Week 11 Idioms /6* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *80-100%* | *0 students* | *1 student* | *0 students* | *0 students* | *1 student* |
| *60-79%* | *1 student* | *2 students* | *1 student* | *1 student* | *0 students* |
| *40-59%* | *3 students* | *2 students* | *2 students* | *0 students* | *0 students* |
| *0-39%* | *3 students* | *2 students* | *4 students* | *9 students* | *7 students* |
| *Identified, not explained* | *3 students* | *3 students* | *3 students* | *0 students* | *2 students* |

Finally, Table 9 shows idiomatic expressions which student participants consistently either failed to explain, or for which they provided incorrect explanations.

*Table 9: Language consistently avoided or incorrectly explained*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *It's a doosey.* | *goes both ways* | *in the book* |
| *I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.* | *giving you an out* | *have your work cut out for you* |
| *are a train wreck* | *always there for me* | *haven't the foggiest* |

The authors feel that the 'troublesome' idiomatic expressions in Table 9 are actually commonly used in New Zealand. It is true that adding the word *idea* to the phrase 'haven't the foggiest' would have facilitated students guessing its meaning. Students often commented that they 'had never heard' an expression prior to exposure, only to tell us that they 'now heard it all the time'. This seems to suggest that the first step to helping interpreting students become more aware of idiomatic expressions would be to recommend ways of increasing their exposure to such expressions. Some recommendations are given in the conclusion section. Secondly, student interpreters need to be taught to always ask for clarification if an expression does not make sense to them.

## 5. Discussion

### *5.1. Interpreting students and idiomatic language*

Native speakers have little difficulty recognizing idiomatic language and distinguishing it from the literal, and even if they encounter a new idiom they are usually able to use context to work out its meaning. Native speakers have learned to deduce the meaning of idiomatic expressions through being exposed to them in context. Previous experience has shown us that the non-native English speaking interpreting students may also be able to use context to work out the meaning of idiomatic language if it has already been identified as such for them, but many struggle with recognizing the idiomatic language themselves. This means that as interpreters in the workplace, they would either misunderstand an idiomatic phrase, assuming it had a literal meaning, and might interpret it literally, thereby failing to convey the meaning. In a guest lecture on translating idiomatic language taken from intercepted telephone calls for law enforcement officers, Deng (2018) advised student interpreters in one of our courses to try and find a 'challenge-proof' translation of idiomatic language used in intercepted phone calls. This involved first recognizing idiomatic language for what it was, within the context of regional language usage, before deciding on a translation that would be acceptable to both defence and prosecution lawyers (Deng, 2018). While a number of the interpreting students in the study reported on here could correctly identify the language that was idiomatic in the written dialogues, they could not explain it. Interpreter educators should train students to ask for clarification in such cases. Once the original speaker clarifies idiomatic language (e.g. by paraphrasing), interpreters can convey the meaning.

The small number of interpreting students who volunteered for each phase of this study gave positive feedback about the study's use to them. In the first phase of the research, the students felt their awareness of idiomatic language had greatly increased and that they now accepted the importance of 'keeping their ear to the ground' and listening for idiomatic language use as part of their continued professional practice as interpreters. In the second phase of the study, students felt the exercises gave them the opportunity to think about each idiom and decide whether they knew the meaning, and if they did, whether it could have both an idiomatic and a literal meaning, or only one of those. Having some time to think about the written idioms in the tables did not, however, mean that they could correctly identify which category they belonged in. In addition, students still struggled to correctly identify and explain the meaning of idiomatic language found in the interviews or dialogues.

The voluntary exercise revealed that even confident interpreting students who have a high level of proficiency in English if not native speakers, were not fully aware of either the frequency of idiomatic language or the number of expressions that can have both a literal and a non-literal meaning. Again, where student interpreters are aware that particular expressions may have a literal and a non-literal meaning, they should be trained to ask speakers for clarification if the answer is not clear from the context.

It would seem that participants' knowledge of polysemy, or the "knowledge of all the possible meanings that a word or expression could have" (Rozati & Ketabi, 2013, p.798), is weak, as is their awareness of the 'creativity' of language users. Lin (2014, p.173) refers to the Martinez and Murphy (2011) study in her discussion of 'formulaic sequences.' Her study showed that some English language learners overestimate their understanding of these sequences simply because they are composed of high-frequency words, noting that learners often overlook the idiomatic meanings of word combinations which appeared familiar. While participants in the current study had advanced levels of English proficiency, we concur with Feng (2014) that their knowledge of non-idiomatic language was still weak.

While completing the exercises in this study, the interpreting students were under time pressure (having to complete all the exercises in their 15-20 minute break from class). This sort of time-pressure is not unusual in real-life interpreting situations. While we cannot state with certainty that unanswered questions were a result of either the students' limited knowledge of idiomatic language or time-pressure, we can speculate that their lack of familiarity with many of the non-literal expressions was a factor. Furthermore, the students were not acting as professional interpreters but simply as participants in our research, so they may have made less effort when the task became too onerous, an option not available to professional interpreters. Our interpreting students appeared to find it difficult to both recognize and accurately interpret the idiomatic language, and as noted, this leaves the potential for possible misunderstanding and miscommunication.

In addition, we feel that as interpreting students do not seem to fully understand the frequency of idiomatic language in English, nor the importance of recognizing phrases that could have either a literal or a non-literal meaning, more research in this area is needed.

## *5.2. Implications for teaching*

All of the interpreting students who volunteered for this study were non-native speakers of English. As usage of idiomatic language is common, not just in general English (Cieślicka, 2006; Cooper, 1998; Grant & Nation, 2006) but also in specialty areas such as the media and advertising, interpreting students must develop not only their awareness of literal and idiomatic language and which phrases could have both meanings, but also interaction management skills to ask for clarification. Students also need to reflect on different approaches to interpreting idiomatic language, for instance by being aware of the work done by Baker (2011). Paraphrasing may be the most 'risk-averse' approach to recommend to student interpreters in this context, especially as the use of idiomatic language may not always constitute a culturally acceptable use of register in all settings (Crezee & Grant, 2016).

There is no doubt that training interpreters involves a very full program. As Bale (2013) has noted, interpreting students must continually update and improve competencies in their languages, especially at the undergraduate level, but some kind of 'language enhancement' is still necessary even for students at a graduate level. It may be that undergraduate interpreting classes will have to make room for this 'language enhancement' in their training. This could involve exposure to and discussion of a wide range of idiomatic language, not only in written but also in audiovisual form, where students are asked to identify not only the meaning of expressions, but also their illocutionary force and possible renditions in their other language.

Such language enhancement practice would allow interpreting students to increase their lexical and pragmatic knowledge of the use of both literal and non-literal/idiomatic vocabulary.

While this study was done using volunteers from an interpreting class, we feel it has relevance for student translators as well. Baker (2011) rightly focuses on different approaches to the translation of idioms and fixed patterns of language. However, student interpreters and beginning translators must first recognize and correctly identify what is idiomatic and what is not, otherwise they cannot even begin to consider suitable interpreting or translation strategies. Other researchers have noted what factors should be taken into consideration when deciding which multiword units to teach learners, the most common of which is frequency, but as Martinez (2013, p.187) notes, researchers are inconsistent about how such expressions should be prioritized. Frequency (how often the expression occurs) and range (what different text types it occurs in) are often factors used, but even with less frequent items in a corpus such as 'Nice to meet you' (which occurs 26 times in the 100 million word British National Corpus), Martinez argues, few teachers would doubt its usefulness. Boers and Lindstromberg (2009) identify another important factor, that of 'semantic transparency,' arguing that the most frequent expressions are likely to be learned anyway, and that it is the mid-range frequency items (e.g., *show someone the ropes*) that should be the focus. Interpreting educators either need to consider the frequency, range and semantic transparency of such idiomatic multiword expressions or give students strategies for learning this language themselves so they can begin to recognize and accurately interpret it.

