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Content

A Professional Paradox: the (Un)equal Balance of the Rights and Duties of Signed Language Interpreters in Poland

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Abstract

The practice of signed language interpreting in Poland is still subject to ongoing professionalisation processes. The place and status of signed language interpreters are poorly defined both in the national legal regulations and in the common awareness of the hearing as well as Deaf people.

It starts with education – interpreters are needed in increasingly demanding situations and settings, yet they have very few opportunities for professional development. They are expected to provide professional services of the highest quality, but with no certification system in place, no quality control is possible. With accessibility being an important issue in Poland, many online events are interpreted into signed language, yet Deaf people struggle to book an interpreter for an in–person medical appointment. In order to work in legal settings, spoken language interpreters must possess highly specialised knowledge and extraordinary language skills which have been confirmed by a state exam, whereas signed language interpreters are appointed to work as expert witnesses based on their experience and recommendations.

Throughout our article, we would like to reflect on the current positionality and status of signed language interpreters in Poland from legal, social, and professional perspectives. We will focus on specific paradoxes of the profession consisting of the ambiguous definition of the role of signed language interpreters, and inequalities in terms of their rights and duties, expectations, and benefits.

Key words

Paradox, signed language interpreting, Polish Sign Language, professionalisation

1. Introduction

Poland is one of many countries which has observed significant changes in the signed language interpreting landscape over the last fifteen years or so (Kalata–Zawłocka, 2021). A multitude of improvements have appeared naturally with the advent of new technologies enabling video–remote communication, but also as a result of the growing linguistic awareness within the Deaf community, emerging training opportunities, and the establishment of an interpreter organisation that has ignited the process of professionalisation.

This, in turn, brought further changes to the ways in which signed language interpreting services are provided. Namely, interpreters have gained a code of ethics and professional standards to guide them in their daily practice, beginning to work in a variety of new settings, such as academia, conferences, artistic environments etc., not only individually but in teams, more and more interpreting from signed to spoken language, and also between Polish Sign Language and English or International Sign. Deaf inter-preters are beginning to come to the fore of the profession and are increasingly appreciated for their work. Accessibility provided by means of signed language interpreting has become more widespread, competent, and encompassing more spheres of life (Kalata-Zawłocka, 2021).

We have had the privilege of witnessing many of these developments through the lens of our research, observations, and day to day contact with the signed language interpreter and Deaf communities. When we were thinking how best to describe what we can currently observe in Poland with regard to signed language interpreting, we came to the conclusion that despite a growing number of regulations, op-portunities, and solutions, in many respects we are far from being satisfied with how the field of signed language interpreting is functioning. As corroborated not only by our own observations and anecdotal evidence but also previous studies (Kalata-Zawłocka, 2021), the situation is undeniably better now than 10 or 20 years ago. Still, we are often under the impression that some of the solutions do not work as they should, that there is a lot of chaos, and that some appear artificial or even sham. This led us to think about this situation as being made up of paradoxes.

Only the most evident ones are discussed in this article, but there are many more, sometimes apparent mainly from the perspective of interpreting professionals, and sometimes more aggravating for their deaf service users. The selected paradoxes are not only identified and described, but also followed by the authors' own suggestions of how to possibly overcome them.

2.   Two Poles, three opinions...

In order to present the current situation of signed language interpreting in Poland, we need to go back in time a little, to set the scene and re-create the atmosphere that led to it.

We believe that the first paradox, although it may not be necessarily particularly perceptible or acute for either practitioners or Deaf people on a daily basis, exerts a negative influence on signed language interpreting as a field. First and foremost, it weakens signed language interpreting on the institutional le-vel and by creating divisions within the communities of interpreters, as well as Deaf people. That stands in opposition to what should be taking place. As many researchers emphasise, what is important when it comes to successful development of the field of signed language interpreting in a given country is the collaboration and mutual support between the national organisation of interpreters and the national organisation of the Deaf (Cokely, 2005; Roy and Napier, 2015; de Wit, 2021; Gebruers, 2019).

There is one leading or national organisation representing the Deaf community and one such for signed language interpreters in Poland. The former, called the Polish Association of the Deaf (*Polski Związek Głuchych* – PZG), was established in 1946 with the aim of providing the Deaf community with social care support, creating working positions for the Deaf in special state-owned enterprises, language rehabi-litation, as well as communication services. It is based in Warsaw and comprises 16 regional branches (in particular voivodeships) and their local sections all over Poland. The latter, called the Association of

Polish Sign Language Interpreters (*Stowarzyszenie Tłumaczy Polskiego Języka Migowego* – STPJM), came into being in 2009 to address the needs of interpreters of Polish Sign Language, who were in great need of professional development and guidance as well as their Deaf service users who wanted to be provided with high quality services[1]. It is based in Warsaw and has no regional offices.

From the moment of the creation of the professional organisation of signed language interpreters, there have been tensions between these two organisations that presumably stemmed from the fact that, at least historically, signed language interpreting in Poland (as in many other countries) was inseparably connected with the Association of the Deaf. Consequently, long before STPJM, PZG had been the only organisation dealing with signed language interpreting and had their own philosophy of how it should be provided or taught. As it later transpired, their ideas were completely different from those of STPJM, who focused on all things related to interpreting: education, professional standards, ethics, etc. For example, PZG promoted a sign-language system (*system językowo-migowy* – SJM),[2] whereas STPJM wanted Polish Sign Language (*polski język migowy* – PJM) to be employed. In fact, promoting the natural language of the Deaf in interpreting services, as opposed to the sign-language system, was the main goal of the association. PZG had a long-established system of teaching SJM and certifying interpreters as transliterators, while STPJM wanted to introduce a system of interpreter certification based on PJM and interpreting.

Whilst PZG has also been in favour of PJM for many years, the two organisations still do not see eye to eye in terms of such fundamental issues as the interpreter's role. PZG perceives interpreters more as social workers and assistants, whereas the association promotes the model of the interpreter as a bilingual-bicultural intermediary.

Summing up – we have two well-established and functioning national organisations that, theoretically speaking, share certain goals, but practically do not collaborate to achieve them. They have never perceived each other as partners, but as competitors. They have moments of occasional courtesy, but nothing on which they could build their long-term policies and which could help them move signed language interpreting forward. This is a tremendous shame, since they could be much more effective standing side by side when fighting against inadequate legislation or when lobbying for the introduction of a certification system for signed language interpreters.

3. Interpreter status

Another paradox that reflects the inequality of the signed language interpreter industry in Poland is the status of this professional group in legal regulations. Despite the fact that signed language interpreters in Poland have progressed significantly towards the professionalisation of their occupation over the past decades, they are still not fully recognised by Polish law. There is also a lack of consensus on how this professional group should be perceived, as there is a discrepancy in the legal provisions when it

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1   https://stpjm.org.pl/en/about-us/about-our-association/ (Accessed 3 November 2023).

2   Sign-supported Polish, known as the sign-language-system in Poland (*system językowo-migowy*, SJM) is an artificial system of visual-spatial communication, whereby signs, partly derived from the natural language of the Deaf (in Poland it is Polish Sign Language – *polski język migowy*, PJM) and partly created for the sake of the system, are articulated in accordance with Polish syntax, simultaneously with spoken utterances. The system is devoid of polysemy and lexical variation (Farris, 1994). Due to its Polish word order, it is much easier to master by hearing people than Polish Sign Language, but much more difficult to comprehend for Deaf people, especially those with limited knowledge of Polish (Kalata-Zawłocka, 2017). SJM was introduced by the Polish Association of the Deaf in the 1960s and promoted in the Deaf community, deaf education and interpreting.

comes to performing the role of a signed language interpreter.

There are four Polish legal documents that directly mention the profession of a signed language interpreter.: *Polish Classification of Professions and Specialisations, Act of 25 November 2004 on the Profession of Sworn Translator, Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 24 January 2005 on Expert Witnesses, and Act of 19 August 2011 on Sign Language and other Means of Communication.*[3] Each of these treats the profession of signed language interpreter differently, and draws attention to varying aspects of the occupation.

According to the Polish Classification of Professions and Specialisations of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, a signed language interpreter is a person who facilitates the functioning of a Deaf person in an environment with hearing people in cases where they have not mastered the ability to communicate through speech and do not receive information through lip–reading, or in situations where oral information cannot be received, e.g. in group activities, at theatre, film or television performances. It also specifies that a signed language interpreter assists a Deaf person at medical appointments, law enforcement or justice hearings, at meetings and briefings in workplaces, at training and cultural activities, etc. This classification places interpreters in an assisting role, rather than mediating between cultures and languages. It does not mention that the interpreter can also be employed by hearing people, who could also be interested in making contact with signing interlocutors. It only retains the perspective of providing help to a Deaf person, with the significant omission of the actually crucial function of bilingual communication through an interpreter.

On the other hand, the *Act [...] on Sign Language and other Means of Communication* may not explicitly define who a signed language interpreter is, but it places them clearly in the category of a professional entity talking about remuneration for their services, indicating the institutions with which they cooperate, but also establishing a register of signed language interpreters managed by voivodeship offices.

In turn, the *Act [...] on the Profession of Sworn Translator* directly mentions signed language interpreters in one paragraph, in which it describes that they cannot apply to become sworn interpreters/translators. This meaningfully influences the status of this professional group, depriving them of certain privileges, in part separating signed language from the interpreters and translators of spoken languages.

As one of the roles of sworn translators/interpreters in Poland is to provide services to courts and law enforcement organs, the legislator found another way to incorporate signed language interpreters in these institutions, despite their exclusion from sworn status. In a professional context, the signed language interpreter appears in the *Regulation of the Minister of Justice [...] on Expert Witnesses*. This document concerns professionals who work on behalf of the court and clearly describes who can apply for the position of court expert signed language interpreter. The regulation specifies that to become

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3   Following in Polish these are:
"Klasyfikacja zawodów i specjalności Ministerstwa Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej"
https://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek–pracy/bazy–danych/klasyfikacja–zawodow–i–specjalnosci/wyszukiwarka–opisow–zawodow//–/klasyfikacja_zawodow/zawod/264310,

"Ustawa z dnia 25 listopada 2004 r. o zawodzie tłumacza przysięgłego"
https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20042732702,

"Rozporządzenie Ministra Sprawiedliwości z dnia 24 stycznia 2005 r. w sprawie biegłych sądowych"
https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20050150133,

"Ustawa z dnia 19 sierpnia 2011 r. o języku migowym i innych środkach komunikowania się"
https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20112091243.

such an expert, a person should be over 21 years of age, hold a T2 certificate[4] of proficiency in signed language[5] or an expert title issued by the PZG. This solution allows signed language interpreters to work in the same environment as their spoken-language counterparts and puts them in a position to share the same responsibilities, but with a completely different burden and level of prestige (Kalata–Zawłocka, 2017).

Something that also affects the perception of the status of signed language interpreters in Poland is that we do not know exactly how many of them are practising professionally. Due to legal and organisational fragmentation, we have different sources and figures as to how many signed language interpreters there are in Poland.

The largest number is given by the already mentioned register of interpreters run by voivodeship offices. It contains a list of as many as 508 interpreters,[6] but this data seems to be highly inaccurate, as the register is kept in a completely declarative manner (meaning that anyone can apply to have their name added to the register without any verification) and also as some of the contacts listed there have become outdated. Different information is provided by the Polish Association of the Deaf, which also runs a database of its accredited interpreters, in which it has listed 85 persons. Even fewer, namely 57, are associated with the Association of Polish Sign Language Interpreters and 29 are listed in the database of court expert witnesses of Polish district courts.[7] The most recent survey, which was also partially a response to such an ambiguous state of affairs, was the National Census of Signed Language Interpreters and Translators conducted by STPJM and the Institute of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warsaw. It involved 236 interpreters, which seems to bring us closer to the current size of the industry.[8]

As part of this paradox, it is also worth noting that the Deaf community itself also has a problem defining the status of a signed language interpreter – on the one hand, many see them as allies who support the group and are not afraid to speak up on important issues (O'Brien et al., 2023). On the other hand, some would like interpreters to remain a third party who, despite inevitable contact with the Deaf community, remain passive mediators between languages (Talipska, 2023).

The poor status of signed language interpreters is also reflected in widespread unawareness and misconceptions regarding the profession. This professional group is still something of an exotic phenomenon. It can be seen, for example, in the approach to the work of TV interpreters. This is reflected e.g. in the press headlines, where it is written about the interpreter "who stole the show" or "won the presidential debate". Of course, the positive message and the fact that the interpreter's work is noticed matters, but the public still does not focus on their professional qualities, but on their mere participation and a kind of performance. It is also demeaning to see (seemingly positive) comments referring to

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4   Previously, interpreter certification by PZG was divided into two levels – T1: sufficient for direct communication, and T2: fully proficient. Currently, the T2 certificate has been transformed into the Certificate of Interpreter of Polish Sign Language issued by the PZG, and it confirms full proficiency in the use and interpretation from/into PJM https://cemn.pzg.org.pl/certyfikaty/certyfikat-tlumacze/ (Accessed 26 November 2023).

5   The document does not specify what is meant by "signed language" – whether Polish Sign Language or sign-supported Polish (at the moment of creating the document, most likely it was the latter).

6   Personal computations based on the websites of 16 provincial offices containing the registers of interpreters of Polish Sign Language (PJM), Sign-supported Polish (SJM) and Communication for the Deaf-Blind (SKOGN), see e.g. https://www.gov.pl/web/uw-opolski/rejestr-tlumaczy-PJM-SJM-SKOGN.

7   Figures are taken from the following sources: Polish Association of the Deaf https://cemn.pzg.org.pl/tlumacze/baza-tlumaczy/ (Accessed 26 November 2023), Association of Polish Sign Language Interpreters (personal communication), and 47 websites of the Polish District Courts, see e.g. https://bip.warszawa.so.gov.pl/artykuly/237/biegli-sadowi (Accessed 26 November 2023).

8   Initial results of the 2023 National Census of Sign Language Interpreters and Translators (publication in progress).

interpreters as "signing ladies", rather than as experts in language mediation (Kalata-Zawłocka, 2021). Sometimes there is also criticism of the presence of interpreters on the TV screen, accusing them of having exaggerated facial expressions or movements and suggesting they could be better replaced by subtitles.[9] Such situations not only demonstrate an ignorance of the interpreting profession, but also a low degree of awareness of accessibility for Deaf people in general. Of course, public discussion can serve to improve the visibility and relevance of the profession – e.g. by giving a voice to the interpreters themselves, but at the same time it is a shame to see that many people simply do not know the role and status of an interpreter.

Considering the above, there is a disparity as to what really constitutes a signed language interpreter in Poland. Is it a Deaf person's assistant, a professional mediating between languages, a signed language expert or perhaps a second-class interpreter, deprived of the possibility to acquire certain professional titles?

4.   Signed language interpreter education

As Deaf awareness grows, so does the need for highly qualified and competent interpreters across the country. Despite this fact, the educational offer for signed language interpreters in Poland is very limited and concentrated mainly in its capital – Warsaw. To begin with, attaining the proficiency level of Polish Sign Language that allows one to start professional practice is already a challenge in itself. Only the University of Warsaw has regular degree programmes where the language of instruction is Polish Sign Language. At various other universities there are courses at different levels, but they are not included in the permanent didactic offer – they are mostly temporary proposals for students who may choose to study signed language as an additional or optional course.[10] When it comes to private opportunities to learn and/or develop Polish Sign Language, one will find mainly language courses at levels between A1 and B2, which are very often run by different branches of the Polish Association of the Deaf, but also by numerous private companies. Some of them are also available online. However, completing such a course most often does not ensure sufficient language competence to even start thinking about inter-preting. Moreover, the quality of teaching at these courses is also a problem – for one thing, the teaching methods and the existing standards are not unified, for another, it happens that many of the signed language courses on offer are being taught by hearing people not entirely competent in this area, which results in participants learning sign-supported Polish instead of Polish Sign Language. Those who are determined to master the latter are often left to their own devices and often turn to the Deaf community for quality language input. The overall situation does not resonate with the view that interpreters need solid language foundations on which to build their interpreting skills (Cokely, 2005; Lakner and Turner, 2015).

With respect to higher education for signed language interpreters, the situation also appears to be a kind of a paradox. First of all, it is concentrated within one university – the University of Warsaw and its two faculties: Faculty of Applied Linguistics with its 3-year BA programme in translation/interpreting where PJM is studied as a C language,[11] and the Faculty of Polish Studies with its 2-year MA programme in Po-

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9   See e.g.: https://plejada.pl/newsy/marcin-tyszka-krytykuje-tlumaczke-jezyka-migowego-wyjasniamy-skad-jej-ekspresja/pqrlxxw (Accessed 12 December 2023).

10   Examples of such universities include the largest universities in Poland, such as the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan or the University of Silesia, but also smaller academic institutions, such as the Upper Silesian University in Katowice, the Pedagogical University in Krakow or the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce.

11   C language is the language that students may learn from scratch in contrast with their B language in which they must already be very fluent when applying to the programme.

lish Sign Language philology focused on the linguistic and cultural aspects of Deaf Studies. The former has no logical continuation in the form of an interpreting MA programme, the latter has no prior BA level that would prepare students for advanced linguistic research at graduate level. The two programmes function independently of each other, and it appears that neither of them is able to deliver fully-formed professionals onto the labour market. Moreover, the two programmes are full-time and only available in full-time, face-to-face mode, impeding access to such education to people from other areas of Poland. Consequently, this is likely to be reflected in disparities between competence levels and interpreting standards offered by practitioners centred around Warsaw and those who do not have this privilege, maybe even in "juxtaposition of university and non-university graduates" (Gebruers, 2019). As interpreter educators (Witter-Merithew and Johnson, 2004; Shaw et al., 2006) underline the importance of high-quality and well-structured university education (preferably exceeding two years) in order to adequately prepare practitioners to meet the requirements of a variety of interpreting settings, the question arises about the logic of university education for signed language interpreters in Poland. The solutions created at this point are in no way a response to the needs of the market and the Deaf community, as well as those who would potentially consider a career as a signed language interpreter.

Thus, it is already fairly evident that entering the signed language interpreter profession in Poland is paradoxically a much-needed but not easy task. But what about when one is already an interpreter and wants to gain new or develop their already possessed professional competences? It is well-known that life-long learning is an inseparable part of the interpreter's job (Lee et al., 2018; Hoza, 2016; Napier, McKee and Goswell, 2010). However, the opportunities for continuous development in Poland are also very limited. The majority of them are offered by the Association of Polish Sign Language Interpreters, or Deaf community organisations, but these are also not provided on a regular basis or as systemic solutions. Most importantly, they are not mandatory. That is why less than a half of the respondents of the National Census of Signed Language Interpreters/Translators (n=99, 41.9%) declared that they had participated in continuous professional development (CPD) activities within the first 9 months of the year 2023.[12]

Finally, interpreters cannot count on professional supervision or official forms of mentoring (some interpreters try to do it individually). This is particularly unfortunate, as supervision is considered highly beneficial in terms of the development of the profession. Apart from serving as a very successful tool for self-reflection and mutual support (Dean and Pollard, 2009; Hetherington, 2011) it may contribute to enhancing professional standards, stimulate learning and development, and positively affect the practitioners' wellbeing. In a broader context, it leads to strengthening relationships and cooperation within the interpreter community (Curtis, 2018), something we definitely need to see more of in Poland.

Last, but not least, signed language interpreters are expected to provide high-quality services, but with no certification system in place, no quality control is in fact possible. There are no official procedures that would determine entry-to-practice qualifications of Polish Sign Language interpreters or guarantee that interpreting services will meet unified standards. This results in a lack of consensus among stakeholders as to what can and should be expected of professional interpreters. It also negatively affects the process of the professionalisation of signed language interpreting in Poland, as greater control over the practitioners is believed to indicate higher professionalisation of the occupation (Mikkelson, 2004). All in all, PJM courses lack systematisation and standardisation to provide a common competence level to would-be interpreters, university education calls for reconsideration and restructuring, the concept of continuous professional development requires development and reliability. With no supervision/men-

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12   Initial results of the 2023 National Census of Sign Language Interpreters and Translators (publication in progress).

toring and certification systems in place, we come to the paradox that one has to be very competent and professional in order to be an interpreting practitioner in Poland, but also self-sufficient in many areas.

5. Accessibility

As a result of the introduction of certain acts of law in previous years, the issue of accessibility is gradually gaining in importance in Poland – within medical settings, administrative settings, television settings, etc. We believe that thanks to that, we are moving in the right direction. Legal regulations being in place, however, does not guarantee that the rights of Deaf citizens are fully respected.

The *Act of 27 August 1997 on Professional and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities*[13] enables Deaf people to apply for funding to cover the costs of interpreting services in various life situations. Regional units of social welfare called "poviat family assistance centres"[14] are responsible for allocating special funds for that particular purpose. Yet as revealed by Małgorzata Talipska, a Deaf researcher and activist, the funding is usually awarded in only a small percentage of cases. In 2018, out of only 9 applications submitted countrywide (sic!), only 5 were granted (Talipska, 2021). It turns out that Deaf applicants are denied financial support that would provide them with access to university classes or child-birth classes, usually on the grounds of insufficient funds, but also errors in their application forms or the inability of the interpreter to issue invoices (ibidem).

The *Act of 18 March 2011 amending the Act on higher education, the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title and on Degrees and Title in Art and on Amendment of other acts*[15] guarantees Deaf students access to education via signed language interpreting services. Sadly, in a majority of universities, interpreting is provided by only one interpreter instead of the customary two.[16] Consequently, it is not possible for one interpreter to provide quality interpreting all day long with only short breaks in between classes. How can this then be called accessibility?

As in many European countries, the provision of signed language interpreting, alongside subtitles and audio description, is a requirement which Polish TV broadcasters must meet under existing laws on accessibility. In Poland, this is the *Act of 22 March 2018 on the Amendment of the Broadcasting Act*.[17] The problem is that it is only public broadcasters that are covered by the regulation and not private ones. Thus, there are different standards, formats, sizes of interpreter and background colours to be found across TV stations and channels. That leads to inconsistencies causing confusion and chaos. Sometimes the interpreter takes up ⅛ of the TV screen,[18] at other times 1/32; sometimes s/he is positioned in the right bottom corner of the screen, at other times in the left, and sometimes s/he floats somewhere in the middle of the left half of the screen, visible from waist to head. The backgrounds against which

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13   http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19971230776 (Accessed 27 November 2023).

14   In Polish: Powiatowe Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie (PCPR).

15   https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20110840455/O/D20110455.pdf (Accessed 27 November 2023).

16   The exception is Philology of Polish Sign Language where signed language interpreters have worked in teams since the start of the programme in 2019.

17   https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20180000915/O/D20180915.pdf (Accessed 27 November 2023).

18   In accordance with "Guidelines on the provision of sign language interpreting in the media in times of crisis" developed by Szczygielska and Kalata-Zawłocka (2020).

the interpreters are placed also vary, it often happens that they are not solid, which affects the reception of the interpreter's signing. It is not infrequent that the interpreters are covered by info bars or tags and logotypes. Moreover, a recent study by Szczygielska (2022) found that some public TV stations repeat the same interpreted content over and over again, only to meet the required percentage of accessible transmissions.

Under the existing laws of 2011[19] and 2019,[20] state institutions and offices are obliged to provide access to their services via signed language interpreting. To this end, many subscribe to one of the providers of online interpreting services operating on the market and invest in video-remote interpreting equipment. However, it is not unusual for a Deaf person to visit such a place with an errand, planning to use the services of remote interpreting (allegedly available in that particular institution), only to learn that the special equipment does not work, or that the person trained to use it is unavailable (Bartosiewicz, in preparation).

Finally, the same act on accessibility entitles institutions and organisations to apply for funding when organising online events with signed language interpreting. Not surprisingly, the number of online webinars, training course, and meetings significantly increased once it was introduced. As noticed by a participant of Kalata-Zawłocka's (2021) research, there is so much online content available in PJM nowadays that Deaf people could sit and watch it 24 hours a day. The problem is that since many interpreters are involved in online interpreting, Deaf people report difficulties in booking an interpreter for their live appointments. On the other hand, interpreters report mixed feelings and the sense of wasting time when interpreting online events, which they suspect no Deaf viewers are following (ibidem).[21]

Hence, on the one hand, even though the law is in place, Deaf people cannot always exercise their rights, but on the other, it appears that accessibility is not always as and where it should be.

6. Interpreters versus interpreters

Another paradox that can be observed in the discourse about the profession of signed language interpreting in Poland is the lack of integration within this professional group. This disparity manifests itself in two aspects.

Firstly, as professionalisation progresses, there is a growing gap between interpreters who approach their duties in an ethical manner, taking care to promote and follow good practice, and those who interpret for the Deaf without this professional commitment. The latter are often people with other jobs, only doing interpreting as an additional activity. These two extremes result in the lack of a unified image of the signed language interpreter – on the one hand, generating the figure of a person who interprets professionally, and on the other someone who knows signed language, uses it to benefit themselves, but at the same time does not integrate with the rest of the professional group.

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19   *Act of 19 August 2011 on sign language and other means of communication* – https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20112091243 (Accessed 28 November 2023).

20   *Act of 19 July 2019 on Providing Accessibility to People with Special Needs* – https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20190001696/U/D20191696Lj.pdf (Accessed 28 November 2023).

21   The reasons for a Deaf audience choosing not to attend online events may be multiple. For one thing it often transpires that the event is poorly promoted within the Deaf community, for another, the topic may be of no special interest to Deaf people, who are often not used to such unlimited access to so many domains.

The second aspect of this paradox is the absence of solidarity within the interpreting community itself. This is related to the fact that signed language interpreters are a diverse professional group, including the distinction between Deaf and hearing practitioners.

Along with the changes, Deaf people are also joining the signed language interpreting industry. At this point, they are already members of professional associations, including STPJM, and clearly contribute to building accessibility with PJM. However, despite these conditions, Deaf interpreters still seem to be something of a novelty (Kalata–Zawłocka and Świderska–Noworyta, 2023), with whom it is not entirely clear what tasks can be assigned. Against this background, there are situations of clients entrusting their interpretation to people who are not always best matched for it, and interpreters accepting new tasks without always being able to perform them at the most adequate level. When it comes to Deaf inter–preters, this may be the case when they translate texts written in a literary language. This difficulty has been discerned by Rachel Sutton–Spence and Klícia De Araújo Campos, both researchers of Brazilian Sign Language, who noted that translating poetry from a written form into Libras was a challenge for the Deaf (Sutton–Spence and De Araújo Campos, 2019). Analogous challenges await Deaf PJM translators, who, transferring content to sign language, must first encounter the text in Polish, which can be cultural–ly marked or linguistically complex, and raise problems of a correct interpretation on their part. Some of these translators trust their own skills so much as not to consult with hearing colleagues or Polish philo–logists. They often end up providing literal translations lacking equivalence of form and/or meaning.

Yet analogies can also be found with hearing interpreters and there is no shortage of examples in Poland when Deaf people express criticism of poorly done work. There are objections to the lack of profes–sionalism and generating a fake sense of accessibility, even if the institutions that hired the hearing interpreter were acting in good faith. In part, these may be due to the non–standardised legal situati–on of the signed language interpreting profession, but also to poor cooperation between hearing and Deaf practitioners. Such interpreting deficiencies in the public sector are reported in overseas studies, including countries where sign interpreting is already at a more professionalised level. For example, in the Netherlands, Deaf service users complain about missing particular elements when receiving interpreting from a hearing person, i.e. sufficient knowledge of the Deaf community and their culture, as well as appropriate handling of linguistic features such as space, classifiers, and facial expressions. If included appropriately in the interpretation, these features make it seem more natural to Deaf recipients and easier to follow. The study also identifies that the main competences that matter in understanding interpretation are adjusting signing style to the topics in the setting or learning new signs by interpreters (Verwey–Jonker, 2003 after: de Wit and Sluis, 2014). Hearing interpreters, for whom signing is often an acquired form of communication, are likely to fail to meet all these expectations without consulting Deaf colleagues or signed language experts, who can be a natural form of support for both them and their professional performance.

Thus, these two seemingly different situations in fact have a common denominator and show that cooperation between Deaf and hearing interpreters is of great importance, ultimately affecting the final outcome of the work of each group.

7.   Conclusions

There have been a considerable number of developments in Poland that theoretically should have taken

signed language interpreting to another level: we have quite a few regulations in place, Deaf and inter-preting organisations have been established, university education in place, there are new accessibility standards, and the interpreting community is growing and developing every year. Yet paradoxically little appears to function in the requisite manner, instead being rather chaotic and lacking synchronisation and cooperation. Interpreters are confronted with expectations and perform duties that are increas-singly challenging, but their legal and social status, as well as educational and professional preparation, remains inadequate to the task.

We recognise that in order to resolve the existing paradoxes that have been just described we would probably need to involve the communities of the Deaf and signed language interpreters in extensive dialogue. After the first few years of the growth and development of the interpreting community, during which the attention was mainly focused on addressing the most substantial gaps in many fields, a mo-ment has arrived when we finally need to reflect on our hitherto achievements and plan for the future. However, the two organisations that should provide the interpreting community with solid foundations on which to build the stability and prestige of the profession are not collaborating together to make this happen. We would encourage them to seek out a compromise and would like to foster the awareness that differences between these two organisations and their particular interests should not hamper the welfare of the two communities they serve.

People call themselves interpreters, but do they know what this really entails? None of the existing documents unequivocally and clearly regulates their profession by naming and unambiguously specify-ing their role, delineating their duties and obligations, but also their rights. There is no monitoring of who enters their name in the interpreter register, no criteria that must be met in order to provide interpreting services. Moreover, signed language interpreters are excluded from the group of sworn translators and interpreters. On top of this, there is a lack of consensus in the Deaf community as to their expectations toward signed language interpreters, and by society at large they are often treated as a necessary evil to be ticked off on a checklist. In these circumstances we recommend the verification and unification of the existing regulations pertaining to signed language interpreting, as well as improving interpreters' working conditions by raising the general public awareness about their work. The status of the pro-fession is multilayered and depends on many factors, but "taking ownership" of the profession, that is adequately naming and describing what interpreters are, as well as what they do, is what is considered crucial in the process of raising its status (Bentley-Sassaman, 2015).

Theoretically speaking, certain opportunities of both formal and informal education are available to sig-ned language interpreters in Poland, but their educational path does not seem to be well-structured and remains fairly limited. Existing university programmes are not compatible with one another, preventing didactic continuity. Thus, some new solutions need to be considered, such as creating a "prequel" for the MA and a "sequel" for the BA programme. Continuing professional development should be made mandatory. This, in turn, will enforce a more regular and systemic provision of CPD opportunities to pra-ctitioners, including mentoring and supervision. Finally, there is a pressing need to establish a certificati-on system to determine and monitor the quality of interpreting services. This should come as a result of a joint effort on the part of all stakeholders.

