

# Constructing linguistic identity and interpreting: a case study of SL interpreting on Chinese television for high-profile political conferences

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the broader social and political implications of sign language interpreting as a social phenomenon in China by investigating – via analysis of news reports and semi-structured interviews with Deaf Chinese people and interpreters – stakeholders’ discourses arising from the presence of sign language interpreting on television for major Chinese political conferences in 2012. Adopting a social constructionist perspective, the analysis draws from media studies, translation studies, sociology, and Deaf studies, with particular attention to the ways in which aspects of interpreting provision are described and valorised. The results show that the interpreting was framed differently, primarily in terms of its quality and social and political value, by the media and by the signing community. Close analysis suggests that the existing construction of deafness primarily as a disability influences the delivery of sign language interpreting in what the target service-users report to be a semi-intelligible form. In the current Chinese social and cultural context, however, such a service is nevertheless prized by signers; they argue that it can provide a learning opportunity for the dominant hearing society, and creates a discursive space for the linguistic and cultural dimensions of Deaf identity to emerge.

For a better and fuller soul

致我亲爱的外婆徐中华

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赵肖

2015年7月9日 于爱丁堡

## Declaration Statement

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# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Declaration Statement .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
Table of tables .....	xii
Table of Abbreviations .....	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Sign language interpreting on Chinese television	1
1.2 Conceptualising interpreting as a socially constructed phenomenon	2
1.3 The political and social value of interpreting	4
1.4 Key terms and definitions	8
1.5 Research questions	10
1.6 Chapter summaries	11
1.7 Summary	13
Chapter 2 Social constructionism, framing theory, and the Chinese context .....	14
2.1 Social constructionism	14
2.1.1 Key features of social constructionism	14
2.1.2 Approaching discourse from a social constructionist perspective	16
2.2 Framing — a social constructionist perspective	18
2.2.1 Frame and framing	18
2.2.2 Framing: selection, exclusion and salience	20
2.2.3 Identifying framing elements	21
2.3 Understanding the social and cultural context of China	26
2.3.1 A unique China — a civilisation or nation-state	26
2.3.2 Chinese cultural values	29
2.3.3 A dominant Han identity and language	30
2.3.4 Language standardisation	32
2.3.5 Chinese media and censorship	34
2.4 Deaf population in China	35

2.4.1 Understanding deafness in China	40
2.4.2 The debate on Chinese Sign Language	43
2.5 Sign language interpreting in China	49
2.5.1 Sign language interpreted programmes in China	52
2.6 Summary	56
Chapter 3 Identity, society, citizenship, and interpreting .....	57
3.1 Redefining interpreting as a social phenomenon	57
3.1.1 Traditional approaches to interpreting	58
3.1.2 Studies on SL interpreting on television	65
3.1.3 Interpreting and the social turn	58
3.1.5 A broader conceptualisation of interpreting	64
3.2 Translation, interpreting and society	67
3.2.1 Rediscover the value of Translation in history	67
3.2.2 Interpreting and its social functions and value	69
3.2.3 Interpreting as constructed by stakeholders	73
3.3 Interpreting and identity	80
3.3.1 Constructing identity	81
3.3.2 Constructing disability and Deaf identity	83
3.3.3 Studying identity in Translation studies	86
3.3.4 Translation and different dimensions of identity	88
3.3.5 Constructing interpreting and identity	91
3.4 Interpreting and citizenship	94
3.4.1 Citizenship and cultural citizenship	94
3.5 A discussion of the theoretical framework	99
3.5.1 Research questions	100
3.5.2 Key concepts	101
Chapter 4 Methodology .....	110
4.1 Appropriateness of the research design	110
4.1.1 Epistemological considerations	110
4.1.2 Ontological considerations	111
4.2 Research strategy: a qualitative research	112
4.2.1 Working with an interpreter	115
4.2.2 The bias of the researcher	118



4.3 Sampling	119
4.4 Data source	120
4.5 Analysing process	123
4.5.1 Frame analysis	123
4.5.2 Developing codes	126
4.5.3 Coding standards	130
4.6 Summary	131
Chapter 5 Data analysis .....	132
5.1 Opposing evaluations: the quality of SL interpreting	132
5.1.1 The media: unanimous praise	132
5.1.2 The signing community: unanimous incomprehension	136
5.1.3 SLIs: dissatisfaction and a sense of understanding	140
5.2 Selection, exclusion, and salience: framing identity and language	144
5.2.1 The media: defining deafness as an obstacle and disability	144
5.2.2 The signing community: deafness as a disability with a language	146
5.2.3 Interpreters: the importance of heritage CSL in understanding deafness	150
5.3 Causal attribution: SL interpreting as a political symbol and service providers	154
5.3.1 The media: a reflection of improved political practice	154
5.3.2 The signing community: political progress vs. an empty “face project”	156
5.3.3 SLIs: the value of interpreting as a “face project”	162
5.4 Framing the social value of SL interpreting: the Chinese context	164
5.4.1 The media: an exercise of social and political citizenship	165
5.4.2 Deaf people: a “psychological comfort” and a communication opportunity	166
5.4.3 Interpreters: a symbolic affirmation of Deaf value and visibility	172
5.5 Treatment recommendations: agreement reached between SLIs and Deaf interviewees	177
5.5.1 Recognising and protecting heritage CSL	177
5.5.2 Diversifying of SL interpreted programmes	178
5.5.3 Engaging with Deaf community	180
5.6 Summary	182
Chapter 6 Discussion .....	185
6.1 A review of the research questions	185
6.2 Research question no. 1: the projection of Deaf identity	185
6.3 Research question no. 2: the value and purpose of interpreting	189

6.3.1 Articulation, difference, respect and political pay-off	190
6.3.2 Understanding interpreting and the service provider	191
6.3.3 SL interpreting on television—an incomprehensible service	195
6.3.4 Incomprehensible service and the service provider	197
6.3.5 “Face project” and face value	200
6.3.6 Government as a parent	202
6.4 Research question no. 3: cultural citizenship—the interplay between identity and interpreting	204
6.4.1 Citizenship and cultural citizenship	205
6.4.2 The real audience — hearing Chinese people	206
6.4.3 The interplay between interpreting and identity	209
6.5 Conceptualising SL interpreting as a socially constructed phenomenon: a summary	210
Chapter 7 Conclusion.....	212
7.1 Introduction	212
7.2 Empirical findings	213
7.2.1 Question 1	213
7.2.2 Question 2	213
7.2.3 Question 3	216
7.3 Theoretical implications	216
7.3.1 Understanding difference: the key to identity construction	217
7.3.2 The value of interpreting — raise the visibility and value of minority language	218
7.3.3 Audism — the root of dysconscious audism	218
7.3.4 Semi-intelligible interpreting — an endorsement of the service provider?	219
7.3.5 In the Chinese social context — a semi-intelligible service is still an articulation	220
7.3.6 The value of interpreting — exercising political citizenship or generating cultural citizenship	220
7.3.7 The influence of Chinese cultural values	221
7.3.8 The “truth” of SL interpreting on television is socially constructed	222
7.4 Policy implications and recommendations	222
7.5 Limitations and future study	224
7.6 Summary	228
Appendices.....	231
Appendix A – Information Sheet and Consent Form	231
Appendix B – The Interview Guide	236

Appendix C – interviews with Deaf and SLI participants	237
List of references.....	236

## **Table of tables**

Table 1 deaf employment figures .....	38
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## **Table of Abbreviations**

CPPCC      China People’s Political Consultative Conference

CPC      Communist Party of China

CCTV      China Central Television

CSL      Chinese Sign Language

D1      Deaf interviewee 1

D2      Deaf interviewee 2

D3      Deaf interviewee 3

D4      Deaf interviewee 4

D5      Deaf interviewee 5

D6      Deaf interviewee 6

D7      Deaf interviewee 7

D8      Deaf interviewee 8

D9      Deaf interviewee 9

D10      Deaf interviewee 10

D11      Deaf interviewee 11

D12      Deaf interviewee 12

D13      Deaf interviewee 13

I1      Interpreter 1

I2      Interpreter 2

I3      Interpreter 3

I4      Interpreter 4

I5      Interpreter 5

I6	Interpreter 6
N1	News 1
N2	News 2
N3	News 3
N4	News 4
N5	News 5
N6	News 6
NPC	National People's Congress
T&I	translation and interpreting

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Sign language interpreting on Chinese television

On March 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, sign language interpreting (hereafter referred to as SL interpreting) was broadcast on the first channel of China Central Television (CCTV-1) during the live streaming of the opening ceremony of China's two most important political conferences—the National People's Congress (NPC) and the China People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) respectively. Later in the year, SL interpreting was adopted in the live broadcast of the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on November 8th. The practice of providing SL interpreting for these three high profile political conferences has then continued as a norm in the following years. It is worth noting that the live broadcast in 2012 was not the first time that SL interpreting was practised by CCTV nor was it the first time that SL interpreting was broadcast on any Chinese television channel. However, it made a difference in the history of SL interpreting in China because the event attracted attention from almost all of the most important news agencies in China. For example, the event was reported on television by 《新闻联播》 (*Xinwen Lianbo*)—the most influential daily news programme run by CCTV, in printed media such as *People's Daily* on its overseas edition, and major online news websites such as *Sohu News*, *Sina News*, *China Net*, *Xinhua Net*. These reports were then quickly circulated among other online news websites.

Not only did the event attract significant attention from the media, it also received unanimous praise from them. The news broadcasts and articles focused on different aspects of SL interpreting on television. Some reports praised the hard preparation work conducted by the interpreter to ensure the quality of the interpreting service; the strength and determination of the interpreter to overcome difficulties encountered during the live broadcast; and the level of professionalism exhibited in her performance. Other news stories commended the symbolic value of SL interpreting and argued that it demonstrated that the Chinese government understood and respected its citizens; guaranteed the political and social rights of Deaf Chinese citizens; raised awareness in society to care about people with disabilities; and represented significant social progress.

The unanimous compliments given by the Chinese media serve as a sharp contrast with the ubiquitous criticism in the literature and Deaf community on the quality and professionalism of SL interpreting in China. Research has shown that most Chinese Deaf signers have difficulty understanding SL interpreting on television (Xiao and Yu, 2009, Xiao and Li, 2011). Xiao et al. (2015) shows that compared to hearing Chinese audiences, Deaf viewers' comprehension of the same news content is significantly lower. Since the inception of the service, Deaf people and sign language interpreters (hereafter referred to as SLIs) have complained about the tiny SL screen; the interpreters' lack of SL proficiency; large loss of information; most importantly, the repudiation of heritage Chinese Sign Language<sup>1</sup> (hereafter referred to as heritage CSL, for a fuller discussion on this issue, see 2.4.2); and urged the authorities to recognise heritage CSL as a fully-fledged language. Through informal discussion with both Deaf Chinese persons and SLIs, I gathered that the interpreting for these high profile political conferences had been subjected to the same criticism as the other interpreted television content. Arguably, it can be concluded that the general interpreting service on television hardly meets the information demand on the part of Deaf Chinese people, and is unlikely to have ensured the practice of political and social rights for Deaf citizens in China or be perceived as respect paid by the Chinese government.

A debate has, therefore, emerged with the media sitting on one end praising the quality and value of SL interpreting on television while the Deaf community on the other end criticise the quality (and presumably the value) of the service. Opposing discourses (see section 1.4 for a discussion on the definition of discourse) and interpretations on the phenomenon of broadcasting SL interpreting on television have surfaced as a result.

## **1.2 Conceptualising interpreting as a socially constructed phenomenon**

The first thing that caught my attention about this event is the fact that SL interpreting is discussed by the media as a social and political practice that serves a larger purpose than just communication. Even though as early as in 1977, Kade (1977:29) has already pointed out that “interpreting as part of communicative interaction is a social

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<sup>1</sup> This term is adapted from the term heritage British Sign Language (heritage BSL) by Graham Turner (2006) to refer to the form of BSL that is least influenced by English.



phenomenon, conditioned by social factors and serving social objectives”, the notion that interpreting is a social phenomenon, the social factors that condition it, and the social objectives it serves have not received much scholarly attention in interpreting studies. Traditionally, interpreting, as a form of Translation (see section 1.4 for a discussion of the term) has been understood as a “process” where words in one language are converted into another (Chesterman, 1997:20, Pöchhacker, 2006b:221) rather than a *phenomenon*. More often than not, particular attention is given to the immediacy of the interpreting process, especially that of conference interpreting. For example, Kade (1968) defined interpreting as a form of Translation in which the source-language text is presented only once and thus cannot be reviewed or replayed, and the target-language text is produced under time pressure, with little chance for correction and revision (cited in (Pöchhacker, 2004)). Later on, interpreting scholars start to see interpreting as not only concerned with two languages but also two cultures. In the shift of paradigm, the emphasis is again not given to the phenomenon of interpreting but the interpreter and how the interpreter is recognised as a human being who can influence and be influenced by the participants, languages, cultures and social norms of any interaction (Roy, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1993b, 1999, Wadensjö, 2014).

Pöchhacker (2006:229) observes that in recent years, more and more interpreting studies researchers have started to explore the social dimension of interpreting.

Translation and interpreting (hereafter referred to as T&I) are increasingly seen as social practices that have taken place in particular social contexts. As Wolf (2014:10) reasons in the field of translation studies, “the translators are inevitably part of a social system and the translation phenomenon is undoubtedly influenced by social institutions at its different production stages such as the selection, translation and publication”.

Arguably, similar statements can be made for interpreting as the interpreters, just like translators, are part of a social system and the interpreting phenomenon, similar to the translation phenomenon, is also conditioned by various social factors. Therefore, the particular SL interpreting event that attracted my interest in the study provides a good opportunity to examine interpreting as a social phenomenon.

Moreover, I am interested in understanding the reason(s) that give(s) rise to the various and likely conflicting discourses on the particular interpreting phenomenon. The different discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television and the

evaluations and interpretations that come with them seem to suggest that interpreting, being perceived as a social phenomenon, is then subject to the process of social construction by different social actors or stakeholders. The media, presumably knowing little about Deaf people and their language, constructed SL interpreting as a satisfactory service that has far-reaching implications. The SL users, Deaf persons and SLIs alike, constructed the same interpreting phenomenon as a disappointing experience, which on the face of it, might have little effect in society.

The process of social construction may be further explored by employing Entman's (1993, 2004, 2007, 2010) work on framing theory in the field of media studies. He has pointed out that in the context of communication, the communicators, be it the media or an individual, consciously or subconsciously select some aspects of the issue in question and make them more salient (framing) in the communicating discourse in such a way as to promote a particular interpretation (frame). Framing theory suggests that the different discourses on the SL interpreting phenomenon might be understood as a result of framing, where the media and the Deaf people and interpreters have selected and emphasised different aspects of the perceived phenomenon. This approach also invites researchers to look beyond the immediate participants (Deaf people) of an interpreting process and identify other relevant stakeholders (the media and SLIs) who are actively involved in the construction of the interpreting phenomenon.

### **1.3 The political and social value of interpreting**

The third aspect of the event that attracted my attention is the media's endorsement of the symbolic value of SL interpreting and the contribution the media believed SL interpreting had made to the government, society, and people with disabilities. These are perhaps not just far-fetched claims made by the media to praise the Chinese government and might have rightfully pointed out the importance held by interpreting in society and policy-making. Among all the studies that explore interpreting as a social phenomenon and the social objectives it serves, interpreting that involves a certain "oppressed" social group—be it asylum seekers, immigrants, or native linguistic minorities—seems to have yielded the most successful results. Researchers, such as Cronin (2006) and Baxter (2013) have contemplated that T&I is not just a matter of communication, but can (and perhaps should) be used as a social and political tool that

achieves significant outcomes (claims not far away from those made by the Chinese media).

Cronin (2006) provides a useful account of the social and political value of T&I service for immigrants, with particular focus on how it addresses issues of identity and citizenship. Based on Sennett's (2002:43) term "alterity" that shows the possibility of classifying unfamiliar social groups as the unknown other, Cronin (2006) argues that there are two alterities facing immigrants. A negative alterity associates the *difference* between immigrants and dominant social group and the unknown of immigrants with indifference, or even, treats the difference and unknown as a threat and something unwanted. Worse still, the unwillingness to communicate and engage with the unknown language renders that particular social group fundamentally undesirable. In fact, Cronin (2006) points out that when one group's language is considered as incomprehensible, less respectable, or even animalistic, the speakers of that language are usually treated with less respect by other members of the society.

In comparison, a more positive alterity of the unknown other treats the difference between dominant and minority groups as an opportunity to explore the different languages and cultures and sees the difference as a contribution to the diversity of the host culture. Cronin argues that translation can be used to achieve this positive alterity through its practice in "urban planning" and "education" (2006:68). According to him, to achieve higher social interaction, it is of great importance to understand a multilingual and multi-ethnic urban space as a *translation space*. This is because translation can be primarily viewed as a dialogue with a different language and culture that has the potential to have an impact on or make a change to one's own language and culture. As a result, translation can be used to stimulate interaction between members that come from different linguistic and cultural groups. In the context of Europe, it is usually Western European languages that are introduced into classrooms for students to learn to translate, yet Cronin argues that if the division between domestic and foreign languages were to be broken down, then the range of languages that needs to be taught in order to open up translation spaces in European societies would have to be greater (2006:68-69).

Cronin (2006) also points out the political value of translation in relation to identity construction. He adopts Hall's (1996:4) understanding of identity that, instead of being

perceived as a static and solid category, identity should be viewed as a dynamic process of constant construction and reconstruction that is produced in “specific historical and institutional sites within specific discourses and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.” From Cronin’s point of view, T&I service constitutes a form of “articulation” of identity, a term used by Hall and Du Gay (1996b:6). The provision of such service *addresses, respects*, and, therefore, *articulates* the language difference explicitly. Since difference is what distinguishes one individual from another, the provision of T&I service is then a successful political practice to demonstrate that the government, which provides the service, understands and appreciates the differences between its people, which is highly likely to earn a benefit for the service provider. Articulating difference through T&I reminds citizens of the value of their own language and culture, hence stimulates commitment of the citizens to the host society and practice of citizenship, which in turn ensures access, participation, justice and more importantly, social integration. In this case, difference is no longer the reason that separates people but a force that binds different groups together.

In narrating the impact that T&I has on the exercise of citizenship, Cronin’s (2006) focus is put on the implementation of access, participation, and justice, which falls into the well-developed conception of citizenship (Marshall, 1950) that overlooks the important status held by *culture* in understanding the concept. However, without mentioning culture explicitly, his discussions on the value of T&I in opening a dialogue across differences and breaking down old constructions of identities have certainly touched the issue.

In Cronin’s eyes, putting translation at the centre of political thinking and practice contributes to an improved understanding of identity which is previously perceived as being fixed, static, and unbreakable (Cronin, 2006:71). He points out that T&I can create newness by allowing different interpretations to emerge. For example, the T&I service provided in Ireland has stimulated new understandings of the history and culture of this island where the contributions made by immigrants have been brought to public attention. Furthermore, the possibility of translation is a possibility to open dialogue across differences. This is vital if countries that are linguistically and culturally diverse wish to foster a more inclusive social environment and change the frustrated social reality caused by the usual approach to identity as a prefixed category. That is to say,

translation has the potential to remind people that society is not merely made up by groups of “us” (the natives) and “others” (the immigrants) where exchanges and dialogues are impossible to initiate (Cronin, 2006:72).

The possibility to open dialogue across differences and the potential to remind people of the importance of valuing others’ language and culture make interpreting a possible practice to exercise cultural citizenship. Citizenship is traditionally seen as consisting of civil, political, and social dimensions with the focus on the rights to which citizens are entitled (Marshall, 1950). In recent years, more and more researchers argue that culture is also an integral part of the notion of citizenship (Roche, 1992, Turner, 1993, Kymlicka, 1995, Ong et al., 1996, Pakulski, 1997, Stevenson, 2001, Delanty, 2002, Nic Craith, 2004, Yurdakul and Bodemann, 2006, Valentine and Skelton, 2007b). One school of thought that promotes the concept argues that culture should be placed at centre stage to understand the nature of citizenship and include the discussion of “identity and belonging” (Delanty, 2002:61). By bringing culture into citizenship, essentially, it argues that citizenship does not only concern rights but also responsibility. Citizens need to learn to acquire cultural citizenship and act responsibly towards difference, that is, the relationship between self and other (Delanty, 2002:64). The understanding of difference is not confined to linguistic and cultural difference but extends to all kinds of difference, be it religion, gender, age, disability, skin colour, etc. Interpreting, which opens a space for dialogue between different languages and cultures, arguably serves as an opportunity for citizens to develop cultural citizenship.

From the literature reviewed above, it is noted that, as far as academics are concerned, T&I service has a symbolic value for linguistic minorities that is larger than the purpose of accessing information. It is an articulation of the linguistic, cultural, and identity difference between social groups. The articulation reminds the minority group members of the value of their language and culture. As a result, it exercises the rights of the minority members as citizens and evokes the commitment of these citizens for the host society. The service is perceived to have the potential to bring new interpretations of the differences between social groups into the host country, which is vital to break the old labels of identities that keep different social groups apart. For these reasons, T&I service can be used as a political and social tool, which should bring benefits not only to the minority groups but also the service provider, public and private.

Are these claims and observations applicable to all sorts of linguistic minorities in different social and cultural contexts? The kind of difference we have discussed so far is primarily limited to language and culture. In this thesis, the particular linguistic minority under investigation, namely Deaf Chinese persons, sits at the intersection of both linguistic minority and disability. Considering the opposing discourses that have already emerged on the quality of SL interpreting on Chinese television, it would be theoretically meaningful to find out whether the new variable *disability* would shed new light on the value of interpreting.

#### **1.4 Key terms and definitions**

Before we move onto the discussion of the research questions of the study, I would like to introduce a list of key terms that are subject to multiple understandings and explain how they are defined and used in the current study.

##### ***Discourse***

The different discourses that arise from the presence of SL interpreting on television drew my attention to examine interpreting as a social phenomenon. However, discourse is a fashionable term in academia understood differently in different approaches. In this study, discourse is understood from a social constructionist point of view where language is seen as “structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002:1). Since the analysis of the discourses are not particularly attached to any approach such as critical discourse analysis, a more general definition of discourse is adopted in the research as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002:1).

##### ***Construction and frame***

By taking a constructionist approach to understand discourse and the interpreting phenomenon, it is then important to explain what a constructionist approach entails. Construct, construction, and constructedness are terms frequently used in the study that require a definition. By using these words, I take the view that “social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors”. Moreover, “the phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but they are in a constant state of revision” (Bryman, 2012:33) . To be more specific, it implies that

SL interpreting as a social phenomenon and deafness as a social category do not have inherent or fixed meaning. Their meaning is created by social actors and prone to changes. A more detailed discussion on social constructionism is provided at the beginning of the second chapter.

The term frame is a constructionist term adopted from media studies, more specifically Entman's (1993) framing theory. The term can be used as a verb and a noun and it neatly describes the process and result of social construction. When used as a verb, it refers to the particular ways in which a communicator talks about any given social topic, namely, selection, exclusion, and salience. The framing process can be seen as one way to understand the process of social construction. When used as a noun, frame refers to the final product of a framing process, namely an interpretation of the social topic, consisting of a particular pattern. Because frame and construction and construct have overlapping meaning, the term frame is only used when referring to the specific process of selection, exclusion, and salience. A much fuller discussion of the term frame and its theoretical implications will be presented in Chapter 2.

### *D/deaf*

By taking a social constructionist approach to social phenomena and categories, identity, a social category, is then subject to different constructions and interpretations. The dichotomy between Deaf and deaf is linked to two distinct sets of meanings and interpretations of deafness (Lane, 1997, Parr and Butler, 1999, Napier, 2002, Valentine and Skelton, 2007a). Skelton and Valentine (2003:11) point out that a broad consensus has been reached on the usage of the two terms. The capitalised Deaf refers to people who value and use SL; who appreciate Deaf culture; who reject the notion of deafness as a disability and embrace it as a linguistic and cultural identity; and who are involved in the Deaf community. On the contrary, lower case deaf refers to people who identify deafness purely as a form of disability and who do not use SL as their first language but resort to forms of oral communication, therefore distant from the Deaf community. In the study, when referring to Chinese deaf people, it is difficult to claim whether a person is culturally Deaf as the term Deaf culture has not gained much attention in the community. Therefore, the lower case deaf is used when deafness is perceived as a disability and the upper case is used when it is referring to a person who uses signing to communicate.

### ***Translation, interpreting, and Translation***

In the thesis, references to literature in translation studies are frequently made, making it necessary to distinguish between the term translation and interpreting. Translation is used when referring to the transfer of information from a written text in one language into that of the other. By comparison, interpreting is used to refer to a similar information transfer process between two languages, regardless of whether the languages are signed or spoken. The term Translation is employed when the mode of language is of secondary importance and the emphasis is put on the abstract process of converting information from one language and culture to the other.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

As mentioned in previous sections, there are three aspects of SL interpreting on Chinese television that attracted my attention. Firstly, I am interested in the fact that the Chinese media have paid attention to SL interpreting on television and attempted to evaluate its quality and understand its purposes and value. Secondly, the conflicting discourses on the quality and value of the current interpreting practice suggest that the interpreting phenomenon is subjected to different constructions and interpretations. Thirdly, since the literature suggests that the social and political value of interpreting is closely associated with its ability to address issues of identity, I am interested in finding out how the relationship is constructed in SL interpreting on Chinese television by Deaf people, SLIs, and the media, especially since the quality of the interpreting service is not desirable.

Therefore, the research questions I set out to explore are as follows:

1. How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television?
2. How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?
3. How is the interplay between interpreting and Deaf identity constructed in these discourses?

By providing answers to these questions, this study aims to:



1. contribute to a strengthened understanding of interpreting as a phenomenon that is socially constructed;

2. contribute to an empirically supported understanding of the social and political value of interpreting that would invite more importance to be attached to Translation in policy-making.

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative study was designed to solicit discourses from the three social groups, including the media, Deaf persons, and SLIs, on the phenomenon of SL interpreting on television. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out with thirteen Deaf participants in two cities in different provinces with an interpreter. Another seven interviews were carried out with SLIs from five cities in China. As for media discourses, seven news reports by major online news outlets were collected. A detailed description of the participants and media reports will be presented in Chapter 4.

In order to illustrate the constructedness of SL interpreting as a social phenomenon, a frame analysis is adopted to unravel the devices that are used by different groups to construct their interpretations of the subject matter. By applying frame analysis in the study, it reveals how different discourses have selected, excluded, and highlighted certain aspects of SL interpreting on Chinese television, resulting in different frames, interpretations and constructions.

## **1.6 Chapter summaries**

Chapter 2 introduces three bodies of knowledge, including social constructionism, framing theory and the social context which Deaf Chinese people inhabit. Social constructionism is introduced here to provide a philosophical and ontological argument that interpreting, as a social phenomenon, is constructed by social actors in a particular historical and cultural context, subject to different interpretations. The concept of framing is then introduced to provide a more tangible approach to understand the process of social construction, where different frames, interpretations, and constructions of the particular social phenomenon, namely SL interpreting on television, are produced as a result of consistent selection, exclusion, and salience. The last part of the chapter provides an introduction to the social and cultural context of China in general that conditions the construction of the interpreting phenomenon. Apart from that, it gives an

introduction to the Chinese deaf population, their experience in life, and the kind of interpreting service available to them.

Chapter 3 moves away from the broader theoretical considerations and focuses on reviewing literature in T&I studies that concern the social purpose and value of T&I. Particular emphasis is given to the ways in which identities are constructed in the interpreting practice; T&I as exercising citizenship; and the various social functions and value of T&I observed in different contexts. Towards the end of the chapter, the theoretical framework of the current study is discussed where theories from sociology, deaf studies, media studies and T&I studies are integrated to provide a theoretical lens to examine the subject matter.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological considerations of the study. It starts by explaining the epistemological and ontological stance taken by the researcher and then moves on to discuss the rationale behind each data collection method, data source and the steps taken to analyse data.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the data collected in the study. The analysis features five themes that have emerged from the data, including evaluating the quality of SL interpreting; identity and language; interpreting and service providers; the social value of interpreting; and treatment recommendations for SL interpreting on television. Under each theme, a comparison of the different frames provided by the stakeholders is provided.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions I proposed at the beginning of the study and the relevant bodies of knowledge outlined in the second and third chapters. It points out that the construals of *difference* lead to different constructions of both the identity of the Deaf minority group and the value of the interpreting practice. In addition, as a practice situated in China, SL interpreting on television is shaped by the dominant construction of deafness as a disability, but at the same time, the practice itself allows the construction of deafness as a linguistic identity to gain visibility.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the purpose of the study, the existing knowledge before the study, the major findings in relation to the research questions, the theoretical and empirical implications of these findings, and limitations of the current study and

how future work can be implemented to address these limitations. Last but not least, a conclusion completes the study.

### **1.7 Summary**

In this chapter, I have, first of all, described the case of broadcasting SL interpreting on Chinese television for high-profile political conferences that has given rise to some conflicting discourses, or more specifically constructions, of the interpreting phenomenon. I have then explained the importance of researching into these discourses that will contribute to the conceptualisation of interpreting as a social phenomenon; its social and political value in relation to identity and citizenship; and the factors shaping its constructions. In order to fully appreciate the constructedness of SL interpreting on Chinese television, the next chapter looks at social constructionism, framing theory, and the contextual information of the Chinese society and Deaf Chinese people.

## **Chapter 2 Social constructionism, framing theory, and the Chinese context**

In this section, I will introduce three bodies of knowledge, including social constructionism, framing theory, and the contextual information regarding China and Chinese d/Deaf people. Social constructionism is introduced as the overarching philosophical perspective that approaches the interpreting phenomenon as socially constructed. The concept of framing is employed to further analyse the process and features of the construction process. Guided by the key values of a social constructionist approach that draw people's attention to cultural and historical specificity, contextual information about China, especially Chinese cultural values and the Chinese deaf population is presented.

### **2.1 Social constructionism**

Social constructionism as a theoretical approach, orientation, philosophy or an ontological consideration, has built itself on the shoulders of a number of disciplines, such as “philosophy, sociology and linguistics, making it multidisciplinary in nature” (Burr, 2003:97). Bryman (2006:36) defines *Constructionism* as an ontological position that “asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors”. As Potter (1996:98) observes: “The world ... is *constituted* in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it.” The implication of this ontological position is that the various social phenomena that we observe in the world and the labels we use to categorise and understand the world are not a given. Rather, they are produced through social interaction. More importantly, once produced, the social phenomena and categories are then subject to further revisions as a result of continued social interaction. Therefore, taking a social constructionist approach to study a social phenomenon and its meaning is to draw attention to the representation or the construction of this particular phenomenon.

#### ***2.1.1 Key features of social constructionism***

According to Burr (2003), it is difficult to single out one feature which could be identified as the core of a social constructionist approach, let alone coming up with one definition of the term that suits all. However, she suggests that there are a few key assumptions (from Gergen, 1985) that a social constructionist should adopt.

Firstly, social constructionism invites people to challenge “taken-for-granted knowledge” (Burr, 2003:114). To be a social constructionist is to take a critical stance towards the ways in which we take for granted our understanding of people and the world in which we live. It objects to the idea that there is a *truth* of the world we inhabit, and that *truth* can be revealed through our observations without distortion. For example, people tend to categorise objects in the world. It does not suggest that there is any absolute division that should be drawn between these categories. Take the two categories, “deaf” and “hearing” for example. Under the medical model of deafness, it seems that there is a definite line between these two categories marking a group of people who have a hearing disability and the other group of people who do not. However, is disability the one and only difference between deaf and hearing people? A cultural model of deafness suggests that the auditory difference can also be perceived through the lens of language and culture instead of a medical disability. The cultural model of deafness has emancipated Deaf people’s life significantly. Therefore, it is important not to take existing social categories for granted (a fuller discussion on the medical and social model of deafness will be presented in section 3.3.2).

Secondly, social constructionism draws people’s attention to historical and cultural specificity. It argues that “the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific” (Burr, 2003:115). A good example is the label — homosexuality. If we put this concept at different times in Chinese history, we would find that homosexuality used to be thought of as an “upper class” fashion in several dynasties in the past. It is only in recent history where it is conceptualised as a social taboo, a moral flaw or a mental disease. The younger Chinese generations adopt a more open attitude towards homosexuality now and accept that people have the freedom to love, regardless of the gender of their loved ones. Similarly, in other cultures and societies, the term homosexuality does not always have the same connotation throughout history and may have gone through similar or different shifts. Baynton (1996) points out that American Sign Language (ASL) used to be perceived as a language worthy of respect. But as the history unfolds, it gradually becomes a language that is insufficient and incompetent. The two examples suggest that no concept or category has an innate, fixed and stable meaning. The concepts and categories people use in life are always relative to and produced by the specific historical and cultural contexts.

Thirdly, social constructionism argues that knowledge is sustained by social process. If we accept that there is no inherent, stable and fixed meaning of any concept and category we use to understand the world, and that there is no absolute *truth* about the nature of our world, then what constitutes the social reality in which generations of people have lived? Social constructionism suggests that the realities are constructed by different people in different historical times through daily interactions, especially the use of language in these interactions. For this reason, language has been the focus of social constructionist analyses.

Fourthly, social constructionism looks at the interplay between knowledge and social action. In this view, the so-called *truth* of our world is no more than the ways of understanding the world that are currently accepted by members of the society. Additionally, the knowledge we use to understand the world influences the kinds of actions we take in our life. Therefore, social constructionism focuses on processes rather than structures. It directs people to investigate how social phenomena and forms of knowledge are obtained through social interactions. More importantly, social constructionism argues that the form of knowledge we adopt on any given topic, event, phenomenon directly impacts the kind of social action we take.

### ***2.1.2 Approaching discourse from a social constructionist perspective***

As mentioned earlier, language, the way we talk about the world, write about the world, is the means through which the reality is constructed. Therefore, to understand social construction, one needs to understand the concept of *discourse*.

Discourse can be approached from two directions: linguistic and sociological. In the linguistic approach to discourse, Fairclough (1992:3) notes that it is used to refer either to extended samples of spoken dialogue in contrast with written “texts” or to extended samples of both spoken and written language. In this approach, Merlini observes that the focus is usually about the organisation of discursive “units above sentence level, such as turn-taking, conversation sequences, and textual structures” (2006:62).

The social approach to discourse sees discourse as referring to “different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice” (Fairclough, 1992:3). Instead of playing a passive role of reflecting or representing certain “social entities and relations, they construct or constitute them; different discourses represent key objects (be they

‘mental illness’, ‘citizenship’ or ‘literacy’) in various ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects” (Fairclough, 1992:4).

According to Burr (2003:1)<sup>2</sup>, social constructionism attaches great importance to the investigation of discourse and perceives discourse as “the way that the forms of language available to us set limits upon, or at least strongly channel, not only what we can think and say, but also what we can do or what can be done to us”. In this case, “discourse” is not just language that describes the world but practice that actively shapes the world. Foucault (1972:49) defines discourse as “practices which form the objects of which they speak”. Burr (2003:2) argues that a discourse is:

a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light.

Based on a social constructionist view of *reality* that multiple realities exist, it could be argued that multiple discourses, representing and focusing on different aspects of the *reality* coexist. Burr used the topic of “fox hunting” as an example and displayed that radically different discourses are held by various people on the very topic, such as “fox hunting as healthy outdoor sport” and “fox hunting as contravention of basic morality” (2003:5). We can see from this example that different discourses, containing different values, focusing on different aspects of the reality, and promoting different types of actions are possible. Therefore, Burr (2003:6) argues that:

discourses, through what is said, written or otherwise represented, serve to construct the phenomena of our world for us, and different discourses construct these things in different ways, each discourse portraying the objects as having a very different nature from the next. Each discourse claims to say what the object really is, that is, claims to be the truth. As we shall see, claims to truth and knowledge are important issues, and lie at the heart of discussions of identity, power and change.

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<sup>2</sup> This reference and future references to Burr (2003) are made to the kindle version of the electronic book whose page number is different from the paper version.

The function of discourse as constructing things *in different ways*, presenting the objects as having *a different nature*, and bringing into focus *different aspects* of the topics are the basic elements of the notion *framing* that will be introduced in the next section.

## **2.2 Framing — a social constructionist perspective**

In this section, I will give an introduction to framing theory in the field of media studies which, I would argue, presents a set of tools to understand the process of social construction.

The concept of frame has become increasingly popular in the field of social sciences. As Benford and Snow (2000) observe, references to frame, descriptively and analytically, can be found in psychology, cognitive psychology in particular (e.g., Bateson, 1979, Bateson, 1973, 1981, Tversky and Kahneman, 1985, 1986), linguistics (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) and discourse analysis (e.g., Van Dijk, 1977, Tannen, 1993), political science and policy studies (e.g., Schön and Rein, 1994), sociology (e.g., Goffman, 1986), communication and media studies (e.g., Pan and Kosicki, 1993, Scheufele, 1999, Entman, 1993). The concept has gained popularity in communication and media studies, in particular. As Scheufele and Iyengar (2012:2) observe, at present, “virtually every volume of the major journals features at least one paper on media frames and framing effects”. The concept of frame has also appeared in Napier (2002) and Baker (2006) in T&I studies. However, in T&I studies, the concept is approached as a synonym of “schema” or “repertoire of knowledge” that is prompted in daily interaction. In this work, I will mainly draw on the application of framing theory in the field of media studies in that I am interested in understanding the frames of news reports and that of the audience of SL interpreting on Chinese television.

### **2.2.1 Frame and framing**

Frame can be used as a verb and a noun in its generic sense. The same situation applies in framing theory where frame can refer to both an active process and a result (Reese et al., 2001). Because of this difference, scholars, when defining frame, have subconsciously chosen to define it either as a product (noun) or as a process (verb).

#### ***Frame as a noun***



Some scholars have focused on the noun side of a frame. For example, Bateson (1954, 1972) introduced the concept of a frame as “a mental construct” that defines “what is going on” in interactive situations. A much-quoted definition by Gamson and Modigliani (1989) defines frame as “a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning.”

### ***Frame as a verb***

Reese (2001) suggests that framing refers to “the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals and their audiences.”

Goffman (1986:21) notes that frames help classify, allowing users to “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its limits”. Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Gitlin (1980) have a similar conceptualisation of frame as selection and emphasis and add that frames are also “persistent ... exclusion”. Entman (1993:53), through his extensive work on framing, has defined frames as follows:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

Therefore,

frames define problems – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; diagnose causes – identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects.

He continues to argue that more than one of these four framing functions may be performed by a single sentence, yet many sentences in the analysed text may play none of them. In addition, it is not a requirement for any text to perform all four functions.

According to Entman, in the context of communication, frames exist in four locations, namely, “the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture” (1993:52).

“Communicators” refers to the producers of frames who make the choice of what to say

and the way to say it. The communicators are guided by frames that organise their belief systems. The text is the product embodying frames. Frames influence the receiver's thinking. However, the frames the receiver adopts may not necessarily be identical with the frames intended by the communicator in the text. The last location is culture, which can be perceived as "the stock of commonly invoked frames" (Entman, 1993:53). It can be defined as "the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993:53). Entman stresses that three functions are common across all frames, which are "selection", "highlighting", and using the selected and highlighted elements to generate an interpretation or argument about "problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 1993:53).

In my research, I use Entman's framing theory as the basis of my analysis and argument. His understanding of framing is not limited to media texts only whereas some scholars have explicitly defined framing as such (e.g., Gitlin, 1980). Entman (1993) has stressed that frames at all locations including the communicator and receiver, perform the same functions and work through the same process of selection and highlighting. They can define problems, analyse causal relations, give evaluations and recommend solutions. This statement has important implications on the methodology part of my study which will be explained in more detail in due course.

### ***2.2.2 Framing: selection, exclusion and salience***

Gitlin states that media frames, "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world for journalists who report it ..." (1980:7). Gamson and Modigliani (1987:143) conceptually define a media frame as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events ... the frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue". Tuchman offered a similar definition for media frames by viewing media or news frames as necessary to turn meaningless and non-recognisable happenings into a discernible event, and posits that "the news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality... it is an essential feature of news" (1978:193). Entman (2007:164) provides an updated definition of media framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation." By comparison, this definition provides a fuller

picture of the dynamics of framing and frames by incorporating the two integral parts of the theory, namely framing – the process of culling and highlighting, and frame – a particular interpretation.

Moreover, this account seems to have captured more successfully the dynamics in framing by pointing out that the process of framing is not value-free. It is a process of culling (selecting and excluding intentionally) a few elements and highlighting (at the same time downplaying other elements) the relationship among them. According to him, frames typically have four functions: presenting a problem definition, analysing causal relations, offering moral judgement and promoting a remedy (Entman 1993, 2004, 2010). Framing works through “shaping” and “altering” audiences’ “interpretations” and “preferences” through “priming” which means that frames “introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way” (Entman, 2007:164).

Entman (1993) argues that the essential process involved in media framing is “selection and salience”, meaning the media select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. According to him, texts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols. However, even a single unillustrated appearance of a notion in an obscure part of the text can be highly salient if it comports with the existing schemata in a receiver’s belief systems. These selected and highlighted symbols and elements are usually referred to as framing elements.

### ***2.2.3 Identifying framing elements***

Knowing that frames work through selection, exclusion and emphasis does not make frames tangible. One might still ask how to identify frames, what parts and elements of one news article constitute its frame?

Gamson and Modigliani (1989b:2) suggest that news discourse can be conceived as having a set of “interpretive *packages*”. Each “interpretive *package*” can be viewed as a whole by the use of a variety of symbolic devices that display its characteristic

elements. They also point out that every package has a signature – a set of elements that suggests its core frame and position in a shorthand fashion. They divide the signature elements into two kinds: framing devices and reasoning devices. The five framing devices are metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images. The three reasoning devices are roots, consequences and appeals to principles.

Gamson and Lasch (1981) and Gamson and Modigliani (1989) in their studies on the political culture of social welfare policy and public opinion on nuclear power, applied this approach and summarised the framing devices in a signature matrix in which the rows represent the cores of different packages and the columns represent the eight different types of symbolic device. The cell entries in the matrix are the signature elements of the various packages. In the study on political culture of social welfare policy, they identified the following four frames: welfare freeloaders, working poor, poverty trap and regulating the poor.

Although their account gives a rich reservoir of framing elements and clear instruction of the analysing approach, yet the definition of each framing element gives too much power to the subjective decision-making on the part of the researcher. For example, it is difficult to define whether a phrase is a catchphrase or not. In addition, after noting visual image in the text as a framing element, the authors do not explain which aspects of the image should be taken into consideration. Another drawback of the approach is that it puts too many limitations on the type of news articles or television broadcasts to which it can apply. To illustrate, they describe “consequences” as “the consequences that will flow from different policies. Again, there may be differences whether short or long term consequences are the focus” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989:21). Therefore, this reasoning device cannot be found in a text where consequences are discussed but they are consequences of the problem, not the policies. This approach also has limitations in terms of the style of text to be analysed in that it favours texts that are rich in metaphors, exemplars and visual images which may not be found in news reports in non-English languages. In addition, after putting together the matrix, the authors do not explain further how to interpret the matrix in order to arrive at a firm conclusion of what the frame is. Last but not least, this approach overlooks one primary function of frame, namely, selection. Frames do not have to manifest in any of the framing devices or

reasoning devices; the choice of selecting some plain facts over others can suggest a frame just the same.

Swenson (1990) (quoted in Tankard, 2001) puts forward a different approach to identifying the symbolic devices that suggest a news frame. He conceives of frame as involving various elements or dimensions of stories and suggests that eight elements or dimensions should be coded in order to identify a story frame including gender of the writer, placement of the article, lexical choices, etc. However, this set of framing elements is too specific to news discourse, therefore it is not applied in the study.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) identify four categories of framing devices representing four different structural dimensions of news discourses: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure. They (1993:62) argue “the four structural dimensions contain only slots with varying power of signification when filled with lexical elements.” Very often, lexical choices of words or labels are made to designate one of the categories in syntactic or script structures. For example, by using “Iraqi dictator”, a news report puts Saddam Hussein to the same side with Hitler and Noriega. “Choosing a particular word, then, is a clear and sometimes powerful cue signifying an underlying frame” (Pan and Kosicki, 1993:63). Similar to the previous approach, each frame element is put together in a frame matrix.

This approach has provided a much clearer definition of each frame element. However, as in the previous approach, the authors do not give a clear account of how to analyse the frame matrix once it is put together and how to decide which frame the article possesses.

Tankard (2001) criticises some of these approaches as being too qualitative so that scholars quickly become the “expert” at identifying frames. He suggests that the first step of identifying frames should be to identify a list of frames for the particular domain under discussion. For the convenience of the coder, each frame should be named by specific keywords, catchphrases, and images. He and his colleagues propose the “list of frames approach” and suggest looking at ten focal points where frames exist:

1. Headlines and kickers (small headlines over the main headlines).
2. Subheads.

3. Photographs.
4. Photo captions.
5. Leads (the beginnings of news stories).
6. Selection of sources or affiliations.
7. Selection of quotes.
8. Pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis).
9. Logos (graphic identification of the particular series an article belongs to).
10. Statistics, charts, and graphs.

The list of frames approach recommends the following steps:

1. Make the range of possible frames explicit.
2. Put the various possible frames in a manifest list.
3. Develop keywords, catchphrases and symbols to help detect each frame.
4. Use the frames in the list as categories in a content analysis.
5. Get coders to code articles or other kinds of content into these categories.

(Tankard 2001:102)

This approach seems to have taken the bias and subjectivity out of the research as it has a pre-made list of frames and is not taking an inductive approach to finding frames. However, the problems lie in the first step – make the range of possible frames explicit. Tankard (2001) does not elaborate on how to make the range of possible frames explicit in an objective way. For this reason, it is still a subjective decision, and it is still the researcher acting as the “expert” in the field, easily finding what he needs.

In the study, I decide to follow the “hierarchical cluster analysis” approach proposed by Matthes and Kohring (2008). This approach adopts Entman’s (1993) definition of frame (already presented in section 2.2.2). This definition is chosen because, by comparison, it is more precise and practical than other popular definitions listed earlier by Gitlin (1980) and Gamson and Modigliani (1989) in that it provides very specific

indicators in terms of how to identify a frame. For example, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) define frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning.” This definition, while essential in helping readers to understand the way frames work, is too broad to guide researchers to carry out a frame analysis. In contrast, Entman’s (1993) definition of frame merits a practical value in that it can be easily translated into empirical indicators. In this definition, four essential elements constituting a frame have been pointed out including problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation. Put in other words, a frame is constituted by a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation or a combination of these four elements. Knowing that these four elements are the building blocks of a frame gives empirical directions to researchers as to where and how to find the frame in the text. According to Matthes and Kohring (2008:264), each element is a coding variable and has several sub-variables. Therefore,

A problem definition can consist of an issue and relevant actors that discuss the problem.

A causal interpretation is an attribution of failure or success regarding a specific outcome.

An evaluation can be positive, negative, or neutral and can refer to different objects.

Finally, a treatment recommendation can include a call for or against a certain action.

After breaking a frame down to its frame elements, the second step of hierarchical cluster analysis is to examine whether some of these different variables systematically group together in a particular way, thus forming a pattern that can be identified across several texts in a sample. These patterns are called frames. That is to say, every frame is characterised by a distinct pattern of variables. The most obvious advantage of this approach is that frames are not proposed beforehand subjectively but empirically determined. The aim of this analysis is that eventually, articles can be grouped into specific clusters with high differences between the clusters and low differences within a cluster. These clusters will then be interpreted as media frames.

As pointed out by Matthes and Kohring (2008), previous approaches to frame analysis are often criticised for being too subjective and lacking in reliability. Following this approach, the problem of reliability in frame analysis is not completely resolved but is shifted to the content analytical assessment of single frame elements. However, the reliability of the frame analysis goes up if a certain variable is more manifesting (Riffe et al., 1998:107). Therefore, single frame elements achieve a higher reliability in comparison to abstract, holistic frames. Another advantage of this approach is that, since the coders are coding single frame elements instead of the whole frame, the impact of coder schemata or coding expectations is weaker, making it easier to detect emerging frames.

However, it is noted that this approach is initially intended for a larger set of texts as the last step is to compare patterns of framing elements across several texts. But still, I would argue that this approach also suits a smaller set of data. In the case of my study, I do not aim to find out whether a large amount of news reports on SL interpreting on television share a frame but to identify the frame of the discourses I gathered to understand what is the particular interpretation the discourses promote. In that sense, this approach provides in-depth tools for me to determine framing elements in the collected discourses and find out what patterns they form in a discourse or across discourses.

### **2.3 Understanding the social and cultural context of China**

Knowing that a social phenomenon is constructed by members of the society with social and cultural specificity, and that the process of social construction is a process of framing that features selection, emphasis and interpretation, it is important then to understand the social and cultural context where my case (SL interpreting on Chinese television for political conferences) is situated. In the following sections, I will give a brief introduction to China, its society and culture.

#### ***2.3.1 A unique China — a civilisation or nation-state***

In today's world, the rise of China is by all means a buzzword. Many China observers argue that as the Chinese economy grows at its current speed, China will soon have the power to redefine the shape of the world. The rise of China draws attention to the Chinese language, history, and culture. As Forsby (2011:5) observes, China, unlike



many countries in the world, is ascending with “its own values, norms and institutions, instead of embracing that of the West”. There are people who are afraid that the Chinese values, norms and institutions, namely, the Chineseness it carries will bring fundamental challenges to the current international order that is configured mainly in line with a Western mentality. So what constitutes Chineseness and why does China differ so much from the rest of the world?

According to Jacques (2009:196), “China, by the standards of every other country, is a most peculiar animal.” Its large population is a very important reason. But apart from these apparent characteristics, there are a few internally generated dynamics that constitute the Chinese sense of *self* (Jacques, 2009). The first one is the notion that China is not a nation-state but a civilisation (1989, Pye, 1992, Jacques, 2009, Forsby, 2011). As Pye (1992:235) succinctly observes: “China is not just another nation-state in the family of nations. China is a civilisation pretending to be a nation-state”.

According to these authors, China as a nation-state is only a very recent creation, dating back to the late nineteenth century when the country was defeated by the European countries and Japan and forced to open up to the rest of the world. For people who are only familiar with the history of the world from then on, perhaps China seems to be an impoverished and since then a developing country that does not deserve too much attention. However, before that part of history, China has existed for several millennia. Its civilisation has exerted great influence on its neighbouring countries and enjoyed incredible prosperity, continuity, and longevity. The shape of the country has changed dramatically over the period due to wars, both invasions and conquests, but China as a distinctive civilisation has always maintained its existence and endured the changes.