Based on the results and feedback, we offer the following recommendations to teachers working with interpreting, translation or other non-native English-speaking students:

- Raise students' awareness from the early stages of language learning:
    - that many English phrases can have a literal meaning, a non-literal meaning, or sometimes both.
    - that these meanings can be deceptively transparent (Martinez & Murphy, 2011).
- Choose a variety of sources of idioms:

    - names of shops, written and spoken advertisements, clips from soap operas (e.g. Grant, 1996) and TV sitcoms, newspaper headlines, radio and television interviews, talkback radio, political texts.
    - dictionaries of idioms, especially those with pictures and etymology, (cf, Szczepaniak & Lew, 2011).
    - English speakers (e.g. neighbors, shop keepers, friends).
    - corpora conversations (e.g. BNC[2], COCA[3]).
    - corpora lectures – (e.g. MICASE[4], BASE[5]).
    - comparison with idioms used in their native languages, to increase their intercultural awareness.
- Show students how translation of some idioms may preserve the meaning only by changing the image, or 'spirit of the original' (Horodecka & Osadnik, 1989-90).
- Encourage students to develop strategies:
    - to notice idioms they hear and see around them.
    - to paraphrase the meaning of idiomatic language including socio-pragmatics and register.
    - to practise using idioms in their conversations with classmates, monitored by their teacher or an English speaker who can give feedback on the appropriateness of their use.

This focus on idioms would help both interpreting and translation teachers and students know if it was worth investing more time and training in this area. Future research would also serve to validate our findings or uncover new ones. The feedback already provided by the interpreting students in this research will be useful for planning future research regarding literal and non-literal language. Previous research by the authors and colleagues (Crezee & Grant, 2016; Crezee, Teng & Burn, 2017; Crezee, Burn & Teng, 2019) has shown that students are particularly receptive to idiomatic language used in documentary style reality television programs involving professionals such as law enforcement officers, border patrol personnel or paramedics and medical staff. Interpreter educators could use modalities such as GoReact or VoiceThread to allow student interpreters to interpret such naturally-occurring language and to reflect on their renditions.

### *5.3. Limitations of the study*

As the number of students participating in this study was small, it is not possible to make generalizations based on the results. Our hope, however, is that when others involved in training interpreters read about this study, it may encourage them to do similar research to see if their interpreting students are able to recognize idiomatic expressions in the target language, distinguish them from literal expressions and accurately explain the meaning in the context in which it is used. This study does give us a good idea of our own advanced undergraduate interpreting students' abilities in these areas. Further research is needed with both interpreting and translation students, as well as with other language students, to see if increased awareness in this area makes a difference. Moreover, the value of our findings is further weakened by the fact that not all the participants answered all the questions. In terms of identification and explanation of idiomatic expressions in particular, failure to respond can skew the results and their interpretation so we recommend that future studies take place during class when given enough time, teachers and/or researchers can ensure that all questions are answered.

[2] British National Corpus

3 Corpus of Contemporary American English

4 Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English

5 British Academic Spoken English Corpus

## 6. Conclusion

It is hoped that raising interpreting and other students' awareness of literal and non-literal language as well as language that can have both meanings will prove to be useful. The authors feel that this increased awareness will become an integral part of students' input monitoring. Recognizing idiomatic language for what it is will be an important first step to considering the cultural and pragmatic implications of rendering this type of language (Hale, 2014; Crezee & Grant, 2016). However, before students can learn to recognize and explain, rather than avoid, the idiomatic language they encounter, they might first need both better lexical knowledge (Zyzik, 2011) and cultural background knowledge (Zheng & Xiang, 2014), both of which can be gained through increased exposure to idiomatic language in the natural context. Interpreter educators need to facilitate this type of exposure in order to help their students improve their ability to both recognize and explain idiomatic language. Feedback from the students who participated in this research indicates that this study increased their awareness of the cultural and pragmatic implications of interpreting idiomatic language, and that they would like more training and practice in this area. An important second step will be to reinforce the concept of interaction management through asking for repetition or clarification. A third step will be strategies for conveying idioms. The authors usually refer to the very useful translation strategies outlined by Baker (2011), while reminding students that they will have less time than translators to weigh up their options. As well as interpreting and translation students, other students such as ones preparing for further study may benefit from this knowledge as well, because idiomatic phrases can also occur in academic lectures (Howarth, 1998; Simpson & Mendis, 2003). We hope that the findings of the small study described here will go some way towards dealing with our interpreting students' 'Achilles heel' in this one aspect of language, and will inspire other researchers to explore learners' knowledge of phrases that can have a literal, idiomatic or both meanings, to benefit future interpreters and translators in particular.

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## Appendix 1

*Literal, idiomatic or both? (1), Answers*

| | ***Literal*** | ***Idiomatic*** | ***Both*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *from A to Z* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *go from A to B* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *do an about face* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *be about face* | *Only literal* | | |
| *above and beyond* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *on somebody's account* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *on your own account* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *take something into account* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *play your ace* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *hold all the aces* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *an Achille's heel* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *a sore heel* | *Only literal* | | |
| *caught somebody in the act* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *caught somebody's act* | *Only literal* | | |
| *cut the act* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *a piece of the action* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *clean up your office* | *Only literal* | | |
| *clean up your act* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *be out of action* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *not know somebody from Adam* | | *Only idiom* | |
| *not know Adam* | *Only literal* | | |
| *be afraid of your own solution* | *Only literal* | | |
| *be afraid of your own shadow* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |
| *be afraid of somebody* | *Only literal* | | |
| *keep something afloat* | | | *Possible, normally idiom* |

## Appendix 2

(Example) Read the short TV dialogue below and circle any idiomatic language you see, then paraphrase the idiomatic phrase(s) in the spaces provided:

*Michael Parkinson* interview with actor *Samuel Jackson* (28.1.08)

*MP*: How has acting helped you in life?

*SJ*: In different ways, but really the only think you have after those **glory days** is your education. You can't **lose your cool** about something someone says to you, you have to ignore it. You would just **die laughing** if I told you some of the things people have said to me.

**Glory days**: happy, wonderful time in your life
**Lose your cool**: get angry
**Die laughing**: laugh a lot

*MP*: Was there a moment when you actually **took stock of** your life?

**Took stock of:** had a good look at your life, carefully thought about what you were doing with your life

*SJ*: Yes, when I realized my drinking was getting **out of hand**. Half the time I was **drunk out of my mind**, so I realized I needed to do something about it.