Signed language interpreters are often perceived as guarantors of accessibility for the Deaf. It should be made clear that this may only be the case if the existing regulations are well designed and duly follow-ed. Still not enough attention is paid to issues of genuine accessibility, which results in empty promises and the sham exercising of Deaf people's rights. Any change to this situation demands a unanimous

reaction from the Deaf community and their hearing allies, including interpreters. It also calls for raising awareness among them about the very notion of accessibility, its legal underpinnings, the requisite criteria for its effective provision and means of advocating for oneself. The next step is to educate the hearing society – at schools, through social campaigns, art, at institutional level, etc. Regulations alone are not enough to ensure accessibility: people need to know, understand, and realise why it is important to follow them.

Signed language interpreters in Poland seem to be a heterogeneous group that does not have a habit of cooperating with each other. This applies to both the aspect of commitment and the division of the community into interpreters absorbed in their career development and those earning a supplementary income from interpreting, showing less progress in professionalisation. The industry, however, should be as close as possible to each other's visions and strive to harmonise a common view in order to build a convergent formula for the profession, which is then perceived by people outside their circle (Gebruers, 2019). A similar thing applies to the interaction between Deaf and hearing interpreters, who, often acting in isolation, let their clients and themselves down through the quality of their work and its subsequent reception. In order to implement good standards and quality interpreting and translation, internal agreement is needed, but also between non- and hearing interpreters, as suggested e.g. by de Wit and Sluis (2014).

To sum up, interpreters come to the profession from a variety of backgrounds, via different avenues, having various motivations and holding on to values which are occasionally conflicting. As a result, disparities within the interpreting community are only natural. The problem appears when some of them do not identify with the profession or its standards, and do not share the same perspective on their role as others, as is the case in Poland. To change this situation, interpreters need to feel that they belong to "a community of practice" (Hunt, 2015: 317 after: Gebruers, 2019) – they should receive a similar education, thus acquiring the same ideology of the profession and standards (Best, 2014). Moreover, establishing ties with their colleagues during the educational process would strengthen group solidarity. Apart from education, the unification of the very professional foundations of interpreting could also be beneficial. This means improving working conditions in order to enable interpreters to undertake interpreting as a full-time job rather than a part-time one (Gebruers, 2019). Having enough work and adequate financial gratification for it would quite likely contribute to reducing competitiveness and increasing the need for collaboration. Subsequently, that would help them develop a sense of unity and of belonging to a group of professional practitioners.

Most importantly, in order to eliminate these paradoxes and facilitate the further development of the profession of signed language interpreters in Poland, stakeholders including interpreters (Deaf and hearing), educators, researchers, Deaf and hearing service users, all need to agree on a mutual and consistent vision of how the interpreting profession should progress (Turner, 2005). Moreover, they should join forces to ensure that this comes to pass.

8.   References

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A Professional Paradox: the (Un)equal Balance of the Rights and Duties of Signed Language Interpreters in Poland

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A Professional Paradox: the (Un)equal Balance of the Rights and Duties of Signed Language Interpreters in Poland

Aiming for the righteous treatment of Deaf interpreters

Naomi Sheneman

Abstract

Although Deaf interpreters are not new to the deaf world, they have recently been integrated into the signed language interpreting profession. Deaf interpreters continue to try to carve places for themselves in this field, but face obstacles such as ongoing covert oppression. Despite the increased appearance of support for Deaf interpreters' work, we are still experiencing microaggressions in our interactions with our team interpreters and when discussing the logistics of our work with hiring entities and interpreting agencies. Deaf interpreters have discussed the nagging feeling that we are being treated differently from our non-deaf peers. Symptoms of ableism within a profession/workplace include abled-bodied people making assumptions about what disabled individuals know and can do and using belittling communication approaches (Castle & Slattery, 2021). Within the signed language interpreting profession, abled-bodied non-deaf interpreters and individuals working within hiring entities demonstrate bias towards Deaf interpreters by talking down to them based on the belief that Deaf interpreters do not understand the inner workings of this profession. For example, interpreting agencies seem to interact with us differently as if we do not know any better. This ableism is also an indicator of know-your-place aggression by asserting professional authority (Robinson, Sheneman & Henner, 2020), based on non-deaf interpreters' longevity in this profession. Know-your-place aggression is defined by Mitchell (2018) as aggression in positions of power that reclaim their power against marginalized individuals. In this preliminary study to understand what is going on, Deaf interpreters were surveyed regarding their experiences with these interactions. Survey responses reveal that Deaf interpreters continue to be mistreated by interpreting colleagues and interpreting referral agencies.

Keywords

1. Introduction

My positionality

Since my 2016 paper on Deaf interpreters' ethics, I have not conducted any research on Deaf interpreters' experiences within the signed language interpreting profession. Admittedly, this is largely because of the controversial nature of their presence in this field and how they may operate differently from their non-deaf interpreting colleagues. I shied away from furthering my exploration of Deaf interpreters' work because this paper was criticized. The most common insistence was that Deaf interpreters and

non-deaf interpreters should approach ethical decisions in the same way. However, Llewellyn-Jones and Lee's (2013) role-space framework disputes the idea that each interpreter approaches an interpreted situation in the same way. I am privileged as an educated Deaf interpreter with a doctorate degree in interpretation and translation. Numerous Deaf interpreter colleagues have asked me to conduct more research on Deaf interpreters over the past few years. Efsli's 2023 conference theme: *Rights, Right?* inspired me to dip my toe in the water.

I have worked as a certified Deaf interpreter for 15 years. Granted, I have had the honor of working with some great non-deaf interpreter teams and interpreting referral agencies. Sadly, it was not uncommon for me to experience microaggressions and oppressive acts by individual non-deaf interpreters and agencies. From non-deaf interpreters, I often get comments insisting that I was not needed such as, "I don't need you here." Sometimes this goes a bit too far with the non-deaf interpreter questioning the deaf consumer, "Are you sure you really need her here?". This approach is rooted in the belief that deaf consumers' linguistic needs are deficient, requiring the presence of Deaf interpreters. Participants in my 2018 doctoral dissertation study expressed that they did not want to have Deaf interpreters despite the potential for improved and enhanced communication access. This preference is rooted in the language attitudes that deaf people develop from the implicit and explicit messaging fed by the system (Hill, 2012). Henner and Robinson (2023) proposed a theoretical and abolitionist framework, crip linguistics, which challenges the ongoing belief that there are right ways to language.

As for interpreting referral agencies, I often experience 'hearsplaining', a term inspired by a similar term:'mansplaining.' This is when a person in a position of power looks down on the minoritized individual, assuming they know nothing and tries to educate them or explain something to them. In the case of 'mansplaining', a man does that to a woman. 'Hearsplaining' isperformed by a non-deaf person judging a deaf person (The Limping Chicken, 2017). I have observed in my email interactions with some interpreting referral agencies that their staff would go into 'hearsplaining' mode, talking down to me and explaining how things are done with clear disregard of my longevity in this profession. I have wondered if they use a similar approach with non-deaf interpreters. Perhaps not.

Recently, I have been supporting novice Deaf interpreters who are starting out in their interpreting work, questioning whether they are qualified enough to remain in the field. They were uncertain about their qualifications and training. Imposter syndrome often affects marginalized individuals primarily because of the system in place (Feenstra et al., 2020). They reported similar treatment from their non-deaf colleagues and interpreting referral agencies. It is challenging to reassure them to continue if they experience this treatment at the very beginning of their career as Deaf interpreters.

Reactions from Deaf interpreters

I decided to take the plunge and conduct a preliminary survey to understand what Deaf interpreters were experiencing. What was surprising to me was the reaction I got when I distributed the survey. Deaf interpreters were appreciative of this survey, insisting that it was important. One Deaf interpreter stated: "Oh my goodness. It's about time that we might have a voice. I'll do the survey!". Another Deaf interpreter expressed hope: "We have the same goals in reducing the resistance and increasing acceptance of what it takes to provide effective communication. The change is happening and hopefully the old stigma habits/thoughts will diminish." This was a confirmation that Deaf interpreters wanted to be heard and seen in this field and that this needs to happen through research.

2.   The Current Status

As long as deaf people and signed languages have existed, there have been deaf people interpreting for their community members (Adam *et al.*, 2014). This has been a reciprocal act for years. It was not until recently that Deaf interpreters were recognized as working professionals in the signed language interpreting field. Deaf interpreters constitute a small fraction of the overall number of interpreters globally, with non-deaf interpreters dominating the landscape of the profession. Deaf interpreters are often described as having the linguistic and cultural capital to improve communication access for deaf people (Rizzolo, 2022). Despite the increased demand for Deaf interpreters, negative attitudes towards them continue to exist. We experienced this through treatment by non-deaf interpreting colleagues and interpreting referral agencies. Through our exchange of stories, Deaf interpreters have discussed sharing the same feeling that we are being treated differently than our non-deaf colleagues.

Castle and Slattery (2021) reported that ableism exists in professions and workplaces because able-bodied people use condescending communication tactics based on their own assumptions about what disabled individuals know and can do. As a result, disabled individuals receive less pay than their able-bodied peers. Based on the exchange of stories among Deaf interpreters, it appears that they most often experience two of five examples of ableism in the workplace, as highlighted by Castle and Slattery (2021): non-deaf individuals make assumptions about them and use degrading communication approaches. The harm of professionalization is that marginalized voices are ignored (Kent, 2007). The increasing number of Deaf interpreters in this profession means their voices are becoming more apparent, but treatment of exclusion and disregard remains.

Ableism/audism, as experienced by Deaf interpreters, is tied to know-your-place aggression in which non-deaf interpreters/individuals assert their professional authority (Robinson, Sheneman & Henner, 2020). Yes, Deaf interpreters are also professionals in this field, but non-deaf interpreters have been in this field longer, which gives them the justification to assert their expertise and knowledge. However, there have been historical documentations of Deaf interpreters at work years before signed language interpretation became a profession. In colonial New England in the United States in 1640, a Deaf interpreter was seen to support the communication process (Carty, Macready, & Sayers, 2009). The first documentation of a Deaf interpreter working in a courtroom took place in 1886 in Indiana, United States (*Skaggs v. State*, 1886). Between 1886 and the present day, there have been other instances of Deaf interpreters providing communication access. The histories of deaf people are shared through narratives rather than written in print. However, this should not be discounted (Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2014).

Mitchell (2018) describes know-your-place aggression as those in majority groups reclaiming their power against marginalized individuals. This aggression is revealed, especially as non-deaf interpreters claim gatekeeping power to determine when Deaf interpreters are needed.

Labeling is another issue. Deaf interpreters are labeled as Deaf interpreters, whereas non-deaf interpreters are labeled as interpreters associated with their working languages (for example, ASL-English interpreter). Adam (2017) proposed that we use working languages to describe Deaf interpreters. Labeling them as Deaf interpreters is an example of othering. Othering is the process of differentiating between those who are not like the general population. This is a way to compartmentalize human beings into boxes (Goodley, 2017).

3.   Methodology

This preliminary survey via Google Forms consisted of one demographic question to ensure their quali-
fications to participate along with 11 questions about their experiences with non-deaf interpreting colle-
agues and interpreting referral agencies. The survey was distributed digitally via social media and email
in the summer of 2023. Emails were sent to individual Deaf interpreters within the global network. Emails
were also sent to interpreting associations in several countries requesting distribution of the survey. The
survey was open for approximately two weeks. I wanted a pulse check to gain a better understanding of
what was going on.
The survey included 42 participants. Google Forms has a basic statistical reporting mechanism for clo-
sed-end questions. Open-ended responses were coded through the identification of common themes.
All of them passed the eligibility question, confirming that they were Deaf interpreters. They had the
option of submitting responses in English or sending signed videos on YouTube or Vimeo. 41 participants
responded anonymously in English. One participant responded in American Sign Language (ASL) via
YouTube. Respondents were from the United States, Canada, Europe, and Mexico. Most respondents
(63.4 percent) were experienced Deaf interpreters who had worked for more than ten years in the field.
A total of 31.7 percent had five to ten years of interpreting experience. A total of 4.9 percent had three to
five years of interpreting experience. Interestingly, no novice Deaf interpreters (0-3 years)participated in
the survey.

4.   Results

All participants reported having experienced oppression from their non-deaf interpreting colleagues,
while 70.7 percent reported that they had experienced similar treatment from interpreting referral agen-
cies.

Next, I will present the results in two categories: non-deaf interpreting colleagues and interpreting refer-
ral agencies.

Oppressive treatment by non-deaf interpreting colleagues

After they had confirmed that they had endured oppressive treatment, they were asked how often to
answer an open-ended question. Responses were categorized as percentages and descriptions. The
numerical response ranged from 45 to 80 percent of the time. One participant expressed: "In the begin-
ning, 80% of the time, but it has decreased over the years and the type of oppression and pattern has
evolved so sometimes it is worse, even though less. I'd say 45% of the time now." The non-numerical re-
sponses used the following descriptions to express frequency: a few times, regularly, often, and always.
A participant insisted: "One is too many." Another participant stated, "To put into words, oppressive
behaviors by non-deaf interpreters and agency owners/employees are entwined with the profession of
providing language interpreting. It is relatively impossible to swim against the current, thus I choose to
drift in specific directions with specific individuals/agencies." Respondents indicated that with experien-
ce over time, they know which colleagues are committed to teamwork and collaboration with which they

are willing to work, so this treatment decreased over time with less exposure to those who are oppressive. One respondent stated that they work with an organization that works with Deaf interpreters on an ongoing basis so that treatment does not exist as often as when they are freelancing in the community.

Respondents were offered options to explain why this was happening and invited to offer other possible reasons.

- 69%: "I'm deaf"
- 14.3%: "I'm new to the field":
- 14.3%: "They feel entitled/privileged"
- 7.1%: "I have got less training than them"
- 7.1% "I am not certified yet"

Other reasons (open-ended):
- Non-deaf interpreting colleagues
    – Are resistant towards DIs due to lack of knowledge about what they do
    – Fear working with them
    – Think they know signed language better
    – Did not think a DI was needed
    – Question DIs' methods for improving communication access
    – Believe that DIs are stupid
    – Do not respect DIs
- I have been a part of the deaf community for a much longer time.
- "I grew up a CODA and lost my hearing to become a Deaf interpreter because I was part of the deaf community for a long time."
- I am not a member of a national interpreting organization.
- "I don't feel I belong"
- My experience was not trusted
- I am a person of color

Respondents were asked to offer examples of oppressive treatment by non-deaf interpreting colleagues:
- Making decisions who/where/when DIs can work
- Not giving them a chance to explain how they support the interpreting process
- Looking down on them acting like they know more
- Not willing to feed a specific way
- Not signing when talking with other hearing team
- Questioning whether they understood anything
- Not transparent nor communicating details of assignments
- Prefer to work with less experienced DIs
- Criticized their sign choices and how they language
- Disputed their interruptions during interpreting process
- Say they are not needed (some preferred hearing teams instead)
- Excluding/ignoring them during interpreting process
- Making decisions without their input
- "Hearsplaining": Telling them how to interpret and how to navigate interpreting jobs
- Quality of their work is lessened, expecting DIs to do the heavy lifting

- Talking behind their backs
- Convince agencies not to use DIs
- Questioned their credentials, training, and linguistic fluency
- Starting an assignment without them
- Not willing to show up at a job because a DI was there
- Not willing to prep with DI
- Challenging their interpretation decisions in front of deaf consumers
- Gatekeeping authority
- Prioritizing their own availability over Deaf interpreters' availability
- Treated them as a deaf consumer instead of a colleague
- Exclusion at national SL association events
- No constructive feedback

One participant shared: "Microaggression statements such as 'you should be grateful that there are DIs for press conferences," and "How dare you criticize another interpreter?'".
Another participant recalled: "Laughing at deaf consumers for their language and dismissing my feedback that it is not right to laugh."

Oppressive treatment by interpreting referral agencies

Of the participants, 59.3% believed that agencies treat them differently, primarily because they were deaf.

Other reasons (open-ended):
- Agencies:
  - Do not advocate for Deaf interpreters
  - Do not recognise my professional experience, skill, and knowledge
  - Believe in a "one size fits all" approach
  - Prioritize profits instead of ensuring effective communication access.
  - *"Business model is highly profitable with no oversight nor quality assurance. In the old days interpreting was local, thus the community could proactively inform others if an interpreter was unprofessional or negligent. Now we have interpreting agencies from the other side of the country dispatching interpreters with no regard to community status or language skills."*
  - Think that Deaf interpreters are not needed
  - Exploit Deaf interpreters
  - Think Deaf interpreters are easily available and desperate for work
  - Assert their authority as non-deaf individuals
- Non-signed language agencies are unfamiliar with signed language and Deaf interpreters:
  "Stigmas, lack of knowledge about effective communication, and no tools to convince requestor why two interpreters are productive.. Hassle? Easier to ask someone else? Not needing to explain why we need to send a bigger team therefore costs more."
- Agencies run by non-deaf interpreters are gatekeepers.
  "Gatekeeping is a big issue when run by HIs. It's a cultural imbalance. They are gatekeepers and they do not want to pay Deaf interpreters for their services or even at appropriate rates."
- Lack of collaboration and united support for Deaf interpreters:
  "There is a lot of competition among different interpreting agencies. Many agencies work in a silo and

do not share interpreters or information."

The survey inquired whether agencies treat Deaf interpreters differently from their non-deaf interpreting colleagues. 83 percent of the respondents responded affirmatively.

How are Deaf interpreters treated differently?
- Lower pay
- Less honor
- Less information about assignments
- Last to get information
- Claim that HIs have more value
- Less assignments:
  "Hearing gets jobs easily... Deaf interpreters have to wait for the gate to be opened to get job."
- Ask HIs for input instead
- Claim that HIs are fluent in SL
- Deciding whether DIs can do the job
- Secure HIs before DIs letting them pick their preferred DIs
- More critical of DIs' ethical decisions
- Patronizing
- Not willing to do video conversations in SL
- Warm-body syndrome:
  "Warm-body syndrome (agencies search for the right hearing fit but deaf warm body that is easily managed) and not looking for quality team."

One participant lamented: "Deciding whether DI can do the job, but not do that with hearing interpreters. This is a double standard. Many hearing interpreters do not sign very well and deaf people suffer."

Effect of oppressive treatment on Deaf interpreters

The survey asked how this treatment from non-deaf interpreting colleagues and interpreting referral agencies made them feel.

- Doubting self
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Dumbfounded
- Disgusted
- Undervalued
- Exhausted from having to advocate for self and access or working harder
- Insulted
- Disappointed
- Gaslit
- Lousy
- Depressed
- Subpar/less of an interpreter
- Annoyed
- Oppressed/ marginalized

- "Tired of the same bullshit"
- "Like a mouse running in a wheel to continue doing the best I can"
- "Let's not go there"
- "It's 2023....."
- "Like shit"
- "Ready to give up"

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Barone (1999) posited that oppression exists at multiple levels: macro (systematic/institutional), meso (intergroups), and micro (individual). At all three levels, structures create barriers for marginalized individuals (Barone, 1999). At the macro level, systematic attitudes towards disabled individuals, including the deaf, have always been a major barrier and trickle down to institutions and individuals' attitudes towards deaf people. This is where Deaf interpreters are impacted.

Language attitudes about signed language and communication access come at the macro level, creating negative perceptions of DIs and deaf consumers who request and/or work with them. At the meso level, interpreting associations, interpreter education programs, interpreting studies, and agencies do not make Deaf interpreters feel valued or welcome. Interactions between interpreting colleagues occur at the micro level.

Most Deaf interpreters in this preliminary study believe that they are being treated in this way simply because they are deaf. This system was rooted in ableism. Abled-bodied individuals were taught to hold judgments towards those with disabilities, despite their best intentions. One participant expressed this concern: "Dominant majority in North America caters to the white abled persons (greater than 80% of active interpreters and interpreter educators). The majority of interpreters learn from non-deaf interpreters/educators, and therefore lack cultural sensitivity or awareness. There is no oversight of interpreting agencies which proliferate from the language and minority Deaf communities."

Access to interpreter education is limited, as many programs were designed for non-deaf students (Deaf Interpreter Academy, 2022). It is problematic that not many Deaf interpreters are educating tomorrow's interpreters, which perpetuates a negative attitude towards them. Some organizations and individuals offer shorter non-credit and non-matriculated training programs tailored for Deaf interpreters. In the United States, the certifying body, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), had a moratorium on certifications for Deaf interpreters for several years, preventing them from progressing further in the field (Rizzolo, 2022). Deaf interpreters survive in this field by identifying non-deaf interpreting colleagues, and interpreting referral agencies have demonstrated through their actions that they are able to support Deaf interpreters' existence in this field.

Recommendations

This topic requires further investigation. While this was a preliminary study to get a feeler of what was going on, it would be worthwhile to conduct mixed methods research with a larger number of Deaf interpreters from different countries. Survey research would be a good quantitative approach, followed

by either a focus group or one-on-one interviews. A country-by-country comparison may offer a better understanding of whether this is a global issue or is applicable to specific countries.

Unfortunately, many signed language interpretation and translation research studies do not include Deaf interpreters. Why not? Let's change that. Deaf interpreters deserve a voice in interpreting studies. I hope for a book about the journey of Deaf interpreters and how they faced and overcame the barriers they faced.

Some issues emerged in the data that warrant further investigation. One participant felt that oppression increased after the COVID-19 pandemic started. Is it possible that the increased visibility of Deaf interpreters in press conferences during the pandemic triggered these oppressive acts?

One respondent believed that this treatment was happening because they were people of color. In 2022, I conducted interviews with a few Deaf interpreters to discuss their interpreter education experiences. One participant was a person of color and reported that they were in a program with a white Deaf student who received better treatment than they did (Deaf Interpreter Academy, 2022). It is worthwhile to explore the intersection of race and deafness in how they are treated in this profession.

A few participants expressed frustration with Coda interpreters. Although many Codas are members of deaf communities long before their non-deaf colleagues, the respondents in this study had a mixed perspective on Codas. Some Codas support their work, while others do not. It would be worthwhile to explore the reasons behind the willingness and the lack thereof to support Deaf interpreters.

Now what?

As one participant expressed, "(The) interpreting field in general is toxic, and we need to do better." As a Deaf interpreter that has been in this field for over 23 years, it has been a challenging ride. I continue to face barriers such as attitudes about my work and communication access at professional events. Let me illustrate an example that occurred at the 2023 efsli Conference. I encountered non-deaf interpreters in the hotel elevator, and they started speaking to me. The mere assumption that everyone is non-deaf is heartbreaking and is parallel with what one participant stated, "I don't feel like I belong." Those in the elevator waited for me to respond, but I could not understand them. I asked, "Do you know there are deaf people here?" One of them became angry, "Yes I know!" There was no apology.

As the Dalai Lama beautifully stated, "Change begins within the individual. Only then can it spread to others." Changes occur at the micro level. It begins with you. I challenge my non-deaf interpreting colleagues and individuals who interpret referral agencies to unpack them with the following questions:

Are you treating deaf interpreters in the same way you treat non-deaf interpreters?
Are you creating spaces for Deaf interpreters?

Keep in mind that every word matters. Microaggressions are small, micro-level comments and actions that may seem minor, but can add up and be more harmful (Solórzan, Ceja & Yosso 2000). However, all microaggressions that Deaf interpreters face in this field do add up. Over time, repeated microaggressions become like a stab in the heart. Quashing our voices and contributions is a form of epistemic violence (Sheneman and Robinson, in press), in which our lived and situated knowledge is excluded and

undervalued. Please embrace and value us. We have so much to offer to this field, especially with our Deaf extralinguistic knowledge (Beldon et al., 2009) which can go some way to address the acculturation gap that exists in the interpreting process (CATIE Center, 2019). Brick and Beldon (2014) claim that it is an ethical violation to operate without a Deaf interpreter, as deaf people deserve optimal communication access. If non-deaf interpreters and interpreting referral agencies continue to harm Deaf interpreters, we may see a drop in the number of Deaf interpreters. Let us work collaboratively to stop this oppressive treatment. As one participant beautifully commented, "Hearing interpreters need to accept the fact that Deaf interpreters are L1 and that working with them is blissful."

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When Right is not Necessarily Right: The Case of the New German Court Interpreting Law

Julia S. Cramer

Abstract

The new German law for interpreting in court proceedings (Gerichtsdolmetschergesetz – GDolmG) entered into force on 1 January 2023. Originally designed to harmonise inconsistent legislation across the different German States, it completely failed to deliver on this promise.

At the same time, the new law has led to considerable protest among interpreters and might even be declared unconstitutional by the Federal Court of Germany.

The expertise of interpreter associations was not adequately taken into account. They had only been given the opportunity to contribute their comments at a very late stage in the deliberation of the legislation and it seems that the important aspects they brought up were never considered in depth. Thus the new German law for court interpreting sheds a very insightful light on the current status of both legal interpreting in general and sign language interpreting in particular as it exists in Germany today.

At the same time, these events very well illustrate the ongoing need to balance the need for professionalisation on the one hand with, on the other hand, the existence of a great many long-standing and experienced interpreters, who do not have the required qualifications.

The events also show that seemingly positive ideas can always have a flipside. In this case, subsuming all interpreters – whether their working languages be spoken or signed – in the same category and calling them "interpreters" without further distinction has created unexpected challenges and has turned out to be counterproductive in the end.

Keywords

Legal interpreting, Germany, legislation, professionalisation, terminology

1.   Introduction

In May 2019, a circular issued by the German Federal Parliament announced that Criminal Proceedings in Germany were to be modernised in 12 different areas (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019a). A so-called "omnibus act" would be created for this – a comprehensive law which would bring about changes to several other laws in one fell swoop. One of the areas affected by these changes was court interpreting.
At that point, this seemed to be a very reasonable idea. Legislation regulating court interpreting was

quite different across the country, and as far as signed language interpreting was concerned, provisions were generally not the same as for spoken language interpreters.

Curiously, the interpreter associations waited to be asked for their professional input on the matter and then for a first draft of the proposed law to be issued.

2.   Starting Points

In order to understand the events, it is worth first having a look at the situation of court interpreters at the time of the announcement.

Professional framework

A long-standing terminological distinction between translating and interpreting had already been introduced in Germany by Kade in 1968. Since the mid-nineties, with academic degrees obtainable at university level, signed language interpreting had become increasingly well established. Recently, a growing trend can be observed for signed language interpreters to speak of themselves as interpreters for a certain language combination similar to spoken language interpreters (e.g. "interpreter for German and German Sign Language") independent of the exact wording of the degree obtained which usually uses the term "sign language interpreter". Correspondingly, in addition to being members of the considerable number of translators' and interpreters' associations for signed language interpreters only, many of them join associations for language mediators with mixed working languages.

At the time when the new law was drafted, many of these associations were listed in the so-called "Lobbyliste" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2023) – a list of stakeholders in different areas designed to support politicians in finding out who to consult when gathering information and weighing up different interests in their opinion-making processes. This list was easily available to everybody on the Internet at any time.

Court interpreting and legislation

Germany is a Federal Republic consisting of 16 federal states. Legislation can be passed at the federal level, thus having a nationwide effect, or – as state law – be valid for a single Federal State only. Typical areas for the latter are police, educational, cultural and media issues. Legal issues in Germany are regulated through various legal norms, some of them being federal law, the other, state law. Examples for superordinate federal law regulations are the German judicature act (Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz – GVG), the German code of criminal procedure (Strafprozeßordnung – StPO) or the judicial remuneration and compensation act (Justizvergütungs- und Entschädigungsgesetz – JVEG).

The swearing-in of court interpreters and translators at the time when this law was announced was regulated through individual court interpreter laws in the different federal states. These regulations showed considerable variation in the professional requirements for application as well as in the professional titles sworn interpreters and translators were allowed to carry afterwards. Language mediators sworn in in one of the federal states could later refer to their swearing-in from one federal state when

working in another state, so that only one swearing-in was necessary. Once sworn in, interpreters were usually entitled to keep this status for an unlimited time, giving them the opportunity to fully specialise in the area for the long-term.

All sworn interpreters and translators for spoken and signed languages were registered in a publicly accessible database at https://www.justiz-dolmetscher.de (Land Hessen, n. d.) in order to make them easy to find for courts and other contracting bodies.

However, in order to be allowed to interpret in lawsuits, interpreters did not necessarily have to be generally sworn in. The judicature act (§ 189 GVG) also leaves room for interpreters to be sworn in on site for individual lawsuits only ("Ad-hoc-Vereidigung").

An extremely relevant legal norm for sign language interpreters was and still is the judicial remuneration and compensation act (Justizvergütungs- und -Entschädigungsgesetz – JVEG) which is not only used to determine remuneration for all spoken and signed language interpreters and translators working in court situations, but is also used as a guideline for many other legal regulations, especially concerning social legislation. In addition, it also serves as the basis for the fees of sign language interpreters in completely different contexts.

By and large, there was a clear trend observable from the perspectives of the professionals and the lawgivers towards subsuming signed language interpreters in the overall interpreting profession without considering their working languages. Thus, signed language interpreters were becoming generally perceived as language mediators on equal terms with spoken language interpreters.

3.   The Announcement

Plans for a new court interpreting law became known in May 2019 when the German Federal Parliament proclaimed in a circular (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019a) the government's intention to modernise criminal proceedings . It outlined 12 central points to be addressed, one of them being the "quality standards for court interpreters" ("Qualitätsstandards für Gerichtsdolmetscher"). In the statement, the need for consistency in legislation concerning the swearing-in of court interpreters in the different federal states was outlined, the aim being to harmonise the different standards regarding both personal and professional requirements. This should be achieved through changes in § 189 GVG and the creation of a new Court Interpreter Law (Gerichtsdolmetschergesetz). This new law was supposed to:

- clearly express the professional obligations of court interpreters (i.e. diligence, impartiality, and confidentiality)
- create a public national registry of all sworn-in interpreters
- determine which bodies should be responsible for the swearing-in of interpreters and translators as well as the necessary personal prerequisites
- and, most importantly, standardise the professional requirements with regard to the examinations of translators, interpreters and sign language interpreters.

All in all, except for the idea of creating a registry, which, in fact, had already been done, the idea of reorganising legal interpreting in Germany seemed very justified in view of its differing requirements.
The proposed changes even appeared to create the long-awaited opportunity to finally reach complete

parity between spoken and signed language interpreters, at least in this area.

Thus, the various interpreters' and translators' associations waited patiently for the Ministry to contact them. But surprisingly and unfortunately, this never happened. Instead, a couple of months later, without any prior consultation, they received a complete first draft of the act as a *fait accompli*.