The continuity and longevity of the Chinese civilisation are incredible in that although it has been invaded and even defeated by strong foreign forces, it has always managed to assimilate the intruders into itself instead of being wiped out and taken over. The notion of China as a living civilisation provides the primary identity and context by which the Chinese people tend to think of their country and define themselves. It could be argued that when Chinese people talk about China, they are not usually referring to the political entity or the geographic entity, but more to the Chinese civilisation – its history, the dynasties, Confucius, the ways of thinking, their relationships and customs, the 关系 (the network of personal connections), the family, filial piety, ancestral

worship, the values, and distinctive philosophy (Jacques, 2009:196). As Forsby (2011:9) argues, the distinctness of Chinese civilisation consists of a few pillars, namely, “the Confucian moral philosophy; the strong dynastic state; the ethnic homogeneity; and the Chinese language; the historic Chinese homeland; the ritualised honouring of forefathers; and the imperially organised tributary system.”

Confucian philosophy, formed by Confucius back in 551–479 BC, has been regarded as one of the most important components of the Chinese civilisation. It has been regarded as a religion (Berling, 1982:5) and even “the cultural DNA of Southeast Asia” (Merkel-Hess and Wasserstrom, 2011). Forsby (2011:12) summarises that Confucian philosophy features a few tenets. In terms of the debate on whether human nature is good or evil, Confucius considers it as flexible. Therefore, human beings can be educated and improved as a result of personal and social education. Confucianism has a universalistic nature that implies that the Chinese society and culture can accommodate and embrace great differences between its social groups and non-Chinese groups and societies can be absorbed into the Chinese system if they are willing to accept and learn the Confucian philosophy. What is perhaps the most distinct feature in Confucianism is its emphasis on collective good over individual benefits. The sacrifice made by an individual is perceived in a highly commendable way if it is for a larger unit to gain benefits. The basic collective unit is one’s family and then it expands to one’s workplace, the city in which a Chinese person lives and up to the entire society.

It can be said that the collective unit is not time-bounded but extends beyond the timeline. Jacques (2009) argues that compared to China, no other country in the world attaches so much importance to its history and its past. It could be claimed that even the history of China thousands of years ago is still constantly relived in its current time. The history and traditions of China are not put in a memory box but are always a source of strength and inspiration for Chinese people who live in the present time. The Chinese scholar Huang (2005:6) writes:

China is...a living history. Here almost every event and process happening today is closely related to the history and cannot be explained without taking history into consideration. Not only scholars, but civil servants and entrepreneurs, as well as ordinary people, all have a strong sense of history...no matter how little formal

education people receive, they all live in history and serve as the heirs and spokesmen of history.

Apart from Confucianism, other religions and philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhism combined have shaped a set of cultural values that are practised by generations of Chinese people.

### ***2.3.2 Chinese cultural values***

In the studying of Chinese culture, a few scholars have noted that there is a clear system of Chinese cultural values that is continuously held by the Chinese people throughout history (Hsu, 1972, Kindle, 1983). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) have developed a well-known value-orientation model to describe these values. According to this model, five orientations are identified, including man-to-nature orientation, man-to-himself orientation, relational orientation, time orientation, and personal-activity orientation. In my thesis, I will focus on relational orientation (for a detailed analysis of all five orientations, see Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961).

The first theme of relational orientation is *respect for authority* (Jacques, 2009). The author argues that Confucianism provides for two most obvious continuities in Chinese civilisation, the state is one of the two. Yau (1988) points out that Chinese people have a strong respect for authority. This particular cultural value is rooted in Confucius's five cardinal relations, between sovereign and minister, father and son, husband and wife, old and young, and between friends (Huang, 2000). The essence of the five cardinal relations is to teach Chinese people that everyone has a role to play in life and it is important that people behave appropriately. In most cases, a respect is required for the former of the five pairs as they are considered to have more authority. Apart from respect, in the eyes of Chinese people, the state, the government is perceived as the embodiment and guardian of Chinese civilisation, and has enjoyed authority and legitimacy amongst the Chinese people to a great extent, both in ancient China and Communist eras. The government as a figure is always not intrusive but as a parent in every household, as is usually the metaphor used by the Chinese people (Jacques, 2009).

*Face* is the second theme of relational orientation. According to Hu (1944) who examined 200 Chinese proverbs in searching of the meaning of face, face can be

understood in primarily two ways as *Mianzi* (面子) or *Lian* (脸), with the former referring to a particular kind of prestige or reputation that is emphasised and attained through success one achieves in life and the latter denoting the trust society has in one's moral character, the loss of which is closely associated with the concept of "shame" (耻). While *Lian* is only prone to be lost as a result of one's misbehaviour, *Mianzi* can be efficiently gained by receiving favourable comments from other members of society the obtaining of which is regarded highly by average Chinese people. For this reason, Chinese people tend to strive to meet other people's expectations in order to gain *mianzi* and at the same time, endeavour not to cause the loss of *mianzi* for others.

*Collectivism*, classified as group orientation under relational orientation, is commonly agreed as a distinct cultural value held by not only Chinese but also Asians. The group orientation is particularly manifest in family relations where, unlike for example European families that usually have clear boundaries between parents and children, Chinese children are much closer to their parents when reaching adulthood. Taking marriage for example, Europeans parents usually lose control over their children's personal decisions when they reach 18 but for Chinese people, marriage is not a mere personal decision but an important one for all members of the two families (Salaff, 1981). Because of the importance placed on a unit larger than oneself, it is observed that Chinese people are more likely to put the group's or even society's benefits before their personal interests.

### ***2.3.3 A dominant Han identity and language***

"The idea of overwhelming racial homogeneity, in the context of a huge population, makes the Chinese in global terms, unique" (Jacques, 2009:266). The Chinese attitude towards race and ethnicity is also remarkably different from that of others. The Han Chinese, the majority ethnicity constituting more than 90% of the entire population of China, conceive of themselves as a single race, even though this is clearly not the case. What sustains this view is the extraordinarily long history of Chinese civilisation, which has enabled a lengthy process of melding and fusing of countless different races. As Jacques (2009) observes, unity is the most important criterion held by Chinese people and the government. The extreme importance attached to territorial unity is underpinned by the idea that the Han Chinese are all of one race, with even the non-Han Chinese being described in terms of separate nationalities rather than races.

Furthermore, when discussing the origin of Chinese people, there is a long-held belief that Chinese people descend from a single source that is disconnected to other branches of humankind. In other words, “the notion of China and Chinese civilisation is bolstered by a widespread belief that the difference between the Chinese and other peoples is not simply cultural or historical but also biological” (Jacques, 2009:421).

Compared to other highly populous nations such as India and the United States, where the diversity of race and ethnicity are not only recognised and, to varying extents, celebrated, China and Chinese people hold a distinctively different attitude towards the definition of race and the essential characteristics that constitute a Chinese self (Jacques, 2009). The conceptualisation of Han-Chinese identity has implications for the ways in which Chinese people perceive other Chinese ethnic minorities.

### ***Han vs. minorities***

Ma (2013) points out that the modern Chinese society is not simply defined as facing the “urban vs. Rural dual structure”, but also the “Han vs. Minorities dual structure” (p. 7). The Han people, according to historical accounts, originated from the central plains region in China and then in the last 2,000 years, quickly spread beyond and increased in population and became the main ethnic group of China. China’s 2010 census reports that the Han Chinese population is currently standing at 1.226 billion, accounting for 91.5 per cent of the total Chinese population. The geographic distribution of the various ethnic groups forms the spatial pattern of the “Han vs minorities dual system” (Ma, 2013:6). In China, the Han Chinese mainly live in highly populous areas such as the central and coastal regions whereas the vast majority of ethnic minority people stay at the western side of China where the landscape usually consists of plateaus, mountains, grassland, and deserts.

In the 1950s, China kicked off a nationality recognition campaign, and officially acknowledged 56 nationalities (Ma, 2012). The terminology and system devised for ethnic groups by the old Republic had been changed accordingly, and since then, the Chinese term “minzu” (民族, meaning nationality) has been applied at two levels: one is “Zhonghua minzu” (中华民族, Chinese nation) denoting that all Chinese people are of one nation; and the other is 56 “minzu” (ethnic groups) within China, including Han

Chinese and 55 minority groups (shaoshu minzu), which has caused much confusion in shaping national identity (Ma, 2012).

Since the 1950s, a number of preferential policies were set up by the Chinese government to benefit the ethnic minorities who, as the previous section explains, have largely resided in less favourable areas in China. The implementation of these policies had brought about some commendable social results. These preferential policies — including “flexible family planning regulations, bonus points awarded at university entrance exams, education system in minority languages, cadre quota in administration of autonomous areas, financial subsidies, etc.” (Ma, 2012:11) — are applicable to individual minority members and not restricted to the regions where they currently live. The members of ethnic minority groups have welcomed these policies in that their nationality (ethnic) status has given them systemic benefits, while the Han people, on the other hand, who are not entitled to these privileges, are reported to have felt a sense of discrimination because of these policies (Teng and Ma, 2009).

#### ***2.3.4 Language standardisation***

The Han vs. Minorities dual system is also reflected in the linguistic environment in China where Mandarin (普通话) is implemented as the standard Chinese used in various public and official spheres while numerous dialects and languages are used in daily life.

As China has 56 ethnicities, the linguistic diversity in this country is enormous. For Han Chinese alone, there are different dialects across the country and then these dialects are spoken with different accents at almost every city and town. The dialects of Han Chinese can be divided into two gross groups, namely the northern dialects and the southern dialects, which share the same writing system. There are about seven sub-groups in the northern dialects and the southern dialects group contains six sub-groups (Huang, 1987:33–45). As for the rest of the 55 ethnic minorities, there are about 80–120 languages used (Lam, 2007:72).

The linguistic diversity China enjoys causes pressure on communication between different linguistic groups, and raises concerns in terms of the unity of the country. Therefore, since 1920, a standard version of Chinese, Putonghua (also known as Mandarin 普通话), belonging to the northern dialects family, is being promoted and

used in schools, on media, and in official occasions. At the beginning of 1956, Putonghua was officially declared as the standard Chinese language that should be adopted by Chinese citizens (Guo, 2004). Guo (2004) points out that at the early stage of implementing Putonghua, policy-makers and speakers of numerous Chinese dialects had the misconception that Putonghua should replace dialects. He quoted the 1955 People's Daily editorial on the promotion of Putonghua that:

We should vigorously advocate the importance of the spread of Putonghua, so that people know correctly the relationship between dialects and Putonghua. Putonghua serves the people of the whole country, and dialects serve the people of an area. To spread Putonghua does not mean to wipe out dialects artificially, but to reduce the scope of dialect use progressively. This is in line with the objective laws of social progress. Dialects are to exist side by side with Putonghua for quite a long period, but the use of Putonghua must be expanded constantly. We should advocate speaking Putonghua on public occasions and using Putonghua as the literary language. We should eliminate localism that does not accept Putonghua, and we should eradicate the phenomenon of abusive use of dialects in publication, especially literary works. Later on, the mentality that Putonghua will eventually replace dialects was dismissed as the then Premier Zhou Enlai reiterated that the promotion of Putonghua was meant to break barriers set by dialects not replace them. (p. 48)

Apart from the policy to standardise the Chinese language, standardisation is also a key theme in minority language policy in China. Zhou (2004:72) points out that the Chinese government has placed great focus on minority language policy as it is believed to have significant relevance to national unity and stability. Bradley points out that for every minority language in China, a standard variety is selected on three criteria: "the language is centrally located, spoken by a large proportion of the group, and spoken by those who are socially and economically more advanced within the nationality" (2005:6). While acknowledging that China's policy on minority language and promoting Putonghua certainly contributed to the stabilisation of some minority regions, Bradley argues that the current language policy poses a threat to the preservation of endangered Chinese dialects and minority languages (2005).

The issue of language diversity and preservation has been brought to the attention of the Chinese government. It should be noted that in order to protect and develop minority languages and culture, the Chinese government set up a school system for minorities that runs parallel to the ordinary schools that use Mandarin as language of instruction (Ma, 2013). An important characteristic of this particular education system is that minority teachers use local minority language as the medium of instruction and adopt textbooks in their mother tongue instead of Mandarin. This results in the reality that very few Han teachers and students would go to these schools.

Ma (2013) believes that this particular education system can bring detrimental social outcomes. Firstly, while minority students can learn to master their mother tongue in these schools, their proficiency in Mandarin is weak since all knowledge and subjects are taught in their mother tongue. In job and labour markets, both in urban and town areas, ethnic minorities are expected to attain proficiency in Mandarin to communicate with co-workers and customers. Graduates of minority schools thus face great difficulty in their job hunting. Secondly, the minority schools' environment is hardly conducive to fostering knowledge exchange with the Han society and the mainstream, which then leads to a lack of mutual cultural understanding and poses challenges for minority students to integrate with society.

### ***2.3.5 Chinese media and censorship***

It is commonly agreed by both Chinese and foreign scholars that the Chinese authorities have always maintained a tight grip on both traditional and new media in order to keep social stability and CCP's ruling (Hassid, 2008, Tong, 2009, Xu, 2014). All media, state-owned or private, are regulated by China Publicity Department (CPD). According to the Reporters without Borders' report in 2013 on the index of press freedom, China was ranked 153 out of 170 countries. Jailing journalists who spoke against the authorities seems to be regarded as one of the effective tools to coerce them into "censorship" (Lee, 1998, Link, 2002, Tong, 2009, Xu, 2014). However, Hassid (2008) argues that 32 Chinese journalists jailed out of over 170,000 registered journalists is not convincing evidence that fear is used to suppress media freedom by the Chinese government. Authors such as Lee (1998:57), Hassid (2014) and Chen (2003) argue that the most powerful tool in harnessing today's Chinese media is the use of "self-censorship". As Lee (1998:57) succinctly points out, self-censorship is nowadays a



powerful information control strategy, referring to “a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and change of emphasis to choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organisations, and even the entire media community in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishments from the power structure.”

Link explains that there is an element of “uncertainty” that contributes to the effectiveness of self-censorship in taming media discourses on politically sensitive topics (2002). The element of “uncertainty” termed as “vagueness” has four primary advantages. Hassid (2014) summarises these four functions as:

- (1) vague accusations frighten more people into changing their behaviour;
- (2) they pressure these people to control their behaviour to greater extent;
- (3) they are “useful in maximising what can be learned during forced confessions” and
- (4) they allow authorities to zero in on whomever they want.

Linking “uncertainty” to organisation theory, Hassid (2014) points out that the power of uncertainty has long been observed in the field of organisation theory. By not setting up clear-cut boundaries, the CPD sometimes rolls out unexpected policies that experienced reporters can be caught off guard. Though there is no conclusive research proving that the employment of “vagueness” or “uncertainty” is deliberate on the CPD’s end, it could be argued that “self-censorship” has effectively suppressed sharper criticism of the Chinese government.

## **2.4 Deaf population in China**

It is not a surprise that China, topping the world list of population size, should also rank first in terms of its deaf population size (Xiao and Yu, 2009). However, it is not until the national survey on disability in 1990 when people were able to tell its actual figure. The survey reported that some 23.09 million people had a hearing loss to some degree; among which 3 million were deaf children and 6 million were profoundly deaf adults (Zeng, 1995). In 2006, China conducted the second national survey on disability where 161,479 disabled Chinese were recorded out of a sample of 2,526,145 people. Based on the survey sample, it is estimated that in 2004, 6.34% Chinese population has a disability, among which the number of people with a hearing loss stands at 24.16%,

accounting for some 20.04 million in total. The number of people with multiple disabilities stands at 13.52 million, among which 41.25% has hearing impairment. Therefore, the total number of people with hearing impairment reached 25.58 million. According to the report, 29.7% of deaf people live in urban areas while the majority of 71.3% live in rural areas. While the proportion of people with disabilities appears to be smaller in China than other countries, this difference might be due to the fact that China still does not recognise all of the categories of disability that other countries do (Kritzer, 2011).

It is noted that both surveys have not investigated the number of people in the deaf population who are sign language users. This is an indication that deafness is primarily understood as a medical condition instead of a linguistic or cultural variation. As a result, although we know the number of people in China who are medically deaf, we still have no accurate number on people who actually use sign language and are willing to identify themselves as culturally and linguistically Deaf. In the study, I will mainly draw from the survey the statistics of people who have hearing loss only instead of having a hearing loss as one of multiple disabilities. The choice is made on the basis that people who have hearing loss only are more likely to be heritage CSL users than the other group.

### ***Employment***

Kritzer (2011) gives a more detailed description of the employment situation of disabled Chinese people. He points out that the aim of Chinese special schools is usually put on helping students to acquire some vocational skills. Usually, for students who have a hearing loss, they are trained for painting and for students with visual disability, they are trained for massage. These skills do not bring a great career prospect for disabled people and are difficult for people who live in the vast rural areas to acquire (Deng and Manset, 2000, Deng et al., 2001).

Unemployment is common among the deaf population in China. According to the 2006 national survey, only 30.7% of deaf people in China had a job. In table 1, it is noted that even within the group of deaf people who have a job, the majority is doing manual labour, which, in China, is seen as less an achievement compared with intellectual labour.



Total	11796	Government	49	technology	121	Office staff	174	Business and service	586	Farming	9986	Factory	841	others	9
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Table 1 deaf employment figures

Since almost 70% of deaf people in China cannot obtain a job, they will have to rely on their family relatives, social insurance, and minimum living allowance and relief. However, the survey shows that for people who are older than 16, 62.3% are not covered by any form of social insurance, 8.6% of them receive a minimum living allowance and relief. 55.7% of them (counted by person times) report that they have never received any subsistence or support in terms of medical service, assistive appliance, rehabilitation training and services, educational expenses subsidy assistance or deduction etc.

### ***Social and family life***

In terms of comprehension and communication capability, the survey shows that more than 80% of deaf people report having mild to extreme obstacles, most of whom live in rural area. When it comes to socialising with other members in society, only 28.8% of deaf people report that they can get along with people easily while others are reported to have mild to extreme difficulties. In terms of social participation, a mere 17.7% deaf people report that they can fully participate in social activities, while a vast majority of 82.3% report difficulties to varying degrees and most of them are in rural areas. A majority of 78.8% of surveyed deaf people report that they can take care of themselves in everyday life.

In terms of access to television and computer, which are two of the most important sources of information for deaf people in China (Xiao and Li, 2011), 78.2% of surveyed households have access to colour television while only 10% of them have access to personal computer. Comparing the situation in rural areas and urban areas, it shows that in rural areas, 70% of families have a colour television and only 1.7% of rural families have access to a personal computer; and in urban areas, some 92.1% families have a colour television and 25.9% have a personal computer.

### ***Education***

China offers its deaf children a continuum of education services from separate schools, special classes attached to regular schools, to the learning in regular classrooms policy (Worrell and Taber, 2009). However, resources, trained teachers, and special schools are extremely limited.

The 2006 national survey reveals that, for deaf people aged between 6 and 14, 83.9% live in rural areas and 17.1% in urban area, among which 81.3% receive nine-year compulsory education. A vast majority of 93.5% of deaf students receive education in regular schools with hearing students, 4 percent attend special class in regular schools and only 2% go to special education school.

The history of deaf people is in fact mirrored in the history of deaf education. From the beginning of deaf education in contemporary China, oral education has, for quite a long time, assumed dominant status (陈建军, 2012). The first reason might be that the very first two deaf schools were established by foreign missionaries who were heavily influenced by the oral education approach in their countries of origin at that time, namely France and USA. The Chinese philosophy of educating deaf and hard of hearing children at that time was that these children must be given aural/oral-only practice first so that they will have some semblance of language skills for later survival in society (Martin et al., 1999). In 1956, the ministry of education held a seminar on the experiences of oral education in deaf schools where it officially announced that oral education should be the way of deaf education. From then on, oralism started to rule the field for almost half a century. The use of SL in classrooms was a recent practice (see the next section for a more detailed discussion).

#### ***2.4.1 Understanding deafness in China***

In China, Deaf studies is primarily focused on deaf education (Johnson, 2004, Lytle et al., 2005, He, 2001, Yang, 2008, Deng and Harris, 2008). For example, a few studies have looked at the use of SL in classroom interaction in deaf schools and reported the importance of using SL in order to achieve better education results (孙宁峰 and 戚善羽, 2008, 丁山燕, 2008, 方红, 2011, 张又宝 and 高宇翔, 2013). Other studies have looked at the oralism/bilingual and bicultural debate in deaf education (张宁生 and 黄丽娇, 2000, Yang, 2008, 陈建军, 2012, 葛遂元, 2012, 张宁生 and 黄丽娇, 2013). Another area which attracts scholarly attention is heritage CSL. Research has been carried out in standardising CSL (Lin et al., 2009, 沈玉林, 2008, 葛遂元, 2013), documenting lexical variations (张虹倩 and 刘斐, 2011, 曹阳 and 张宁生, 2011) and CSL grammar and corpus (吴铃, 2005a, 吴铃, 2005b, 吴铃, 2006, 李恒 and 吴铃, 2013). Another large portion of literature focuses on the effects of cochlear implants. Ding et al. (2009)

conclude that cochlear implantation is a safe and reliable surgical procedure in China which enables deaf people to achieve a more satisfactory life (曹克利 and 魏朝刚, 2000, 卢晓月, 2003, 卢晓月, 2004, 冀飞 et al., 2005, 曹克利 et al., 2005). By comparison, very little research has been done to understand the ways in which Deaf identity and culture are constructed in China.

### ***Disability — incomplete and useless***

In China, deafness has long been viewed as a disability, an obstacle and a severe medical condition that renders a person useless. The discussion of deafness as cultural and linguistic identity only occurred quite recently and has not exerted any significant influence on the Chinese Deaf community (张宁生 and 王琦, 2009, 郭楠, 2013). In the Law of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons (1990), disability is defined as physical or mental “deficit.” It is therefore based on the presence or absence of impairment, and there is a clear divide between those who are “abnormal” (disabled) and those who are “normal” (non-disabled). This conceptualisation of deafness is vividly reflected by a widely-used Chinese term “canji” (残疾), meaning “disability” in English. The literal meaning of “canji” (残疾) is “incomplete” (残) and “illness” (疾) (Guo et al., 2005). Another term that is used to describe disability is “canfei” (残废), meaning “incomplete” and “useless”. There is a sympathetic attitude toward people with disabilities that is deeply rooted in Chinese society influenced by Confucianism (Deng & Harris, 2008). Nevertheless, people with disabilities were kept at the bottom of the structure of society under this philosophy, and much like in the United States, a culture of compassion instead of education was adopted to respond to the needs of those with disabilities (Yang and Wang, 1994, Ye and Piao, 1995).

Li and Prevatt (2010:459), in investigating anxiety among deaf and hard of hearing children in China, conclude that deafness is viewed as something “wrong” and it is something that should be “fixed”. It is something that Chinese parents would invest every effort in order to find a cure for their deaf children. Numerous treatment procedures, including cochlear implantation and other non-conventional means such as acupuncture or herbal medicines, are sought by the Chinese (Callaway, 2000). These studies shed light on society and family’s attitudes towards deafness and deaf people and the difference between deaf and hearing. Deaf children are seen as a problem that

should by all means be fixed and become normal while deafness is invested with negative evaluations in China and is seen as an obstacle, disability, inferior to being hearing and unacceptable in society. Because of these kinds of conceptualisations and attitudes, people focus their attention on how to normalise deaf children, i.e. how to teach them to speak and integrate them into the speech community. Therefore, oral education is preferred and signing is ignored and even forbidden for fear that the use of the hands to communicate would impede the development of oral language communication. The outcome of this conceptualisation of difference has caused about half a century of unsuccessful oral education for deaf children and has a profound impact on their prospects and identity.

张宁生 (2010), 张松柏 and 徐铁卫 (2010) observe that Deaf culture is an under-researched topic in China. The latter defines Deaf culture as the features that are unique to the Deaf community. The three authors share the view that Deaf people are a special group at the margin of society. They have traditionally been defined as people with disabilities but what makes them different from other disabled groups is that their hearing loss is undetectable at a glance. The loss of hearing and the inability to speak lead to the unique use of SL as a substitute for speech communication, which in turn, gradually builds a Deaf culture, based on SL, that have things in common with but at the same time distant from the mainstream culture.

Indeed, in China, the notion of Deaf culture is yet to be studied to a greater extent. So far, there is no empirical study describing what the Deaf culture in China looks like. The discussion on this topic is under repression because deafness has long been viewed as a disability, illness, and deficit. As a result, Deaf people are reduced to passive recipients of the attention and care extended to them with little attention paid to their language and culture. This oppressive situation is challenged by western movements which advocate SL as the mother tongue of Deaf people and the equality between Deaf and hearing groups. 张松柏 and 徐铁卫 (2010:24) observe that substituting the notion of “normal people” (正常人) with “hearing people” (听人) in western countries marks a significant change in the perceptions of deafness. By doing so, it challenges the traditional way of looking at deafness as an abnormality and a deficit. It also raises the salience of the perception of Deaf people as a minority group who share a unique language and culture, pushing forward the notion that Deaf people are a linguistic and



cultural minority. These developments have exerted great influence on the Chinese Deaf community. 张松柏 and 徐铁卫 (2010:25) argue that the change from “deaf vs. normal people” into “deaf vs. hearing people” has brought real psychological emancipation for Deaf people because the ability to hear is no longer the criterion to judge whether they are normal or not, but just one of the many differences between social groups. As a result, Deaf people in China are paying more and more attention to their language rights and civil rights. For instance, there are movements in China where Deaf people are fighting for fair representation in the media, the right to drive a car, better education resources, job opportunities, and legal recognition of SL as their mother tongue (张松柏 and 徐铁卫, 2010).

#### ***2.4.2 The debate on Chinese Sign Language***

The term “Chinese Sign Language” is used to refer to very different sign language systems in China by different stakeholders, which sometimes causes confusion for readers. Many Deaf people and scholars informally use the term or the term “standard sign language” to refer to the signs collected in the book series *Chinese Sign Language* (more detail will be discussed in this section about the book series). On the other hand, more and more scholars are calling for the use of the term “Chinese Sign Language” to solely refer to the sign language that is actually used by Deaf Chinese people. In this thesis, to avoid confusion over the term “Chinese Sign Language”, the author will use the term “heritage Chinese Sign Language” (heritage CSL) to refer to the language Deaf Chinese people traditionally use amongst themselves. More importantly, considering that currently in China, both in terms of language policy and language planning, the need to study and protect Deaf people’s language is not stressed and the current law does not recognise sign language as a minority language, let alone the protection of Deaf culture; therefore, the use of the term “heritage Chinese Sign Language” also intends to call for people’s attention to the fact that the language is part of Deaf culture and should be valued by society and government.

Whether heritage CSL is a “real language” has not reached a conclusion in the Chinese mainland (张宁生 and 黄丽娇, 2013:29). 葛遂元 (2012:20) observes that currently there are two voices in China regarding this topic. There is a school of thought that embraces the Western attitude on the status of SL and acknowledges that SL is a full-fledged language and heritage CSL should be regarded as the mother tongue of Chinese

signers. The opposing school of thought believes that CSL is no more than a derivative of Chinese and it is a form of Chinese, not a separate language.

In Beijing Sign Language Forum 2005, the head of the National Committee of Languages remarked that SL in China is built on the basis of Putonghua (Mandarin), which is used among a special group of people as a visual language fulfilled by hands to communicate among Deaf people. From the point of linguistics, according to the official, it is a tool of communication for Deaf people. With that said, the official emphasised, it is still based on Chinese Mandarin. More still, there is no independent phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, and writing system.

However, Zhang (2004) argues that it is inappropriate to describe the use of SL in education simply as a manual system for education purposes. In his eyes, it is of primary importance to acknowledge that heritage CSL, of fully linguistic nature, is an independent language and that heritage CSL is the mother tongue of Deaf Chinese people. 龚群虎 et al. (2005) directly expressed his objection to the notion that heritage CSL is only a derivative of Chinese Mandarin. He argues that most linguists in the developed countries see eye to eye on the proposition that SLs are natural languages. China will look peculiar if it insists otherwise.

### ***The use of SL in China***

The different views on whether heritage CSL is a language lead to further divisions on the use of language in the Chinese Deaf community. When it comes to whether heritage CSL or oral language should be used in classroom, the attitude is paradoxical. The special education sector has largely agreed that heritage CSL is useful and more effective in classroom than oral language is. But at the same time, the supremacy of using oral language in teaching and the acquisition of oral Chinese for deaf students remain unchallenged (张宁生, 2010:25). When it comes to what form of SL is appropriate to use in education, on television, and in public places, the situation in China is even more chaotic.

### ***Chinese Sign Language — a contentious book series***

Apart from heritage CSL, which in this study refers to the congregation of the local SLs used by Deaf people in their daily life, there are also signs published by the National

Committees on Education and Languages as well as China's Federation of Persons with Disabilities which are also called *Chinese Sign Language*. 刘艳虹 et al. (2013:36) state that *Chinese Sign Language* is compiled as a national effort to create a standard version of CSL. The signs collected in the book series are therefore called "Chinese Sign Language". Therefore, a particular signing style, mainly using signs from the book series, following the Chinese grammar, usually lacking facial expressions and body movements, is referred to as Signed Chinese, "standard CSL", "grammatical CSL" by signers and SLIs. In 1991, the central government issued a statement announcing that conferences held by deaf associations at all levels and television stations must use *Chinese Sign Language*. Local schools should use *Chinese Sign Language* in classrooms. Special education majors in colleges and universities should teach students *Chinese Sign Language*. It seems that there is now a standard version of CSL which should be able to solve the communication problem.

However, there are very different attitudes towards this issue. 沈玉林 (2008:5) points out that the standardisation of CSL is usually supported by hearing people. They tend to think that all the different dialects and varieties of heritage CSL have caused difficulty in communication and teaching. Therefore, it is best to standardise CSL. In China, standardising CSL is an important mission and has gained support from the central government. Even Deaf people, many of them, support standardising CSL (Xiao and Yu, 2009). However, 沈玉林 (2008) argues that a lot of mistakes have been made in standardising CSL. To start with, there is a severe lack of respect for Deaf Chinese people when it comes to standardising CSL. People who were involved in the work were usually hearing people who were not proficient in using CSL and some deaf people who were not necessarily culturally Deaf.

Wu (2015, personal communication) points out that she once conducted a study and found that about 1000 signs out of some 5000 signs collected in the book series use fingerspelling for the Pinyin initials of the Chinese words. While Pinyin fingerspelling is sometimes used in heritage CSL, she points out that the vast majority of these signs have naturally emerged signs that do not use Pinyin initials, indicating that the editors of the book series did not explore CSL properly. One of the Deaf interviewees in my study who was involved in compiling the book series reveals that the editorial committee was dominated by hearing people who were not familiar with CSL. As a

result, heritage signs were often dismissed by hearing editors and Pinyin initials were adopted to create new signs for Chinese words. For a long time since the *Chinese Sign Language* book series was first published, they are the only sign language books in the Chinese mainland. However, Johnson (2004) points out, this book series should not and cannot be considered a CSL dictionary due to limited vocabulary coverage and the fact that each entry consists of only a simple drawing of the sign, its grammatical class, and a translation of its meaning into Chinese.

### ***Signed Chinese — a more serious issue***

Currently, there is no research that provides a general account on the grammar of CSL. However, it is commonly agreed that the CSL family includes the northern and southern dialects and Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL), historically a variety of the southern CSL dialect (Fischer and Gong, 2010). The northern dialect, used in places like Beijing, appears to be more heavily influenced by spoken language: for example, the northern dialect uses more Chinese pinyin signs (Gong, 2005). This is perhaps due to a relatively stronger oral tradition in deaf education in Beijing (Gong, 2005, 龚群虎 et al., 2005). The southern dialect, used, for example, in Shanghai, shows somewhat less influence from the spoken language.

However, apart from the use of all these natural dialects of CSL, there is another way of signing, namely, Signed Chinese. 闫延河 (2012:26) points out that Signed Chinese is a system of visual signs created by hearing people. It uses the signs collected in the book series *Chinese Sign Language* as its vocabulary and follows the Chinese grammar. Moreover, 闫延河 (2012:25–27) and 赵庆 (2012) observe that there are a few problems of Signed Chinese and its use in special education schools.

To start with, Signed Chinese aims at converting Chinese words and phrases into signs. However, for proper nouns and abstract concepts, Signed Chinese resorts to substituting the signs used by Deaf people with the Pinyin initials of these Chinese words. As a result, it creates confusion for Deaf users because a lot of words and phrases in Chinese can share the same Pinyin initials. Moreover, using Pinyin initials inevitably loses a large part of the meaning of that word. For example, the word “politics” (政治 and Zheng Zhi in Pinyin system), is signed as Zh Zh, which conveys virtually no meaning at

all. Secondly, Signed Chinese does not take into consideration Deaf people's natural ways of communication. For example, heritage CSL features brevity and facial expression. Sometimes a sentence in Chinese can be expressed by a single sign with proper facial expression. But Signed Chinese does not build itself on these rules, and follows the Chinese grammar with the aim to sign every word in a Chinese sentence, making it repetitious. Thirdly, the current *Chinese Sign Language* only includes 5586 signs, that is, about one-tenth of the commonly used Chinese vocabulary. A lot of Chinese words cannot find Signed Chinese equivalences in it, making it difficult for teachers to communicate with students in classroom. He points out that Signed Chinese is primarily used by teachers and educators in special education schools but is resisted by Deaf students.

### ***Language use in schools and Deaf community***

江小英 (2003) investigates the use of *Chinese Sign Language* among Deaf university students, teachers at deaf schools and Deaf adults in Beijing and reveals that only 30.13% of the respondents use *Chinese Sign Language* among which 14.17% are teachers, 15.11% are university students, and very few Deaf adults use it. Being a supporter of standardising CSL, the researcher concludes that the promotion of standard CSL among Deaf signers is far from satisfactory. 江小英 (2003, 2004) then believes that the results of the study reveal that there are problems in the compilation of the book series and calls for including Deaf people in the work. There are however, contradictory results on the popularity of *Chinese Sign Language*. In 2004, the education and employment department in the China Federation of Persons with Disabilities and the National Deaf Persons Association conducted a survey in 27 provinces and found that 80% of people believe that the current version of *Chinese Sign Language* should be held as the national, standardised CSL and promoted among Deaf people.

刘艳虹 et al. (2013) also carried out a survey on the use of sign language in China. The study covers 13,241 participants including 9583 Deaf students and 2709 teachers from special education schools and 949 Deaf adults from 18 provinces in China. The survey shows that the kind of SL used in Deaf education is different from that used by Deaf people in society. Deaf adults primarily use local CSL, while 65% of the students and

37.2% of the teachers in special education schools use a combination of Signed Chinese and local CSLs. 99% of teachers, 90% of Deaf students, and 80% of Deaf adults have read about *Chinese Sign Language*. The research also shows that 80% of teachers, 71.9% of Deaf students, and more than 50% of Deaf adults think it is necessary to standardise CSL.

Based on the survey, 刘艳虹 et al. (2013) have concluded that *Chinese Sign Language* has become an important source for people to learn CSL and the basis of standardising CSL, because the majority of teachers, Deaf students and adults have read it and use it at different levels. Therefore, in their eyes, promoting *Chinese Sign Language* should be an effective measure to bring information access for Deaf viewers. They recognise that there is inconsistency of vocabulary and grammar between “standard CSL” and local CSL. Without commenting on the inconsistency of grammar, they point out that adjustments are needed in order to address the vocabulary differences. However, it is not clear from the article whether the adjustments should be more prone to *Chinese Sign Language* or heritage CSL.

I would like to argue that while the size of the sample in 刘艳虹 et al. (2013) study is large, it is not representative. The sample of Deaf adults is significantly disproportionate, therefore, leading to questionable statistics and conclusions, considering the results of the Deaf adult group differ significantly from the other two groups. The conclusion that *Chinese Sign Language* has become an important source for Deaf people because the majority of respondents has read it is to some extent far-fetched. As mentioned earlier, this book is used compulsorily amongst students and teachers, and is not voluntarily used by Deaf people. The fact that the vast majority of Deaf adults have used it in school and later on abandoned it upon graduation reveals much more important issues which are not addressed by the researchers. The conclusion that the reason SL interpreting is incomprehensible is that interpreters do not use the “standard CSL” and the insufficient knowledge of “standard CSL” is not convincing. These issues have appeared in the data collected in the study and will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. I would like to warn that more than 80% of respondents prefer to standardise CSL should not be read easily as 80% of respondents accept the current version of standard CSL. Standardisation should be carefully discussed with the participation of Deaf people.

The resistance from the Deaf community against *Chinese Sign Language* has been noticed by the National Centre for Sign Language and Braille. Currently, the Centre redefines the kind of SL it aims at developing as 中国通用手语 (a common-purpose CSL). It states that “the common-purpose CSL” is derived on the basis of CSL and SL studies, including both vocabulary and syntax. It is a language that is endorsed by related governmental departments and organisations, and should be used in international activities, schools and education sector, cultural publications, news broadcast and other media settings, and social service sector. It maintains that the relationship between the “common-purpose CSL” and local CSL dialects is like that of Chinese Mandarin and dialects. They are used in different occasions and can co-exist in the long run.

## **2.5 Sign language interpreting in China**

SL interpreting training is only at its starting point in China. In preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, it was the first time the Chinese government acknowledged SL interpreting as a profession and the importance and the lack of professional SLIs. On January 11th, 2007, SL interpreting was recognised as a new profession by the Ministry of China Labour and Social Security. There are a lot of difficulties facing this profession, for example, the lack of a comprehensive understanding of CSL in terms of its grammar and syntax raises significant challenge when designing a training programme.

Researchers and educators in the field of special education in China have articulated the importance of training SLIs and implications of lacking professional interpreters. 白瑞霞 and 王俊珍 (2012:8) points out that heritage CSL is the first language of Deaf people and a valuable tool for communication providing them access to education, interpersonal relationships, and equal social participation. However, the lack of professional interpreters has put severe limits on Deaf people’s access to social resources and the quality of their life. 陈英 (2011:107) notes that there was a significant shortage of SLIs in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games where 900 professional SLIs were needed.

The first 3-year full-time SL interpreting degree at undergraduate level was set up at Zhongzhou University in 2004. In 2013, the first full-time 3-year master programme of SL interpreting on television was set up at Jiangsu Normal University, exploring the

way to educate professional SLIs working on television. For example, up to 10 students can be admitted into the programme in 2015. Although this course is not a prerequisite for SLIs who work on television and the first batch of graduates is due in 2016, it has the potential to contribute to the professionalisation of SL interpreting. In terms of SL interpreting certification schemes, there are two SL proficiency tests, one organised by the China Association for Employment Promotion (CAEP) and the other co-organised by CAEP and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Apart from that, a few provinces and municipalities such as Shanghai and Guangdong province have launched their own certification schemes.

Despite the lack of training for interpreters, there have been people interpreting for the Deaf community. It was not until 2009 when Xiao and Yu (2009) carried out a national survey on SL interpreting in China that we could have a clear view of the self-sustained profession. The survey covered eight provinces and municipalities in China and received 106 valid responses from SLIs and 259 responses from Deaf people. The survey found that 96.3% of the interpreters work in special education schools and the rest of them work in local deaf associations. 94.3% interpreters are working on a part-time basis. The responses from the Deaf participants showed that teachers at special education schools are the primary source of interpreters, accounting for 50%, followed by family members or friends, standing at 34.5%, and then staff at deaf associations, 14.3%. As for qualifications of the interpreters, only 40.8% suggest that they have received training on SL interpreting skills but the training was not full-time training, but primarily short-term seminars or workshops. 20.4% of the interpreters reported that they had an SL interpreting certificate, but the study did not state which kind of certificate it was. In terms of work opportunities and settings, the study reveals that the biggest demand (48%) comes from police and courts. In terms of working conditions, the survey indicates that the interpreters quite often have to work for more than 1 hour without a partner and the payment in Shanghai (probably the most economically advanced city in China) is about 2 euros per hour.

### ***The lack of professional interpreters***

The lack of professional interpreters is indeed felt by people outside the academic circle. The companies who recruit Deaf employees and staff at police stations, courts,



and hospitals have expressed their concerns on the issue (丁晶, 2006, 杨新慧, 2011, 王珊珊, 2012).

For example, 杨新慧 (2011:31), who is not an academic but a legal professional working at Chongqing municipal Procuratorate, reiterates the importance of training interpreters in order to protect the rights of the Deaf people. She points out that although the current laws and regulations stipulate that in cases where a Deaf suspect is involved, a person who is competent in “Deaf and mute signs” (聋哑手势) should be present and the interrogation should be recorded, there is no specific regulation on the nature of the interpreting job, the procedures and standards of soliciting interpreters, which can jeopardise the rights of the Deaf person and the effectiveness of the legal work.

She is particularly concerned that the presence of only one interpreter makes it difficult to ensure the message from the Deaf suspect is delivered fully. The mistakes in the translation may not be noticed by the police officers, resulting in the deprivation of the rights of the Deaf person. 杨新慧 (2011:32) urges the legal sector to roll out specific regulation for SL interpreting in police settings; ensure that at least two certified interpreters are present in each case; and train members of staff to learn CSL so that in cases where Deaf persons are involved, a legal professional who understands CSL can supervise the quality of the work.

Apart from the police sector, there has been research on training interpreters for companies that have hired Deaf people. For example, 白瑞霞 and 王俊珍 (2012) reach an agreement with *San Quan* food company which has about 600 Deaf employees to improve the communication between administrative staff and Deaf workers. The researchers realise that although there is a lack of conventional signs for the terminology commonly used in food industry, Deaf people in that factory have created signs already. The researchers then collected the signs invented by the Deaf workers at the company and the expressions of the common terms and phrases used by the hearing administrators. After that, they spent two years training the administrative staff at the company on a weekly basis to learn these signs and expressions. They report that this project has greatly improved the communication between hearing and Deaf employees, changed hearing employees' attitudes towards the value of CSL, and attracted more

Deaf people to work for the company. 毕春霞 et al. (2010) and 臧渝梨 et al. (2008), medical professionals, report that the current Chinese medical system ignores the needs of Deaf people to access hospital. In order to address the issue, the former hospital organised groups of nurses to visit local deaf school to learn CSL every week. The Deaf patients were asked to evaluate the SL service in order to ensure that the communication was effective. These examples reveal that although there are no authorities in charge of providing SL interpreting service for Deaf people, the private sectors and related government units who have contact with Deaf people have started to look for solutions. This indicates that the interest to recruit and train SLIs is not limited to the Deaf and academic circle and can gain support from various sectors.

### ***2.5.1 Sign language interpreted programmes in China***

The earliest SL programme on Chinese television is *Xinwen Shouyu* (新闻手语 signed news) on Beijing municipal channel in 1989. It was put in place immediately after the legislation that requires television stations to provide programmes in SL. It broadcast 8 minutes of news with a small SL interpreting screen on a weekly basis. Due to a low audience rating, it was cancelled in 2010. Nevertheless, this new programme is a good start that sees more SL interpreted programmes for the Deaf Chinese. From then on, national, provincial and municipal television channels have begun to set up programmes with signed language interpreting. Most of them are news programmes.

Indeed, though a newcomer to the arena of television programmes with SL interpreting, China now has the biggest number of such programmes (Xiao and Li, 2011). By the end of 2011, more than 190 television channels are broadcasting programmes with SL interpreting according to Statistical Yearbook of China Disabled People's Cause of 2011. Television, following the internet, is the second biggest source of information for the urban Deaf. As for the much larger rural area where internet access is not widely applicable, television must be the primary source of information and entertainment. From the official figures available, it is shown that 170 provincial and municipal channels now run news programmes with signed renditions. By the end of 2010, a total of 190 television channels in China have introduced news programmes with SL interpreting, among which 29 are at provincial level and 161 at municipal level, as reported in the annual report of China Disabled Persons' Federation. In its 2011 annual report, 196 television channels in China have set up news programmes with SL

interpreting, where 28 are provincial level television channels and 168 are municipal level channels. And the figure is expected to rise quickly, given the fact that though 28 out of China's 30 provincial-level television channels now run such programmes, only 168 out of 6557 municipal channels have done the same. As "achieving obstacle-free communication" has been on the central and local governments' work agenda, local television channels are under pressure to create SLI programmes or expand existing ones in length and frequency.

Although we know the number of the SL interpreting programmes now, future research is needed to obtain accurate information as to the types of the programmes, the background of the interpreters, the selection procedures of the interpreters, and their working conditions. Most of the news programmes in China are broadcast on a weekly basis. But there is a trend that more and more television channels will provide news programmes with SL interpreting on a daily basis. CCTV-NEWS, a national-level news channel has adopted SL interpreting for its news programme — *Focus On*, which is broadcast every day from 6pm to 7pm. In China's central Henan province, the provincial television news channel has just expanded its SL interpreted news from 10 minutes per week to 18 minutes per day (Xiao and Li, 2011).

### ***The quality of SL interpreting on television***

With all of these optimistic signs indicating the support SL interpreting is gaining from the central government, the rapid development should not cover the problems it brings. Quite a few studies have shown that SL interpreting on television is not popular amongst Deaf audiences. For example, 刘艳虹 et al. (2013) have examined the participants' attitude towards SL interpreting on television and found that the majority of the Deaf audience cannot understand the interpreting service. The study shows that 58.8% of interpreters use a combination of natural CSL and standard CSL; 32.6% of interpreters use primarily standard CSL (the signs from *Chinese Sign Language*); and 7.8% of interpreters use local heritage CSL and a few interpreters use signs created by themselves. They conclude that there are two reasons for the incomprehension; the first one is that the interpreters are not using standard CSL but a mixture of standard CSL and natural CSL. As for programmes that use standard CSL, the incomprehension is caused because the Deaf audiences have not mastered standard CSL.

I would argue that this study reaches some premature conclusions. The root issue of the unpopular SL interpreting on television lies precisely in the fact that the so-called standard CSL and Signed Chinese are widely resisted by Deaf audiences. As Xiao and Yu's (2009) survey on SL interpreting in China shows, the main cause of a low level of comprehension amongst the Deaf community lies in the fact that the Deaf Chinese community prefers to use heritage CSL while the interpreters on television tend to use Signed Chinese. The reason some Deaf people can understand SL interpreting on television to some extent is because Signed Chinese is required to be used in schools. For this reason, Deaf people who can understand the interpreters better are usually people who have had higher education degrees. This should not be used as evidence underpinning the argument that Signed Chinese is, therefore, better than CSL or that it is Deaf people's fault because they do not make an effort to acquire Signed Chinese. Rather, I maintain the view that the use of Signed Chinese on television is fundamentally a lack of respect for the linguistic rights of Deaf people and more work and research should be carried out on this matter in order to provide a satisfactory service for CSL users.

Xiao and Li (2011) administered a national survey on SL interpreting on television. The study confirms the wide unpopularity of SL interpreting on television across China with a mere one-tenth of viewers indicating that they watched it on a regular basis. The issue of Signed Chinese stood out as the main issue causing incomprehension as it only provides the viewers with broken pieces of information, hardly making any sense. Although Signed Chinese, as the official means of standardising CSL, has caused large-scale opposition amongst Deaf signers, as much as 70.8% of respondents still support the standardisation of CSL. However, this again should not be used to suggest that Deaf people support the current *Chinese Sign Language* as the standard CSL and the issue of standardisation should be administered with caution and Deaf participation.

Although there are a lot of problems and challenges in SL interpreting on Chinese television, its current status is still a good starting point. Since 2011, a few changes have been observed in televised SL interpreting that indicate a more promising future.

To start with, the number of television channels that provide SL interpreting is increasing since the first programme was opened in 1989. It is noted that one of the national television channels — CCTV-NEWS started to provide one-hour SL

interpreting on a daily basis. 28 out of 30 provincial television channels are providing SL interpreting on a daily or weekly basis. 168 out of 6557 municipal channels joined as well. Following national, provincial and municipal channels, it is reported that by the end of 2012, all of the 11 county-level television channels under Xian Yang municipality, Shanxi province, have started to broadcast SL interpreting programmes. The increasing number has revealed the vast potential for more SL interpreting programmes and the acute demand for more qualified SLIs to work for these programmes.

The second trend observed is that, apart from SL interpreted news programmes, more and more national events have adopted SL interpreting. For example, during the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, many of the interviews and reports were broadcast with SL interpreting, which was widely applauded by the Deaf viewers and ordinary Chinese citizens. However, it was a pity that they were cancelled after the conclusion of the sports event. As mentioned in the Introduction, important political conferences have started to provide SL interpreting during their live streaming. Following the good start, in 2013, Shanxi province and Shanghai municipality have introduced SL interpreting for NPC and CPPCC at provincial level and municipal level respectively.

The third trend is that SL interpreting on television is shifting from its previous hearing-interpreter-dominated mode to a Deaf-hearing-cooperating mode. Take the 2012 Beijing NPC and 2013 Shanghai CPPCC for example. In 2012, when SL interpreting was first introduced in NPC, the interpreter was reported to work on her own without any partner. But after one year, in Shanghai CPPCC interpreting, it was reported that Shanghai municipal Disabled Persons' Federation organised a 'think tank' for the interpreting assignment that includes both Deaf and hearing people two weeks before the conference started. The interpreters consulted with Deaf members when they were uncertain about how to sign certain concepts. The interpreters were reported to have also taken into consideration many factors such as Deaf culture, Deaf ways of thinking and the average knowledge base of Deaf people in Shanghai, and practised and modified their signing with the help of Deaf members. In 2014, two municipal news programmes in Suzhou city and Qixia (a district in Nanjing city) made significant progress by employing Deaf people to work as SLI. They have realised the importance of facial expression in CSL and encouraged the SLIs to adopt proper facial expression to facilitate the comprehension of the news content for Deaf viewers.

## **2.6 Summary**

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on social constructionism and framing theory as an ontological position and theoretical perspective to approach the interpreting phenomenon outlined in the Introduction. In order to understand the interpreting phenomenon within its social and cultural contexts, I have then reviewed literature that discusses Chinese cultural values, the Chinese media, and Chinese society. More specifically, literature on the Chinese Deaf population, CSL, and SL interpreting has been reviewed to provide a more immediate context to understand the practice of broadcasting SL interpreting on television. In the next chapter, I will focus on reviewing literature that discusses issues of identity, society, and citizenship in relation to interpreting.

## **Chapter 3 Identity, society, citizenship, and interpreting**

The first section of the chapter is to define SL interpreting as a form of minority language interpreting and Deaf people as a minority group in societies. It is argued that SL interpreting that involves a minority social group cannot be seen simply as a measure to facilitate communication between two equal participants. In the second section, I will focus on reviewing the literature concerning the “sociological turn” in the field of translation and interpreting studies (hereafter referred to as T&I studies). Interpreting is not approached from a pure linguistic or psychological stance in this particular body of knowledge, but seen as a social phenomenon and practice. In the third section, I will focus on reviewing the literature that deals with the issue of identity in the sociological turn of T&I studies, where different dimensions of identity are examined in relation to T&I. The main point I want to raise is that, although the concept of identity has attracted scholarly attention in our field, so far the focus has been on the identity of the translator and interpreter that is shaped during the T&I process. Little attention has been paid to what identities of other participants are shaped by the phenomenon of T&I itself. The fourth section mainly discusses the interplay between interpreting and citizenship where the cultural dimension of citizenship is brought into the discussion. And I posit that interpreting, as a highly interactive and communicative event, provides space for individuals to generate and acquire cultural citizenship, more precisely, to learn to respond to the difference between “us” and “them” in a responsible manner. The last section provides a detailed analysis of the theoretical framework that draws from the field of sociology, media studies, Deaf studies and T&I studies and then explains why the proposed conceptual framework would be instrumental in answering my research questions.