**Out of hand**: out of control
**Drunk out of my mind**: very drunk

# Spoken Language Interpreters and Signed Language Interpreters: Towards Cross-fertilization

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**Abstract**

**This commentary aims to give an overview of developments in the related fields of spoken and signed language interpreting, with consideration given to professionalization, standards, education and training, and research. We base our discussion on our observations of the changing nature of the sister professions over the years, as the two related fields become more closely aligned. We propose that spoken and signed language interpreters can work more closely together to promote more cross-fertilization in interpreting studies.**

Keywords: Spoken language interpreting, signed language interpreting, profession, status, training, education, standards, research

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# Spoken Language Interpreters and Signed Language Interpreters: Towards Cross-fertilization

## 1. Introduction

In 2017, at the 30th anniversary celebration conference of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters UK (ASLI) in London, we co-presented a comparative overview of the spoken language interpreting and signed language interpreting fields, in which we expressed our shared hope that the two fields would get closer. In fact, we have seen just such a trend. In 2019, Jemina Napier was appointed CETRA chair professor[i] at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL). This was the first time a signed language interpreter was selected to be the guest professor at Antwerp's international doctoral summer school for translation and interpreting studies. Out of the 25 participants in the program that year, 12 were interpreters, and three had research projects involving both spoken and signed language interpreting. We welcome this inclusion of a signed language interpreter as professor, as well as the interest shown by all the participants at the CETRA school in signed language interpreting research. In this commentary, we offer an overview of our initial ASLI presentation and of recent developments, and we describe our hopes for the future.

## 2. Spoken language interpreting and signed language interpreting: A general comparison

We believe that a stereoscopic view of interpreting, from two different angles, has the potential of highlighting differences and similarities which are often either invisible in the separate interpreting communities or taken for granted, in order to foster better understanding of various phenomena and challenges for the benefit of trainers, researchers, practitioners and ultimately society as a whole. Napier (2015) has provided a detailed comparison of spoken and signed language interpreting, with a focus on the history and development of each field, current trends and future directions. In conclusion, she states "the future looks bright with possibilities of increasing collaboration and replication of research across modalities" (pp.139-140). In this commentary, it is not our intention to repeat what is in the 2015 chapter; instead we use broader brushstrokes to create a general comparison based on our observations, including developments since 2015.

### *2.1. Fundamental technical differences between translation and interpreting, and spoken language interpreting and signed language interpreting*

For the sake of brevity, we will not address the obvious, such as the difference in modalities per se. However, in simultaneous interpreting in both spoken and signed interpreting, as well as in sight translation, the pressure to produce an accurate linguistic rendition of a speaker's utterance within seconds, generally without a possibility of revising one's output, has far-reaching implications both on what is feasible and on actual strategies and tactics.

This is what makes interpreting quite different from written or signed translation. The translators' and interpreters' means of expression also differ markedly. All use language, but whereas translators have only language choices, and sometimes page layout and print styles to express messages, interpreters have language choices, prosody and other forms of voice modulation (in spoken language interpreting), as well as visual languaging practices, eye gaze gesture, body movement, and body posture (Davitti & Pasquandrea, 2017), the last two intrinsic to signing.

Another technical difference lies in the size of more or less standardized general and specialized lexicons. The lexicons of spoken languages are larger by at least one order of magnitude than the lexicons of signed languages, which creates challenges (Pointurier-Pournin, 2009; Swabey et al., 2016) and forces signed language interpreters to resort to various preparation strategies (see Nicodemus, Swabey & Taylor, 2014) and to different tactics when working into signed languages, e.g. fingerspelling (see for example, Nicodemus et al, 2017).

### *2.2. Settings and modes*

Spoken language interpreters in conference and media settings work mostly in the simultaneous mode, but also in the 'long-consecutive' mode (with notes). In community interpreting and court interpreting, they mostly use 'short consecutive' (without notes), but sometimes use simultaneous and long consecutive as well. Signed language interpreters work predominantly in the simultaneous mode in all settings, and sometimes in the short consecutive mode in contexts where sensitive information is handled, particularly in medical and legal settings. In fact, signed language interpreters are particularly encouraged to use short consecutive or blended mode in these settings (Russell, Shaw & Malcolm, 2010). Most of their work is done in public service (community) and educational settings, though they are increasingly working as conference interpreters with deaf professionals in high-level political meetings and academic environments. The range of settings in which individual signed language interpreters work is thus generally far wider.

### *2.3. Professionalization*

In spoken language interpreting, there is a sharp distinction in most countries between conference interpreters and community interpreters, demarcated by different working conditions, remuneration and qualification requirements. The gap is narrowing due to economic pressures, which sometimes force conference interpreters to accept the less favourable remuneration and working conditions of community interpreters.

Professionalization in spoken language interpreting started with conference interpreting. AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, was founded in 1953, and the professionalization process reached maturity decades ago, with codes of practice, training institutions and social recognition. Professionalization of spoken language community interpreting started much later, in the 1980s or 1990s, and is still evolving and struggling in many countries (Hale, 2007).

The professionalization of signed language interpreting began in the United States with the establishment of the first professional association, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), in 1964. Other countries followed. In Europe, the European Forum on Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) was founded in 1993, and internationally, the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) followed in 2005. Elsewhere, professionalization of signed language interpreting is still at an early or intermediate stage. In 1992, the former WASLI president called SLI an 'emerging profession' (Scott-Gibson, 1992). More than 25 years later, is this still the case? In some ways SLI could still be considered a fledgling profession, because there is still a lack of consistency worldwide.

### *2.4. The self-image and social position of interpreters*

As is clearly expressed in internal discourse in conference interpreter training programs and illustrated by AIIC admission procedures and by various statements in the literature (e.g. Seleskovitch & Lederer 1984: 165-166, Pinhas, 1982), spoken language conference interpreters see themselves as highly educated and intelligent, with a near-perfect mastery of their working languages, capable of presenting in the target language a faithful image of a (high-level) speaker's speech. Reality is somewhat remote from this ideal, which interpreters and trainers aim to attain nevertheless through intensive training and practice. This has implications for student selection, and potential conference interpreting students often undergo stringent screening procedures to ensure that they have the linguistic competencies required. As such, conference interpreting has had a high professional status.

Spoken language community interpreters are regarded in a different light. Like signed language interpreters, they need to be versatile to work in a range of public service settings. Typically, they come from the language community that they serve. The focus of their training, if any, is typically on their role, ethical behaviour, terminology and interpersonal skills for dealing with the sensitive settings where they find themselves working (de Pedro Ricoy, 2010). Their professional status is low, and they are often incorrectly regarded by some as 'helpers' or advocates for their community.

For signed language interpreters, there tends to be a focus on signing fluency and more attention is given to relationships with deaf people, sometimes neglecting to remember that signed language interpreters work with both deaf *and* hearing people. But because interpreters themselves are often hearing, they find themselves in a situation of 'fractious interdependence' with deaf people (Napier, 2002). Deaf communities tend to give much weight to interpreters with the 'right attitude' and an alignment with the rights and interests of deaf people, with notions of empowerment for deaf people being central to working relationships (Holcomb & Smith, 2018).

## *2.5. Challenges in professional interpreting*

In spoken language interpreting, the most frequently mentioned challenges include speed of delivery of source speeches, speeches read out without the interpreters having had the texts or the time to prepare their interpretation, cognitive problems related to remote interpreting, relays and multiple relays in multi-lingual conferences, foreign accents and English as a *lingua-franca.* The literature abounds with references to these problems (see for instance Pearl, 1999; Seeber, 2017).