4.   First Draft and Reactions

First draft

The first draft of the omnibus act called "Gesetz zur Modernisierung des Strafverfahrens – StrafRModG" (law for the modernisation of the criminal proceedings) had been devised by the Ministry of Justice and was sent out to a very limited number of interpreter associations on 8 August 2019 (Deutscher Bunde–stag, 2019b). These associations were asked to hand in their statements within a period of two months. Thankfully, they started circulating the draft to a much larger number of associations, so that many members of the profession as a whole were informed.

Reactions of the interpreter associations

The topic sparked great interest, and a great many criticisms were made on a large variety of topics. The gist of these statements was very similar and included many of the following points:
- Although listed as one of key elements to be addressed, the relevant obligations of language medi–ators were not described in it at all.
- No clear definition of the term "court interpreter" was included.
- The list of required qualifications was completely inadequate and insufficient. The draft only referred to "necessary language skills" ("die erforderlichen Sprachkenntnisse"). These should be proven by passing an interpreting exam at a state examination office ("staatliches Prüfungsamt") or a university. In certain cases, a language degree from abroad, a C2 language certificate issued by a language institute or even a higher education school certificate from abroad could substitute as proof, but without proof of German language proficiency. On the other hand, no proof of knowled–ge of legal language in any of the future working languages nor any legal expert knowledge was mentioned.
- The sphere of relevance of the proposed law would be limited to court hearings only, thus disregar–ding other relevant and related areas where specialised language mediators would be needed for meetings with the prosecution or the police.
- There was no mention of a standardised examination which would harmonise standards in the different German states.
- Sworn professionals would not have priority over interpreters who were sworn in for one single occasion.
- According to the draft, it would be still possible to ask an interpreter agency to send any interpreter without checking for relevant qualifications.
- There would only be a short transition period until language mediators, previously sworn in accor–ding to Federal State regulations, would all lose their accreditation. This would create extra expense and unnecessary work for both the language mediators, as well as for the courts themselves. No

grandfather clause for experienced and long-standing language mediators was included, which would have made it possible for them to stay in the field on the basis of their experience. Thus it was feared that many seasoned interpreters could lose their main source of income. A relatively short transition period of 2 years was planned in, after which time the law was to take effect.

- Last but not least, signed language interpreters (as well as translators) were not explicitly mentioned in the text at all. This was strange in that the law was supposed to be designed specifically for them as well. Still it seemed then not to be an oversight, but was generally understood to be a deliberate decision to eliminate the artificial distinction between colleagues with different working languages – a fatal misunderstanding, as it later turned out.

Reactions of the German Federal Council

Another important stakeholder in the legislation process in German is the Federal Council (Bundesrat) which consequently was also invited to formulate a statement. In its evaluation of the draft, the German Federal Council (Bundesrat, 2019) pointed out that:

- interpreters are not an integral part of judicature itself, so that it should not be possible to regulate their work on a federal level at all.
- the planned law would interfere with the educational sovereignty of the federal states.
- signed language interpreters and translators were not included in the draft.
- the regulations were only for lawsuits, but not for other related instances, or for situations where authorities would want to make use of sworn interpreters and translators.
- the fact that in future, accreditations should be valid for 5 years only would violate the protection of confidence of long-standing language mediators.

In conclusion, the Bundesrat called the proposed changes "neither necessary nor reasonable" ("weder notwendig noch sinnvoll", Bundesrat 2019, p. 4). It even recommended removing the whole passage about court interpreting from the omnibus act and – if at all – establishing a court interpreting law at a later date to have the chance to consider everything in more detail. Unfortunately, in spite of these severe doubts in terms of the content and the general legality of the planned law, the legislative process was not stopped, but instead simply continued.

5. The Court Interpreting Law

The First Version

Subsequently, the law for the modernisation of criminal proceedings, including the proposed court interpreting law, was approved and published in the Federal Law Gazette (Bundesgesetzblatt) on 12 December 2019 with only slight changes as compared to the initial draft (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2021). There were also small changes with regard to its timeline, as the "Gerichtsdolmetschergesetz – GDolmG" (that was its name) was now planned to come into effect a little later, namely on 1 July 2021 with a transition period until 12 December 2024.

In this version of the law, the requirements for court interpreters would have been lowered in some cases as compared to the standard previously required. In several federal states, actual proficiency until then

had had to be proven by means ofh an examination which tested the interpreters' knowledge of both languages, legal terminology in both languages and most of all, their interpreting skills and knowledge of other relevant techniques.

By now, it was clear that signed language interpreters and translators were indeed not meant to be included in the scope of the law. Interestingly, in this version an additional proof of examination was listed as a possible prerequisite to be sworn in as an interpreter: a certificate of participation in training to become a certified translator issued by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

The Second and Final Version

Then, even before the law came into effect, on 30 June 2021 some more changes were introduced as part of the so-called "law for the further development of the code of criminal procedure and for the amendment of other regulations" (Gesetz zur Fortentwicklung der Strafprozessordnung und zur Änderung weiterer Vorschriften) (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2021, S. 2109f.).

Most importantly, the term "language skills" ("Sprachkennisse") was now changed to "specialist expert knowledge" in the German language and the other working language ("Fachkenntnisse". Literally instead of "in the working language", it spoke of the language "to be sworn on"). Furthermore, basic knowledge of German legal language was added as a requirement.

The part about the alternative proof of proficiency was also adapted in a way that the school leaving certificate was taken out and instead proof via a state-run procedure to check the language proficiency was introduced.

Although these changes constitute an improvement in some regards, they show even more ignorance about interpreting in other respects, since now the term "Fachwissen" was once again not defined at all. Thus it could refer to anything from knowledge of the German language to knowledge of the two languages used in the lawsuit to having obtained an interpreting degree at a university, but it did not distinguish at all between general language proficiency, legal language proficiency and interpreting proficiency.

6.   Consequences

Sadly, further protest from the relevant associations did not prevent the law from coming into effect on 1 January 2023. So what has been the outcome so far?

Amendment of Federal State regulations

After the sphere of the GDolmG had become clear and it turned out that additional Federal State rules for signed language and translators would still be needed, all individual Federal States had to update their previous regulations accordingly. Instead of a harmonised homogenous set of rules valid in every state, there are now still several different laws, plus one more.

Timeline

Prolonged grace periods were later put into effect for all language mediators in order to give the Federal States time to adapt to the new situation. It was agreed that spoken language interpreters would be able to keep their prior accreditations until 31 December 2026 at the latest, and that signed language interpreters and translators would have time up to and including 31 December 2027.

Spoken Language Interpreters

As all swearing-in of spoken language interpreters based on the previous regulations will expire at the end of 2026 at the latest, and after that will have a validity of 5 years only, many long-standing colleagues will at least have financial and organisational problems renewing their accreditations. The situation will be even worse for those long-standing interpreters who cannot meet the new requirements and will lose the basis for their regular work. They might keep on working for local authorities at least – but most probably not to a comparable extent, and remuneration might be lower.

The procedures and the costs for being sworn in can still vary between the various states, in spite of the new law.

Sign Language Interpreters

As far as sign language interpreters are concerned, after the point when their current accreditation expires, at the latest at the end of 2027, they will no longer have the opportunity to become sworn in for general topics. Those who had a general accreditation may at least stay accredited for work at the local authority level. All in all, this newly introduced distinction between spoken and signed language interpreters again emphasises the gap between the two groups and threatens professionalisation.

Effect on Interpreting Quality

It is expected that GDolmG will not bring about the desired increase in quality. As for spoken language interpreters, many seasoned colleagues with a solid background will gradually drop out of the field. It is questionable if there will be enough qualified young professionals to be able to fill these gaps, one reason being the small number of places where state examinations can be carried out and the necessary qualifications obtained.

On the other hand, there may be an increase in the number of interpreters lacking the necessary qualifications brought in by judges, as they will be able to appoint anybody as an interpreter and easily swear that person in temporarily according to § 189 GVG. This is facilitated by the option to rely on interpreting agencies instead of individual persons. These agencies can then send them an interpreter to lawsuit proceedings without any regulations applying at all.

The lack of understanding about the necessity of quality language mediation is also underpinned by § 190 GVG which allows court registrars to interpret in lawsuits without ever having to be sworn in.

Constitutional Complaint

In order to oppose the GDolmG, northern-German interpreter and translator association ADÜ Nord has conducted a fundraising campaign with the aim of financially supporting language mediators bringing their case against the law before the Federal Constitutional Court.

Among the proposed points at issue are the unequal treatment of the groups of language mediators as well as the intrusion into the right of unrestricted choice of occupation and the lack of protection of confidence for long-standing court interpreters. Also, it is still in question whether the law was even passed legally at all. Such suits can be brought until end of 2023.[1]

There is a strong possibility that the new law will be declared unconstitutional and will at least have to be amended in great detail. Unfortunately, the outcome is clear, as there will be no real certainty of the legal situation in the community, and by then many long-standing colleagues will possibly already have decided to leave their jobs.

Lessons learned

One important lesson that our profession has had to learn from these events is that even today, ignorance of language mediation and its specificities still seems widespread. It is vital to further raise both general and political awareness of language mediation as a whole and signed language interpreting in particular. Thus, associations should strive to establish good contact with politicians and political bodies and try to show up in as many lobbying lists as possible in order to be actively involved whenever decisions are made and new legislation is drafted. It is quite obvious that the importance of professional language mediation in the legal system has been underestimated by many of the people involved.
The good news is that the case of the GDolmG has shown that even if there are different associations in a country with slightly different aims, they can stand together when necessary and share information, should the need to make themselves heard arise. And it is well worth it to bring them together when need be; the fundraising campaign to support the suit was only successful because so many colleagues were able to band together in a common cause.

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1   On 15 December 2023, the constitutional suit against GDolmG and the change in § 189 Abs. 2. GVG was indeed brought.
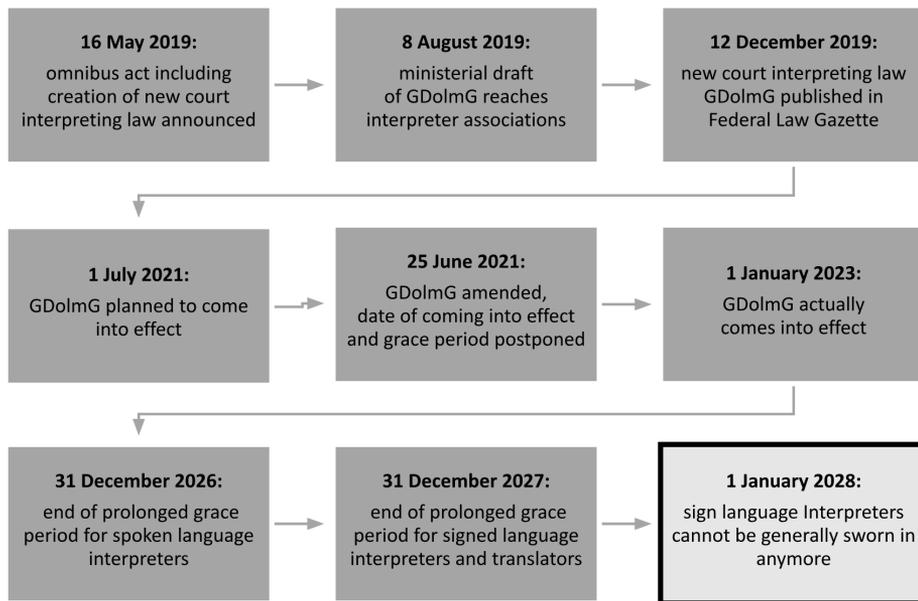
16 May 2019: omnibus act including creation of new court interpreting law announced	8 August 2019: ministerial draft of GDolmG reaches interpreter associations	12 December 2019: new court interpreting law GDolmG published in Federal Law Gazette
1 July 2021: GDolmG planned to come into effect	25 June 2021: GDolmG amended, date of coming into effect and grace period postponed	1 January 2023: GDolmG actually comes into effect
31 December 2026: end of prolonged grace period for spoken language interpreters	31 December 2027: end of prolonged grace period for signed language interpreters and translators	1 January 2028: sign language Interpreters cannot be generally sworn in anymore

Fig 1. Milestones regarding the court interpreting law GDolmG

7. Conclusions

It has become clear by now that the new court interpreting law has almost completely failed to fulfil its promise: no quality insurance has been introduced, no harmonisation has taken place. A constitutional complaint against GDolmG would have to be issued by the end of 2023 at the latest. It is desirable that this will happen and that there will be consequences to this in the course of 2024 so that in the end signed language interpreters will be seen as equal to their spoken language counterparts by both the legislator and the public. There should be a way to ensure that long-standing court interpreting colleagues will be able to stay in their profession and be available for work in lawsuits, thus raising the level of quality and closing the doors on inept, untrained and inexperienced personnel.

We do not know yet if this suit will be successful in declaring the law unconstitutional or if anything positive will come out of it. And it is not clear, whether a second attempt at regulation would bring more reasonable results – but in any case it is good to know that if language mediators are not heard in the first place, together they are strong, and there is a legal way to change things.

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Male British Sign Language interpreters' perception of sign language interpreting as a linguistic or caring profession

Paul Michaels

Abstract

Sign language interpreting is largely pursued by women in most countries, leading many hearing people to regard it as a job associated with caregiving, similar to nursing and teaching. Nevertheless, deaf people typically perceive their needs as centred around obtaining equal access to information as hearing people, rather than requiring care. In my recent doctoral research, I conducted a study with 38 male sign language interpreters situated in the UK. The aim was to investigate their motivations for choosing this career and their experiences working in a field that is largely occupied by women. Empirical data was gathered through individual interviews with 25 participants and a closed Facebook group with an additional 13 participants. A particular inquiry was made regarding participants' perception of sign language interpreting as either a linguistic or a caring profession. Posing this topic is crucial due to the manner in which interpreters depict the field of sign language interpreting to hearing people. This portrayal will directly influence the perception and treatment of deaf people by hearing people who they encounter and engage with. The key findings revealed a divergence of opinions, which is noteworthy due to the potential conflicting guidance that hearing people may receive from sign language interpreters regarding their responsibilities. This paper will incorporate these findings, addressing the issue of how we as interpreters may adapt to the evolving societal views of empowered deaf groups and their entitlement to information accessibility. This research addresses the lack of knowledge regarding interpreters' agreement or disagreement with the perception that their profession is caring.

Keywords

Interpreting, linguistic profession, caring profession, perceptions, empowerment, advocacy

1. Introduction

British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting is primarily a profession populated by women (Napier et al., 2021). It is one of several mostly female professions worldwide, such as care work, dental hygiene, hairdressing, social work, and education. Nursing, a predominantly female profession, has accumulated the most extensive knowledge base and presents numerous notable similarities to interpreting. There are similarities in the emergence and evolution, developments in characterisations and characteristics of the people involved, the required abilities, and the personality features of both professions.

According to Williams (1995), men who pursue a career in nursing experience differential treatment compared to women. They are directed towards specific specialties that are traditionally associated with men (e.g. mental health and trauma care) and are expected to carry out activities that are considered masculine (Williams, 1995). Examining intersectionality is crucial when investigating the factors that drive men to pursue careers in fields that are traditionally occupied by women. Skelton (2012) posited that to comprehend the role of men in primary education, which is predominantly associated with femininity, a change in theoretical framework is necessary. Rather than subscribing to the oversimplified notion that women are nurturing and caring while men are competitive and authoritative, a feminist poststructuralist perspective should be adopted. This perspective acknowledges that gender is intertwined with other aspects of identity, such as race, social class, age, and sexuality. By embracing this perspective, a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of masculine positions influenced by various characteristics and experiences can be achieved.

The designation of BSL interpreting as either a linguistic or caring profession is a topic of discussion, given that the majority of BSL interpreters are women and professions largely held by women are often associated with 'care'. The profession formerly operated on a voluntary basis and held an informal status. However, it has now evolved to incorporate formal training, qualifications (Adam, 2022), and registration (Napier, 2004).

Unsurprisingly, the topic of linguistics and care was brought up by those who participated in my study and elicited a variety of opinions. While certain male interpreters believed that interpreting is and should be solely focused on language, others believed that interpreting encompasses both linguistic and humanistic aspects. The concepts of advocacy and empowerment were connected, albeit in distinct ways, to both the caring and linguistic dimensions of the interpreting role.

Advocates of the linguistic perspective viewed their role as effectively facilitating communication, thereby granting deaf people access to information that could be utilised for their own self-empowerment. However, the role's caring aspects were predominantly associated with advocating for and empowering deaf people. These talks raise concerns about the poor comprehension of advocacy and empowerment, but they specifically concentrate on the issues of gender identity and gender performance among men in the interpreting profession.

These questions are connected to a more fundamental inquiry: What is the role of men in the profession? The presence of uncertainty may be regarded as profoundly disconcerting for men, bolstering arguments in favour of a linguistic occupation. This is because more comprehensive interpretations of the occupation as one centred around 'caring' could be perceived as posing a danger to men's acceptability and inclusion. Alternatively, male interpreters can acknowledge the caring nature of their profession and the interpersonal skills required for working with people. They can then reflect on their own identity and strive to cultivate a compassionate form of masculinity, as described by Elliot (2016), which rejects dominance and embraces caring values.

Implementing such a strategy would be consistent with Lupton's (2000) finding that when men work in predominantly female fields and face threats to their masculinity, they try to reconcile their gender and occupational identities by redefining or justifying the nature of their jobs, or by re-evaluating their own understanding of masculinity. In research conducted by Simpson (2014), an example of negotiation is presented involving male airline cabin crew. These crew members establish masculine authority by carrying out safety and security inspections, while also fulfilling their responsibilities of attending to pas-

sengers. However, this aspect of their role, which is seen as traditionally 'feminine' service, is considered as less important and undervalued.

From a cultural standpoint, jobs that are largely occupied by women and the feminine abilities associated with them are often underestimated in terms of their value, both in cultural and financial terms (Skeggs, 2014). The male participants in this study had made substantial investments, both in terms of training and, at times, emotional commitment. They had specific reasons for entering the profession, and for men who may have been unsure about their gender identity within the profession, they had discovered methods to reconcile their identities with their personal understanding of masculinity. This paper delves deeper into the perception of sign language interpreting, first as a linguistic profession and then as a caring profession.

2. Methodology

A qualitative methodology was selected to document the personal narratives and first-hand encounters of male BSL interpreters. This method enabled them to exchange comprehensive and perceptive viewpoints regarding their observations and understandings of BSL interpreting. I disseminated expression of interest forms to a collective of 274 male interpreters who are enrolled with three distinct registration authorities in the UK. From a total of 274 forms distributed, I received 72 responses. Based on these, 38 interpreters agreed to be included in the study as the sample. The primary methodology employed for data collection entailed conducting individual semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 25 participants. In addition, a closed focus group was utilised on Facebook as an alternative method of data collecting for participants who were either reluctant or unable to partake in an individual interview (n13).

Before collecting data, ethical approval was acquired from Durham University. Prior to their involvement, all participants were given a participant information sheet and consent form. The BSL interpreting community in the UK is recognised to be of limited size, with a disproportionately low number of men in the profession. To maintain anonymity, I took steps to minimise the gathering of demographic data and provided each participant with a pseudonym.

The individual interviews were done using three distinct modalities: face-to-face (n3), remote (n21), or telephonic (n1). The interviews were systematically recorded, transcribed, and securely stored on devices that require a password for access. A total of eight questions were posted on the Facebook group, and all the information collected from the interviews and Facebook group was uploaded to NVivo for the purpose of conducting a systematic analysis of the entire data set in order to identify emerging trends.

3. Findings

The following sections will explore a widely-debated topic in the field of BSL interpreting: whether the profession is primarily linguistic or caring. This discussion will also consider the association of care with traditionally female roles and how male interpreters navigate this issue.

A linguistic profession

Isaac explicitly said that BSL interpreting is a job that requires linguistic expertise. He stated that if someone displays curiosity about his activities, he will explain that the procedure is comparable to the practice of spoken language interpreting.

> *I always considered interpreting to be a linguistic profession. Through learning BSL and studying Deaf history, I naturally became aware of the development of BSL interpreting and the linguistic analysis of the language. If someone shows an interest in what I'm doing, I will describe the process as equivalent to spoken language interpreting.* (Isaac)

In this comment, Isaac explicitly rejects the idea that he is providing a caring function in the interpreted encounter and instead characterises his contribution to others as purely linguistic. Prior studies have examined the phenomenon of distancing oneself from feminine features of professions that are largely female (Cottingham, 2015; Cross & Bagihole, 2002; Irvine & Vermilya, 2010; Simpson, 2004). This is accomplished by restructuring the tasks and responsibilities of the job and strengthening the elements that are traditionally associated with masculinity (Simpson, 2004), as well as fostering a more masculine environment within the field (Cross & Bagihole, 2002). As a consequence of these actions, men establish a superior position (Irvine & Vermilya, 2010) for themselves in their career and establish emotional detachment to handle unfavourable feelings (Cottingham, 2015).

Riley believed that the profession was primarily focused on language rather than on providing care. He emphasised that a linguistic career requires formal training in order to be proficient.

> *I think it probably would be linguistic because essentially that's what you're there for. [When] you're saying linguistic profession, then it's clear that you actually have to have some formal training in order to do that. We are interpreting between two separate languages and making sure everybody is on the same page and understanding each other. So yeah, I think I'd lean more towards the linguistic description of the profession really.* (Riley)

By advocating for formal training as a requirement for sign language interpreters, he is elevating the professionalism of the role. Professionalisation brings with it a level of status that is typically lacking in semi-routine and routine jobs, which are predominantly held by women. Unfortunately, women tend to have lower status and value in the workplace, as highlighted by Skeggs (2014). Theo, who collaborates with numerous deaf professionals, expressed his perspective on interpreting, stating:

> *I tend to talk about interpreting as a linguistic exercise rather than a caring one, absolutely. And when people say "Oh, it must be so fulfilling" or whatever, I then tell them who I work with and how high up they are and how they probably earn 10X what they earn (laughter).* (Theo)

Theo's statement does not include specific names of his colleagues, but rather describes the many professional roles within the deaf community that they have. He asserts that the deaf people he interprets for are skilled professionals who do not require a 'carer' in their job environment. Instead, the deaf person needs a professional interpreter who can proficiently interpret between English and BSL, ensuring their equitable access to information, just like everyone else there. Through this technique, Theo is positioning himself as a linguistic expert, offering a service to the deaf person rather than being their carer, a common notion among hearing people. Consistently emphasising the role of sign language interpreters

to others who are not familiar with it can be time-consuming. George acknowledges that it has taken a significant amount of time for the profession to be accepted as a linguistic field.

> *As a profession seen by those who carry out the profession and perhaps those who are hearing but also aware of the profession, I don't think it's seen as a caring profession any longer and I think some of the hard work that is being conducted by ASLI for instance has created that shift from the caring perspective from (sic) [to] a more professional perspective, I think.* (George)

In the UK, diligent efforts by membership associations such as the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI), Visual Language Professionals (VLP) and the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI) have facilitated a transition from a compassionate outlook to a more formal and business-oriented approach. Nevertheless, it might be contended that there are still those who do not perceive the profession as a linguistic one due to their limited comprehension of the sign language interpreter's position. Sign language interpreters are likely to have an ongoing task of consistently educating people about their role.

A linguistic profession with caring attributes

A considerable number of interpreters I interviewed expressed the belief that the sign language interpreting profession included a noteworthy aspect of caring. Jacob concisely summarised this issue by describing sign language interpreting as a vocation that combines linguistic expertise with compassionate qualities. He acknowledged the inherent disparity in power that many deaf people face in their lives and elucidated that by incorporating small acts of compassion, the efficacy of the linguistic aspect is enhanced and mitigates minor obstacles. He said:

> *I think from the little caring elements that I put into it, it makes the linguistic side work better. It smooths over those little bumps.* (Jacob)

He went on to acknowledge that due to both society's perception of deaf people as disabled and the limited availability of information in sign language, deaf people are frequently denied equal treatment in society. Therefore, he assumed the responsibility of advocating for the deaf person by increasing awareness among the hearing people attending interpreted activities. He recognised that this goes beyond the role of interpreting and is aware of the importance of doing so without diminishing the deaf person's authority, with the ultimate goal of improving the interpreting process.

Rory provided an illustration of his desire for greater adaptability in his work arrangements. He expressed his intention to refuse the deaf person's notes when they are handed to him by the Consultant in a medical appointment, suggesting that they should be provided directly to the patient. Occasionally, he does this action while holding the patient's hand and using his other hand to communicate in sign language that the cancer is not suitable for surgery. He said:

> *I want to be seen as a linguistic professional and allowed the flexibility to show a caring side when needed. Is that too much to ask?* (Rory)

Rory's conduct in this situation aligns with the viewpoint of Llewelyn-Jones and Lee (2014) regarding interpreters' 'presentation of self'. They explain that interpreters should align their behaviour with the

expectations of the participants, rather than contradicting them. Interpreters can enhance their effectiveness in supporting successful interactions by adopting comparable communicative behaviours as other participants and normalising their own behaviour. Rory's scenario highlights his affable demeanour and underscores the fact that the interpreter is not inconspicuous, but rather serves as more than just a medium for relaying information (Neumann Solow, 1981). Rory's compassionate action of hand-holding, however, might be easily misunderstood and he might be mistakenly perceived as the deaf person's 'companion'.

Archie regarded translating as a privileged opportunity to be involved in someone's life, rather than simply considering it a caring job, and said:

> *Language involves emotion, and if you can't tap into that, then I don't think you're doing the people that you're working with a good service. It is linguistic but you've got to have... you've got to care for the people around you.* (Archie)

His view is that language encompasses emotions, and if an interpreter is unable to access and utilise them, then they are not effective in their role. He emphasised the importance of demonstrating empathy and compassion, particularly when dealing with highly personal elements of peoples' lives.

Incorporating the recognition of emotional elements in language introduces an extra dimension to the process of interpretation. While certain translation tasks, such describing how to access council services on video, may not require emotional involvement, many others, such as the situation recounted by Rory, involve conveying distressing news like a cancer prognosis.

Interpreters may exhibit preferences for various types of interpreting tasks, and assignments that involve a level of attentiveness are more likely to attract interpreters with compassionate personalities. Gender stereotyped perceptions of women as carers (Litosseliti and Leadbeater, 2013) can result in men being seen as less appropriate for such tasks. Although it is not feasible to definitively establish that male interpreters actively avoid assignments with caring responsibilities, it is clear that male interpreters tend to occupy positions of higher status and engage in more publicly prominent activities, such as television and politics (Napier et al., 2021).

Perception as caring

The notion that the interpreting profession is perceived as a caring profession can be traced back to the belief that deafness is a disability. Ellis said:

> *I think that what it is ultimately linked back to is the fact that the possibility that deafness (original emphasis) was seen as a disability and therefore if you work with deaf people you're working with disabled (original emphasis) people and therefore you're a carer. I don't think it's seen from a linguistic point of view, language point of view, yet. That might change. Fingers crossed.* (Ellis)

Ellis is explaining that working with deaf people is equated with working with disabled people, thus positioning interpreters as carers. This concept is tagging by association, which refers to the historical perception of deaf people as disabled due to the medical profession's intention to restore their hearing. Due to their apparent disability, it was believed that they required the assistance of a carer or the

support of an interpreter. This perspective towards people who are deaf easily disregards the crucial role played by interpreters in facilitating the accessibility of deaf peoples' contributions to others who can hear. Within the community of sign language users, it is people who are able to hear but cannot sign that are considered to have a disability. The concept of 'Deaf Gain' has been introduced to counter the prevailing focus on hearing loss and instead highlight the ways in which being deaf can enrich the cultural richness of human existence. (Bauman, H-Dirksen & Murray, 2009, 2014; Holcomb, 2013 as referenced in Szarkowski & Brice, 2018, p. 133).

Freddie expressed his perspective on how interpreters are often perceived as caregivers. He said:

> From the outside world, we are with this person, we arrive, or we are seen to be arriving with them in the sense that the doctor calls you and you are with them already or you arrive at an appointment with them. I think other people's schema of somebody arriving with someone or someone being with someone in an appointment is that they're their carer or they're there to help them. (Freddie)

In this situation, the healthcare provider perceives the interpreter as a companion who ensures the safety and well-being of the deaf person, a practice that is commonly permitted in medical settings to support those who may be vulnerable. Regarding the cultural construction, Leigh (2017) states:

This cultural construction is often reinforced by a society that does not understand the potential for deaf people to live rich lives and accomplish their maximum, hearing and speaking issues notwithstanding. Many are not aware that there are culturally Deaf lawyers, medical doctors, stockbrokers, entrepreneurs, school administrators, and an infinite plethora of other occupations. (Leigh, 2017, p. 208).

Furthermore, due to the largely female composition of the sign language interpreting field, it is sometimes perceived as a career of low social standing and may not receive due recognition from other professionals.

Ollie discussed how his personal interpretation of the role of an interpreter may differ from the public's perception and wrote:

> I usually let them know that I am there to provide access to all parties in the room and never say that I'm there to 'help' or 'support' the Deaf person. (Ollie)

Caring as advocacy

Many interviewees acknowledged that interpreters fulfil other tasks beyond the immediate act of interpreting, which can be perceived as acts of care. The provided data extracts encompass the notions of assistance, expertise, sentiment, compassion, empowerment, and support. Although some interpreters initially opposed the idea of interpreting as an act of care, they recount instances where they are deeply committed to providing exceptional service to the people they interpret for. This commitment involves tasks such as obtaining information, facilitating access to resources, and lobbying for social equality.

According to Harvey, a bond is formed that goes beyond the role of an interpreter. While it is not really a friendship, it falls somewhere in the middle between friendship and acquaintanceship. He said:

There is definitely helping that goes on, I mean even with my Access to Work [workplace inter-preting] clients, not everything I do is interpreting. When you're spending eight hours a day with somebody, one day a week or whatever it is, you do develop a relationship that is beyond kind of interpreter. It's not friend (original emphasis) either but it's kind of somewhere in between that and so, yeah, if it comes to it that somebody is asking for my help with something or something that isn't strictly interpreting, then generally I'm happy to operate in that space. (Harvey)

He acknowledges that the connections between clients and interpreters can occur frequently and last for a long time, especially when it comes to designated interpreters (see Dickinson, 2017; Hauser & Hauser, 2008). Ellis expressed his desire to maintain the human aspect of interpretation when recounting an experience where he was interpreting for someone nearing the end of their life and said:

I found myself drawn into a situation... it's got to the point where initially I thought "well, it's just another job", but now he's dying it's upsetting me because I've got to know him. (Ellis)

He acknowledged that he was already deeply involved in the scenario by describing being 'too drawn in' and recognised that he had no choice but to continue with it in the interest of continuity of service (Hetherington, 2014).

