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'Look-at-me' Versus 'Look-at-this': Signed Language Interpreters'Perceptions of Promotion on Facebook

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'Look-at-me' Versus 'Look-at-this': Signed Language Interpreters' Perceptions of Promotion on Facebook

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Abstract

This article reports on a study exploring signed language interpreters' perceptions of promotion on Facebook. Due to the global prevalence of Facebook, this study incorporated an international perspective by holding focus groups comprising 12 signed language interpreters from three nations: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. Facebook was perceived as a beneficial tool for promoting awareness and information about professional news and for implicit professional self-promotion. Specific strategies were reported for managing professional presentations of self on the social networking site. Interpreters promoting accessibility at events where their presence was requested was deemed acceptable, but further research is needed to conclusively determine common perspectives on an interpreter sharing information via Facebook about a public interpreting event after the fact. Participants in this study felt it was permissible for Deaf clients to post pictures or videos of working interpreters on Facebook but less so for the interpreters to post such media of themselves.

Keywords: Facebook, promotion, self-promotion, professionalism, e-professionalism, self-presentation

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'Look-at-me' Versus 'Look-at-this': Signed Language Interpreters' Perceptions of Promotion on Facebook

This article reports on an exploratory study into signed language interpreters'perceptions about promotion on Facebook. Facebook is the world's largest social networking platform, both in terms of active users and global reach (The Statistics Portal, 2015) and has been acknowledged as an effective medium for professional promotion, including both promotion of information and self-promotion (Lagenfeld, Cook, Sudbeck, Luers, & Schenarts, 2014). With new social and professional norms evolving in the online domain (Anderson & Rainie, 2010; Cain & Romanelli, 2009), it is interesting to explore how promotion may be manifesting in the interpreting profession and how professionals perceive these developments. Hence this research seeks insight into the question of how signed language interpreters perceive promotion on Facebook.

This issue is of particular relevance to interpreter trainers and interpreting students. Research (Anderson & Rainie, 2010; Fuchs, 2014) points to a new culture forming online and dissimilarities in how different generations use social media (Joiner et al., 2013; Lee & Ho, 2011; Qualman, 2013). Best (2016) asks if this new culture might impact perceptions of professional appropriateness of posts online and lead to differing expectations of more experienced and novice interpreters, such as interpreter educators and students. Generational differences of professional social media usage and expectations remain to be explored; this study was an initial inquiry into perceptions of one specific facet of online culture: online promotion. Greater insight into perceptions of professional expressions and utilization of social networking sites like Facebook for promotional purposes may enable interpreters, clients, educators, interpreting agencies and other stakeholders to proactively engage in constructive dialogue on how to leverage social media and share influence in evolving professional standards.

1.   Promotion

The issue of interpreters and self-promotion via social media has been explicitly addressed in published material, but scholarly research is lacking. However, important professional discussions are taking place around these issues, which may lead to further research. While this research study focuses on signed language interpreters, the following exploration of the available literature regarding social media and promotion encompasses both spoken and signed language interpreting, and general professional use of Facebook.

1.1. Promotion via Facebook

Researchers such as Lagenfeld et al. (2014) have identified benefits that professionals may gain from using Facebook, including information promotion, self-promotion and advertisement. Facebook allows its users to very quickly reach a large audience and share content in multiple formats such as text, pictures and video, making it an especially powerful medium for advertisement and promotion. In fact, research on professional use of Facebook (Jain et al., 2014) has shown that sharing pictures is one of the top reasons that people use the site. Social media skills on sites such as Facebook are also mentioned as important for personal branding, network building, credibility, attracting interest and other aspects of general professional self-promotion (Kleiman & Cooper, 2011). Professionals find Facebook useful for promotion of information and events; through Facebook practitioners can stay abreast of relevant developments in a professional field (Lawson & Cowling, 2015; Weber & Vincent, 2014).