### **3.1 Redefining interpreting as a social phenomenon**

In this section, I will review the different constructions of interpreting in T&I studies and the aspects of interpreting that have been highlighted in these approaches. I will then argue that it is useful to conceptualise interpreting as a social phenomenon.

### ***3.1.1 Traditional approaches to interpreting***

Interpreting is prioritised as a *process* at the beginning of interpreting studies. As mentioned in section 1.2, as early as in 1977, Kade (1977:29) has already conceptualised interpreting as a “social phenomenon, conditioned by social factors and serving social objectives”. Understanding interpreting as a social phenomenon conditioned by social factors and serving social objectives has particular importance in explaining the reason interpreting takes certain forms in certain societies and in promoting its practice in different sectors of society.

However, in the early days of interpreting studies, the complexity and difficulty of interpreting naturally draws researchers’ attention. For example, in Pöchhacker (2004:11) book *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, he draws on Kade’s (1968) definition that emphasises the “immediacy” of interpreting and posits that “interpreting is a form of Translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language.” Highlighting the *immediacy* of interpreting gives rise to a psycholinguistic and cognitive perspective to the understanding of interpreting (see Ingram, 1978, 1974, Seleskovitch, 1976). The most comprehensive work in deciphering the process of interpreting is perhaps Daniel Gile’s (2009) Effort Model. However, foregrounding interpreting as a process where the focus is given to understanding how information from one language is decoded, comprehended, and then encoded into the other language overlooks external factors that condition interpreting, namely the social and cultural context of the interpreting process.

### ***3.1.2 Interpreting and the social turn***

In the previous section, I have discussed the limits of a psycholinguistic approach to interpreting and reviewed the main topics in media interpreting and SL interpreting on television. In this section, I will review literature that approaches interpreting from a sociolinguistic or sociocultural perspective that takes into consideration social and cultural factors.

Rudvin (2006b:173), when presenting the premises of her research, states that the process of interpreting and translating is by no means a mere mechanical one. Authors such as Cokely (1992), Metzger (1999, 2004, 2005a, 2005b), Rudvin (2006a, 2007) and Roy (1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1999, 2000a, 2000b) have supported such a perspective



in exploring interpreting as they agree that interpreters are not just mediating between two different languages but also between communities and cultures. This school of thought leads to the conceptualisation of interpreting as a *social practice*. As Millán-Varela (2003:155) remarks, by looking at Translation as a social practice, it provides “a privileged space in which to explore not only the activity itself but also the complex nature of the contexts in which they take place, as well as underlying attitudes and conflicts.” This body of knowledge that takes into consideration society and culture has gained momentum in T&I studies and led to a “sociological turn” in the field.

Many scholars have observed (e.g. Pöchhacker, 2006, 2008, Angelelli, 2014, Wolf, 2014) that a “sociological turn” has taken place in T&I studies in the past thirty years or so. As Wolf (2014:8) remarks, every turn in a given discipline marks a paradigmatic shift of scholarly attention. More precisely, it reveals a break from traditional approaches in the field and introduces a new lens through which the discipline is reexamined. According to her, the sociological turn in translation studies underscores the attention shift from the translation process to the social factors conditioning a translation process. Instead of abandoning the linguistic approach to translation studies, the sociological approach stands on its predecessor’s shoulders and explores new horizons in the field.

In the field of interpreting, Pöchhacker (2006) observes that in the past few decades, interpreting studies has been forging a social dimension at rapid speed. Similarly to Wolf’s (2014) argument, he suggests that the social turn in interpreting studies is not a complete negation of the previous approaches to interpreting. Rather, it presents a different angle through which interpreting is reexamined with the focus placed on the “social sphere of interaction” (Wolf, 2014:229).

The sociological turn is not the first of its kind in the field of translation studies. As a discipline sitting in the contact zones of different languages, societies and cultures, translation studies is susceptible to paradigmatic shifts (Wolf, 2014:9). In the 1960s, the field has witnessed a robust “cultural turn” already which significantly expanded the scope of factors, namely cultural implications, taken into consideration by translation scholars (Bassnett. and Lefevere, 1990, Snell-Hornby, 1990, Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999, 2006). This makes up for the approaches developed prior to the cultural turn

where the consequences of the context on text production and the contextual factors forming the deeper impact of the translation text were rarely discussed (Wolf, 2014:10).

The perspectives and approaches developed in the cultural turn laid a foundation for the rise of the sociological turn where translation is seen as a social practice. This means that translation is seen as taking place within social contexts. There are two reasons for this statement. Firstly, the individuals, who carry out the work of translation, are inevitably part of a social system. Secondly, the translation phenomenon is undoubtedly influenced by social institutions at its different production stages such as the selection, translation and publication (Wolf, 2014:10).

With more and more attention devoted to the sociological aspects of translation, Snell-Hornby (2006:172) calls for the translation studies discipline to pay attention to the emerging new paradigm. She welcomes it as a promising alternative to the purely linguistic approach and praises it as a matter of great significance in expanding the boundary of the field. What can we gain from a sociological perspective on T&I where they are perceived as an activity profoundly influenced by social configurations? Pöchhacker (2006) suggests that one of the consequences of “going social” is the research philosophy adopted by individual researchers. It requires researchers to engage more with philosophical considerations and carefully justify their theoretical framework in line with their philosophical standing, namely, their ways of seeing the world.

However, although Wolf (2014) has pointed out that both the social phenomena of Translation and translators need to be studied in the sociological turn in T&I studies, so far the primary attention is given to the interpreter and translator (more examples will be given in section 3.3.3). For example, Pöchhacker (2006a) calls for more scholarly attention in enriching the social dimension of interpreting studies with particular focus on “the meme of ‘mediation’...Particular attention should be given to the issues of identity, role and power of the mediator, in the conceptual dimensions of ‘interaction’ and ‘culture’” (p. 229). Clearly, Pöchhacker has given his emphasis on the study of the interpreter as the centre of sociological investigation of interpreting. However, it should be stressed that the sociological aspects of interpreting studies should not focus only on the situatedness of the translator or interpreter, as the majority of current research does,

but take a wider conceptualisation and explore the social and cultural factors moulding interpreting as a social phenomenon.

In the case of my study, a sociological perspective enables me to move away from directly discussing issues such as quality and comprehension, and focusing on the situatedness of SL interpreting in the context of the Chinese culture and society. It also enables me to draw theoretically and methodologically from other disciplines to investigate the factors that contribute to the shaping of the current SL interpreting on television, the language choice of the interpreter, the formation of deaf Chinese identity, and people's attitudes towards SL interpreting on television. At the same time, studying SL interpreting on Chinese television contributes to a deeper understanding of interpreting as a social phenomenon and the knowledge about interpreting in the current sociological turn.

### ***3.1.3 Contribution from minority language to interpreting***

Before we discuss SL interpreting as a kind of minority language interpreting, concepts such as “a linguistic minority” and “minority language” require a definition. Defining which language qualifies as a minority language is not as straightforward as it seems. Hogan-Brun and Ramoniené (2003), Hogan-Brun (2005), Hogan-Brun et al. (2008)'s extensive work on language policy in the Baltic states show that a once dominant language (in this case Russian) can become a minority language due to social and political changes, yet it is nevertheless problematic to grant such a language a minority language status. In the field of Translation studies, minority language has not attracted much scholarly attention. As Cronin (1998:145) rightfully points out, theoretical discussions in the field of translation studies have largely ignored minority language and translators who work in these languages, but this particular branch of translation can contribute to a fuller understanding of translation and reveal the ongoing but often neglected power dynamics between dominant and minority languages. As pointed out by Branchadell and West (2005) and Branchadell (2011b), there is not yet a clear-cut definition of minority language offered in the field of translation studies. Therefore, we need to explore other areas in order to obtain a suitable one. According to Branchadell (2005:2), the definition of “minority language” is best captured by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. In the Charter, “minority or regional languages” refers to languages that are first of all:

traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population. Secondly, a minority language is different from the official language(s) of that state, on the understanding that such definition does not include either dialect(s) of the official language(s) of the state or the languages of migrants.

SLs, therefore, sit comfortably under the umbrella of minority languages in that SLs, with or without official recognition, have been used by signers worldwide traditionally. Secondly, the size of any Deaf population in any state is significantly smaller than the rest of the state's population. Thirdly, any SL in a country is markedly different from the official language(s) of that state and cannot be classified as a dialect of the state language.

After positioning SLs under the umbrella of minority languages, I will then explore the nature of "minority" in this context. Cronin (1995:86) elaborates on the dynamic connotation of a minority language that "minority" is not an absolute static factual status of a language but is more of a relation. According to him, the relativity of the concept "minority" appears in two dimensions, namely "diachronic" and "spatial" (Cronin, 1995:86). The diachronic relation refers to the historical experience which creates an unbalanced relationship between languages. SLs worldwide, have suffered from an asymmetrical relationship with the dominant spoken languages in societies. It is only in recent history where some SLs have been recognised as languages. Therefore, SLs are a form of minority language in this regard. The "spatial" relationship is closely related to diachronic relationships which refers to languages that either find themselves as minority languages because of a redrawing of national boundaries or they co-exist with other languages in the same territory but are no longer in a dominant position. A new dimension is then added to the "spatial relationship" in the case of SLs in that they do not readily fit either category. SLs have never assumed dominance in the society with or without a redrawing of national boundary and social changes. In which case, SLs can be categorised as "absolute minority language", a term used by Branchadell (2005) denoting a language that is not a primary language in any state. SLs belong to this family because not only presently, but historically, they have never been a majority language in any state.

***Why researching on interpreting and linguistic minority***

Once we have had an operative definition and sited SLs as a member of minority languages with Deaf people defined as a linguistic minority, two questions naturally surface. First, why do I want to position SL in the field of minority language and why interpreting studies should care about such a minority language at all.

The second question was asked initially by Branchadell (2011a) in *Translation Studies* where he cast the question — why Translation Studies should care about minority languages at all. In order to answer the question, he paraphrases a quote from John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address and argues that “we should ask not what translation can do for minority languages but rather what minority languages can do for translation” (Branchadell, 2011:97). Toury (1985:7) answered this question by arguing that the principal justification for establishing “translation into minority languages” as an object of study is because it constitutes a “weak target system”. As a result, a unique opportunity is presented to “uncover translational mechanisms in a more or less bare form. Regularities thus detected may well throw light on essential traits of the process of translating in general and may contribute to the elaboration of the theory of translation itself” (Toury, 1985:7).

A similar statement can be made in the case of SL interpreting and interpreting studies. The fact that SL is a form of “absolute minority languages” provides a platform for researchers to explore regularities that may not be outstanding in the mode of spoken languages. By investigating interpreting for minority languages, the field of interpreting studies will benefit from a better understanding of the nature of interpreting. As Baxter (2013) points out, the definition of interpreting proposed by Pöchhacker (2004:10) that “interpreting is performed ‘here and now’ for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture” is too narrow and cannot grasp the full scope of interpreting. As a definition, it does not include situations where a minority language is used but perhaps only considers the use of dominant languages. With the use of minority language taken into consideration, the primary function of interpreting undoubtedly goes beyond merely facilitating communication.

The fact that the linguistic minority group in SL interpreting (Deaf people) happens to be a group of people with a hearing disability who live in phonocentric societies where speech is the dominant form of communication would add more dimensions to the understanding of interpreting. Moreover, studying an interpreting phenomenon in the

Chinese social and cultural context will help Translation to “take on new meaning” because it discusses “non-Western materials” and includes non-Western experience (Tymoczko, 2006:21) .

### ***3.1.4 A broader conceptualisation of interpreting***

The understanding of interpreting has expanded tremendously since its establishment. Its focus has shifted from the more immediate cognitive information processes to the broader social and cultural environment. However, I would like to stress that equal attention should be given to both the interpreting phenomenon and interpreters in the social turn. A similar argument has been made by Baxter (2013:235) that the current field of interpreting studies has paid little attention to “interpreting as phenomenon in itself and the impact it can make on ‘weak’ subjects such as minority and regional languages.”

Wuyun Gaowa (2001:166) notes that the ancient term for interpreting in Chinese Tang dynasty “*yi*yu” (译语) can refer to three different things at the same time, including Translators, a Translating event, or the act of Translating between languages. Putting it in the context of interpreting, it suggests that interpreters, the interpreting event, as well as interpreting practice, are closely related to each other and are integral parts of interpreting. Although, in current China, more concrete terms have been developed to refer to the three different concepts, the term *yi*yu still bears ancient wisdom that current researchers should not overlook.

I propose that the concept of interpreting should be recalibrated through the lens of social turn, where the focus is not only given to the interpreter who is mediating and managing the situation but to interpreting as a social phenomenon, the social factors that shape the phenomenon, and the social objectives it serves (Kade, 1968). As a social phenomenon, interpreting opens up an opportunity for communication between different groups. Therefore, it is important to examine the form of communication interpreting has assumed in a particular context and what factors have contributed to the shape and nature of communication assumed by that particular interpreted communicative encounter. If we take SL interpreting on Chinese television for example, while it is important to look at the performance of the interpreter, namely the quality of the interpreting and strategies the interpreter adopts, it is equally important to

investigate other issues concerning the phenomenon. By looking at the broader context of this particular interpreting event, it is possible to explore concepts much wider than the roles and identities of the interpreter. It opens up more extensive discussions on the purpose and value of SL interpreting and the projected and perceived identities of the Deaf Chinese community and the power differentials involved in shaping SL interpreting on television in China.

### ***3.1.5 Studies on SL interpreting on television***

Influenced by the psycholinguistic approach to interpreting, literature on media interpreting has primarily focused on investigating specific features of this genre of interpreting, i.e. challenges and difficulties posed by the media content and context on the interpreters (Kurz, 1990). Since media interpreting can be termed as one of the most challenging kind of interpreting, scholars have drawn attention to the *quality* of media interpreting output and the criteria to evaluate the concept of *quality* (e.g. Kurz and Pöchhacker, 1995, Straniero Sergio, 2003, Darwish A., 2006). Pöchhacker (2011) posits that media interpreting has gradually grown into a more independent genre of interpreting rather than an aspect of conference interpreting and presents a broad range of methodological options (corpus study, manual source-target comparison, and listening comprehension experiments) and topics (idioms, linguistic varieties and rhetoric) in media interpreting. Other topics investigated include interpreting provision (Andres and Fünfer, 2011); interpreting strategies such as the use of prosody and discourse markers to manage the flow of discourse (Pignataro, 2011); coping with cultural references (Pöchhacker, 2007) and question/answer topical coherence in television interpreting (Dal Fovo, 2012); and work environment for media interpreters (Jiménez Serrano, 2011, Viaggio, 2001, Kurz, 1996). A variety of materials have been studied as well, for example, interpreting legal discourse on television (Amato, 2002); press conference (Sergio, 2003); live media ceremonies (Amato and Mack, 2011) and so on. In recent years, there is also a growth of research that focuses on media interpreter as a mediator (Straniero Sergio, 1999, Katan and Straniero-Sergio, 2001, Chiaro, 2002, Straniero Sergio, 2011). We can see from these topics that research on media interpreting has adopted a particularly linguistic and psychological approach with limited attention paid to studying media interpreting as a social phenomenon, the social factors (not the challenges created by the media setting) that condition it, or the objectives it serves.

As for SL interpreting on television, since the SL interpreting profession in general is still developing at different rates in the world and often referred to as an emerging profession (Napier, 2009), more attention needs to be afforded to SL interpreting on television. As rightfully pointed out by Turner (2007:9), there is still an “enormous and barely-touched agenda” in signed language T&I studies. Kellett Bidoli (2010) also points out that SL interpreting in media settings has attracted little attention so far. This is manifested in Grbic (2007)’s work where she has found that research on SL interpreting in media settings only accounts for 7 percent of the corpus which is composed of all references to SL interpreting on television from 1970–2005 from three bibliographies, excluding book review, unpublished papers and projects on interpreter training.

Existing studies in the area have mostly concentrated on the interpreting output (e.g. Kellett Bidoli, 2007, 2008), user comprehension (Steiner, 1998, Stone, 2007, Xiao and Li, 2011, e.g. Wehrmeyer, 2013, 2015, Xiao et al., 2015); service provision (Kyle and Allsop, 1997, e.g. Steiner, 1998, Kurz and Mikulasek, 2004, Xiao and Yu, 2009); Deaf vs. hearing interpreter/translator (e.g. Allsop and Kyle, 2008, Stone, 2009). These studies point out a number of common issues in SL interpreting practice. Generally speaking, research that concerns SL interpreting provision in developed countries (for instance, Steiner, 1998, Kellett Bidoli, 2007, 2008) shows that there are challenges presented by the time factor, news text style, culturally-loaded terms, proper names etc., yet the quality and user comprehension are still adequate. However, research that concerns SL interpreting provision in developing countries like China and South Africa (as shown in research by Xiao et al., 2015 and Wehrmeyer, 2013, 2015) reveals serious comprehension issues that directly point to the lack of training and SL skills on the part of SLIs. Similarly, these studies have pointed out that viewers prefer subtitles to SL interpreting despite their relatively low literacy in the national language. These studies have, like media interpreting, placed the focus of researching SL interpreting on television primarily on linguistic issues, comprehension and interpreting issues. On the other hand, they have also hinted at the importance of understanding interpreting in its social context. While it is meaningful to investigate linguistic and interpreting issues, the visibility of SL (a minority and oppressed language) and Deaf people (a minority and often oppressed social group) brought by the media and the ensuing implications for



SL, Deaf people, and even society should attract more attention in academia, not only from interpreting studies but media studies and sociology as well.

In this section, I have reviewed the different approaches to interpreting and argued that it is valuable to pay equal attention to both interpreting as a phenomenon in itself and the interpreter. In the next section, I will review the literature concerning the interplay between interpreting and identity, society, and citizenship.

### **3.2 Translation, interpreting and society**

In this section, I will review literature that discusses the social value of T&I in different settings and historical periods.

#### ***3.2.1 Rediscover the value of Translation in history***

Conceptualising Translation as a social phenomenon allows us to include a historical perspective on examining the concept of Translation. For instance, research on the history of translation at different stages in China provides a valuable account of the social objectives T&I served in Chinese society throughout history. It also sheds light on the evolution of Translation and its social status at different stages in Chinese history.

Li Nanqiu (2002) claims that interpreting is not a simple linguistic transfer and that interpreting may have contributed to the historical records of China. Further work by Lung and Li (2005:202) investigates historical documents of different periods in China where interpreting activities were recorded and suggest that interpreting took part in recording history in three ways, including “interpreters’ notes being used as a reference in compiling historical events, interpreters being consulted for details after the interlingual exchanges, and historians referring to interpreters’ renditions on the spot” (cited in Lung, 2008).

Rachel Lung’s (2008, 2009) work on translation officials of the Tang central government in medieval China sheds light on two kinds of staff members who worked as interpreters and translators in the central government of the Tang dynasty (618–906 AD). Although the author’s major contribution is the differentiation of the two translation officials, namely translators in the Court of Diplomatic Reception (Yiyu) and translators in the Secretariat (Fanshu Yiyu), whose duties and differences were often

ignored by previous scholars, my review of her work would focus on the contextual factors and functions of these translators in the Tang dynasty.

Lung (2008) positions her investigation of the functions of translation in the historical context of the Tang dynasty where China is at one of its best periods in history in terms of military, economic and cultural strength. China has always perceived itself as the centre of the world and perceived foreigners as less educated and civilised people. The Tang dynasty, however, was different. Taizong emperor of Tang dynasty actively promoted the idea of peaceful co-existence with foreign people and culture and considered China as a big family for all different nationalities. As a result, there was unprecedented presence of foreigners, mostly envoys, the clergy, and merchants (Lung, 2008:178), in China, creating the language needs to facilitate communication with these groups. As a result, the Court of Diplomatic Reception (鸿胪寺) was established to cater for foreign guests upon their first arrival. Apart from assisting foreign visitors about general daily matters (Gaowa, 2001), Lung (2008:182) suggests that historical documentation provides evidence that the Court translators were also involved in interviewing foreign envoys in order to obtain strategic and technical information about their country of origin and submitted it to the Bureau of Historiography. Lung (2008:183) therefore argues that translation in the Tang dynasty is not as simple as facilitating the communication between China and other countries, but is of strategic importance for China. As Schafer (1963) comments, the geographic and strategic information collected through the interviews with the assistance of Court translators is instrumental in making maps of China's neighbouring countries and is of particular importance to the strategists of the Chinese army.

Lung (2009) provides further evidence that interpreters play a significant part in compiling historical records in China. The writer reveals the practice of interviewing foreign envoys in the Court and locates textual and pictorial evidence about these occasions and provides proof that information gained from these interviews was directly adapted into the archival accounts of these people and their country. Evidence is also found in the written records of Sui dynasty (AD 581–618) that the interpreted conversation between the Chinese emperor and a Japanese envoy was directly adapted into historic recordings. Moreover, Lung and Li (2005) observe that in the recorded interpreting events in China, evidence can often be found where the words of foreign

people were rephrased to serve the purpose of reflecting the supremacy of the Chinese culture.

### ***3.2.2 Interpreting and its social functions and value***

The social value of interpreting is made salient in cases where a minority language is involved. Bahadır (2010) argues that interpreters often find them positioned in difficult situations where they have to mediate between and speak in both dominating and oppressed languages, especially in settings such as warfare, asylum seeking, prison. In literature that discusses the value of interpreting, the focus is usually given to the role played by and the decisions made by the interpreters.

#### ***The role of interpreter***

For example, Tryuk (2010) investigates the work of interpreters in an extreme and critical situation – the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. In this context, interpreting is usually provided to prisoners by their fellow inmates at hearings, interrogations, and other occasions, who are also subject to the common fate – torture and death. The context of a concentration camp has a profound impact on the decisions made by the camp interpreters during interpreting, knowing that their words may potentially change their life and the life of their fellow inmates. The fact that it is impossible for the camp interpreters to remain impartial and neutral in the context of life and death illustrates the complexities and difficulties in interpreting and the importance of examining an interpreting event as a situated social practice.

Another piece of research exploring the details of interpreting activity in concentration camps uses survivors' accounts to reconstruct the work of interpreters and the functions of interpreting in that extreme situation (Wolf, 2013). Similar to Tryuk's (2010) work, the results show that the ever-present terror in concentration camps, i.e. the context of concentration camps, has a significant impact on the ways in which the interpreters work. More importantly, the different kinds of interpreting activities have in turn, shaped the everyday life of prisoners. It is important to note that interpreting is a survival strategy under these highly traumatising circumstances and that many of the survivors regarded interpreters as being helpful in giving them suggestions to avoid severe punishment so that they can survive in camps.

In another two pieces of work examining the nature of the relationship between interpreters and their immediate social context of extreme violence and conflict – the Iraq war, the focus is again given to the dual role played by the interpreter as combatant Inghilleri (2009), (2010). The research shows that the decision taken by Iraqis and other Arabic-speakers to interpret for the US Army is a complex one which raises critical ethical questions and struggles for the interpreters and their family members and friends. But the agreement to interpret for the US army is seen as proof that the interpreters support the decisions made by the politicians to declare war. It is also indicated that the context in which the interpreters work and live, i.e. the military camp, makes the interpreters adopt the military ethics as their own. It also notes how public opinion and interpreters' attitude towards the decision to interpret for the US army could change rapidly once the news broke out that the US army abused Iraqi captives. As the context evolves, interpreting is no longer viewed as a strategy to liberate the country but as a form of betrayal of their fellow countryman. The research serves as a vivid example that the perceptions of interpreting and the role of interpreters are greatly influenced by the social context.

Interpreters and translators participate in the making of history and reality in many other aspects. Although it is hard to access documentation on the use of interpreters and translators in gathering intelligence, Footitt (2009, 2012, 2014) manages to explore the involvement of translators and interpreters during World War II whose duty was translating material from decrypted and coded messages and confiscated documents from enemies. Baker (2010) comments that these translators and interpreters, undoubtedly, continue to have a part, often undocumented, in intelligence gathering activities.

Pérez (2011) examines the work of interpreters to facilitate communication between indigenous islanders and European conquerors in the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula from the mid-fourteenth century to the end of the fifteenth. The focus of the research is how interpreting is related to the conquest and acculturation of the Canary Archipelago at later stages. She indicates that the training of interpreters to facilitate communication contributed to a faster speed of the conquest and that the quality of the interpreter's work had a significant impact on the situation. It is also noted that language skills were not the only key factor in the situation, the interpreter's kinship or cultural familiarity

with the region also played a key role in achieving the conquest. By comparison, islands which do not have interpreters took longer to surrender.

Baker (2010) argues that translators and interpreters working in war zones play a significant role in recording the war because unlike media reporters and soldiers who come and go, interpreters and translators are a constant force in war zones. The continuity of their presence makes it possible for others to record the war. She also points out that interpreters and translators have a significant part to play in shaping other people's perception of any war. As Palmer (2007:19) observes, the interpreters in his interviews are given considerable freedom in their work where they are not obliged to provide a word-for-word interpretation. Therefore, they have the freedom to present information to journalists and military officers selectively, which has considerable influence on the narratives constructed during the ongoing war.

Other studies on translators and interpreters in war zones have provided a wide range of work they are engaged in, which is significantly different from just translating. For example, Takeda (2009:52) states that during World War II, second generation Japanese Americans were hired by the US forces as interpreters and translators. Their duty extends far beyond the linguistic nature of interpreting, and they also “translated captured enemy documents, interrogated Japanese prisoners of war, persuaded Japanese soldiers and civilians to surrender, and participated in propaganda activities.” By completing these various tasks, they are also engaged in constructing the war for outsiders.

### ***The value of interpreting***

Besides interpreting in extreme situations such as the war zone and conflicts, research on interpreting using a minority language also sheds light on the purpose and social value of T&I. Baxter (2013) examined the political dimension of providing interpreting for Galician speakers. According to him, interpreting for Galician is not merely a question of facilitating communication but a political issue where Galician as a minority language is promoted and the rights of minority language speakers are protected. Woodsworth (1996) raises similar arguments that the translation into minority languages such as Scots and Romansch are not strictly necessary because very few speakers of these two languages are still monolingual. However, translation into these

minority languages should be continued as it has significant “institutional, political and ideological implications, which can be highly instructive for our understanding of translational phenomena in general” (Woodsworth, 1996:213). Therefore, the choice of providing interpreting services into a minority language is a political decision which involves important questions of “status and prestige and language rights rather than just communication” (Baxter 2013:238). Baxter (2013:239) also points out that it is economically more efficient to guarantee the highly visible presence of minority languages through the provision of interpreting services in high-profile conferences compared to other strategies such as radio and poster campaigns which are currently taken by the government.

Diaz Fouces (2005:102) makes similar comments on the “role” of translation that translation is an effective tool to change users’ perception of the symbolic and practical value of their own language, as a language into which translations are made is considered a useful one. He (2010) also points out that an efficient management of translation practices leads minority languages to assume attributes of the languages of the upper level.

This view is applicable to interpreting as well. As Baxter (2013:239) states, introducing the use of minority language in high-profile conferences as one of the working languages on equal footing with dominant languages such as English is useful in raising the perceived status of these minority languages, especially in cases where the speakers of those minority languages feel inferior and insecure about their language. I would argue that this does not only apply to speakers of those minority languages but also to speakers of dominant languages. It links straight to the notion of cultural citizenship (see section 3.4.1 for a fuller discussion) that the provision of interpreting for minority languages creates space for speakers of dominant languages to learn that minority languages are fully capable of serving the needs of communication. As a result, interpreting can change their perceptions of minority languages in a positive light.

Therefore, Baxter (2013:239) proposes that policy-makers should work together in order to utilise the symbolic potential of interpreting to eliminating existing linguistic prejudices and create a fairer discursive space for all languages entirely. Beukes (2009:1) also explores the political dimensions of translation and interpreting as a social practice. She argues that interpreting and translation should not be viewed as a

mere measure for communication, but as a “language development tool for creating a ‘discursive space’ for indigenous (minority) languages”. She points out that in current debates on language planning in South Africa, the political role of T&I to promote language development is widely neglected. As a result, the socio-cultural contexts, in which minority languages are used, have reduced significantly.

González Núñez (2013) explores the value of translation in language policy in Northern Ireland. The researcher points out that in any country where multiple languages are used, the discussion of language policy always involves the decision whether translation should be provided or not. For a country like Northern Ireland where it is divided by cultural, religious, and political differences, language is an important factor in the struggle. Translation, therefore, is perceived as one of the binding tools and is believed to possess an inclusive power for Northern Ireland to overcome inequalities created by its past and contribute to a more peaceful future. Apart from this, translation is also believed to have the power to ease discrimination against immigrant communities. It helps to promote languages of the minorities and immigrants and contributes to preserving and highlighting the cultural identities associated with these languages. By doing so, translation becomes a healing force to foster good relations among different linguistic and cultural communities.

This body of research suggests that in the field of language planning, there is a growing interest in examining the great symbolic potential interpreting has to function as a useful tool for language planning. It also demonstrates that translation serves many more purposes than just communication. While this body of literature does not focus solely on the role of the interpreter and translator, it is noted that there is a taken-for-granted assumption that the service providers are providing interpreting of good quality. It does not investigate occasions where the quality of the service fails to meet the basic communicative function. Therefore, further research should be carried out to examine the consequences that my current research is working on.

So far, I have reviewed literature that discusses the social value of T&I. In the next section, I will shift the focus onto another aspect of T&I in relation to society, namely, the stakeholders that should be involved when examining the topic of interpreting.

### ***3.2.3 Interpreting as constructed by stakeholders***

In this section, I will review the literature that looks at the ways in which interpreting is perceived and constructed in society as well as in academia.

### ***Scholars and interpreters as stakeholders***

In terms of interpreting-related research, the stakeholders that are consulted in various studies are usually interpreting scholars and interpreters. For example, when discussing the notion of quality of interpreting, which is usually approached for the purpose of assessment (e.g., Shlesinger, 1997, Kurz, 2001, 2003), Grbić (2008) examines quality as a social construct and compares different definitions and perceptions of quality by scholars and professionals in the field. There have been a handful of studies that investigated interpreters' perceptions of professional practice in order to develop a fuller picture of various aspects of interpreting including quality, professional ideology, self-representation, and practice (e.g., Hale and Luzardo, 1997, Tate and Turner, 1997, Angelelli, 2004, Zwischenberger, 2011).

Hale's (2011) research on the positive side of community interpreting provides an excellent example of a different way in which interpreting is framed in academic discourse. She observes that so far, research on community interpreting has focused attention on the issues and problems in the field. For example, much research has pointed out the fuzzy boundary of the role of community interpreter, the failure to address the issue of accuracy and impartiality on the interpreter's part, wrong attitudes of service providers and recipients when working with interpreters, and so on (Hale, 2011:235). She notes that many of the studies in the field look at the performance of untrained and *ad hoc* interpreters and argues that while these studies have been instrumental in identifying problems and gaps in the field, thus pointing direction to future work and attention, they have also overlooked the good practices and examples set by competent interpreters, right-minded service providers and understanding service users.

In order to compensate for the overly negative framing of the field of interpreting, her research aims at identifying some of the positive aspects of working as a community interpreter. The results show that the significant majority of 97.9% of respondents reported adhering to the criteria of accuracy and impartiality. 86.2% used the first and second person pronouns to facilitate a direct communication between the interpreted



participants. Although 4.4% of respondents reported difficult situations where they had to breach the code of ethics, the majority stated that the code of ethics had been useful in giving them directions when they faced ethical dilemmas. Her research demonstrates that – as its title indicates – there is a positive side of the community that should not be excluded by academia. The exclusion of positive aspects by researchers presents a discouraging landscape of the field and their inclusion provides a more balanced view.

### ***Consumer as a stakeholder***

While it is important to solicit opinions from academics, educators, and interpreters, it is equally important to understand the perceptions of the consumers of interpreting. As Napier (2011) observes in the field of SL interpreting studies, very few studies have looked at the perceptions of SLIs or consumers of SL interpreting through the lens of a linguistic analysis. She stresses that:

Investigation of signed language interpreting from the perspective of interpreters and consumers is needed, not only to include them as stakeholders in the provision and consumption of interpreting services and to explore their agenda in terms of quality interpreting services; but also to explore interpreters and interpreting as a *social behavior*. Thus it is important to consider not only *what* is said by interpreters and consumers about interpreting, but also *how* they say it (p.61, my emphasis).

As she points out, despite the lack of a significant body of knowledge, there has been a growing interest in eliciting Deaf people's perceptions of SL interpreting. For example, Stone and Allsop (2007) carry out interviews with British Deaf persons about their perceptions of the quality of interpreting; Napier and Barker (2004) use focus groups with Australian Deaf university students in order to find out their perceptions of the SL interpreting service they receive at university; and Kurz and Langer (2004) interview Deaf and hard-of-hearing students about their SL interpreting experience. However, these studies can be described as aiming at finding out *what* is said about SL interpreting, not *how* they say it. Moreover, these studies have not considered investigating the perceptions of the other participant – hearing consumers of SL interpreting.

Without employing the concept of framing, Napier (2011) carries out an innovative thematic and content analysis of focus group data generated from all three immediate

participants of SL interpreting – Deaf people, SLIs, and hearing people. Instead of focusing on *what* has been said by the three stakeholders, she pays particular attention to *how* they say it. By comparing the data from each group, the study concludes that participants' attitudes towards interpreters and interpreting are formed through their choice of language and the topics *they chose to focus on*. This particular observation has an apparent link to Entman's (1993) framing theory where selection and salience are key factors that create a particular frame or an interpretation of a certain topic. The study also finds that although there are similarities between the different perceptions held by different stakeholders, it can be concluded that all three groups have different perceptions and interpretations of SL interpreting they experienced. Again, this observation has theoretical relevance to framing theory and social constructionism that recognise the existence of multiple and even conflicting interpretations and constructions of the social reality.

### ***Media as a stakeholder***

In the previous section, we have seen a range of stakeholders that are taken into consideration by interpreting and translation scholars. However, are stakeholders limited to the three immediate participants of an interpreted event? As Baker (2010) points out, currently very little attention is paid to the ways in which interpreting is perceived by and represented in the media. As far as SL interpreting on television is concerned, there is little research investigating public or media perceptions of media interpreting or SL interpreting on television. However, it is important to pay attention to this direction considering the fact that SL interpreting on television reaches audience larger than Deaf audience. That is to say, the visibility of SL brought by television interpreting raises wider social implications.

In the larger field of interpreting studies, I would like to highlight two pieces of research, which have addressed some of the broader social issues by reviewing media discourse on interpreting. The first one looks at simultaneous conference interpreting in the Turkish printed and electronic media (Diriker, 2003) and the second one researches into the media discourse on legal interpreting provision in Ireland (Phelan, 2011).

Diriker (2003) analyses a total of 48 news items in order to find out firstly, when a discourse on simultaneous interpreting started to emerge in the Turkish media;

secondly, which aspects of the profession and the professionals were selected and emphasised by the members of the media; and thirdly, which aspects of the profession and the professionals were chosen and emphasised by professional interpreters addressing the media. Although Diriker (2003) does not refer to framing theory by Entman (1993), the second and third research questions she poses (selection and emphasis) indicate clearly that in her view, interpreting as a social phenomenon is framed by both the media and interpreters.

The study shows that there are mainly five generators of media discourse on simultaneous interpreting in the Turkish media, namely big events, big money, big mistakes, personal fame and big career. The media mostly focus on the differences between professional and non-professional simultaneous interpreters and possible scandals about the profession and professionals. Members of the media unanimously believe that the best kind of simultaneous interpreting is one that manages to interpret each word of the original text into the target language. They uphold three criteria including “loyalty to the original word”, “fluency” and “synchronicity of the delivery” when presenting, praising or criticising simultaneous interpreting (Diriker, 2003:242). Compared to members of the media, professional interpreters when addressing the media, place more emphasis on “loyalty to meaning of the original message” instead of the original word. They gave a more complex description of simultaneous interpreting to the media. The interpreters also underscore that the job of simultaneous interpreting is more than seeking the original meaning of the words but also entails an “interpretation” of the original message which unavoidably involves subjectivity to some extent.

By comparing both media and interpreter discourses on simultaneous interpreting, Diriker (2003) is able to highlight the gap between the understanding of simultaneous interpreting between the media and interpreters, pointing out the need to discuss interpreting outside the profession.

Phelan (2011) reviewed 70 national and provincial newspaper articles about court reports with interpreters involved in Ireland over an eight-year period from 2003 to 2010. These reports feature six themes including proficiency in English; no interpreter provided at the garda station; no interpreter provided in court; interpreting cost; interpreter competency and interpreter ethics. She then argues that the findings

demonstrate that the media reports on court interpreting in Ireland are selective rather than comprehensive, which also reflects Entman's (1993) notion of framing in media studies.

The newspaper articles used in Phelan's (2011) research prove to be a very useful source of information, which reveal the ad hoc nature of the court interpreting provision in Ireland. It shows that some judges, lawyers and police officers were not aware of the possible right to have free access to an interpreter in criminal proceedings. Similarly, the defendants often do not expect to be provided with an interpreter and would resort to their friends, family members or hire a personal interpreter when necessary. Many judges were not aware of the importance of having a competent interpreter in court and the boundaries of the interpreter's role. The views from different stakeholders in court interpreting, especially the judges, lawyers, police officers, are very valuable in understanding the current situation in Ireland and serve as an indicator of the wider international court interpreting provision.

The two pieces of research show that media reports on interpreting are a very new and useful source of material to study the interpreting profession and professionals. Moreover, the research demonstrates that the interpreting profession concerns a wider range of stakeholders than the most direct ones and that there is a discrepancy in terms of different stakeholders' knowledge of the interpreting profession and professionals. Diriker's (2003) work reveals that members of the media and professional interpreters use very different language discussing the same object, i.e. simultaneous interpreting, depending on their individual identity, position and intentions. Their views are not neutral accounts of the examined object but are social and personal constructs, which reflect social, cultural and individual expectations and perspectives. Phelan's (2011) work emphasises the importance of including perspectives of different stakeholders of the interpreting profession. Although she does not directly interview various stakeholders to elicit their views on court interpreting provision in Ireland, she documents their opinions reported in the news stories, which serve as strong evidence of the *ad hoc* situation in Ireland.

As pointed out by Diriker (2003:231), professions are social entities, which "shape and are shaped by the discourse pertaining to that specific field". She also argues that in the case of the simultaneous interpreting profession, similar to other professions, the

identity, image and status of interpreters are intertwined with the way in which the profession and the professional are (re)presented in the discourse on simultaneous interpreting (2003:231). In the case of SL interpreting on television and the more general SL interpreting studies, it is clear that not very much is known in terms of how the profession and the professionals are perceived and discussed by the wider public and the wider stakeholders. Further still, without knowing the ways in which the wider audience understands SL interpreting on television, it is hard to see the SL interpreting profession properly in terms of its identity, image and status.

### ***Other stakeholders***

Lee (2009) carries out a survey-based study to analyse the perceptions of court interpreting by both legal professionals and practicing court interpreters. The results present significant conflicting views on the role of court interpreters. 67% of legal professionals chose “translation machine” while only 28% of court interpreters did, and 54% of legal professionals chose “facilitator of communication” while 89% of court interpreters selected this option. Considering “translation machine” and “facilitator of communication” are basically the opposite ends of the spectrum of the roles of interpreters, the results demonstrate the needs to investigate further the reasons behind the conflicting views by means of qualitative research that allows more in-depth answers to be solicited. The study shows the importance of inquiring into the perceptions of stakeholders other than just interpreters so that a better understanding of the field can be gained. As demonstrated by this research, the role of interpreting is constructed differently according to different groups of stakeholders. It shows the gaps in knowledge in terms of the nature of interpreting amongst legal professionals with whom court interpreters work closely and points out the need to provide training for legal professionals so that court interpreting can achieve best results.

Palmer (2007) and Parmer and Fontan (2007) interview media personnel who have directly worked with interpreters in the context of the Iraq war. Both studies provide very precious data on the ways in which the work of translators and interpreters in the war zone are perceived by mainstream media. Baker (2010) engages in a similar pursuit to explore how translators and interpreters are seen in the context of war and the ways in which they in turn, take part in constructing the war. She examines media reports on translators and interpreters and finds that war correspondents tend to narrate translators

and interpreters as victims of the extreme conflicts and violence, whose skills are exploited by the politicians and militants without being offered any protection or respect. They are often described as subject to another sort of unfair treatment, namely, the hatred that comes from their fellow countrymen because they are viewed as traitors by offering assistance to the invaders of their homeland. Interestingly, the media often do not attempt to accuse the interpreters and translators of betraying their country but use the accusations by the public to further establish them as victims of the war. In contrast, many Iraqis see interpreters and translators as not innocent victims but villains, conscious collaborators with the invading forces. This construct is also held by some foreign media who are not one of the mainstream outlets.

The victim vs. villain metaphor is also a reflection of another set of opposing frames of translators and interpreters, namely, whether they should be perceived as trusted ally or security threat. Palmer (2007:20) states that all the seventeen journalists, who worked with interpreters, believed them, some to the point of trusting them even in life-threatening situations. Similar results are provided by Baker (2010) that soldiers who worked with interpreters continuously trusted them completely without hesitation. With that said, translators and interpreters, who belong to the invaded community, are not believed by the politicians and are seen as a security threat.

The literature that I have reviewed in this section demonstrates that the professionals interpreters work with, the media, interpreters, interpreting users, and interpreting scholars all take part in framing interpreting. Moreover, different stakeholders frame the phenomenon of interpreting in various ways. My research aims at contributing to this body of knowledge by tapping into different perspectives on SL interpreting on Chinese television held by various stakeholders, namely the Deaf signers, the media, and SLIs. I hope that it will present a balanced picture of the issue in question and reveal the different frames it contains.

### **3.3 Interpreting and identity**

In this section, I will first of all introduce the concept of identity and explain the ways in which this particular concept is studied. I will then explain why the concept of identity is important for the field of T&I studies by reviewing relevant work in T&I studies. By

doing so, I will also point out a few gaps in the current discussion of the interplay between Translation and identity to which my study aims to contribute.

### ***3.3.1 Constructing identity***

Resnik (2006:585) puts forward “one of the main characteristics of our time is the instability of identities and the continuous invention of new/old identities. Traditions and ethnic identities are deconstructed and reconstructed. Immigrants ... participate in the dynamic of identity production”.

There is a school of thought which supports the idea of “identity as deconstruction and reconstruction” advocated from a constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995). Resnik (2006) conceptualizes identity as a flexible and unstable concept which undergoes continuous deconstruction and reconstruction. Similarly, Maydell and Wilson (2009), when describing identity of immigrants, also posit the notion of “identity as deconstruction and reconstruction”. Gergen (1985, 1991) goes further and suggests that a person’s identity is constructed in discursive practices, specifically through continuous interactions and relationship with others, as well as with the immediate environment. This particular environment includes not only the people and community around, but also spatial and historical circumstances in which a person finds him/herself. Many scholars have argued that people’s identities are influenced by the history of their culture and they often inherit the cultural values from their previous generations and pass them onto their later generations (Liu and Hilton, 2005, Liu et al., 2005).

This body of literature discusses how oneself formulates his and her identity but I would argue that the formation of identity does not concern oneself only. One can perceive and construct his or her identity in a certain way, but that perception may not hold true in others’ eyes. Therefore, the construction and reconstruction of the same person’s identity can happen inside and outside that person and be influenced by different discourses related to that person.

An extensive body of literature concerning the notion of identity discusses the term “difference” and that identity construction is essentially constructing the difference between two groups. Matheson (2005) suggests that labels are used as a discursive device in order to divide people into separate social categories. Maydell and Wilson (2009) suggest that the articulation of “difference” often manifests in inferior and

negative labels reflected upon by the participants, such as “alien”, “inadequate”, “unequal” and others. According to Matheson (2005:24), the act of labelling a person defines how members of the society can understand and judge any action done by that person and allows them to generalise about them. Through labels, an individual or a group of individuals can be discursively constructed as different, or inferior to the rest of a population, which may signify social marginalisation of this person or group (Matheson, 2005). Cottle (2000) and Yurdakul & Bodemann (2006) explain that the “abnormal” or “deviant” construction of cultural identity is not a naive practice. They argue that it may be used by the host society as a way to claim power in order to dominate and discriminate the “inferior” groups of a population, including immigrants.

These studies demonstrate that identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the disturbing recognition that the construction of identity is only possible by examining what is negative about the other (Derrida, 1981, Butler, 1993, Hall, 1996, Hall and Du Gay, 1996a, Hall, 1997, Hall and Sealy, 2001). This particular conceptualisation of the notion of identity, which can be said to be prevalent in today’s world, reduces its capacity to mere exclusion, to project the other party as inferior and abjected in reality.

Hall (1996), in his inspirational introduction: *Who Needs ‘Identity’*, eloquently defends the constructionist approach to understanding “identity”. According to him, identities are

“about the questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (p.4).

Another important dimension of Hall’s definition of identity is also the issue of “difference”. He (1995, 1996) maintains the view that identities are created as a result of the ways in which modern societies are divided by the difference between subjects. Hall (1996:4) emphasises that identities are constructed within instead of outside representation. That is to say, identities are constructed within, not outside discourse. According to this view, we need to understand identities as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, Hall argues that the constructions of



identities are by no means an innocent individual practice. They emerge within “the play of particular modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity” (1996:4).

### ***3.3.2 Constructing disability and Deaf identity***

Disability, a label used to distinguish certain people from others, can be understood as a social construction. The term often comes with negative evaluations of the value of people with disabilities. It is common for non-disabled people to assume that the limitations disabled people experience in their life are inflicted by their own disability. The publication of *Fundamental Principles of Disability* (UPIAS, 1976) puts forward a different perspective on disability and argues that it is not disability itself that sets barriers around disabled people but the social responses to disability. This particular understanding of disability and society leads to what is now a well-known model, namely, the social model of disability published in *Social Work with Disabled People* (Oliver, 1983).

The social model of disability aims to redefine disability as a lived experience for people who are discriminated against, excluded by, or oppressed by society. This model has tremendous psychological and political value for people with disabilities, as seen in Campbell and Oliver’s work that the social model of disability creates:

Challenge to dominant social perceptions of disability as personal tragedy and the affirmation of positive images of disability through the development of a politics of personal identity...the development and articulation of the social model of disability, which, by focusing on disabling environments rather than individual impairments, freed up disabled people’s hearts and minds by offering an alternative conceptualisation of the problem. (1996:20)

However, the social model of disability leaves little room for the notion of impairment for fear that too much discussion on impairment will lend support to the much resisted pathological construction of disability. However, many researchers in disability studies later on argue that it would be hazardous to ignore completely the discussion of impairment, as the experience of the body – the limitations caused by impairment without the socially imposed barriers and oppression – is also valued in understanding

disability (French, 1993, Shakespeare and Watson, 1997, Swain and French, 2000, Thomas, 2007, Shakespeare, 2013). Hughes and Paterson (1997:329) also criticise the exclusion of impairment by social modellers as admitting the legitimacy of the medical construct of impairment as a fixed human property.

Thomas (1999, 2004a, 2004b) argues that it is important to take into account both disability and impairment and the field of disability studies needs further theorisation. He suggests that current social modellers give primary attention to identify barriers in society and overlook the psychological and emotional consequences of disability that made people with impairment “feel of lesser value, worthless, unattractive or disgusting” (Thomas, 2004a:25). Secondly, through his extensive work, he supports an approach to impairment that does not deliberately exclude the discussion of biological differences that underpin the discussion on social barriers and oppression (Thomas, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2007).

Similar to the development observed in disability studies, Deaf studies has seen a shift from a “medical” construction of deafness towards a “social”. The publication of *A Dictionary of American Sign Language* (Stokoe et al., 1976) proves that signed languages, just as their hearing counterparts, can be divided into smaller parts and validates signed languages as natural and full-fledged languages.

### ***A social and cultural model of deafness***

Deafness is a constructed concept whose meaning is largely granted by the society in which it is situated (Lane, 1995). It can be interpreted as medical and social construction just as the many different ways by which concepts like homosexual marriage are understood. Different constructions of deafness have the ability to shape the kind of service Deaf people receive (including interpreting service) and more profoundly, different outcomes of Deaf people’s destinies (Becker, 1981, Mottez et al., 1990, Lane et al., 1996, Leigh et al., 1998, Bat-Chava, 2000).

Lane (1995, 1997) points out that two constructions of deafness are competing with one another, one is deafness as a category of disability and the other posits Deaf people as members of a linguistic minority. There is an increasing support of the latter construct. The growing use of capitalised Deaf (culturally deaf) over deaf (medically deaf) is an evidence of the movement (Charrow and Wilbur, 1975, Napier, 2002, Bauman, 2004,

Valentine and Skelton, 2007a). Lane (1995) observes that each construct speaks to different interests held by different deaf groups. People who acquire deafness late in life or have a moderate hearing loss would prefer the disability construct while those who are profoundly deaf and value SL and Deaf culture will associate themselves with the linguistic and cultural model. It is important to note that traditionally, the issue of cochlear implant has been rejected in the discussion of linguistic and cultural Deaf identity because “cochlear implants” are perceived as a means to “cure” deafness (Sparrow, 2005), therefore, “cure” Deaf language and culture. Currently, the situation is changing and more and more scholars (for example, Leigh, 2009; Sparrow, 2010, Oullette, 2010, Paludneviene and Leigh, 2011) are paying attention to the particular group of deaf people and the interesting yet complex situation presented by cochlear implant technology concerning the choice of culture and identity.

### ***The Deaf experience—audism and dysconscious audism***

However, not every Deaf person has fully embraced the linguistic and cultural model of deafness. Two factors are at work here: audism and dysconscious audism.

Audism is an important concept in understanding the social oppression Deaf people experience as a result of the medical model of deafness. The term was first coined by Humphries (1975) to describe the discrimination against Deaf people in society. He defines audism as “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears” (cited in Bauman, 2004, as the original article was unpublished). Audism regards one’s ability to hear and speak as the primary criterion to assess one’s intelligence and humanity. It asserts that Deaf people can only be better off if they can acquire speech as their hearing counterparts. Bauman (2004) points out that there are three facets of audism: individual, institutional, and metaphysical. He advocates that mainstream dictionaries should validate the term audism and provides this operational definition:

Audism: (O.di.zm) n.