In signed language interpreting, most of these challenges come in as well. In addition, physical environment problems such as lighting, the physical positioning of the interpreter, the frequency of lexical gaps, variability in signing ability and signing styles of interpreters and deaf people also capture one's attention. For video relay interpreting, the two-dimensional screen onto which three-dimensional signing is mapped is also challenging when watching signed language production, but many challenges in video remote interpreting cross over spoken and signed language interpreting (see Napier, Skinner & Braun, 2018). Finally, issues of trust and acceptance by deaf community members are more salient in SLI (see Haug et al, 2017), although they are also observed in spoken language community interpreting (Edwards et al, 2005).

## *2.6. Ethical issues in professional interpreting*

In spoken language conference interpreting, ethical issues are generally not perceived as challenging, as the principals tend to be peers, though power imbalances are not infrequent, and on the whole, interpreters feel they can act as mere vectors of the speakers' messages. In spoken language community interpreting, ethical challenges are very salient. As mentioned earlier, interpreters typically identify strongly with the patient/client, most often a refugee or immigrant struggling in the complex medical, legal and social service systems of a new country and culture. This identification can lead to conflicting role expectations, to strong pressure by one party, to affective involvement and to frustration.

This also applies to signed language interpreting, where interpreters often tend to ally themselves with deaf people, who they sometimes explicitly view as having been treated unfairly by society. When they are hearing themselves and therefore part of the 'oppressors,' gaining the trust of deaf people is not a matter of course. This raises questions of role boundaries, of impartiality vs. commitment to fight inequality (De Meulder & Haualand, 2019).

## 2.7. Professional status issues

For historical reasons and as mentioned earlier, spoken language conference interpreters started out with a high professional and financial status. This status has been declining but is still high, in particular thanks to the action of AIIC and to the influence of prestigious and highly selective graduate interpreter training programs.

Spoken language community interpreters started with a far lower status, with no professional recognition or public perception of the need for quality standards. This has evolved ever since the early1990s, with the emergence of supporting legislation (in some countries), institutional accreditation, training and standards (ISO Community Interpreting). Their status and compensation have improved, but remain below those of conference interpreters with some disparities between countries.

Signed language interpreters also started with a low status as 'helpers', but professional standards were established early in the context of anti-disability legislation in some countries.

Their status has been improving with legal recognition of signed languages and with their increased visibility through television and social media, but it is strongly constrained by local political, sociocultural and economic contexts. Accreditation and training systems vary around the world, but strong guidelines for training and assessment have been developed, inter alia by the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli)[3] and the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT).

# 3. Interpreter training and education

Spoken language conference interpreter training began in the 1940s in various European universities with highly selective, mostly postgraduate programs. Mastery of all working languages (generally three or more) is a prerequisite for admission, and both admission and graduation rates have been low in what can be termed an elitist system (Pinhas, 1982).

Spoken language community interpreter training is far less selective, possibly due to the demand for interpreters in this sector, which typically outstrips conference or sign interpreting by at least two orders of magnitude. These training programs typically draw working adults from the community with some language proficiency and are relatively short, focusing more on role boundaries, ethical issues, interpreting protocols, behavioural norms, and dialogic interaction management. Community interpreting may thus have been perceived as less demanding, but this perception is changing, as more postgraduate community interpreter training programs are now being offered in various countries (Hale, 2007).

Historically, signed language interpreters 'evolved' from deaf communities, learning from deaf sign language users, but later became 'schooled' interpreters through formal education and training programmes (Cokely, 2005). The first SLI training initiatives, typically short courses, started in the USA in the 1960s. Training is now offered in a wide range of community colleges, vocational training programs and universities in various countries (Napier, 2009). Some postgraduate training is offered, but there is little incentive to gain further qualifications as there is no career progression structure – professional development training is required in many countries to maintain a credential, but no further formal education. Attrition rates in basic training programs are high, as unlike spoken language interpreter training, these programs do not require fluency in a signed language as a prerequisite for admission. As signed languages are rarely taught at school, most students entering an interpreting program are also learning to sign, and the learning curve is steep. Screening procedures have been tested for identifying applicants with the required language learning skills and personality attributes (Bontempo et al., 2014). Now that deaf sign language users have less of a gatekeeping role in who becomes a signed language interpreter, many educational providers are introducing principles of service learning into their programmes, so that interpreting students have to

[3] See http://efsli.org/publications/shop/ for guidelines on learning outcomes and assessment guidelines for interpreter training; https://www.cit-asl.org/new/past-conferences/proceedings/ for access to CIT conference proceedings that variously discuss standards for training and assessment.

devise projects that are of benefit to local deaf communities, to ensure that deaf people are still involved in training activities (Shaw, 2013).

## 4. Research into interpreting

### *4.1. A micro-overview of the development of TS, IS and TIS*

Systematic research into interpreting started in the 1960s, roughly at the same time as Translation Studies (TS), that is, research into (mostly) written translation. Among the most prominent pioneer 'practisearchers', Danica Seleskovitch in the 'West' and Ghelly Chernov in the USSR and the 'East' stand out (Gile, 1994, 1995; Pöchhacker, 2004).

Interpreting Studies (IS) was initially ignored by TS, but was gradually acknowledged as part of the discipline. Its growth has been very fast over the past two decades, and it has acquired enough 'critical mass' to be considered autonomous, and to suggest that replacing TS by the more 'federative' TIS (Translation & Interpreting Studies) 'umbrella-name' is now appropriate.

IS initially addressed exclusively spoken language conference interpreting and focused on interpreting cognition before moving on to didactic applications. It started including spoken language community interpreting later. SLI research developed autonomously, but is gradually being integrated fully into IS, as is indeed suggested by the appointment of a signed language interpreter as the visiting Chair Professor of the CETRA Translation Studies Summer School in 2019. IS now also covers topics around professional environments, working conditions, quality expectations and perception, history and more (see Pöchhacker, 2015).

Methodologically speaking, after a brief period in the 1960s and 1970s when interpreting cognition was studied experimentally by psychologists (Oléron & Nanpon, Barik, Gerver, Goldman-Eisler – see Gile, 1994; Pöchhacker, 2004), their approach was criticized by practitioners, especially Seleskovitch and followers (see a review in Gile, 1995) who took over with introspection, classroom observation and speculation with little self-skepticism. A reaction occurred in the 1990s, with a clear aspiration to 'more scientific' research, including more engagement with existing theories, with knowledge and methods from cognate disciplines, more empirical research to test theories on the basis of data (Gile, 1994). For a long time, cognitive and didactic issues were the center of attention. The 1990s began to see more systematic research into community interpreting as well, with seminal works by Wadensjö (1998) (and Roy, 2000 as regards SLI), who showed that far from being neutral 'conduits' of messages, dialogue interpreters are active participants who also manage turn-taking among the principals as well as other aspects of the interaction. With this research, social and professional issues gained visibility. More recently, this development has also spread to spoken language conference interpreting research (e.g. Diriker, 2004).