Zweig (2014) examines what he refers to as the rising "look-at-me" culture of self-promotion on social media and argues that some professions are fundamentally at odds with this practice. In certain professions, the practitioner must enable or facilitate an objective beyond the practitioner and perform "anonymous work", and the better the job is performed, the less the professional is noticed. He identifies interpreting as among these professions, exploring spoken language interpreting in the United Nations, where the integrity of the work is prioritized over self-promotion and the practitioner's role in bringing about the service. Best (2016) considers anonymous work in community interpreting, in which practitioners may work on a freelance basis. Freelance practitioners in many professions, including interpreting, are often advised to engage in self-promotional tactics, such as personal branding (Downie, 2016), that enable them to stand out from the competition (Kleiman & Cooper, 2011). The codes of conduct for signed language interpreters in the countries included in this study do not mention self-promotion, nor are there any published works examining how signed language interpreters may or may not have promoted themselves prior to the advent of social media. This study explores manifestations and perceptions of online self-promotion by signed language interpreters on social media, which may help lead the profession toward agreed-upon standards and expectations of professional behaviour online.

1.1.1 Overt promotion via event presence.

The look-at-me culture of social media and ensuing type of self-promotion referenced by Zweig (2014) as being at odds with the interpreting profession is an overt form of promotion. Were an interpreter to engage in this type of self-promotion, bringing him/herself front and centre, it would distract from the primacy of the work at hand. Judd (2015) addressed this through the examples of broadcasting the presence of an interpreter for a particular event or with a notable individual (referred to in the article as "event presence"). Judd documented types of interpreters' Facebook posts, some of which posts are overt promotion:

- Posting photos of themselves or the venue explicitly or following the assignment
- Promoting interpreting assignment information, that is, sharing organization advertisements that outline the event that the individual has been hired to interpret
- Promoting that the individual will be interpreting at a particular event either via a status update, or in response to comments posted by other Facebook users
- Commenting and sharing individual experiences of the event
- Commenting on obituary notices of high-profile dignitaries, or other Deaf individuals and disclosing they had interpreted for them

Judd (2015) asks: "Is it appropriate for assigned interpreters to advertise the event they have been contracted to interpret?" The blog generated several diverse perspectives in the commentary.

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) recently published a special-edition newsletter focusing on the topic of social media and eliciting viewpoints from practitioners. In its introduction, WASLI President Debra Russell (Russell, 2016) reminded interpreters that posting information about assignments may impinge on client confidentiality. Several respondents commented that some types of assignment-related information—specifically, the availability of an interpreter at an open, public event—may not necessarily distract from the primacy of the work by bringing attention to interpreters but rather promote accessibility, encouraging members of the Deaf community, who may not otherwise be informed of the event, to attend. There are evidently

many questions about what types of promotional content are appropriate for interpreters to post on Facebook, and many varied responses, but no research to date has attempted to ascertain common perspectives.

1.2. Professional Presentations of Self on Facebook

Creating an online persona can be considered an important element of promotion. Presentation of self drives the creation of an online persona, and research has indicated that Facebook is an effective tool for self-presentation (Baraket-Bojmel, Moran, & Shahar, 2016). People choose how to portray themselves online and utilize strategies for self-presentation that they believe will garner them respect and "likes." (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016; Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013). Researchers have reported that personal and professional identities converge on social media such as Facebook (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), leading people to present themselves online in varied roles (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016). Butler (2012) suggested that signed language interpreters bifurcate their personal and professional spheres by keeping content separate, so as not to inadvertently broadcast detrimental professional presentations. Best (2016) countered that signed language interpreters typically have personal involvement within the Deaf communities in which they work, in which the personal and professional spheres overlap and cannot be easily divided. Furthermore, Clyde, Rodriguez, and Geiser (2014) conducted research on perceptions of Facebook profiles and found that a strict division between professional and personal profiles may not necessarily portray a professional persona. In order to determine how profiles are perceived, one study created Facebook profiles for a fictional physician, with personal information and healthy (hiking, reading) or unhealthy behaviours (sleeping in, overeating), and professional content related only to the physician's training and ensuing practice (Clyde et al., 2014). The researchers hypothesized that the 250 study participants would deem the purely professional profile as the most professional, but they rated the personal–healthy profiles most professional; the personal–unhealthy profiles were judged as least professional. The researchers surmised that the personal–healthy profiles contained sufficient personal information for viewers to determine certain character traits of the physician, whereas the purely professional profiles contained no personal information, precluding viewers from making any inferences (Clyde et al., 2014).