1. The notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears.
2. A system of advantage based on hearing ability.

### 3. A metaphysical orientation that links human identity with speech.

The three entries of the term correspond to the three aspects of audism listed by Bauman (2004). He argues that the individual audist behaviour – the sense of superiority because of one’s hearing and speaking ability – is deeply rooted in the systemic advantages hearing people enjoy in society. The hearing advantages, in turn, result from the metaphysical position that language is exclusively in the form of speech, and language, based on speech, marks the distinction between human and animal. Turner (2007) investigates the notion of institutional audism and demonstrates the ways in which audism is overtly present in Deaf people’s work place and everyday life.

Deaf people are not immune from the audism phenomenon. Gertz (2008) observes that some Deaf people experience an “impaired consciousness” where they recognise the value of Deaf culture but still accept the reality of hearing hegemony, a phenomenon termed “dysconscious audism” (p.219). She argues that this particular form of audism prevents the full emancipation of Deaf people, casts a shadow on “Deaf cultural pride”, deters Deaf people from upholding their values for fear of challenging the mainstream values, deters Deaf people from receiving decent education as dysconscious audism associates more value with speech than signing, and ultimately impedes the development of Deaf identity for Deaf individuals.

In this section, literature on identity, disability and Deaf identity is reviewed. In the next a few sections, the focus will move on to review the literature that discusses identity in the field of T&I studies.

#### ***3.3.3 Studying identity in Translation studies***

House et al. (2005) in the introduction to Translation and the construction of identity write about the importance of the concept of identity in the field of translation studies. It is true as Hall notes that in recent years, there is “veritable discursive explosion around the concept of ‘identity’” (1996:1). The phenomenon is also observed in the field of T&I studies. Identity is no longer viewed as a fixed category or a correct representation of reality but as an ever-changing process of formation and reformation, construction and reconstruction. As Homi Bhabha comments, identity is seen as “never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is ever the problematic process of access to an image of reality” (1994:73). House et al. (2005:3) remark that

it (identity) is no longer a static, fixed, enduring and therefore automatically serviceable category, but a problematic, ungraspable, undecidable construction, an elusive fiction only existing when being stated and quickly vanishing again right away, just present in the very act of its naming; ultimately, it is perhaps merely an effect of language and nominalism.

If the notion of identity should be seen in that way, as constant construction and reconstruction, then is it still feasible and appropriate to examine, analyse and describe this concept? Hall (1996) provides his answer to this question. According to him, it seems that the old understandings of the concept identity are inadequate. However, the possibility of providing a fuller and truer substitute seems unlikely at this moment. Therefore, the better alternative is to carry on with the concept of identity and bear in mind its constantly changing conditions. This indicates that identity is “an idea that cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all” (Hall, 1996:2). House et al. (2005:4) further elaborate that exploring identity in this way means a shift of focus to the “dynamics of its articulation, to the process of identification, and thus to the discursive practices to which this process is to a great extent linked.”

According to this view, discursive practices around the concept of identity provide us with material to explore identities that “are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiple constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions” (Hall 1996:4). Most importantly, Hall argues that identities are constructed within instead of independent of discourse. Therefore, it is important to understand identities as “produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discourses and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge from the play of specific modalities of power” (Hall, 1996:4).

House et al. (2005:4) point out that the current approach to the concept of identity is of great relevance to translation and intercultural studies. They depict translation and identity not as isolated fields but as fields that have interplay in between. The reason is that the translation and cross-cultural studies discipline:

accepts that translation and intercultural practices play a vital part in the formation of (cultural, national, social, personal, religious, centered, ethnic, professional,

disciplinary, etc.) identities, just as translations and intercultural practices themselves are conditioned by existing expectations both coming from those identities and deriving from their own (perceived) identity and associated behaviour. (House et al., 2005:4)

As mentioned earlier, identities are constructed through discourses and practices. Therefore, translation as a form of cross-cultural communication produces abundant discourses and practices where the issue of identity emerges naturally and provides a prime site for scholarly investigation on the concept of identity. As Herman (1996:15) notes the notion of identity becomes prominent and foregrounds itself through translation. Translation reflects a culture or an aspect of a culture. At the same time, translation tends to draw the boundary between “self” and “other”, in order to better present its difference.

Therefore, House et al. (2005) argue that translation studies is informative for explorations around identity and that “identity” is “one of the most productive concepts in our disciplinary vocabulary” (p. 4). Just as Hall (1996) states, it is a concept without which certain fundamental questions cannot be answered. House et al. (2005) also argue that perceiving identity as a dynamic process of constant change, formation and reformation in the context of translation provides us with opportunities to pursue questions such as the role of translation in continually constructing identities and the behaviour of translation in front of discourses and practices that have the power to (re)construct identities. It is important to understand the imposed forces or free will behind translation that will unveil the rival forces claiming power and authority over the shaping of identity.

### ***3.3.4 Translation and different dimensions of identity***

#### ***The identity of the interpreter and translator***

The concept of identity is widely discussed in T&I studies. For instance, the International Association of Translation and Interpreting Studies (IATIS)’s 2005 yearbook on Translation and the Construction of Identity is a piece of evidence where different dimensions of the interplay between translation and identity have been discussed extensively.

For example, Hale (2005) approaches the issue of identity by exploring the problems, pressures, gaps and inadequate understandings that put the professional identity of interpreters in jeopardy. Hale (2005:14) observes that there is an emerging “identity crisis” amongst interpreters in community interpreting settings. There are many factors contributing to the crisis on the part of both the interpreters and the clients. A lack of formal training on the interpreter’s end resulted in interpreters having to step out of their role prescribed in the Code of Conduct from time to time. The result is that interpreters often fail to acquire and present a strong professional identity.

The situation is often more acute for untrained interpreters. They have a poor perception of the complexities of their job and do not fully grasp the implications arising from each decision they make. Eventually, they suffer from the pressure and insecurity the lack of expertise and experience can bring. At the same time, in many cases, interpreters are not regarded as having a professional identity by the other participants involved in the interpreted event. As a result, the interpreter usually has poor access to preparation materials and is provided with inadequate working conditions. All these issues contribute to a shaky professional identity and jeopardise the development of interpreting as a profession.

Mason (2005) sees identity as a discursive practice that is always negotiated through the interpreting process. By examining the identity negotiation and construction process in interpreted events, Mason (2005) points out that identities are constructed and projected by participants via their discursal and other choices. At the same time, identities are also perceived and processed by other participants in the communicative event. Moreover, he observes that in many cases, participants are inclined to step into a perceived identity and modify their behaviours accordingly to meet the expectations associated with that identity in particular. This reflects the power differentials amongst the participants to construct and preserve their identity.

Another collection of papers titled *Identity and Status in the Translational Profession* (Sela-Shaffy and Shlesinger, 2011) discussed the professional identity construction of translators and interpreters at both micro and macro levels.

For example, Setton and Guo (2011) have studied interpreters and translators in Shanghai and Taipei and compared their attitudes to role, status and professional identity. Zwischenberger (2011) has carried out an international survey on conference

interpreters in order to understand how the interpreters represent themselves at the workplace. Baibikov (2011) compared different versions of translations and examined the ways in which identities of the translators are revised in each version.

Building on Mason's (2005) view that identity is a discursive practice, Merlini (2009) brings together a linguistic-interactional and a socio-psychological approach around the concepts of "role", "discourse", "position", and "narrative" to examine the construction and reconstruction of competing identities in the process of interpreting an asylum-seeking interview. Her analysis presents the occasion of cultural mediation as a zone of instability where identities constantly shift. Apart from extensive analysis of the identity shifts and their impacts on the interpreter's strategies to manage the floor and his or her psychological struggles, the research also looks at the identity constructions of the other participants during the process where the interviewee's identity also went through changes when the interviewer positioned the interviewee as a "person" instead of just another "case" towards the end of the interview. As a result, the identity of the interviewer changed from an impersonal official to a caring social being.

#### ***Other national and cultural identities***

There is also a body of knowledge which examines the role T&I plays in shaping identities that are not possessed by the interpreters and translators during the immediate process of interpreting or translation.

For instance, Ridge (2005) examines the crucial role translation plays in multilingual societies such as that of South Africa to negotiate the construction of identities and to shape this multicultural society. By studying the translation of two South African literary texts, Ridge observes that the translators are engaged in a political activity in essence. It deals with preserving and constructing the cultural identities projected in the source texts in order to facilitate intercultural communication in the target South African society. He then discusses the legal clauses regarding translation in the South African Constitution and argues that translation and language policy needs to be improved to accommodate different languages, cultures and identities and to include previously marginalised ones. Revisiting translation and language policy in this light can ensure equal participation of citizens in their voices in all sections of life.



Jones and Arsenijević (2005) discuss identity from the perspective that foreign identities are constructed and expressed through translation. The subject of their study is poetry translation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian (BH) culture. They find that the translations of BH poetry play a vital role in constructing the uniqueness of the BH cultural identity and supporting the preservation of that identity. They observe that literary translation from Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture into English, a global language “has played a small but important part in gathering international support for the survival of civil society ideals in wartime BH” (p. 88). They have also pointed out that translation is selective in presenting voices and identities of the marginal social groups in BH society. Moreover, they argue that translation from minority voices into a globalised language such as English has an emancipatory potential to create a shared space in the world for all minorities in different parts of the world.

Similar investigations on the connections between the constructedness of national identities and the role played by translators forming those identities are carried out by Hanna (2005) by analysing two translations of Othello in Egypt. He finds that two distinctive types of Arabic identities associated with opposing political ideals are constructed in the translations by utilising either Standard Arabic – signifying the unity of the Arab world, or the use of Egyptian vernacular – indicating regional specificity and downplaying a pan-Arab identity.

### ***3.3.5 Constructing interpreting and identity***

The research reviewed in the previous section provides empirical evidence of the interplay between interpreting, translation, and identity. Apart from pointing out that identities are discursive practices that can be produced during translation and interpreting, they do not provide a comprehensive theory to explain why such an interplay exists. This section will take a look at Cronin’s (2006) work which addresses the gap I have just pointed out.

Cronin argues that translation in migrants’ cases is not a matter of some theoretical speculation, nor is it a classroom exercise, but a question of “real, immediate and urgent seriousness” (2006:45). In effect, the migrant’s ability to translate or be translated can in some cases become a matter of life and death. For example, immigrants, who have reduced access to interpreting services, are much more likely to suffer health problems

resulting from fewer opportunities for medical follow-up visits, lower patient satisfaction, lower uptake of preventative measures etc. (Bischoff et al., 2003a, Bischoff et al., 2003b, Bischoff and Loutan, 2004, Bischoff and Hudelson, 2010). Pöllabauer (2004, 2007) elaborates on the case of translation for asylum seekers where the failure to be translated might result in a deportation and sometimes a death sentence.

The issues mentioned above such as health and legal indictments are not absent in the Deaf world. For example, Deaf people in China (much as elsewhere) have complained that it is difficult for them to communicate with a doctor without the presence of an interpreter. As a result, they would rather stay at home if the condition were not too severe. Deaf people also need interpreters in court (Xiao and Yu, 2009) where failure in translation would jeopardise the deaf person's personal image and perhaps have an impact on the judge's decision. So the question of interpreting services is at the centre of Deaf people's life socially, culturally, politically and economically, in the same way as in the lives of the particular type of linguistic minority – immigrants.

Brah (2004) argues that a social outcome is largely shaped by the way difference is understood. Therefore, the way in which difference between hearing and deaf is understood shapes the way in which deafness is perceived by society. Similar comments are made by Hall (2004) that things are connected as much by their difference as by their similarity.

Cronin (2006) proposes that the way “difference” is conceptualised has significant impact on the way we might respond to it, what kind of policies we might adopt on translation etc. “Difference” can be seen as either just an unproblematic way of people doing things differently or it can be associated with downgrading evaluations and even unacceptability. These two ways of understanding difference correspond to Sennett's (2002) distinction between difference and alterity, where she argues that “the distinction between difference and alterity has to do with the possibility of classifying strangers in terms of difference versus the possibility of the unknown other” (p.43). As a result, two responses are possible to the translation challenges faced by linguistic diversity. One is “difference multiculturalism” where “difference is acknowledged, respected through provision of appropriate translation services” (Cronin, 2006:67). Another response is to regard language difference as part of an “unknown other” which in consequence, transforms into two forms of “alterity”: positive alterity and negative alterity (Cronin,

2006:67). Positive alterity means that what is “unknown” about the other language and culture is not only recognised but becomes an opportunity to discover, communicate and actively engage in exchange. Negative alterity is where the linguistic and cultural difference is perceived as unwanted, a threat. “The incomprehensible language of others becomes a further sign, along with dress or food habits or manners of socialising, of their fundamental undesirability” (Cronin, 2006:67). In some cases, Cronin argues, the “lack” of a comprehensible language is interpreted as “a lack of humanity” itself and “the other is rendered inhuman” (Cronin, 2006:67).

Cronin (2006) argues that public service providers have now realised that respecting the differences between different groups of people through translation has a legitimate *pay-off*. In the context of political communication, Hall (1996) brings forward the concept “articulation”, i.e. that the interest or commitment of humans must be “solicited” on the basis of what makes them different, as “their difference is what constitutes them as separate subjects with an identity” (p.6). Hall points out that the most successful kind of politics is less likely to be one that tells everyone to believe and behave like the Party leader but one that respects and addresses people in their different situations and different needs. Cronin (2006) argues that for immigrants, the inclusion of translation and interpreting services among the public services constitutes a form of articulation because immigrants are addressed directly or “hailed” in their language difference. In this situation, linguistic minorities will find it much easier to engage in intercultural communications in that their differences and identity have been respected and addressed rather than just ignored. He continues to argue that whether the intention behind the provision of interpreting service is sincere is less important than the outcome it can achieve.

It is noted that interpreting then becomes more than a service but a handy tool, if not anything more, for the government (if it is the service provider) to demonstrate that it recognises the differences of its people and is addressing these differences with respect. In such cases, governments can use T&I as a political tool to demonstrate the progress they have achieved in understanding and respecting the differences between various social groups, thus setting up an admirable public image.

In this section, I have compared the similarities in the experiences of Deaf people and immigrants as a linguistic minority. Moreover, I have reflected on theories that

illustrate how identity of linguistic minorities can be shaped by the society's understanding of their differences and how that understanding of difference relates to the interpreting and translation services they might receive. Last but not least, we have taken a look at the dynamic relationship between interpreting and identity in relation to service providers, i.e. how interpreting is used as a tool by the government to engage its minority population into the society.

I would argue that Cronin's (2006) work seems to view the function played by interpreting in addressing the issue of identity in a purely ideal and positive manner. It appears that as long as translation accommodation is provided, people's difference is automatically noticed and catered for, thus forming a binding strength between different social groups. On the surface, this line of reasoning seems to be applaudable.

However, we should also consider the possibility where interpreting might assume a destructive power alienating further the already distant social groups. Secondly, Cronin focuses on examining the effects interpreting can have in terms of articulating people's identity. However, I would argue that it is also important to investigate whether the existing constructions of identity have conditioned interpreting. In other words, translation and interpreting are not just there to address identity but play a significant part in constructing identity.

### **3.4 Interpreting and citizenship**

In this section, I want to discuss the interplay between the two seemingly distant concepts, interpreting and citizenship.

#### ***3.4.1 Citizenship and cultural citizenship***

Citizenship has been traditionally viewed as a political notion. Many scholars have talked about citizenship as a kind of membership, a source of belonging to a larger unit, which is associated with rights and obligations (Marshall, 1950, Kymlicka, 1995, Ong et al., 1996, Pakulski, 1997, Valentine and Skelton, 2007b). As Stevenson (2001:92) observes, citizenship can be seen as a form of inclusion or exclusion in relation to a political community. A commonly cited definition coined by Marshall (1963) looks at citizenship from three angles: civil, political and social. A detailed explanation of the three elements in citizenship is as follows:

The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice...By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body...By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. (p.1–2)

While this definition is still famous in the field of political theory, more and more people have criticised the neglect of culture in the conception of citizenship and call for more attention to be paid to culture which is of great importance in reshaping citizenship (Roche, 1992, Turner, 1993, Putnam, 1999, Nic Craith, 2004). Much work has been done in recent years around the discussion of culture and citizenship. A new dimension of citizenship has been forged, namely the cultural aspect, hence cultural citizenship. However, the nature and the scope of this new dimension of citizenship are still at debate. Currently, there are two schools of thought in the field regarding the concept of cultural citizenship, and a clear and widely accepted theory of cultural citizenship is yet to be established.

The first school sees the cultural dimension of citizenship as an extension of the existing framework of citizenship. The work in this approach, in essence, is to include groups that have previously been excluded or marginalised and the discussion is mainly confined to ethnic minorities. Many scholars have argued that the cultural dimension of citizenship should not be viewed as an addition to the more legitimate and well-established political, social, and civil dimensions (e.g., Beck, 1998, Castells, 1996, Melucci, 1996, Castells, 2011). I will not discuss in depth the first approach but focus on the second approach to cultural citizenship which derives from cultural sociology where the goal is to put culture at the central place in terms of understanding the nature of citizenship. Understanding the importance held by culture means understanding that citizenship goes beyond the conventional rights such as state welfare, appropriate political representation and duly civil justice and touches issues that can be described as “cultural rights”, the right to hold one’s cultural identity and the particular way of life in

that culture (Stevenson, 2001:3). As Delanty (2002:61) observes, the key task of this approach “is to bring about inclusion in the sphere of identity and belonging”.

In Delanty’s (2002) review of writings on the broader approach to cultural citizenship, he highlights the importance of the learning dimension of cultural citizenship. In his words, the learning aspect of cultural citizenship is in essence a constructivist process. People learn citizenship in their daily life through both informal and critical communicative events. Citizenship in this sense is not just about rights but “the learning of a capacity for action and responsibility but essentially, it is about the learning of the self and the relationship of self and other” (Delanty, 2002:64). Cultural citizenship is learned not born with, in that it manifests itself in the ways in which a person sees himself and others. In this sense, identity, as a social construct of who we are and who they are, becomes indispensable in the discussion of citizenship. The individual learning of citizenship should not be viewed as isolated experience. It can perform as a medium through which it translates into a collective knowledge and eventually be constructed as part of the social reality.

Another key thought in this approach to cultural citizenship is the expansion of the scope of diversity in the previous discussion of citizenship. Diversity in this sense is more than ethnic diversity but includes all kinds of difference amongst groups, featuring gender, age, disability, race, etc. Last but not least, Delanty (2002) reminds us of one of the most important aspects of cultural citizenship which concerns “the styles and forms of language, cultural models, narratives, discourses that people use to make sense of their society, interpret their place in it, construct courses of action and thereby give rise to new demands for rights, which we may call cultural rights” (p.66).

While the notion of cultural citizenship is still relatively new, the current debates in Baltic countries regarding language, culture, and citizenship have provided an example to demonstrate that language and culture are important components of citizenship (see for Hogan-Brun, 2005, 2006, Hogan-Brun and Ramonienė, 2003, 2004, Hogan-Brun et al., 2008). This body of knowledge demonstrates that culture can be used as a tool to deny certain linguistic groups, in this case Russian speakers who used to be the dominant linguistic and cultural group in the Soviet Union era, acquisition of citizenship in order to protect and revive an indigenous culture and identity in those states.

Although there is yet a systematic theory of cultural citizenship, the notion of cultural citizenship provides us with a useful perspective to reexamine the notion of minority rights and identity. It is important to note that language is an integral part that makes up one's identity. As Hogan-Brun and Wolff (2003:3) succinctly point out, "the use of the language of choice is an important human right as it is through language – a primary marker of identity – that we are able to identify ourselves, others, and to be identified by others, that we think, communicate and generally relate to the world around us". By using this concept, we are primarily seeking the inclusion of minority rights of all kinds, not restricted to ethnic minorities; we are not merely addressing the issue of rights and participation (as the focus of previous approaches to citizenship) but also concerns dealing with the issue of identity and a sense of belonging; and we are paying particular attention to all sorts of communicative events where individual and collective learning of cultural citizenship takes place.

### **3.4.2 Interpreting and citizenship**

Interpreting has been associated with the exercise of linguistic rights for minority language speakers and issues such as obtaining a common voice through interpreting (Bahadır, 2010). The symbolic value of interpreting as a means of empowerment is also held by researchers in the field of community interpreting. The provision of interpreting services in healthcare and legal settings for local users of minority languages and for immigrants who have a poor command of the language of their host countries is essential in enabling people to be culturally translated to function in the society. As Snelling (2002:ix) remarks in the context of the UK, interpreting is an effective tool for empowering speakers of minority languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, etc. and helping them to integrate into the mainstream society by fully exercising their fundamental rights to speak their own languages.

Translation is also closely associated with exercising language rights, which are broadly defined as "a basic human right for a community, and perhaps an individual, to be allowed to use their mother tongue in public functions and to have their children educated in it, even though it is not the official or majority language of the place where they live" (Joseph, 2006:54–55). Millán-Varela (2003), in her study of the "ambiguous" power of translation in the Galician context, argues that translation functions both as an empowering and oppressing tool when translation policy is absent

and urges that translation should be taken into consideration for language planning. As Baxter (2013:239) has pointed out, conference interpreting is not only useful in terms of its non-negligible symbolic value of promoting minority languages which are assumed lower status and prestige, it also provides an opportunity for people to exercise their language rights as prescribed by law.

### ***Interpreting as exercising citizenship***

Cronin (2006) examines the role played by translation to exercise minority rights under the discussion of citizenship. He maintains that in immigration contexts, the concept of citizenship is closely associated with the role and formulation of translation (p.70). According to him, the rights of citizens are inseparable from the fundamental human rights to which every member of the humanity is entitled. As a result, democratic societies can no longer operate under the idea that they are isolated systems and need to accommodate people's right to enter and leave a community as well as languages (Cronin, 2006:71). This is where a theory of translation should come in so that people's language human rights can be respected, regardless of the particular places and forms of languages to which people are attached. The ability to link persons between the universal rights and the particular local circumstances and forms of expression makes translation an integral part of universal human rights which underlines the rights associated with citizenship (Cronin, 2006).

I would further argue that translation not only allows people to see the value of their language and culture but also allows the other side of the communication to learn the value of other people's language and culture and understand that others are equal and capable participants in all sectors of life. Cronin (2006:72) comments that our current world is dominated by identity politics where culture is viewed as "closed wholes", translation and the possibility of embracing translation provides us with the opportunity to open dialogue across different cultures and languages and the chance to bring down the wall of difference and resistance.

Cronin's work provides a rough framework for the discussion of interpreting and citizenship. However, apart from stating that citizenship is based on fundamental human rights, he does not give a precise definition of citizenship. As Cronin (2007) argues, translation is instrumental in that it ensures access, participation and in turn



provides the rights brought by citizenship. His focus on access and participation seems to fall into the traditional discussion of citizenship.

### ***Interpreting as generating cultural citizenship***

However, Cronin (2006:71) also highlights that the value of translation lies not only in the fact that translation ensures the implementation of “access, participation and justice” through plurality but more importantly, providing translation service to accommodate people’s language needs reminds individuals of the value of the form of culture and medium of expression where they belong. The emphasis that interpreting can remind speakers of minority languages of the value of their mother tongue, as far as I am concerned, links interpreting with the concept of cultural citizenship.

I would argue that there is much benefit from introducing the concept of cultural citizenship into the translation studies field. Thinking of citizenship in terms of individual and collective cultural learning processes which contribute to the formation of identity for self and other and a sense of belonging provides us with useful thinking on the role translation can play in this process. Much richer than merely ensuring the exercise of citizenship, translation provides people a learning space where people can try to work out the differences between self and other in an instrumental way, and eventually figure out the relationship between self and other and creates a sense of belonging for oneself and others. This conceptualisation enriches Cronin’s theory on the interplay between translation and identity where identity seems to be standing on its own and is addressed through the provision of translation accommodation. It articulates that there is more dynamic between the two where translation plays a part in constructing identity, as well as a tool addressing the constructed identity. Therefore, examining the issue of translation through the lens of cultural citizenship provides a platform where the topic of identity can be discussed to a fuller degree.

### **3.5 A discussion of the theoretical framework**

In this section, I will present my theoretical framework. Firstly, I will review the phenomenon that is examined in this research and propose my research questions. Secondly, I will put forward the key concepts of my interests and discuss the relationship between them. Thirdly, I will offer a plan to investigate these fundamental concepts in order to answer my research questions.

### ***3.5.1 Research questions***

As mentioned in the introduction, the study sets out to examine the phenomenon of putting SL interpreting on Chinese television during the live broadcast of high-profile political conferences. The event brought SL interpreting under the spotlight of the media and other stakeholders including the Deaf Chinese community and SLIs. As a result, discourses around the phenomenon are produced by the three groups of stakeholders.

Interestingly, the media reports on the event have all given positive comments to the decision of putting SL interpreting on television. In their eyes, SL interpreting on television seems to be serving a range of purposes other than a mere communication. The quality of the service is highly praised and the phenomenon itself is said to have significant social and political implications such as paying attention to and raising social awareness of the rights of minority groups, displaying real political ideals, and setting up a positive public image of the Chinese government. In this discourse, SL interpreting is closely associated with the issue of Deaf minority identity and is presented as a tool to address the issue of minority identity in a positive way. As a result, interpreting is provided to raise the social status of Deaf Chinese people and in turn, to illustrate real social and political practice by the Chinese government.

While the media are entirely positive on every aspect of the event, in academia, SL interpreting on television has never received many positive evaluations. Literature in this regard has reported negative evaluations from Deaf Chinese people and SLIs. The focus has been on the poor quality of the interpreting service, the lack of training on the part of the interpreters; the apparent ignorance of CSL; the unreasonable imposition and use of Signed Chinese (Xiao and Li, 2011, Zhao, 2012); and a low level of comprehension among the Deaf Chinese audience (Xiao et al., 2015). The practice of putting SL interpreting on television, therefore, is regarded as a face project which is of little real value to the Deaf Chinese population and is certainly not viewed as a good political decision.

The current literature suggests that there is no qualitative research carried out on the sociological aspects of SL interpreting on Chinese television where SL interpreting is seen as a social practice. And the relationship between the role of interpreting and the Deaf Chinese identity is not yet addressed. Therefore, this research seeks to view SL

interpreting on television as a social phenomenon and practice in itself and sets out to explore what kind of Deaf identity has emerged out of the discourses produced by the media, Deaf Chinese viewers and SLIs. Then I will explore the ways in which the interplay between interpreting and emerged Deaf identity is constructed in these discourses. My research questions are as follows:

1. How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected and perceived in discourses arising from the phenomenon of putting SL interpreting on television?
2. How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?
3. How is the interplay between interpreting and deaf identity constructed in these discourses?

In order to answer these two questions, it is important to draw on theories from multiple disciplines to examine a few key concepts and the relationship between these concepts.

### ***3.5.2 Key concepts***

The first concept that requires careful grounding is the concept of identity. I have mainly drawn on Hall's work on identity from the field of sociology to provide the basis for my discussion.

I approach the concept of identity from a sociological perspective first. Identity is not an autonomous or self-sufficient inner core of an individual that is independent of the world which he or she inhabits. On the contrary, identity is of an interactive nature. That is to say, identity is constructed through the interaction between the self and society. As Hall (1995:597) points out, the sociological conceptualisation of identity "bridges the gap between the 'inside' and the 'outside' – between the personal and the public worlds". In the past, identity was thought to be formed through the process of us projecting "ourselves" into existing cultural categories and in turn taking in the meanings and values associated with these fixed categories and make them part of "ourselves". In this way, the process of identification becomes one that puts individuals or groups into the social structure and help stabilise the persons or what Hall (1995) calls subjects as well as the cultural worlds they live in.

The sociological conception of identity posits the concept as a fixed, unified, and stable category that is not subject to change. However, Hall (1990) argues that there is no

consistent, permanent, and unified identity. Identity is not a sense of “being” but a sense of “becoming”. We as human beings possess different identities at different times. Sometimes, the identities we adopt can be conflicting and pulling us in different directions, making constant shifts in our experience of identification. Identity thus becomes a “moveable feast” where it is “formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (Hall, 1995:598).

The second concept I would like to adopt in my research is the concept of discourse. In this study, discourse is not approached from a linguistic perspective but a sociological one. Fairclough (1992:3) defines discourses as different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practices. It assumes an active role in reflecting or representing “social entities and relations, they construct or constitute them; different discourses represent key objects in various ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects” (Fairclough, 1992:4).

The link between the two concepts is that the process of constructing identity is a discursive practice. As Hall (1996:4) points out, identities are “never singular but multiple, constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions”.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of identity has attracted scholarly attention from the field of T&I studies. As House et al. (2005:4) maintain

translation and intercultural practices play a vital part in the formation of (cultural, national, social, personal, religious, centered, ethnic, profession, disciplinary, etc.) identities, just as translations and intercultural practices themselves are conditioned by existing expectations both coming from those identities and deriving from their own (perceived) identity and associated behaviour.

Therefore, on the broad level, it can be understood that the identities of Deaf Chinese people and their social implications have shaped the phenomenon of SL interpreting on Chinese television while at the same time, the form of SL interpreting on Chinese television and the discourses deriving from the practices also play a part in the shaping of the identities of Deaf Chinese people. As a result, the opposing discourses on SL interpreting on television become a prime site to investigate the ways in which deaf

identities are constructed and the ways in which deaf identities shape the practice of SL interpreting on Chinese television.

Here I have started to weave the key concepts into a theoretical framework. The next two concepts that will be added to the framework are “the value of interpreting” and “interpreting as a social phenomenon and practice”.

As I have argued in previous sections, the majority of research in the field of T&I studies has focused on the agents (translators and interpreters) or the process of communication between languages. Very little attention is paid to interpreting as a phenomenon in its own right, as well as a social practice situated in both immediate and broader social and cultural contexts.

By viewing interpreting as a social practice, a privileged space is provided for us to explore why a decision to interpret is made in relation to its sophisticated surroundings, as well as “underlying attitudes and conflicts” (Millan-Varela, 2003:155). Moreover, it also provides an opportunity to move away from the most immediate function of interpreting (to communicate), and to examine other social or political values carried by the interpreting phenomenon itself.

As for the role of interpreting, I mainly draw from Cronin’s (2006) work on translation and interpreting to understand this concept.

According to him, there is a social and political dimension in any interpreting phenomenon that involves a linguistic minority. The social and political values of interpreting are made evident because the decision to interpret addresses the issue of *difference* and “articulates” (Hall, 1996) the identity of linguistic minorities in a positive way. As a result, interpreting is used as a political tool to show respect for members of minority groups and therefore performs as a binding force for the society. Considering the previous discussion on identity as a discursive practice formed by interpreting, discourses on the social phenomenon of SL interpreting on television provide ample material for me to study the value of interpreting and analyse its relations to the constructed Deaf identities. This is where the concept – the value of interpreting – connects to previous discussions on the issue of identity, discourse, and the perception of interpreting as a social phenomenon and practice.

Cronin (2007) also associates interpreting with the exercise of citizenship. Against the backdrop of globalisation, people of different linguistic backgrounds can enter and leave languages with greater freedom. In the context of immigration, countries cannot ignore the basic right of people to use their mother tongue in their host country. For this reason, the right to access interpreting and translation services in order to function fully as a citizen is important if a person's citizenship status is recognised and respected. While Cronin's work gives a useful introduction to the interplay between interpreting and citizenship, there is more to explore. Hereby, I propose to introduce another concept into the theoretical framework, namely cultural citizenship. In the study, I mainly draw from the work by Delanty (2002) from the field of sociology to investigate this matter.

In recent years, more and more attention has been given to the insufficiency of conceptualising the notion of citizenship in its old way, namely in terms social, civil, and political in the field of sociology and political theory. An argument is formed that the field has neglected the fourth dimension of citizenship – culture.

Delanty (2002:61) points out that by including the cultural dimension in the discussion of citizenship, we are covering not just the rights of ethnic minorities but all kinds of minority groups in the society. By thinking about cultural citizenship, we are mainly including the discussion of “identity and belonging” (Delanty, 2002:61) because cultural citizenship is not just about people's rights but also obligations (Turner, 2001). More importantly, it reveals a process of learning, a process of learning the difference between the self and the other and the relationship in-between, and a process of acquiring the capacity to act responsibly. In other words, cultural citizenship is an acquired ability which allows individuals to construct identities for themselves and others responsibly and examine whether these constructs are appropriate. Cultural citizenship is not learned in a social vacuum, as Delanty (2002) points out, but in both informal and critical communicative events in daily life.

According to this view, SL interpreting provided on Chinese television serves as one of these critical communicative events in people's life, where people can learn about the difference between hearing and deaf and then construct identities for both hearing and deaf people. This is where the concept of cultural citizenship fits our previous discussion of the proposed theoretical framework. It connects to the role of interpreting

and the issue of identity. At this stage, the framework looks more sophisticated than before as more dimensions are added to the interplay between the role of interpreting and identity.

Let us take a look at its current structure. The existing identities of a linguistic minority shape the form of interpreting that is provided for the linguistic minority. As a result of the interpreting provision, discourses on interpreting are generated, providing a space where new identities of a linguistic minority are perhaps constructed.

Moreover, interpreting as one kind of communicative event provides an avenue where people can learn of cultural citizenship, namely to think about the differences between themselves and the linguistic minority in question, who “we” are in relation to who “they” are, and position us and them in the social world we inhabit. The result of the learning experience is the generation of discourses and the creation of perhaps new identities for themselves and the linguistic minority. Moreover, the meanings and values of the newly constructed identities will be taken by individuals and become part of them and part of the reality in which we live. In this sense, the role of interpreting and translation is not only there to address and respect existing identities but also play a part in constructing and producing identities, and ultimately shaping the reality in which we all live.

The last pair of concepts that will be introduced into my theoretical framework is social construction and framing. I have stated that the goal of my research is to explore the ways in which d/Deaf identities, the value of interpreting and the interplay between interpreting and identity are constructed in the discourses on the phenomenon of SL interpreting on television. It is then important to understand the forming process of discourse on any social phenomenon.

Social constructionism acts as the ontological root of my study. It allows me to look at the phenomenon of providing SL interpreting on television and the consequences of the event (namely, the generated discourses, identities, and the perceived value of interpreting made evident) as a process of social construction where knowledge and reality are obtained through social interactions.

The claim, that there is no taken-for-granted knowledge for us to understand people and the world, supports my approach to the concept of identity where identities are not seen

as fixed, permanent, closed, and unified. More importantly, previous constructions of d/Deaf identities are not the only and direct representation of truth, because there is no “truth” in the world.

Social constructionism calls for people’s attention to historical and cultural specificity. It argues that “the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific” (Burr, 2003:97). This claim supports the view I have adopted in the research that interpreting is a social phenomenon and practice. The form it takes and the discourses it generates are shaped by both immediate social and cultural and broader historical contextual factors. Therefore, it naturally draws my attention to investigating the views and attitudes deriving from the generated discourses on SL interpreting on Chinese television that are historically and culturally specific to the Chinese context.

Social constructionism also invites people to think about the process in which knowledge is generated. Instead of thinking of knowledge as a form of truth independent of the social world, it argues that knowledge is produced as a result of and sustained by social interactions, especially the use of language. The emphasis on the use of language and social interactions supports my plan to investigate the discourses generated out of a highly communicative and interactive occasion (the event of having SL interpreting on television) in order to explore the production of new knowledge (i.e. the formation of identities and new understanding of Deaf people and the world).

Moreover, social constructionism argues that there is an interplay between knowledge and social action. That is to say, the knowledge generated out of the process of social interactions will, in the end, impact people’s social behaviour. This view supports the part of my theoretical framework where it maintains that the role of interpreting is not simply for communication, but has a real impact on the society.

So far, the theoretical framework is almost complete. With social constructionism acting as the guiding research philosophy, the social phenomenon of having SL interpreting on television for high-profile conferences is grounded as a highly interactive and communicative event. The event then opens up space for individuals to learn of cultural citizenship. The experience of learning results in discourses on the phenomenon being generated, d/Deaf identities being formed, and the role of interpreting being manifested.



The last piece of my proposed theoretical framework is the concept of framing, or in my own words, the explanation to the process of social construction. I have mentioned in previous parts that the process of social construction takes place in interactive social encounters through the use of language. It is also suggested that there is no ultimate accurate representation of truth but multiple, sometimes conflicting observations. However, how exactly have these manifold and conflicting constructions come into being? Why do the media and scholars encounter the same social phenomenon but come up with opposing discourses? This is where the concept of framing drawn from the field of media studies (Entman, 1993, 2004, 2010) comes into play.

Having its roots in social constructionism, framing attempts to provide an explanation for the process of social construction, with a particular focus on the way communicators (the media and individuals) structure their discourses on a given social topic or phenomenon.

Entman (2010) argues that there is no complete and objective discourse on any social topic. That is to say, the way we communicate our thoughts on a given subject is essentially framed. He (2010:164) suggests that the process of framing is a process of “culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.” That particular interpretation is a frame. According to this view, the discourses we constructed and the knowledge we obtained only qualify as interpretations which can differ significantly depending on which elements of perceived reality we have included and which connections between these elements we have built and highlighted.

Entman (1993) further explains that a frame can perform a combination of four functions, i.e. problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. These four functions in essence explain the way individuals and the media approach and construct a social phenomenon by means of trying to define it, find its causal relations, give evaluations and/or provide suggestions and remedies.

The concept of framing provides me with a theoretical tool with which I can examine the opposing discourses on the same phenomenon of SL interpreting on television. It also offers me a way to decode the constructed discourses by investigating which elements have been selected and highlighted in each discourse and then examine what

kinds of problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations and treatment recommendations are offered.

I will now recap the essential parts of the proposed framework. In this framework, interpreting is not seen as just a communicative act but as a social phenomenon and practice of a highly interactive nature. As an interactive site, it provides people space to think about the difference between the deaf and hearing people they have in mind before and after SL interpreting on television. Therefore, it constitutes one of the communicative events for people to acquire cultural citizenship where people learn the difference between themselves and others and construct identities for both parties. The outcome of the process of thinking and learning has shaped and will shape the world we inhabit.

Another result of the event is the generation of particular discourses on the phenomenon of putting SL interpreting on television for high-profile political conferences. I will focus my attention on three elements including the constructed d/Deaf identities, the constructed role of interpreting, and the constructed interplay between the role of interpreting and deaf identities. As guided by social constructionism, I do not see the constructions as accurate representations of the reality but as interpretations of the world which are influenced by historical and cultural contextual factors which might be particular to China. Moreover, I also bear in mind that these interpretations are framed where a process of selection, exclusion and salience is involved and manifest in the form of problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.

By gathering discourses on SL interpreting on television for political conferences and exploring what kind of frames are provided, I should be able to find answers to my research questions I set out at the beginning of the thesis.

1. How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television?
2. How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?
3. How is the interplay between interpreting and deaf identity constructed in these discourses?

In the next chapter, I will discuss my plans to gather and analyse discourses on the social phenomenon in which I am interested.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

This chapter aims at providing detailed information regarding how my proposed theoretical framework informs the rest of the research design, namely, my methodological decisions. I will begin the chapter by reviewing the purpose of my research. I will then move on to elaborate on the appropriateness of the research design and the philosophical considerations. In the next section, I will discuss my research design, data source, methods, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, internal and external validity. The last section will provide a brief review of the chapter with comments on the limitations and ethical assurances.

### **4.1 Appropriateness of the research design**

The research I conduct is of a qualitative nature. In this section, I will provide a brief discussion of my epistemological and ontological considerations which function as the philosophical umbrella guiding my methodological choices.

#### ***4.1.1 Epistemological considerations***

In terms of my epistemological considerations, I adopt an interpretivist approach that puts its emphasis on an interpretative understanding of the perceived social reality instead of a positivist explanation of it. Interpretivism has its roots in phenomenology. A traditional explanation of the position taken by phenomenology is provided below:

The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not “mean” anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist—social reality—has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects (are) constructed by the common-sense thinking of men (and women!), living their daily life within the social world. (Schutz, 1962:59)

This quote serves as an excellent example to illustrate the emphasis placed by interpretivists on the importance of understanding social actions taken by social actors from their point of view.

Bryman (2007) points out that another school of research, which has a significant impact on interpretivism, is symbolic interactionism, especially the writings of Herbert Blumer. According to Blumer (1962:188), “the position of symbolic interaction requires the student to catch the process of interpretation through which (actors) construct their actions.” This view has an apparent similarity with phenomenology where both schools of thought see the process of interpreting the world as the basis for individuals to construct their actions.

Therefore, for researchers who adopt an interpretivist stance to approach the topic of his or her interest, the research involves three stages of interpretation. The researcher tries to interpret the interpretations of the people he or she studies. The researcher then further interprets these interpretations in relation to the concepts and theories he or she proposes in the theoretical framework (Bryman, 2007:31).

In my study, I do not attempt to provide a positivistic explanation of the social phenomenon I want to explore. I try to present an interpretivist understanding of the phenomenon that is carried by the social actors whom I want to investigate in the research.

#### ***4.1.2 Ontological considerations***

In terms of my ontological position, I do not share the thought of objectivism that social entities are objective entities or categories that are pre-given and possess a reality independent of social actors. On the contrary, I take a constructionist stance that sees social entities as being built on the basis of the perceptions and actions of social actors. As Bryman (2007) writes, constructionism implies that “social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision” (p.33). The view above suggests that the categories and phenomena we use to understand the world are, in fact, social constructs accomplished by social actors. Therefore, the meanings they possess are not definitive but subject to constant formation and reformation. According to this view, the current meanings carried by social categories such as “deafness” and “disability” should not be considered as absolute truth, but as products by social actors historically and contemporarily. Similarly, the meanings and functions granted to the phenomenon of having SL interpreting on television for high-profile political conferences are open to interpretations by different social actors.

In the second chapter, I have written extensively about social constructionism. The epistemological and ontological considerations have a strong influence on the qualitative approach that I take to investigate the SL interpreting phenomenon on Chinese television, the formulation of my research questions, and my choice of methods. In the next section, I will review the research questions I set out with and explain the connections with my philosophical groundings.

#### **4.2 Research strategy: a qualitative research**

As mentioned earlier, the social phenomenon of my research interests is the event of putting SL interpreting on television for high-profile political conferences in China. Amongst all the interesting topics involved by the phenomenon, my particular attention is given to the ways in which the identity of Deaf Chinese people, the role of interpreting and the interplay between the two are constructed.

Taking a constructionist approach to the phenomenon, I perceive the concept of identity and the role of interpreting in terms of social constructs which undergo a process of constant formation and reformation. As a result, identity and role are not approached to find out their one and only definitions, but to explore different interpretations about them and observe what they might become in the future. Similarly, the attention is also given to the context of the phenomenon and attempts to find out how it influences the constructions of identity and role by different social actors. Influenced by constructionism, I maintain that the discourses generated by the phenomenon are a valuable source of data to understand how social constructs come into being.

Therefore, a qualitative research strategy is taken in conducting the study. This means that the emphasis of my work is not on quantification in terms of collecting and analysing data and generalising the results. The aim of the research is not to test a theory, but to take an inductive approach to examine the concepts and theories I proposed in the theoretical framework based on the interpretations of the social phenomenon collected in the study.

Since the aim of my research is to analyse various discourses produced by different social actors, the first phase of my methodological planning is to generate or collect such discourses. I have identified three actors involved in producing such discourses, including the Chinese media, Deaf Chinese people, and Chinese SLIs.

In terms of collecting discourses on SL interpreting on television by the Chinese media, I decided to collect news reports on the event instead of generating such discourses by means of interviews. Unlike many studies where the method to analyse news stories is quantitative, namely, content analysis, my approach to the news discourses is a combination of qualitative ones, namely, frame analysis and qualitative content analysis (the specific process of analysing is to be discussed in depth later in section 4.5. By taking this approach, I am interested in finding out underlying themes in these discourses and how they are framed. The fact that these media reports arose independently of my research helps to reinforce the validity of the data.

As for discourses by Deaf Chinese people and Chinese SLIs, I have chosen to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews in order to generate data. By choosing this method, I want to allow some room for my interviewees to go off the topics I have set for the interview and bring in content that they deem relevant and significant. With a certain level of freedom, the process of the interviews is not rigid but flexible, taking into consideration the directions in which the interviewees wish to head (Weiss, 1995, Mason, 2002, Hale and Napier, 2013). It also allows me to adjust the focus of the study if the respondents bring in important aspects that I have overlooked.

I would like to direct the readers' attention to my choice of interviews over other equally valid methods such as the focus group. At the early stage of drafting my research design, the focus group was one of the options I had in mind, especially for generating data from potential Deaf interviewees. At the same time, the focus group does not have a distinct advantage over qualitative interviews regarding the nature of my research and the type of data I wish to collect. For example, it is difficult to give equal time to each participant to express their ideas as the interaction is likely to be dominated by a strong character. Secondly, participants, who have a less confident personality, may choose to suppress their real opinion and comply with the dominant voice in order to avoid a conflicting situation. To some extent, the semi-structured interview is preferred in that it allows the interviewee to express his or her opinions freely on a sensitive topic without the interference of other people's presence and views (Weiss, 1995, Silverman, 2010, Ritchie et al., 2013).

However, when it comes to collecting data from Deaf participants, I have considered running a pilot focus group with the help of a Deaf surrogate moderator. There are a few reasons for such a research design.

The first reason concerned my identity as a hearing researcher and my participants' identity as Deaf Chinese people. My knowledge of heritage CSL was inadequate to conduct an in-depth interview. My concerns were that my insufficient knowledge of CSL might be seen as the sign of an "outsider" who was not able to understand Deaf Chinese people sufficiently to generate an empathetic interpretation of the data. Thus, it might damage the participants' willingness to open up and share their full opinions. Therefore, I wanted to find a Deaf person who was familiar with my research and knew about interview skills to take my place as the interviewer. By doing so, I hoped that the presence of a Deaf facilitator and his or her fluent use of CSL would help the interviewees feel less intimidated and more at ease, thus more likely to share his or her perceptions. Moreover, a Deaf person, fluent in heritage CSL, would be in a better position in terms of picking up the flow of information faster and responding to the questions better. Another reason for me to consider the use of a Deaf facilitator is the potential to empower the Deaf community and engage them in the academic circle. Turner (2000, 2007) argues that research should be carried out "on, for and with members of the community" and inviting Deaf people to take part in administering research would provide a good opportunity to achieve that.

The use of a surrogate researcher or Deaf facilitator is not unprecedented in the field of SL interpreting studies. For example, Napier and Kidd (2013) have trained other researchers to collaborate in conducting interviews. In order to ensure that the interviews are consistent, they have organised a weekend workshop, where project objectives are discussed. The research team has worked collaboratively to revise the draft interview questions, to agree on criteria for identifying potential participants in their home states, and to agree on a procedure for recruiting participants.

In another paper by Napier and Sabolcec (2014), they have conducted semi-structured interviews with Deaf Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) signers on their experiences of healthcare access. The two researchers have agreed that collecting data from the Deaf community is best done in a SL by trained data collectors who are fluent in that language. In their views, data collected in a text-based form can be problematic,



resulting from the English literacy levels and subsequent health literacy levels of Deaf people. Thus, they would like to avoid the limitations surfaced from previous studies by enabling the Deaf participants to talk to Deaf people in their own SL and ensuring that the study conforms to the ethical guidelines for conducting deafness research (Pollard, 1992, Harris et al., 2009, Singleton et al., 2012, Singleton et al., 2015).

They have recruited 5 Deaf Auslan signers and organised a weekend to discuss with signers the objectives of the project. The team cooperated in designing interview questions, agreeing on criteria for identifying potential participants in their home states and concurring on a procedure for recruiting participants. The team also participated in simulated interviews that were video-recorded and discussed in terms of efficacy in order to refine the interview method. In a similar manner, Turner (2004) also invited Deaf people to conduct frontline data generation. These studies show that if properly planned, the use of surrogate interviewers can yield good results. Therefore, although this current study does not adopt such an approach (see more discussion on the limitation of such choice in section 7.5), it can be considered for future research.

#### ***4.2.1 Working with an interpreter***

More and more research nowadays involves participants of ethnic minority backgrounds who do not speak the same language as the researcher (Murray and Wynne, 2001).

Therefore, language becomes a barrier in cross-language/culture research. In many cases, the participants have acquired a certain level of the language spoken by the researcher. Therefore, many researchers would attempt to carry out the interview in their mother tongue in order to have direct communication. However, research has shown that asking the participants to use their second language in an interview requires extra effort on their part: this is particularly acute when a sensitive or stressful issue is discussed, often resulting in the interviewees not being able to express their thoughts to the fullest extent (Westermeyer, 1990). Participants speaking in their second language may perceive themselves as less confident, happy and intelligent (de Zelueta, 1990).

Therefore, the use of an interpreter to facilitate both parties' communication in their first language seems to be an ideal solution.

In recent years, more and more attention has been given to the idea that research should be used to give voice to and empower minority groups (Vaz, 1997, Murray and Wynne, 2001, Turner, 2007). In this context, the use of an interpreter offers an opportunity to

access and give voice to the “thoughts, feelings and experiences” of members of minority groups “living within a different and dominant culture” in a fuller sense (Murray and Wynne, 2001:5).

In fact, the use of an interpreter as a third party in qualitative research has attracted attention in many other fields as well, such as healthcare and social work. It has been argued that there are researchers sometimes negate the influence of the interpreter’s presence in the research process, seeing the interpreter as invisible and an unproblematic medium to facilitate the collection of facts (Temple, 2002, Temple and Young, 2004, Temple and Edwards, 2008). Some studies have warned that the involvement of an interpreter is not simple: there may be questions about the accuracy and reliability of their work, as well as broader issues of the validity (Brämberg and Dahlberg, 2012). For social constructionists, the presence of an interpreter adds variables to the data collection process: it has been argued therefore that interpreters are active producers of data, and their perspectives should be accounted as part of the data (Hale and Napier, 2013).

Murray and Wynne (2001:23) point out a range of difficulties interpreters can bring into the research process, such as “the three-way production of data; selective translation; reliability of interpretation; impartiality of the interpreter; and confidentiality.” Squires (2009) reviews 40 cross-language studies and reveals that 33 out of 40 studies reflect a certain level of insufficiency in their choices of methods including positioning the interpreter as an unproblematic and invisible part of the research, failure to consider running the interview questions in the first language of the participants prior to data collection, insufficient information on the qualification of the interpreter, failure to acknowledge the use of an interpreter as a limitation of the study, and inadequate methodological design for cross-language research. Suggestions have been made to minimise the implications brought by the presence of an interpreter systematically in order to increase the rigour of the study. It is recommended that researchers spend time identifying an interpreter who is familiar with qualitative research and the topic of interest (Freed, 1988), has a good command of both languages (Westermeyer, 1990), and who is a professional interpreter instead of a family member or a friend (Murray and Wynne 2001:9). Moreover, it is suggested that the interpreter should be briefed adequately so that the interpreter is clear about her role in the interview, the protocol,

confidentiality requirements and the topic guide of the interview (Murray and Wynne 2001:9).