Ellis's narrative demonstrates his prioritisation of human compassion over professional norms that would typically require him to interpret for a person dying without displaying emotional reactions. He characterises himself as being very engrossed and finding the scenario distressing. His response is very human, and his choice to remain committed to this client until the conclusion demonstrates his professionalism in acknowledging the significance of providing uninterrupted support to his client. Ellis displayed a deep emotional attachment to this relationship, acknowledging the distressing nature of the circumstance and feeling justified in expressing his emotions.

Toby recognised instances in which he perceived himself as a supporter of the deaf person. These instances revolved around facilitating optimal understanding and communication between both parties. He said:

Where I see something is not going right, I will probably become an ally for the deaf person. So, in that way you could say it's caring for that deaf person but it's not caring. It's about evening things out or saying that something is going wrong and stepping in to stop it before it, because that, if you follow that down, that's going to destroy this communication and there is maybe some cultural thing or that the question is too wordy that they're asking somebody in a job interview and so in that way, you could say that it's caring. Yeah. But I don't consider it as caring as in being about personal welfare, it's more about this thing to do with enabling each side to understand or communicate with each other in the best way possible. (Toby)

In this passage, Toby recounts a scenario in which the result of an interview may have had significant repercussions for the deaf person and desired to intervene when he observed that the situation was not progressing favourably. Driven by his determination to prevent what he perceived as an unfair treatment; he took on the role of an advocate for the deaf person.

This leads us into the disputed realm of advocacy. According to McCartney (2017, p. 84)

> *The difference between sign language interpreting and other social justice professions is that interpreters should never speak out for the people; rather, interpreters should encourage d/Deaf people to speak out on their own behalf.* (McCartney, 2017, p. 84)

However, deafness is intertwined with various other attributes, meaning that although being deaf alone may not necessitate advocacy beyond self-advocacy and collective advocacy within the deaf community, deaf people may require and actively seek advocacy assistance in facilitating access, navigating systems, mobilising resources, and addressing inequalities. Undoubtedly, the core of sign language interpreting is to enable and facilitate access.

The preceding excerpts in this section address feelings of discomfort and lack of clarity around professional limits and the importance of taking care of oneself. These concerns are addressed in terms of differentiating between providing assistance and showing compassion, as well as supporting effective communication between interlocutors who are deaf and those who can hear. The anxiety stems from the concept of emotions and the exertion of emotional labour, which is typically attributed to women rather than men (Grey, 2010). However, Hsieh and Nicodemus (2015) contend that while making decisions regarding emotions and emotion work in interpreter-mediated medical encounters, it is crucial to prioritise the principles of quality and equality of care. This entails exercising professional discernment regarding the optimal approach to managing emotions while simultaneously working towards the goals of understanding interactions, as exemplified in Ellis's narrative.

In a broader sense, what these extracts share is a degree or type of involvement with deaf clients that surpasses the mere technical aspect of interpreting and aims to enhance communication. In each instance, the interpreter is dedicated to assisting the client in an alternative manner, involving actions that are typically linked to the feminine and compassionate or caring components of interpretation. They are engaging in this behaviour from locations where they can confidently articulate their position within a profession that is mostly occupied by women, without jeopardising their sense of masculinity.

Caring as empowerment

When I asked Alfie about his views on the notion of interpreting being considered a caring profession, he replied by stating his objective was one of providing equal opportunities for everyone to accomplish tasks that others may overlook or consider trivial. He said:

> *I'm trying to create opportunities for people on a level playing field for them to get stuff done which other people take for granted and you know I suppose that works for deaf people and hearing people who are trying to work with deaf people, and you know, I'm facilitating things, but I wouldn't say that this is a caring profession. I'm not comfortable with that description at all. I don't think that describes what I'm doing at all.* (Alfie)

Alfie firmly asserts that he is not employed in a career that involves providing care. However, he does recognise that he has genuine concern for the people he works with and is genuinely invested in the results of interpreting various situations. By providing equal communication opportunities, he is empowering people who are deaf who might not have access to such empowerment without information being conveyed through interpreted interactions.

Harrison saw tasks outside interpreting to be empowering. He stated that there are people belonging to diverse linguistic communities engaging in various activities, possessing distinct cultural knowledge, and experiencing different gaps in knowledge, and as an interpreter, he is assisting in facilitating this process. He said:

> I absolutely think it's an enabling profession and it's both enabling because there are people with different language groups doing stuff and different cultural knowledge and different knowledge gaps and you're, kind of, helping that happen but they also have different goals and they're really different contextual goals. (Harrison)

Harrison explained that he encouraged deaf people to assert their authority in discussing any medical concerns they may have, thereby maximising the doctor's ability to accurately diagnose and treat any potential ailments. He might opt to engage in this activity in addition to interpreting between languages. He felt that once a client attains empowerment, they are granted inclusion.

Arlo emphasised the importance of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice by stating:

> For me it's a caring profession. Although I may be uncomfortable with caring, for me it's about diversity. It's about inclusion. And it's about social justice. Those are the reasons why I do it. Now, I don't know whether that... it's not caring, but it is. It's caring about how society is. I don't think I care, in that sense, for the people that I work with but am I careful to try and promote those agendas? Yes. Those are my underlying values. (Arlo)

Women as carers

A small number of the research participants provided insights into the inclination of women in the profession towards caring roles. Joshua's perspective is that women tend to exhibit a greater inclination towards compassion and a sense of responsibility towards deaf people, leading them to feel compelled to assist them in various ways. He said:

> I find that women will be more sort of caring, or they'll feel like they need to do things for the deaf person as I think I'm much more, well this is how I feel anyway, I don't know if it's because I'm a man, but I just think they're deaf, they're not disabled. And so, you know, they can do things themselves and I do think they should do things themselves... so I'm not afraid to say "well you can do that" or I don't feel like I'll say "I'll call your parents" or "I'll call that person for you" is I think, you know, it would be like "well, you can send them a text" or "you can FaceTime them" or... yes I'll support them but I don't feel like, I feel like there's some female interpreters that are more motherly and I don't agree with that actually. (Joshua)

In this comment, Joshua discussed the process of empowering the deaf person. He noted that his approach differed from some women he worked with, as he believed they might tend to do things for the deaf person instead of encouraging them to do it themselves, taking on a more nurturing role. When Jacob examined the gender disparity within the field, he expressed his belief that some people pursue it with the intention of assisting the deaf community. He said:

> There is... mainly women, but it works, I don't know why that is... I think there's that whole carer

> *model... I think some people go into it because they want to 'help the deaf people'. (Jacob)*

In this statement, Jacob suggests that female interpreters may be more inclined to adopt the helper model of interpreting (Lee, 1997) due to their inherent inclination as carers.

Riley hypothesised that females would exhibit a greater inclination towards the profession due to the perceived nurturing aspect associated with the role. He stated:

> *You know, the 'caring' in inverted commas professions tend to attract the females more than males, for whatever reason, and the more, kind of, the high-octane, high-powered, expected to do overtime and expected to, sort of, live the job, tends to attract, or at least get, more males in it. And again, you can speculate why that is, you know, it could be for a number of reasons, you know, due to women having babies and, you know, not being able to pursue the career full-time, in the same way males do. And, you know, there's obviously a load of reasons why that could be the case. (Riley)*

A significant number of feminists would contend that Riley's perspective is antiquated and unfounded. The profession of a sign language interpreter may appeal to a woman with a caring disposition, but there is no evidence to suggest that women are incapable of pursuing this vocation on a full-time basis if they so desire. Nevertheless, the actual situation in the field indicates that women are about twice as prone as males to engage in part-time employment (Napier et al., 2021).

The compassionate disposition of sign language interpreting was also recognised in the study conducted by McDermid (2009), wherein interpreters and educators specialising in Deaf Studies in America and Canada were interviewed. According to certain research participants, the reason for the absence of male students in sign language interpreting is the idea of it as a job that involves helping others, which tends to attract more females. This finding aligns with the stereotyped picture of BSL interpreting. The sign language interpreting profession is portrayed, advanced, and strengthened as a predominantly female profession due to the prevailing beliefs that women are carers, nurturers, and effective communicators. This perception is reinforced by the perspectives of certain male participants in this study.

All-encompassing responsibilities

Ellis saw a lack of awareness and comprehension regarding the function of an interpreter, the process of interpreting, and the comprehensive obligations included in an interpreted event. He said:

We interpret, but for a lot of people that might be the first and last time they ever meet a deaf person, so why would you expect them to know anything at all about the whole cultural background? So, in that sense, yeah, it brings the caring, the culture, the linguistics all together as a package and maybe the fact that I'm getting up of a morning with a smile on my face and going out and loving what I'm doing is because I'm able to do all of that. (Ellis)

This comment by Ellis consolidates several perspectives expressed by the study participants. Determining whether the sign language interpreting profession is primarily linguistic or caring is a challenging task. The interpreters participating in this research believe that a combination of both aspects is necessary to effectively serve the needs of the deaf and hearing communities involved in interactions.

4. Conclusion

The gender dynamics within BSL interpreting can be analysed by considering the historical context, which involves the interpreter being seen as a helper for the deaf community. This perception is influenced by the belief that women are more adept at providing assistance or caregiving compared to men. Additionally, it is shaped by the societal perception of deaf people as disabled and in need of care, a role that is traditionally associated with women.

During my discussion with Archie, I was mindful of the analogy comparing a car to the concept that an engine is essential for its functioning. The car requires an engine for transportation between points A and B. The body of the car symbolises the linguistic aspect of sign language interpreting, whilst the engine represents the establishment of rapport. Just as a car's inability to generate power hinders its ability to travel from point A to point B, a lack of rapport might impede the efficient communication required for interpreting. An important conclusion drawn from this discussion on the nature of BSL interpreting is that we should not categorise it as solely a 'linguistic' or 'caring' profession. Instead, it should encompass both aspects, along with other qualities, in order to effectively serve the needs of deaf and hearing clients who require interpreting services. Furthermore, it is evident that the perspective of the profession can differ depending on the geographical location or the people associated with it.

One could argue that in the past, BSL interpreting was primarily perceived as a career associated with caring and compassion. However, based on the quotes, it seems that this perception is undergoing a transformation. This is significant for two reasons. Men who are exposed to or learning BSL may hesitate to pursue a career in interpreting if they perceive it as a predominantly female and gay male profession, potentially due to a perception of it being nurturing in nature. Furthermore, altering the portrayal of the occupation should promote the recognition of deaf people as a distinct cultural and linguistic minority. Presenting interpreting as a language profession that involves demonstrating compassion and understanding towards the people one is collaborating with, could potentially appeal to a larger number of men interested in pursuing this profession. An influx of men into the profession would partially address the acknowledged scarcity of BSL interpreters overall, while also catering to the interpreting requirements of deaf men who specifically prefer to collaborate with a male interpreter, especially in professional and medical environments.

In line with Kimmel's (2006) contention:

> *We need a new definition of masculinity in this new century: a definition that is more about the character of men's hearts and depths of their souls than about the size of their biceps, wallets, or penises'.* (Kimmel, 2006, p. 254)

I contend that it is necessary to establish a revised definition of the BSL interpreter, one that encompasses the delivery of a superior interpretation while also taking into account the essence and spirit of the profession. This person, regardless of gender, will surely flourish in the field of sign language interpretation.

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Exploring the Impact of Holocaust Literacy on Signed Language Interpreters

Sherry Shaw and E. Lynn Jacobowitz

Abstract

Communication access is a fundamental human right that drives the preparation of competent interpreters to manage situational demands in emotionally charged settings, conflict zones, or trauma-related situations. Furthermore, interpreters are increasingly challenged to confront shifting community positions, consumer priorities for cultural and linguistic matches, and the forcible displacement of Deaf community members brought on by conflict, oppression, discrimination, and unsafe living conditions. In response to current demands, interpreters must build their personal, social, and professional identities around the intersection of language, history, human rights, civil liberties, ethics, and social inclusion if they are to effectively provide communication access.

Based on a 2020–2023 study of Holocaust literacy and its impact on interpreters, we present how aspiring, new, and experienced interpreters can apply concepts of 'otherness' and communication equity to their ethical decision-making and identity development. Incorporating a Deaf Jewish facilitator, our study used group interview transcripts, photo rankings, written artifacts, and surveys from two interpreter groups traveling to European Holocaust memorial sites as data collection methods. Four themes emerged from the study: (1) productive dissonance (managing 'disorienting dilemmas' for transformative learning), (2) justice-equity, (3) communal coping (camaraderie for processing trauma), and (4) consumer orientation (thinking beyond oneself). The results verified that aspiring and practicing interpreters are strongly impacted by Holocaust experiential learning in which they share disorienting experiences in spaces of historical significance. This presentation emphasized how interpreters could incorporate Holocaust literacy into their personal and professional interactions with diverse, traumatized, and oppressed populations.

Keywords

Holocaust literacy, professional identity, experiential learning, disorienting dilemma

1. Introduction

Professional identity, an element of social identity, is dynamically constructed to make sense of who we are and the roles we play across situations and populations. A person's social and professional identities fuse according to the values, principles, and self-awareness developed over time (Buck et al., 2019). Interpreting students begin formulating professional identities through applying ethical decision-making to critical elements of an interpreter's work, such as role-space creation, participation equity,

moral competence, conflict resolution, and environmental negotiation (Hunt, 2015; Llewellyn–Jones & Lee, 2014; Napier et al., 2017). If educational programs inadequately guide students through building the "confidence that comes with competence, status, and a strong professional identity" (Hale, 2007, p. 35), students may graduate with narrow perspectives of the interpreter's responsibilities and ethical practices that are ineffective and unsafe (Heidermann & Weininger, 2019). Furthermore, Jones and Abes (2013) caution about the impact of program negligence when students do not receive structured identi-ty–building interventions to enhance cognitive processing and affective development.

Experiential Learning through Group Travel

Experiences outside the traditional classroom promote new perspectives about one's work and wor-ldviews (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and study abroad is a form of experiential learning that improves critical thinking about social inequities, intercultural sensitivity, peer connectedness, and identity development (Ruth et al., 2019; Tarrant, 2010). Additionally, short–term study abroad can be a transformative expe-rience that promotes resilience, appreciation for diversity, and rethinking of preconceived beliefs (DiF-rancesco et al., 2019). Groups that travel together become a "complex microsystem" in which students interact with each other and foreign nationals to gain perspective on their own identities (Johnstone et al., 2020, p. 129). Within this microsystem, students create a relational structure that can make a lasting impact on their careers (Jones & Abes, 2013; Okken et al., 2019).

Holocaust Illiteracy

Holocaust education opens dialogue with students about the consequences of ethnic, social, and religious stereotyping on contemporary societal issues. Aalai (2020) supports showing students how "pervasive parallels persist between [the Holocaust] genocide and the continued violation of others' rights and *othering* of marginalized groups" (p. 211). Recent polling indicated 73% of Americans have never visited a Holocaust memorial (Pew Research Center, 2020), and while 90% of young Americans believe the Holocaust happened, 63% do not know six million Jews were killed, 48% cannot name one concentration camp, and 20% believe Jews caused the Holocaust (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 2020). These knowledge deficits contribute to the need for extending student experience beyond traditional means, "integrating historically, politically, and ideologically marginalized narratives and...having one's own limited perspective broadened through having pre–established belief systems questioned" (Hunt, 2015, p. 312). Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory suggests how interpreting students might make sense of disorienting experiences inherent to experiential Holocaust education and follow a process of self–examination, assumptions assessment, option exploration, and action planning. Wiesel (2009), Holocaust survivor and co-founder of the United States Holocaust Me-morial Museum, urged memorializing what had happened for future generations:

> Over the years, week by week, day by day, the number of survivors of the Holocaust diminishes and those of the documents increases...We are holding to [its memory] with our last energy...The murderous intentions of Hitler and his acolytes towards the Jewish people and its history, their plans concerning other national and ethnic minorities, the malefic power of their imagination, the quasi–indifference of the free world, the suffering and agony of the victims as well as their solitude: how to conceive them in their totality, and how to explain them. (Wiesel, p. xxvii)

Interpreters as Functionaries

Applying the incidents and context of the Holocaust to our work as interpreters begins with an understanding of how interpreters became essential within the multilingual concentration camp system. Interpreters were either commissioned personnel serving alongside camp administrators or ad hoc communication facilitators who were prisoners themselves. According to Wolf (2016), prison populations might present up to 40 languages at once, and the interpreter's duties related to translating records and communicating camp rules, orders, interrogations, roll call, and punishments. Language differences among prisoners resulted in the creation of a camp lingua franca, a unique form of German called 'crematorium Esperanto' (p. 95). Language became weaponized for demeaning prisoners, and responding appropriately to a command was a matter of life or death (Aschenberg, 2016; Wolf, 2013). As with other essential laborers, interpreters were primarily prisoner- functionaries who were coerced into performing as a matter of survival (Halpin, 2018). Functionaries could receive extra rations, but their work expectations were shrouded in chaos, which was integral to creating disorder within individuals (Tryuk, 2010; Wolf, 2016). Interpreter-functionaries were unable to apply professional standards, and Levi (1988) coined the term 'grey zone' to describe a survival space in which camp interpreters struggled with guilt, confusion, risk, and identity loss (Tryuk, 2016, p. 31).

Eugenics and the Deaf Population

Aside from the study of interpreters in concentration camps, Holocaust experiential learning for interpreters would be incomplete without considering the impact of genetic cleansing initiatives on Deaf people who fell victim to Hitler's policies to improve genetics through selective breeding (called eugenics). The 'Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases' led to annihilation of "people who were deemed inferior, burdensome existences, and unworthy of life" (Biesold, 1999, p. 160) through forced sterilizations, abortion, infanticide, marriage restrictions, and extermination. Deaf people with disabilities were transferred to locations where they would be euthanized, but the internment of Deaf Jews in concentration camps is far less documented. Whereas Deaf Jews were considered unfit to live under Nazi law, Deaf people stood a better chance of survival if they avoided signing publicly and separated themselves from other Deaf inmates (Zaurov, 2016). There are no records of signed language interpreters working in the concentration camps other than stories of heritage signers who communicated secretly with Deaf inmates.

Short-Term Study Abroad: Project Description

A Deaf–Hearing faculty team from the University of North Florida (UNF) recruited eleven ASL/English Interpreting and Deaf Education students to travel to Schloss Hartheim Euthanasia Center (Alkoven, Austria) and Auschwitz–Birkenau Memorial Museum (Oświęcim, Poland). The primary consideration for participating in the study abroad was the ability to use ASL, and because ASL is the language of instruction within the graduate and undergraduate programs at UNF, all applicants qualified to attend. The 11-day itinerary incorporated socializing with Deaf community members in Kraków (Poland), Linz (Austria), and Vienna and touring Lebenswelt, a community for Deaf adults with disabilities in Upper Austria. Students attended seminars about interpreters in Mauthausen Concentration Camp (Michaela Wolf, University of Graz) and experiences of Deaf people during national socialism (Katharina Schalber, University of Vienna). The trip's organizer and leader is the lead researcher on this study. Travel occur-

red in spring 2019, and data collection began 18 months later. The study is contextualized by literature on identity construction, study abroad value, camp interpreters, and the "Deaf Holocaust" (Kimura, & Hayashi, 2019; Zaurov, 2016, p. 143). Whereas concentration camps were designed to erode personal and social identities (Wolf, 2016), connecting students to Holocaust events was expected to positively impact identity–building (Gómez Amich, 2013). The overarching research question was 'How did traveling with a group of interpreting students to Holocaust memorial sites impact your identity as a professional interpreter?' While the research team anticipated a lasting impact of this themed study abroad on new and experienced interpreters, the depth of transformation and contribution to identity–building that would directly impact their work was uncertain. The team was keenly interested in learning how such an intensive experiential learning opportunity would manifest itself over time in the lives and work of the students (in this case, approximately 18 months from travel to study implementation).

2.   Methodology – or another suitable heading

Our mixed methods design integrated Collier's (1967) photo elicitation technique for stimulating participant narratives about shifting identities (Kohon & Carder, 2014), resilience and coping (Bowling, 2019), and interpersonal communication (Nelson, 2019). Warranted by the cultural, religious, and linguistic complexity inherent to this study, the research team introduced a form of analytical triangulation to organize the data from various frames of reference each researcher brought to the process. Two analysts identified themes and subthemes by manually coding focus group interviews and responses to open–ended survey questions, subsequently comparing and reconciling their coding schemes (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Participants verified the accuracy of transcriptions and checked the conclusions for errors that might have misrepresented their narratives. This process of member checking ensured the final report was adequately reflective of the participants' contributions (Orcher, 2005).

Participants

One of the students who attended the study abroad was a Deaf Education major who became a co–researcher due to her photo elicitation experience as a Fulbright Scholar. Of the remaining ten attendees, nine agreed to participate in the study. Two participants had minimal, or no interpreting experience (22%), and the remainder had more than three years of interpreting experience (78%). Three were nationally certified interpreters (33%, NAD, RID, CASLI), two held a state screening level (22%), two held an EIPA Level 3+ (22%) and two were not credentialed (22%). The university's IRB designated the moderator as a participant because of her unique contributions to the discussions, resulting in a heterogeneous sample (n = 10) across age (40% ages 18–26, 40% ages 27–34, 20% ages >35), gender (20% male, 80% female, 0% other), ethnicity (10% Black, 80% White, 10% Other), and religion (20% Jewish, 50% Christian). All participants, aside from the moderator–participant, were hearing, and one was a heritage signer. Discrepancies in categories not totalling 100% are due to undisclosed information.

Measures

The two main data sources were group interviews and a survey containing agreement statements, photo

and value rankings, and open-ended questions. The five-point Likert scale used reverse-coded statements to avoid response bias and asked participants to respond without concern for researcher expectations to avoid social desirability bias (see Appendix for sample questions). Focus groups incorporated 58 photos selected from a photo collection assembled by the participants and faculty co-leaders to invoke memories of the experiences. A final data source was the moderator-participant's summative video of her impressions about the focus group dialogue from a Deaf, Jewish perspective (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mixed Methods Data Sources

Qualitative	Quantitative
Focus group interviews	Likert agreement scale
Rationale for photo rankings	Photo rankings
Open-ended survey questions	Professional value rankings
Moderator-Participant perspectives	

Procedure

Upon IRB approval, participants self-assigned to focus groups, and each group met twice. Participants received a preparation packet with photograph batches, mental preparation suggestions, a project overview, and guiding questions. Photo batches were quasi-associated with guiding questions and loosely associated with each other; however, participants were not restricted and could use any photo they identified as meaningful to their responses. The purpose of using photographs to stimulate dialogue was to facilitate recall and help participants organize their thoughts through a visual prompt, which was beneficial considering it had been 18 months since the students had traveled together. The moderator-participant, whose first language is American Sign Language (ASL), and the lead researcher, whose first language is English, co-translated focus group recordings from ASL to English, resolving any discrepancies with each other and respective participants. Whereas ASL signs and English words do not have a one-to-one correspondence, the contextual meanings, rather than word frequency, influenced thematic content analysis.

3. Analysis – or another suitable heading

Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of open-ended questions and focus group transcripts produced four themes and seven subthemes across the spectrum of personal, social, and professional identity (see Table 1). Clearly, some data narratives overlap categories, and the coders used their judgment in designating which theme best fit the participant's intended meaning. After analysis, the coding team reviewed unassignable codes to prevent overlooking meaningful data. In this discussion of the prevalent themes, descriptive quotes illustrate how the themes contribute to professional identity-building.

Table 1: Emergent Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Productive dissonance	Cognitive processing, Challenge confrontation, Values clarification, Self-Efficacy
Communal coping	Responsibility
Consumer orientation	Humanness, Intergroup relations
Justice and equity	

Theme 1:   Productive Dissonance

Students who practiced reflexivity about their experiences were demonstrating 'productive dissonance' in response to their internal conflicts (Lee & Williams, 2017). Resounding Mezirow's (2000) transformation process of clarifying meaning after a "disorienting dilemma" (p. 94), dissonance was deemed productive if participants (a) applied critical thinking about the Nazis' chain of logic, (b) overcame disorientation with engagement and risk-taking, and (c) saw equilibrium loss as beneficial to professional growth. Applying critical thinking to perceptions of indifference to Holocaust atrocities, participants realized how propaganda immobilized people into bystanders (Goldberg, 2017), thus concluding that each level of agreement to bad ideas takes a person to new depths of complicity. Participants also grappled with extreme contrasts that demanded self-exploration:

- Schloss Hartheim is a beautiful castle-turned-extermination site. I watched [a peer] count her steps from the unloading platform to the adjacent gas chamber. It was such a short walk from life to death! Contrast that with people living and working in Lebenswelt, where people with disabilities are considered worthy of living.
- I connect this scenario to Black Lives Matter because one group was valued less than another.
- One leader advocated for exterminating whoever he decided was unworthy based on certain cha-racteristics, and the other accepts people's challenges and figures out the best way to help them live meaningful lives. A leader makes all the difference.
- I wonder whether we sufficiently scrutinize our political, religious, educational, and social leaders.
- Do I passively accept what I am told, or do I critically think about what I am told?

Participants expressed concerns about becoming passive observers to their surroundings. Some students expressed a fear of succumbing to dangerous ideology (Could I let myself be indoctrinated so subtly?). Another participant acknowledged that visiting a Holocaust museum might provoke shock and disbelief, but standing on the Birkenau selection platform makes denying the Holocaust impossible (It didn't get down into the depths of who I am until I was there). One participant suggested disorientation was a challenge to be embraced. Noticeably, participants who paired disequilibrium with positivity, par-ticularly when communicating with Deaf nationals who used different signed languages, were most often the experienced interpreters with more confidence in their language proficiency.

Theme 2: Communal Coping

Recurring discussion about group bonding resulted in the emergent theme of 'communal coping' (Zajdel & Helgeson, 2020). Within the group, students created ways to manage their discomfort and distress. Communal coping was most efficient when students explored new cities, shared meals, and talked together; however, some students struggled to cope (I didn't feel I could get it out and that impacted me

personally.) Acclimation to new environments and adaptability were common descriptors of communal coping:

- We relied on each other to cope with the sadness of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and our connection resulted in enduring relationships.
- Sometimes, I needed to stop thinking about the trauma and be out with friends. I could stop obsessing about all the things that were so horrible.
- We were like lost sheep [walking through the Kraków ghetto], and I'm reminded how Jewish people must have felt as they were herded into ghettos, camps, and the unknown.
- The photo of our hostel bunks reminds me of trying to find the hostel. It was a bit scary. We were practicing the same kind of flexibility interpreters use to find unfamiliar places.
- Meeting new people and staying in close quarters was great. There was no petty individualism. That really helped me realize the importance of relationships. I know I matured and developed my emotional intelligence.

Theme 3: Consumer Orientation

'Consumer orientation' was the label assigned to the students' application of experiences to relationships with consumers of interpreting services. Participants considered how interpreters negotiate roles and responsibilities and promote equitable outcomes for Deaf constituents:

- It was important for [interpreter] to maintain professionalism even though she was seeing Auschwitz-Birkenau for the first time along with [Deaf co-leader].
- Interpreting in 2020 has become so transactional. Gone are the days when consumers knew the names of their interpreters, where they were from, and their ties to the Deaf community. As wonderful as technology is, interpreting has become more of an assembly line business. There is less opportunity to build relationships with consumers.
- The interpreter's responsibility is to mediate differences between consumers so Deaf people are not automatically considered inferior. We have to convey that empathic bond while we stay professional. That's my idea of how the Auschwitz atrocities relate to the work of an interpreter.
- It's humbling to think that on top of communication barriers, people in the camps didn't even have basic human necessities. Interpreters in the camps worked in unconventional ways that were atypical of professional interpreters, but the outcomes were equal to other inmates.
- Do I see myself as someone who just gets the job done, or do I make sure the outcome for the Deaf person is as equitable as possible?

Another conversation described the spectator effect on Deaf consumers and concluded that acting like tourists in the Deaf community is detrimental to identity-building. One student equated passive observation to a Deaf zoo, where students go to learn signs without engaging directly with people. Serendipitous encounters with foreign Deaf signers were described as exhilarating by some and difficult by others:

- It was the highlight of my trip!
- It was the happiest situation in my life, next to becoming a parent!
- I've never used drugs, but I was high with happiness.
- I think it's important to make ourselves vulnerable and learn new skills by taking chances in hard situations. We have to want to avoid stagnation. Two people trying to communicate must respect each other's efforts.
- I am not technically an interpreter, but I wish I had participated more and joined in conversations. I

was nervous about my ASL and I lost a lot of opportunities.
- Every day, it was difficult for me to figure out how to communicate.

These final comments correspond to a 'self-efficacy' subtheme, which relates to misplacing locus of control onto external conditions or perceptions of inadequacy. Participants who lacked language confidence and who were in the earliest stages of professional identity-building experienced negative self-talk that likely inhibited them from risk-taking, a normal stepping-stone toward becoming a professional.

Theme 4: Justice and Equity

'Justice and equity' permeated several focus group discussions about inequality, ignorance, blind trust, misunderstanding, and complacency. Participants deliberated the meaning of societal value and ways to mitigate inequities related to language, stereotyping, and oppression:
- I can see how colonialism and oppression could stem from not having a common language.
- I had a very small frame of reference. Now, my mind is more open.
- I'm better at asking questions to get more information without judging people.
- Finding what we have in common and what we have experienced differently is important.
- We saw how people were killed for being different from the group in control. If we allow another group to be perceived as non-human, we are on a slippery slope to creating a greater divide between the groups.
- It's so important that we continue to honor humanity.
- Interpreters cannot function as machines because humanity is involved in every interpreting situation.
- As a future interpreter, I was greatly impacted by watching the different forms of language at Lebenswelt [German, English, ASL, Austrian Sign Language, Lorm alphabet, tactile Austrian Sign Language].
- The Hundertwasserhaus [Vienna] shows the diversity of our profession. The floor isn't always flat and walls aren't always straight. Just like people. And it's marvelous anyway. There's not just one way to be right.

The lead researcher conducted a final layer of qualitative analysis on the moderator-participant's impressions of moderating focus groups from the standpoint of her family's internment, diaspora, and survival accounts. Her reflections spotlighted the incidental impact that experiential learning of the Holocaust can have on the researchers themselves, as they engage with participants and begin to internally process the data. Personal experiences recalled during focus group facilitation and afterward during data analysis led to a deeper awareness of gaps in her family history and renewed interest in filling these gaps:

> I refer to myself as a 'bad Jew' because being Deaf has somewhat separated me from my hearing family and stories of relatives who perished in the Holocaust. Some family members barely escaped with their lives and settled in various places around the world. Although my sister and brother had contact with our cousins, my communication barrier left me with little information about our family history. I once asked my sister why the Holocaust survivors in our family did not talk about their experiences with the next generation, and she said it was too painful to 'rehash' the past. Several older cousins bore the evidence of identification numbers tattooed on their

left forearms. In retrospect, I wish I had ignored my mother's warning not to ask questions of the survivors in our family. Participating in this project touched me so deeply and allowed me to dredge up my own family history and renewed my interest in understanding the impact of Holocaust education on the next generation of interpreters.