Many Facebook users employ self-enhancement strategies when creating their profiles (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016). In some cases this results in a "false Facebook self" in which an individual positively inflates his/her self-presentation to the point where the presentation deviates from the true self (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz, & Turel, 2015). Self-enhancement strategies in the context of a social network such as Facebook include selecting favourable information or events to post on the site and avoiding posting anything that may have negative implications (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016). This type of self-promotion may particularly be displayed in profiles of individuals who "believe that ability is fixed" (as opposed to malleable and learned) and "are thus primarily concerned with demonstrating their competence relative to others" (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Murayama, 2008, as cited in Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016, p. 789). However all individuals typically adjust their self-presentations to that which they think will elicit the best audience reaction, and self-enhancing posts are often associated with positive social feedback (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016). These findings support Fuchs's (2014) assertion that modern humans are now living in an increasingly participatory online culture, in which content and norms are shaped by those who participate in it and influence its creation. Individuals' own cultures may also impact the frequency of positive self-presentation on Facebook; such posts are more common in some cultures than in others (Lee-Won, Shim, Joo, & Park, 2014).

2. Methodology

This qualitative study is based on the responses of focus-group discussions with a total of 12 interpreters. Given the global nature of Facebook, international perspectives were sought. Focus groups of four participants each were held with interpreters from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. Requisites for participation

were that an individual be a signed language interpreter and a current Facebook user (i.e., have an active Facebook account), and be proficient in spoken English. Calls for participants were disseminated via email to professional networks and by Facebook posts set to public viewing. Institutional review was sought and approved for this distribution by Heriot-Watt University. Participants completed a basic data form collecting demographic information and questions about their Facebook profile, such as whether or not they were Facebook friends with other interpreters; if they followed any agencies, associations or other professional organizations on Facebook, and how often they logged into the site.

Focus groups were chosen over other qualitative data collection methods such as interviews because of the benefits that focus groups confer toward creating a synergy of perspectives. As Napier and Hale (2013) explain, focus groups facilitate the exploring of an idea to its full significance, allowing more data to be collected from participants at the same time, and the "combined effort of the group can produce a wider range of information and ideas than a series of interviews" (p. 105). Focus groups were held via Skype to facilitate the international aspect of the study. Some semistructured prompt questions regarding Facebook usage guided discussion. Prompts addressed broad topics identified in the literature; specific interview questions included, for example: What are your thoughts about Facebook and promotion? Have you seen interpreters posting pictures of themselves interpreting at public events or next to famous people? What are your perceptions on agency promotion on Facebook?

The focus-group sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions were then uploaded to QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis computer software, which facilitated the "scissor-and-sort technique" (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2006) for data analysis. The software identified sections relevant to the research question. Then a thematic framework (Rabiee, 2004) was identified for the major issues or topics, and the transcript divided into sections, with each specifically coded to delineate the corresponding related topic (Rabiee, 2004; Stewart et al., 2006). One coder was used to do this. Themes were identified when a topic was directly relevant to the literature and/or discussed by at least two groups. Attention was also directed toward identifying any country-specific themes. This was done by studying the transcript and by examining themes for expressed relevancy or irrelevancy to a single country and by noting when two groups (countries) discussed a theme and the other did not. or when only one group discussed a theme.