In this section, I will explain the way I deal with the implications of working with an interpreter and the strategies I have adopted in order to minimise the impact.

Finding professional full-time SLIs in China with credentials is virtually impossible. The reason is that there is no formal training provided for potential interpreters, and there is no organisation or association for interpreters with which to register so that potential clients can reach them easily. Secondly, the vast majority of interpreters are not professionals but are usually teachers working with special education schools or children of Deaf parents or staff of various governmental institutions who need to communicate with Deaf people and have acquired CSL. Moreover, although there are a few CSL proficiency tests, those tests are not popular amongst SLIs and Deaf people. This is because it is usually the imposed Signed Chinese that is assessed in those tests. As explained in previous chapters, the majority of CSL users prefer to use heritage CSL than Signed Chinese. Therefore, even if there are interpreters who pass the exams and obtain the credentials, they will not be able to communicate with Deaf people smoothly as they are not using their language. In this context, I have to resort to finding interpreters who have a good reputation in the community instead of holding onto the principle of finding interpreters with credentials.

The two interpreters employed for this study are both experienced SLIs in their cities. Interpreter A is now in her fifties and has worked in her local deaf school for over 30 years. She acquired CSL at the beginning of her career and was taught by a Deaf teacher in her school. She has extensive interpreting experiences in various settings, including interpreting at police stations, hospitals, national conferences, schools, on television and for academic interviews. Interpreter B, the other interpreter, is a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) in her forties and a teacher at her local deaf school as well. She also has rich experience in SL interpreting including community, conference, healthcare, police and academic interpreting. Both interpreters are famous in the national Deaf community, and crucially, were recommended to me by Deaf people from different cities, indicating a level of community confidence in their suitability and skills.

After agreeing on working together to carry out interviews, I arranged four online meetings with each of the interpreters to discuss the interpreting task. I prepared an

extensive interview guide (see Appendix B) for both interpreters to read in advance which explains the purpose of my research and the process and questions of the interviews. During the meetings, we have established the shared understanding that their role was not just to translate word-for-word but as an insider of Deaf culture who should help mediate the interview process to get rich in-depth data. We also discussed the questions I had designed for the interview and modified some wording so that the questions could be expressed in CSL in a way that was culturally clear and explicit for the interviewees. While agreeing on the roles they would adopt, we have also agreed that the interpreters would consciously avoid leading the interviews in a particular direction and would seek to let the interviewees express their opinions on the topic freely.

Confidentiality: last but not least, both interpreters were briefed about the principle of confidentiality as recognised by Heriot-Watt University and signed the confidentiality agreement (see Appendix A).

#### ***4.2.2 The bias of the researcher***

Bryman (2007:39) suggests that although the idea that researchers should strive to be neutral and unbiased is familiar in the social sciences, the idea is upheld by fewer scholars now. Indeed, a researcher's values can influence his or her research at various points including "choice of research areas, formulation of research question, choice of method, formulation of research design and data collection techniques, implementation of data collection, analysis of data, interpretation of data and conclusions" (Bryman, 2007:39). In the case of my research, the choice of my research areas, formulation of research questions clearly indicates my perception of Deaf people in China as a disadvantaged group and my intention to empower this group. I have mentioned earlier that currently in China there is an intensive debate over the use of heritage CSL vs. Signed Chinese (see section 2.4.2). In my opinion, heritage CSL is the language used by the Deaf Chinese community. It represents the Deaf culture because it values the features in the communication among Deaf people, including the use of facial expressions, the grammar, and the vocabulary. Signed Chinese, to my mind, is an imposed language system created by hearing experts without consulting the Deaf community properly. It emphasises the use of the Chinese grammar, vocabulary, and largely ignores the importance of facial expressions. I understand the intention behind

creating such a standard CSL so that communication is easier for Deaf people across the country but I think it is only legitimate if Deaf people have been consulted on this issue extensively. In this sense, Signed Chinese should not be regarded as a legitimate language system for Deaf people and its widespread use on television and among SLIs should be carefully examined.

However, before I conducted my interviews with Deaf people and interpreters, I reminded myself many times not to show my attitude on this division during the discussion. There are chances that I will encounter participants who think highly of the importance of Signed Chinese. Instead of shutting down the conversation or arguing with the participants, I should let them express their views freely and explore the reasons why they think so.

### **4.3 Sampling**

The purpose of my research is to study the way different actors construct and frame the phenomenon of SL interpreting on television. This does not require sampling research participants on a random basis. Therefore, the sampling strategy adopted in my study is a combination of purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and opportunistic sampling. The size of the sample does not increase by a great extent as the process of interviews unfolds but is very much established at the planning stage of the research.

I initially identified two interpreters in two cities. As they are very familiar with the local Deaf community and have contact with other SLIs either in their city or elsewhere, I asked for their help to get in touch with some potential participants. Interpreter A approached the former chairman of her local deaf association who agreed to be interviewed and then asked seven other Deaf people to join the interview. Interpreter A then invited another interpreter she worked with to be interviewed and several others in other cities to be interviewed via the internet. Similarly, Interpreter B knows the local Deaf community in her city very well and quickly contacted seven Deaf people to join our interview. She also invited an interpreter she considered competent to be interviewed.

The criteria for their recommendations were very simple. We were looking for deaf or hard-of-hearing SL users who have watched SL interpreting on television in general and/or for political conferences and are interested in offering their thoughts to the study.

As for the interpreters, we were looking for interpreters who have had real interpreting experiences and have a good reputation in the community. Apart from these requirements, we aim to achieve a good level of diversity in factors such as age, gender, profession, education. We also hoped to include approximately equal numbers of male and female participants so that we could include as much diversity as possible in terms of the collected views instead of getting data of a homogeneous nature.

Although the majority of the interviewees agreed to participate in the research prior to the actual data collection, two people were interviewed as they accompanied their friends to the interview site who had watched SL interpreting on television and were interested in the topic.

#### **4.4 Data source**

In this section, I will give a brief overview of the three sources of data in the study, namely, the media, Deaf Chinese people and the SLIs.

##### ***The media***

Since media is a very broad concept, it is necessary to put boundaries around it to give a clear picture of the range of materials on which this study focuses. In the study, I have limited the scope of materials to be used to online news released by major news websites only. I first searched “SL interpreting on television” and “political conferences” online and then selected all the news stories released by Xinhua news agency, Sina News, Tencent News and Sohu News. Eight news reports were selected to be used as research data for my PhD project. The length of the report ranges from 400–1200 words. These websites are very influential in China and serve as suitable examples of the media discourses. There are also less famous websites that reported on the event. They usually just circulated the ones by the major news outlets directly or wrote reports that were significantly shorter which made them incomparable to the articles I have chosen. News reports released by social media such as Sina Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter), television programmes and print newspapers are not included in the study. There are practical considerations in the decision. I have excluded television broadcasts because the current research framework is more suitable for the analysis of text and does not provide tools to analyse the semiotic features that are prominent in these broadcasts. Although many influential national television

stations have reported on the event, apart from the visual aspect, the content of their reports is very similar to that of the reports released online. Therefore, the decision to leave out television broadcasts does not constitute a significant loss of data. However, I acknowledge that the exclusion of visual analysis is one of the limitations (see section 7.5 for further discussion) of my current theoretical framework and visual analysis represents a further, significant, and distinct area of enquiry in itself. As for social media, some of the reports released by social media accounts are the same as the articles I have included in my study. There are other reports that are significantly shorter and released by sources that are difficult to verify, so they are not comparable to the articles I have mentioned earlier as well. It should be noted that due to the fact that I am not based in China, collecting print newspaper two months after the event becomes difficult and cannot be included in the research.

As for the news stories I have collected, although it would be useful to include details such as the font of the text, the photos included, the placement of the news story and the layout of its page, the current theoretical framework does not provide tools to analyse these features. These textual and paratextual features, though being beyond the scope of the present study, can be taken into consideration in future studies.

### ***Deaf Chinese people***

I have decided to carry out one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the help of two interpreters to investigate their frames of SL interpreting on television. The interviewees come from city A and city B where the two interpreters live. In city A, I have carried out interviews with seven Deaf Chinese people. In city B I have conducted interviews with six Deaf Chinese people. Please see appendix C for an overview of the background of the participants and the length of the interviews.

The interview site: for interviews in city A, the majority took place at the local Deaf club where Deaf people come on a regular basis to play mahjong (a popular Chinese gambling game) with other Deaf friends. There is one exception, the interview with D3, which took place in the dining room in the hotel where I stayed. The interviewee had to leave for a different city the next day, so he preferred to meet beforehand and suggested meeting at my hotel. For interviews in city B, they took place in two places. Many of them were carried out at the interpreter's home because they were all familiar with her

house and preferred to be interviewed there. We have also conducted interviews in the local deaf school where some of the participants work.

There are seven male interviewees and six female interviewees. Two are under 20, two are between 20 and 30, three of them are between 30 and 40, two of them are between 40 and 50, two of them are between 50 and 60, two of them are above 60. In terms of education, six of them obtained a university degree; two of them are still in their high school study; two of them went to middle school and three of them went to primary school. In terms of employment, four of them do not have a job at the moment; one of them works at the local association of disabled persons; two of them are teachers at a local special education school; one of them works at the local hospital, two of them are students, one of them is a dancer and the last one is a photographer. Among all of them, only one person is hard-of-hearing and can speak Chinese to a limited extent, the rest are either born deaf or became deaf at an early stage of life. In general, the gender, age and education factors present a good degree of diversity and ensure inclusion of a wide range of Deaf discourses on the topic. See Appendix C for a fuller background information about each participant.

### ***SLIs***

I have conducted interviews with seven interpreters in five cities in China, among which only one person is male, the remaining six are all female. In terms of age, one is under 20, one is between 20 and 30, three are between 31 and 40, one is between 41 and 50 and the last one is between 51 and 60. In terms of employment, only one of them works as a full time interpreter, one of them is still a university student majoring in SL interpreting and the remaining five are all teachers at a local special education school who work as interpreters when necessary. In terms of education, five of them obtained university degrees while the remaining two had high school diplomas. In terms of interpreting settings they have worked in, all of them have worked for conferences, three of them have worked for police settings, five have worked for community settings, five have worked for educational settings and one has worked on television.

### ***Informed consent***

Each participant was asked for their consent to be interviewed and video recorded. The Heriot-Watt University protocol requires each participant to sign their name on the



consent form. However, the first and second Deaf interviewees were quite suspicious about this requirement and feared that there might be consequences if they put down their names and only agreed to give a verbal confirmation. So I have video recorded the conversation we had and the consent they gave. From then on, I took extra effort to explain the nature of the signature and offered the participants the option of giving a verbal confirmation and have it recorded. As for the interpreters, 4 of them signed their name on the form and the two interpreters who were interviewed via the internet confirmed their approval verbally.

#### **4.5 Analysing process**

The process of analysing data consists roughly of two main stages. The first phase is frame analysis where each sentence is coded (the particular coding process will be discussed in later sections), resulting in a proliferation of codes. The second stage is to examine the connections between these codes and then group them into themes and categories in relation to the research question and the theoretical framework (Bryman, 2012). The next few sections will give detailed explanation as to how to carry out a frame analysis and how to develop codes for that analysis.

##### **4.5.1 Frame analysis**

As mentioned earlier, I adopt the *hierarchical cluster analysis* approach to frame analysis proposed by Matthes and Kohring (2008). This approach is originally designed to identify and compare the frames of large quantities of news reports. Since I was working with 20 interviews and seven news articles, I did attempt to run a statistical analysis to identify whether several articles or interviews share similar patterns of frame elements as suggested by the last step of the approach because the size of the sample is not adequate for quantification analysis. With that said, I will still draw comparisons between the identified frame elements from each strand of data and outline patterns that they form.

The first step of the approach is to define codes with which to mark the framing variables. Matthes and Kohring (2008) have the advantage of a well-developed codebook created in 1988. Their codebook has been constantly refined and improved and used by researchers in 16 countries. For example, under problem definition, the code book includes specific codes such as “topic: biomedicine”, “topic: research”,

“topic: economics” etc. Therefore, the two researchers do not have to come up with their specific codes. This advantage to their approach also becomes a shortcoming in that they skip the explanation on the process of developing codes and also do not discuss how the code book they use is compiled. Moreover, not every topic is well researched with codebook ready to use, so the lack of the elaboration on developing codes adds to the difficulty in carrying out the kind of analysis they propose. For example, when approaching a topic that is fairly novel in news coverage such as SLI on TV in this study, there will not be a well-established code book at hand. The researcher needs to figure out what specific codes under each framing variable are appropriate for the article he or she is dealing with.

In order to solve the issue, I decide to code the four general framing variables first. The project was carried out by an individual researcher so the coding is completed without a second coder. The unit of analysis is the article, as frames are most commonly coded per article (Matthes, 2007). The coding is then carried out on each sentence. The coding variables I start with include the four functions Entman (1993) proposed in his definition of frame namely *problem definition*, *causal attribution*, *moral evaluation and treatment recommendation*. Each frame element includes a set of subsequent variables.

For example, the frame element *problem definition* includes variables on topic and actor. According to Matthes and Kohring (2008), topic and actor are the most important components in problem definition as the two variables mark the content of the article and define the central issue of a news story. David et al. (2011) add that “the topic is defined as the central issue under investigation or the primary argument around which all the other arguments revolve” (p. 335). However, apart from the central topic, news articles also have underlying themes which, unlike the topic, may be more than one. Therefore, it is important to code all the themes as well and make a distinction between *theme* and *topic* in the final analysis. The frame element *causal attribution* is operationalised with variables measuring who is deemed responsible for the drawbacks and benefits (if any) of providing SL interpreting on television in the television broadcast of this event. Moreover, for *moral evaluation*, I included drawback and benefit (if any) evaluations of SL interpreting on television. As for *treatment recommendation*, I include whether this measure is positively or negatively judged.

After these more general categories of framing elements and variables are identified, I will then identify more specific codes for each variable.

The end product of this analysis is a frame element matrix where each frame element and its sub-variables are placed in columns.

In order to code the text efficiently, I used the Mac application Tamsanalyzer and a set of codes are created as required by the coding software. Each code is named after the initials of the frame elements and variables. They are as follows:

PD>T: PD stands for problem definition (the more general frame element) and T stands for topic and theme (the more specific frame variable under problem definition). The > symbol is the default symbol by Tamsanalyzer indicating that the right side code is a sub-variable under the left side code.

PD>A: PD stands for problem definition (the more general frame element) and A stands for Actor.

CA>B: CA stands for causal attribution and B stands for benefits.

CA>P: CA see above and P stands for problems.

ME>P: ME stands for moral evaluation and P stands for positive.

ME>N: ME see above and N stands for negative.

ME>NT: ME see above and NT stands for neutral.

TR>P: TR stands for treatment recommendation and P stands for positive.

TR>N: TR see above and N stands for negative.

Each code is in pairs. For example, positive moral evaluation has a start code {ME>P} at the beginning of the coded text and an end code {/ME>P} at the end of the coded text.

I have piloted my coding with the first news article and a random interview with Deaf people in both the original Chinese and its English translations. I first coded the Chinese source text and then translated the text into English. It should be noted that I transcribed the interpreter's interpretation in Chinese instead of signer's original SL

version. Scholars such as Stone and West (2012) and Young and Temple (2014) have discussed the limitations of using translation and coding translated texts and pointed out that nuances of the original text could be missed in a translation, causing different interpretations of the original message. In order to address the issue of misinterpretation, I have resorted to consulting the two interpreters when a Chinese interpretation was not clear or seemed contradictory. However, the use of translation and coding translated text are still acknowledged as a limitation in the study.

In the process of translating Chinese interpretation into English, I aimed to preserve the original linguistic features and structural features and then coded the English text. I went through the chosen article sentence by sentence in multiple rounds and coded all the linguistic elements that reveal frame element variables. For the rest of the interviews and news reports, the coding is carried out on the Chinese text only. A small sample of the coded text is presented below:

Coded Chinese source text:

{PD>A}柳华文{/PD>A}认为，{PD>T}为两会直播配备手语翻译{/PD>T}，  
{ME>P}首先是保障{PD>A}残疾人公民{/PD>A}在政治生活方面享有与  
{PD>A}其他公民{/PD>A}平等权利的有效方式。{/ME>P}

Coded English target text:

{PD>A}Liu Huawen{/PD>A} believes that {PD>T}providing SLI on TV at the  
live broadcast of NPC and CPPCC{/PD>T}, {ME>P}first of all, is an effective  
measure to ensure that {PD>A}citizens with disabilities{/PD>A} enjoy equal  
rights with {PD>A}other citizens{/PD>A} in political life{/ME>P}.

#### **4.5.2 Developing codes**

As the coding practice unfolds, more and more nuances under each frame element surfaced, requiring new codes for them. The way I managed the situation was not to rush into defining new codes. I carried on with coding one text with just four framing elements, and when the text was finished, I grouped the coded text under the themes and then set up subcategories under each framing element. For example, for problem definition, I have coded both the topics and the actors and then started to analyse the

different types of topics and actors. I will give an example of how I developed the more specific code for “actors”.

First of all, I coded all of the actors in the article using the pair of codes:

{PD>A}{/PD>A}.

An excerpt of coded text would look like the following:

The {PD>A}Chinese government{/PD>A} takes swift action to put SL interpreting on television which benefits {PD>A}people with hearing obstacles{/PD>A} by providing more information access...

I then put all the coded actors together and started to put those which are related under a more general category.

For example, actors such as “Chinese government”, “Chinese officials”, “CCTV”, “National Broadcast and Television Bureau” and “Party members” are categorised as “Chinese authorities”. And eventually, six categories of actors were identified, including the Chinese authorities, the Chinese society, Deaf Chinese people, people with disability, vulnerable social groups and SLIs. This process was also applied to the other three framing elements. I then used the newly developed sets of codes to analyse the next text and see if more categories were needed. In this process, there were also categories developed earlier which should be expanded so that similar categories can be integrated. Similarly, some categories had to be readjusted to be more focused so that the differences between categories could be clearly identified. Eventually, almost all texts can be coded by the codes I have developed.

More specific codes of each category are introduced as follows:

Actors: social members who are discussing the issue or who are being discussed.

PD>A>CG: actors including people who work in or represent the Chinese government or bureaus and departments which belongs to the government.

PD>A>DP: The actors involved are d/Deaf people including both people with a degree of hearing loss who use CSL and who don't use CSL. The reason is that the Chinese reports do not make a distinction as to who they are referring to, signers or non-signers. Therefore, when expressions such as people with hearing obstacles,

people who have hearing and speech problems, disabled people with hearing problems are used, the code is applied.

PD>A>SLR: The actor involved is the signed language interpreter

PD>A>CS: the actor, which is involved in the discussion, is the Chinese society which can be in both general and narrow sense. It can refer to individual members of the society or a more general society that is made up primarily by hearing people or both hearing and deaf members. It can refer to a more abstract concept of society where it is equivalent to China.

PD>A>PWD: the actor, which is being discussed, is people with disabilities.

PD>A>VG: the actor, which is being discussed, is vulnerable social groups.

A similar process was applied to all the rest of the framing elements and as for the “topic”, I have identified 12 different subtopics and their codes are introduced as follows:

PD: problem definition

PD>T>PC: the topic of that sentence is the political conference

PD>T>SLI: the topic of that sentence is SL interpreting including what is required to perform SL interpreting, including skills.

PD>T>MSLI: the topic of that sentence is the meaning or the function of SL interpreting on television.

PD>T>SLR: the topic of that sentence is sign language interpreter. This is the more general topic with subtopics as follows. However, in the coding process, I am not using this general category but instead will use more specific codes, so the same topic is not coded twice.

PD>T>SLR>APP: the topic is the appearance of the interpreter, including her clothes, her style and her look.

PD>T>SLR>EXP: the topic is the experience of the interpreter, including her professional background, previous interpreting experiences.

PD>T>SLR>PP: the topic is how the interpreter prepares for her interpreting job.

PD>T>SLR>PF: the topic is the performance of the interpreter during the job, how she copes with difficulty, information accuracy, speed of delivery, her manners.

PD>T>DP: the topic of the sentence is Deaf people.

PD>T>CG: the topic of the sentence is the Chinese government.

PD>T>PD: the topic of the sentence is people with disability.

PD>T>VG: the topic of the sentence is vulnerable social groups.

The specific codes for causal attribution are as follows:

CA: causal attribution

CA>BT: the causal attribution of the benefits

CA>PM: the causal attribution of the problem.

The specific codes for moral evaluation are as follows:

ME: moral evaluation

ME>P: positive evaluation.

Here all topics and actors are involved and are included in the sub-topics of ME>P.

ME>P>CG: positive evaluation of the Chinese government

ME>P>CS: positive evaluation of the Chinese society

ME>P>DP: positive evaluation of Deaf people

ME>P>PD: positive evaluation of people with disabilities

ME>P>VG: positive evaluation of vulnerable groups

ME>P>PC: positive evaluation of political conferences

ME>P>SLI: positive evaluation of SL interpreting, including its quality, style, etc.

ME>P>MSLI: positive evaluation of the meaning or the function of having SL interpreting on TV

ME>P>SLR>APP: positive evaluation of the interpreter's appearance

ME>P>SLR>EXP: positive evaluation of the interpreter's experience

ME>P>SLR>PF: positive evaluation of the interpreter's performance

ME>P>SLR>PP: positive evaluation of the interpreter's preparation work

ME>N: a negative evaluation.

The same set codes of positive evaluation applies to the negative evaluation of the letter P representing positive switched to negative.

ME>NT: neutral evaluation.

This refers to an evaluation with no clear indication of positive or negative inclination.

The more specific codes for treatment recommendation and their definitions are as follows:

TR: treatment recommendation

TR>P positive treatment recommendation

TR>N negative treatment recommendation.

#### ***4.5.3 Coding standards***

There are no detailed instructions in the theory as to how to code the framing elements. For example, for each category, there is no rule as to whether the researcher should code the entire sentence, or just the relevant phrase. Therefore, practice is required to achieve consistency in the unit of coding. After coding a few articles, I decided that one effective approach would be coding the sentence because it would be difficult for the coders to agree on exactly which words in that sentence functioned as a framing element. Sometimes, the framing element was made up of chunks of words in different places in a sentence. As a result, if the coding unit is the phrase, then the framing element would be over-counted.

Another reason for the preference of sentence to words and phrases was the importance of context. Sometimes, it was not the words which performed the function of framing but the meaning of that sentence. Therefore, it was difficult to locate the exact phrase as no phrase alone performed that function. The other issue I would like to point out was the order of coding. Because there were four broad categories to code and each consisted of a number of codes, I found the practice of coding four categories of framing elements at the same time too demanding. Therefore, I would recommend



coding one category at a time, so that the texts were analysed thoroughly. But no matter which way future researchers might take, it is important to have a written record of the guideline and follow it consistently. The coding procedure I set for my study is as follows:

After developing a comprehensive set of codes, each text is coded four times. The unit of coding is sentence.

The first round of coding is only problem definition, i.e. the actor and the topic.

For the actor: quote the specific words that are used to address that actor and nothing more than that because it is easy to pin down the actors in the text.

For the topic: code the entire sentence.

The second round is coding causal attribution and the entire sentence should be coded.

The third round is moral evaluation: code the entire sentence if there is an evaluation.

The fourth round is treatment recommendation, again, the entire sentence is coded.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In this section, I have elaborated on my epistemological and ontological considerations which determine the choices I made in relation to the qualitative approaches and methods I adopt in the study. An overview of the sampling strategy and data sources is presented and a detailed explanation of the analysing framework and the process of coding data is provided. I have also pointed out the limitations of my research design, including issues such as the implications of working with interpreters, the bias I hold as a researcher, the exclusion of visual aspects in data collection. In the next chapter, I will present an analysis of the data and highlight the themes and patterns that emerged.

## **Chapter 5 Data analysis**

In this chapter, I will present the five themes that emerged from the data, namely, evaluating the quality of SL interpreting; identity and language; interpreting and service provider; the social value of interpreting; and treatment recommendations. In presenting each theme, I will compare discourses from the three types of stakeholder and point out how each theme was framed differently by different stakeholders in terms of the four framing elements that were used in orchestrating the discourses. Section 5.1 presents different evaluations provided by different stakeholders on the issue of quality that serves as the basis for understanding the different frames on the issue of Deaf identity highlighted in section 5.2. These two sections provide a detailed answer to the first research I set out with, namely, how is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television? Section 5.3, section 5.4, and section 5.5 discuss the political and social value of SL interpreting on television and provide answers to the second research question I began with, namely, how is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in the discourses? Section 5.6 summarises the salient issues emerging in the previous analyses and answers the last research question, i.e. how is the interplay between interpreting and Deaf identity constructed in the discourses?

### **5.1 Opposing evaluations: the quality of SL interpreting**

The quality of the interpreting service was always the first topic brought up by the interviewees, both interpreters and Deaf signers. It was also an important part of the media reports. However, on this topic, opposing frames emerged. The interpreters and signers expressed strong criticisms while the media gave unanimous praise. The next part is divided into two sections, namely the media frame and the Deaf frame, presenting the specific framing elements – i.e. causal attributions and evaluations – that emerged from the data.

#### ***5.1.1 The media: unanimous praise***

The data from each news article gave positive evaluations of the quality of the interpreting service from different angles, including the number of signs produced, the difficulty of preparation work, the intensity of the task, and the image of the interpreter.

### ***The number of signs***

Both N4 and N5 commented on the number of signs produced by the interpreter during the live broadcast in order to support their positive evaluation of the quality of the service. For example:

同时，耳朵也要时刻敏锐，听准总理所说出的每一个字，然后迅速转化为手势。政府工作报告 1.8 万余字，她自己估计做了 1.4 万个手语动作。 — 新闻五第四段

At the same time, she needs to keep her ears sharp, listen carefully to every word said by the prime minister and convert it quickly into signs. The government work report is about 18,000 words long and she estimated that she produced some 14,000 sign language movements. — N5 paragraph 4

Similarly, N4 reported that the interpreter produced signs continuously during the live streaming of the government report for about one hour and forty minutes and interpreted this important talk accurately with some 10,000 SL movements.

We can see from the data presented above the reason that the number of signs was used as an indicator of the quality of the interpreting. It can be inferred that because the original report has about 18,000 characters and the interpreter produced 14,000 signs, the conclusion that the content of the report was more or less covered by the interpretation was then reached, which in turn suggested that the quality of the interpreting service was satisfactory.

### ***The preparation work***

N2, N3 and N4 all reported the preparation work undertaken by the interpreter prior to the live broadcast that, in their eyes, ensured the quality of her work. N4 mentioned that the actual report was not accessible to the interpreter until just one hour before the conference started. This inevitably presented a significant challenge for the interpreter, said N4, but she dealt with it very well. The article explained that the interpreter started

her preparation work by reading last year's government report as soon as she received the notice that SL interpreting was required for this year's conference, which, according to N4, made up for being unable to access the new report.

The media also reported on the way the interpreter handled technical terms and vocabulary that are used less frequently in daily life. In order to ensure correct interpretation, the interpreter, as reported by N2, N3, and N4, carefully noted down all the words for which she was unsure of an equivalent sign and looked them up in the *Chinese Sign Language* book series. N2 described that the interpreter's two sets of *Chinese Sign Language* looked very old, as a result of flipping through the pages very often. In addition, it also reported that the interpreter was under great stress during the preparation process as she was unable to fall asleep at night, occupied by the unfamiliar terms she had noted down. More often than not, she would get up again and start looking up these terms in that book series. It seems that the media acknowledged the use of *Chinese Sign Language* as a practice that should be adopted to ensure the signs used in interpreting are standard, thus underpinning their endorsement of the quality of the interpreter's work. In fact, N3 described *Chinese Sign Language* book series as 'SL reference book' explicitly.

### ***The intensity of the actual task***

Apart from the challenges in the preparation phase, the interpreter also had to overcome a number of hurdles during the live broadcast. N2 pointed out that the interpreter had to continue signing throughout the 1 hour and 40 minutes broadcast on her own, which was reported as an unprecedented challenge for the interpreter. The interpreter also told the reporter that her biggest concern was that she might not have enough physical strength to complete the task. She discussed with her colleague about her concerns and came up with a solution. She invited a female colleague who looks like her and had similar haircut to wait outside the interpreting studio. If she passed out, her colleague can quickly put on her clothes, take her place, and continue interpreting. Apparently, the media reported this anecdote with admiration as a piece of proof for her strong will, strength, determination, and fortitude. In the end, her colleague did not replace her on the screen which meant that she managed to interpret continuously for 1 hour and 40 minutes.

The media also reported other minor problems the interpreter had to deal with during the live streaming. For example, N2 quoted the interpreter that:

周晔指着脸颊说：今天在直播的时候，老感觉这里痒，而且有几个瞬间鼻子也不舒服。但是不能随便动，表情也一定不能变，一定要保持饱满的精神状态。除非是晕倒了，否则任何问题都要克服。 — 第 26 段

Zhou Ye pointed to her cheek and said: “during the live broadcast; it was very itchy, and there were moments my nose was a bit uncomfortable. But I tell myself not to scratch it or move, and I had to keep the same look, and stay energetic. I had to overcome any issue; as long as I did not pass out, it was okay.” — Paragraph 26

According to N2, the interpreter’s high level of professionalism was reflected in her determination to achieve the “mission impossible”. The displayed determination on the part of the interpreter was used as evidence supporting the positive evaluation of her by the media. According to the media reports, the interpreter not only possessed good skills but was also of great character.

### ***The image of the interpreter***

N2,3,4,5 gave positive evaluation of the look of the interpreter and her performance in front of the camera. She was described as sitting up straight in front of the camera throughout the task and keeping a steady posture apart from her signing hands and arms. She was commended as highly focused on capturing information and producing interpretation while managing to keep looking at the camera and keeping an energetic and pleasant facial expression. Her red suit and short haircut were also mentioned by these reports as making her look professional on television.

To summarise, the news reports gave highly affirmative comments on the interpreter and her work. The number of signs she produced was used to indicate that she did not miss much information. The challenges the interpreter faced prior to and during the interpreting task did not raise concerns over the quality of her work and the professionalism of the practice but were framed in a way to demonstrate her hard work, determination and suitability as a “public face” of CSL. Her reference to the *Chinese Sign Language* book series was commended as ensuring the use of standard signs on television. Her performance in front of the camera and her professional look, in the

eyes of the media, also added to the credibility of her work. As N4 put it, the live streaming of SL interpreting for the conference was “successful, and the interpreter accurately and perfectly interpreted every word and sentence said by the prime minister”. N1 and N6 did not mention the interpreter in particular, but both briefly described the interpreting service as being effective in delivering information to its target audience.

### ***5.1.2 The signing community: unanimous incomprehension***

Unlike the media who gave unanimous praise of the quality of SL interpreting on television, all deaf interviewees reported that the quality of the current interpreting service on television, including the interpreting for political conferences, was far below the standard they hoped for. The incomprehension was not confined to themselves, they said, but also other Deaf people they knew. For example, D1 estimated that 90 percent of the interpreting on television is incomprehensible for deaf people. They found it difficult to understand the interpreter and gradually lost interest in watching these programmes. As far as they are concerned, SL interpreting on television failed in its mission to deliver information to them. In terms of *causal attribution*, they pointed to a number of reasons that led to their dissatisfaction including the small SL screen, inconvenient broadcasting time, the vast number of SL dialects, rigid facial expression, misinterpretation, information loss, the use of Signed Chinese rather than CSL, and the use of “unnatural non-Deaf” signs.

Among these factors, the *salience* is not given equally to each one of them. The small SL screen and inconvenient broadcasting time were reported to have caused dissatisfaction among Deaf interviewees but did not lead to incomprehension. The use of signs from different SL dialects by SLIs in different cities and regions was evaluated as having caused incomprehension for Deaf viewers in other cities and regions but not causing rejection from the interviewees.

The fact that a great deal of information was missing from the interpretation was commonly regarded as one of the issues that led to incomprehension. For example, D10 pointed out that:

手语新闻里面介绍的都是比较简单的内容，都不是很具体的阐述。这样子看起来不太容易懂。缺失的遗漏的会有很多。—第 50 段

The content delivered by the SLI is always a reduced version (compared to its spoken counterpart), with much less details, which makes it difficult for us to understand. There is a lot of information missing from the interpreting. — paragraph 50

The lack of facial expression was commonly agreed as one of the most apparent factors that caused the incomprehension among the Deaf audience. For example, D5 observed that:

标准的手语太死板了，没意思，自然手语比较活泼一些，表情比较丰富一些。—第 54 段

Standard CSL is too rigid and boring. Natural (*heritage*) CSL is much livelier and has much richer facial expressions. — paragraph 54

The comment indicates that facial expression is a significant aspect of heritage CSL that is currently absent from the SL interpreting broadcast on television. For this reason, Deaf people gradually lost interest in watching SL interpreting on television and would rather watch subtitles, read newspapers, or use the internet to access information. D11 expressed his frustration that:

为什么呢？就是打手语的人，他也不管别人是不是能看懂他的手语，自说自话在那里打。也没有什么表情在那里。手语我经常都看不明白我就直接看字幕。你听说那个南非的那个什么手语，曼德拉那个手语翻译。他乱打，那么别人一样看不懂。我们那个新闻跟那个差不多。— 第 14 段

Why (we can't understand)? It is because the interpreters do not care whether his audience can understand him or not. They just sign along as if there were no audience, with no facial expressions. I often can't understand the interpreting and had to switch to subtitles. Have you heard of the interpreter in South Africa<sup>3</sup>? He

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<sup>3</sup> At Nelson Mandela's (the then South Africa President) funeral, the sign language interpreter, instead of signing in proper South African Sign Language, was instead using fake signs, causing great media attention (Turner, 2013).

was using fake signs. I feel that the Chinese SL interpreting is very much like that.  
— Paragraph 14

### ***Signed Chinese – the most salient issue***

The biggest issue that caused incomprehension among Deaf interviewees is the use of Signed Chinese. They all reported that the interpreters were not delivering the message but signing one Chinese character<sup>4</sup> after the other. To illustrate, D4 described his experience of watching Signed Chinese on television as:

看到过的，看的也少。有时候看到了就看，没看到就不看。第一个是看不懂，第二个是看了以后很费劲。他打的都是一个字一个字的打，在我脑子里出现的一个一个字，完了之后就是要转换成理解他的意思，比较费时间，看的很累。—第39段

I've seen it (SL interpreting on television), but I rarely watch it. If I happen to come across it, I would give it a try. But I wouldn't look it up on television on purpose. The first impression is I can't understand it. The second is that it is very tiring. The SLIs are signing one character after another, so in my head, I only see every character popping up in order and I have to figure out how the characters are combined into meaningful words and what do these combinations mean in a sentence. It is very time-consuming and requires a lot of effort. — paragraph 39

In this way, signing was reduced to the use of a set of symbols substituting Chinese characters instead of a language that has its own grammar and vocabulary. All Deaf interviewees observed that the interpreters on television use Pinyin (Pinyin finger spelling) initials frequently. They pointed out that this was precisely the consequences of using Signed Chinese. Given that it is impossible for every Chinese character and word to have a corresponding sign, SLIs who aim to transliterate every word and phrase will have to use Pinyin initials when a directly corresponding sign is not available. Since the same Pinyin initials apply for many Chinese words and phrases, resorting to

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<sup>4</sup> There is a difference between a Chinese character (字) and a Chinese word (词). A word can consist of more than one character.



the use of Pinyin too frequently would inevitably lead to incomprehension (see section 2.4.2 for an example).

### *Unnatural signs*

Apart from observing the word order of Chinese language too closely, Deaf people also reported that the signs used by the SLIs were often different from the signs Deaf people would use. Apart from D9, who stopped watching SL interpreting on television because the screen was too small, every other interviewee pointed out that, first of all, the use of too many Pinyin initials made the language somewhat artificial and far from the heritage CSL. For example, D8 observes that there is a new style of signing used by young people and SLIs:

新手势拼音比较多。现在的手势是按照汉语顺序来的，好像是汉语的代  
符号一样的…新手势是字字字对对对，跟汉字有关系。—第22段

*The new signs (the kind of CSL that is influenced more by Chinese, my emphasis) use a lot of Pinyin fingerspelling, and follow the Chinese grammatical order, like manual codes for Chinese. Each new sign (my emphasis) corresponds to a Chinese character in order. — paragraph 22*

Apart from that, everyone but D9 spotted that SLIs, especially the ones on CCTV, adopted signs from the *Chinese Sign Language* book series. They pointed out that although the signs in the book series were taught in special education schools, Deaf people either rejected them or abandoned them after graduation because the signs (a large number of them) were not heritage Deaf signs (see section 2.4.2 for a more in depth review of the book series). Apart from those signs that were deemed “not natural” (not heritage CSL signs), D3 and D8 pointed out that signs used by northern Deaf people were selected more often than those used by Deaf people in the south, making it difficult for southern Deaf people who had limited exposure to northern dialects to understand the interpretation.

D3, D5, and D11 argued that the unnatural signs were created by hearing experts who were not fluent heritage CSL users and outsiders of the Deaf community. D3, an informant who took part in the compilation of *Chinese Sign Language* book series as

well as the current CSL standardisation project at national level (see section 2.4.2 for a discussion on the work taken regarding standardising CSL), revealed that:

我们手语研讨的时候全部是健全人在做主的。教育部、中残联把这个权交给了\*\*大学。\*\*教授，他们都是健全人…他们不懂得聋人的生活习惯和环境，只是在研究这些字应该是怎么打，然后把这个套在我们身上，这样子是不可以的…中国手语上下两本书，印出来的，很多聋人反对。我们有什么办法？他的名字上是写的中国聋人协会认同，把聋人名字加上去了，把中国残联的，国家什么委员会专家教授名字全部加上去通过讨论，我们能有什么说法。我们聋协的名字挂在上面，中国就是这样一种情况。  
—第35-41段

When we are discussing sign language related issues, it is always the hearing people who decide. The Ministry of Education and the Association of China's Disabled Persons have endowed power to \*\* university. The professors there are all hearing. They did not understand Deaf people's ways of life but only focused on how to sign Chinese characters and then force the signs onto Deaf people. This is wrong. The book series *Chinese Sign Language*, is criticised and rejected by many Deaf people. But what can we do? It has China Deaf Association printed on the front cover with Deaf people's names, saying that it has gained our approval. What can we say? Deaf association is said to have given their consent. This is China. — paragraph 35-41

To summarise, this section discusses the evaluations of the quality of SL interpreting on television from Deaf audiences' point of view. The comments given by these interviewees presented a very different and much more critical discourse compared to that by the media with one Deaf interviewee even compared SL interpreting on Chinese television to that in Nelson Mandela's funeral. Among all the factors that created the strong sense of dissatisfaction, the lack of understanding in terms of CSL was singled out as the main issue. In the next section, I will present the discourses and framing elements that were given by SLIs.

### ***5.1.3 SLIs: dissatisfaction and a sense of understanding***

In terms of *moral evaluation*, the interpreters all agreed that SL interpreting on television is not satisfactory. In terms of *causal attribution*, they shared the Deaf interviewees' opinion that Signed Chinese was the main cause of incomprehension. Other less salient factors were also pointed out: SLIs on television were usually not proficient at signing, a lack of training added to large information loss and

misinterpretation. However, *evaluations* were different about the extent to which Deaf people could understand interpreting on television. I3 and I1 offered the strongest criticism of the quality of interpreting on television. I1 mentioned that sometimes, the message was completely wrong as SLIs were trying to catch up with the news reader.

丢弃会很多，还有更恶劣的情况，就是打到一半来不及就打后面，有时聋人肯定和否定词是放在最后的。他居然会描述一个现象后没有否定，意思就打反了。我们中国电视新闻里没有一个监督体系，问题是千疮百孔。—第 17 段

Information loss is common and there are worse cases. Sometimes, the SLIs could not catch up (with the news reader), so they drop the latter half of the sentence. But usually in signing, we put words that signify affirmation or negation at the end of the sentence. So sometimes, the negation word is missing, presenting exactly the opposite message. There is no supervision system for SL interpreting on Chinese television, so we see a lot of problems. — Paragraph 17

Others, however, indicated although the quality of SL interpreting on television was not satisfactory, it could be understood to some extent if Deaf people were patient enough. For example, I5 commented that:

我有时候会看一些，但是也不是很懂…我觉得聋人可能要比我好一些。聋人看手语的理解力要比我们更强一些…如果他们愿意看的话，我觉得最起码能够看懂百分之七八十。—第62-64段

Sometimes I would watch it, but I don't understand much... I think maybe deaf people would understand more because they have higher level of comprehension for SL... If they are willing to watch, I guess at least they can understand 70–80 percent. — paragraph 62–64

Unlike Deaf interviewees who primarily *attributed* the incomprehension to the use of Signed Chinese and a lack of facial expression on the part of the interpreter, SLIs interviewed in the study added a variety of supplementary reasons which, they felt, jointly accounted for the unpopularity of SL interpreting among Deaf persons.

I2 admitted that some interpreters who work in television were not fluent CSL users, yet she showed a very strong sense of sympathy towards the interpreters and argued that interpreting on television itself was a difficult task. To illustrate, she said that:

其实手语新闻挺辛苦的，工作也不太好做。你比如说世界上的新闻，他的语速比播国内新闻要快。做手语翻译真的是吃力不讨好。。。有时候确实跟不上。世界新闻生词冷词偏僻的词也比较多。—第 12 段

SL interpreting on television for news programmes is difficult. It's not an easy job, especially world news. The delivery speed is faster than that of domestic news. SLIs, they work hard but earn little recognition... Sometimes it is impossible to catch up (with the news reader), and world news usually contains a lot of less commonly used vocabulary. — paragraph 12

I2 pointed out that the unsatisfactory quality of SL interpreting on television might be unavoidable considering the speed of information delivery by the news reader and the common use of unfamiliar terms in the news text. As far as she is concerned, the SLIs were dealing with an immensely difficult job and it was regrettable that their effort had not been recognised by Deaf viewers. I2 felt that there was a lack of understanding of the challenges caused by interpreting on television *on the part of Deaf viewers*, which added to their frustration.

I1 and I6 gave a broader range of factors that can be *attributed* to the status-quo in terms of quality. I1 pointed out that the television stations were partly responsible because they preferred to have interpreters who were young and good-looking.

我经常在看，我发现年轻漂亮的都上电视台了，电视台比较关注形象，但是很多的手语打出来聋人是看不懂的。—第 16 段

I watch it (SL interpreting on television) often. I find that the SLIs are all young and good-looking. The television stations care about personal appearance, but the kind of signing (SLIs produced) is incomprehensible to Deaf people. — paragraph 16

Although she did not elaborate on the issue, it could be inferred that there were interpreters with richer experiences and better skills who were not chosen because they were not as young and good-looking as the current interpreters. SLIs argued that the

relatively low level of education among Deaf Chinese people and the various dialects of CSL were also part of the reason. For instance, I6 pointed out that:

因为聋人手语方言特点严重，所以很难让所有聋人都看明白。这需要统一全国手语。其次，聋人文化程度不同，部分聋人理解起来很困难。—第 29 段

Because Deaf people have quite a number of dialects amongst them, making it impossible to ensure that every one of them can understand the interpreting on television. To address the issue, we need to standardise CSL. Secondly, the level of education is varied amongst Deaf people, some of them would find it difficult to understand. —paragraph 29

As far as he is concerned, the various dialects in CSL were a significant reason SL interpreting on television did not achieve a high level of understanding among its target audience. It implied that the interpreters could not sign different dialects simultaneously. Therefore, there would always be signers who were unfamiliar with the signs used by the interpreters. In terms of *treatment recommendation*, he recommended that standardising CSL would provide a solution to this issue (the issue of standardising is discussed in section 2.4.2). Secondly, he also argued that not every Deaf person had received proper education, many of them would have difficulty understanding the issues discussed in news programmes.

I2 expressed concerns about the fact that during the live streaming of NPC and CPPCC, there was only one SLI working for the conference. She said:

我觉得很悲哀，难道我们中国只有一个手语翻译吗？这是对手语翻译的曲解，认为手语翻译可以从始至终两个小时一个人翻译...我觉得开头她肯定翻得好，越到后面，她的精力不够了。她的翻译质量肯定会降低...我觉得作为一个手语翻译，她也应该提出自己的要求，讲清楚自己工作的性质。应该有一个团体，最起码四个人一起工作，而不是一个人。—第 105 段

I feel very sad watching this. Do we only have one SLI in the entire country? It is wrong to think that one interpreter can work for two hours... I think in the beginning, she must be working smoothly. But later on, her energy level would fall, and the quality of her interpreting will lower for certain... I think, as an interpreter, she needs to articulate her requests, explaining the nature of her work. She should

be working with a team, a team of four interpreters, perhaps. But indeed not working alone. — paragraph 105

So while I1 felt sympathetic towards the working interpreter for these political conferences, she also held her responsible (*causal attribution*) for the challenging situation in which she put herself. She felt that the interpreter did not take the initiative to negotiate with the authorities to assemble a team of interpreters for a challenging task like this.

In their accounts of the issue of quality, a number of *causal attributions* were identified. To start with, programme directors at television stations held certain set of standards that was not universally welcomed when it comes to selecting interpreters by putting the look and age of an interpreter above his or her ability. Secondly, the inherent language style in news and political conferences made the work very difficult for interpreters. Thirdly, Deaf people in China are not a homogeneous group who have a similar level of education; nor do they use CSL in the same way. These facts made it impossible for interpreters to make their work understood by all Deaf people. It also suggested that part of the reason leading to such a high level of incomprehension was that Deaf people did not make an effort to try and understand the interpreters. Had they done so, the comprehension level would be much higher. Fourthly, many interpreters who worked on television were not very competent in SL.

## **5.2 Selection, exclusion, and salience: framing identity and language**

In the previous section, I have pointed out that every interpreter and Deaf person interviewed in the study pointed out that language (including the use of Signed Chinese, the use of signs from *Chinese Sign Language* book series, and the various CSL dialects) was the leading cause of their incomprehension of SL interpreting on television. In this section, I will focus on discussing the ways in which the identity of Deaf people was *defined* by the three stakeholders in relation to these issues and their attitude towards what is the proper use of SL on television.

### **5.2.1 The media: defining deafness as an obstacle and disability**

In the media reports, when referring to deaf Chinese people, the following terms were used: (有听力障碍的残疾人) “disabled people with hearing obstacles”; (聋哑人) “deaf

and mute people”; (听力障碍人士) “people with hearing obstacles”. Being defined as such, they were also identified as belonging to (残障人士) “people with disabilities and obstacles”; (弱势群体) “disadvantaged social groups”; and (残疾人) “disabled people”.

From these terms, we can see that, in terms of *problem definition*, deafness was primarily defined as an obstacle and a disability. In N6 and N4 where the term “deaf and mute people” (聋哑人) was used, it was used in relation to the notion of “disability” and “obstacle”. Deaf people were described as a disadvantaged social group as well. However, there was no detailed description of the actual disadvantages supposedly experienced by this particular group. In fact, N1 and N6 argued specifically that:

目前全国人大代表和政协委员中有几十位身体残障的人，每个人平等参与政治生活的愿望都非常强烈。聋哑人受自身残障的局限，接收信息的局限比较大，因此他们渴望信息传播渠道的多元化。—第9段

At present, there are dozens of people who have “physical disabilities and obstacles<sup>5</sup>” serving as representatives in NPC and CPPCC. They all want to take part in political life on an equal footing with other representatives. “Deaf and mute people”, constrained by their own “disability and obstacle”, experience great barriers in accessing information. Therefore, they have a strong desire for diversified information channels. — paragraph 9

The comment indicates that N1 and N6, in terms of *causal attribution*, believed that the barriers Deaf people experienced in life were inflicted by their “disability and obstacle” (残障). This implies that, consciously or subconsciously, N1 and N6 believe that hearing is a social norm and that other people, rather than society, are at fault for not being able to conform to the norm.

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<sup>5</sup> Terms as such are literal translations of the original Chinese terms. There are similar terms in English for example “impairment”. However, I believe it is important to retain the original Chinese meaning to the greatest extent as it does suggest a different way of framing deafness.

As already discussed in section 5.2.1, the media did not mention whether the interpreting was conducted in Signed Chinese or heritage CSL and reported the use of *Chinese Sign Language* as ensuring the signs used on television were standard. When reporting on the use of SL, without specifically mentioning CSL, N2 and N3 quoted the interpreter they interviewed that:

这些词我们平时也用，但是有些不太规范。这次我们要通过电视直播，把手语规范化工作向前推进一步。—第 19 段

These words, we use them in daily life as well, but there is a lack of standard in the signs we use. This time, through live streaming on television, we will advance the work of standardising sign language. — Paragraph 19

The revelation of the comment is that the interpreter pointed out that some Chinese concepts had various SL expressions with no established standard. For this reason, she perceived the interpreting event as an opportunity to promote “standard” signs among Deaf people. Judging from her use of *Chinese Sign Language* as a reference book (as discussed in section 2.4.2), it can be inferred that she held that the signs collected in that book series represent a standard version of CSL.

### ***5.2.2 The signing community: deafness as a disability with a language***

In the interviews with Deaf participants, Deaf people were referred to as (聋人) “deaf people” or “disabled people” (残疾人) while hearing people were referred to as (健听人) “healthy and hearing people” or (健全人) “healthy and complete people”.

The data presented above suggest that all Deaf interviewees, when talking about Deaf people in the interviews, referred to them as “deaf people” and only three interviewees identified themselves specifically as disabled people. This might indicate that the majority of the interviewees did not *define* deafness primarily as a disability. However, taking a look at the terms used to refer to hearing people, it is notable that Deaf interviewees labeled them primarily as “healthy people” and more than half of them used the term “complete”. This might indicate that although the majority of the interviewees did not primarily define deafness as a disability, they might have subconsciously viewed it as a “deficiency” to some extent.