Research into SLI mirrored research into spoken language interpreting in that it also started with experiments and exploration of cognitive issues, but it quickly moved on into examining roles, ethics, dialogic practice and interactional management. We now see a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as more inter-disciplinary research. What can be qualified as a global 'explosion' of signed language interpreting research, which covers both process and product, has given rise to studies on themes such as teamwork strategies, and users' perceptions and expectations.[4]

[4] See the Gallaudet University Press Studies in Interpretation Series for examples: http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/studies-in-interpretation.html

## 5. Salient research issues and cooperation between spoken and signed language interpreting

Why should spoken language conference interpreters be interested in SLI? SLI is more complex than spoken language interpreting. On the cognitive side, besides understanding the source speech and producing a target speech, signed language interpreters need to interact with deaf persons who may sign to them while they are interpreting a speaker, and also mind their spatial position so as to see what they need to see and be seen at the same time. In addition, the high frequency of lexical gaps when working into sign languages forces them to be rapidly creative, which probably also entails higher cognitive load. Besides, they need to deal with highly variable signing styles and to adapt to deaf clients who may not have good mastery of their standard national sign language.

Looking at the work of SLIs could therefore raise awareness of phenomena that also exist in spoken language interpreting but have not been addressed yet because they are not salient enough. This includes the difference between a somewhat idealized discourse on conference interpreting, with interpreters who have perfect mastery of their working languages and can interpret speeches very faithfully in impeccable linguistic form with the less glamorous real situation, where the quality of language and the completeness and accuracy of information rendition suffer. They can also move from an interpreter-centered world view into a more user-centered view, something which is central in SLI.

As regards research into SLI, spoken language interpreters can take inspiration from studies that look at the importance of the interpreter's attitude in user satisfaction, at expectations which differ markedly from what is spelled out in professional codes of ethics, at the extent to which deaf users of SLI actually understand the interpreters' target speech, at SLI tactics that have to do with language, including International Sign. Spoken language interpreters can also learn from the rather large ethnographical and mixed methods research corpus found in SLI.[5]

Why should signed language interpreters be interested in spoken language interpreting, and in particular in conference interpreting? Perhaps because by looking at the foci of spoken language interpreting, including the conference setting, and at research on spoken language interpreting cognition, they can raise their own awareness of issues, methods and findings of some relevance to them, much in the same way as spoken language interpreters can benefit from looking at SLI.

Signed language interpreters may also be interested in what spoken language interpreters have included in their formalized ethics, standards and protocol documents. Spoken language conference interpreters have, to a large extent, determined their own standards, as opposed to the rather strong reliance of SLI on norms and expectations defined by deaf communities, which have given primacy to language and cultural heritage rights rather than to the interpreters' needs associated with the requirement to work professionally.

The higher status of spoken language conference interpreters is also a social phenomenon that signed language interpreters may be interested in, as well as their generally better working conditions and higher remuneration. The ambitious values of educational attainment and high-level professional training could also be an inspiring reference. Now that an AIIC Sign Language Network[6] has been established, more signed language interpreters are becoming members of AIIC as conference interpreters, which could lead to a shift in the overall professional status of signed language interpreters. There could also be a move towards recognising the value of multilingualism in signed language interpreters, as there is for spoken language interpreters, at least in Europe and Africa.

## 6. Towards collaborative work?

There is clearly much common ground between spoken language interpreting and SLI, especially as regards community interpreting, and the differences make mutual neighbourly interest productive. There are already collective volumes with contributions from both, and one methodological volume written by a signed language

[5] See earlier reference to Gallaudet University Press' Studies in Interpretation Series

[6] https://www.aiicsignlanguage.net

interpreter and a spoken language interpreter (Hale & Napier, 2013). Beyond this, however, comparative research and collaborative research could be even more productive.

For instance, studies of tactics and strategies with both modalities have the potential of highlighting processing differences linked to modalities, to linguistic issues, to user expectations, to norms and their effects on the output and on quality perception. Studies of quality perception in which both modalities are used would be equally interesting. Comparative studies of training methods, including student experience, the use of technological tools, and internship systems could help validate traditions or suggest changes.

At a time when the market puts increasing pressure on the interpreting profession(s) and creates some anxiety, widening horizons and prospects for cross-fertilization and productive cooperation in research are definitely welcome.

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[i] https://arts.kuleuven.be/cetra

# Making It Work: Applying AIIC Professional Standards to Conference Signed Language Interpreters

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**Abstract**

**Conference interpreters, signed and spoken, work in a wide range of high-level settings, from international summits with (non)governmental bodies to politically-oriented networking events. Considering that such settings require advanced expertise of the interpreters, it is surprising that there is still a lack of awareness among clients and interpreters of the fundamental professional standards of conference signed language interpreters. This article discusses the need to educate and raise awareness among signed language interpreters and their clients regarding the rights to demand, respectively, good working conditions and linguistic access.**

Keywords: conference interpreting, signed language interpreters, professional standards, working conditions

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# Making It Work: Applying AIIC Professional Standards to Conference Signed Language Interpreters

## 1. Introduction

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) established the AIIC Sign Language Network (SLN) in 2008 (Monfort & de Wit, 2012). The aim of SLN was to provide support to signed language interpreters working in conference settings, and to work towards them becoming members of AIIC. At their Assembly in 2012, the AIIC membership agreed that signed language interpreters could join as members. Being the first signed language interpreter to become a member of AIIC and then serving as SLN coordinator since 2015, I have been heavily involved in the further development of the SLN. In my role I am actively lobbying for signed language interpreters to enjoy rights and working conditions equal to those conferred on conference interpreters of spoken languages. As part of this effort, I am working with SLN members to increase awareness among hiring parties and the signed and spoken language interpreting community on how signed language interpreters work.

International conferences and high-level meetings require interpreters with relevant expertise and skill levels. Many opportunities exist for spoken language interpreting students in Europe to obtain these advanced skills in conference interpreting, from weeklong intensive courses to master's degrees offered at universities. These programs accommodate various language combinations, levels of linguistic competence, previous degrees and interest. However, signed language interpreters have very limited options when it comes to studying conference interpreting. The ninety educational programs currently available in Europe to train signed language interpreters prepare them as general practitioners and not specifically for conference settings (de Wit, 2016). Educational programs for signed language interpreters differ between countries and even within some countries. The majority of the programs teach students to interpret between their national signed and spoken languages. The duration and the structure of the programs do not provide opportunities for students to add additional advanced skills, such as those required by conference interpreting. This has an effect on how signed language interpreters work at conferences. While it is true that signed language interpreters are being educated at a higher level than ever before and that they are increasingly being hired by international organizations, the way they are often contracted indicates that they are insufficiently aware of the professional standards and best practices that are generally applied to spoken language interpreters and that should apply to them as well. As a result, due to a lack of shared knowledge and expertise, spoken and signed language interpreters working at the same conference may carry out their work very differently. If we encourage signed language interpreters to be trained as conference interpreters, they can eventually provide higher quality interpretations, in turn leading to improved accessibility for deaf signers.

## 2. Defining conference interpreting

Defining conference interpreting is a challenge. Comprised of many differing elements, the field of conference interpreting has eluded capture in one definition. The literature (Duflou, 2016; Gile, 2005; Setton & Dawrant, 2016) provides various definitions of conference interpreting, all of which are slightly different. The AIIC had debated the topic for years and in July 2018 established a small working group specifically to develop a single definition of the term. Currently AIIC defines conference interpreting as follows:[2]

> "Conference interpretation is conveying a message spoken in one language into another. It is practised at international summits, professional seminars, and bilateral or multilateral meetings of heads of State and Government."

This is just one example of the numerous definitions of conference interpreting that exists. A committee of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is also currently working on a new standard for conference interpreting which will include both a definition and a description of the field.