3. Participants

Eleven of the 12 participants turned in basic data forms. All were active users of Facebook, with three signing into Facebook daily and eight logging into Facebook more than once a day. Ten of the focus-group contributors were female and two were male. Four of the participants were in the age range of 26–33; four were ages 34–41, and three were ages 42–49. All focus-group participants who submitted data forms were Facebook friends with other signed language interpreters, and all were Facebook friends with Deaf people or those with ties to the Deaf community. Nine were Facebook friends with clients; one was Facebook friends with past clients but not current clients; one was not Facebook friends with any clients. Ten of the 11 who completed data forms followed signed language interpreting agencies, associations, or regulatory bodies on Facebook.

4. Results and Discussion

The themes discussed below include information promotion, implicit self-promotion, accessibility promotion of an event versus self-promotion, interpreting agency promotion, and photos and videos. Information promotion is directly relevant to the literature (Lagenfeld et al., 2014; Lawson & Cowling, 2015; Weber & Vincent, 2014) and a prompt question elicited perceptions regarding interpreting agency promotion. Implicit self-promotion,

accessibility promotion of an event versus self-promotion, and issues surrounding photos and videos emerged from the data as each focus group engaged in discussion and differentiated these topics.

All groups stated the usefulness of Facebook for information promotion, but differences arose when interpreters self-reported on their use of Facebook for self-promotion. Best (2016) states that most signed language interpreters work on a freelance basis and hence may view promotional tactics as important for growing their business. The eight participants from the United States and United Kingdom were all freelance interpreters; on the other hand, all four of the Danish interpreter participants were staff interpreters with agencies. Implicit self-promotion as general professionalism was seen as something to leverage. More overt promotion related to interpreter and agency event presence was found to elicit complex and differing viewpoints, sometimes depending on the perceived intent of the post. The posting of photos and videos of interpreters engaged in the practice of interpreting also generated interesting comments.

4.1. Information promotion

All participants acknowledged Facebook as an effective platform for the promotion of professional information, as the literature has also found (Lagenfeld et al., 2014; Lawson & Cowling, 2015; Weber & Vincent, 2014). This included advertising upcoming events, opportunities to participate in research studies, new research findings, forthcoming conferences, workshops and Deaf community events.

4.2. Implicit self-promotion

All participants felt that it was possible to influence perceptions of professionalism based on one's Facebook profile. The Danish interpreters stated that although they had seen promotional posts from colleagues, they themselves did not feel a need to self-promote, perhaps because they were all agency staff and may not have needed to compete and promote themselves in the same way; indeed, the agencies' own promotions featured information about their staff interpreters. In contrast, the freelance interpreters in both the American and British groups explicitly stated the importance of Facebook as an avenue of self-promotion. The type of self-promotion advocated in this context can be understood as implicit self-promotion, an important element of which is managing one's professional online persona. The Danish interpreters, too, reported strategies for managing their professional presentation of self ; but they did not consider these efforts to be "self-promotion."

The signed language interpreters perceived an overlap of their online personal and professional realms, stemming from their involvement in the Deaf community offline. None of the interpreters in this study reported keeping separate personal and professional Facebook profiles, but all groups reported strategies for managing perceptions of professionalism via their Facebook profile postings. One participant reported only posting personal content and nothing about work; another participant took an opposite approach and focused only on professionally related material. All participants reported self-monitoring the content of their posts and refraining from expressing potentially divisive comments or polarizing viewpoints. Interpreters reported separating personal and professional content only within specific groups rather than on their general Facebook page (such as in groups composed only of interpreters) to prevent potential misinterpretations or misconstrued perceptions forming among individuals who were not members of that specific group.

Posting and sharing professional materials was an oft-cited strategy for fostering implicit self-promotion. Participant 10 in the British group explained this approach when describing Facebook as "a promotional tool":

> To some extent one of the reasons I share a lot of publications, conferences, events, things like that is because it reflects positively on me as a professional interpreter.