With that said, every Deaf interviewee had a clear understanding that “natural” (heritage) CSL, different from Chinese in terms of its structure and expressions, was the language used by Deaf people. As mentioned in section 5.1.2, they found the use of Signed Chinese incomprehensible and every one of them recommended that heritage CSL should be used instead. Six Deaf interviewees, in terms of *treatment recommendation*, urged strongly that the government should recognise CSL and promote the use of CSL on television and in schools and higher education. They argued that heritage CSL should be used instead of creating signs in line with Chinese expressions. D3 (who was involved in compiling *Chinese Sign Language*) urged that:

我说这个手语呢，健全人懂也不可能，还是让聋人去做吧，做出来以后，如果有什么大的问题，专家或者是老师或者健全人，会手语的，大家一起发现问题后可以提出来，帮助这方面可以的，你不放心，不给聋人，全部自己抓着，说这有什么用，手势没有我们聋人好，你手势没有我们聋人好为什么要抓着呢？等到手势好的人生老病死过去了，再传下来就没了，那么培养的都是汉语的手势，不是聋人的手势。还是要保护一下聋人的自然手语，还是有困难的，是不是很压抑听着？—第 45 段

My opinion is that healthy and complete people are unlikely to fully understand CSL. So let Deaf people take over the work. Experts, teachers, or “healthy and complete people” who know CSL can review the work and point out problems if any. Suggestions are welcomed. But you don’t trust Deaf people’s ability, you don’t give Deaf people the opportunity and you fully control all work (related to SL). What’s the point? Your understanding of CSL is not as good as ours, your signing is not as natural as ours, so why are you in charge? When this generation of Deaf people who are fluent CSL users die away, CSL will disappear with them. All the signs in future will be Chinese signs not Deaf signs. We should protect natural (*heritage*) CSL. I know it is difficult. Have I depressed you? — paragraph 45

The comment showed that, as a Deaf participant involved in the national SL standardisation project, D3 found that hearing people who were not familiar with CSL were the decision makers. He found the practice unacceptable, felt it had disastrous effects on the preservation of CSL and warned that, if no action were taken, the kind of SL that would be used for future generations of Deaf people might be a signed version

of Chinese. However, this strong urge to preserve and promote CSL was not shared by every interviewee.

### ***Paradoxical attitude towards Signed Chinese and Chinese Sign Language***

Despite the fact that every Deaf interviewee listed Signed Chinese as the most salient problem of the current SL interpreting on television, and the majority of them found the signs from *Chinese Sign Language* book series did not represent Deaf people's own language, there were a few Deaf participants who did not express strong objections to its use.

D6 and D7 mentioned that although they did not use Signed Chinese and signs from *Chinese Sign Language* in school, new students who transferred to their school often adopted Signed Chinese and signs from that book series. At the beginning, they would look up the signs used by the new students in the two books to facilitate communication but the new students themselves would quickly pick up the signs and grammar of the local CSL from their fellow students. Interestingly, however, the conclusion then drawn by D6 and D7 is that it is the students' fault not studying the book series hard enough. They also added that after graduation, Deaf people would focus their attention on making money and very few of them would spend time reading SL books, implying, in terms of *causal attribution*, that Deaf people are partially responsible for the unpopularity of *Chinese Sign Language*. This might indicate that although *Chinese Sign Language* is endorsed by the government as textbook to be used in special education schools, the practice is not strictly observed in every one of them. However, since students have early exposure to *Chinese Sign Language*, they do not hold as strong a criticism of it as elder signers.

There was only one Deaf interviewee (D13) who admitted that he could not fully understand SL interpreting on television because of Signed Chinese, and at the same time, believed that Signed Chinese is more valuable than CSL. The interviewee argued that:

汉语地位高是应该的。我们的手语呢也应该改改改，多改一点，去接近汉语一点。汉语还是非常重要的。自然手语打了以后语句也有颠倒的现象。按照

文法手语打呢，对聋人来说提高语文水平，写作能力也是很有帮助的。—第 86 段

It is nothing but natural that Chinese language assumes a more important status than CSL. CSL needs to change itself to become more like Chinese. The Chinese language is crucial. CSL sometimes has a very disorderly structure. If we use Signed Chinese, it will be very helpful for the deaf people to achieve a higher level of competence in Chinese and Chinese writing. — paragraph 86

It can be inferred from his statement that, in terms of *moral evaluation*, the interviewee held the Chinese grammar as the *correct* grammar and that of CSL wrong, indicating his lack of confidence as a CSL user in comparison to the dominant spoken language. Signed Chinese that follows Chinese closely is therefore seen as more acceptable because of its resemblance to Chinese.

He provided the reason for his preference of Signed Chinese over CSL:

重点是为了教学，加强教学。他们好的聋人学会文法手语的都是通过大学的受过正规教育的。我们这些呢就是用自然手语的就有的地方也没有受过正规教育。我有时候也会把新的手语交给一些我的同龄人，老人。新的手语有好处，好的东西我们也要吸收。—第 88 段

The point is for education, achieving better educational results. The well-educated Deaf people who learnt Signed Chinese are those who went to colleges and received decent education. We, people who use natural (*heritage*) CSL, are the ones who did not receive proper teaching. Sometimes, I would pass on some new signs I came across to people of my age and older. New CSL has its advantages, and we need to absorb that. — paragraph 88

D13 evidently believed that acquiring Signed Chinese (which he refers to as “new CSL”) would lead to an enhanced opportunity to receive higher education. From his experience, Signed Chinese was taught in schools and universities. Therefore, in order to go to university, one has to learn Signed Chinese. This line of reasoning reveals the consequences the wide use of Signed Chinese in education (especially higher education) can have on Deaf people’s attitude towards CSL. The use of only Signed Chinese in these settings might create an impression among Deaf signers that heritage CSL is not

able to achieve equal educational outcomes, thus believing CSL is inferior to Signed Chinese. It is also interesting to note that D13 had no hope for heritage CSL to assume a more important status in higher education or in society. When it comes to the prospects of heritage CSL being replaced by Signed Chinese, the interviewee believed that time would make the right decision for people. That is to say, if heritage CSL disappears, he would simply accept the reality.

Although this is the only interviewee who did not appreciate the value of heritage CSL (at least appeared to be so during the interview), it would not be unrealistic to surmise that perhaps a portion of Deaf Chinese people agrees with him on this issue. The use of CSL is limited to Deaf people only and has little place in society, which can cause a sense of inferiority for some members of the Deaf Chinese community. The use of Signed Chinese in schools and universities (and perhaps on television as well) may reinforce the impression that learning Signed Chinese has more practical value for Deaf people, and – though this is an unsubstantiated assumption – that this will in turn lead to easier or more effective learning of Chinese.

### ***5.2.3 Interpreters: the importance of heritage CSL in understanding deafness***

In the previous two sections, I have presented data regarding the ways in which deafness is constructed by the media and Deaf interviewees. In this section, I will present data from SLIs' perspectives regarding the issue of Deaf identity and CSL.

When interviewed in the study, SLIs all referred to Deaf people as (聋人) “deaf people”<sup>6</sup>. In addition, I4 and I5 also sometimes used the term (残疾人) “disabled people”. When talking about hearing people, I5 and I6 mentioned them only once as (健康人) “healthy people” and (健听人) “healthy hearing people” respectively. Every interpreter mentioned that, in terms of *causal attribution*, it was common for Deaf people to experience discrimination, misunderstanding, and ridicule in society and the value of their language was not recognised by the government and society. They all argued that, in terms of *treatment recommendation*, it was of great importance that the

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<sup>6</sup> The Western d/Deaf discussion has reached China. However, so far there is no such equivalence in the Chinese language that denotes a cultural and linguistic Deaf identity.

government announces that it recognises CSL as a natural language. For example, I5 pointed out that there was a big gap between China and more advanced countries in terms of the understanding of deafness. She stated that many countries in the world had accepted heritage SLs in their country as fully-fledged languages. By comparison, China still needed to catch up with these countries.

In terms of *causal attribution*, I1 argued further that the cause of all the problems faced by the Deaf Chinese community was the lack of language recognition on the part of the Chinese government. She explained that:

我觉得中国聋人这个群体他在社会上所处的地位实际上和他的语言地位很有关系。现在很多聋人都在呼吁要就业要什么...它只是一种表面治理。聋人的地位没有体现出来是因为他跟健听的社会有障碍。有障碍就是他的语言。他发不出声，他的群体的素质，文化素养低下，也是因为在教学的时候，在翻译队伍这方面整体的缺失，导致了他整体接收信息的缺失，导致了他文化体系的缺失，导致了今后就业文化水平低，职业技能学得少。都和他语言的发展有关系...所以现在没有把它的根解决的话，都是很费力的在解决表象的很多东西。如果语言地位确立了，你就可以解决他的体系，解决了体系之后，他的翻译队伍，他的服务队伍，语言的发展标准都会出来，他从小出生到进入学校之前的语言环境都会得到改善...就好像这个人是没有一个骨头一样的，脊椎没有，有了脊椎他所有东西都好发展。—第 39 段

I think that the status-quo of Deaf people's social position has its roots in the status granted to their language. Right now, a lot of Deaf people are calling for better employment, etc. That's just the surface issue. The reason Deaf people are not visible in society is that there are barriers between the community and them. That barrier is their language. They can't talk. Their group "quality"<sup>7</sup>, educational quality is very low. That is because there is no interpreting provided in their education system, which resulted in the absence of their information access and cultural system. This, in the modern era, has determined their relatively lower level of

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<sup>7</sup> 素质 ( Suzhi ) a literal translation would be "quality", a typical Chinese term referring to how well-educated a person is.

professional skills and language competence. Everything is related to their language... Therefore, if we do not address the fundamental issue first, we are wasting our time and energy to fight the superficial symptoms. With an explicit recognition of Deaf people's language, the whole systemic problems can be solved with ease. We can start to train interpreters, set up teams of social workers, develop language standards; everything will be improved including their language environment from birth to school... Right now, it is as if the Deaf Chinese group is a person without bones, not just any bone, but a missing spine. If we can replant that spine, things can be sorted out quickly. — paragraph 39

I1 pointed out that as long as CSL was not endorsed by the Chinese government, it would be primarily regarded as the obstacle on the Deaf side in communication with hearing people. She argued that, without recognition, CSL would not be used in schools, higher education and workplace. This could in turn lead to a comparatively low level of education, resulting in unpromising prospects for Deaf people. It is also worth noting that, in terms of *causal attribution*, the interpreter believed that the barrier Deaf people experience in life is their language, instead of society's lack of understanding of their language.

As section 5.2.2 indicated, SLIs interviewed in the study pointed out that the use of Signed Chinese (and the consequent frequent use of Pinyin fingerspelling) was one of the leading factors that caused incomprehension of SL interpreting on television for Deaf people. All SLIs urged that it was important to use CSL on television. Apart from following Chinese sentence order too closely, every SLI also pointed out SLIs on television tended to use signs from the *Chinese Sign Language* book series. I1 (who used to work in television) confessed that she used to believe that the purpose of interpreting on television was to teach Deaf people the standard CSL (the signs from the book series). After discussing with Deaf people in her city, she realised that the main purpose of interpreting was to provide information access for Deaf people and switched to using local CSL. I4 (who studied SL interpreting as her college degree) admitted that the book series was used as textbook in her college and she was required to memorise all the signs in it. However, after becoming more engaged with the local Deaf community, she realised that Deaf people rejected the signs approved by the two books and believed that interpreting should be provided in local CSL.

There were also paradoxical *evaluations* towards Signed Chinese and *Chinese Sign Language*. I6, while stressing the importance of using CSL, believed that the signs in the book series were standard and commended interpreters who followed it as providing the best standard interpretation. I2, for example, argued that while in private, it was easier to use heritage CSL; in classrooms and conferences, it was better to use Signed Chinese. She provided her reasons for that view:

并不是说有一个等级。汉语顺序好，怎么说呢，现在很多聋人都能看字幕。老师打得用汉语顺序就是和字幕是统一的。信息量的获取就比较全面。自然手语有自己的缺陷。就是说，怎么说呢，意思是到了但是他还是不具体。没有文法手语那么的具体...它的优势是高度概括，重点突出。但是他不可能完完全全把信息都反馈出去，表达出来，我觉得他有他的优点和不足，应该取长补短。—第 73–89 段

I am not saying that there is a hierarchy. I think the Chinese structure is better than that of natural CSL. How do I explain this? Right now, a lot of Deaf people can read subtitles. If the teacher (interpreter) uses the Chinese structure, then it matches the structure of the subtitles. Therefore, Deaf people would have fuller access to information by referring to both. Natural (*heritage*) CSL has its disadvantages. That is to say, the meaning can be delivered, but some details are missing. It can't be as detailed and precise as Signed Chinese. Highly concise and having an explicit emphasis are its advantages. But natural (*heritage*) CSL can't express information in its most complete sense. I think it has advantages and disadvantages, and we need to learn from the strength of other languages to make up for its shortcomings. — paragraph 73–89

I1, who was a strong supporter of CSL, believed that Signed Chinese had its uses:

我不反对，为什么我不反对呢？总比你没人打手语好，总比你什么手语都不会好。你在初学的时候你要打你的，将手势汉语作为最低级的，初级。有了一定词汇的积累之后，我会告诉你怎么样的表现更接近聋人...我觉得电视里能打手语的人越多越好...第一个层次就是要有，有了以后你的力量才会越来越强大。—第 59 段

I do not reject Signed Chinese, why? It is better than no signs at all, better than no signers at all. When you first start to learn, think of Signed Chinese as CSL at its lowest level. With the accumulation of vocabulary, I will tell you what kind of CSL is closer to Deaf people's SL... I reckon that as for the number of SLIs on television, the more the merrier. The most important and essential requirement is that there are SLIs on television. With that, the power of SL will be stronger and stronger. — paragraph 59

These data suggest that SLIs interviewed in the study appreciated the value of heritage CSL. While the SLIs in the study advocated for the use of heritage CSL on television and other social sectors, not all of them rejected the use of Signed Chinese. More importantly, the paradoxical evaluations given by I2 suggest that there is a lack of confidence in heritage CSL even on the part of some SLIs.

### **5.3 Causal attribution: SL interpreting as a political symbol and service providers**

The second theme that emerged from all three strands of data is the political value of SL interpreting. In terms of *causal attribution*, the media, SLIs and Deaf people in the study all agreed that the decision to broadcast SL interpreting on television was made by various Chinese authorities, especially for high profile political conferences. However, different frames have emerged on the value of this SL interpreting in light of the provider selected to deliver the service.

#### ***5.3.1 The media: a reflection of improved political practice***

All six news articles praised the organising bodies of the political conferences for the decision they made to broadcast SL interpreting on television for Deaf citizens. N5 and N2 quoted messages posted by Chinese internet users on Weibo<sup>8</sup> who commented on their feelings after they discovered the broadcast of SL interpreting for NPC and CPPCC. For example, N5 quoted a comment that:

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<sup>8</sup> Weibo is a popular microblog social media platform mainly used in China. It is similar to Twitter.



对于周晔的手语翻译工作，网友们是一片赞誉之声：两会越来越以人为本，不仅体现在政府的施政上，还体现在会议组织的细节上。—第 6–9 段

Zhou Ye's SL interpreting has received praise from internet users: NPC and CPPCC are doing better job in terms of putting people forward. This is not only reflected in the policies drawn up by the government but also the details of conference organisation. — paragraph 6–9

The data showed that not only the media, but also some ordinary Chinese citizens interpreted the broadcast of SL interpreting as a progressive step made by the Chinese government. N1 elaborated on this particular interpretation and stated that:

中国为两会提供手语直播，鲜明地展示了党和国家关心残疾人、倡导残疾人权利保障的积极立场和态度。—第 1 段

China, by providing sign language live broadcast for NPC and CPPCC, vividly exhibits that the Party and the nation care about people with disabilities and their positive stance and attitude towards safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities. — paragraph 1

Evidently, the provision of SL interpreting for NPC and CPPCC had an apparent value for the political body of China, namely the CPC, as the practice “vividly” demonstrated the government's caring stance.

N1 further explained why the provision of SL interpreting should be interpreted as a progressive step on the part of the government:

直播配备手语翻译，可以让全社会直观地看到党和国家理解、尊重、关心残疾人公民的实实在在的举措。—第 8 段

Live broadcasting (*NPC and CPPCC*) with SL interpreting on television lets the entire society see straightforwardly that the Party and the nation *understand, respect (my emphasis)*, and care about disabled citizens and that they have taken concrete and tangible measures. — Paragraph 8

As the data explained, the decision of providing SL interpreting showed that the Party “understood, respected, and cared about disabled citizens”. Although N1 did not further

explain why the provision of interpreting for Deaf people meant the Party “understood” and “respected” disabled citizens, it could be inferred that “understand” meant that the government was aware that Deaf citizens communicate manually, different from other citizens and “respect” meant that the government did not force Deaf citizens to communicate orally and respected the difference through the provision of SL interpreting. According to N1, SL interpreting not only set up a socially progressive image for the government, but also made this particular image visible for the entire Chinese society. In other words, interpreting is interpreted here as an effective political practice to gain approval and support from society. It is worth noting that SL interpreting on television is indeed, of very obvious high visibility as a symbolic gesture that seems, on the surface, to be pretty unambiguous and easy for the viewing population to construe, even if they know little about heritage CSL. However, for anyone who knows heritage CSL, this is a highly ambiguous gesture indicating that perhaps, the state simply does not or does not bother to understand the difference between heritage CSL and Signed Chinese.

### ***5.3.2 The signing community: political progress vs. an empty “face project”***

In terms of *causal attribution*, every Deaf interviewee pointed out that the decision to provide SL interpreting on television for news programmes and political conferences was made by the Chinese government. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, every one of them stated that they could not understand the interpreting. For this reason, Deaf interviewees provided a range of interpretations of the value of interpreting in relation to the government.

D13, who was a supporter of Signed Chinese (indicated in section 5.2.2), reported that watching SL interpreting on television made him feel that the government attached more importance to Deaf people. D8, who did not support Signed Chinese but believed the signs used by SLIs on CCTV were standard, confirmed that SL interpreting showed that the government perceived Deaf Chinese people as an important social group and wanted Deaf people to receive political information and “love China”. It is interesting to note that both D13 and D8 confessed that they had lost interest in watching SL interpreting on television because they simply could not understand it.

D9, D11 and D12, by comparison, held a completely critical attitude towards the government’s intentions in providing SL interpreting on television, all labelling it a

“face project” (面子工程)<sup>9</sup> for the government; that is, something the government has done to make it appear commendable. D11, who compared the quality of SL interpreting on Chinese television to that of the fake SL interpreting at Nelson Mandela’s funeral (see section 5.1.2 for an explanation of the particular incident), commented that:

这就是面子工程，就是政府用来完成任务的。 — 第 18 段

This is just a face Project, it’s something the government does as a task they have to do to show that they have done something already... — paragraph 18

也许有人会觉得手语上电视了就意味着政府关心我们了，聋人获益了，权利保障进步了。也许表面上看或者国际上看是这样。但是事实上，他看起来像是加强了聋人的联系，但是事实上，没有什么实际作用。 — 第 70 段

Maybe, some people would say that SL is on television, this means the country pays attention, and Deaf people benefit from it and they have better rights secured. I think on the surface, international society might think so. Because, if you look at it, it seems that this has strengthened the links between Deaf people and society. But in reality, I don’t believe this has any real effect. — paragraph 70

For these interviewees, the provision of an interpreting service for Deaf people should suggest that the service provider cares about the Deaf population. However, because the quality of the service (*causal attribution*) was judged as almost as fake as that of the infamous fake interpreting at Nelson Mandela’s funeral, the interviewees reached the *evaluation* that the government was not sincere in providing such service and had taken advantage of SL interpreting and Deaf people and earned credit for itself.

Other interviewees, however, did not necessarily perceive SL interpreting on Chinese television as a “face project”. D5, D6 and D7 reported that they were very confused as to whether the government provided interpreting for Deaf people out of respect or not.

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<sup>9</sup> “Face project” is a literal translation of the Chinese term 面子工程, which refers to a somewhat unique Chinese phenomenon where certain government projects are carried out to earn public endorsement while the quality of these projects is usually proven to be far from satisfactory later.

D5 described his uncertain feelings when he made an effort to watch SL interpreting on television:

就是感觉有被，又被尊重了，但是呢看到那个翻译呢都是标准的手语，又看不明白，就看不下去，北京的那个北京电视台嘛不是有手语翻译，但是字幕没有，他说看看到简单的能看懂，就是长时间看又看不明白了，他说如果有又有字幕，然后手语翻译说的好一点就好了，他说翻译的不好，还有标准手语太多，他说感觉就不好，不行，好像又没被尊重。—第 48 段

(I) feel like I have been respected. But then I see the use of Signed Chinese by the interpreters. I cannot understand it and I don't want to continue watching. The Beijing television station provides SL interpreting without subtitles. Sometimes, when the content is simple, I can understand. But if I watch it for a longer period of time, I start to lose track of the message. How I wish subtitles could be added and the interpreter's signing could be improved. Right now, the quality of interpreting is awful, too much Signed Chinese, making me feel bad about it. Then I feel that I am not actually respected. — paragraph 48

D6 and D7 described their feelings in a similar way: they felt as if the government did care about Deaf people but failed to attach enough importance to them. As these examples show, the provision of interpreting can create an impression for the recipients of the service that they are respected by the service provider. However, in this case, the users of CSL could not relate to and identify with the use of Signed Chinese, greatly diminishing the sense of respect delivered by the presence of interpreting.

D1, D2, and D4 probably expressed the most mixed *evaluations* on this topic. At the beginning of the interviews, they all praised the government for providing SL interpreting on television for political conferences and news programmes. They argued that the decision showed that the government respected and cared about Deaf Chinese citizens. For example, D2 described her feelings when she watched SL interpreting on television for the first time:

想到以前外国有手语翻译，对聋人的重视，中国好像没有手语翻译，对聋人不重视，现在有了手语翻译呢觉得对聋人的地位呢有提高，觉得呢就是跟世

界接轨了，我们跟外国呢是一样的，聋人有地位的。现在中央电视台有了手语翻译，就觉得国家都是承认的东西。—第 9 段

I remembered that, in the past, foreign countries have SL interpreting on television. These countries pay great attention to their Deaf citizens. China didn't have SL interpreting on television, it didn't pay much attention to us. Now there is interpreting on television, I feel like Deaf people's social status has been lifted and we are catching up with the world. Chinese Deaf, like foreign Deaf people, have their place in the society. Now that CCTV has SL interpreting, I feel like SL is accepted by the government. — paragraph 9

D4 and D1 argued that SL interpreting was obvious proof that the government respected and cared about Deaf people. They reasoned that if this was not the case, the government would not take the trouble to arrange for such a service to be broadcast. However, as the interviews went on, especially as issues such as the use of Signed Chinese rather than CSL were raised, they admitted that the current SL interpreting on television was a “face project” (面子工程) and a “piece of decoration” (装门面) after all. D1 made the following comment:

手语翻译就是个装门面的事情，不太实用...我公正的说，这个是政府行为，给大家看就是说对我们聋人的关心。但是呢，它的实用性比较少。其实各地成立的聋人协会，对聋人进行针对性的教育比电视还实用，比这个电视手语翻译还有实惠。—第 26 和 34 段

SL interpreting is just a face project of no practical use... To be fair, this is a state practice, to show others that the government cares about us, Deaf people. But it has very limited practical value. The deaf associations in different cities and the activities carried out by them to educate Deaf people are far more efficient than SL interpreting on television and brought much more real benefits to Deaf people. — paragraph 26 and 34

D4 expressed a similar view on this:

对于聋人来讲就是没什么必要，因为这是看不懂的手语，这是一种摆设，拿掉也无所谓。但是呢对国家领导来看呢有这个东西是一种形式，对国际上就

好像是照顾残疾人这方面，这种形式要放着，表达我们好像关心残疾人的，我想到为残疾人提供这种帮助。—第 59 段

For Deaf people, there is no value in having this kind of SL interpreting because we don't understand it. It's just a piece of decoration; it doesn't matter for us if you stop providing it on television. But for national leaders, this is a formality, telling people in the world that the Chinese government is taking care of their disabled people. So, it is more valuable for the government to keep it so as to show that it cares about disabled people and has realised that they need to provide assistance of this kind to people with disabilities. — paragraph 59

The revelation of these quotes is that, for many of the interviewees, they welcomed SL interpreting at first sight. The reason is likely to be the one given by D2 that the provision of interpreting on television made her feel that SL was finally recognised and accepted by the Chinese government. For this reason, Deaf people are likely to feel that the government “understands and respects” them. Undoubtedly, the government is perhaps more interested in projecting this “understanding and respecting” image to the much more numerous hearing population (which will take the presence of SL interpreting at face value, having no reason to doubt their communicative effectiveness) than to a few thousand Deaf people. However, the use of Signed Chinese rather than CSL and the incomprehension that followed did make the Deaf community doubt the sincerity behind such service provision. More often than not, the unsatisfactory quality of SL interpreting on television made them arrive at the disappointing conclusion that the government probably did not truly care about Deaf people and just wanted to take advantage of SL interpreting to create an impression that they had made concrete progress in improving the livelihood of Deaf citizens.

It is then surprising to find out that, despite their disappointment, some of the Deaf people who had either criticised SL interpreting as a “face project” at the beginning (D11) or later on (D1 and D2) argued that SL interpreting, regardless of its quality, should continue to be broadcast on television. They explained that China would gain approval from international society for providing this service as a result. D1 gave a detailed explanation on this point:

中国的形象在世界上好，我也光荣啊。我也是个中国人，我也自豪，我也光荣。中国在世界的地位差了我也觉得丢脸啊...祖国光荣我也光荣，祖国不繁荣不光荣，我们的光荣从哪儿来？谈不起个人的荣誉，就是国家的荣誉胜过我个人的荣誉...在中国我会提建议，我会说反语。但是在外国我肯定不会说我们的这个手语翻译不好，我肯定会说它好，就像我的妈妈有错我不会骂她，我不会指责她。—第 44, 51 和 55 段

I would feel proud if China has a good international image. If China has a good reputation in the world, then as a Chinese person, I would be proud of myself and feel the glory of my country. I will lose face if China has a bad image in the world. I will be valued if my country is valued. If China is not prosperous and valued, where is our sense of pride and glory? There will be no starting point for my personal value and pride. That is to say: my country's interests are more important than my own... In China, I will be making suggestions and even be sarcastic when I talk about our problems. But when I am abroad, I will not speak ill of our SL interpreting service. I will commend it. It's like I don't shout at or scold my mother when she does something wrong. — paragraph 44, 51 and 55

To summarise, four different attitudes towards the Chinese government's decision to broadcast SL interpreting were identified. These attitudes were formed under the premise that every one of the interviewees had declared that they could not understand SL interpreting on television for both political conferences and news programmes. D13 and D8 perceived the government's attention as sincere and thus shared the views of the media that the interpreting phenomenon was proof that the government understood, respected and cared about Deaf people. D9, D11 and D12, who rejected the use of Signed Chinese on television, constructed a completely different interpretation of the interpreting phenomenon, arguing that it was taken advantage of by the Chinese government as a political tool. D5, D6 and D7, who all supported the use of CSL, somehow ended up with a sense of confusion where they did feel respected by the government at the sight of interpreting on television but also felt disrespected upon seeing the use of Signed Chinese. D1, D2 and D4, who were strong supporters of CSL, also ended up with a paradoxical feeling where they wanted to see the presence of SL interpreting as proof that the government sincerely cared about and respected Deaf citizens but could not convince themselves entirely because of the use of Signed

Chinese. Last but not least, apart from the interviewees who acknowledged the government's work of providing SL interpreting on television, some of the interviewees who saw the interpreting phenomenon as a "face project" by the government felt that it was appropriate for the government to continue taking advantage from the "face project" at the cost of their own benefit.

### ***5.3.3 SLIs: the value of interpreting as a "face project"***

As discussed in section 5.1.3, every SLI pointed out that Deaf people had difficulty in understanding SL interpreting on television. All of the interpreters interviewed criticised the Chinese government for not ensuring that heritage CSL was used. For the six SLIs interviewed in the study, all but I3 (who insisted that the use of Signed Chinese proved the insincerity of the government and called SL interpreting on television "a face project") nevertheless agreed that the service was proof that the Chinese government respected and cared about Deaf people. When they were asked why they endorsed the government's actions despite the problems they had pointed out (and attributed to the government), the majority of SLIs argued that the situation would improve in the future.

I2 compared the life of Deaf people in the past and at present and *evaluated* that:

其实中国也在发展也在变好，从老一代聋人到现在的聋人，我觉得他们的生活在慢慢提高。以前聋人做的工作都是低的体力劳动，搬运工，木匠，连木匠都做不了只能做小工，瓦匠，砌墙，帮别人运土。现在他们懂技术，做老师，有思想，有自己的博客，协会，聋人还能开车...最起码的不象旧社会一样，吃了上顿烦下顿。以前有生存危机，现在生存危机没有了。觉得还在好，大家都看到在变好，也希望这个国家越来越好。—第 51 段

Well, China is developing and is becoming better. Comparing the life of the older Deaf people with the younger ones, I feel that the quality of their life is improving. In the past, Deaf people were doing "lower" manual jobs, selling labour, working as carpenters. For those who can't even work as a carpenter, they can only take the very basic manual jobs such as roofers and or work at construction sites, for example, manually carrying sand bags. Now they understand technology, they work as teachers, they are educated, they have their



own blogs and associations, and they can drive now... At least, life is different, different from a time when people have to worry about where is the next meal. We used to have survival crisis, now we don't. We think it will be better, we are seeing the changes and hope that this country will be better. — paragraph 51

I6 *attributed* the shortcomings of the interpreting service provided by the government to the current historical and social context.

中国毕竟正处于发展中国家，人口又过于庞大。在物质和精神文明建设上相比那些国家非常困难。做一件事情比较困难。举个例子，就拿手语证书来讲。这个中国一直都没有，现在想有，最起码要经历这样一个阶段：一定的需求，一定的手语翻译人群基础，一定数量的手语山寨证书的成功案例，一定的研究调研考察审批才能实现。简单说一个大国向前行进的每一步都很慢，但如果这一步迈出去了，一定很扎实。—第 46 段

China is still a developing country, with too large a population. It is more difficult for China to develop its materialistic and spiritual wealth than other countries. Take SL certification for an example. China never has such certification and is now developing one. I think at least, the process would entail the following stages: some initial demand and a good number of potential SLIs will lead to a few “fake” certifications to emerge and with further research, evaluation, and supervision, eventually we will have a desirable scheme. Put it in a simple way, for a big country, it is difficult to make a step forward, however, once that step is made, it will be a solid one. — paragraph 46

I1 *evaluated* that the current interpreting service on television had significant drawbacks, making it more or less a “face project”. She also pointed out that SL interpreting on television was not the only “face project” in China. She gave an example that in the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, an interpreter was needed during the broadcast. Instead of choosing an experienced interpreter, the organisers asked a hearing person who knew little about signing but who “looked good on television”, to memorise the signs and appear instead. However, I1 argued that:

我也认同电视上有手语翻译了，证明聋人地位和平等上去了，证明国家对他们尊重了。我也认同。但是就是上的程度有多大的问题。是上去了国家重视

了，他做这个节目至少把你放在心上了。至于他是表面，不管他是面子工程还是里子工程，面子他说来这也是个面子。至少他知道这个是他的面子。怕就怕你连他的面子都不是。—第 72 段

I also agree that SL interpreting on television proves that Deaf people assume a higher social status now and the notion of equality is addressed. It shows that the government respects them. I do agree. What concerns me is the extent to which the government values Deaf Chinese people. Yes, their social status is higher. Yes, the government respects them. Having this kind of programme at least proves that deaf people have been taken into consideration by the government now. There is no point in arguing whether the current SL interpreting is a face project or not. Even if it is a face project, at least it shows that SL is considered a “face” (面子) (*for the government, my interpretation*). At least, the government knows now that SL interpreting gains face for it. People should be more worried if SL interpreting on television is not even considered the face of the government. — paragraph 72

The data revealed that 5 out of 6 interpreters understood the SL interpreting phenomenon as proof that the Chinese government respected Deaf people. In their eyes, the mere provision of interpreting in any form was the line drawn between disrespect and respect. The current problems in the service were interpreted as indicating a relatively lower level of respect instead of disrespect. Among the interviewees, I2, I4, I5 and I6 showed a sense of understanding that problems were inevitable because, according to them, China was at its initial stages of development and the government had a wide range of issues to address. They had confidence that the government would notice the issues in SL interpreting and address them in due course. Even I1, who pointed out that “SL face projects” were common, argued that it was valuable for SL interpreting to be considered the “face” (to be considered a valuable measure) of the government. According to her, the use of SL interpreting as a “face project” (面子工程) still meant that the government paid attention to Deaf citizens and understood that the provision of interpreting helped project a commendable government image.

#### **5.4 Framing the social value of SL interpreting: the Chinese context**

The fourth theme that emerged from the data is the social value of SL interpreting. Again, the media held a different frame compared to the SLIs and Deaf interviewees.

#### ***5.4.1 The media: an exercise of social and political citizenship***

As mentioned in section 5.1.1, the media reports gave unanimous praise to the quality of SL interpreting on television for political conferences. The unanimous praise can be interpreted as evidence that the media assumed that Deaf people had benefited from the service and were able to receive information efficiently. When discussing the issue of information access, N1 explained the reason that providing access through interpreting was a proper decision:

中国在2008年批准了联合国《残疾人权利公约》，其中规定缔约国应当采取一切适当措施，包括“承认和推动手语的使用”，确保残疾人能够在与其他人平等的基础上，通过自行选择交流形式寻求、接受、传递信息。—第8段

In 2008, China endorsed *the UN Convention on the Rights of Deaf Persons* in which it requires governments to take appropriate measures, including the recognition and promotion of the use of SL so as to ensure that disabled people can choose freely a communication method to access, receive, and pass information on equal footing with other people. — paragraph 8

The data suggest that the interpreting phenomenon is believed by the media to be proof that the use of SL among Deaf people is accepted by the government. Moreover, Deaf people now have the freedom to communicate in their language, indicating that they are on a par with speakers of other languages.

N1, N2, N3, and N4 argued that the provision of SL interpreting on television offered an opportunity for both the wider society and Deaf people to see that the government cared about citizens with disabilities. N1, N3, and N6 argued that the provision of interpreting had ensured that Deaf people, as Chinese citizens though disabled, were able to exercise their social and political rights. In fact, N3 quoted *Laws on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in China* that:

‘残疾人的公民权利和人格尊严受法律保护’、‘残疾人在政治、经济、文化、社会和家庭生活等方面享有同其他公民平等的权利。’而这也是直播十八大报告时加入手语解说的重要原因。—第 21 段

“The civil rights and humane dignity of Chinese citizens with disabilities are protected by the law”; “people with disabilities should enjoy equal rights with other citizens in terms of political, economic, social and family life”; and this is an important reason that SL interpreting is provided for the live broadcasting of the 18th Party Congress. — paragraph 21

N4 reported that Deaf people felt happy for and proud of themselves after watching the interpreting on television. N5 quoted an internet user that the interpreting phenomenon set a record in terms of the number of SL audience.

#### ***5.4.2 Deaf people: a “psychological comfort” and a communication opportunity***

As section 5.2.2 indicates, apart from D9, D11, and D12 who perceived the use of Signed Chinese as an indication of disrespect for the community, other Deaf people, though frustrated by the quality of SL interpreting on television, felt that they had been respected by the government to some extent.

Apart from a sense of being respected by the government, D6 and D7 (both high school graduates) pointed out that they had also felt a “psychological comfort” after watching SL interpreting on television. To illustrate, D7 expressed her happiness when she first noticed that SL interpreting was on television:

我觉得这是一种心灵的安慰。以前我小时候没有看到过手语翻译。到了我上初中的时候，就看到电视上有手语翻译了。我觉得心里觉得特别温馨。好想家里人他们都是说话，电视上也都是说话。好像电视和我没有关系。现在有了电视手语翻译，就觉得好像跟我说话，我觉得很温馨。好像是跟我说话一样。我觉得很温馨。— 第 67 段

I think it is a psychological comfort for our souls. When I was a child, there was no SL interpreting on television. I only saw it when I was in my junior school. It gave me a warm and happy feeling. In my family, everyone speaks. The people in the television programmes, they speak as well. I feel there is no connection between me

and television. With SL interpreting on television, I feel like someone is talking to me, and I feel very warm and very content. Someone is talking to me; I am glad. — paragraph 67

D6 said she had a heartfelt sense of warmth when watching SL interpreting on television despite the fact that she did not understand what the SLI was signing:

他说的话我虽然看不懂，但是我觉得温馨。我们作为聋人，他用手语在翻译，就像在为我服务。我觉得特别开心。健听人会手语也不容易，很辛苦。两会的手语翻译，这个老师，我很佩服他。那个两会他一个人从头到尾坚持完成，真的很辛苦。真不容易。我也很佩服他，很能理解他。他为我们服务，他很辛苦，我们也理解他，知道他是在为我们服务。觉得很高兴...不管看得懂看不懂，看到手语就有亲切感。—第 72-74 段

Although I don't know what the interpreters say to me, I feel very warm and content. We are Deaf, and she is explaining using SL, as if she is providing a service to me especially. I just feel very content. It is not easy for a hearing person to learn SL. It is a lot of work. The interpreter for NPC and CPPCC, that teacher, I admire her. From the beginning to the end, she was there interpreting on her own. It must be very, very hard and difficult. I admire her and appreciate her effort. She endured a lot of difficulties doing the interpreting. We understand her, and we know that she is providing us a service. I feel very satisfied... Comprehension is less important here, I simply feel a sense of intimacy when I see SL interpreting on television. — paragraph 72–74

Both interviewees revealed a sense of *happiness* when watching SL interpreting on television. In D6 and D7's eyes, whether they could understand the content of interpreting was not too important. As D7 pointed out, she grew up in an environment where the television content was always delivered in speech. As a result, she felt that she was not part of television's intended audience. The provision of SL interpreting on television made a difference in her experience of television. As both D6 and D7 described, the interpreting phenomenon made them feel that the television was *talking* to them directly and specifically. The sense of *happiness* can be then inferred as deriving from the feeling that Deaf people were no longer ignored by the media.

Other Deaf interviewees added that watching SL interpreting on television made them feel that as SL users, the value of their language and themselves had been acknowledged by the government. For example, D2 reported that:

她说以前就看到就是说社会上对聋人有歧视现象，觉得打手语是一种另类的东西，是给人瞧不起的，现在中央电视台有了手语翻译，就觉得国家都是承认的东西。 —第 19 段

In the past, society discriminated against Deaf people. Signing was seen as something strange and different, something that was looked down upon. Now CCTV has SL interpreting, (I) felt that it has gained national recognition. — paragraph 19

Similarly, D4 argued that:

说明这个社会上说明，他就说是聋人的这个身份价值他说存在，他有，就是必须要关心他们的需要，就是这个意识是对的，要加这个手语。 —第 89 段

It shows that there is value for a deaf identity. The value is there. And it shows that people should cater for their (Deaf people's) needs. This is the right mentality, this is why SL should be added (put on television). — paragraph 89

As D2 revealed, in her past experience, the use of SL was rejected and belittled by the hearing society. Deaf people's inability to speak and the use of signing were different from other members in society. This difference was not welcomed but discriminated against by the hearing society, making Deaf people feel inferior in front of hearing people. As D4 then argued, the use of SL interpreting on CCTV was perceived to be an affirmation of the value of SL, and thus that of Deaf people. The interviewee's comments showed that the provision of interpreting in SL, regardless of its quality, made some Deaf people feel that the long-ignored value of SL and Deaf people had been validated by the government. As a result, they felt more confident about their language and themselves.

Apart from boosting confidence in the value of Deaf people and their language, interviewees also argued, in terms of *positive evaluation*, that the provision of interpreting offered a valuable opportunity for hearing members of the society. As mentioned in section 5.3.2 D11, D12, and D4 believed that interpreting was just a form of "face project" (面子工程) and had little value for Deaf people directly. However, even strong

critics (as D11, D12, and D4 were) still admitted that SL interpreting had a constructive impact on society to some degree. For example, D11 said:

电视上有了手语，也许很多健听人会对手语感觉到好奇。因为对手语有了兴趣，他们也许会想学手语。现在有很多社工和社会上的人想学手语。 — 第二十段

Having SL interpreting on television, a lot of hearing people start to feel curious about SL. Because they are interested in SL, they would be willing to learn SL. Right now, a lot of social workers and other people are willing to learn SL. — paragraph 20

通过这些节目，许多听人也许会开始注意到聋人群体，并且改变他们对聋人的态度。尤其是以前的媒体，总是报道聋人的负面消息。现在有了电视手语，也许越来越多的人会对我们有一个更全面的了解。 — 第二十四段

Through such programmes, many hearing people can start to pay attention to Deaf people and change their attitudes towards Deaf people. Especially in the past, the media are always broadcasting negative information about us. But with SL interpreting on television, more and more people would be able to have a more balanced understanding of us. — paragraph 24

As these comments show, Deaf people who held the strongest criticism of the SL interpreting on television, arguing it was no more than a matter of “face project” (面子工程), still believed that this interpreting had its value. In their eyes, Deaf people are usually portrayed in a negative manner on television (for example, Deaf thieves and gangs). For this reason, broadcasting SL is perceived by Deaf people as spreading relatively positive information about this particular community.

The majority of Deaf interviewees argued that the SL interpreting, in spite of any issues about its quality, promoted the use of signing in society. They pointed out that society has historically discriminated against the use of signing and valued speaking as the only socially acceptable form of communication. D13 argued that:

就是说电视上的手语翻译在社会上呢也起到了帮助聋人宣传这个聋文化的特点。宣传在这个人群中还有人不是说话的，交流是靠手来交流的。给很多的年轻人感觉到这个手语翻译是为聋人服务的。—第 33 段

SL interpreting on television helps promote Deaf culture, by proclaiming that there are people in society who do not speak but sign. It makes young people understand that SL interpreting is a service for Deaf people. — paragraph 39

It can be inferred from the comment that D13 believed that there is a lack of understanding in society that speaking is not the only way of communication. For this reason, SL interpreting served as an example for society to see that signing was another possibility.

Apart from providing an alternative mode of communication, interviewees argued that, SL interpreting also educated hearing members of society that SL is a language fully capable of satisfying Deaf people's needs for communication and should not be treated as inferior. They pointed out that the use of SL was often discriminated against by hearing people in society. D3 shared his impression that:

还有社会上的那个世界是一样的，好象比较歧视聋人，认为聋人的手语呢，不被社会所尊重。好象手语有点疯狂的一样的。就看你们打的个手势一样就感觉印象不是很好，比如两个人在路上打手语，边上有很多人围观，像我们是耍猴一样的。—第 31 段

Society, well, seems to discriminate against Deaf people. Deaf people's SL is not respected. (Hearing people) think that SL is almost crazy and do not have a positive impression of signing. For example, if two Deaf people were signing to each other in the street, a lot of people would stare at them as if it were a monkey show. — paragraph 31

Other Deaf people also shared a similar impression that hearing people used to and may still make fun of Deaf people for signing. They hoped that the visibility of SL interpreting on television would make a difference in this respect. In fact, D2 mentioned that since the inception of SL interpreting on television, there was a visible change in people's attitude towards signing. She observed that:



平时接触的人，我们以前是在路过的时候打手势有很多回头率，就看我们，看我们好像怪物一样打手势。现在是我们一边走一边打手势，好像大家也习以为常了。也觉得没有什么奇怪的地方。商店、大街上也就没有人就是围观我们，歧视我们，还有的时候回头看我们，就像很稀奇一样。现在不稀奇了。就我们走我们的，我们打手势，我们聊我们的天，没有人觉得我们是另类的。—第 5 段

Those people we meet in our life, in the past, when we walk past someone while signing to our friend, very often, that person we walk past would turn around and look at us, as if we are some sort of weird creature, monster, making gestures. Nowadays, people seem to be getting used to us signing to our friends while we're walking in the street. They seem to think it is not strange anymore. There are few people in the shops or the street who would stare at us or look down on us or turn around and look at us as if we created a rare scene. We are just walking in the streets freely, using sign language, chatting with our friends; nobody thinks that we are out of place. — paragraph 5

Whether the change in attitude and behaviour on the part of hearing people is a result of watching SL interpreting on television or not, at least some Deaf people, in this data, *attributed* this particular change to the interpreting phenomenon.

However, not everyone held an entirely positive *evaluation* of the potential of SL interpreting to change social attitudes and behaviours towards SL and Deaf people. D1, for example, while affirming the potential of interpreting to bring about changes in society, cautiously pointed out that this particular value of SL interpreting depended on the person watching it. He argued that the interpreting phenomenon might not be understood in the way the signing community hoped and not everybody would fully appreciate the message that signing was just as normal as speaking. However, he reported that he would be content if two percent of hearing audience members were to see it in that way and change their attitude and behaviour accordingly. D11 however, hoped that the visibility of SL interpreting would encourage hearing people to make friends with Deaf people, believing that interpreting was not going to make a fundamental change in people's perception of deafness nor their real attitude towards it. He argued that:

因为这个是我们根深蒂固的东西，反正我就感觉到这种东西对我们聋人就是没有太大的帮助，尤其是他自己的一些事情，聋人和健全人结婚了以后变得，哦，比如说聋人和健全人谈恋爱、结婚，有的人就会感觉到就是找一个聋人的话你是不是会有生理遗传什么的，就是对这种聋人根深蒂固的这种还是一种歧视。—第 109 段

This is a deeply-rooted truth. No matter what you might feel, my conclusion is that things like interpreting on television have limited value for us Deaf people. My personal experience is an example. Say a Deaf person wants to marry a “healthy and complete person” (健全人): some people might query whether marrying a Deaf person, will their children be deaf? So you can see, deep down in their heart, they discriminate against Deaf people. — paragraph 109

From this comment, we can see that, while the majority of Deaf people believed that interpreting was going to change hearing people’s perceptions of SL and deafness, there were still people who believed that discrimination against deafness could not be eradicated by interpreting.

#### ***5.4.3 Interpreters: a symbolic affirmation of Deaf value and visibility***

As section 5.3.3 suggested, in terms of *moral evaluation* and *causal attribution*, only interviewee I3 expressed strong opposition to the claim that SL interpreting was proof that the Chinese government respected Deaf people. Other interpreters believed that Deaf people and their use of CSL were indeed respected by the government but further work should be carried out to enhance Deaf people’s experience of such services. However, there was unanimous agreement that SL interpreting, disregarding its quality, had positive social impact.

Similar to some Deaf interviewees, I2 and I4 pointed out that watching SL interpreting on television might make Deaf people feel a sense of reassurance in society even if they could not understand it. As I4 reasoned:

我感觉虽然说聋人不一定完全能看懂，但是能看出就是国家在这方面在努力，就是最起码他们聋人，就像我刚才说的他们一看到有，最起码知道国家领导人心里，他们就会说那些领导心里有我们聋人，就是至少给我们安排了一个

翻译，不管他，先不提他翻译的好或者是不好，先，就是能想到我们了，说明就是在这方面在努力，那就是后边要求能不能做的更好一点。—第 106 段

I feel that although Deaf people can't understand the interpreter fully, at least they get the impression that their country is making an effort. I mean, at least, when they see interpreting on television, they would know that, in the heart of the national leaders, they would say that in the heart of these leaders, there is a place for Deaf people. They have at least provided an interpreter for us. The quality of interpreting, good or bad, can be put aside. The most important message is that the leaders keep Deaf people in mind. They are working on that. Then we can discuss whether the service can be improved. — paragraph 106

According to these two interpreters, the interpreting phenomenon carried a message that Deaf people were taken seriously by the government. This feeling of being valued and not being ignored brought a sense of temporary satisfaction for Deaf people who, as pointed out by both interpreters and Deaf interviewees previously, had long felt a sense of neglect by the government and society.

Every interpreter argued that Deaf people had always been mistreated by society (*moral evaluation* and *causal attribution*). I2 pointed out that Deaf people were used to discrimination, neglect and inattention and they were made to feel inferior as a result of being unable to speak. Many hearing people were afraid of them, some found the use of SL unintelligible, some only knew Deaf people as thieves and gang members, some made fun of signing, and some refused to interact with Deaf people. They all described Deaf people as staying at the bottom of society, invisible to the public eye. I2 pointed out that Deaf people were literally “mute people”, described in a Chinese idiom, who were “swallowing a bitter Chinese medicine and could not tell other people the bitterness they tasted”. I1 argued that:

那个时代我都不知道有聋校，你现在不可能不知道了吧？至少很多人都知道在苏州有聋校了，至少很多人都知道在苏州有，在各个群体当中有聋人群体，就说明这个聋人他是在上升中，他是在逐渐到大众群体里有这么一块，尽管他哪怕他是弱势他也是一块的，在我那个时代我根本不知道你是不是弱势

的我都不知道，就像你基本上就像一个灰尘一样的，我都不知道你在这个世界上存在，所以呢这是确实是一个进步。—第 74 段

At that time (*when I was looking for a job*), I didn't even know there was such a thing as a deaf school. In your generation, you must have known it quite early on, didn't you? Now, a lot of people in my city know about deaf schools. Now Deaf people are visible in different social sectors. This means that Deaf people are climbing up the social ladder and gradually integrating into the mainstream society. Even if they are a disadvantaged group, that is still part of society. At that time, I didn't even know Deaf people as a disadvantaged social group. It was as if they were dust; their presence was known to nobody. So, you can see, (*the provision of SL interpreting*) is definitely a step towards social progress. — paragraph 74

The discrimination against SL and the indifference from society might explain the reason that all interpreters agreed that the use of SL in high-profile interpreting events was evidence of social progress as it was proof that the government, at the very least, endorsed SL as a language. As pointed out by this interviewee, the most important contribution made by the interpreting phenomenon was that Deaf people were brought into the public eye. Living in a society that knew little about Deaf existence and experience, the most important issue was perhaps not demanding a decent service but making sure that society was aware of the existence of Deaf people. For this reason, SL interpreting on television for news programmes and political conferences alike addressed this need.