The moderator expressed three impressions that related to focus group themes: equitable outcomes, language proficiency, and diversity in interpreter education programs. Regarding interpreter–functionaries, she reflected on the impossibility of comparing camp workers to interpreters today and tied her thoughts to the responsibility of interpreters to provide access to linguistic and environmental information so Deaf people can achieve the same outcomes as hearing people (It's not appropriate for an interpreter to be just 'good enough'. Interpreters are learning to empower Deaf consumers by providing extralinguistic information, like noises and tone of voice.). The moderator noted that ASL proficiency is a determinant for equitable outcomes and corresponds with the ability to adapt when confronted with extremely emotional responses to content (An interpreter with more skill can control emotional responses when interpreting traumatic events. Students who are developing ASL proficiency are more likely to let their insecurities inhibit their use of the language. Although not a direct comparison, I think of the Jews whose emotions must have been out of control when they could not understand what was happening.). Lastly, the moderator connected the participants' comments to her own perceptions on how interpreter education programs could use study abroad and Holocaust education to diversify student experiences:

> Programs could increase the incidence of BIPOC students participating in study abroad by traveling to places that are not primarily populated by White people. I am fascinated by the gestural–visual methods the students used when they met Deaf nationals who used a different signed language. Interpreting programs could apply what these students accomplished by frequently exposing students to a variety of Deaf people whose language falls along a continuum of ASL and English sign systems. Just like the trip leader arranged a network of people to interact with the students, students need a network of Deaf people who influence their language development.

Quantitative Results

Survey responses were analyzed by collapsing *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree* categories (likewise with *strongly disagree* and *somewhat disagree*), revealing that students absolutely agreed (100%) they are (a) more empathic toward people from different backgrounds, (b) better able to apply knowledge to interactions with diverse populations, and (c) more likely to understand alternative perspectives. Whereas some scale items used negative statements, participants disagreed (89%) that the Holocaust information they acquired was inaccurate or that the trip was not beneficial for professional development. Of the 49 statements, nine statements prompted substantive agreement (88–99%):
- Interacting with people who are Deaf with disabilities was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter). [Theme: Justice and Equity]
- Interacting with local Deaf people was beneficial to me as an interpreter (or future interpreter). [Theme: Consumer Orientation]
- I am more encouraging to other interpreters who are at a different developmental stage than me. [Theme: Communal Coping]
- I learned more effective communication strategies for expressing myself to Deaf people. [Theme:

Consumer Orientation]
- I am more committed to promoting equity and social justice at home. [Theme: Justice and Equity]
- I am a better professional because of my experiences on this trip. [Subtheme: Responsibility]
- Hartheim made me think of the Deaf people or people with disabilities who have influenced who I am. [Theme: Consumer Orientation]
- This trip helped me mature as a professional. [Subtheme: Responsibility]
- I still have a lot to learn about working with people from oppressed groups. [Theme: Justice and Equity]

Photo-ranking survey questions prompted participants to rank a series of ten images according to the impact they might have on their work as interpreters. Participants selected five photographs that represented the closest relationship to their professional identity-building. [The full version of this published paper provides a figure of highest-ranking photographs for professional impact.]

4.   Conclusions

There are three methodological features distinguishing this study from traditional designs in interpreter-related research: moderator-as-participant, photo elicitation, and triangulation strategies. The Deaf, Jewish moderator created a conducive environment for Holocaust dialogue. The various data sources revealed prevalent themes and subthemes that might not have been apparent from a single source. The constant-comparison coding process led to categorization of ~400 codes that yielded rich description to answer the guiding question: 'How did traveling with a group of interpreting students to Holocaust memorial sites impact your identity as a professional interpreter?' Using photographs as research tools was an appropriate technique for eliciting profoundly sensitive conversations, particularly on topics of complicity, human rights, and communication equity. Without the photographs, it might have been difficult to stimulate the deep personal analysis achieved by the participants in this study.

Practical Application

Results should be applied cautiously, as they represent the perceptions of one student group and are not generalizable to other groups, times, or situations. Nevertheless, the findings align with transformational learning theorists and confirm that participants effectively questioned their pre-established belief systems and restored their equilibrium according to the new values they identified as most critical to their work (e.g., adaptability, stamina, empathy, and honoring another person's humanity). Participants highlighted ways they were transformed through stretching their language and cultural abilities, adapting to traumatic realities, and acquiring fresh perspectives of their own roles and responsibilities from a social justice perspective. The group's solidarity speaks volumes about the importance of community for tackling difficult subjects like racism. Participants extended their experiences to a desire for equitable outcomes for Deaf people in their local communities, prompting interpreter educators to tie social justice training exercises to the Deaf people students already know, gradually widening the circumference of community outreach to marginalized populations.

Interpreter educators can use international travel to encourage critical thinking about historically relevant topics, and with adequate institutional infrastructure, they can build travel itineraries around

the features that most impacted our participants, such as interacting with Deaf nationals and adapting to unfamiliar environments and cultures. Furthermore, the findings about (non)productive dissonance illuminated connections between self-estimation of language proficiency and deliberate disengagement that caused regret over lost opportunities. Students who saw themselves as trainees rather than up-and-coming interpreters were less likely to experiment with visual communication strategies when opportunities arose. Future faculty leaders should learn from these student disclosures and emphasize, perhaps as part of pre-travel screening, the expectation for visual language creativity at every opportunity and adherence to Deaf cultural norms through full participation.

Future Research Implications

Holocaust education is largely unaddressed and under-researched within interpreter education. To expand upon this study's findings, international collaborations between spoken and signed language researchers could explore the most effective means of utilizing Holocaust education to stimulate language proficiency and ethical decision-making around social justice topics. An international research partnership would establish a concentrated research agenda regarding vital humanities issues such as eugenics, group supremacy, Holocaust denial, and the dehumanization of others. Collaborative researchers could design methods of inquiry that produce generalizable findings that are widely applicable to spoken and signed language interpreting students. Future studies that measure student perceptions at distinct intervals of Holocaust learning (prior to travel, immediately upon return, six months, and 18 months post-travel) may yield information about how study abroad continues to impact identity development well into the interpreter's career. Cross-sectional studies with larger samples could broaden our understanding of how interpreting students develop professionalism through travel. Anti-Semitic and other discriminatory influences on college campuses make this study a call for action, particularly as programs determine strategies for addressing social inequities.

In conclusion, the relevance of Holocaust education to contemporary issues is apparent; however, acquiring knowledge is not the same as applying knowledge to one's own identity, values, and belief systems. Auschwitz-Birkenau is a powerful symbol of man's inhumanity to man, and accountability for acknowledging its societal repercussions rests with the current generation, as the survivor population rapidly diminishes. Measuring the impact of the Auschwitz symbolism on interpreting students' professional identity is undoubtedly complicated, and this study produced a mere glimpse of transformation that cannot be observed fully by researchers. Perhaps, participants in this study will challenge social inequities and mistreatment of people with physical and mental differences and become agents of change, displaying their transformed identities in ways that will positively impact human rights within the profession. The four themes of Justice and Equity, Communal Coping, Productive Dissonance, and Consumer Orientation especially should resonate with interpreter educators, given their responsibility to address prejudice, stereotypes, racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination within their programs.

Acknowledgments

5.   References

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E. Lynn Jacobowitz, Ph.D., is a retired professor from Gallaudet University, Department of American Sign Language/Deaf Studies. She co-authored *Have you ever seen?* ASL Handshape DVD/Book and a seminal publication co-authored with Dr. William C. Stokoe, based on her discovery of a set of verbs indicating past and future. Lynn trained interpreters in Egypt, Japan, Israel, Sweden, Italy, and Hong Kong and owns ASL STAR, a company that provides ASL training and resources to the Deaf and hearing community. Lynn has two daughters, both of whom are graduates of Gallaudet University. In 2022, she participated as a Guest Faculty in the study abroad to Holocaust memorials with interpreting students from the University of North Florida.

Taking care of your mind and body is doing the right thing for yourself and the deaf community

Naomi Sheneman and Jennifer Kagan

Abstract

Yoga has long been known for its numerous benefits to the mind and the body. Self-care is of the utmost importance. Signed language interpretation is physical, cognitive, and mental (Moser-Mercer *et al.*, 1998; Muller, 2013; RIT, 2008). Experience has informed us that signed language interpreters improve their interpreting skills and decision-making with ongoing practice in the profession over the years; however, there is an attrition concern. Interpreters may leave the profession because of the physical limitations resulting from debiliting injuries that emerge from interpreting work. They may also leave the profession because their mental health is affected by work stressors such as vicarious trauma (Harvey, 2003). Owing to the burnout of professionals leading to their departure, deaf people experience a loss of highly skilled and experienced interpreters. Yoga has great potential as a useful tool to support signed language interpreters' physical needs in addressing specific physical issues resulting from how their bodies are positioned during interpretation. For example, research has shown the effectiveness of yoga in treating carpal tunnel syndrome and repetitive strain disorders (Quilter, 2007), both of which are issues faced by signed language interpreters. Yoga incorporates mindfulness and breathing techniques that can ground interpreters throughout the day between interpreting jobs and helping with decision-making skills (Chambers, 2020). Continuous practice has significant potential to increase the longevity of interpreters in the field. Self-care, not a major focus in the development of an interpreter, is essential to their well-being and allows them to be better interpreters (Zenizo, 2013). Yoga improves one's ability to focus and reduce an otherwise distracted mind (Woodyard, 2011).

Key words

Yoga, self-care, physical health, mental health, signed language interpreters, retention

1. Introduction

We argue that yoga is the best practice for signed language interpreters to take care of themselves physically and mentally. We are both long-time practitioners in this profession as well as in yoga. Experience has informed us that yoga is essential for the sustainability of signed language interpreters. In this paper, we share our personal experiences as both signed language and yoga practitioners, and offer references to research studies that support our claim.

Our positionalities

Jennifer is a hearing interpreter certified in the United States. She obtained an Iyengar Yoga Instructor Level 3 certification. She is certified by the International Association of Yoga Therapists. She is currently studying to become an Ayurveda Health Coach. She developed pain from interpreting and sought so‐lutions. Yoga was the solution that was most effective over a long period of time. When Jennifer started practicing, she decided to take on a rigorous process of becoming a teacher. She has been teaching yoga for more than 20 years in both New York City and San Miguel del Allende, Mexico. Her work has re‐cently pivoted to focus on healthy living coaching and yoga instruction for signed language interpreters.

Naomi is a Deaf interpreter certified in the United States. She started working in the signed language interpreting field when she discovered yoga in 2000. Naomi often remarks that yoga is the best antide‐pressant, as after each practice, she usually feels collected, calm, and content. She is currently training in a yoga teacher certification program at the University of New Mexico, Taos. This program uses a mixture of Hatha and Iyengar yoga and incorporates knowledge from the physical therapy and kinesio‐logy fields.

We met each other at an Iyengar yoga class in San Francisco in 2007, where the United States' Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) conference was held. While they did not meet at the RID conference, it was ironic that they met in a yoga class. It was obvious to Jennifer that Naomi was deaf and they con‐nected. They have been in contact since then in discussing ideas for promoting yoga to signed language interpreters and deaf people.

Self‐assessment

To gain buy‐in from our audience, we must challenge our readers to perform a brief self‐assessment. Consider the following questions as those apply to you. Do you experience the following symptoms: body pain or tension during or after interpreting work, mental stress affecting your ability to relax and ground yourself, and/or burnout? If you answer yes to at least one of these symptoms, we ask our gentle readers to read on with an open mind and open heart. If you experience one of those symptoms, it is not too late to start creating solutions that benefit you and the deaf people that you serve.

Next, ask yourself if you have been trained in the value of self‐care in interpreter education, made self‐care a primary focus of your work as an interpreter, and/or established a regular routine or practice that holistically protects and heals your body and mind. If you already have, great. Keep practicing and spreading wisdom to your colleagues. During our presentation at efsli Thessaloniki, not many audience members responded affirmatively.

2. Impact of interpreting on our bodyminds

The word bodymind is rooted in disability studies. The term resists Western thought of dualism in which the body and mind are separate. Rather, they are in a single unit, working interdependently (Price, 2015). Similarly, yoga is rooted in the Eastern belief that the mind and body are interconnected. Howe‐ver, despite critiques by philosophers, health professionals, and lay people, society's heavy reliance on

biomedical models perpetuates dualism (Mehta, 2011). Thus, within the biomedical model, only physical symptoms are treated without getting to the root cause (Mehta, 2011).

We must examine the impact of interpreting on our bodyminds, not just on physical injuries. Our work requires our entire body, which can affect us. When we are out of balance or are disconnected, we are stressed. This stress impacts the processability. However, we were unable to establish good boundaries. Stress can affect cardiovascular, hormonal, and immune systems. We respond to situations out of reactivity, namely, our "fight or flight" response (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2020). Ultimately, high stress levels render us incapable of being proactive or coping with situations that emerge in our work.

Various physical injuries have emerged from interpreting work. There have been different names to describe repetitive motion disorders, but those mean the same thing: Cumulative Motion Injury (CMI), Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD), Repetitive Motion Injury (RMI), Repetitive Use Injury (RUI), Repetitive Stress Disorder (RSD), and Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). This physical injury can occur in signed language interpreters who repeatedly perform the same rapid motions throughout the day while working. "Activities that require forceful, speedy, repeated movements, combined with awkward postures and insufficient rest time between movements put interpreters at greatest risk for injuries. The most common injuries are to the wrist (Carpal tunnel Syndrome), the arm (tendinitis), the shoulder (bursitis), and the back" (Access Services Northwest, 2023, para. 1).

3.   Importance of self-care for signed language interpreters

Interpreter education curricula often do not include instruction on self-care. Naomi, as an interpreter educator, often asked her students to define self-care. For many, it usually means to chill out. "Chill out" has many connotations. Interestingly, working signed language interpreter participants in Zelznio's (2013) study defined self-care as doing something physical, while only one identified building a support system among interpreter colleagues as a self-care strategy. Self-care includes various physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual activities. Ideally, interpreters should have a menu of ready options. Interpreters reported that they wanted to incorporate more self-care activities to prevent injury and make it possible for them to remain in the profession for a long period of time (Zelnio, 2013). But how?

Self-care requires learning various tools to ensure that time is invested in self-care. One needs to be trained to set healthy boundaries as a top priority (Nash, 2018). Self-care needs to be a consistent practice, such as something that is in your schedule on an ongoing basis. Consistent practices make it sustainable and stable. Self-care is not a release you do on occasion. You need to take care of your 'tool' and tune your "vehicle". As previously discussed, stress causes reactivity. We do not want this reactivity to emerge during our interpreting work, which could jeopardize the connections we have with deaf people. We can be blinded to our stress and do not see the harm of our actions to others.

One organization posits that, "self-care is essential for maintaining good health. By maintaining a good health regimen of self-care, the negative impacts of work-related stress such as emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue and burnout are reduced", (Deafness and Mental Health Statewide Consultation and Liaison Service, n.d., p. 2). Kiecolt-Glaser *et al.* (2018) argue that if stress levels are constantly high, individuals can experience physiological and mental issues changing the stress reactivity. They call this "a vicious cycle" (p. 492) and recommend yoga as a self-care strategy.

4.   What is yoga?

The word yoga has Sanskrit roots, meaning "to yoke". To yoke is to join and focus (Lasater, 1997), and it is believed that we often operate through life with our minds and bodies operating as two separate entities. This separation causes stress. Yoga also means unity. To achieve a better quality of life, we need to learn how to unite our minds and bodies. Unification is the path to relieve stress and pain. Western yoga practices often focus on the physical aspects of yoga. However, yoga has three areas of focus: physical, spiritual, and mental. If all three parts are united and holistically practiced, yoga can be taken home. Home is where the heart is. Imagine the scene from the movie, ET in which ET keeps on saying 'phone home' and Dorothy in *Wizard of Oz* being anxious to return home. Dorothy realizes that the key to returning home is in her power—simply, three clicks of her heels. In the Western world, dualism is a long-held belief that views the mind and body as two separate parts. This belief promotes ongoing division and compartmentalization (Mehta, 2011), focusing on identity categories that further separate us from our true selves.

Yoga is an ancient science–based spiritual practice that promotes a unified harmony within one's being as a single entity (mind and body). Yoga was first developed in India thousands of years ago. It is not tied to a specific religion. Rather, it is a way of living to promote inner well–being (Basavaraddi, 2015). While yoga has numerous physical benefits, the asana (Sanskrit term for pose) has a powerful effect on our physiology, biochemistry, emotions, energy, and spiritual connection to your true self. When we know what home feels like and how to get there, it is less difficult to manage threats to our physical and mental health.

This was reflected in one yoga sutra (1.3). Specifically, yoga sutras are threads (snippets of wisdom) that can aid in the yogic journey (Bryant, 2009). Specifically the translation for the yoga sutra 1.3: tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe-'vasthānam is "In the state of yoga, the seer rests in its true nature" (Bryant, 2009). This sutra argues that health happens when we are connected to our true selves. If we are disconnected, we are divided, which in turn leads to judgment and negativity. The lack of alignment between the self and nature leads to stress. This promotes physical pain, dysregulation, and lack of somatic awareness. In contrast, connection is made apparent through improved awareness of physical, mental, and emotional levels that promote positive change. If this connection is maintained on an ongoing basis, it is easier to get back "home" (centering yourself) when you are dysregulated. Without division/disconnection, there is no judgment. With this connection, we are aligned with nature, seasons, biorhythms, and our inner nature. This means that you experience less stress.

Yoga Styles: Iyengar Yoga

There are many yoga styles. The major parts of yoga practice are physical poses that can have a posi–tive impact on emotional well–being, meditation, and breathwork (Park & Finkelstein–Fox, 2020). Under the Hatha umbrella is the Iyengar yoga, which eventually became our practice for our own reasons. Iyengar yoga was developed by B.K.S. Iyengar who was based in Pune, India. Williams *et al*. (2009) states that Iyengar yoga is the most prevalent yoga style. Iyengar applied variations to classical poses to sup–port health issues that are commonly experienced by individuals (Williams *et al*, 2009).

Iyengar yoga focuses on proper alignment of all body types and ages. Iyengar recognizes that not all as–anas (poses) are accessible to everyone; therefore, the use of props is strongly encouraged to support

our bodies. A wide range of props are observed in Iyengar yoga. The most commonly used props for shoulder stands are walls, blocks, straps, bolsters, blankets, chairs, ropes, dowels, and padding and elevation for shoulder stands. Iyengar yoga emphasizes that poses should be taught in a specific sequence that makes sense rather than randomly performing different poses. This method is well established. Modifications are possible for different conditions. A 2012 article in *The New York Times Magazine* (Broad, 2012) caused a ripple in yoga communities, arguing that inversions in yoga are damaging to the body. However, Iyengar believed that props should be used to support novice and experienced yoga practitioners. In reality, with props and proper alignment and modification in Iyengar, safety in yoga is possible. Although beneficial, inversions are not compulsory for signed language interpreters. However, because of the inventiveness of Iyengar yoga, a variety of accessible poses can achieve the same physiological and emotional benefits as inversions. Learning yoga is a process, so each person should practice progressively and ideally under the tutelage of a trained yoga teacher who can help them navigate learning poses and progress to more complicated poses, such as inversions and conquer obstacles to their growth. Each person should practice asanas with which they feel comfortable. If they want to attempt more difficult poses, such as inversions, they should do so with the support of an experienced and trained yoga practitioner. In Iyengar's Light on Yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar's claims on very specific benefits of each asanas have been repeatedly challenged by healthcare professionals and yoga teachers largely because they have no research basis (Burke, n.d.) Although this concern is valid, asanas are still beneficial to overall well-being.

Naomi began practicing Hatha yoga, and immediately drew on how it felt good. She expressed to her teacher that she knew that she wanted to teach yoga someday. Her teacher advised her to explore various yoga styles. After two years of trying different yoga styles, she discovered Iyengar. She loves the use of different props to support her body, as she worked towards advanced and more difficult poses. The proper alignment emphasized in Iyengar yoga minimizes the risk of injury. In the past 23 years, Naomi has undergone three major surgeries: several casts (one on the arm, three on the legs/foot), and cancer.

Her Iyengar teachers told her to come to the class while she was recovering. They offered Naomi modifications during those times, so that she could still benefit from yoga while recovering. This surprised her, so she reached out to teachers with different yoga styles. Other yoga teachers practicing different styles did not know what to do with her and told her not to come to yoga until she fully recovered. The body can become temporarily or permanently disabled. Naomi appreciated the accessibility of the Iyengar yoga. One of her early Iyengar yoga teachers reminded her that just because she could do asana with ease on a particular day does not mean that she could approach it with ease on a different day. This was when Naomi realized how yoga clearly represented the unity between her mind and body.

Jennifer began her search for yoga when she had extreme pain in her shoulders and wrists from interpreting. She looked to yoga because her mother was an avid practitioner who had healed her debilitating back pain with a yoga practice. Initially, she was not drawn to Iyengar yoga and spent the next few years trying all the different styles of yoga. Eventually, she injured her knee and could not participate in classes. She remembered her initial experience with Iyengar Yoga and knew that they could help. As a result, she healed her knee and canceled the surgery for her torn meniscus. She appreciated how Iyengar yoga is a time-honored practice with deep roots in a classical lineage-based system from India. Jennifer, like Naomi, decided to stop jumping around and stick to one practice. True personal growth, whether physical or mental, is not achieved by jumping around to things you like or avoiding things you do not like. Sticking with one method, Jennifer has learned to face the parts she did not like, and as a result has become stronger, more resilient, and most notably more emotionally stable. Jennifer found

that she could rely on her practice for every condition of life and body. She has studied many times with the Iyengar family in Pune, India, and currently practices regularly with a highly-trained teacher in Pune, India.

Benefits of yoga

In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in studying the benefits of yoga practice. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of yoga. We invite you to explore these resources to find something that fits your current physical and mental state. We have highlighted a few relevant studies. Even a single session may have a positive effect. Park and Finkelstein-Fox (2020) analyzed regular yoga practitioners' physiological resources and emotional well-being before and immediately after a yoga session. Positive feelings increased because physiological resources were activated in the yoga session, and exhaustion decreased. Garfinkel *et al*. (1998) conducted a study that found yoga was effective in treating Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, an affliction that is common among signed language interpreters. Another study by Crow, Jeannot and Trewhela (2015) showed that Iyengar yoga is effective in reducing spinal pain. Participants in the study conducted by Williams *et al*. (2009) reported improvement in lower back pain after practicing yoga for 12–24 weeks. Yoga has been proven to be beneficial for persistent pain (Wren et al., 2011). Finally, based on a corpus study by Woodyard (2011), yoga practice was found to have a potential impact on one's well-being. Yoga appears to "enhance muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory and cardiovascular function, promote recovery from and treatment of addiction, reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improve sleep patterns, and enhance overall well-being and quality of life," (p. 49).

5.   Yoga for signed language interpreters

We now synthesize the existing literature on the benefits of yoga, as highlighted in the previous section, for application to signed language interpreters. Incorporating yoga practice can support signed language interpreters in the following ways: improving physical sustainability to manage and prevent repetitive injury, increasing physical strength as well as range of motion, promoting mental resiliency to prevent burnout, activating the parasympathetic nervous system (vagus nerve), rest and recuperation of the nervous system, helping with stressful situations, promoting quicker thinking ability, reducing reactivity, clear mental processing leading to more effective decisions, improving mental focus, and boosting confidence. Essentially, yoga improved somatic awareness. As you become increasingly aware of how you feel, you can address it by making any necessary changes to your work and life. Interpreters can experience that "coming home" feeling and be able to reset quickly. One major advantage in bridging the disconnection among signed language interpreters and deaf people is that yoga can change their mindset to one of unity and human connection. When you feel more united with yourself, you naturally feel more unified and less divided from others. Yoga can cultivate courage by helping people confront fear. This means that you feel comfortable with the discomfort. Often, when people feel discomfort, there is an impulse to avoid or buffer with activities to "feel good", such as binging on television, shopping, and drinking. In addition, impostor syndrome is a common challenge faced by signed language interpreters, who question their fitness and ability to perform well in this field. This syndrome creates a significant amount of stress that impedes interpretation efficacy (Best, Henshaw & Dickinson, 2022). As an impostor, you feel powerless, which leads to an inability to discuss one's work, which could actually be

a panacea for impostor syndrome. Coping mechanisms from yoga practice can help reduce cognitive distortions that manifest as impostor feelings. These impostor feelings could prevent interpreters from facing and resolving the power issues that exist in this profession.

We share our personal experiences as interpreter practitioners who practise yoga. For Naomi, on-going yoga practice helps maintain a clear mind, which, in turn, can improve the mental capacity for processing information while interpreting. If she is not grounded, her mind will be unclear, triggering a heightened sense of anxiety and causing more "brain farts" (errors in processing). For Jennifer, regular yoga practice has allowed her to continue interpreting over the last 30 years. She no longer experiences the pain she felt at the start of her career. When an assignment is challenging physically or mentally, Jennifer has the diverse tools of her practice to help herself so that stress does not accumulate and cause disease. A consistent practice has helped Jennifer hone her self-awareness, which aids in setting boundaries, identifying personal limits, reflecting on her work, and letting go of stress on a regular basis.

As interpreter practitioners, we have heard various stories about how our colleagues were injured by the work. For example, one person lost all the ability to move their arm while on a job and had to take worker's compensation. We are concerned that it is apparent that a high number of interpreters in their fifties have a list of problems.

Reflections from our yoga workshop at efsli Thessaloniki

We presented a short sequence of poses in a gestural format so that it was accessible to all, especially because we wanted conference interpreters, who were working non-stop, to benefit from the class. We chose a sequence that would relieve the common areas of an interpreter's pain and stress, as well as the effects of sitting at a conference for a week. The sequence increased the range of motion in the shoulders, opened the chest, expanded the backs of the legs, extended the spine, and connected the participants to their breath.

While simple and less than 20 minutes, benefits were immediately observed. Finally, participants were asked to connect to their breath, and Jennifer immediately noted that the sound and quality of their breath was smooth and peaceful. Their eyes were softer and more receptive. The conference interpreters were in the first row and the effects on them were palpable.

After the session, many interpreters expressed how good they felt with a simple session. One of the conference interpreters commented that the session made her realize how important yoga was for her and how necessary it was for her as an interpreter. She had been practicing regularly before the COVID-19 pandemic but had stopped and had been neglecting her body for the past three years. She vowed to return home and then began again.

A few weeks later, Jennifer met one of the conference attendees in Spain. The interpreter stated that once the conference interpreters resumed their work, they could see the positive effect immediately. She noticed that they looked more relaxed and easier. Consequently, she was convinced that this was an essential part of the interpreter's practice.

Jennifer has since had contact with conference attendees via social media. All expressed how valuable and important the session was and how they felt so much better. When questioned if they were still

practicing, or if they had sought a class in their home or wanted to know about the programs Jennifer offers, almost all responded that they had not; they did not have time, but they wanted to. Brushing their teeth is not yet a priority. Interpreters are in pain; they want to feel better, but they consistently say they have no time. We need to prioritize this in our field, especially for those interpreters in countries where demand is high and qualified interpreters are few and far between, or they do not have professional practices that protect them. These interpreters are not thinking of the long-term effects on their bodies, but instead are understandably concerned with providing a service only they can do. What quality of work can an overworked, stressed, exhausted interpreter who has no time for themselves provide?

If we get our cars tuned up regularly so that they do not break down, why should not our body and mind require the same care? If not cared for, the body will speak, it will break down, and by that time, the symptoms will be severe. We need to prioritize a practice that helps the interpreter's body and mind wellness for today, tomorrow, and years to come.

Selecting yoga classes and teachers

If you have reached this part of the paper and determined that you would like to try practicing yoga, you may wonder how you might start the process. Proceed with caution. Do not settle for just any yoga class you see. What is good for us (strength and flexibility) may not be good without progressive learning. Some questions should be explored when trying to find a yoga teacher or class:
- How much training did the teacher receive?
- Is the teacher familiar with the conditions faced by signed language interpreters in their work?
- How much focus is on proper physical alignment rather than just "doing poses?"
- Do they know how to offer alternatives that are not avoidance of an action but help you develop the skill?

Naomi went to different yoga classes and was concerned that some teachers expected students to perform advanced poses and inversions without props supporting their bodies, such as doing a headstand in the middle of the room without a wall and seeing some people get injured.

In her search, Jennifer attended a class that had a fixed sequence of poses, and the classes progressed fairly rapidly. There was little instruction, but only a few auditory cues, as the students performed the poses. Moving from one pose to the next, which requires an understanding of the shoulder joint, Jennifer heard her rotator cuff tear. While extremely painful and unpleasant, this injury led Jennifer towards a yoga method that was more instructional and offered her alternatives for her overused shoulder and wrist joints. For example, after years of practicing Iyengar yoga, Jennifer learned how to slowly build up strength and flexibility and now has no issues doing handstand, arm balances, or other poses that require weight-bearing on her wrists and shoulders. In fact, these poses have helped her as an interpreter, her hands and wrists are stronger and Jennifer knows that this is partly why she does not have the problems many other interpreters experience.

Quilter (2007) posited that the proper modification of injuries can be useful. If not, an incorrect approach can create more problems. Signed language interpreters need to be cautious of performing weight-bearing exercises and movements without instruction, with little focus on proper physical alignment. When the body is out of alignment, the load is uneven, and the body moves in patterns that enable weakness and do not build strength or flexibility, leading to injury. Signed language interpreters

cannot take the chance of injury that could temporarily or permanently disable us from doing work. It is important to start where you are and to have a teacher who can progressively challenge you and move you forward.

We recognize that some people think yoga is not suitable for them. They may argue that they do not have the body or fitness to perform yoga. In contrast, yoga is accessible to anyone, with the right yoga teacher and class. You may have to try different yoga teachers and classes with care until you find the right connection.