Projecting general professionalism was viewed as fostering implicit self-promotion:

> People reach out if you have a good presence, a good reputation and you're not acting an idiot online. Then people get in touch...They might not have my e-mail or phone number to text, so they are getting to me in the most accessible way. (American Participant 2)

The theme of implicit self-promotion identified in this research emerged through discussion. The strategic posting of content included posting certain content only within specific groups to manage any potentially unfavourable reactions or interpretations from outside the target audience as well as selecting content to post with the intent of influencing audience liking (indicating that they like the post via Facebook's interaction options) and respect (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013).

4.3. Event presence: Accessibility promotion versus self-promotion

While Russell (2016) states that posting assignment-related information may undermine client confidentiality, participants agreed that confidentiality concerns were largely inapplicable to public events.

Although some commentary exists suggesting a differentiation of type between event accessibility promotion and interpreter self-promotion (WASLI, 2016), this distinction was not drawn by the researcher. Participants were simply asked if they had seen posts or photos that an interpreter had posted themselves about their presence or planned presence at a notable public assignment, and, if so, how they perceived such posts. Nevertheless, a distinction surfaced in all focus groups between posts that promote event accessibility and those that an interpreter or agency posts about their presence at the event, particularly after the fact. All participants reported observing both types of posts on Facebook, and each type of post was associated with some corresponding viewpoints.

4.3.1 Accessibility promotion

Advertising on Facebook that a public event will be accessible because a signed language interpreter will be made available—even if that interpreter originated the post— was generally viewed to be an acceptable method of event accessibility promotion. Both the American and British groups gave examples of interpreters who had been contracted to interpret at music concerts and festivals and made posts on Facebook to promote the accessibility of the event. American Participant 1 explained:

> That is a way to let the community know that, "Hey, by the way, this event has interpreters. If you want to come and want to get tickets or something, the battle has already been won, because we are already interpreting and going to be there." Come one, come all.

British Participant 10 articulated the distinction and also saw it as a beneficial development:

> They're not necessarily self-promoting. They're promoting to some extent the accessibility of festivals, which is something that hasn't happened previously.

4.3.2 Interpreter self-promotion

To explore interpreter self-promotion, participants were asked if they had observed interpreters making posts on Facebook, including posting pictures of themselves alongside prominent figures at interpreting assignments or announcing assignments at high-level jobs or other notable public events, and if so, how they perceived these posts. All participants reported having seen posts made by an interpreter working at a public event and/or next to a famous person; however, posting about one's presence as an interpreter at an event and/or with a prominent individual, particularly after the fact, led to varying viewpoints. It was felt that this was generally done in an effort to create perceptions of professional competence and respect, as British Participant 12 expressed:

> Part of the reason people are on social media is not just to communicate and keep in touch with people, it's to build up a persona. To spin a story about who you are. Look at me. I'm an amazing interpreter. Here's me with [name of famous British person]. It's quite hard to avoid being sucked into that I think.

Although they did not deem them unethical or blatantly unprofessional, participants perceived this kind of post negatively, using adjectives such as "icky" and "uncomfortable" to describe their feelings. If the motivation

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behind such posts aligns with the sentiments expressed by British Participant 12 above, then this may be understood as the type of self-promotion referenced by Zweig (2014) and argued to be incompatible with the interpreting profession. Some exceptions were suggested, however, depending on the perceived intent of the post. The American group, for example, posited that some of these types of posts may be coming less from an orientation of self-promotion and more from a feeling of awe: "*Isn't this cool?! I have the best job ever!,*" as described by American Participant 2.

The British group also mentioned possible perceptual differences depending on intent, illustrated by Participant 9 musing:

> I just wondered if we were saying, "I was interpreting for [name of famous British person] today. This man is erudite. I really respect him...it's an honour." Is it purely about the phraseology that gets used or would it still be self-promotion by putting that up? Would it just be more palatable? I'm trying to decide if whether there is a balance to be struck or if it's purely that it feels unpalatable come what may that you put in.