## 3. Demands

Conference settings create complex demands on interpreters due to the participants' multitude of languages, cultures, jargon, and subject matter, often in high-stakes settings (Tiselius, 2013). The conference interpreter must possess a high degree of fluency in multiple languages and cultures, as well as advanced interpreting skills and subject-matter expertise in order to deliver a quality interpretation (Duflou, 2016; Gile, 2005; Jones, 1998; Leeson, 2005; Setton & Dawrant, 2016).

Unfortunately, it appears that there is a lack of awareness among signed language interpreters and their clients about the fundamental professional standards of conference interpreters (de Wit & Sluis, 2016). These professional standards[3] lay out the expected working conditions and technical requirements for the field, such as: working hours, number of interpreters per team, and travel times. The conference interpreter has the responsibility, in consultation and collaboration with the clients, to ensure that these professional standards are met by the contracting party, which can be either the institution organizing the event or a language agency specializing in conference services. In principle, signed and spoken language interpreters working at conferences should all work and be treated according to the same professional standards.

## 4. Professional representation

AIIC was established in 1953 and developed the first professional standards for conference interpreters. This was partly in response to the experience of interpreters working at the Nuremberg trials.[4] These interpreters had first-hand experience of inadequate working conditions in a high-level conference-type setting which required simultaneous interpretation. Today, AIIC has over 3,000 individual members in 91 countries. The AIIC's professional standards ensure the professional quality of its members; the organization also acts as a trade union.[5]

Until recently, the vast majority of AIIC members were interpreters of spoken languages. To assist and encourage conference signed language interpreters to become members of AIIC, AIIC established the Sign Language Network (SLN). Originally, the SLN had only spoken language interpreters as members, whose aim was

2 https://aiic.net/node/5/conference-interpreting/lang/1
3 https://aiic.net/page/6746
4 https://aiic.net/page/7943
5 https://aiic.net/page/3202

to reach out to signed language interpreters and assist them in becoming members of AIIC. As of April 2020, AIIC had eight signed language interpreter members and nine pre-candidates. The 21 spoken language interpreters in the SLN continue to collaborate with signed language interpreter members to raise awareness among signed language interpreters, spoken language interpreters, and users of conference interpreting services (de Wit & Tiselius, 2017).

The AIIC Sign Language Network has developed three sets of guidelines for working with signed language interpreters in conference settings: guidelines for working in a mixed team,[6] guidelines for sound engineers,[7] and guidelines for positioning signed language interpreters in conferences including web-streaming.[8] Helga Stevens, a former deaf member of the European Parliament, used signed language interpreting services extensively in her work. Acknowledging the lack of recognition for the profession of signed language interpreters, she hosted a European conference in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels in September 2016. She proposed a resolution (2016/2952) for the recognition of signed languages and the signed language interpreter profession in Europe, which was passed in November 2016.

## 5. Signed language interpreters as conference interpreters

Freelance conference interpreters can be contracted directly by institutions and organizations. In spite of the fact that these are often just one-time requests, signed language interpreters report spending a disproportionate amount of time on educating organizations about the logistics and technical requirements of the assignment (de Wit & Sluis, 2016). Further complicating matters is the persistent misconception that signed language interpreters are not conference interpreters providing linguistic access to participants, but a legally-required service providing access for people with disabilities. This differentiation often leads to far-reaching consequences. Unlike their spoken language colleagues, signed language interpreters are often not officially registered for the conference and therefore do not receive equal access to documents, institutional buildings and even remuneration. To address this issue, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) adopted a resolution in January 2018 stating that spoken and signed language interpreters working at conferences are all considered conference interpreters.[9] This resolution can be used by interpreters and clients to inform agencies and institutions of the expectation of equal working conditions and remuneration for both signed and spoken language interpreters.

## 6. International agreements

Despite the AIIC resolution, further education is needed among interpreters and their clients regarding their right to demand equal working conditions and linguistic access, as stipulated in formal international agreements. These agreements are negotiated between AIIC and international institutions such as the European Parliament, the European Commission and the United Nations. AIIC is the sole negotiating partner with these institutions and has established separate agreements between AIIC and each institution. These agreements ensure the working conditions and remuneration of conference interpreters who work for the institutions, precluding the need for the individual interpreter to negotiate working conditions and payment. These institutions must already comply with the terms agreed to with AIIC.

Interpreters and clients are often unaware of these existing institutional agreements. As a result, they may agree to terms that are in conflict with them. This may then lead to conflicts with the spoken language interpreters working at the assignment who are benefitting from better pay and working conditions. In addition, if the

[6] https://aiic.net/page/6701
[7] https://aiic.net/page/6700
[8] https://aiic.net/page/7821
[9] https://aiic.net/page/8604

differences in contractual provisions lead to limited access for signed language interpreters to the documents needed to prepare for the interpretation or to institutional buildings, the end result will be to affect the access of the deaf signers.

## 7. Conclusion

Signed language interpreters have few opportunities to be trained as conference interpreters. This has a major impact on the quality of signed language interpreting services being provided at conferences. To fill this gap, the current European programs for spoken language interpreters in conference interpreting should add their national signed language as one of the working languages in the program, and signed language interpreting programs should offer a post-graduate program in conference interpreting. Signed language interpreting students should be informed of the need for experience and training in order to effectively interpret at conferences. Alternatively, current signed language interpreters with solid experience could consider reaching out to a training in conference interpreting in their country to explore the possibilities of enrolling and adding conference interpreting as a specialization to their current degree.

Moreover, the AIIC institutional agreements, AIIC professional standards, the AIIC SLN guidelines, and the European Parliament resolution (2016/2952) all provide interpreters and clients with an array of tools to request adequate working conditions for conference signed language interpreters. These in turn will lead to better access for deaf and hearing clients. It is the professional responsibility of the interpreters to educate organizations, clients, and colleagues about these standards and agreements in order to see them implemented. Recognizing and applying these professional standards will especially help linguistic minorities, such as persons who use signed languages, in participating fully and equally in high-level meetings. It is our responsibility as conference signed language interpreters to educate ourselves and all other stakeholders regarding these agreements and to encourage colleagues to adopt these professional standards.

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# Book Review: The Next Generation of Research in Interpreter Education: Pursuing Evidence-based Practice

**Francesca Maria Frittella** [1]

*Roy, C. B., and Winston, E. A. (Ed.). (2018). The next generation of research in interpreter education: Pursuing evidence-based practice. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press. (153 pages).*

Cynthia Roy and Elizabeth Winston have brought together in this volume the work of five scholars who are fundamental contributors to research-driven signed language interpreter education in the United States and Canada. The aim of the book is foreshadowed in its programmatic title: to support the ongoing shift in interpreter education from a teaching model based on perpetuated habits and myths to a systematic methodology with sound theoretical underpinning. In other words, the objective is to gradually replace teaching based on *common practices* with research-validated *best* or *effective practices*. This aim is the thread that binds together the individual contributions to this volume. Each study critically analyses one established assumption or an emerging trend in signed language interpreter education, places it within a theoretical framework, and investigates empirically its impact on the interpreting classroom. The common aim of the studies reflects a fundamental shift in the field's philosophical assumptions about teaching and learning with profound methodological implications. The participants in the educational encounter are no longer discarded as marginal or irrelevant to the learning outcome; their subjectivity is no longer regarded as an unwanted influence contaminating the study's outcomes. On the contrary, the students, their feelings, their satisfaction with the learning experience, the adequacy and depth of their reflection and metacognitive processes are regarded as fundamental forces determining the outcome of teaching. Student-dependent variables are, therefore, no longer excluded from the research question but become its very object. It could be said that the shift to "student-centered teaching" is starting to be accompanied by a shift to "student-centered research."