In the eyes of all of the interpreters interviewed, the endorsement of SL and the visibility of SL sent a message to society that there was value in Deaf people. This action, in the eyes of the SLIs, invited hearing citizens to endorse SL and Deaf people as well. In return, Deaf people could gradually find their place in society. As I3 put it:

以前社会群体，对聋人是有误解的。觉得可怕，怪，不愿接触，把他们也划归到神经病类的范围。直到现在，很多社会人群都学习手语，喜欢接触聋人，帮助聋人，认可聋人的价值。聋人只是听不到，但是双手还是可以劳作，创造价值的。—第 103-104 段

In the past, (a lot of) social groups had misconceptions about Deaf people. They think deaf people are frightening, weird and do not want to socialise with Deaf

people and label them as people with a mental disorder. Right now, a lot of social groups are learning SL and like to make friends with deaf people and help deaf people, acknowledging the value of Deaf people. Deaf people just can't hear, but they have good hands and can work and create value. — paragraph 103–104

I6 explained that:

我常把聋人比作以前的中国人，其实中国人挺好的，但是因为外国人不了解中国人，所以总带着一种有色眼镜看人。现在的聋人也一样，不懂、没接触过聋人的人总觉得聋人无法沟通、心理复杂、不好接触、偷盗、打架等等不好的想法，使得聋人无形当中受到了歧视，但通过手语这个渠道大家可以慢慢的了解聋人，并融入到其中，进而带动聋人融入我们这个大社会。—第 44 段

I used to compare Deaf people to Chinese people in the past. Chinese people are good, but because foreigners did not know much about Chinese people, they looked at us through coloured glasses. The same is happening to Deaf people. People who know nothing about Deaf people, who never have the opportunity to know a Deaf person, tend to think Deaf people are impossible to communicate with, difficult, inaccessible or think all Deaf people are thieves and trouble-makers. These misunderstandings about Deaf people lead to discrimination against them. However, SL helps us to gradually understand Deaf people, engage with them, and in turn, bring them into the mainstream society. — paragraph 44

It can be inferred from these comments that, in terms of *moral evaluation*, the interpreters in the study believed that affirmation of CSL was effectively affirmation of Deaf people. It provided an alternative way to understand Deaf people and put an end to familiar forms of discrimination against them. The SLIs pointed out that the fact that Deaf people could not understand SL interpreting on television did not undermine the power of interpreting in achieving these social outcomes. I3, who expressed the strongest criticism against the current forms of SL interpreting on television and the Chinese government, nevertheless argued that:

社会上的人，不会去想那么多。看到手语翻译，就会给他们一个想法，对聋人群体好奇，关心并且慢慢的关注起来。他们并没有过多的考虑新闻翻译的作用。—第 106-107 段

People in society, they won't think too much. Watching SL interpreting will give them an idea and ignite their curiosity about this group of people and make them care and gradually pay attention to them. They don't think too much about the functionality (*quality*) of SL interpreting on television (*for Deaf people*). — paragraph 106–107

I5 provided a detailed account of the value of interpreting in changing people's perceptions of and interactions with Deaf people:

这就是媒体的力量。我觉得媒体的力量真的是无限大的，它在传播一种力量传播一种信念，就是说，聋人可以平等地参与社会，聋人也是我们社会的一份子，我们要关心他们。媒体的力量是巨大的，很多观众，很多老百姓看到电视以后，就会自然而然去改变，就会觉得聋人也应该参与我们的社会生活。这种力量的改变是潜移默化的，不是说我今天看到手语新闻后我的行动立刻就改变了，立刻跟聋人做好朋友了，不是这么一回事。但是他们内心里面会有一种潜移默化的改变，这种改变我觉得是悄悄在改变的。但是这种力量也是巨大的。—第 50 段

This is the power of media. I feel that the media have infinite power. It helps promote a force and a belief. It promotes that Deaf people can take part in society equally (*as hearing people do*). Deaf people are members of our society. We need to care about them. Media have enormous power. Many audiences, ordinary citizens, after watching (*SL interpreting on*) television, would change naturally, would share the belief that Deaf people should be part of our society. The changes brought by the media are subtle. It's not as if "I watch SL interpreting today and will change my behaviour immediately and become good friends with Deaf people". That's not true. But in their heart, subconsciously, a change will take place. The process is quiet and subtle but has great strength. – paragraph 50

我觉得它像一种旗帜像一种标志一样。其实我觉得有些事情不一定起作用，但是它是一种标志。媒体的力量多广大，千家万户多少人，多少亿中国人全部都可以看到，就是这样。—第 52 段

In my eyes, (*SL interpreting on television*) is a flag, a symbol. I personally feel that not everything has to work but it is a symbol. The power of the media is enormous. Tens of thousands of households, hundreds of millions of Chinese people can watch it (*SL interpreting*) on television. That's it. — paragraph 52

## **5.5 Treatment recommendations: agreement reached between SLIs and Deaf interviewees**

The last theme that emerged from the data is, the terms of frame analysis, the treatment recommendation given by SLIs and Deaf people regarding the kind of progress in SL interpreting on television they look forward to seeing in future. It should be noted that the media did not include discussions on this topic, apparently – given what they *did* say – in the belief that the quality of SL interpreting on Chinese television was already satisfactory.

### ***5.5.1 Recognising and protecting heritage CSL***

As discussed in section 5.2.3, many Deaf interviewees urged the government to start protecting heritage CSL before it disappears. For example, D3 pointed out:

等到手势好的人生老病死过去了，再传下来就没了，那么培养的都是汉语手势，不是聋人手势。还是要保护一下聋人的自然手势。—第 45 段

When the older generations whose signing is good pass away, nothing will be left. All we will have left is Signed Chinese, not Deaf signs (*heritage CSL*). We should protect Deaf people's "natural signs" (*heritage CSL*). — paragraph 45

Interviewee D4 discussed the reasons as to why the current form of interpreting had limited impact on Deaf people's life from a different angle. He argued that the most important thing for Deaf people would be the recognition of a Deaf identity. He explained further that:

对聋人帮助大首先要承认聋人的身份，这个是很重要的。现在法律里面没有把聋人的语言作为一种语言的地位没有承认。—第 103 段

The prerequisite for helping Deaf people is the acknowledgement of Deaf identity. It is of great importance. Right now, even Deaf people's language has not been recognised by the law as a language. — paragraph 103

According to him, the recognition of SL was an integral part of the recognition of Deaf identity. He continued that, with more and more Deaf people going to university and receiving a good education, they would gradually become more conscious of the identity they possess. Then they would start to protect and fight for the rights to which their group should be entitled. Eventually, heritage CSL would be recognised as a language. He elaborated further on what this Deaf identity meant:

获得信息的权利。比如说聋人看电视比如宣传，比如翻译、生活、家庭各个方面的服务，手语的服务、医疗的翻译、会议的翻译、老了以后的这个养老，他不能打电话怎么联系，这个都是权益，是聋人的身份，就是要有这样的，因为国外有很多都有这样的服务，我们这个身份没有认同的话他就这方面缺失。—第 107 段

The right to access information: for example, watching television, representation of Deaf people on television, interpreting, every aspect of life and family, services in CSL, including medical interpreting, conference interpreting, etc. How to support oneself when they grow old and what services should be put in place for Deaf people because they can't make phone calls. These are all rights associated with Deaf identity. That's the right way. Right now, a lot of countries provide services like that. It won't happen if our status is not recognised. — paragraph 107

### ***5.5.2 Diversifying of SL interpreted programmes***

The majority of interviewees were critical of the diversity of deaf-related content on television. For example, interviewees D11, D1 and D8 criticised the media for putting too much emphasis on the negative side of the Deaf Chinese community. Deaf interviewee 11 pointed out that:



以前媒体都是介绍不好的...比如聋人偷盗呀, 假献爱心呀...这样一些但是并不代表全部...就像健全人一样也有好有坏, 聋人也一样。—第 44 段

The media used to report only the bad things, like deaf thieves or deaf frauds for donation... But this is not the full picture of the Deaf community... Like hearing people, there are nice Deaf people and bad ones. — paragraph 44

He thought that the Chinese government should be responsible for the crimes committed by the Deaf Chinese people in that:

现在外面有很多非法的, 因为他们就业有困难, 那么如果市政府能保证他们能有一个吃饭的职业, 那么这种情况就会越来越少。—第 44 段

Right now, a lot of Deaf people are doing illegal things, that is because they can't find a job. If the government could guarantee their employment, then there would be far fewer people like that. — paragraph 44

In terms of the treatment for the lack of diversity of SL interpreted programmes, almost all interviewees expressed the wish that SL interpreting on television covered a wider range of topics and was closer to reflecting Deaf people's lives. For example, D9 *recommended* that:

看病、生活, 这些我都喜欢。什么地方有免费, 还有养老、补贴、医保、有什么东西又涨价了降价了, 我比较关心这些...新闻我一样喜欢。旅游方面的我也可以通过这个方面了解。平时都了解不到这方面的信息, 聋人外面的情况也不知道, 生病了怎么办我也不了解到哪里看病, 增加了我看起来就比较清楚了。—第 28 段

Topics related to seeing a doctor or life in general would appeal to me. Where can I get free stuff, welfare for elderly people, subsidy, medical insurance, an increase or decrease in commodities. I would like to know more about these. I do like news. (But) I also wish to know more about travel, for example. I can't access information on these topics. We, the deaf people, know little about the outside world. I don't know which hospital to go to when I am ill. If I could obtain this information through SL interpreting, it would be better. — paragraph 28

Deaf people have difficulty accessing information in many aspects of their lives and would welcome improvements on this front. Having interpreting for some news programmes was, they indicated, a good start, but the decision-makers in government should not feel complacent about what they had achieved.

### ***5.5.3 Engaging with Deaf community***

When it comes to treatment recommendations, almost all interviewees have mentioned one change they want to see in future SL interpreting on television – better engagement with the Deaf audience.

#### ***Democracy***

D1 suggested that, in the future, Deaf people should be involved in interviewing SLIs for television work. He said:

地方电视台选择手语翻译的时候让我们聋人来评价考评，比方说同样一条新闻，他打，我们选择一个就是说我们看得懂的人做手语翻译。为什么像唱歌这些，比如达人秀，中国好声音，它有评委，选一个最好的其他淘汰。他说为什么这个手语翻译不要让我们聋人来选呢。—第 95 段

Deaf people should be involved in future selection process when the television station interviews potential SLIs. I think we can do it like this. We choose the same news item and ask all the candidates to sign it and then we choose the one we understand. There are some entertainment shows like the Chinese Talent and the Voice of China, which have judges to decide which candidates stay and which to be sent home. Why can't the television station let us, the Deaf people, decide? — paragraph 95

D8 *recommended* that, in order to raise the level of popularity of SL interpreting on television among Deaf people, the television stations could work with local Deaf associations to listen to their opinions and let more people know about these programmes:

电视台呢最好跟残联一起合办一个广泛听听聋人的意见，希望就是看到那些节目，多问聋人的兴趣点在哪里。广泛吸取群众的意见，采纳我们的意见。

还有就是说经常在聋人群体中，活动中，协会中宣传哪一天有我们聋人的节目了...宣传的力度也是非常重要。—第 59 段

The local television station and deaf association should host an event and listen to Deaf people's thoughts and ideas on what kind of programmes they like, what their interests are, etc. They should also spread the schedule of these programmes amongst the local Deaf people. Information promotion is also imperative. — paragraph 59

D1 suggested that in order to help the interpreters to master SL, cooperation between deaf people and hearing people is needed:

政府应该出面，给手语翻译一个好的学习机会。给一个老的聋人教师，手语打得好的人去教他们，传承他们。聋人跟健听人一起来研究怎么把手语翻译搞好。有的聋人手语好，但是汉语能力比较差；有的健全人呢手势不好，但是他汉语能力非常好。我们可以互相取长补短，共同来研究，把手语翻译的问题解决好。—第 94 段

The government should take the initiative to give SLIs an opportunity to polish their skills. It should invite an experienced Deaf teacher, whose SL is fit to teach them, to pass his or her knowledge of SL to them. Deaf people should work with hearing people to sort out the issue of SL interpreting. Some Deaf people are very competent in SL but not that skilled in Chinese; some hearing people are not proficient in SL but very qualified in Chinese. We can complement each other in terms of our strength and work together to find a way forward for SL interpreting. — paragraph 94

D13 gave a *recommendation* to interpreters that in order to provide useful services:

一个好的手语翻译还要多接触聋人，多和聋人交流。就是说多用聋人的懂得语言，就是手语来传递他的信息。—第 68 段

A good interpreter should interact with deaf people more often and communicate with them. That is to say; they should use a language that deaf people understand to relay information for deaf people. — paragraph 68

D4 disclosed the measures the television station in his city had already considered taking to address Deaf people's complaints on the quality and democracy of SL interpreting on television. He said that:

我们这个\*\*电视台汉语的手势把它换成了一个聋人在打手势，用聋人自然手语的那个手势来表达，这是一种改进。—第 51 段

Our television station is now considering employing a Deaf person to sign on television, using Deaf people's natural (*heritage*) CSL. That is an improvement. — paragraph 51

All these comments reveal Deaf people's desire to be more involved by the authorities. They want to be more involved in the process of tailoring programmes to meet their interests and of selecting and training interpreters. They want the interpreters to use heritage CSL instead of Signed Chinese when they sign on television. Last but not least, they want the interpreters to engage more directly with Deaf people in order to provide better service.

## 5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented different frames that emerged from interviewees' discourses in conversations about the phenomenon of broadcasting SL interpreting on television. I have highlighted five major themes that emerged from the data, pointing out that the media reports discussed the first four themes while the SLI and Deaf perspectives encompassed all five of them. The first theme, *the quality of SL interpreting on television*, mainly features the framing element: moral evaluation. It is notable that the media gave unanimous praise to the quality of SL interpreting on television while both SLIs and Deaf interviewees pointed out that the service was virtually incomprehensible for many Deaf people. Among all the *causal attributions* provided by SLIs and Deaf interviewees, the use of Signed Chinese was strongly identified as a salient issue.

The data that relate to the second theme *identity and language* show that while the media understood that Deaf people communicate via SL, they still primarily *defined* Deaf people as disabled people and spent little effort discussing CSL. By comparison, although there were different attitudes towards the nature of deafness, the use of Signed

Chinese, CSL, and “standard CSL”, SLIs and Deaf people placed emphasis on the fact that Deaf people have their own language.

Because the media had paid little attention to Deaf people’s language and believed that the quality of SL interpreting was excellent, they reached the conclusion that SL interpreting on television was a successful political practice implemented by the Chinese government when it comes to *evaluating* the value of interpreting. By comparison, because of the unsatisfactory quality of SL interpreting in the eyes of Deaf people and SLIs, very few of them gave complete endorsement to the Chinese government’s intention to provide SL interpreting on television for Deaf audiences. On the contrary, there were interviewees who gave mixed *evaluations* about whether the government respected Deaf people; who believed the government simply took advantage of SL interpreting and used it as a “face project” for its own benefit; who initially believed that the government was sincere but could not explain the use of Signed Chinese and concluded that perhaps SL interpreting was simply a “face project”; and who definitely believed that any SL interpreting was proof of governmental respect without doubt and argued that the quality of the interpreting service would improve in future. However, compared to Deaf people, SLIs seems to have appreciated the “face value” to a greater extent.

When it comes to evaluating the social value of SL interpreting, different frames emerged again. The media, who did not pay much attention to CSL, believed that the current interpreting service enabled Deaf people to overcome barriers in terms of accessing information. As a result, interpreting functioned to facilitate the exercising of Deaf people’s political citizenship as they were able to follow important political events in China. They also believed that the interpreting practice would raise social awareness of the need to care about disabled people in China. Deaf interviewees and SLIs, on the other hand, did not perceive SL interpreting as an exercise of Deaf people’s political citizenship. Rather, they perceived it as a learning opportunity for the hearing society to notice that Deaf people have a language and hoped that the hearing society would change their attitude towards Deaf people and the use of CSL in future. While the media did not provide any *treatment recommendation* as to the improvement of SL interpreting (apparently being content with the current practices), SLIs and Deaf people

in the study urged the government to listen to Deaf people sincerely and to enable Deaf people to participate in the design of services.

From the findings presented in this chapter, it is apparent that this particular interpreting phenomenon is framed differently by the three groups of stakeholders. Patterns of selection, exclusion, and salience and different framing elements are observed in these findings, creating different interpretations of the same interpreting phenomenon. In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings in relation to my research questions and the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

## **Chapter 6 Discussion**

This chapter critically examines the findings of this study in the light of the research questions set out in the Introduction and in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Section 6.1 provides a review of the research questions. Sections 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 discuss the theoretical implications of these findings in relation to the three research questions respectively and their contribution to theory will also be discussed. Section 6.5 provides a short summary of the discussion.

### **6.1 A review of the research questions**

This study set out to answer the following questions:

1. How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television?
2. How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?
3. How is the interplay between interpreting and Deaf identity constructed in these discourses?

The next three sections will explore how the findings of this study provide answers to each of these questions in turn. These answers in turn contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between interpreting, identity, service providers, and society.

### **6.2 Research question no. 1: the projection of Deaf identity**

This thesis has shown that Deaf identity in China is constructed differently by different stakeholders and even by different Deaf people. In the literature review, section 2.4.1 provided a brief general account of the construction of deafness in China, with particular emphasis on the Chinese perception of deafness as a lack, a wrong, a deficiency, and something that needs to be “fixed” (Callaway, 2002). Section 2.4.2 then described the battle in China over the nature of “Chinese Sign Language”, given that Signed Chinese, a mixture of heritage CSL and contrived signs, and heritage CSL all claim this status. Section 3.3.1 widened the discussion by reviewing literature on identity as a dynamic discursive practice rather than as a fixed and static entity (Hall, 1996). Section 3.3.2 offered a review of literature in Deaf studies regarding the medical

vs. social model of deafness and the notion of “audism” and “dysconscious audism” and their effects on the development of Deaf identities.

This thesis also analysed the construction of deafness and the ways in which Deaf people are addressed by different stakeholders in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on Chinese television for political conferences. Section 5.2.1 showed that when referring to Deaf people, the media used the words: (有听力障碍的残疾人) “disabled people with hearing obstacles”; (聋哑人) “deaf and mute people”; and (听力障碍人士) “people with hearing obstacles”. By comparison, as shown in section 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, Deaf people and SLIs referred to Deaf people just as (聋人) “deaf people” and occasionally as (残疾人) “disabled people” when referring to the larger social group to which Deaf people belong.

The media did not make explicit references to hearing people in their reports. However, hearing people, in the interviews with Deaf people and interpreters, were referred to as (健康人) “healthy people” and (健听人) “healthy and hearing people”; (健全人) “healthy and complete people”.

These different terms reveal the process of framing – *selection*, *exclusion*, and *salience* – and two framing devices: *problem definition* and *causal attribution* (Entman, 1993). It was observed that, in the media reports, some news articles *defined* hearing loss as an “obstacle” (障碍) that made Deaf people disabled, while others chose to exclude the use of *disability* and phrased the loss of hearing as an “obstacle” on its own. It is then interesting to note that two news articles (see section 5.1.2), in terms of *causal attribution*, explained that Deaf people’s limited access to information was engendered by their own *condition*. As section 5.4.1 pointed out, when discussing the value of SL interpreting for Deaf people in China, the media believed that SL interpreting would increase the visibility of *disabled people* rather than Deaf people as a linguistic minority (this will be discussed more in depth in section 6.5). By comparison, Deaf people and SLIs most often refer to Deaf people just as “deaf people” (聋人) without stressing deafness as an “obstacle” (障碍) or disability. The comparison suggests that the media (and perhaps the Chinese society in general) had not yet adopted the social model of deafness (Lane, 1995) and disability (Oliver, 1983). Their understanding of deafness as



an *obstacle* inflicted by Deaf people's own *condition* reflects the prevalence of "audism" (Humphries, 1975) in Chinese society.

However, the Deaf interviewees and interpreters in the study do not seem to have fully embraced the social model of deafness and disability either. Although there was a growing use of the phrase "hearing people" (听人) instead of "healthy and hearing people" (健听人) in Chinese Deaf community, interpreters and Deaf interviewees in this study still tended to use words like "healthy and complete" (健全) when referring to hearing people. The use of such words by Deaf interviewees and interpreters in the study suggests that, perhaps subconsciously, the interviewees still regarded deafness as a "lack" and "deficiency", as reported in earlier years by Li and Prevatt (2010) and Callaway (2000), reflecting the symptoms of dysconscious audism (Gertz, 2002).

When it comes to the issue of language, the data (see section 5.2.1) suggest that there was barely any discussion of heritage CSL in the media reports (*exclusion*). By comparison, every Deaf interviewee and interpreter in the study discussed the issue of CSL (see sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). They had a clear understanding that heritage CSL is the language of Deaf people and that it is different from Chinese in terms of its grammar. In addition, in terms of *causal attribution*, every Deaf interviewee and interpreter pointed out that the use of Signed Chinese was a major reason that the SL interpreting on television was incomprehensible.

However, only about half of the Deaf interviewees and four interpreters expressed a strong urge to protect and promote the use of heritage CSL on television, in schools and in universities. It is interesting to note that many of the interpreters and Deaf people felt that the failure to understand the interpreting was partly due to the behaviour of Deaf people themselves (*causal attribution*), specifically the fact that many Deaf people did not make an effort to study Chinese to a sufficient level to allow them to understand subtitles (see sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). They argued that the subtitles were accurate; should all Deaf people be competent in reading Chinese, they would have no problem understanding the news and no need to turn to SL interpreting.

The assumed primacy of Chinese becomes more evident in the interview with D13, who believed that Signed Chinese was better than CSL as Signed Chinese followed the

Chinese word order more closely, a feature that could help Deaf people to learn Chinese. He believed that people who acquired Signed Chinese were able to go to universities and people who used heritage CSL were not properly educated. His view was therefore that Deaf people should learn Signed Chinese as a means to gain access to education. This particular *causal attribution* is taken to its logical conclusion in his view that it was “not a big deal” if heritage CSL vanished in future.

Similarly, while I1 and I4 strongly urged that heritage CSL should be recognised as a fully-fledged language and stressed that its recognition could have far-reaching influence in all aspects of Deaf lives, others were more tolerant towards the use of Signed Chinese. I2 (see section 5.2.3), for example, believed that Deaf people could have fuller access to information via Signed Chinese as it followed the sentence order of the subtitles. She stressed that she was not trying to place Chinese above CSL but she believed that CSL could not express detailed information as Chinese could.

Views on the book series, *Chinese Sign Language*, elicited parallel responses. Although the majority of interviewees (see section 5.1.2 and 5.1.3) observed that interpreters used signs from the book series that were not heritage Deaf signs, there were Deaf interviewees (section 5.2.2) and an interpreter (section 5.2.3) who believed that the signs from the book series represented a linguistic standard and should be promoted in the Deaf community.

These paradoxical attitudes towards CSL, Signed Chinese and *Chinese Sign Language* on the part of Deaf interviewees and interpreters displayed in the data would seem to constitute a form of “dysconscious audism” (Gertz, 2002). The interviewees had recognised CSL as the language used by Deaf Chinese people but still felt a sense of inferiority compared to users of Chinese. The interviews with D13 and D8 (see section 5.2.2 for a more detailed analysis) exemplify how “audism” within the surrounding society could produce “dysconscious audism” within the Deaf community. Both of these interviewees believed that the signs used on television must be those of a standard variety and that acquiring Signed Chinese enabled Deaf people to receive higher education. Their consequent conclusion was that Signed Chinese was more valuable than CSL. It is interesting to note that both Deaf interviewees and SLIs in the study

seem to view the diversity of heritage CSL as a barrier for communication instead of a reason for celebration. The emphasis put on having a standard CSL is understandable in the Chinese context where the standardisation of spoken Chinese and minority languages (see section 2.3.4 for the issue of language standardisation) and the use of Mandarin in public space as well as in media are the norm.

The higher status granted to Signed Chinese by some Deaf interviewees and SLIs strongly suggests that the signing community could not fully embrace the value of heritage CSL and the linguistic and cultural dimensions of Deaf identity due to long-term audist social oppression such as the use of Signed Chinese in education settings, a decision made by hearing people rather than Deaf people (see section 5.2.2 for evidence). I2's point that CSL was not as expressive as Chinese may seem to be valid given the fact that there is a large difference in vocabulary size between heritage CSL and Chinese. However, it is important to note that the use of heritage CSL has long been suppressed in the Chinese society and does not have the equal opportunity to develop as Chinese does. More importantly, due to the lack of research effort in documenting heritage CSL, it is highly likely that the existing vocabulary gap is simply a result of inadequate documentation. It is therefore premature to conclude that CSL has limited functions compared to Chinese. The different frames or constructions of Deaf identity and the crucial role language plays in shaping such construals are proof that language is an integral part that constructs identity (Hogan-Brun and Wolff, 2003).

### **6.3 Research question no. 2: the value and purpose of interpreting**

This section considers the answer to the second research question, which seeks to elucidate the way that the purpose and value of interpreting is constructed in the discourses. As the answer to this question has important theoretical implications, a short recapitulation of the key literature on the topic of the value of interpreting will be given first, before the findings of this thesis are examined. These findings are then divided into two parts: one on the views reflected in the media and the other on the views of Deaf interviewees and SLIs. In each part, the four kinds of framing elements as well as the process of framing, namely, *selection*, *exclusion*, and *salience* (Entman, 1993) will be highlighted. I will then explain the implications of these findings for existing theory.

### ***6.3.1 Articulation, difference, respect and political pay-off***

Section 3.3.5 argued that Cronin (2006) provides a useful account of the ways in which interpreting articulates the difference that is at the core of the identity of a linguistic group. Cronin shares Hall's (1996:6) view that the difference that marks one group from the other is what constitutes them as separate human beings with an identity. The ways in which "difference" is understood and constructed have a significant impact on the way people respond to that difference. In a linguistically diverse society – especially in the case of a dominant language and a minority language in the context of immigration – the kind of responses people make to the linguistic difference directly shape the social reality people inhabit.

This linguistic difference can be perceived either positively and negatively. In some cases, linguistic difference and the resulting comprehension barrier lead people to think of the other group as less human, reducing them to an inferior and inhuman existence. By comparison, a positive attitude towards linguistic difference brings about fruitful effects, leading to a fairer social environment. Interpreted with a friendly attitude, linguistic difference is not only recognised but also respected and welcomed. It is perceived as an opportunity to discover the unknown other and engage in dialogue and communication.

For this reason, the provision of T&I services definitely constitutes a rewarding response to linguistic difference, where the difference is seen as worth the time and effort to explore, with the minority language being placed on an equal footing with other languages. As a result, T&I functions as a form of "articulation" to use Hall's (1996) term, where the linguistic and cultural difference of the minority group is proclaimed and respected by members of society, generating an inclusive power that binds the minority groups to mainstream society. Politicians who can demonstrate that they understand and respect people's differences are much more successful than those who simply demand people believe in their commitments (Hall 1996). For this reason, Cronin (2006:63) suggests that T&I can be used as a political tool for service providers, which should bring them a "legitimate pay-off".

The following sections aim to explore whether this this explanation holds true in the case of SL interpreting on Chinese television. To do this, it considers whether the Deaf community in China feels that their linguistic difference is recognised and respected by

the government and society as a result of having SL interpreting on television and whether the government has earned legitimate pay-off as a result of providing SL interpreting on television.

### ***6.3.2 Understanding interpreting and the service provider***

#### ***SL interpreting – excellent quality service?***

As far as the media were concerned, providing SL interpreting on television for high-profile political conferences represented significant value in many respects. The media believed that, in terms of *moral evaluation*, the quality of the service was highly commendable. The praise given to the quality of SL interpreting on television, however, was not based on feedback from the Deaf community. In these reports, the quality of interpreting was believed to be exceptionally good: in terms of *causal attribution*, this conclusion appears to have been based on the supposed number of signs the interpreter produced, the difficulty she encountered during her preparation and the final live-streaming, and her diligent use of *Chinese Sign Language* as a source of reference for uncertain terms (see section 5.1.1 for a more detailed analysis).

What the data reveal is a marked ignorance among the media of Deaf people, their language, and SL interpreting as a form of interpreting. In the context of Xiao and Li's (2012) survey on the quality of SL interpreting on television shows, their research shows that the most important criterion for Deaf viewers was comprehensibility, the number of signs produced by the interpreter (assuming that this can be straightforwardly calculated) may prove that the interpreter works hard, but has no direct link to the quality of her work. In fact, the simple notion that one can judge the quality of SL interpreting based on the number of signs produced betrays a shallow understanding of both SL and interpreting. It implies that the media tried to understand CSL through the lens of their knowledge of spoken Chinese and perhaps believed that every Chinese character could find its equivalent sign in CSL. For this reason, if the number of signs were roughly the same as that of the Chinese characters in the government report, the media would believe that the interpreter had interpreted accurately. Moreover, it reveals that the media probably believed that interpreting was just about converting each word from one language into another. Future research could be carried out to

investigate whether the same set of standards is also applied by the media to evaluating the interpreting between Chinese and a more dominant language, for example, English.

Yet, the interpreter's lack of access to conference reports and her need to work on her own throughout such an important occasion should raise concerns about the quality of her interpreting, rather than praise, considering that simultaneous interpreting is a highly demanding task and any interpreter's performance can be expected to decline after 20–30 minutes. Such practices also raise questions as to whether this was an example of professional interpreting. In addition, questions could be asked as to how the service provider (i.e. the broadcaster) could ensure the quality of the interpreter's work as she approached her physical and mental limits. The fact that the interpreter survived these difficulties may point to her perseverance but using it as a proof of the quality of her work would seem to be questionable. If this event is read as a typical example of CSL interpreting, these issues suggest that there is a significant lack of professionalism in CSL interpreting practice. Even though SL interpreting was provided, the service provider seems not to have viewed the practice in the same way as interpreting into spoken foreign languages.

The use of *Chinese Sign Language* as a standard reference book and the conclusion by the media that its use necessarily indicates good quality interpreting is also a highly questionable means of evaluation. Many studies have pointed out that *Chinese Sign Language* does not represent Deaf people's language, is unpopular among Deaf people (沈玉林, 2013; 江小英, 2003; 刘艳虹 et al. 2013), and is the root cause of the large-scale incomprehension of SL interpreting on television (Xiao and Yu, 2009; Xiao and Li, 2012; Xiao, Chen, and Palmer, 2015). The book series contains a considerable number of artificial signs created by hearing people, often uses Pinyin initials fingerspelling for proper nouns and abstract concepts (difficult to decipher as a lot of Chinese words can share the same Pinyin initials), and only lists about one-tenth of the most common words used in Chinese, demonstrating a significant gap of vocabulary (闫延河, 2012). Judging from the wide topics covered in the government reports and the complex terminology they must adopt, it is safe to assume that there will be a large number of words in Chinese for which no equivalents were indicated in the *Chinese Sign Language* book series. This issue was not pursued in any of the news reports but

certainly should raise concerns as to the comprehensibility of an interpreting service where important technical terms and concepts cannot be expressed.

In essence, almost all the factors the media listed (in terms of *causal attribution*) as having contributed to a quality service are all highly questionable. The fact that these factors and their subsequent *evaluations* were made with little reference, if any, to the feedback from the Deaf audience, which is perhaps the only group of people that could judge the quality of SL interpreting, confirms that Chinese society is still an audist society where Deaf voices are not valued (see Bauman, 2004). The symptoms of audism are centred on the difference between Deaf and hearing (Turner, 2006). The exclusion of Deaf voices in the reports suggests that sensory difference has not led the media to engage with this particular group of people. It also points at a sense of hearing superiority (perhaps subconsciously held by the media) where the media felt comfortable speaking on behalf of Deaf people.

Therefore, beneath an appearance of benevolence, sympathy, and care, lies not an empowering hand, but an audist disabling attitude. While this attitude may seem superficially benign, it may have far-reaching consequences for Deaf people. If the media continue to exclude Deaf people's voices on matters that concern their well-being and propagate the view that the service Deaf people receive is satisfactory, then society will be less likely to pay attention to Deaf matters.

#### ***Unanimous praise from the media to the service provider***

As the media believed that the interpreting service on television was professional, accurate, and standard, they gave unanimous compliments to the Chinese government (in terms of *causal attribution*) and the political value of SL interpreting on television (in terms of *moral evaluation*). The data (section 5.3.1) suggest that the media saw SL interpreting as functioning to do more than just facilitate access to information for Deaf people. Instead, it was imbued with a variety of symbolic *value*. One view was that it established an image of the government being trustworthy as it demonstrated an improved political practice that showed that the government understood, respected, and cared about citizens with disabilities. The reports also argued that SL interpreting on television spread an important political message to the rest of the world that people with disabilities in China were enabled to take part in significant political activities on an

equal footing with other citizens. This in turn was seen as indicating that the government had implemented concrete actions to secure the rights of its citizens.

These findings support the claim that interpreting does not exist in a vacuum or purely for the purpose of communication (Rudvin, 2006). It can be perceived as a political practice that has significant implications for service providers. Media reports therefore provide strong confirmation of Cronin's (2006) theory that interpreting provision is a positive response to "difference" and therefore should bring about positive outcomes and earn credit for the service provider. As far as the media are concerned, SL interpreting is proof that the Chinese government "understands", "respects", and "cares about" the Deaf community. The underlying implication is that the government understands that Deaf people are different from hearing people and the difference is that they communicate manually instead of orally. This logic then suggests that the government respects that difference by providing SL interpreting on television to guarantee the political participation and access of Deaf people. To the media, the provision of SL interpreting therefore serves as solid evidence that the government cares about this particular group of people. In Cronin's (2006) theoretical terms, this view sees SL interpreting as a form of "articulation" where the "difference" of being Deaf is directly recognised and addressed in a positive manner. This is then a successful political measure and a binding force that should give the public a positive view of the Chinese government, as it shows that the government perceived the difference of a particular social group and is working on addressing that difference.

It is interesting to note, however, that although the "pay-off" brought by SL interpreting is based on the fact that Deaf people use a different language, the media still defined them primarily as a disabled social group rather than as a linguistic minority. It seems that, according to the media, interpreting, by default, is a useful political and social tool to address the *difference* of the identity of a linguistic group.

If these findings are linked to the previous discussion on the ways in which the media evaluate the quality of the interpreting service then it becomes apparent that the usefulness of SL interpreting on television as suggested above is an interpretation constructed from a hearing perspective. In the light of the incomprehensibility of this interpreting, it would, however, be natural to ask whether the government truly understands, respects, and cares about Deaf people in China. Key to any attempt to



answer this question would be an explanation of why Signed Chinese and signs from *Chinese Sign Language* are used on television instead of heritage CSL. The use of only one interpreter instead of a team of professionals working in shifts to maintain quality also seems to stand as evidence against a superficial account of the government's attitude.

The next section will discuss the data obtained from Deaf interviewees and SLIs on their understanding of the interplay between interpreting and the service provider.

### ***6.3.3 SL interpreting on television—an incomprehensible service***

Unlike the media who gave uniformly positive *evaluations* of the quality of SL interpreting on television, Deaf people and SLIs expressed either a lack of interest or a strong criticism of this service. Many people reported that they were put off by the quality of the interpreting service on television and rarely watched these programmes (see section 5.1.2). D11 even compared the interpreting on Chinese television to the fake SL interpreting at the funeral of Nelson Mandela (Turner, 2013) and argued that there was no real difference between the two.

Deaf and interpreter interviewees pointed to a number of issues (*causal attribution*) that they felt were *salient* in both political conferences and news programmes that were *excluded* in the media frame. Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 reported that comprehensibility was seen as the most important of these. While the media thought SL interpreting on television had met the demand for information access by Deaf Chinese people, both the interpreters and Deaf interviewees pointed out that they had great difficulty in understanding the interpreting provided. Signed Chinese was commonly agreed as the cause of this lack of comprehension. As all interviewees pointed out, it was common that the interpreters on television (political conferences and daily news programmes alike) used Signed Chinese instead of heritage CSL. As heritage CSL differs significantly from Signed Chinese in terms of grammar and vocabulary, when Deaf people and interpreters watched SL interpreting on television, they perceived little more than a string of individual Chinese characters, leaving signers attempting to process these characters in order to understand the message. Both Deaf viewers and interpreters pointed out that without facial expressions, it is difficult to understand the interpreter and such expressions were missing in the interpreting provided on television. It was

also noted by both groups that many interpreters on television were inexperienced and missed a significant amount of information. In addition, some interpreters commented on the fact that all SL interpreted programmes and events were rendered by just one interpreter. Judging from their personal experience, they reckoned that towards the end of the interpreting task, the quality of the interpreter's work would be doubtful as a consequence of fatigue.

### ***SL interpreting on television — proof of audism***

Another reason for the dissatisfaction of the Deaf and SL audience was the lack of variety (*causal attribution*) among the programmes broadcast with interpretation (see sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3). Both Deaf people and SLIs expressed a strong desire that SL interpreting be provided for programmes that were closer to the lives of Deaf people. They wanted to access everyday information, family stories and so on. Currently, however, SL interpreting is only provided for news programmes and political conferences, which only appeals to a limited number of Deaf people.

The final reason interpreters and Deaf people were unhappy about the current SL interpreting on television was that these programmes were produced without input from the Deaf population (see sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3). Deaf interviewees expressed a strong desire to be involved in the production process. They proposed that they could help improve the language competence of the interpreters. They also wanted to be involved in evaluating the interpreters selected by the television stations. In addition, they hoped that television stations would organise meetings with the local Deaf community so that they could talk to Deaf people directly and understand their interests and preferences. Interpreters also pointed out that the current SL interpreting on television was too distant from the everyday lives of Deaf people. Television stations, they felt, should take the initiative to engage in dialogue with Deaf people in order to provide programmes that would attract the Deaf audience. They also pointed out that the interpreters currently appearing on television appeared, by virtue of their signing style, to have limited contact with the Deaf community. They therefore suggested that interpreters should engage with the Deaf community and discuss with them when they have difficulties in finding a sign for a particular term to make sure that their interpretation can be understood by Deaf people.

These findings confirm the conclusions drawn by previous research that Deaf people find it difficult to understand the interpreters on television and that the use of Signed Chinese is the root cause of this lack of comprehension (Xiao and Yu, 2009, Xiao and Li, 2012, Xiao, Chen, and Palmer, 2015). Both the quality of the interpreting service on television and the way it is designed point to the way the “difference” between Deaf and hearing is constructed by the television stations and the government. Ignorance of heritage CSL, the lack of diversity in SL interpreted programmes, and the absence of Deaf participation in designing such programmes all seem to indicate that “audism” (Bauman, 2002, Turner, 2007) is constantly present in decisions that concern Deaf people in China.

The provision of this service *for* Deaf people without, as far as this data indicates, listening *to* them can be interpreted in four related ways. The first is that the authorities perhaps simply do not know how to engage with Deaf people. The second is that the authorities do not believe that Deaf people’s opinions are important, since they are not sought at any point during the production process. Since these opinions are not sought, it is logical to surmise that the authorities do not expect that Deaf people would be able to provide any valuable suggestions, which would be the third reason. Finally, the fourth reason would seem to be that the authorities believe that they know what is best for Deaf people without consulting them. All four of these are manifestations of *audism*, reflecting social oppression and marginalisation.

For this reason, it can be concluded that, while the provision of interpreting could be read as reflecting a perception of Deaf identity in linguistic minority terms, the Deaf identity reflected in the current form of SL interpreting is still that of a *disability*. Moreover, this disability identity still views deafness as something unwanted, something that warrants no further exploration, something that can and should be ignored. It also suggests that underlying the sympathy given to Deaf people is the belief that being Deaf means that a person is incapable of making decisions on what kind of interpreter output is desirable, and thus that hearing people are in a better position to make such decisions.

#### ***6.3.4 Incomprehensible service and the service provider***

It may be expected that the incomprehensibility of the interpreting would lead to strong criticism of the Chinese government from the interviewees given that every interviewee,

whether Deaf or an interpreter, expressed dissatisfaction about the quality of the interpreting provided and the lack of Deaf participation in the service provision. However, the data in section 5.3.2 and section 5.3.3 suggest that even an incomprehensible interpreting service earned the Chinese government some level of approval from the interviewees.

As section 5.3.2 shows, four kinds of attitude from Deaf people emerged on the topic of interpreting and the service provider. Deaf interviewees who believed that Chinese was more important than heritage CSL and that the signs in *Chinese Sign Language* should be preferred held the view that the presence of SL interpreting on television was proof that the government respected, and cared about Deaf people, even if Deaf people could not understand the interpreting provided. On the other hand, Deaf interviewees who rejected the use of Signed Chinese believed that SL interpreting was a mere “face project” that was promoted by the Chinese government to boost their own public image. Another two groups of Deaf interviewees expressed very paradoxical feelings about SL interpreting and the Chinese government. One group, who initially held the view that SL interpreting on television was proof that the government respected Deaf people, expressed different views after further discussion, believing instead that the government was not sincere enough in providing this service given that Signed Chinese was used rather than CSL. They thus concluded that SL interpreting was simply a “face project” for the government. Among the final group, this question caused confusion. While they felt that they were respected by the government since SL interpreting was broadcast on television, they also felt that they were not particularly respected by the government as the service was not presented in heritage CSL.

The data show that interpreting is not perceived as a positive political tool by default. Whether it is perceived as a useful political tool depends on whether people believe that the service provider is being sincere. These data therefore offer expansion of the understanding of the interplay between interpreting and the service provider put forward by Cronin (2006). Cronin suggests that interpreting automatically brings benefit to the service provider as the practice suggests that the service provider has recognised the linguistic difference of a minority group and is willing to respond to that difference in a positive way. He also maintains that *sincerity* is less important since addressing difference is the most successful form of politics. While the data gathered here from the

media seem to confirm Cronin's theory on the relationship between interpreting and service provider, the views held by Deaf Chinese people and SLIs paint a more complex picture.

Data from Deaf people suggest that interpreting does not have an innate benefit for the service provider, at least not from the direct recipients of such service. Instead, such benefit can only be earned when the users of the service are satisfied with it. While some Deaf people, notably those who prefer Signed Chinese or Chinese over CSL, felt the government were being sincere, the majority of Deaf interviewees found themselves unable to give full (and for some Deaf interviewees even partial credit) to the Chinese government because of the use of Signed Chinese. The use of Signed Chinese was read as an indication that the service provider either did not have adequate knowledge about Deaf people's language (in the case that they do not know about heritage CSL) or that they believe that Signed Chinese is more appropriate for use on television (suggesting that they do not fully embrace heritage CSL). Both cases can be interpreted as a lack of *sincerity* on the part of the government by the Deaf audience. In both cases, Deaf people's difference (their language) is seen as not fully addressed, "articulated" (Hall, 1996) and respected by the interpreting service and so Deaf people feel unable to endorse the service provider.

The mixed accounts given by some Deaf people, from initially believing that SL interpreting was proof of governmental respect to believing that it was only a "face project" (面子工程) the government set up for its own benefit, therefore gain specific importance in our understanding of using interpreting as a political tool. The findings of this study demonstrate that providing SL interpreting on Chinese television could have been highly likely to be perceived as proof of governmental respect by Deaf audiences, as D4 argued, since, even providing any service can be read as proof that the government cares about Deaf people. As a result, this practice boosted the confidence that Deaf people had in the government. However, the use of Signed Chinese confirmed that their *difference*, their language, was not truly respected by the government. Deaf people thus were disappointed to find that the service did not *articulate* (to use Cronin (2006) and Hall's (1996) term) their linguistic difference but instead guided the public towards thinking that the government had made concrete

progress for Deaf people in China. For this reason, SL interpreting was no longer perceived as a governmental progress but rather as a “face project” (面子工程).

The ambivalence observed among some Deaf people who felt both respected and disrespected by the government also provides a useful insight into understanding the interplay between interpreting and the service provider in the current Chinese social context. As section 5.4.2 suggests, the reason that these people still felt respected by the government was that broadcast SL interpreting was a relatively new phenomenon. Moreover, in a context where Deaf people have long suffered from social discrimination about their inability to hear and their use of SL, even the use of Signed Chinese made some of them feel that their difference, language, and identity had been addressed and articulated, thus creating a degree of reassurance or confidence in expressing a Deaf identity.

The disappointment and ambivalence displayed here have significant implications for our understanding of the interplay between interpreting and the service provider. Cronin (2006) argues that interpreting can be used as a political tool by service providers to articulate one’s linguistic difference, and that therefore it functions as a binding force that not only connects a person to society but also invites that person to invest in his or her social position. Following this line of reasoning, I would argue that a disappointing interpreting service not only fails to connect a person to society or persuade the person to invest in his or her social position but in fact makes a person lose confidence in the service provider. The logical result of this is that, instead of believing in the service provider, people are likely to develop doubts about them. In such cases, interpreting becomes an alienating force that pushes people further away from society.

### ***6.3.5 “Face project” and face value***

The data obtained from the SLIs presented a similar but slightly different picture. As section 5.1.3 points out, every SLI interviewed in the study maintained that SL interpreting on television in general was difficult for Deaf people to understand. They therefore indicated that the government was partly responsible for such problems and needed to improve its work in this area. However, section 5.3.3 suggests that only I3 viewed the government as being completely insincere. The other 5 SLIs all argued that SL interpreting on television should be regarded as proof that the Chinese government

respected Deaf Chinese people. For them, rather than the provision of this service being viewed as either a sign of respect or disrespect, the real issue was *the extent (or depth) of respect* the government has for Deaf people.

Their interpretation of SL interpreting as a definite symbol of governmental respect is contextually situated. I2, I4, I5, and I6 positioned the issue of SL interpreting in the context of Chinese society and argued that problems were natural considering that China is still a developing country faced with daunting challenges in all social sectors. They compared the current lives of Deaf people to their state a few decades ago and pointed out that significant progress had been made. As a result, they believed that SL interpreting, as one of the many issues facing the Chinese Deaf community, would improve as China progresses. Even I1, who argued that the current SL interpreting service on television was a “face project” (面子工程) for the government, pointed out that, in the current social environment, using SL interpreting as a “face project” still had its value. She pointed out that Deaf people used to be considered as subhuman and “lived like dust, unnoticed in society”. By this reasoning, the fact that SL interpreting can appear on television as a medium through which the Chinese government presents itself to citizens is definitely evidence that the government has started to pay more attention to the Deaf community.

It is observed from the data that, similar to Deaf interviewees, the interpreter group varied in their views of the interplay between the service provider and interpreting. However, it is important to note that, after taking into consideration the current Chinese social context, five out of the six interpreters perceived SL interpreting on television as a definite sign of governmental respect. This was despite the fact that they all admitted that the SL interpreting on television was difficult for Deaf people to understand. From their point of view, although the current SL interpreting was not perfect in many ways, it was viewed as progress in this particular social context as Deaf people used to be ignored, ridiculed and discriminated against in Chinese society, while their use of SL was perceived to be deviant.

The interviews with Deaf people and interpreters therefore present a strong case for further research on whether interpreting has an inherent, fixed, and definite “pay-off” for the service provider (Cronin, 2006). In light of the findings of this study, I would argue that there is no inherent “pay-off” for the service provider in the provision of

interpreting and that the “pay-off” is a social construction that is valid in a specific historical period (Burr, 2004) on the basis of selection, exclusion, and emphasis (Entman, 1993). At least, in the case of this research, each different perception and construction of this specific interpreting phenomenon was built upon a different line of reasoning. It could be argued, for instance, that a semi-intelligible SL interpreting service on television fundamentally serves no communicative purpose and the government’s intention is simply to use it as a “face project” for its own benefits. However, it could also be argued that the government’s intention needs to be judged in the current Chinese context. Focusing on the progress that has been made so far by the Chinese government to improve Deaf people’s livelihoods, it is not unreasonable to reach the conclusion that the government is sincere in providing interpreting service for Deaf people. Hence, it might be expected that any current issues will be resolved in the relatively near future. This latter interpretation, however, should not be taken by the government as an excuse for complacency. The credit the government has received from the semi-intelligible interpreting service is contextually generated and therefore temporary. If the quality of the service remains the same for too long, the contextual pay-off of interpreting is likely to gradually fade away. In such a situation, the Deaf community and interpreters who support the use of heritage CSL are likely eventually to agree that the government was not sincere and that the interpreting service was indeed nothing but a “face project”.

#### ***6.3.6 Government as a parent***

One finding which is perhaps unique to this research relates to the argument made by interviewees that SL interpreting on television is a “face project” for the government. As the previous section suggests, a few Deaf interviewees and interpreters expressed criticism of and disappointment in the government and a few Deaf interviewees wanted to believe the government but concluded that the interpreting service was a “face project”. It could be concluded, on the basis of this evidence, that Deaf Chinese people therefore dislike the Chinese government and wish the entire world to see that the government is taking advantage of SL interpreting. However, the data presented a different story.

Among all the interviewees who had sharply criticised the government, everyone but I3 still argued that it was important for SL interpreting to remain on television *for the*



*benefit of the government.* They argued that for Deaf people, the service at the moment was effectively a rather pointless “decoration” and that its presence or absence would make no difference to them. However, they shared the view that it was important that international society saw it so that foreign countries would conclude that the Chinese government was taking care of its deaf citizens. They all stressed that it was important that China had a good image on the international stage, even if this meant their own interests had to be sacrificed. D1, for instance, explained that China’s international image was of great importance to him. He felt that his personal image was closely related to that of China. He said that he would criticise China in China but would not do so abroad. He would instead defend his country in front of other people as China was like his mother, whom he would never denigrate in public.

These findings confirm some of the observations on Chineseness discussed in the second chapter of the thesis. The findings reflect the influence that Confucianism has on the Chinese population, in which the government is perceived as the representation of the country and as a parent (Jacques, 2005, Yau, 1988). These findings also show that the ways in which SL interpreting is constructed are influenced by the social and cultural context in which it is situated. Although Deaf people are unhappy about the ways their “parent” treats them, they are reluctant to criticise it in front of “strangers”. Instead, they hope that it will behave more appropriately over time. In short, people invest great hope and patience in the government.

Moreover, the findings also reflect the specifically Chinese values reviewed in section 2.3.2, namely, the concept of “face” (Hu, 1944) and collectivism (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). It was observed that some interviewees, though disappointed by the quality of SL interpreting on television, were willing to sacrifice any right to access information effectively in order to protect the image of the Chinese government, or more precisely, the image of China itself. They therefore constructed this case of interpreting as representing a positive face for the larger unit to which they belong. This particular understanding confirms Jacques’s (2009) observation that the Chinese government is perceived as the embodiment of China, whereas elsewhere government and country are construed as separate entities. In short, the importance attached to the concepts of face and collectivism held by Chinese people meant that some Deaf people and interpreters were willing to put the benefit to China before the personal benefits of

the Deaf population. In theoretical terms, this offers further support for the claim that interpreting is a practice which is situated in a particular social and cultural context (Wolf, 2014). In order to understand the ways in which a particular instance of interpreting is constructed in a particular society, it is necessary to take into consideration broader social and cultural contextual factors.

However, it would be premature to reach the simplistic conclusion that Deaf Chinese people are more willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to protect the face of China, due to their cultural values. I would argue that the influence that social and cultural factors have on constructions of any interpreting phenomenon can and should lead to important challenges of these same factors. While it is important to note that China is a developing country and naturally has many problems that remain to be solved, it is also important to widen the view to include an account of provisions for Deaf communities worldwide. In fact, many developed countries have already set examples of progress on matters such as language, education, and interpreting services for Deaf people. China therefore has no need to repeat the mistakes that other countries have already made and corrected and certainly does not need to find solutions entirely on its own.

Moreover, I would argue that cultural values should not be used as an excuse to ignore criticism. In this particular case, the concepts of *face* and *collectivism* might be the cultural roots of the problems of Chinese Deaf people and even of China itself. It is dangerous to perceive any criticism as hurting the *face* of China. In the case of SL interpreting on Chinese television, if Deaf people continue to perceive their criticisms as threats to China's international image (*face*), they may suppress their opinions about what would constitute an effective and desirable SL interpreting service. The consequences of this inaction could be that the Chinese government, Chinese society, and even the wider international community would assume that Deaf people are satisfied with the quality of interpreting. As a result, the improvement Deaf people truly desire may never arrive. The Chinese authorities need to hear constructive criticisms from the public in order to improve their political practice. Suppressing such constructive criticisms may potentially lead the country on a more treacherous path.