While it was suggested that some such posts may come from a different intent than conspicuous, look-at-me self-promotion, it was not clear if this difference in intent would make these posts more acceptable. Regardless of the intent, if the integrity of the work is not held paramount, then Zweig's (2014) theory arguably still applies. While posts of this type were perceived differently than what could be understood as event accessibility promotion and were generally viewed with reserve, the data on this particular topic were inconclusive as to perceived professional acceptability of such posts. Further research could delve more deeply into this issue.

4.3.3 Interpreting agency promotion

Ten of the 11 participants who filled in the basic data forms reported using Facebook to follow others in the interpreting community such as agencies, associations, or regulatory bodies. The Danish group said the agencies they worked for used Facebook mostly as a way of advertising, creating a company brand, sharing professional information and as a platform for introducing the Deaf community to their staff interpreters--should the interpreters choose to take part—via background information and videos of the interpreters. The Danish interpreters did not express negative sentiments toward agency promotion; in contrast, the American group in particular took issue with some agency approaches to Facebook posts. Two participants recounted incidents in which an agency announced via Facebook that it had provided interpretation coverage for a notable assignment, but failed to give the working interpreters any credit—which participants deemed an unfair marketing strategy. The American participants concurred that such posts by agencies could not be construed in any way other than self-promotion. Participant 1 explained: *With agencies it's not a geek out moment. It's a look at us.* Participants in this group viewed these posts as negative. Similar sentiments regarding agencies announcing that they provided interpreters at notable events were also expressed in the British group, until Participant 9 made the following point:

> I agree that there becomes a very fine line where we start to talk about jobs, but actually it's a business selling themselves...to get its name out there to get more contacts thru the door. It's just because it's in our world of interpreting that we find it uncomfortable...I think it would be... double standard of us to say that they can't promote themselves because they are technically a business doing what businesses will do these days, which is reaching out by social media.

The American and British groups conveyed some feelings of being held to different expectations on Facebook as interpreters than perhaps to what some agencies themselves adhere. This apparent difference in perception of agency versus individual interpreter event presence promotional posting is interesting given that Best (2016) states that many freelance interpreters can essentially be understood as entrepreneurs running their own small businesses. Further research could delve further into individual freelance interpreter expectations of promotion versus acceptable promotion for interpreting service provision entities.

4.4. Photos and video

Focus-group participants in this study acknowledged the advantages of Facebook technology for promotional purposes, but they also mentioned potential liabilities from the same features that conferred benefits. The fact that pictures or videos can be taken and disseminated on Facebook with the possibility of content going viral (i.e., becoming extremely popular via multiple shares) without the interpreter's knowledge or permission was seen as potentially detrimental to one's professional persona. It was discussed that although an interpreter may untag him/herself from a picture posted by another Facebook user so that the picture does not appear on his/her own Facebook wall, the photograph would still remain elsewhere on Facebook. This leaves public perceptions with professional ramifications out of one's complete control.

There was consensus by all groups that photos or videos posted by others, particularly Deaf clients, were acceptable; however, pictures or videos posted by the interpreter themselves were deemed less permissible. Participant 6 in the Danish group explained:

> If someone is taking pictures of what's going on to go on the page of the Deaf association [it's different than] if I ask someone else to take a picture of me and the person I'm interpreting for or with, and I put it up on my Facebook page.

A British contributor, Participant 9, offered additional insight:

> I think for me one of the biggest things I've noticed is where it starts creating power and control issues in my head, of figuring out who's putting what where, for what reason. If a Deaf person posts a picture of you while they have been working with you because they were necessarily in charge of the job, I don't struggle with that so much because actually that's them making the decision.

While it was generally perceived as less favourable for an interpreter to post pictures him/herself, both the American and Danish focus groups recounted examples of interpreters asking Deaf clients for permission to post photos before doing so; this was generally felt to make it acceptable. This tactic fails to address the fact that people viewing the post may be unaware that the Deaf client gave that permission, a consideration that was not discussed in any of the focus groups. There was, however, also sentiment expressed regarding uncertainty about the appropriate professional response to pictures that others had posted of the interpreter, as articulated by Danish Participant 8:

> If some person...takes a picture of me where I'm interpreting and shares it with me on my Facebook, I have to think about what I do about it. Some consumers comment on that. Should I comment on that or should I pretend I didn't see it or should I "like" it? If I "like" it does it mean that I like myself because I was interpreting? I think about it so much, and I just decided to "like" nothing.