6.   Conclusion

Self-care is essential for signed language interpreters for the following reasons: improved personal and professional relationships, retention of quality interpreters, and sustainable professional work. We want to change the landscape in your field and place self-care at the top of the list of skills an interpreter needs to be an effective and successful interpreter. Interpreters deserve it, and the deaf community deserves healthy and skilled interpreters. We ask you to make time for yourself and prioritize self-care. Try to incorporate the following into your lives: mindful breathing, feeling empowered, openness, happiness, calmness, tranquility, relaxation, feeling free, positive, and peaceful. Gardner, Lally & Wardle (2012) recommend that you choose something that makes you feel good and repeat it on an ongoing basis until it becomes part of your norm that it does not feel like it requires much effort. Therefore, we recommend yoga as a self-care option. The better you are in your mind and body, the better you are as an interpreter for the deaf.

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Naomi Sheneman has been working professionally in the interpreting profession since 2000 in various roles. She is a consultant, researcher, educator, interpreter, and diagnostician. She was the first deaf woman to receive a Ph.D. degree in Interpretation from Gallaudet University in 2018. She is currently a full-time faculty member at the University of Houston teaching interpretation and translation. She gave presentations and training both nationally and internationally, focusing on ethics, deaf interpreters' work, power dynamics in interpretation, and medical interpreting. Her publications include a study on Deaf interpreters' ethics, interpreting in international conferences, and power imbalances in interactions between deaf people and interpreters. Her most recent major publication, through Routledge, examined epistemic violence within the signed language interpreting profession. In 2022, she received an "Excellence in Research" award from the Conference of Interpreter Trainers. She has been practicing yoga since 2000 and is currently in yoga teacher training at the University of New Mexico, Taos.

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Jennifer Kagan has been working professionally as a certified interpreter for close to 30 years, providing services in the United States with Mexico as her home base for the past 11 years. She has been certified as an Iyengar Yoga Teacher at the Junior 3 level as a yoga practitioner for over 25 years. She is a certified yoga therapist with the International Association of Yoga Therapists. She is also certified as an Ayurveda Health Coach. She currently runs the Yoga and Wellness for Sign Language Interpreters program, offering courses and programs for interpreters to feel better, establish a sustainable career, and avoid burnout. She also runs the Yoga Academy for Sign Language Interpreters, offering resources, courses, and programs for interpreters. She is so passionate about changing the field of interpreting to prioritize interpreter health and wellness that she designs individualized programs that empower interpreters to live a healthy life and relieve stress, pain, and tension.

The dilemma of politically correct signing: attempts of proper discourse formation tampering with visual linguistic modality

Georgokostopoulos Christos and Sapountzaki Galini

Abstract

The recent expansion of sign language (SL) uses in larger audiences, both within and outside the deaf community, remote SL transmission (through mass media and social networks), and accordingly, the widespread use of sign language interpretation in public spaces have not only led to increased demand for the creation of an inclusive, neutral, and fair language but has also resulted increasingly difficult choices in selecting politically correct terms in SLs. Intentions of the political correctness movement are timely and well-meaning, however, whether politically correct speech/sign can expand along, and not against, the full linguistic dynamics and descriptive worldview of visual-spatial modality, or whether there is some kind of conflict between the two, remains a question that calls for discussion. Often, the question is raised for most interpreters, who function as language transmitters, whether they should use the correct politically correct language or the natural linguistic expressions, respecting the particular identity (worldview and linguistic conventions) of sign languages in public spaces, where more hearing people than Deaf are present. This paper has a twofold purpose: firstly, to provide a brief theoretical description of political correctness in sign languages and the regulatory processes for creating politically correct terms. Secondly, it aims to present two lexical projects in Greek Sign Language (GSL) with an emphasis on regulatory attempts to attribute politically correct terms. These projects are:

1. Collection of linguistic resources on employment and work union/activism terms (2016, University of Thessaly)
2. Creation of a politically correct glossary of LGBTQIA+ terminology in Greek Sign Language (2021, Hands Up and LGBTQIA+ and Disability).

The present paper will discuss some selected, indicative examples of entries and optimal linguistic processes to be used in creating new sign terms. Processes of novel term formation cross-linguistically, and in SLs in particular, include initialization, depiction, metaphor, metonymy, embodiment, among others. Evidence will be provided on the linguistic evolution and historical change of some GSL terms that achieve a fair balance between ethical propriety and social equality, all while retaining GSL visual properties with minimal interferences from spoken languages. While these two projects are not directly related to sign interpreting, their results and proposed lexical expressions can be utilized by interpreters as more acceptable, fair, inclusive, or neutral renditions in their interpreting practices.

Key words

1.   Introduction

Politically correct speech has been adopted for public speaking during the last decades in order to pro-
tect vulnerable minority groups from derogatory or outdated terms and was initially applied in the lingu-
istic context of English and European languages (Fairclough, 2003), where direct reference, especially
regarding bodily features, is deemed offensive. Political correctness is a practice of linguistic cleansing
following prescriptive linguistics, through which certain terms or expressions are targeted as inapprop-
riate, while socially appropriate equivalents are suggested for use instead (Moschonas, 2005). Although
the intentions of the movement of political correctness are good, the dilemma remains as to whether
each proposed term is compatible with the motor-visual modality and the linguistically expressed wor-
ldview of sign languages (SLs) (Carney, 2019; Loos, Cramer and Napoli, 2019; Sutton-Spence and Woll,
2007). The family of SLs, of which Greek Sign Language (GSL) is a part, have a remarkably high potential
for detailed descriptions of entities or physical phenomena due to the visual modality of transmission in
the three-dimensional space, as well as due to their evolution in environments of communication bet-
ween closely connected members of signing communities. On the other hand, descriptive vagueness
is not valued in GSL, but considered as a sign of linguistic incompetence or as unwillingness to express
oneself. For example, words that describe racial characteristics of people outside the GSL community,
biological or physical characteristics of members of the community, religion, gender identities or certain
professions are formed through depictions that are considered 'racist' in the context of political correct-
ness (McKee and McKee, 2011; Mickelburgh, and Syal, 2004, Aarons and Akach, 1998).

During the process of the linguistic monitoring of unofficial terms that undergo changes in order to be
more politically correct and non-offensive, linguistic means that mutilate natural visuo-spatial expres-
sive properties of SLs are often adopted. During the same process, SLs increasingly conform to norms
and word formation rules or features of spoken language (e.g. initialization, word-to-word translation), in
a way surrendering the self-governance and autonomy which has been gained at a dear price, after the
long and arduous efforts of the Deaf movement.

2.   Which signs are politically correct or incorrect?

Spoken and signed languages are driven by different dynamics as to the linguistic signifier, and follow
different norms of offensiveness or non-acceptability. The links between signified and signifier in SLs
are visible, since the available visual prompts of the real world are far more abundant for lexicalization
in SLs than sounds of the real world can become prompts for spoken language lexicalization. Numerous
linguistic conventions are transparent in lexical and syntactic level, while the linguistic systems of SLs
are visibly mapped, calling for an extension of the traditional linguistic Saussurean principles (Sapount-
zaki, Rontogianni and Haleftira, 2024; Loos et al., 2019). Since the default process from a notion to a
linguistic meaning and the assignment of a lexical form to that meaning usually requires, and always
permits, transparency, it is all too common that the results look offensive to western, hearing cultures.
Such examples are most apparent in the domain of sexual notions (oral sex, genitalia) as well as in the
domain of physical features beyond the standards of normalcy or beauty (big nose) (Mirus, Fisher and
Napoli, 2012). Deaf signing communities are indeed very sensitive as to politically correct signing, which
must conform to specific principles of acceptable linguistic expression. However, their standards are
not rooted in taboos on sexuality, race or physical appearance but on possible bias against Deaf identity,
worldview and pride. These features are celebrated through abundant use of motor and visually driven

linguistic expression (Carney, 2019; Sutton-Spence and Woll, 2007). The sign DEAF, for example, and the meaning it conveys is acceptable for the Deaf community, while the hearing community prefers a less 'brute' reference to deafness, such as 'person with hearing problems', the latter being unacceptable in the Deaf community. Similarly, other signs have been characterized by signers as not acceptable because they are visually vague, or because their visual prompts are not appropriate. Such are the signs of "nurse"(see Fig.1), "Jew" (see Fig.2 and Fig.3), "India" (see Fig.4 and Fig.5), which do have clear visual prompts, however these prompts are not adequately inclusive. In these cases, it is suggested that other, equally visual but more inclusive and/or neutral terms need to replace the existing ones (Loos et al., 2019; Sutton-Spence and Woll, 2007).

Fig 1. "NURSE" in Greek Sign Language: a non-inclusive term based on the shape of a female nurse's headcover

Fig 2. "JEWISH" in American Sign Language: a non- inclusive term, depicting the traditional appearance of a male, bearded Jew

Fig 3. "JEWISH" in Greek Sign Language: an inclusive term, based on the Jewish star symbol

Fig 4. "INDIA" in Greek Sign Language as a non-inclusive term

Fig 5. "INDIA" in American Sign Language as a non-inclusive term

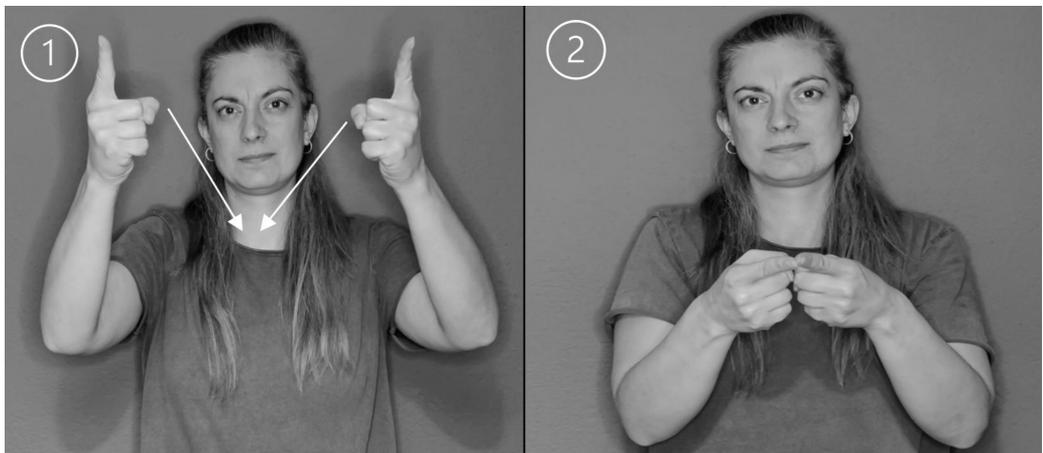*The iconic root of both terms above is a physical trait in the traditional appearance of female Hindus.

Fig 6. "INDIA'' in British Sign Language as an inclusive term, using the topographical shape of the country as a base for lexicalization

Euphemisms or figurative speech are deployed for lowering the offensiveness/taking the edges off offensive terms of strong words and expressions. Visual connotations have been among the most common notions to avoid in politically correct speech (Pyers, 2006; Colville and Stewart 1988; Wood-ward 1979). In SLs, reduction of the visual transparency of a potentially offensive lexeme may include morphophonological adjustments of handshape and movement and may involve reduction or omission of non-manual prosodic features (Loos et al., 2019; Sze, Wei, and Wong, 2017; Mirus et al., 2012).

Psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic processes determine not only the syntax of sign languages, but also the linguistic behaviors of their users. On the one hand, certain behaviors that are considered to be polite within the Deaf Community, could be a taboo for the hearing people: staring into the eyes of the interlocutor, while demonstrating a significant degree of empathy at the paralinguistic level, in the Western world, could be perceived as an expression of romantic attraction. Referring to the marital status of oneself or asking similar questions to an interlocutor at the beginning of communication is also pro-

bably a rude behavior for hearing community standards, as well as direct questions about sensitive topics. Explicit description of one's physical appearance is also taboo for hearing people, while within the Deaf community it is considered to be absolutely acceptable, as is pointing with the finger or referring to someone present by a mere third person pronoun (he, she) instead of using their name. What is also remarkable is the familiarity that the Deaf people have among each other which also reflects in discussions on subjects such as bodily functions or sexual matters, in which they sign in a very descriptive way without a trace of shame or fear of offending someone, due to available language means that allow to modify signs in order to intentionally be offensive or not. Pointing with the finger in signed languages is a central part of their grammar, hence it is used in all types of environment, formal or informal; however, it is hard for hearing people who learn sign languages as a second language to adopt an equally heavy use of finger-pointing as native signers. Other linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions, such as the notion of politeness, in sign languages are defined in a different way; accuracy and clarity of signing are highly appreciated, since they are required for successful communication (Sapountzaki et al., 2024; Sapountzaki and Georgokostopoulos, 2017).

On the other hand, specific linguistic and paralinguistic or cultural behaviors are offensive in GSL. Being asked about hearing loss or experiences in an everyday conversation is certainly not an ice-breaker between people who are not close friends and this behavior comes off as an autistic attitude. Among non-familiar members in the signing community, observing a signed conversation between third parties without giving out some visual signals that demonstrate understanding and reaction to what is being signed is against the principle of interactional security and is considered offensive or discouraging. Moreover, lack of visual reactions, or even lack of eye contact while someone is signing to them (personally or as an audience) will most certainly be interpreted as failure to acknowledge the signer or perceive what is being said, as boredom and/or as a strong hint of low respect towards the signer (Sapountzaki and Georgokostopoulos, 2017).

From a psycholinguistic point of view, sign languages as non-written languages have intense interactive and oral dynamics (Ong, 1982), where, face-to-face and not recorded communication is defined by the term "orality", irrespectively of the channel of transmission of communication (speech or sign can equally have "orality" features). During face-to-face communication between signers, speech tends to be direct rather than reported, compared to a language of high prestige and a long tradition of written records and cultivation, such as the Greek Language in which the indirect and subordination speech forms are more frequently used.

Marking subjectivity on words and sentences in GSL is highly valued and involves the signer's attitude as well as the audience. Objectivity is not valued as a native GSL narration feature and is incompatible with role perspectives. Moreover, most sign utterances do not restrict information to the context of objectivity; narrators do not often dissociate from discourse, as the user of a Western spoken/auditory language expects, but systematically use techniques that maintain a high degree of narrator's involvement (Lakoff and Johnson 1999); narrators are also expected to express their subjective point of view on the subjects narrated or argued. In the structural level signed languages, as GSL, these cultural and paralinguistic features are prevalent through grammatical and textual mechanisms such as the constructed role with surrogate role and action, which more-or-less corresponds to direct and reported speech options during dialogues (Quer, 2018; Dudis, 2007).

Explicitness type	Hearing culture (western world)	Deaf culture (western world)	Compatibility
Direct speech (role taking)	offensive	not offensive / required	incompatible
Explicit reference on physical anatomy	offensive	not offensive / required	incompatible
Explicit description of inanimate objects	not offensive	not offensive	compatible
Reference on negative emotions	offensive	not offensive	incompatible
Reference on positive emotions	not offensive	not offensive	compatible
Derogatory terms	offensive	offensive	compatible
Dissociation of narrator	offensive	not valued – not native	incompatible

Table 1: A table comparing norms related to political correctness in the two linguistic cultures and modalities in the western world

3. Parties involved in the development of new politically correct words

Following the traits of spontaneous signing of native signers, as this is realized by members of the Deaf community, is the safest practice for creating new lexemes in SLs. In this manner a sign that is already in broad use within the linguistic community prevails, not following specific target–oriented processes. Native signers often compose new terms, which are readily understood and accepted by the community due to their evolution from visual images. After an appropriate time span, such neologisms spread across the community and obtain a full lexical status in the language's dictionary. Besides this natural process of introduction, a new term may be a result of methodical and targeted linguistic engineering, especially when the need arises for a new concept to be lexicalized. The parties involved in linguistic engineering in the case of SLs include Deaf native signers who have an active role in the community as well as strong metalinguistic abilities, linguists with a deep understanding of SLs, Deaf who are part of the politically targeted / threatened group (such as LGBTQIA+, Jewish, or others) and specialists with solid knowledge on issues of the group in question. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary in order to ensure that the new terms are not only linguistically appropriate, but that they also accurately transfer the concepts in question from a cultural point of view that satisfies both the Deaf community and the targeted/threatened community in question (Wallin, 1990). In many countries, neologisms that have undergone a procedure of political correction of this nature can be communicated to the public through special glossaries (Johnston, 2001, 2003; Schermer, Brien and Brennan, 2001; Hanke, Konrad and Schwarz, 2001) or they can be spread through their introduction in the language used in the media (Baker, Van de Bogaerde, Pfau and Schermer, 2016). It is also assumed that in some countries the role of sign language interpreters in the news broadcasting and over the Internet can increase the spread of new terms, as long as interpreters have been informed and updated on them.

4. Creating new politically correct terms: processes

The invention or re–adjustment of politically correct terms can be based on nativization or non–nativization processes, both being acceptable methodologically. In the first case, mechanisms of iconic schemas and clusters of more than one word are deployed to create the new term (Rathman, 2023; Moiselle and Leeson, 2022; Dudis, 2005, 2007; Taub, 2000). In the second case, it is unimodal or bimodal borrowing that forms the base of the new term; borrowing between two sign languages is considered unimodal, since they are both transmitted via the same modality channel, while borrowing between a

spoken and a signed language is a bimodal event, which involves the internal process of transformation of a spoken or written form to a signed, or fingerspelled, end result (Brentari and Padden, 2001). The first method is viewed as the preferred one (Moiselle and Leeson, 2023) for the creation of new terms in SLs.

Nativization processes:

Language productivity is fully deployed for the formation of visual schemas, including visual semantics, heavy morphological inflections and complex use of classifier signs (Brennan, 1990, Dudis, 2007). Often, an output term is based on an existing lexical form (Sutton–Spence, 2005). In other instances, new lexemes are created by lexicalization of periphrases or compound signs of the established lexicon (Perniss, Thompson and Vigliocco, 2010; Brennan, 1992; Supalla, 1986). Tuning down non–manual features of an existing sign may also be enough for ensuring political correctness as well as for retaining the necessary iconicity of, e.g. an euphemistic sign, not loaded with quality or quantity markers (see Fig. 7 and Fig.8) (McCullough and Emmorey 2009; Emmorey, Tversky and Taylor, 2000).

Fig 7. "FAT" in Greek Sign Language: a non–offensive form of the sign, still retaining explicit description of physical appearance

Fig 8. "FAT" in Greek Sign Language as an euphemistic sign with prosodic tuning down of non–manual quantifiers

Non– nativization processes:

On the other hand, borrowing between different SLs is a well–trodden path for the introduction of politically correct terms on an interlinguistic level (Adam, 2012). This type of borrowing is known as unimodal in recent bibliography, and is considered as a good practice for politically correct terms. Borrowed terms through this process undergo minimal changes when spread into the target language. Bimodal borrowing, i.e. between a given national spoken or written form and its respective SL is also possible. Different components of a spoken or written word can be internalized in a SL; mouth patterns, compounding according to the superstrate oral language, full fingerspelling, or acronym fingerspelling, are all candidate loan constituents for a SL to use and even assimilate (Sapountzaki, 2005).

5. Lexical Project 1: Data collection for employment–related corpus GSL

Organizer/setting/year: The present project was organized by the University of Thessaly with scientific

supervisor Dr. Galini Sapountzaki at the Conference Center of the University of Thessaly (located at the Holy Monastery of Pau, Argalasti), in August 2016.

Participants: The language resource collection team consisted of twenty adult members of the Deaf community involved in teaching GSL as a second language, with strong metacognitive skills in GSL. Aim: Collection and recording of terms of work, employment, training and workers' movements (syndicalism).

Methodology: The methodological principles of this project are those of linguistic data collection for signed or minority languages (Duval, 2008, Fenlon et al., 2015), during a specially prepared participatory research summer school workshop. Before the summer school workshop, some background work had to be carried out before the actual data collection, related to the semantic width of the terms to be collected, as well as to the word or phrase boundaries of employment–related terminology. Greek language glossaries on work, employment, training and workers' movements were also consulted (indicatively, Alexatos, 2008; Triantafillidis, 2013; Babiniotis, 2015). At the first stage of the workshop, a total of 1,040 Greek words had been collected on commonly used or more specialized vocabulary, which were divided into semantic subcategories and disseminated to the participants of the workshop. In the second phase, the collected material was studied by five small groups of the participants, who were Deaf native GSL users with strong metalinguistic ability. The total number of the participants was twenty; they came from all over Greece. During the workshop, each small group daily compiled a table of proposed equivalents of the Greek glossary assigned to them for that day, according to the Hellenic Society for Terminology (ELOT 402 ISO – ELETO, Orthogramma, 2010). At the evening sessions, the assembly attended the presentations and comments of the findings of each group and by discussion and vote each term was affirmed, adjusted, completed or even disallowed. Further, note was taken as to secondary attributes of a word, regarding its span of use, social register, age of introduction in the language, as well as signs of possible interlinguistic influence. The final sets or terms were video–recorded on site. As becomes apparent, the aim of the workshop was to collect rough or exact existing GSL equivalents in word or short phrase level in the domain of employment. Linguistic adjustment of existing terms as to their political correctness was not the focus of the workshop, which followed a strictly descriptive approach; however, this compilation is the most effective option to the best of our knowledge. Certain terms that the groups proposed to the assembly were considered as non–formal, or non–acceptable for socio–political reasons, although widespread in the Greek Deaf community. It was decided that the terms considered derogatory should be kept in the glossary, accompanied by a short explanatory note. The notions expressed by non–appropriate terms were further expressed in periphrases, and it was agreed that the invention of novel forms was beyond the scope of the research workshop, respecting the natural process of linguistic change, as a different committee of a prescriptive orientation and appropriate composure should deal with developing new terms.

Outcomes: Three informal, possibly derogatory lemmata (established signs) were identified in the employment corpus: blue collar / unskilled worker, prostitute, psychiatrist.

Semantics for GSL cheap / stupid:

The most widely used ASL sign for "unskilled worker" (see Fig. 9) is literally translated as "very low–level worker", with the sign for "very low" being a synonym of the signs for "cheap" and "devalued" in GSL. After the assembly of participants decided that this translation carries connotations that are derogatory

as to one's personality as a whole, possibly resulting in employment and social exclusion, it was propo–sed that two alternative terms may be added to the glossary, for the Deaf community to decide on the final choice; these phrases were a) "without specialty" (see. Fig.10), and b) "not having knowledge of a specialty".

A widespread version in the Deaf community for the notion "unskilled worker" contains an older form of the word "illiterate" (see Fig.11), and was omitted altogether for two reasons; firstly, this form translates both as "having no knowledge about" and as "stupid", with slight changes in facial expression; secondly, even without the derogatory facial expression, from a semantic point of view the term is not accurate nowadays. For the meaning "illiterate", the suggested periphrastic translation was "person who does not know how to write and read" (see Fig.12).

Fig 9. "UNSKILLED WORKER" an established sign with offensive connotations (WORK CHEAP/LOW)

Fig 10. "UNSKILLED WORKER" an established, and acceptable term (CERTIFICATE NO–HAVE)
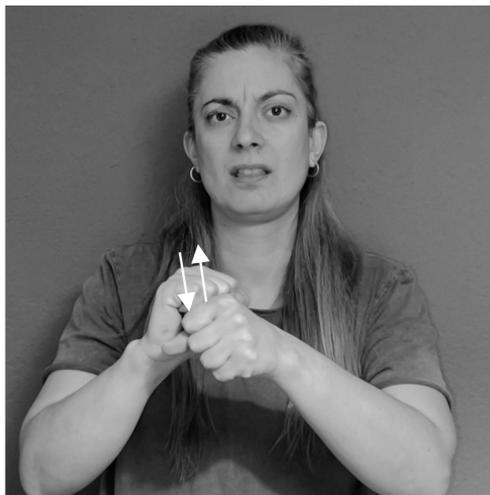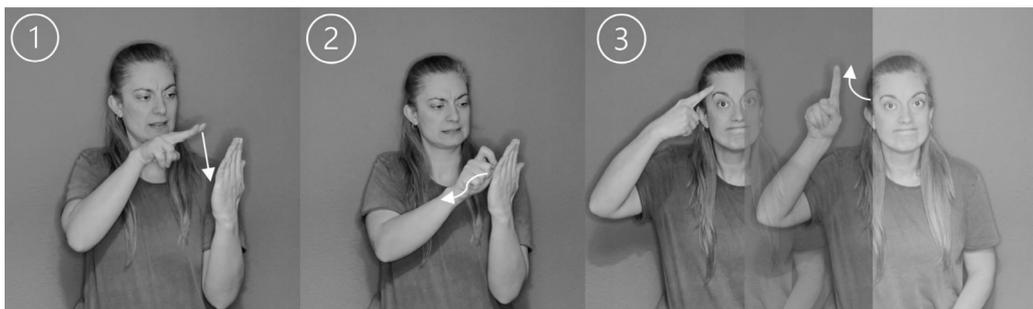
Fig 11. "ILLITERATE" as an offensive term

Fig 12. "ILLITERATE": a short phrase expressing the same notion objectively (READ WRITE NO–KNOW)

Form: non–manual features, handling classifiers:

The existing signs for 'prostitute' in GSL were two, out of which one was included in the glossary. The omitted form was negatively loaded with non–manual features and with a handling classifier, depicting a "person waving a handbag while chewing a chewing gum" (see Fig.13). It was deemed by the assembly of participants that an acceptable form should not incorporate strong non–manual features or a move-ment classifier (see Fig. 14).

Fig 13. "PROSTITUTE" as a non–accepted term

Fig 14. "PROSTITUTE" as an accepted term

Social, or sociolinguistic behavior, direct reference to madness:

For the notion of "psychiatrist", the most widespread term in GSL is a compound of the signs for "mad" and "doctor" (see Fig. 15) in GSL. Since the research workshop had clearly decided on a non–prescriptive orientation, the existing term was included in the glossary, but an alternative term was suggested also, translating word–for–word the greek term for "psychiatrist", whose components are "soul" and "doctor" (see Fig.16).

Fig 15. "PSYCHIATRIST" as a non–accepted term

Fig 16. "PSYCHIATRIST" as an accepted term

Reasons for deciding on not developing new terms:

1. Strong resistance **to the point of passion**!
2. **Protecting a minority group, valuing a native language, respecting the legacy of the older members of the community:** Not trusting anyone playing around with GSL: from the beginning of the workshop it was agreed that the group would not be entrusted to create their own new signs.
3. **Previous bad experience:** A lot of inaccurate signs have been created artificially in GSL, and a lot of glossaries have been developed over the past decades. Most of these terms are not valued by the community, strangely enough, even when they are being used among signers (such as the case of a non-native manual marker for questions of "either/or", or such as the par etymology (folk etymology) in the sign for "information", which is obviously neither native-like, nor do they cover a gap in lexicon and grammar of GSL, but have nevertheless prevailed. We were determined not to repeat the same mistake in the workshop.
4. **Social responsibility, respect of the Deaf community hierarchy, not taking unauthorized action:** the organizers as well as the Deaf participants would not take the initiative to create new terms, fearing an outcry from the Deaf community.

6.   Lexical Project 2: LGBTQIA+ terminology in GSL

Organizer/setting/year: This project was organized by the Hands-Up interpreting and accessibility agency/services in collaboration with the Greek LGBTQIA+ People with Disabilities and was carried out over eight online sessions in 2021.

Participants: The group of specialists included an organizer from the Greek LGBTQIA+ People with Disabilities, three Deaf members of the Deaf community who were actively involved in GSL teaching as a second language (L2), as well as three certified interpreters of GSL with a long experience in the field. Participants were selected by the Hands-Up coordinators based on their active involvement in the Deaf LGBTQIA+ community as well as their metacognitive and metalinguistic skills in their biographies, in

order to guarantee both the quantity and quality of outputs for the glossary.

Aim: The aim of the project was to select appropriate terms for the LGBTQIA+ terminology in GSL, or create/develop new terms that met the requirements of political correctness.

Methodology: The methodology of research in this group was participatory, following the same guidelines for data collection as the research workshop on employment terms. At the first stage, seventy-five terms selected from the internet glossary of 'Colouryouth' (https://www.colouryouth.gr/terms/) on LGBTQIA+ areas were studied. Their candidate equivalents in GSL were written down and subsequently evaluated as to possibly negative connotations. At the second stage, creation of alternative lexical translations was assigned to two working subgroups, for LGBTQIA+ notions that lacked a lexical translation in GSL as well as for terms that were deemed inappropriate.It was again agreed that the engineering of neologisms was to be avoided; instead, existing neologisms that had already evolved in small GSL groups of users but had not yet spread across the broader GSL community were preferred. Next, the two groups informed the assembly for a discussion, confirmation or modification of the proposed terms via a series of online meetings. For the terms "lesbian", "homosexual", "queer", "active" and "passive" roles, some additional actions followed, such as informal polls among Deaf members of LGBTQIA+ community. This project did have a prescriptive orientation, but it still was a mere indication of the work of linguistic committees at an initial stage, and it remains open for revisions, improvements, additions or omissions through feedback between the committee and the GSL community. The tools proposed for the creation of new terms followed current bibliography on nativization and iconic schematization processes (depictions and periphrases) and non-nativization processes (fingerspelling, endogenous or bimodal borrowing) (Rathman, 2023; Moiselle and Leeson, 2022; Dudis, 2005, 2007; Taub, 2000). Additional criteria considered were the following:
- Criteria on perceptibility and clarity, as stated by the Greek Company of Terminology (ELOT on translanguaging 402 ISO-ELETO, Grammar, 2010).
- Technical criteria for the facilitation of rendering and interpreting processes, taking into consideration optimal time management for interpreters (i.e. avoiding long periphrases).
- Sociolinguistic criteria, such as using existing neologisms created by native signers, provided these are politically correct; conforming to the cultural and linguistic norms of GSL; applying the principles of linguistic equity, neutrality, and equality and inclusivity.