#### **6.4 Research question no. 3: cultural citizenship—the interplay between identity and interpreting**

Sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 indicate that almost all Deaf people and SLIs in the study thought that SL interpreting on television did not provide an improvement for Deaf people in terms of information access, yet the majority of them mentioned that SL interpreting on television was in some sense comforting for Deaf people. In their eyes, the quality of the service was less important than the attitude it represented. More specifically, they perceived that the underlying attitude connoted by the presence of SL interpreting on television was that China has embraced the fact that Deaf people have an equally functioning visual-manual language. Additional reasons for this appreciation are discussed below.

#### ***6.4.1 Citizenship and cultural citizenship***

Previous literature suggests that T&I provision represents the implementation of the language rights held by members of linguistic minorities. However, the emphasis in such literature is largely placed on the political dimension of citizenship, in which T&I is perceived as a means of “access, participation, and justice” (Cronin, 2006:71). Moreover, T&I is perceived as empowering and binding tools for linguistic minority groups, allowing them to fully exercise their fundamental rights to speak their languages (Cronin, 2006, Baxter, 2013, Snelling, 2002). The right to access information in one’s mother tongue is conceived as one of the political expressions of the notion of citizenship. By emphasising the ways in which T&I provide “access, participation, and justice” or opportunities to exercise rights, studies have focused on the conception of citizenship as a civic, political, and social construct and thus the element of culture has not received adequate and explicit attention. In recent years, more and more attention has been given to the cultural dimension of citizenship (Delanty, 2002) and studies that reveal the crucial position held by language and culture in citizenship have accumulated (Hogan-Brun, 2005, 2006). This approach differs significantly from previous conceptions of citizenship, in which the emphasis was given to the rights into which people are born. The foundational contribution of this new approach is that citizenship involves a learning process.

The data obtained from the media articles confirm that the media see televised SL interpreting for political conferences as evidence that disabled citizens in China can participate fully in political activities alongside other citizens. Attention here is focused on the concepts of “rights” and “access”. However, the data obtained from both the

interpreters and the Deaf people suggested that only a small fraction of interviewees associated interpreting with the exercising of political rights. In contrast, they pointed out that the reason they want SL interpreting to stay on television was that it presents a learning opportunity for society to glimpse the existence and nature of Deaf identity.

#### ***6.4.2 The real audience — hearing Chinese people***

According to Deaf interviewees and interpreters, the SL interpreting currently provided on television is not, in fact, primarily aimed at Deaf viewers at all (see sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3). The quality of the communication presented was therefore deemed to be of secondary importance. They argued instead that the service was aimed at hearing viewers as they believed that Chinese hearing society knew little about Deaf people, and especially about their language, heritage CSL. Interpreting therefore offers an opportunity for hearing members of the public to see that Deaf people have their own language and are capable of communication. Many interviewees said that they hoped that these SL interpreted programmes would encourage hearing people to notice Deaf people and then change their attitude towards them. One interpreter in particular said that she believed that SL interpreting has great social influence on both the hearing public and the Deaf community. She hoped that SL interpreting on television would enable hearing people to see that CSL is a language and one that can be used to provide a service to Deaf people and to raise awareness that its capabilities need to be respected. In fact, one Deaf interviewee mentioned that the way she is treated has changed since SL interpreting first appeared on television. She stated that in the past, when she was walking and signing with friends, people would look at her as if she was “a strange creature producing peculiar gestures”. Since SL interpreting appeared on television, this interviewee has found that fewer and fewer people stare at her when she signs in front of hearing people.

The data revealed that, as far as Deaf people and SLIs are concerned, the most important value of SL interpreting on television is to provide a space for the hearing public to see and pay attention to the difference between Deaf and hearing existences. They hope that the hearing public will, by virtue of the fact that interpreting is shown on television as a service for Deaf people, come to appreciate that the use of signing is normal and that SLs are every bit as functional as spoken languages. They hope that the

use of SLs will no longer be deemed “inhuman” or “animalistic” nor subject to discrimination.

As Cronin (2006:71) points out, the value of interpreting lies not only in providing “access, participation, and justice” but more importantly, in reminding individuals of the value of their own language and culture. I would argue that SL interpreting may not simply be an opportunity for the hearing majority to see the value of signed languages but for some members of the Deaf community to appreciate this value too as we have seen in section 5.2.2 that not every Deaf interviewee has fully embraced the value of heritage CSL.

### ***Interpreting and cultural citizenship: theoretical implications***

These findings have important theoretical implications. Interpreting is perceived by Deaf people and SLIs as a communicative interaction in which society is given an opportunity to think about the difference between Deaf and hearing communities and to reflect upon how to react to that difference respectfully. In other words, the provision of SL interpreting is a form of providing the learning opportunity that is stressed in the notion of cultural citizenship.

Conceptualising interpreting as a way of exercising cultural citizenship helps to provide a more nuanced response to theoretical claims about the use of interpreting as a tool of inclusion. These include the claim that it is an inclusive tool for linguistic minorities (Nunez, 2013, Cronin, 2006) and that it is a political tool to create discursive space for minority languages (Beukes, 2009), as well as the views that translation can effectively change people’s perception of the symbolic and practical value of their language and that interpreting makes a language look useful (Diaz Fouces, 2005a). These data also partially confirm the view that interpreting into a minority language at high-profile conferences raises the perceived status of that minority language, especially for members of that minority language who feel inferior and insecure about their own language (Diaz Fouces, 2005a).

To understand how the findings of this study act as a partial validation of all these claims, it is important to view interpreting, in this study, SL interpreting on television, as form of exercising citizenship. In the study, SL interpreting opens up a public discursive space for people to think about the difference between themselves and the

particular highlighted linguistic minority in a positive manner. The use of SL interpreting suggests that the service provider does not look down on the minority language as less functional or of inferior status. It therefore invites people to examine their perceptions of minority languages, in this case, a signed language, and to arrive at their own, similar conclusions. In this process, what has essentially taken place is that the public has received a lesson in cultural citizenship and has implicitly been invited to act respectfully when faced by similar issues in future. The learning process implied by cultural citizenship in turn contributes to nurturing a more responsible and tolerant public, in which people have greater propensity to valorise difference in a positive way, thus increasing inclusion and ameliorating the social environment.

The findings of the study also provide further confirmatory evidence for the claim that citizenship is not simply about the default civil, political and social rights to which citizens are entitled but also about the responsibility to be a good citizen (Stevenson, 2000). In this view, being a good citizen implies awareness of the difference between the self and the other, expressed in terms of gender, age, social class, disability, language, or any other distinguishing factor. It also implies a process of learning to see and respond to difference in a way that invites dialogue and exchanges. Viewing citizenship as a process means that cultural citizenship is viewed as a skill that is gradually acquired in daily communicative events, leading to difference being respected instead of being a cause of discrimination. This process of acquiring cultural citizenship is not exclusive to the dominant social group, however. It applies to minority groups as well. In this conception of citizenship, members of minority groups who may feel inferior or insecure because of their differences are encouraged to learn to see the value of them. As a result, alternative and perhaps more favourable identities of minority groups can be constructed by members of minority groups and the dominant group, contributing to a fairer and more equitable social environment.

The findings of the study also suggest that culture, or more specifically, a sincere attitude towards “cultural differences”, is at the centre of citizenship (see Delanty, 2002). It would seem that the civil, political, and social rights provided under citizenship cannot be fully exercised if the cultural rights produced by the cultural dimension of citizenship are not recognised. SL interpreting on television, while being conceived of as the realisation of the “participation and access” offered by the civil,

political, and social rights of Deaf Chinese citizens, has not helped these citizens to fully exercise these rights as their linguistic and cultural difference has not been fully or sincerely recognised.

#### ***6.4.3 The interplay between interpreting and identity***

The findings and their theoretical implications discussed so far provide answers to the third research question set out at the beginning of the study on the interplay between interpreting and identity constructed in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television. The findings discussed so far on the constructions of Deaf identities and the value of SL interpreting on television confirm the claim that Translation, as a form of intercultural communication, plays an important part in shaping identities, just as Translation is shaped by existing constructions of identities (House et al., 2005:4).

The current form of SL interpreting on Chinese television is the result of the construction of deafness as a medical disability and the ensuing feeling of hearing superiority and audist dominance. As a result of the same construction, heritage CSL has not yet been recognised by the Chinese government and society as a fully functioning language on a par with any other language. Consequently, Signed Chinese remains prevalent and contrived signs are foregrounded in SL interpreting on television. The findings presented in this chapter contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between interpreting and identity discussed by Cronin (2006) by *emphasising* (framing) that interpreting is not simply there to address the identity of a linguistic minority but is also shaped by the socially-constructed identity of that linguistic minority.

However, the findings of the present study also reveal that, in a particular social context where the linguistic minority has been prone to long-term social oppression, even a semi-intelligible interpreting service is inevitably addressing and articulating the identity of a linguistic minority. In fact, the semi-intelligible interpreting service provides a learning opportunity for dominant social groups to reflect on their response to the difference between the *self* and *other*. In this case, interpreting opens up a public space where people can develop their acquisition of cultural citizenship (Delanty, 2002) and learn to behave responsibly in the presence of *difference*. Learning to understand

difference appropriately, in the case of this study, suggests that deafness can move from being perceived as a disability and towards being perceived as the identity of a particular linguistic group that uses a visual-gestural language. Therefore, it is the generation and acquisition of cultural citizenship that makes identity a dynamic discursive practice, a matter of “becoming” rather than a sense of “being” (Hall, 1996).

### **6.5 Conceptualising SL interpreting as a socially constructed phenomenon: a summary**

This chapter has discussed the different frames emerging from the discourses that arose at the presence of SL interpreting on television by different stakeholders. In these discourses, it is clear that the three groups of stakeholders have selected, excluded, and highlighted (Entman, 1993) different aspects of SL interpreting on television and arrived at their distinct and even opposing constructions or frames of the interpreting phenomenon by employing different sets of framing elements: *problem definition*, *causal attribution*, *moral evaluation*, and *treatment recommendation* (Entman, 1993). As section 6.3.6 indicates, the different constructions are influenced by the Chinese social and cultural context.

If we take a closer look at the different frames emerging from the data in relation to the three different research questions, namely, the issue of identity projection, value and purpose of interpreting, and the interplay between identity and interpreting, it is clear that SL interpreting on television, as far as the three groups of stakeholders are concerned, is not just a process of relaying information. Rather, it is a social phenomenon subject to interpretation and construction by social actors. More importantly, it is constructed as a social phenomenon conditioned by social factors (the current construction of Deaf identity in China, for example) and serving social objectives (Kade, 1976). The perceived political and social value of interpreting shown in both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 points out that T&I is definitely not an idle classroom exercise and should be taken into consideration in policy-making (Cronin, 2006) in order to create a harmonious society in any linguistically and culturally diverse society, as it can open a discursive space that generates a kinder acquisition of citizenship where culture is the central learning subject. However, T&I as a political tool should not be taken for granted. The different interpretations of the Chinese government’s intention to provide SL interpreting on television for political conferences demonstrate that only



the right T&I service can send the right message (Turner, 2003). And undoubtedly, any authority should aim to send the right message. As for the interplay between interpreting and identity, it is important to note that language is crucial for identity (Hogan-Brun and Wolff, 2003), the recognition or lack of recognition of language can result in very different identity constructions and bring about very different consequent changes for members of linguistic minority groups (Turner, 2007).

This study also demonstrates that it is valuable to widen the conversation and engage more stakeholders in T&I studies (Napier, 2011, Turner, 2007). In *Critical readings in translation studies*, Baker (2010) points out the lack of research that explores T&I in the public eye. This study contributes to the gap by including the media's perspective and finds that the media do provide a fresh and meaningful point of view. More importantly, the media's interests in interpreting and constructing the unfamiliar SL interpreting phenomenon indicate that T&I is of greater relevance to society and its members.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion**

This chapter consists of six sections. In the introduction, I will reintroduce the subject of discussion in my study and the research questions I set out to answer, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of the topic. I will then move on to discuss the major findings of my research and how it addresses the research questions. The next section is devoted to discussing the theoretical implications of my research and its original contribution to the existing body of knowledge that are not only concerned with SL interpreting studies in Chinese context but are of wider interest to interpreting studies in general. The fourth section focuses on the policy implications the current study reveals and the recommendations it proposes. The fifth section discusses the limitations of the study and points out how future studies can contribute to an improved understanding of the subject matter. Last but not least, a conclusion of the conclusion will be provided as a summary of the entire research project.

### **7.1 Introduction**

The study explores the various discourses on SL interpreting on television for political conferences adopted by different stakeholders, including the Chinese media, Deaf Chinese people, and SLIs. More importantly, the study focuses on the ways in which various stakeholders construct Deaf identity, the value of SL interpreting, and the interplay between interpreting and identity in these discourses. Correspondingly, the research questions of the study are as follows:

1. How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television?
2. How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?
3. How is the interplay between the value of interpreting and Deaf identity constructed in these discourses?

Exploring these questions is valuable as it enables us to investigate not only the social nature of SL interpreting and the interaction between SL interpreting and identity, topics hitherto barely touched in the Chinese context; but also the social factors that condition interpreting and the social objectives that interpreting could potentially serve in a world that is increasingly globalised.

## 7.2 Empirical findings

A detailed analysis of the findings of the research has been presented in Chapter 5. In this section, I will provide a summary of the findings in relation to the three research questions.

### 7.2.1 Question 1

*How is the identity of Deaf Chinese people projected in the discourses arising from the presence of SL interpreting on television?*

A comparison of the different discourses (see sections 5.1 and 5.2) that focused on Deaf people showed that two different frames or constructions of Deaf identity were being foregrounded. The media, in terms of *problem definition*, constructed Deaf people primarily as a passive social group inflicted by a hearing “*disability*” and “*obstacle*” (障碍). Heritage CSL was almost *excluded* from the media’s construction of Deaf identity. As far as the media are concerned (in terms of *causal attribution*), deafness presents a barrier in Deaf people’s life. However, that barrier is not created by society but by their own *condition*. In contrast, the interpreter and Deaf groups constructed Deaf people as not just a group of people that has a hearing disability, but more as a linguistic community which has its own language. However, it is observed that a majority of Deaf people and interpreters in the study had not fully embraced heritage CSL – the linguistic and cultural dimension of Deaf identity – as many of them believed that Chinese was more valuable than CSL and Deaf people were partly responsible for the unsatisfactory SL interpreting service on television because they failed to master Chinese to understand the subtitles.

### 7.2.2 Question 2

*How is the purpose and value of interpreting constructed in these discourses?*

#### ***The media***

The findings suggested that, in general and in terms of *moral evaluation*, interpreting was perceived by the media as being an entirely positive, welcome development. SL interpreting on television was regarded as a quality service that satisfied Deaf people’s need to access information. For this reason, interpreting was perceived as embodying particular political and social value. The media interpreted it as a useful tool employed

by the government (*causal attribution*) to demonstrate the work it carried out in improving the livelihood of disadvantaged people at the margin of society. It was also viewed by the media as an effective tool used by the government to ensure the political and social rights to which Deaf people are entitled as Chinese citizens. In addition, the media conceptualised SL interpreting as a political practice that could exert some far-reaching influence on the Chinese society, raising people's awareness to care about *disabled people* and vulnerable social groups, a category they see as including Deaf Chinese people.

### ***Deaf people and interpreters***

The findings obtained from interpreters and Deaf interviewees suggested a significantly different construct of the political value of interpreting and a modestly different construct of the social value of interpreting.

Both groups saw the quality of SL interpreting on television as far below the standard that would be necessary to facilitate a desirable level of comprehension (*moral evaluation*). The use of Signed Chinese instead of heritage CSL and the lack of Deaf people's participation in the process (*causal attribution*) were the two major issues raised by interpreters and Deaf interviewees. The ignorance of Deaf people's language and voice concerned the two groups, resulting in different constructions of the purpose and value of SL interpreting. Some of them argued that the purpose of providing SL interpreting on television in its current form was not sincere. Moreover, because SL interpreting in the linguistically impoverished and somewhat artificial form did not meet Deaf people's demand for information access, it was not perceived as guaranteeing Deaf people's political and social rights as Chinese citizens.

In fact, the majority of the interviewees from the two groups, for various reasons (see sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 for a fuller description) described using SL interpreting as a form of "face project" (面子工程) for the government to boost its own public image which was seen as the real purpose behind the interpreting phenomenon. One Deaf person even compared the interpreting service to that by the fake SL interpreter who rose to instant international prominence by "performing" at Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa (Turner, 2013).

With that said, it is important to note that when it comes to the purpose of providing SL interpreting on television, while admitting it was a “face project”, the majority of interpreters and Deaf interviewees still felt that Deaf people were respected by the Chinese government. They argued that compared to the past where being a Deaf person and the use of a SL were ridiculed by hearing people, even the use of an artificial SL represented an improved conceptualisation of deafness and CSL. As two Deaf interviewees nicely summarised, even though they could not understand SL interpreting on television, it still gave them a “psychological comfort” and made them feel that someone was trying to talk to them specifically.

***Hold our criticism: a sacrifice made for the Chinese government and China***

Moreover, despite the criticisms and ambivalence (see sections 6.3.4 and 6.3.5) expressed by the two groups (SLIs and Deaf interviewees) about the government’s intention and the purpose of SL interpreting, they nevertheless supported the current SL interpreting remaining on television so that the government maintains its *face* internationally. According to them, keeping SL interpreting on television sets an admirable image for the Chinese government, hence China, because it demonstrated that the government was making progress in improving the livelihood of its deaf citizens. In their eyes, it was more important that China had a positive image than their individual benefits.

Although many SLIs and Deaf Chinese interviewees argued that SL interpreting on television failed its political purpose (the one interpreted by the media as demonstrating the sincerity of the government) and its primary purpose of facilitating information access for Deaf people, they nevertheless praised the social value embodied by interpreting. Unlike the media, which argued that interpreting made Deaf people, a disabled social group, visible in public eye, and hence would raise social awareness to care about Deaf people, Deaf people and interpreters in the study had much more ambitious expectations of the social function of SL interpreting on television. They hoped that the visibility of SL made possible through the interpreting phenomenon would provide a learning opportunity for the hearing society to see the other side of deafness. They believed that providing SL interpreting at high-profile conferences and events would change people’s perceptions of Deaf people, reduce social discriminations, and increase interactions between the Deaf and hearing. More

specifically, they wanted society to learn that being Deaf did not suggest that that person was less intelligent and inhuman. The social recognition of heritage CSL, in their eyes, was fundamental to the implementation of all other social and political rights owed to Deaf people in China.

### **7.2.3 Question 3**

*How is the interplay between interpreting and Deaf identity constructed in these discourses?*

There was no in-depth discussion on this issue in the media discourses, apart from a few passing references in news reports (see section 5.4.1) that interpreting would raise more social attention and care for Deaf people.

By comparison, Deaf interviewees and interpreters often gave a detailed (*salience*) but somewhat ambivalent elaboration on the issue. According to them, the current form of SL interpreting on television neither featured nor respected heritage CSL. In addition, they argued that it was the lack of respect for CSL and understanding for Deaf people that were part of the reason that SL interpreting on television took its current form. At the same time, they also argued that, interpreting, *even in its present semi-intelligible form*, had the ability to promote Deaf people as a social group that had a fully linguistic language. The mere presence of interpreters and hence SL was, they felt, bound to be taken by the general public as a tacit declaration by the authorities that they construed China's Deaf people as users of a distinct language, worthy of this form of social recognition. In the eyes of Deaf people and interpreters, the provision of interpreting, despite its poor quality, served as a learning opportunity for the hearing public to see that signing was endorsed by the government. As a result, for the time being, they believed that the current SL interpreting on television was still valuable in challenging people's previous perception of deafness that ignored heritage CSL, thus creating opportunities for the linguistic dimension of Deaf identity to surface.

### **7.3 Theoretical implications**

The findings of the research lend specific, contextually-grounded support to the school of thought that interpreting is a social practice. It exists in a social and cultural context and serves larger purposes than communication. To illustrate, the current study shows that in the Chinese context, the form of SL interpreting is shaped by the authorities'

existing construct of the identity of Deaf Chinese people. Interestingly, the purpose of interpreting is constructed differently by different stakeholders, reflecting and creating, essentially, different constructs of Deaf identity. Moreover, these constructions are not objective representations of a reality, but of interpretations created as a result of consistent selection, exclusion, and emphasis – that is, framing (Entman, 1993).

### ***7.3.1 Understanding difference: the key to identity construction***

The collected discourses on Deaf people reveal that the key to the different constructs of Deaf identity is the understanding of the difference between Deaf and hearing people. The study shows that the difference was framed differently by the three groups of stakeholders, resulting in constructions of Deaf identities that were significantly different from each other. The media's construct *excluded* the linguistic value deafness carries while putting *emphasis* on the disability aspect of deafness. On the contrary, the interpreters and Deaf interviewees chose to *highlight* the linguistic nature of deafness. The different constructions of Deaf identity resulting from different framing of the difference between hearing and Deaf provide empirical support to the claim that difference is at the centre of identity construction (Hall, 1996) and in the case of the current study, language is the difference and the core marker of identity (Hogan-Brun and Wolff, 2003).

Consequently, these different interpretations of difference invite different responses to deafness. The media, in their reporting (in terms of *treatment recommendation*), were calling for society to extend more attention and care to Deaf people and treat them with respect, while the interpreters and Deaf people were calling for society to recognise and understand that Deaf people have a fully-functioning, independent language, thus creating a fairer environment for Deaf people. The different responses to difference support Cronin's (2006) theoretical claim that the ways in which people conceptualise difference have significant impact on the responses they take towards the other group and on the kind of translation service the other group may receive. In the case of my study, it is clear that conceptualising the Deaf difference as denoting a linguistic identity calls for more interpreting service to be offered to Deaf people while conceptualising the Deaf difference primarily as a medical condition is less likely to encourage more interpreting service provision.

Both appeals can be classified as constructive “alterity” (Sennett, 2002) to the difference between Deaf and hearing, yet there is a significant difference between the two. Describing Deaf people as a group that needs attention and care essentially constructs them as a disabled group of people who are not on an equal footing with hearing people; such a construct reinforces the existing social attitudes and will not bring fundamental changes to their situation. By comparison, the latter construct, if recognised and implemented, has the potential to advance Deaf people’s status as citizens through proper education and service provision (Turner, 2007).

### ***7.3.2 The value of interpreting — raise the visibility and value of minority language***

The findings also raise new questions about the value of interpreting. Previous studies have shown that the social prominence of high-profile conferences increases the visibility of linguistic difference and value (Baxter, 2013, González Núñez, 2013). The media frames on the purpose of interpreting (raising social awareness to respect and care about disabled citizens) and deaf identity (primarily as a disabled group) suggest that although SL was made visible through SL interpreting on television, yet the service did not attract attention from the media on the linguistic difference and value of CSL. Cronin (2006) suggests that the provision of interpreting helps speakers of a linguistic minority to notice the value of their mother tongue. However, the data obtained from D13 certainly suggested that some Deaf CSL users still believed that Chinese was more important than heritage CSL and the latter should reform itself so as to follow the Chinese grammar. These findings, the apparent lack of confidence for heritage CSL, suggest that interpreting does not always bring about immediate change in people’s perceptions of the value of their language.

### ***7.3.3 Audism — the root of dysconscious audism***

The sense of inferiority felt by some interpreters and heritage CSL users; the belief that Signed Chinese was more formal, therefore appropriate to be used in public events; and the illogical blame that Deaf people should master Chinese in order to understand the subtitles (see section 5.2.3) indicate that the Deaf Chinese community has not fully embraced the social model of deafness and their linguistic identity, hence suffering from *dysconscious audism* (Gertz, 2002).



However, if we probe into the causes of the observed dysconscious audism, we will find that its root cause is in fact *audism*. As section 5.2.2 suggests, the reason some Deaf people valued Signed Chinese more than heritage CSL is that Signed Chinese was used in education settings, in public events, and on television. However, these decisions were made by hearing policy-makers without consulting heritage CSL users properly. Nevertheless, these practices made some Deaf people reach a conclusion where they attributed the opportunity to receive higher education and better employment to the mastery of Signed Chinese.

#### ***7.3.4 Semi-intelligible interpreting — an endorsement of the service provider?***

The findings presented in sections 5.3 and 5.4 also reveal more dimensions of the claim that interpreting constitutes a form of “articulation” of the linguistic difference of a minority group that brings a legitimate pay-off to service providers, and that interpreting is one of the means to exercise the rights granted through the notion of citizenship (Cronin, 2006). There is no doubt that interpreting *can* serve this function. The media frame indeed suggests that SL interpreting on Chinese television articulated the difference of being deaf (being disabled) adequately. For this reason, the media believed, in terms of *causal attribution*, that the service provider – in this case, the Chinese government – should be credited for its sincere effort to provide information access to Deaf people, helping them to exercise their political and social rights as Chinese citizens.

However, as far as Deaf people and interpreters in the study were concerned, the current SL interpreting on television failed, to a great extent, to constitute an appropriate articulation of the Deaf difference as it did not address the fact that heritage CSL is the language used by Deaf people. Instead, many Deaf people and interpreters believed that, in terms of *causal attribution*, the service served as a solid piece of evidence that the Chinese government lacked sincerity in this matter. The lack of sincerity has a significantly damaging effect on the image of the government in their eyes, as the government is perceived to have taken advantage of SL interpreting as a “face project” to boost its public image. The fact that the interpreting service is here reported to be almost incomprehensible to the ostensible target group refutes the claim that deaf people’s political and social rights as Chinese citizens have been satisfied.

These findings contradict Cronin's (2006) position on the issue of "sincerity" where he argues that "sincerity" behind the interpreting service is less important because the provision of interpreting will almost undoubtedly boost people's confidence for the service provider. The revelation of the findings is that "sincerity" is in fact the deciding factor that determines whether the service provider can earn approval from the users of interpreting service, because a lack of sincerity can lead to an inappropriate service in the eyes of the service users. However, for other social actors who are not familiar with the minority language in question, the act of service provision indeed portrays the service provider as providing satisfactory service to minority groups, thus earning the service provider the "legitimate pay-off" (Cronin, 2006).

### ***7.3.5 In the Chinese social context — a semi-intelligible service is still an articulation***

The findings of the research also invite us to think about the notion that interpreting is a social phenomenon that is conditioned by social factors (Kade, 1968). As mentioned earlier, the quality of SL interpreting on Chinese television, as perceived by the interpreters and Deaf people interviewed in the study, failed to fulfil its primary purpose of communication. It was perceived to have failed to constitute a valid articulation of the Deaf identity, let alone to exercise the political and social rights of Deaf citizens. However, as we have seen, because of the Chinese social context — wherein deafness is perceived so predominantly as a disability and the use of a manual-visual language has long been degraded – interpreters and Deaf people argued that even the current form of SL interpreting articulated Deaf identity to some degree. Some Deaf Chinese people perceived the provision of the semi-intelligible interpreting service as finally "the light at the end of a tunnel". On the other hand, the SL community hoped that SL interpreting would provide a learning opportunity for the hearing society which knew little about SL and Deaf people.

### ***7.3.6 The value of interpreting — exercising political citizenship or generating cultural citizenship***

The opposing discourses on whether the current SL interpreting has enhanced Deaf Chinese people's citizenship or not brings our attention to the important role that language and culture can adopt in shaping citizenship (Delanty, 2002, Hogan-Brun, 2005, Hogan-Brun et al., 2008). We can see from the data that a paradoxical situation occurred. The media believed that the current interpreting service enabled Deaf

disabled citizens to access political information, therefore functioned as an exercise of their political citizenship. However, SLIs and Deaf interviewees, unable to comprehend the interpreting service, did not come to the same conclusion. However, the learning opportunity offered by the presence of SL interpreting on television for the hearing society *stressed* by SLIs and Deaf people links interpreting to the notion of cultural citizenship (Delanty, 2002). Interpreters and Deaf people primarily hoped that SL interpreting would help to create a discursive space for the dominant social group to reflect on their construct of the *difference* arising from being Deaf. Chinese signers and SLIs hoped that the hearing social group would come to the conclusion that Deaf people are not useless, less intelligent, or incapable of communication, and should be treated with respect instead of discrimination.

Considering cultural citizenship is about learning to perceive and respond to difference responsibly, the value of interpreting, as far as Deaf people and SLIs are concerned, lay in the opportunity interpreting had provided for hearing people to acquire cultural citizenship, to be more aware of the linguistic value of CSL, and to become more informed and responsible citizens by changing their attitudes towards Deaf people eventually. The opportunity to learn and acquire cultural citizenship is perhaps a plausible explanation for the theoretical claim that interpreting can be used as a political and social tool to bind dominant and minority linguistic groups (Cronin, 2006; Baxter, 2013). Moreover, the value of interpreting to generate cultural citizenship among hearing members of the Chinese society, and hence the possibility of the linguistic construct of Deaf identity being accepted by society, make Hall's (1996) claim that identity is not a sense of "being" but a sense of "becoming" possible.

### ***7.3.7 The influence of Chinese cultural values***

What is perhaps also unique to the Chinese context is Deaf people and interpreters' paradoxical discourses on the notion of SL interpreting being used as a "face project" by the government. Despite their sharp criticism of using SL interpreting as a "face project", they still wanted SL interpreting to continue to project politically expedient, "advanced" values, maintaining a good image for the Chinese government internationally. This particular data reflect that the interpreting phenomenon is constructed with "cultural specificity" (Burr, 2002), reflecting the importance attached

to the concept of “face”, “respect for authority”, and “collectivism” (Yau, 1988, Jacques, 2009) in Chinese culture.

The paradoxical discourses mentioned earlier demonstrated that, as far as interpreters and Deaf people are concerned, the Chinese government is an embodiment of China, a larger unit to which they all belong. For this reason, they believed that they, as a member of Chinese society, should not expose “our own problems”, which would hurt the collective *face* of China. In fact, although an incomprehensible interpreting service has hurt Deaf people’s personal interests, influenced by the concept of *face* and *collectivism*, they were willing to sacrifice their own well-being to protect the Chinese government and China. The data then support my claim that the SL interpreting phenomenon is a construction influenced by both social and cultural factors.

### ***7.3.8 The “truth” of SL interpreting on television is socially constructed***

Napier (2011) points out that it is important to look at interpreting as a “social behaviour”. Kade (1968) observes that interpreting is a “social phenomenon” that is conditioned by social factors and serving social objectives. The findings of the thesis contribute to this scholarship and add that interpreting is a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon, conditioned by social factors and can be interpreted to serve certain social and political objectives. It is difficult to conclude, based on the findings presented in the thesis, that interpreting is serving a definite social objective. However, what is clear is that interpreting can be interpreted to be serving certain social and political objectives, depending on which aspects of interpreting are *selected* and *highlighted* in the construction process. The different interpretations of the value of interpreting, especially the ones revealed in the media discourses, demonstrate the need to engage more stakeholders in T&I research (Napier, 2011, Turner, 2007, Baker, 2010) as a fresh perspective can reveal the relevance of T&I to other fields that might be overlooked by insiders.

## **7.4 Policy implications and recommendations**

The findings of the study have apparent implications for policy-makers in China. In fact, the implications are not limited to the decisions that directly concern Deaf matters, language planning, or interpreting. The issues revealed by the study are a microcosm of many other acute social and political problems in China.

Broadly speaking, the most salient issue raised by the study for Chinese policy makers is the sincerity in government work. In a narrow sense, the question facing the Chinese government right now in terms of the provision of SL interpreting services is how to use interpreting as a political tool and a binding social force and at the same time be perceived as being sincere in improving Deaf people's livelihood. The solutions to the problem have already been proposed by the interpreters and Deaf people in the study.

From the responses given by interpreters and Deaf people, this study suggests that the government and the television stations would gain approval from the Deaf community if they are willing to consult Deaf people when it comes to providing services that concern them. In this case, if an interpreting service were to be provided for Deaf people, the government needs to canvass their needs first. For example, what kinds of programmes appeal to the Deaf audience? What kind of interpreting is most useful?

Secondly, the government would gain approval from the Deaf community if they clearly state that the Chinese government understands that Deaf people are capable of making decisions and giving suggestions on matters that concern them. For this to happen, Deaf people should be invited to take part in different phases of the provision of SL interpreting on television. For example, the BBC selects SLIs that are popular among the Deaf audience and SLIs would consult Deaf people when there is a gap in vocabulary. More importantly, the quality of interpreting on television is monitored by Deaf staff who work at BBC (Skinner, 2014, personal communication). Chinese Deaf people could take part in selecting and evaluating the interpreters as language experts. After the launching of the interpreted programme, they could also provide continuing training for interpreters to improve their SL skills.

The next question the Chinese government should contemplate is the issue of incomprehensibility of SL interpreting on Chinese television. The central government has passed laws that urge the provincial and local television stations to provide SL interpreting. The *2011 Statistical Yearbook of China Disabled People's Cause* reported that more than 190 television channels at both provincial and municipal levels had provided SL interpreting on television. Given that only 168 out of 6557 municipal channels have provided this service, the number of such programmes is expected to rise significantly in the next few years. This study strongly suggests that the service may continue to be perceived as a "face project" and, in terms of meaningful

communication, a waste of government funding if Signed Chinese remains the norm. For this reason, the government should then fully appreciate the language and culture of the community and respect it through legislation in order to create a positive language environment for heritage CSL.

The large demand for SLIs on television also draws our attention to the issue of training interpreters. The nature of media interpreting, including the wide range of topics and fast delivery of news, requires professional training if a good service is wanted. Since the linguistics of CSL is still at the exploring stage, a lot of academic inputs are required which in turn, demand more financial resources to be put in place to support related projects. Some countries in the world have already established SL interpreting training programme at university level. For example, Heriot-Watt University in Scotland currently runs a four-year full-time undergraduate course to train potential SLIs. It is important to note that this programme features real Deaf input where more than half of its teaching faculty comes from the Deaf community.

Apart from providing SL interpreting on television, interpreting in schools, hospitals, workplaces, and other social settings is perhaps a more urgent issue that concerns the livelihood of Deaf people directly. With proper interpreter training schemes, Deaf people can gain better education and professional knowledge, which in turn creates better career prospects and stronger economic outcomes, outweighing the financial input for such training schemes. As Dickinson's (2010) work suggests, with the assistance of SLIs, Deaf people can gain more effective access to different work environments.

This research underlines the need for these actions to be taken into consideration soon. The fact that the interviewed interpreters and Deaf people still maintained a welcoming (if somewhat ambivalent) attitude towards the current SL interpreting arrangements should not be taken as granting license for complacency on the part of the government. As the data suggest, the positive feedback lies in the fact that SL interpreting on television is a relatively new phenomenon, and Deaf people and interpreters are looking forward to seeing improvements. If the quality of the service remains unchanged in the long run, the government is likely to face sharper criticisms from the SL community.

## **7.5 Limitations and future study**

Although the study has provided fruitful results, there are still limitations in the research design and methodological considerations. In this section, I reflect upon aspects of the study which might be strengthened in subsequent scholarship and propose a direction for future research in the field.

Firstly, the study sets out to explore the social construction of SL interpreting on Chinese television and three groups of stakeholders were identified, namely, the media, the Deaf community, and SLIs. While the data obtained from these groups provided revealing results, the study could be beneficially extended if a fourth group – hearing Chinese people – were included in the study.

If this social group were added, the study would not only be able to discuss the ways in which SL interpreting is constructed and framed by the various stakeholders, but also reveal more about the wider effects of such constructs and frames. Although some Deaf people have pointed out that SL interpreting has, to some degree, changed hearing citizens' attitude towards the use of SL, a large-scale investigation would be able to show whether interpreting has real influence on hearing people's perceptions of deafness. Longitudinal research with all four groups could also begin to explore the rate, type and potentially causation of change that occurs in these perceptions over time. Therefore, further research is desired to explore this part of the data.

Secondly, the current study has only included written news reports released by online news outlets and excluded video broadcasts issued by television stations. This was due to the limitations of the adopted approach to frame analysis in which the focus rests upon the analysis of written texts. However, the visual aspects of the data provided by video broadcasts (the position of SLI screen and the visual representation of Deaf people and sign language in the broadcasts) certainly deserve researchers' attention and could be expected to add a significant dimension to the analysis. Therefore, future researchers may wish to modify the theoretical framework to accommodate the analysis of visual representations of SL interpreting, Deaf people, and interpreters to enrich the study.

Thirdly, the topic of the research is SL interpreting on television, and the interview data for the study were collected via the mediation of SLIs. Talking about SLIs in front of SLIs might have limited the extent to which some deaf participants were willing to open

up and share their feelings. In the case of the current study, the sharp criticisms given by the Deaf participants towards the government and SL interpreting practice confirm the salience of the data, yet the use of interpreters still raises concerns for future studies. One way to address this issue would be for the researcher to be a fluent CSL user (Deaf or hearing) and to carry out interviews in CSL directly. For some potential researchers, this would undoubtedly represent a major challenge. The fact that China is a vast country and that CSL has a great number of varieties in different regions compounds the situation, no matter what the background of the researcher. Another solution would be training Deaf people who are familiar with academic research as co-investigators to conduct interviews or manage focus groups. This might be particularly useful as it creates new opportunities associated with the university circle. As Young (2011) points out, Deaf people, more often than not, are excluded from research processes. The exclusion, in her eyes, denotes an audist bias against SL in academia. Therefore, inviting Deaf people into the research process would be an effective measure to break the audist practice and can be seen as a means of empowerment for Deaf people (Turner, 2000, Napier and Sabolcec, 2014).

In this study, I considered the use of a Deaf “surrogate” interviewer whose rapport with interviewees was expected to create the scope for extended interaction with participants. The surrogate interviewer proposed was Mr. Feng Gang (hard of hearing, fluent in both CSL and Signed Chinese), who is the director of a famous online programme *Shou Yu Hu Tong*<sup>10</sup> based in Beijing. Feng Gang’s programme releases interviews he carries out with deaf people, usually discussing issues pertinent to deaf people’s daily life, such as the difficulty of finding an interpreter, going to hospital, and so on. After agreeing on collaborating on this topic, we discussed extensively the subject of the research, potential questions that might be asked, how to approach potential participants and the style of the interview.

However, in the end, he did not carry out the pilot focus group owing to circumstances beyond his control. By that time, it was not realistic to find and prepare another person

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<sup>10</sup> “Sign Language Alley”: Hu Tong is a typical small alley that was common in Beijing and is now disappearing. Therefore, the name suggests the need to preserve natural CSL and prevent it from disappearing like Hutong.



for this task. Therefore, I came back to the idea of conducting the collection of data myself with the help of an interpreter. Nevertheless, similar efforts could be made for future researchers, which again would create scope to include members of the Deaf community in the research process.

Fourthly, it is a commonly agreed practice to work with interpreters who have obtained proper qualifications or received professional training (see section 4.2.1). However, this is not feasible in China because of the absence of such training and certification schemes. In preparing for this data-generation activity, I was only able to identify two interpreters who had rich, extensive relevant experience. As a result, the sampling of the Deaf participants was limited to the two cities in the south of China where the interpreters live. Since the sample is small, and heritage CSL is significantly different between northern and southern China, the results of the study should be considered limited to representing the views of the participants only, rather than being inappropriately generalised to represent the views of Deaf people in other parts of China.

Although a good range of variables such as gender, profession and education have been taken into consideration, it should be noted that the study does not include any Deaf person from the vast rural area of China. Future study should place particular emphasis on canvassing feedback from this part of the Chinese deaf population. Because it is relatively hard to reach them, their views have continually been neglected by the academic circle (as shown in section 3.1.2, the current research on Deaf people and SL interpreting is largely based on urban Deaf people). Yet, since they are disproportionately likely to be illiterate (Xiao, 2009), and thus unlikely to use subtitles when watching television, their reliance on SL interpreting is likely to be much greater than that of urban deaf people (Xiao and Yu, 2011). Moreover, although in the current study, the interviews with Deaf participants and SLIs have yielded revealing data that answered the research questions adequately, the range of interviewees is nevertheless limited. For future study, it would be beneficial if a larger, more controlled, and therefore more representative sample could be recruited.

Fifthly, the current study only employs a written version of consent form for the interviewees. While it did not cause problems for interpreters, it did raise concerns amongst Deaf interviewees who feared that signing their names on the form could have

consequences. Therefore, the study could be improved if a signed pre-recorded version of the consent form was prepared for Deaf interviewees. This practice has been practiced by Napier and Sabolcec (2014) and recommended by Young and Temple (2014) as allowing Deaf participants to access information about the research in which they are involved in their own language.

## 7.6 Summary

As we have seen, this study sets out to investigate the ways in which different stakeholders, namely the Chinese media, SLIs and Deaf people, construe SL interpreting on television for high-profile political conferences. The results show that the media discourses differ significantly from those of the Deaf people and interpreters, and a pattern of framing, namely, *selection*, *exclusion*, and *salience* (Entman, 1993), has been identified.

The media discourses constructed Deaf Chinese people as a disabled social group (*problem definition*) while overlooking their linguistic capability (*exclusion*). In contrast, the interpreters and Deaf interviewees downplayed the disability aspect of deafness and constructed it as an identity for a language minority (*selection and salience*), confirming that language is a primary marker of identity (Hogan-Brun and Wolff, 2003, Turner, 2003). Because of the different constructs of deafness, the media on the one hand, and the Deaf interviewees and interpreters on the other had entirely different evaluations of the quality of interpreting. The former gave absolute praise (*moral evaluation*) while the latter, pointing out that the use of Signed Chinese (*causal attribution*) disrespected heritage CSL, argued that the interpreting was incomprehensible (opposing *moral evaluation*).

As a result, the value of SL interpreting on television was constructed differently by different agents. The media saw SL interpreting as a successful political and social tool that brought constructive results in many ways, including creating a respectable public image for the Chinese government, exercising political and social rights for Deaf Chinese citizens, and raising social awareness to pay attention and respect to Deaf people and other vulnerable social groups. The interpreters and Deaf people saw SL interpreting as a “face project” used by the government to create a good image, failing to exercise any political or social rights for Deaf Chinese citizens. Interestingly, however, although they were unhappy that the government used SL interpreting as a

“face project”, they were willing to tolerate it so that the international image of China would not be hurt.

With that said, the interpreters and Deaf people in the study still held that SL interpreting in its current form had constructive value in contemporary China. Because China had overlooked the linguistic status of Deaf people in the past, even SL interpreting on television using Signed Chinese was seen as a breakthrough which brought “psychological comfort” to Deaf Chinese citizens. It was perceived by them as a promising signal that China had made some progress in recognising Deaf people’s language and addressing that dimension of deafness, and would keep making improvements. Moreover, since the hearing people in Chinese society know little about Deaf people’s language, SL interpreting on television, regardless of its quality, was believed to serve as a learning opportunity for hearing Chinese citizens to see a different mode of communication that could change their perceptions of deafness and actions towards Deaf people.

The results of the study thus underpin the proposition that interpreting is a social practice that is situated in a particular social and cultural context (Kade, 1968, Wolf, 2014). As a social practice, interpreting is shaped by and reflects existing constructs of the identity of the particular linguistic groups represented (House et al., 2005). At the same time, it also creates a *discursive space* for new construals of the same identity to gain momentum (Hall, 1996). The function, value and purpose of interpreting can be constructed in different ways depending on social perceptions of the minority identity in question. The findings of the research also show that interpreting can be used as a political tool by a government which creates an inclusive social atmosphere while setting up a positive image for itself (Cronin, 2006). The use of state-sponsored interpreting appears to demonstrate that the government acknowledges the distinct identity of a subset of citizens with respect. However, the benefits of this tool will only come into effect when the government applies it *with sincerity* (Cronin, 2006). Apart from that, interpreting can also be used as a tool not just to exercise the political and social rights granted by the national citizenship, but more importantly to exercise cultural citizenship where the difference of a linguistic minority group is presented in the public space. The exercise of cultural citizenship is an educational opportunity for both minority and majority groups to learn the value of the minority language (Baxter,

2013, Cronin, 2006), which is conducive to the promotion of a more positive construct of identity for the particular minority group, thus creating a fairer society.

The current Chinese social and cultural context (as discussed in sections 7.2.2 and 7.2.3) determines that a semi-intelligible SL interpreting service can still function as a means of generating and promoting cultural citizenship (Delanty, 2002), and that the SL community in China is willing to withhold in public its private criticism of the government. However, the government needs to recognise the insufficiency of its work and make changes before state-backed interpreting loses its current positive evaluation in the eyes of China's signing community. As Turner (2007:2) points out that

wherever sign languages have been used by Deaf people, both languages and people have been misunderstood: such misunderstandings have occasioned dire consequences for members of these linguistic communities...the effective delivery of SLTI (*sign language translation and interpreting*) services can be a core element in eliminating these misunderstandings – in other words, *if we get it right*, people's lives are liable measurably to alter as responses are generated to some of the key barriers that life presents (*my emphasis*).

It is important that China gets it right.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Information Sheet and Consent Form**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM**

##### **Title of Research Project**

The social construction of interpreting for linguistic minority in China

##### **Details of Project**

This project is investigating SL interpreting on Chinese television. The aim of this research is to describe and analyse the ways in which the phenomenon of putting signed language interpreting on television is perceived in Chinese society by different stakeholders including the Chinese media, the hearing public, Deaf Chinese people and SLIs.

##### **Your role in this research**

You have been invited to participate in this research on the basis of your knowledge and experience of sign language and sign language interpreting. Interviews with you will be carried out and will provide insights to the ways in which SL interpreting on television is perceived by Chinese citizens with a sign language background. The interviews will be video recorded and transcribed into a written text and then translated into English. Written quotes from the transcription might be selected and used in the final piece of writing.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may stop, review and edit the recording at any stage. You may withdraw from this research without prejudice or negative consequences. If you wish to do so, please contact one of the contact persons within three months after the end of the interview.

##### **Contact Details**

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact me:

Xiao Zhao

Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies

Heriot-Watt University

Edinburgh

EH14 4AS

Email: xz115@hw.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact my supervisor:

Dr Svenja Wurm

Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies

Heriot-Watt University

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EH14 4AS

Email: S.B.Wurm@hw.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email or correspondence address below).

### **Anonymity**

Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name, but we might refer to the group of which you are a member.

### **Consent**

I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewers.

**TICK HERE:**

**DATE**.....

*Note: Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data*

*Name of interviewee:*.....

*Signature:* .....

*Email/phone:*.....

*Address:* .....

*Signature of researcher*.....

2 copies to be signed by both interviewee and researcher, one kept by each

## 采访信息以及同意书

### 研究项目名称

中国社会对少数语种传译的构建与解读

### 研究内容

该项目着重于探索中国电视手语翻译。其目的在于描述与分析中国媒体，听人群众，聋人以及手语翻译对电视手语翻译这种现象的看法与解读。

### 您的参与

您因为对手语和手语翻译的有一定的认识与经历而被邀请参加此次采访。您的参与将会丰富我们对电视手语翻译的看法与认识。此次采访将会被拍摄成视频，然后转写成中文稿并最终翻译成英文。其中您的某些话语可能被直接引用到作者的论文中。

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请确认打勾：

日期：

被采访人姓名：

签名：

电子邮件/电话号码：

地址：

采访人签名：

该表格一式两份，各执一份。

## Appendix B – The Interview Guide

### The interview guide

Q: How is interpreting for linguistic minorities constructed in Chinese society?

From the literature review on framing theory and social constructionism, it is learnt that it is possible to understand the process of social construction through the process of framing. Therefore, the four themes I am going to explore in my interview are the same ones I used to analyse the news report, i.e. *problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation*. By doing so, I would be able to understand the ways in which the phenomenon of having SL interpreting on television for political conferences is understood and interpreted by different stakeholders.

Themes:

1. Problem definition: which aspects of SL interpreting on television are selected to be discussed? Who are mentioned?
2. Moral evaluation: is SL interpreting a positive thing? Negative thing? Why?
3. Causal attribution: Who is responsible for the positive or negative influence by SL interpreting on television?
4. Treatment recommendation: what should we do in future?

The basic flow I have in mind is firstly, getting a general description of what people think of SL interpreting on television and then move on to explore further into theme 2 – moral evaluation. Using the answers from theme 2 to explore theme 3 – causal attribution and then arrive at theme 4 – treatment recommendation.

Line of questions:

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?  
(An easy opening, getting people to talk)
2. Have you watched SL interpreting on television before? What do you think of it?  
(Satisfied? Dissatisfied? And why? potentially eliciting answers for theme 1.2.3)
3. What kind of influence do you think SL interpreting on television would bring to your life? And to other people or the society in general?  
(Positive ones? Negative ones? No influence? Why? Potentially eliciting answers for theme 1. 2. 3)
4. Have you noticed that SL interpreting has been used in live streaming national political conferences such as NPC and CPPCC? What do you think of that?  
(theme 1.2.3)
5. What kind of influence do you think SL interpreting on television for these political conferences can bring to your life or to other people's life or to the Chinese society?  
(theme 1.2.3)
6. What would you like to see in future for SL interpreting on television?  
(theme 4)
7. Anything else about SL interpreting on television which you would like to add?

I think in reality, many questions will be asked in a different ways. Because question no. 2 should be able to provide me some answers to all the 4 themes I want to explore, therefore, I should be able to hear the response to question no. 2 and be able to then ask questions like: *you have mentioned that it is good to have SL interpreting on television because of A, I wonder if there are other benefits?* This would then lead me to theme no. 2 *moral evaluation*. Or *you have mentioned that there are a lot of problems in SL interpreting on television, I wonder if you can tell me more about who has created these problems?* This would naturally lead me to theme no. 3 *causal attribution*.

## Appendix C – interviews with Deaf and SLI participants

### Deaf Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Job	education	Deafness	Date	length
D1	male	61	government	middle school	born deaf	14/06	45mins
D2	female	31	no job	university	born deaf	15/06	30mins
D3	female	56	no job	primary school	born deaf	15/06	22mins
D4	male	32	teacher	university	born deaf	15/06	26mins
D5	male	22	factory worker	university	born deaf	16/06	53mins
D6	female	24	dancer	univeristy	born deaf	16/06	25mins
D7	male	33	hospital staff	university	born deaf	16/06	37mins
D8	female	71	no job	primary school	born deaf	18/06	56mins
D9	male	72	no job	primary school	born deaf	18/06	42mins
D10	female	18	student	high school	became deaf at 3	19/06	33mins
D11	female	18	student	high school	hard of hearing	19/06	35mins
D12	male	41	teacher	university	born deaf	20/06	30mins
D13	male	42	photographer	middle school	born deaf	20/06	36mins

SLIs

Code	Gender	Age	Profession	education	CODA	interview date	length
I1	female	24	teacher	univeristy	N	June 17th	77 mins
I2	female	55	teacher	university	N	June 16th	92 mins
I3	male	35	full time SLI	university	N	June 6th	online chatting
I4	female	33	teacher	univeristy	N	June 19th	32 mins
I5	female	48	teacher	high school	Y	June 20th	68 mins
I6	female	30	teacher	university	Y	June 28th	online chatting

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