While this study found that pictures posted by a Deaf client were more acceptable than those posted by an interpreter themselves and that asking a client for permission to post a picture was also deemed admissible, further research could delve into how commonly this view is held and elicit further insight into common rationale underpinning these perceptions. Additional research could also explore types of online responses typically employed in reaction to having photographic or videographic content of oneself posted on Facebook. Jain et al. (2014) found that sharing pictures was rated as a top reason for using Facebook. Hence issues surrounding photographs and videos of interpreters working at an assignment are important contemporary considerations of signed language interpreter professionalism, and worthy of further exploration.

5. Study Limitations

This exploratory study into interpreter perceptions of promotion on Facebook has some limitations. Although all participants reported having seen posts made by an interpreter working at a notable event and/or next to a famous

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person, some described having seen these types of posts more often than others. Hence while perceptions on different types of promotional posts on Facebook were sought, this research does not establish the prevalence of these types of posts.

The researcher did not ask participants if their Facebook viewing habits were more country-centric or international in nature. Regardless, all participants were from Western countries, so while an international viewpoint was gathered, generalizability of findings to non-Western countries and contexts may not hold. In this regard, it is also worth noting that the sample size for this research study was relatively small.

Rabiee (2004, p. 657) states, "It is important to acknowledge that regardless of the type of research…an extent of subjectivity exits." Though approaches were taken to reduce potential subjectivity by adhering to recognized methods for conducting focus groups and subsequent data analysis as described in the literature (Napier & Hale, 2013; Rabiee, 2004; Stewart et al., 2006;), all phases of this research were carried out by a single researcher, so some level of subjectivity may be present (Rabiee, 2004) regardless of efforts to guard against it.

6. Conclusion

This research serves as a foundational inquiry into perceptions of promotional posts by interpreters on Facebook and may lay the groundwork for further discussion and exploration of the topic amongst educators, practitioners, students and researchers. This study found that interpreters perceived Facebook as helpful in promoting awareness of information and relevant events. The ability to engage in implicit self-promotion was also perceived as a professional benefit to leverage, a finding that can be incorporated into a broader teaching of maintaining a professional online persona.

This research also found that there was a difference in perception among the signed language interpreters in this study when a Facebook post was event-centric and promoted accessibility, compared with an interpreter-centric post, particularly when posted after the event took place. Further research could delve more deeply into how such posts are perceived. Photos and videos posted by the client rather than the interpreter were regarded as acceptable, but future research could explore perceptions of members of the Deaf community to posted pictures as well as strategies for interpreters managing photos and videos posted by others.

Several avenues of further research could expound further on the findings from this study. For example, although Lee-Won et al. (2014) found cultural differences in presentations of self on Facebook, in this research study there were no distinctions between the interpreters of different nationalities; but they all came from Western countries. Given the global pervasiveness of Facebook and social media in general, cultural differences in usage and perception of Facebook could be explored further. Other types of social media other than Facebook may also be examined to investigate promotion via other platforms.

Research has shown that social media users create posts expecting positive audience response (Baraket-Bojmel et al., 2016), offering support to the assertion that norms online are shaped via participant involvement (Fuchs, 2014). Zweig (2014) argues that the 'look-at-me' culture of social media is incompatible with the occupation of interpreting, but social media is becoming a part of everyday life. This necessitates awareness, forethought and ultimately guidance for professional online expectations of interpreting practitioners. Further research into how promotion in the interpreting field is manifesting and perceived by practitioners, clients and other stakeholders—as well as explicit dialogue and awareness-raising on the topic in workshops and training programs—will encourage the interpreting profession to proactively engage in shaping online expectations of professionalism.

Acknowledgments

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