In Chapter 1, "Applying Adult Learning Theory to ASL-English Interpretation Role-Play Activities," authors Paul Harrelson, Annie Marks, and Chan Yi Hin report their exploration of role play in the classroom: a method

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commonly employed to prepare signed language interpreting students for real-life practice. In their inquiry, they challenge the widely-held assumption that the more authentic the classroom activities, the greater their effectiveness. To investigate this assumption, the authors present a review of situated learning theory, social learning theory, and experiential learning. Based on such a framework, the authors argue that systematic teacher's interventions are required to guarantee the effectiveness of role-play activities. The authors suggest manipulating the setup of the activities by gradually decreasing the level of teacher control along what they call the "authenticity spectrum of interpreting programme elements." Further research is needed to accomplish the ambitious aim of the authors to systematize the fundamental components of role-play activities. However, the authors' approach seems to be highly productive and may serve as a starting point for future studies. Their authenticity spectrum and catalogue of teaching techniques within this continuum may represent a scaffolding framework for the design of role-play activities. This could serve as a design model for courses with clear learning objectives and a progression corresponding to the learning needs of the students, which could guide trainers' decisions around which elements to include in the classroom, how and why.

Chapter 2, "Exploring Deaf Interpreter Education: Narratives from Practitioners and Students," presents Jeremy Rogers' qualitative study identifying patterns in curricula, instructional approach, and formative experiences in Deaf interpreter education with the aim of distinguishing effective instructional approaches. The study analysed a small corpus of semi-structured interviews with nine participants (six working Deaf interpreters and three Deaf interpreting students), who were interviewed about their perspectives on existing preparation practices. The interview transcriptions were analysed using an open-coding method to identify recurring themes. The results suggest that the institutions where the participants completed their training may be ill-equipped to admit deaf students. While the small participant population may render these results ungeneralizable, the feeling of frustration reported by the participants in being disadvantaged during their training compared to hearing students should at least serve as a loud alarm bell to institutions. It would be unacceptable if the foundational ethical principles of the profession and its very purpose—that of creating a more inclusive society with equal opportunities for all—were neglected in the very places that have been established to safeguard, nurture and spread these principles. The methodology adopted by the author seems effective to address this topic. It would be desirable to offer data and a visual representation of the total occurrence of each theme in the interview responses.

Chapter 3, "Anxiety and Self-Efficacy in Novice Interpreters: Examining the Impact of SMART Goal Setting and Mastery Rehearsal Scriptwriting," by Kimberly S. Bates, offers a comprehensive review of the issue of stress in the interpreting classroom. The author examined the beneficial impact that a combination of SMART goal setting and mastery rehearsal scriptwriting may have on novice signed language interpreters' levels of self-efficacy and anxiety. Three participants completed the study and only one received mentorship. The author collected in-depth qualitative data on participants' self-efficacy and anxiety level at baseline, midpoint and end of the study using methods such as inventories, questionnaires, a reflective journal and interviews. The in-depth analysis of each individual case is a distinguishing element of this contribution that may serve as inspiration for future studies.

Chapter 4, "Practitioners' Perspectives on Mentoring," by Kimberly A. Boeh, shares a study on mentoring. The study involved a survey of 443 interpreters and four students. The context is the perceived lack of workplace support mentioned as a reason for work dissatisfaction among signed language interpreters, combined with the feeling of novice interpreters that they are insufficiently prepared to enter the field. Mentorship, involving the direct transmission of practical knowledge by an expert to a novice entering a community of practice, is regarded as a crucial means to support students in the transition from training to real-life practice and reduce their vulnerability when facing problems for which they are not prepared. The study reveals that there is very little consensus in the field concerning mentorship models, including whether the mentors should receive remuneration and who should bear the cost for such a programme. The author proposes a possible model involving agencies partnering a veteran interpreter with an entry-level interpreter and paying each of them for their work. While the feasibility of this solution remains to be assessed, it seems important to discuss further possible solutions to give novice interpreters access to mentoring whilst guaranteeing compensation to mentors. A further issue that should be investigated is the quality of mentoring and whether and how mentors should be selected and trained.

Finally, in Chapter 5, "Teaching to Self-Assess: Developing Critical Thinking Skills for Student Interpreters," Stephen Fitzmaurice presents a method for developing students' self-assessment skills. Self-assessment skills are crucial, in that they correlate with work performance, self-regulation and life-long learning skills. For the past two years, the author has been assessing his students not on their interpretation product but on the quality of their self-assessment. Not only may this method encourage students to self-regulate and take charge of their learning process, it may also contribute to reducing classroom anxiety, by transforming the role of the trainer from assessor to facilitator of students' effective engagement.

On the whole, this book provides a valuable contribution toward furthering research-based signed language interpreter education in America and beyond. As a conference interpreter trainer, a practitioner and a researcher in interpreting pedagogy and course design, I found that the book also offers valuable insights for the research and practice of spoken language interpreting: an area in which we are still far from completing the shift to systematic, research-based teaching.

The studies in this book may provide a double contribution to interpreter education research. The first may lie in their effort to expand the theoretical framework for course design. The second contribution may lie in their methodology. The interpreting education research panorama has been largely dominated by the quantitative research paradigm. Researchers in the field of education have come to realize the inadequacy of this methodology in the investigation of pedagogical phenomena in all their complexity, the identification of crucial patterns and the explanation of the intricate interplay of factors that influence the learning outcome. This realization stimulated the recent increase in mixed-method and qualitative studies. Works like the ones presented in this volume provide practical examples of how to apply abstract principles to answer our research questions and may serve as a precedent for future studies.

Regarding the limitations of the work, more concerted efforts are required to develop a research-validated, comprehensive instructional design framework for interpreter education. A comprehensive theoretical framework on this topic in our field is still missing. Further research is needed to identify new effective practices, systematize the array of available teaching interventions and define precisely the conditions under which these may be effective. Nevertheless, our efforts should be directed to developing a methodology for qualitative interpreting pedagogy research. In this new stage, issues of rigour and legitimacy seem to challenge the field, as we are learning to apply new criteria to judge the quality of research work where the traditional parameters of quantitative research are not applicable. It should be an aim of the field to develop blueprints for study design, analysis and evaluation of qualitative data.

Finally, the very approach to teaching promoted by the editors and authors in this volume may, in itself, be regarded as a contribution of this book, perhaps the one with furthest-reaching implications for interpreter education practice. The examples of action research presented in this book, embedded in the real-life context of teaching and learning, turn the interpreting classroom into a laboratory. They consider the students, their engagement patterns and response to the activities as the primary source of data to test the effectiveness of teaching methods. This way, they urge educators not to take teaching-learning mechanisms for granted, not to leave the result of the teacher-learner interaction to chance. They remind us that each class session is meant to be a meaningful encounter and that it is our responsibility to create adequate conditions for the goals of such interaction to be met.