At the final stage, the selected terms were recorded and posted on Youtube for dissemination to the broader public: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzrXq714lGYandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6Ef-bPfcPFJfzjtandindex=12

Outcomes:

The results of the analysis are as follows:

As illustrated in the following diagram (1), most of the lexical terms created emerged through nativization processes (70%), with a significantly smaller percentage of non-nativization evolved terms (30%).
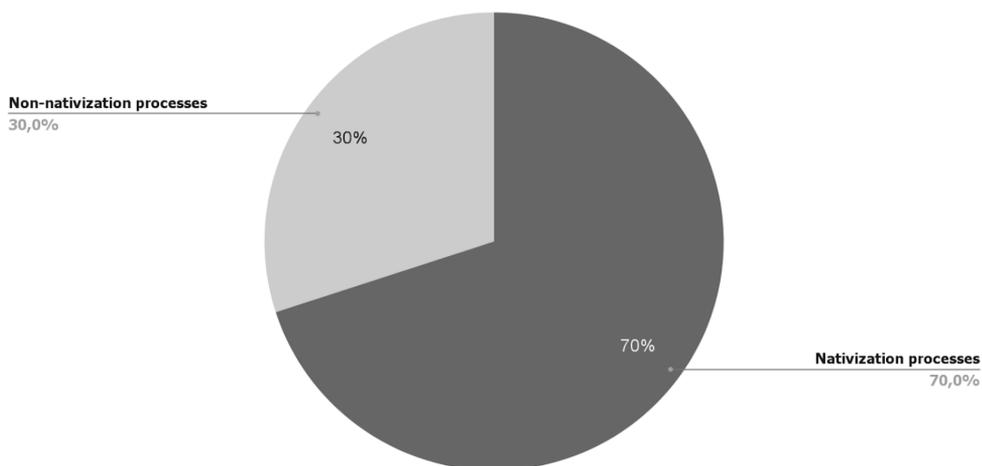
Diagram 1: Distribution of nativization and non-nativization processes

In the following diagram (2) and table (2), one can see the distribution of the 75 terms' origin and linguistic nature. Only 20% of the resulting terms belong to the core lexicon of GSL, while 25% are word-for-word translations of Greek terms. The highest percentage of politically appropriate terms were periphrases (40%). The remaining terms had a non-linguistic or paralinguistic source; a small percentage (10%) of the total consisted of depictions, while unimodal borrowing and fingerspelling were the source of even smaller sets of signs (4% and 1%, respectively).
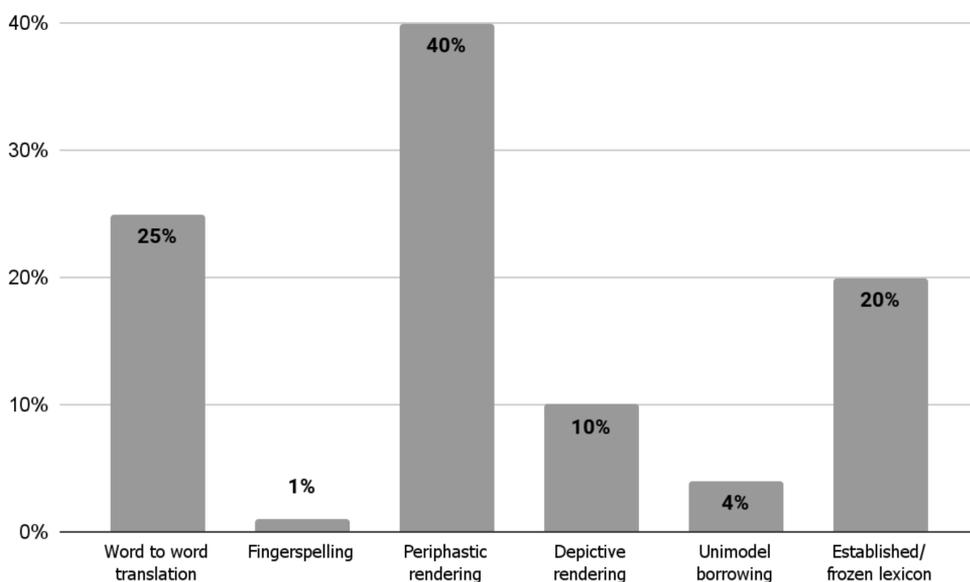
Diagram 2. Distribution of the terms' origin and linguistic nature

	Word to word translation	Fingerspelling	Periphrastic rendering	Depictive rendering	Unimodel borrowing	Established/ frozen lexicon	Total (N) of words
(N) of terms per category	20	1	30	5	4	15	75

Table 2. Total number of signs per category

An example of the 40% of lemmata with a periphrastic output is the notion for HETERONORMATIVITY, where the term was described as a short phrase: SOCIETY IMPOSE STRAIGHT (see video of the lemma in the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFZmXoLfJbgandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbP-fcPFJfzjtandindex=42).

The lemmata of ACTIVE and PASSIVE were included in their existing manual forms, as used already in the lexicon of GSL, but tuning down the non-manual features, which the project assembly deemed as informal and inappropriate (see videos in the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1nARvPJ-Bggandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=44, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvQ4ZrzgZu8andlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=73)

Use of unimodal borrowing from ASL is observed for the lemma TRANS. A group of Deaf trans people participated in a conference in Florida 2003 (as mentioned in Morris, Ard and Lefkowitz, 2023) and agreed on creating a novel compound sign based on the forms for BEAUTIFUL and I (identity), using the handshape and movement of BEAUTIFUL, and the location of I on the chest of the signer. This form was adopted based on Alex Leffers'[1] remark: "It doesn't matter what you look like, or how you represent yourself, it's about who you are on the inside," ... "That identity is protected; it can't be taken from you". (see video in link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyCgjEP4xesandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbP-fcPFJfzjtandindex=9). The lemma for GAY had already internalized in GSL, as a unimodal external loan. (see video in link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUwctxbLuRAandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=71)

For some of the terms, such as LESBIAN, more than one politically appropriate option were proposed. In the case of 'lesbian', the first lemma was a result of unimodal borrowing from ASL and it appears to be in use by signers based in Southern Greece (see video in link, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uhWN-5K8uYandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=34), while the second was a northern variant, opted by the Greek LGTBG+ Deaf community poll. (see video in link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEZumDQh144andlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcP-FJfzjtandindex=35). The poll method was conducted via the Deaf LGBTIQ+ chat group on Messenger. The chat group had a total of 22 members, of which 18 voted. In this way, the word voted for by the majority prevailed as the most acceptable. Most of the poll participants replied that the southern option for LESBIAN carried heavy physical connotations and was devoid of any trace of affectionate or human contact.

Loans across the different modalities of spoken and signed languages are the lemmata for GENDER IDENTITY and CIS. In the first case, the resulting term is a word-for-word translation of the Greek term, and in the second case ASL fingerspelling forms the sign as C-I-S (see video in link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CtBQGc4QoEandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=4,

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1   Deaf manager of Communications and Community Engagement with the Division of Equity, Diversity and Inclusive Excellence and coordinator for the LGBTQIA+ programs at Gallaudet University, USA.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JapRs_aNQ0andlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzj-tandindex=5)

Depictive rendering and constructed action were the sources of other signs, such as the lemma for VOGUING (see video in link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT-0_utKn5Iandlist=PLRfOsS-z9nY3Pz4yVSw6EfbPfcPFJfzjtandindex=61)

7.   Conclusions

Concerning the lexical projects:

After processing the data and reviewing the processes of creation of politically correct terms in GSL, it appears that in many cases these consist of established phenomena of language change and linguistic evolution. Native GSL signers do balance between moral probity, equality and respect of the linguistic modality with minimal interference from the spoken language modality. Consulting of relevant bibliography confirms our empirical findings in the Deaf community also makes prevalent that most deaf signers, especially those of younger ages, are more accepting towards lexical changes for political correctness when these are a result of nativisation processes and when a lemma is under native processes of spreading these terms (Stamp, Schembri, Fenlon, Rentelis, Woll, and Cormier, 2014).

In both projects, periphrases were the most prevalent form of new GSL terms (50% in the employment-related glossary, and 40% in the LGBTQIA+ project). This type of rendering transfers a concept accurately while respecting the grammar of the recipient language; in the case of GSLs, or of other SLs for that matter, users' preference to periphrases over non-assimilated loans is indicative of the strength and viability of their languages. However, periphrases are not part of the established terminology across users of the language. On the other hand, GSL can produce much more dense lexemes than spoken Greek, incorporating literal or symbolic spatial relations, which leads to the question of why long periphrases are preferred over a possibly short, dense new term. It is possible that GSL does exhibit complex morpho-syntactic mechanisms but may not be equally flexible when forming compound words. In any case, sociolinguistic phenomena of and around GSL surely play a significant role for the reluctance on new term creation; GSL users respect their heritage and community and would not rush to invent new terms; on the other hand, linguistic planning in GSL is very weak, if at all existent, and there is not an relevant official committee to undertake the responsibility of this task (Sapountzaki and Haleftira, 2018).

Word-for-word translations of terms account for a smaller, albeit significant subgroup of terms in both projects. Some of these instances may be incidental, while for the rest, spoken Greek influence is apparent. These terms are recognized as such by the signing GSL community and broadly used, even when they may not be semantically accurate or morpho-syntactically native-like. This is a commonly observed phenomenon and does not come as a surprise to the linguist.

Final remarks on sign language interpreting:

Sign language interpreters cannot afford to bypass the risks of offensiveness or non-inclusivity through the words and phrases they use. To begin with, most of the interpreters at the present time are women,

and they have to come in terms with preconceptions of the type of public speech a woman may produce in order to be perceived as politically correct or not. Moreover, the quest for professional ethics while interpreting is increasingly strong (Murphy, 2012). On the other hand, interpreters being among natural language spreaders, or even linguistic models between two different languages, and, in the case of SLs, between two different modalities (Dupont and Alemany, 2023), they have to find a balance between linguistic accuracy of the message transmitted, as the code of ethics of interpreting requires, and between linguistic appropriateness, respecting the cultural and linguistic norms of SLs. As mentioned in the paper, the relation between sign and meaning in a lexical SL item is quite often transparent, with forms fusing into meanings iconically in the lexical semantics as well as in syntax, and it is precisely this inherent closeness between meaning and form in SLs that may be considered crude or inappropriate. Prescriptionist approaches for compensating against the possible crudeness of signs that may be violating equity, respect and inclusivity often distort the indigenous linguistic SL dynamics and further deconstruct the Deaf users' worldview.

In cases where inappropriateness in a lexeme and pressure for change is persistent, such as in references of a person's identity, replacement with a new term may be unavoidable.

Each interpreting environment is different, according to the characteristics of the audience, so there is a reasonable question of whether certain terms are to be used predominantly when interpreting in public spaces, where more hearing than Deaf people attend. In these spaces, politically correct speech according to the hearing culture may be preferred in order to comply with the standards of the majority of the audience, but at the same time the interpreter risks being unsupportive of the Deaf community. Conversely, an interpreter in a public setting may opt to still use native SL transparent expressions, supporting the means of expression of the Deaf, hence supporting the Deaf identity, worldview, and linguistic consensuses, but risking negative connotations against the speaker or even the Deaf community.

In conclusion, issues related to political correctness across languages reflect a complex synchronic relation between languages and cultures within a given political context. It is crucial for interpreters to keep updating and including cultural aspects into interpreting training and education, familiarise themselves with the different appropriate norms for each linguistic modality and each type of communication environment, and nonetheless, distinguish between reasons of appropriateness in different environments of their profession. To this point, there is not a 'golden rule' for facing these challenges. However, interpreting strategies regarding political correctness have been proposed (Murphy, 2012; Sczesny et al., 2016 Pshenitsyn, 2011), some of which meet the prerequisites for preserving the linguistic autonomy of SLs. Including issues of political correctness in interpreting courses will provide future interpreters with a valuable tool, facilitating fast, responsible and informed decision-making, not only as interpreters, but as cultural intermediaries.

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A Collective Approach to Sign Language Interpreting for the Theatre

Lynnette Taylor, Stephanie Feyne and Candace Broecker–Penn

Abstract

Art is a human right. This has been stated unequivocally in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27, "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community" (United Nations, 1948). In New York City, renowned for its theatre, Deaf audiences often participate in the cultural life of the greater community by attending interpreted theatre performances.

In the theatre, interpreters strive for fidelity to the interpreted performance. The performative to per–formative nature of live interpretation in the theatre poses unique considerations in both the translation and the performed interpretation. In this paper, we introduce features of a collaborative and dialogic approach that are integral to producing translations and interpretations with fidelity to the performed source material.

The four guiding principles for this work are: service to the community, recognition of the political act of interpretation, that Deaf team members are intrinsic to this work, and that fidelity is to the performed theatrical event, not to the script.

This paper covers a brief history of signed interpreted theatre in the United States, the importance and place of representation in this work, aspects of interpreted theatre that are distinct from work in other venues, the collective construction of conceptual and physical shared meaning space, as well as strate–gies that are employed in this work. It closes with a reminder of the importance of the Deaf community in this work.

Key words

Theatre interpreting, team constructed discourse, shared meaning space, collaborative interpretation, performance fidelity, character depiction

1.   Introduction

Art is a human right. This has been stated unequivocally in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27, "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community" (United Nations, 1948). In New York City, renowned for its theatre, Deaf audiences often participate in the cultural life of the greater community by attending interpreted theatre performances.

In the theatre, interpreters strive for fidelity to the interpreted performance. The performative to performative nature of live interpretation in the theatre poses unique considerations in both the translation and the performed interpretation. In this paper, we introduce features of a collaborative and dialogic approach that are integral to producing translations and interpretations with fidelity to the performed source material.

We address guiding principles and discursive interactive communication in addition to translation and performance considerations and strategies. While our forthcoming book, *Show of Hands: Interpreting for the Theatre* (Taylor, Feyne, Broecker–Penn, 2023) addresses this content in greater depth, this paper touches on important aspects of the work.

Our approach was developed from a practitioner perspective and is based on our collective experience of interpreting in venues in New York City and beyond, including Broadway, Off–Broadway, Regional, Touring, Experimental, and Shakespeare festival productions. We believe this approach not only honors the discursive nature of theatrical performances, but also the discursive aspects of signed languages.

We begin by situating interpreted theatre in its historical frame in the United States.
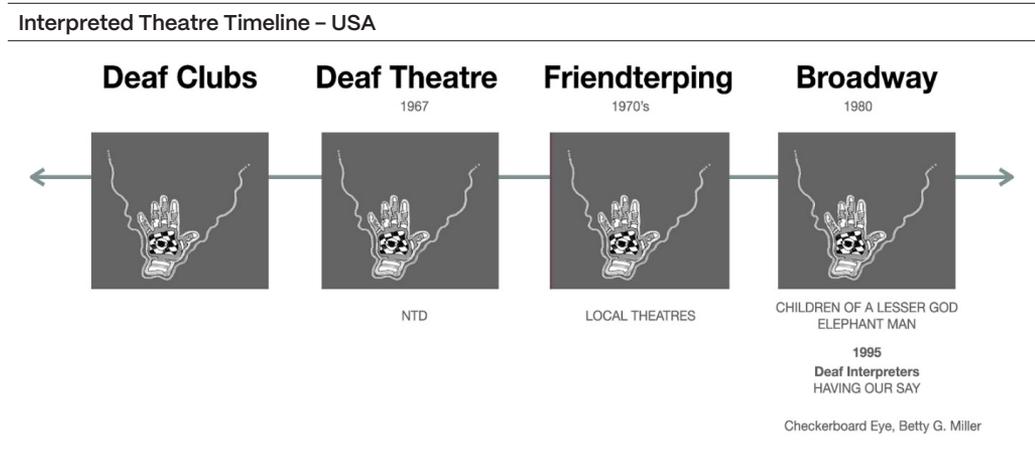
2.   History of interpreted theatre in the US

Interpreted Theatre Timeline – USA

Deaf Clubs	Deaf Theatre 1967	Friendterping 1970's	Broadway 1980
	NTD	LOCAL THEATRES	CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD ELEPHANT MAN

1995
Deaf Interpreters
HAVING OUR SAY

Checkerboard Eye, Betty G. Miller

Figure 1

In the US, the art of ASL storytelling was developed and nurtured in Deaf Clubs and Deaf schools. Signed theatre productions for Deaf community members were mounted and performed in schools, universities, and clubs.

The National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) was the first "accessible" theatre. Founded in 1967, it was the first professional Deaf theatre company in America (NTD, 2019). Its performances in ASL were augmented by hearing company members speaking in English. In this way, Deaf performers invited hearing audiences to the shared theatre experience. Perhaps for the first time, Deaf and hearing family members

and friends could enjoy theatre together.

In addition, there was a growing interest in attending theatrical productions which were not accessible. In the spirit of community, many hearing interpreters accompanied Deaf friends, family, and artists to the theatre. We sat side by side in the audience, casually interpreting. Rachel Kolb and Timothy Y. Loh use the phrase "friendterpreting" for such interactions (Kolb, R. and Loh, T. Y. (2022). We would do our best, make corrections on the fly, check in with our friends for clarity, and figure it out together. These early experiences of collective co-construction of meaning helped us identify strategies that were later incorporated into our approach to professional interpreting for the theatre.

In 1980, *Children of A Lesser God*, a fraught love story that explores the cultural dynamics between a Deaf woman, Sarah Norman, and her hearing lover, James Leeds, opened on Broadway with a Deaf and hearing cast. For her performance as Sarah, Deaf actress Phyllis Freilich walked away with the Tony Award for Best Actress. The production was also honored with Best Play and Best Actor (IBDB.com). *Children of a Lesser God* was the catalyst for commercial theatres to provide professional interpreted performances.

Later that year, *Elephant Man* starring David Bowie was the first interpreted show on Broadway. The team consisted of Alan Champion and Phil Giambarisi. Interpreters were now moving from sitting in the audience to standing in the spotlight. This repositioning from a more deaf-centric to an interpreter-centric model requires constant negotiation.

For the first 15 years, interpreters for theatre in New York City were all hearing, even though teams were supported by Deaf advisors and directors. In 1995, Michelle Banks and Patrice Creamer, two Black women, made history by being the first Deaf interpreters on Broadway. The hearing interpreter team member was Lisa Weems. The play they interpreted, *Having Our Say*, was developed from the oral history of two centenarian civil rights pioneers, Sarah L. Delany and her sister, A. Elizabeth Delany, who were born in the late 19th century to a former slave. Not only was this the first appearance of Deaf interpreters on Broadway, it also was a recognition of the importance of representation in interpreting teams for the theatre.

While a growing number of theatres provide access through interpreted performances, friendterpreting still occurs today as many shows are not accessible.

3.   Guiding principles

In the early 1980s, there was a small group of Deaf and hearing interpreters and advisors in New York City doing this work. There had been no formal training. From working together, we began to develop a shared set of beliefs that our work should always be in tandem with the Deaf community and be responsive to its guidance. And that the work we do should not cause harm.

The authors of this paper have developed four guiding principles for our work: service to the community, recognition of the political act of interpretation, that Deaf team members are intrinsic to this work, and that fidelity is to the performed theatrical event, not to the script.
We see interpreting for theatre as a service to the Deaf community, not a vehicle for stardom. Providing

a service necessitates us performing the task with integrity. This means we bring our skills as interpreters to this work. Achieving and maintaining linguistic and cultural fluency requires interpreters to be living the language in our daily practice and our lives.

Interpreting is also, by its very nature, a political act. An interpreted performance is an act of desegregation – where Deaf and hearing audiences share a space that is typically reserved for hearing audiences. The interpreting team must be mindful of the political and ethical messages we send as we work in theatrical venues. As Dr. Tom Humphries points out, "The public imagination about deafness is very limited" (Humphries, 2022). We recognize that there are socially constructed stereotypes and tropes about signed languages, the deaf community, and the role of the interpreter. Interpreters must be mindful that our choices, even unintentional choices, do not play into supporting those narratives and misconceptions. This requires an on-going, inter-cultural examination of our role in the space, our belief systems, our ethical framework.

Another principle is that Deaf team members are integral to the entire experience. From the onset of theatrical interpretation, Deaf people were involved in a variety of roles: vetting the interpreters for Broadway as well as serving as interpreter directors and performance interpreters.

The final principle we want to address is that our fidelity is to the performed source, not to the script. The performance on stage has already been "interpreted" from text to stage. Our work is informed by the decisions made by the director, actors, and creative team.
These principles guide our work in developing translations and performed interpretations that are respectful of the source, the target language, the team, and the audience.

Representation

Because interpreters' bodies are understood in their situational context, it is important to consider what our bodies signify in the theatrical context and how our bodies may or may not align with the story being told onstage. Our field has long accepted the "Myth of Neutrality," of interpreters as neutral language conduits (a myth which has been challenged by Melanie Metzger). We cannot ignore the fact that interpreters' bodies reflect a sociocultural narrative.

When approaching the works of playwrights or directors who design their shows "with racial, gender, cultural, or ethnic specificity, then the play's cultural lens becomes an important consideration for selecting the interpreting team" (Taylor, et al, 2023). We must be mindful and ask whether we are the right interpreter to be stepping into the light and telling that story.

When Kenny Leon accepted his 2021 Tony award for Best Director, he addressed the lack of representation in American theatre by saying, "We've got to make the table bigger." This is germane to our work as well in that we must invite members of the community who, for the most part, have not been at the table. For us, this means we actively seek out a diverse pool of interpreters and Interpreter Directors, which in turn welcomes a more diverse audience into the space.

Aspects unique to interpreted theatre

It is important to recognize that interpreted theatre is rehearsed, interactive, performative, and dialogic. In addition, team composition includes interpreters (Deaf and hearing) and a Deaf interpreter director. Depending on the needs of the show of course – the team can seek out additional linguistic, cultural and/or dramaturgical resources.

In considering fidelity in interpreted theatre, we came to recognize the stage not only as the source, but also as a member of the team. The interpreted performance is intentionally designed in such a way that there is a constant interplay between the two spaces: the interpreted space and the stage space.

The performed interpretation is live and simultaneous. It is produced in an interactive manner among team members using natural dialogic discourse. Team collaboration for the development of the in-terpreted performance occurs throughout several phases (that may be iterative or overlapping). The rehearsal process includes the unpacking of the play and the development of translatory and perfor-mative agreements. Rehearsals are conducted in the target language so that, in a conversational way, we begin to build a shared semantic domain for the world of the play and develop a shared use of space. This process requires the team to be collectively responsible for telling the whole story.

4.   Everything is translatory

Translatory possibilities emerge from the theatrical experience, rather than from the script. This inclu-des: team composition, character assignment, character depiction, translation choices, performative choices, performance of the translation. All our choices are designed to convey the layers of meaning that make up the play.

Just as the composition of the cast onstage conveys information to the audience, we recognize team composition is a critical component of the storytelling and therefore is one of the content strands of meaning that needs to be considered. While we stated this concept in the section on Representation, we mention it here as a translatory consideration. We cannot ignore the fact that interpreters' bodies reflect a sociocultural narrative. When shows are designed with racial, gender, cultural, or ethnic specificity, our goal is to have the team composition support the narrative of the stage.

In New York City, typically interpreting teams of three stand in front of the stage in a designated interpreting space that is well lit. As most shows often have more than three characters, a translatory consideration is how characters are assigned to interpreters. This is not arbitrary, rather it is based on the characters' relationships and their interactions. This is a storytelling strategy.

Since interpreters often represent multiple characters, character depiction is another strategy used for presenting a quick animated snapshot of who you are interpreting for at a particular moment. Character depiction draws from the characteristics and mannerisms the actor has created.

During rehearsals, the team makes agreements about how to import the vocabulary of the play: the dialogue, the actor's behaviors and actions on the stage, as well as other theatrical elements such as aural and visual information. Constraints on the translations include the performability and simultaneity of the live interpretation in relation to the show.
Team Constructed Discourse

Theatre is mostly a dialogic art form; therefore, the interpreting team produces a dialogic interpretation.

"Team constructed discourse" (Taylor, Feyne and Broecker–Penn, 2023) requires the team members to be engaged in the dialogue they are interpreting and actively listening to the signed responses. This is a different positionality for interpreters.

The team determines which visual, performative, linguistic, thematic, and emotive stage information will be imported into the translation so that it reflects both the content and the aesthetic and performative delivery of the production.

Given it is a live performance, both the stage and the interpretations are subject to change – and the whole team needs to be responsive to these impromptu changes. Also, even though it is rehearsed, it is not frozen. The teams stay actively engaged to each other and the stage, responding to and revising as needed. In this way, the collective interpretation honors the integrity of the social interactions on the stage.

Collectively Constructed Shared Meaning Space

The meta container for the interpretation – a space in which all the discursive agreements and importation of meaning from the stage are performed – is what we call "the shared meaning space" (Taylor, Feyne, and Broecker–Penn, 2023). It serves as a simulacrum, a representation of the staged performance where the interpretation is expressed in a dialogic manner and is developed by the team in rehearsals. The team collectively builds the shared conceptual and spatial references, which become part of the performed interpretation. In this way, we design an interpretation that will engage with and respond to the performance on stage.
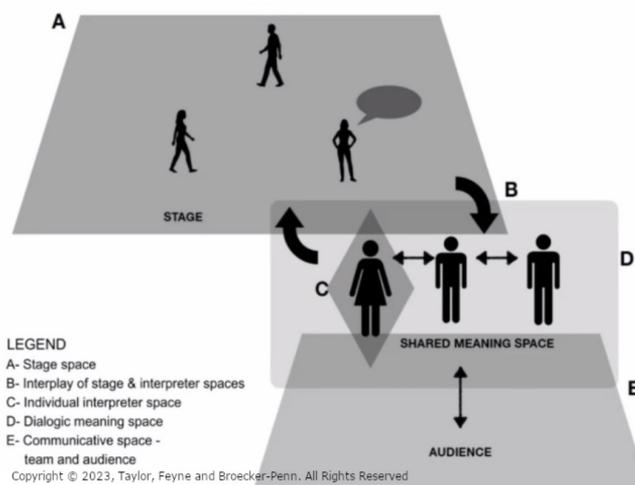
Shared Meaning Space

Figure 2 (Taylor, Feyne, and Broecker–Penn, 2023)

The above diagram shows the three interactive spaces and demonstrates the complexity of the interactions and interplay between the stage action, the interpretation, and the audience.

Shared Spatial Agreements in Interpreted Discourse

Discursive Spatial Agreements

Figure 3 (Taylor, Feyne, and Broecker–Penn, 2023)

The four photos above are examples of conversational spaces delineated in the shared meaning space. They are taken from a sample interpretation of *The Lion King* and illustrate interpreters incorporating multiple agreements between the stage and the conversational partners. Lynnette, on the left, is interpreting for Timon and Candace, on the right, is interpreting for Pumba. The interpreters employ strategies of eye gaze, body positioning, and shared lexical agreements. As explained in our book:

> *"In a 26-second exchange between Timon, Pumba, and Simba, we see five discrete spatial agreements expressed through body position and eye gaze: interpreters looking to the stage, Timon and Pumba addressing Simba, Pumba talking to Simba (with Timon engaged and receptive), and the team to the audience. In brief, the stage picture informs the interpreting team's decisions about where to place referents in our shared meaning space"* (Taylor, Feyne and Broecker–Penn, 2023).

In the top left photo, the team focus is to the stage as the conversation begins. Their stance is as interpreters rather than in character.

In the top right photo, both assume the character stance. Candace and Lynnette focus their gaze and direct their comments towards their shared referent for Simba.
In the lower left photo, Lynnette engages as a dialogic partner. Her gaze toward Candace guides the audience to the primary focus, Candace, as Pumba, who is signing to Simba.

In the lower right photo, the interpreters are now representing a moment in the characters' conversation that is directed toward the audience.

Team Dialogic Agreements

Character Dialogic Agreements

Figure 4 (Taylor, Feyne, and Broecker–Penn, 2023)

These photos show examples of character dialogic agreement. These agreements include translation, emotive and performative agreements that align with the stage information.

In the top left photo, Lynnette is engaged in active listening in character as Timon.

In the top right is an example of a lexical agreement between interpreters. This agreement is the foundation for a joke between them. A pun on the spoken word and a pun on the sign are needed to express the humor in the dialogue that follows.

In the bottom two photos, the interpreters continue the signed pun as they are listening and responding to each other in a manner that reflects the animated way the characters, Timon and Pumba, are listening and responding to each other.

Interplay of Stage and Shared Meaning Space

Looping the stage into the shared meaning space – "hooks and fasteners"

Dialogic and Interactive

Focus to Stage   Stage as Team   **Recognize the importation of Pumba**   Dialogic interaction as character
Character Depiction and Constructed Action
Performative and Visual Agreements

Figure 5 (Taylor, Feyne, and Broecker–Penn, 2023)

In the first image of Figure 5, both interpreters are incorporating character depiction as they gaze to the stage. Throwing focus to the stage is a signal that the stage action is occurring. This stage action will then be imported into the shared meaning space through constructed action and constructed discourse.

In the second photo, Lynnette guides the audience gaze from the stage back to the interpreted space when she turns to watch Candace representing Pumba. Candace engages in constructed action reflecting Pumba's outlandish singing.

Finally, Lynnette responds dialogically to the constructed action by commenting on Pumba's singing.

These hooks and fasteners are means of keeping the shared meaning space in conversation with the stage space. Throughout the performance, there is an ongoing interplay between the stage and the shared meaning space.

5.   Conclusion

In conclusion, our work should always be rooted in and in service to the Deaf community.

In our conference presentation, we shared a video of Frank Dattolo (a former member of the National Theatre for the Deaf as well as an avid theatergoer and fan of interpreted shows). In his comments, available in full on the Hands On Sign Interpreted Performances website, he shares his perspective on why interpreted theatre is important. We quote the translation of his thoughts here:

> *"I feel that access to theatre is very important for me as a Deaf person because of equity. It gives me equal footing, a sense of feeling on par with everyone else, like you and me and the public. Generally speaking, the hearing population has access to information that I don't. What you know, I want to know, too. Why should you have all the information? Why can't I also have some of this information? I want to be included in the information sharing. I am a part of this world, a member of humanity, a citizen of the world and I want to be included. Especially because art has the amazing*

power to bring about change and the ability to change the world. I, too, want to change the world through art. But if we keep our worlds segregated that won't be possible" (Hands On, 2022).

In this paper, we have introduced our guiding principles for our work (service to the community, recognition of the political act of interpretation, that Deaf team members are intrinsic to this work, and that fidelity is to the performed theatrical event, not to the script) as well as some aspects of our strategies for interpreted theatre. We hope what we offer stimulates new conversations about this topic and invites more communities into the conversation. This, in turn, will expand the theatre interpreting pool to include Deaf and diverse communities, reflect the communities we serve, and strengthen relationships between theatre audiences and theatres.

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Lynnette Taylor, BFA, Stephanie Feyne, MA, and Candace Broecker-Penn, MA, have collectively interpreted over 600 shows and were curriculum developers and core instructors for the annual national "Interpreting for the Theatre" Seminar at the Juilliard School in New York City, 1998–2009. Their book, Show of Hands: Interpreting for the Theatre, is soon to be published. In addition to holding certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, they each have arts backgrounds. Lynnette is an award-winning stop motion animation filmmaker and event producer. Stephanie and Candace have performed on stage and on television, and Candace has appeared in films and toured with The National Theatre of the Deaf. All three are conference presenters, have been adjunct instructors at interpreter education programs, and they each have published articles on interpretation. All three interpret in community venues and work in a variety of genres, including theatre, film, and TV, both in front of the audience and behind the scenes.