As a reviewer, I particularly appreciated this approach and believe that all educators could be inspired by this book to adopt a researcher perspective regarding their teaching. Other than comprehensive theoretical frameworks, rigorous study designs and validated course design and teaching methods, this approach seems indispensable to achieve sustained improvement in interpreter education. If we regarded each of our classes as a small-scale experiment and aimed to discover a piece of truth or answer a small research question every time we teach, would not this be a guarantee of life-long improvement? I believe that cultivating this mindset is the key to empowering the next generation of educators to practice innovation rather than merely replicating the unquestioned practices of the previous generation.

# Dissertation Abstracts

In this section, we feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral or master's theses. If you have recently completed a master's or PhD thesis in the field of interpreter or translator education and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200–300 words to citjournaleditor@gmail.com. We urge all academic supervisors to encourage their students to submit abstracts of their completed dissertations for inclusion in the next issue of the journal, in order to help disseminate new research and to support the next generation of academic researchers.

## Approximately There – Positioning video-mediated interpreting in frontline police services

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**Abstract**

This study examines how a police force in the UK makes use of video interpreting services to undertake standard police procedures. Two frontline police services were examined: four non-emergency video relay service (VRS) calls to a Police Scotland's helpline; and three video remote interpreted calls (VRI) to book a suspect into police custody. Both contexts were identified as areas for potential VRS/VRI expansion by Police Scotland. The research questions focused on how cooperation was negotiated during a video-mediated interpreted interaction in a frontline policing context and how cooperation affected the delivery of the combined service.

This study combined Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) with Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004) to track the capacity and willingness that each participant displayed in assuming, negotiating, or challenging the shared rights or duties, and to consider the role non-human entities (e.g. technology, policies, artefacts) had in shaping these interactive positioning moves.

This study found a range of positioning moves that either work towards or become a co-positioning arrangement. The establishment of co-positions means different actors have established a unified group of rights and duties that are mutually shared. The study findings reaffirm the challenges of remote communication, as well as which features of communication promoted by call handlers, custody sergeant and interpreters appear to be mutually effective for frontline policing interactions. The police participant and the interpreter have a shared objective: to learn about the citizen and to construct an understanding of the issue at hand. Issues still exist regarding knowing how to adapt standard police procedures or generic responses to become meaningful to someone who is a deaf user of British Sign Language (BSL). Interpreters will sometimes become involved in advocating the deaf person's right to receive parity of service beyond the VRS/VRI call. By focusing on standard police procedures and understanding what works and

why, we can identify where and when VRS/VRI services could be used to increase citizen access to other areas of police services.

Keywords: Video Relay Service, video remote interpreted calls, British Sign Language (BSL), positioning theory, policing vulnerabilities, policing diverse communities, police interpreting

## A Multi-Perspective Approach to Translation Practice and Translation Pedagogy: Professional Translators, Trainers and Students. Data from language services sectors and university translator training programs in Australia and Vietnam

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**Abstract**

This empirical study explores the nature and degree of correspondence between contemporary university translation programs and professional translation practice. It aimed to assess the degree to which translation students are equipped by their training programs with the skills required in the professional translation industry. The study employed a mixed-method design with both quantitative and qualitative approaches, featuring a first phase of online surveys (quantitative and qualitative) followed by a second phase of semi-structured interviews (qualitative). The study recruited respondents from two contexts in Australia and Vietnam, including working professional translators and translation educators and students from university translation programs.

As a theoretical framework, the data analysis applied a translator competence model which was adapted from Kelly's (2005) macro translator competence and Kiraly's (2016) dynamic model of translator competence for translator education. SPSS 22 was utilized for the quantitative analysis and NVivo 11 software was applied to the qualitative content analysis. The data were organised into three descriptive themes underlying three main competence blocks in the study framework: strategic workplace competence, instrumental competence, and thematic competence, all drawn from Campbell's (1998) view on building blocks in curriculum design.

This study provides yet more evidence that pedagogical practices lack alignment with the real life contexts of professional practice. Participating translators expressed a belief that, given the changing demands of professional translation, their work status and their client types, translator training needs to address both international and local work requirements in order to equip graduates for the global market. The results highlight the knowledge and skills that graduates felt they still lack. These include both industry-specific competences such as the ability to understand briefs and to use translation tools, and generic competences such as skill in working collaboratively with others and a familiarity with business requirements such as quotes and invoices.

This study found a high degree of congruence between what respondents perceived to be essential content in translator education and what had been offered in their own training, in particular in relation to modules related to strategic and the instrumental competencies, which were valued for their practical and profession-oriented nature. However, cross tabulations of data revealed convergences as well as divergences in expectations and in the reality of training between postgraduate and undergraduate programs in Australia and Vietnam.

This study applied a translator competence model in investigating translation practice and translation pedagogy in the Asia Pacific context. The perspectives from these two research contexts and training levels provide insights that have pedagogical implications for translator educators and program developers.

Keywords: university translation programs, professional translation requirements, translator competence, translation pedagogy, translation practice

# Authoring a Profession: A Historiography of Book Publishing and Educational Usage of Books in ASL-English Interpretation

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**Abstract**

This study identified and gathered published books concentrating on American Sign Language-English interpreting. Details of the books were recorded to develop an historical reflection, called a “historiography,” of the field of ASL-English interpreting. Book content was also critically reviewed and compared to the national standards of knowledge and skill competencies for interpreter education set by the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE). Frequencies and gaps of alignment were noted. Finally, this study collected survey data from faculty who teach undergraduate American Sign Language-English interpreting courses. The survey explored faculty familiarity with, usage of, and preferences for books published for the profession of American Sign Language-English interpreting.

The historical development of books written for the profession of American Sign Language-English interpreting offers perspective on the profession as a whole and highlights the progress made toward sharing knowledge within a professional sphere. Comparison of book content with national knowledge and competency standards provides insights that may assist interpreter educators with more appropriate book choices for particular courses. Survey data collected for this study reveals current trends in usage of books published for the ASL-English interpreting field. The data collected within this study can be used to improve interpreter education, which in turn can improve the interpreted experiences of the deaf and hearing people who rely on American Sign Language-English interpretations.

Keywords: historiography, CCIE, interpreter education, book usage, publications

## Dissertation abstracts

# The social organization of ASL-English interpreters: An institutional ethnography of getting scheduled

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**Abstract**

Despite the growing professionalization of ASL-English interpreting in the United States, questions remain regarding the decisions involving the placement of appropriately qualified and credentialed interpreters on assignments, a process referred to as scheduling. Over the past 40 years, reliance on community-sourced interpreting provision has evolved into a dependence on professional interpreting agencies and other entities engaged in the business of scheduling interpreters. Anecdotally, both professional interpreters and consumers of interpreting services report frustration with how interpreters currently are scheduled for assignments. I adopt an institutional ethnographic (IE) approach to investigate the regulation and organization of interpreter scheduling. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, and observations of scheduling activity, I report on the process of scheduling, the efficacy of providing access to clients, and the intersection of the institution of access with other large social constructs of racism and capitalism that impede access. Experiential accounts from study participants illuminate a sequence of coordinated action in interpreters' local practice. Beyond these experiential accounts are observable moments of discourse and texts that organize the sequence of scheduling ASL-English interpreters. Key stakeholders coordinated by this sequence lack information and standards to inform their work. A clearer understanding of the processes of interpreter scheduling can shed light on competing factors and recommendations for future practices, and may lead to greater collaboration on practices which are better equipped to ensure access.

Keywords: institutional ethnography, ASL-English interpreting, scheduling, ruling-relations, social institutions, Decision-Making, problematic, standpoint