Interpreter ethics: role and legitimacy in the process of creating sign language neologisms in the professional field

Alemany Aline and Le Roy Aurélia

Abstract

The historical context of Toulouse (France) and the bilingual school led and is leading interpreters — who were often CODAs back then, very implicated in the Deaf community, and now non–CODA interpreters, that can be as implicated — to grow alongside Deaf students and then workers who got more and more in technical fields. Therefore, interpreters became more and more skilled in technical fields as well. Some of us are even starting to really specialise in some field(s). This is the case in architecture. A Deaf student for whom we interpreted a lot is now an architect and we often work in his company. When we are passing from French Sign Language to French, and vice versa, we may sometimes face a lexicon gap (as you can encounter between spoken languages). Therefore, rather quickly, we felt the need to reflect on concepts and create signs so we (interpreters) could be more at ease during interpreting (to understand and express ourselves in one language or the other); but also for the Deaf user to be seen as a professional, rightfully skilled and using the same technical terms as his peers. In this very specific context, we (the Deaf professional and us as interpreters) created a think tank to create new signs. Our position in this group leads us to reflect on our ethics as interpreters. What makes us legitimate to be part of this process? Where are our limits? We also need to be very careful about the impacts on the Deaf community and its reaction. For instance, if we were to spread these neologisms without precautions.

Key words

Neologisms, French Sign Language, Ethics, Sign Language Interpreter

1. Introduction

This article aims to present an overview of interpreter strategies in technical and scientific domains; these insights refer to a French context. More particularly, the focus will be on how interpreters deal with terminology based on interpretations for Deaf professionals working in specific fields. Such specific fields, being ultimately approached by Deaf Sign Language users – thus needing interpretation settings to work efficiently – drive interpreters to struggle with strategies and lead them to reflect on sign language terminology as well, towards newly coined signs. We will see how 'think tanks' can be a solution to tackle these issues and how they have been experienced by a French interpreters team – Interpretis – from Toulouse (South West France).

However, regarding the interpreter code of ethics and the duty not to override our framework or the Deaf community prerogatives, it raises the question of interpreter legitimacy and ethics in that process. Another question is also about the spreading and use of these neologisms.

General context in France

In France, the right to use sign language (SL) was claimed during the mid-seventies following a Deaf protest movement that took place in 1975 known as the 'Deaf Revival' (*« Réveil Sourd »* in French). This was meant to put an end to a century of discrimination after the Congress of Milan (1880), which banned the use of SL in schools for the Deaf. The come-back of SL in all fields, including the education field, led to some initiatives allowing Deaf children to eventually have access to education and to be taught directly in SL. In Toulouse, in 1985, parents of Deaf children began to set up a bilingual educational path following the steps of the 2LPE association (Poitiers, West France) that was the first to create bilingual classes. The bilingual educational path is now complete in Toulouse, from kindergarten to the Baccalauréat (French high-school diploma). In kindergarten and elementary schools, children are taught directly in SL by Deaf teachers. In secondary school and high school, only a few courses are taught in SL, most of them being taught by hearing teachers; interpretation settings are therefore required in these settings. As a reminder, these first seeds were sowed some 40 years ago; we could think that throughout all these years, Deaf children would have been increasingly acknowledged as students in their own right. As a matter of fact, these decades have been marked by many debates around the right to education for Deaf children, comparing oralist or SL education, mainstream public schools or institutionalised schools, individual or collective integration, Deaf teachers or interpreters alongside hearing ones. Nowadays, even if a bilingual educational programme exists in Toulouse – and it is only one out of a few in France – it should be understood that SL is too often thought of as a tool only useful to transmit information and not enough as a language; "it must be rooted within a community and in everyday life. It must be exchanged in a variety of situations between language users of all ages and conditions, throughout different language registers"[1] (Dalle, 2003, p.57). A focus also needs to be directed towards the terminology with "a systematic reflection on neologisms and on new lexicon creations (inventory, validation, harmonisation, diffusion)"[2] (Dalle, 2003, p.55). Of course, this should be handled first by Deaf teachers; and that dynamic is in place for some domains. Unfortunately, in high school, interpreters are the only SL referents for Deaf students and as national educational programs are evolving, it is not only some French, mathematics, history and philosophy courses that need interpretation but also geopolitics, engineering sciences or political sciences. That is an issue to be tackled.

From an employment perspective, from 1987 onwards, employment legal requirements were established which defined an employment obligation quota of 6% of disabled workers for any employer with at least 20 employees. It has been revised in 2020 to include employers with fewer than 20 employees. To achieve this obligation, the employer can directly hire people with disabilities, subcontract work out locally, or choose to pay a contribution fee to a specific organisation (Agefiph) which then uses the funds to further professional inclusion. As inclusion and diversity are more and more talked about in our societies, some big companies – thanks to their 'disability department' – also commit to foster inclusion and diversity in the workplace, encouraging awareness sessions and actions, and offering widespread accommodations for their workers.

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1   Dalle, P. (2003) La place de la langue des signes dans le milieu institutionnel de l'éducation : enjeux, blocages et évolution. *Langue française, numéro 137 : La Langue des signes. Statuts linguistiques et institutionnels*. Quotes translated by the authors.

2   *Ibid.*

On a social perspective, a law was passed on 11 February 11 2005 on the "Equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of disabled persons". This legislation outlines several rights of individuals with disabilities, encourages wider accommodations to all areas of social life and a right to compensation in any domains. It sets forth the principle by which "each individual with disabilities is entitled to accommodation to secure equal access to all programs and services. By virtue of this obligation, an individual with disabilities is guaranteed both access to the fundamental rights belonging to all citizens and the ability to fully exercise citizenship."[3]. It led to an increase of interpretation requests in any domains, e.g. social, public and cultural.

Interpreter context in Toulouse–Interpretis

Our interpreting company – Interpretis – was born in the 1990s; at the beginning of the adventure, there were five Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs), which grew to 30 SLIs over the next 15 years. Since the beginning, Interpretis has worked alongside the Deaf community and taken part in the professionalisation of interpreters, working for example on the definition of the Code of Ethics or later enabling SL to enter the academic world by inserting SL into an already existing spoken interpretation training course. Indeed, a two–year Master's degree was initially set up in 2005 to train hearing SLIs but not only; it also aimed to train Deaf translators, which it was quite a premiere in France. There was also a strong willingness to offer that qualification under a work–study setting. Near–to–be hearing interpreters and Deaf translators benefited from field experiments – one at Interpretis, the other in a company running media accessibility (translation of daily news in SL, translation of children's books, etc.) and setting up a VRS/VRI service. Being not only in a theoretical program but on the field obviously helps to build the future professional framework. The Master's degree is now a five–year complete programme known as the D–TIM (Jean Jaurès University, Toulouse), and offers also a third path which is the LSF–LSF mediation for Deaf students.[4]

As already mentioned, Toulouse hosts one of a few bilingual educational programmes. Every year, many families leave everything behind to move to Toulouse so their children can benefit from this programme and choose afterwards what they really want to do with their life. The Deaf signing community is therefore growing and with it the opportunity to create a dynamic social and cultural network. Incidentally Toulouse is well-known to be a Deaf capital city. Many initiatives were born there to improve education, to allow information diffusion in SL, to give accessibility to public services, to open up cultural places to Deaf artists, and so on.

As that dynamic network grew, research on SL was also reflected on by the Deaf community and researchers. It was meant to think sign language as a language and to study every linguistic aspect such as a written sign language, or sign language avatars for example. Interpretis took part in some of these analyses, both providing interpretation during the projects and also providing interpreters as experts or as experimenters. We still try to be part of research projects on SL, such as with the Easier project[5], an European project working on an automated–tool translation between spoken and signed languages.

Regarding that context, we provide interpretation in a variety of areas: social, cultural, legal, and medical

3   Online source: www.cleiss.fr.

4   For more information, see the efsli presentation by Segouat (2023).

5   To know more about Easier: www.project–easier.eu.

environments t. It could be face-to-face interviews, appointments, conferences or team meetings. We were also involved in the set-up of a video-relay service, working and experimenting this new practice with our partner who was implementing it and we still are interpreter providers for VRS/VRI platforms.

During the last twenty years however, thanks to the bilingual educational programme that allows Deaf students to complete their training to the baccalauréat, we are seeing more and more requests to interpret on university courses (scientific domains and humanities) and in technical professional spheres. Deaf students or professionals unfortunately are always the only Deaf people in the environment, which means that terminology naturally becomes a matter of interest we have to work on together. We will explain in the next chapter what issues we have to tackle and how we are adjusting to them.

2. A methodology to create neologisms

The identified needs

As interpreters, we translate from one language to another. As everyone reading this paper already knows: interpreters need to listen to a message, memorise it, convert its meaning and then express it in the target language while keeping on the tasks listed before. This cycle can be broken or, at least, slowed down by linguistic factors as lexicon gaps. Here, we use the term "lexicon gap" to refer to the fact that though everything can be said in SLs, it may occur in technical fields — due to the interpretation setting — that the interpreter does not have the technical sign equivalent to a specific concept. However, we do not think that one word equals one sign. We prefer to say that for one concept, there might be one or several signs to express it.

Interpreters intervene in various places, each of them with their own jargon or terminology — which the interpreters might not know. Thus, they will have to make more efforts to understand the meaning and find a strategy to translate the term to the best of their ability. According to the situation, the interpreter can choose to fingerspell, paraphrase, give a visual depiction, ask for an explanation, use a temporary sign, point at a screen, etc. Moreover, we have to keep in mind that interpreters are certified as interpreters; and not as expert biologists or philosophers.

Acknowledging that, our interpreters team tried something else: setting up a 'think tank' to create neologisms. This experience was successful and is now something we regularly do.

Another strategy: think tanks

The strategies listed above are known to be quite effective and they are now part of our interpreters' toolkit. However, in specific terminology situations, something else – what we call 'think tanks' and which will be detailed below – has to be put in place to guarantee the quality of interpretation.

Indeed, in the professional sphere, we encounter Deaf professionals who need – in order to be fully integrated in the workplace – interpretations during team meetings, individual interviews, meetings with clients or partnership review meetings. When in technical environments, or very specific domains, it is not only the jargon of the client we need to be familiar with, but also the specific terminology. It becomes

clearly an issue for which our usual toolkit will not be sufficient enough when we are involved on a regular basis, many times a week or a month. The regularity of a situation is thus the first game-changer.

In that case, obviously we cannot just use fingerspelling, point at a screen or initialise a specific word; we do need to find the most adequate signs to ensure a proper interpretation. We also need to establish a clear distinction between everyday language and specific/technical language. During interpretation, we are always trying to think of some more accurate and iconic signs. We are going through our mental library, trying to determine the least bad way to convey the message; we are analysing in the meantime if a sign would be a good one regarding the context, the morphology and the iconic charge. It is quite a complex process: it is time-consuming and our cognitive efforts are unequal. The quality of interpretation could be at stake.

Thinking about adequate terminology represents also an important lever for improving the communication situation. Indeed if we do not tackle the gap appropriately, it is not only the quality of interpretation that is at stake, it is above all the communication situation. We are facilitators, communication enablers, it means that "for interpreters working between any two languages, one of the major challenges will not only be to find equivalent words, phrases, and idioms, but also to present them in a familiar structure and in a convincing manner"[6] (Mindess, 2014, p.57). When it comes to specific terminology, we cannot ask Deaf professionals to mentally supplement our work all the time; they need to fully participate in the meeting. We need to blend into the specific field by respecting linguistic usage so the Deaf professionals can be aware of these specific ways of speaking about the domain and adjust to it. In that communication perspective, it is above all the image of the Deaf professionals we have to support. Indeed, how will they be perceived if our interpretation is not accurate, specific enough or hesitant, both in terminology and in ways of speaking in this field?

Our methodology

Usually for every think tank, we gather one or several Deaf professionals from one field and hearing interpreters. These interpreters are the ones interpreting in real situations for the Deaf professional. Here, the Deaf professional gives the knowledge of the technical field (its concepts, terminology in French); French Sign Language is usually their native language. As for the hearing interpreters, they are a complement to Deaf professional because they are the first receptors of the technical vocabulary in interpretation settings; during their academic career, they learned about translation and interpretation. In addition to their expertise in French, they learnt about etymology and developed competency in linguistic analysis of their own language but also of French Sign Language.

Because we already encountered some difficulties while interpreting, we are able to create a first glossary which is listing all the terms that are usually (or had already been) used in this particular field. Then, we search for pictures and a definition and we discusst these concepts so everyone in the room has the same conceptualisation. For instance, in the same room, if six people were asked to draw a "window", there would be six different kinds of windows drawn. In a technical field, the terms are very precise, this is why it is so important for Deaf professionals and interpreters to conceptualise the exact same notion. Then, we start looking for a sign to translate each term. While doing that, we tend to keep in mind the diglossia existing between French and LSF so we try not to use the classifier of the first letter of the word

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6   Mindess, A. (2014) *Reading between the signs: intercultural communication for sign language interpreters*. Intercultural Press, third edition.

in French. Indeed, we will most likely be looking for a visual classifier in order to avoid misunderstandings and/or confusion with another sign. The aim is to find something explicit enough without being a parap–hrase and something easy to make; easily applicable in an interpreting situation. Once we have found a sign satisfying enough, we record it.

Usually, all the process is gathered in a single document (a table) with various columns (term, definition, picture, link to the video of the sign we have created, others). Here are two examples of tables:

Recherche par lot	Architecture - Dessin	Signe	Explication LSF	Définition Texte	Image
Général	Attique			Dernier étage d'un bâtiment, con	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V
Architecture - Dessin	Balcon 1	https://drive.g		Dalle en saillie sur une façade	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k
Phases	Balcon 2	https://drive.g		Dalle en saillie sur une façade	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V
GO	brise soleil			Dispositif de protection d'une fa	https://drive.google.com/file/d/19
Plomberie-Ventilation	Coupe	https://drive.g		Représentation graphique d'un c	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x
Etanchéité	Croquis	https://drive.g		Dessin approximatif à main levé	
Carrelage	Ebauche			Première forme, encore imparfa	
Isolation	Elevation	https://drive.g		Représentation graphique d'un c	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W
Menuiserie	Epure	https://drive.g		Dessin précis représentant un ou	
Géomètre	Esquisse	https://drive.g		Dessin rapide, à main levée, repr	
Facade	Façade	https://drive.g		Représentation d'un bâtiment en	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N
Cloison Faux plafond	Garde corps	https://drive.g		Il existe trois types de garde-cor	https://drive.google.com/file/d/18
Métallerie-Serrurerie	Loggia	https://drive.g		Balcon couvert et non saillant pa	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h
Acoustique	Mur couac			L'espace étroit entre deux bâtim	
Sécurité	Mur gouttereau	https://drive.g		Un mur gouttereau est, dans le l	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e
Charpente	Mur mitoyen	https://drive.g		Mur commun à deux bâtiments	
Aménagement	Patio			Cour ou petit jardin clos dans un	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L
Thermique Environnement	Pergola	https://drive.g		Couverture à claire-voie sur une	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H
VRD	pied droit			Mur formant la partie latérale d'	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J
Electricité	Pignon 1	https://drive.g		Le pignon désigne la partie supé	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z
BIM	Plan			Dessin obtenu par projection ort	https://drive.google.com/file/d/18
Administration-Juridique-Réglementation	Plan de calepinage	https://drive.g		Conception du découpage d'un c	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z
	Récollement	https://drive.g		Plan indiquant les implantations	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F

Fig 1. Example of table for architecture (Interpretis and Taillandier Architectes et Associés)

Bullage	Processus réalisé avec un bulleur (ou un barboteur à gaz), appareil utilisé dans les laboratoires de chimie dans lequel on fait passer un gaz dans un liquide soit pour le purifier, soit pour en contrôler le débit, ou encore dans un but analytique.	Bullage.mp4
Centrifugation	Opération de séparation mécanique, par action de la force centrifuge, des constituants d'un mélange entraîné dans un mouvement de rotation.	Centrifugation.mp4
Chromatographie	méthode physico-chimique qui sert à séparer les différentes substances présentes dans un mélange. L'appareil utilisé pour effectuer certaines chromatographies se nomme chromatographe. L'image ou le diagramme obtenu par chromatographie est appelé chromatogramme. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgNYV0Y6kkI	Chromatographie.mp4
Dilution	Ajout de solvant à un soluté pour que le volume de la solution augmente (sans que le volume du soluté change)	Dilution.mp4
Emulsion	Mélange hétérogène de deux liquides normalement non miscibles mais qui se mélangent finalement sous l'effet d'une agitation ou de l'ajout de principes actifs. Emulsion directe : phase huileuse (petite quantité) dispersée dans la phase aqueuse. Emulsion inverse : phase aqueuse dispersée dans la phase huileuse. NB/ le liquide dispersé (petite quantité en goutelettes) est appelé phase discontinue et le liquide majoritaire est la phase continue.	Emulsion.mp4
Solvant	substance, liquide ou supercritique à sa température d'utilisation, qui a la propriété de dissoudre, de diluer ou d'extraire d'autres substances sans les modifier chimiquement et sans lui-même se modifier.	Solvant.mp4
Solvant green	En lien avec la chimie verte : a pour but de concevoir des produits et des procédés chimiques permettant de réduire voire d'éliminer l'utilisation et la synthèse de substances dangereuses. Il s'agit d'encourager les chimistes à considérer l'impact environnemental des produits chimiques et de leur synthèse dès la conception.	solvant + vert
Stabilité	Etude de la stabilité d'un produit, par des courbes de stabilité ("stabs")	Stabilité.mp4
Stérile	Désinfecté, pas de prolifération possible de micro-organismes	

Fig 2. Example of table for cosmetics research (Interpretis and CEA)

Limitations of a think tank

Creating a think tank and proposing neologisms could be challenging and as we are in that dynamic process whenever it seems possible, it does happen that we come across some limitations. These limitations are experienced for different reasons.

First, think tank settings could be defined like any project management: it will include people, time and money resources, not only for the interpreting agency but also for the client and their employees involved. Interpreters usually working for the Deaf professional will need to attend these think tanks (usually a group of two to four interpreters) as well as the Deaf person; it means that they will not be available for work in the meantime. Time needs to be allocated for these meetings on a regular basis, which therefore represents a cost for everyone. As a matter of fact, we have found it to be much more efficient when the interpreting agency and the client sign an agreement to organise these think tanks. It also ensures a confidentiality clause when necessary. Unfortunately, only a few clients commit to that process; either they do not have enough resources to allocate, or they do not fully understand the purpose.

Behind that question of understanding the purpose lies another far more problematic question: is the Deaf person fully recognized as a professional? Too often, the Deaf person is first and foremost seen as suffering from a handicap rather than a valuable asset. And if accommodations are discussed, it appears that SL is either not understood as a language, or if so, it will be seen as an incomplete one where one cannot say everything particularly in technical or specific areas. Another misconception will also imply that Deaf people can easily lip-read or follow the meeting thanks to speech-to-text devices instead of sign language interpreting. Therefore, without a strong willingness from the Deaf person's managers to acknowledge them as a professional and to recognize their language, no think tank process would be put in place.

Another limitation is faced when we cannot experiment with signs created right away in a real-time interpretation situation. It has already happened that a subject for which signs have been created during a think tank was finally talked about in a meeting many days or weeks later. In that case, we experienced that the remembrance of a coined sign could be delayed in the cognitive process, either because we take too much time to remember the meaning of the concept that lead us to the image of the sign afterwards, or because we cannot easily express the coined sign in the discourse, due to morphology or spatialisation issues.

Moreover, we have to keep in mind that empiric experience could also lead to a change of the sign previously created; indeed, the communication situation often gives us a better understanding of the concept or allows a new way of signing in a more fluent or adequate manner. It appears then that think tanks and interpretation settings should be alternated to be effective enough to validate or reject newly-coined signs.

When it comes to the validation or rejection of a sign and as any other language, we should have native SL users to do that. Unfortunately, there is often only one Deaf lexical user in the workplace. In that case, how can they try technical coined signs, think about others, or simply naturally talk about the domain? Or how can they assess a creation?

Which brings us to the next question: are we legitimate enough and is it compliant with our ethics to commit to participate in that process of creating SL neologisms?

3.   Reflecting on legitimacy and ethics

Legitimacy

In some countries, relations between hearing interpreters and the Deaf community are tense and divi-sive, lacking trust between both parties. For instance, S. Jordan Wright presented a conference during the Clin d'Œil festival in July 2022 called "Interpreters: Oppressors or Allies?". In this conference, he only presented the situation of the United States where Deaf people fear there is a linguistic appropriation by hearing people (interpreters included). This may be explained by the diglossia existing between spoken languages and signed languages as we already exposed (2.2) and the fact that Deaf people are the minority living in a hearing majority. This is what is happening in the United States and maybe in other countries; however in France, we have a cooperative relationship between the Deaf community and hearing interpreters (most of the time). But we still are hearing people and our native or first language is not usually LSF (unless we are CODAs). In this case, how can we advocate to have the right to create neologisms? We actually identified two kinds of legitimacy: the one Deaf people assign to us and the one we assign to ourselves.

The first gives us the right to be part of these think tanks because Deaf people are also part of it. We do not take control of it and we do not decide upon what is created and what will be spread outside of these groups. Moreover, we always let the Deaf professionals record the neologisms we have created together either because their company is the owner of what is created during our think tanks, or because Deaf professionals have more legitimacy to appear on screen if the signs were to be posted online and then reused by other Deaf people.

In other situations, mostly with students or for a specific situation, we create what we call 'temporary signs', which we do not feel legitimate to reuse in other situations, with other people. This is because it is created during a precise moment, with specific people and it does not have the purpose to be spread elsewhere. Whereas in these think tanks, we take the time to analyse the meaning of each term in order to find the most iconic way to translate it in SL. And this is also why we do not call these creations 'temporary signs' but 'neologisms'.

The second legitimacy might be harder to assign to oneself because of something that almost every interpreter has already felt: impostor syndrome. During efsli conferences in September 2022, Dr Jules Dickinson and Brett Best presented their research about this sense of being an impostor that the vast majority of SLIs feel. During their research, they sent a survey on social media and collected answers from 339 interpreters in England and the results are that 84.7% of them have already experienced impostor syndrome. They often feel as a fraud in a new field and not qualified enough – they do not have diplomas in every technical field. The two researchers found out that this comes from the perfectio-nist trait interpreters tend to have. But as we already explained (2.2), we have many skills (knowledge in translation, interpretation, etymology, etc.) which give us the legitimacy to be part of think tanks, alongside Deaf professionals.

Because we can have these two legitimacies, we have the right to create neologisms but both are man-datory.

Ethics

The role of SLIs has been evolving throughout the years, and "the profession has used various labels to help interpreters grasp where the borders of their responsibility lie."[7] (Mindess, 2014, p.15). As the profession structured itself, codes of ethics, like for spoken language interpreters, were meant to guide professional practice. The French national association of sign language interpreters and translators (AFILS) adopted its own code of ethics in 1988.[8]

The ethics we want to talk about here is not just the usual code of ethics and its three major pillars – neutrality, accuracy and confidentiality — but ethics as in "applied ethics" and how an interpreter chooses to conduct their practice in a communication situation regarding the needs of Deaf professionals. We are dealing with translation decisions in a given time frame and we have to select one option out of many alternatives. It means of course we have to comply with our code of ethics during the interpretation, which limits us in our practice, but we also have a responsibility in its improvement and analysis in–between appointments. Because we daily experience a variety of communication situations and linguistic specificities, we can tell what triggers led to the use of an 'emergency toolkit' and how to address them, for example by setting up a think tank with the Deaf professionals.

In reference to the foreword of Anna Mindess' book written by Sharon Neumann Solow (Mindess, 2014), we take a "ride in mediating between cultures",[9] between hearing and Deaf cultures, but when it comes to interpretation in professional areas we cannot forget that a third party is involved: the technical field culture. It becomes then our duty to take actions to facilitate communication in these situations.

We also engage in think tanks regarding cooperation theory, as defined by Anthony Pym during a recorded conference: "the goal of any translation project should be long–term cooperation between cultures"[10] (Pym, 2000, 7'19''). It means that we have to be clear about the interpreting situation and why we are involved in it, as well as its objective, to offer an adequate cooperation relationship with participants. Creating a think tank allows all participants to share a 'win–win situation' afterwards. On one hand, interpreters benefit from the creation of neologisms during their next live interpretation; we are more accurate, we save time in the cognitive process and iconicity prevails. On the other hand, Deaf people consolidate their professional position and recognition and they can demonstrate and develop their linguistic expertise.

Another ethical safeguard is related to the use or spreading of the neologisms created. We have to keep in mind that newly–coined signs created in a think tank are linked to a specific professional environment; this will be elaborated below. If we participate in these creations, we should not forget that these glossaries are not ours. Glossaries are not meant to be fixed documents to be reused; on the contrary "they should be 'used increasingly often by ever more speakers' before being considered permanent lexicon"[11]

7   Mindess, A. (2014) *Reading between the signs: intercultural communication for sign language interpreters*. Intercultural Press, third edition.

8   Online source: http://www.afils.fr/code-ethique/.

9   Mindess, A. (2014) *Reading between the signs: intercultural communication for sign language interpreters*. Intercultural Press, third edition.

10   Pym, A. (2020) *Translator ethics, from cooperation to risk and trust*. A talk by Anthony Pym for Hong Kong Baptist University, September 24, 2020. <https://hkbutube.lib.hkbu.edu.hk/st/display.php?bibno=st969>.

11   Raino, P., & Ahonen, O. (2018) From zero to sign : transferring food safety from Finnish to Finnish sign language [online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327836721_From_zero_to_sign_Transferring_food_safety_from_Finnish_to_Finnish_Sign_Language.

(Raino and Ahonen, 2018, p.7). That raises the question of the spreading of neologisms and how SL users would have access to them.

Spreading the neologisms created

As the neologisms are created in a small committee, in a table document, how best to make them available for anyone? In France, we do not yet have the appropriate technology to make a list of terms, add their definition in French, a picture and the sign in LSF, plus the possibility to search not in French but in LSF directly. Meanwhile, at Interpretis and with our Deaf collaborators, we often think of using or creating a website specialised in LSF glossary. We even thought of contacting STIM (the French equivalent of STEM) to add our neologisms to those they have already created and published on their website. As more and more Deaf people specialise in technical fields, this need for the perfect technology interface becomes more and more urgent. We already noticed that interpreters have been creating signs in their company or city but none of us communicate about it in the interpreting community. We might recreate the same things at the same time but in different places or years later, in the same place, with different people. This is a waste of time and resources because lots of neologisms get lost over time.

As we are aware of this phenomenon, we took the liberty of glossaries between the interpreters' community (working in the same company or not) when having the same client. We have already been in that dynamic, sharing the results of a think tank to colleagues from another region that occasionally work for one of our clients. Everyone could benefit from that collaboration. It facilitated the interpreting situation for our colleagues because they had material for preparation; and clients (Deaf and hearing professionals) praised the quality of interpretation and the professionalism of our community. It was also very rewarding for us to see a concrete application of the think tank outside our local environment.

Moreover, interpreters are natural language spreaders because they intervene in various situations and they are visiblen; so Deaf people might take what they sign without questioning its origin or they might not understand the neologism. For this very reason, interpreters need to be very careful. With due consideration, the interpreter will choose to use a neologism or not, knowing that other people, in another environment, might not understand the discourse if the neologism is not used carefully (explaining it during the interpretation, adding where it is coming from, etc.) which will harm the interpretation setting.

Finally, another limitation to the spreading of these neologisms is the lack of feedback about their adoption. As a matter of fact, for now, we cannot rely on any legitimate body to anchor this practice or assess signs which were created in a think tank. We do not know how often they are used by the Deaf professionals outside the original interpretation setting or how Deaf people react when interpreters use these neologisms – knowing that not many places allow us to use them. We need to admit that outside the original interpretation setting and outside the think tanks, these technical words are not often used elsewhere, in another context. Nonetheless, there is a need in France to study the degree of terminology adoption and circulation. Can we consider one neologism validated, if it does live for several years, but only with one Deaf user in one specific area?

4.   Conclusion

This paper aims to share some insights about think tanks we set up in very specific professional environ-

ments to create neologisms and enhance the quality of interpretation in these situations.

Such a topic could be quite sensitive, if we consider it should only be a Deaf competency, but we sought to demonstratethat we do have a role in that process, as experts in communication, translation and French language. We always keep strong ethics in mind, and we insist on setting up think tanks with Deaf professionals who wish to be part of it. Of course, as professional interpreters, we adopt the idea that "the solution lies in respecting the use and genius of the target language, otherwise the communication would not be successful"[12] (Durieux, 2016, p.34). As for the Deaf competency, it clearly appears that SL Deaf users are needed to try, share and validate neologisms created in these think tanks. Only then would they be fully understood as neologisms before becoming a more permanent validated lexicon. To facilitate that process, the question of spreading and adoption also needs to be addressed.

To conclude, as think tanks or glossaries often come from local initiatives regarding some specific situations and acknowledging that their results are not disseminated and validated straightaway, we are keen to say that we are more experimenting with a neology process; neology being "both a terminology discipline and a process that focuses on the creation or recycling of words for new uses"[13] (Durieux, 2016, p.28). We clearly are in that dynamic model by setting-up think tanks to find accurate coined signs after having discussed concepts.

Eventually, we should see neology as a powerful tool to stand up for Sign Language recognition because it "enables any language to stay alive by adapting to new circumstances and new needs"[14] (Dell'Aquila, Giovannini and Scetti, 2018, p.2). In the communication situation indeed, it demonstrates that everything can be said in SL even in scientific or technical fields, and in the same way it allows to change the perception hearing colleagues or hierarchy have of Deaf colleagues, empowering the latter in their professional work environment.

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About the author(s)

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Interpreter ethics: role and legitimacy in the process of creating sign language neologisms in the professional field
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Aline Alemany has been working as a hearing interpreter — and French Sign Language is not her first language — since 2018 at Interpretis (Toulouse, France). She is also a board member of AFILS (French Association of Sign Language Interpreters and Translators) since 2021.

During her Master's degree (at the D–TIM, Toulouse), she attended courses on terminology in French and English and she wrote a thesis on French Sign Language terminology in the medical field. Since she got her degree, she has been trying to take part in STIM (the French equivalent of STEM) events or other colloquiums on Sign Language terminology.

When she started working at Interpretis, she quickly specialized in the interpretation of biology courses (high school and university) but also in other technical fields such as architecture. After working for a Deaf architect and his hearing coworkers, she is now focusing on this field and they created a think tank on neologisms; something to reflect on as an interpreter, on many levels.

As a hearing interpreter and because of the relationship that interpreters (herself included) and the Deaf community have in Toulouse, it is important to her to reflect on her ethics and her legitimacy to take part into the neology process: does she assign it to herself as she is a potential oppressor or is it because it was rightly given to her?

Also, thanks to a large population of Deaf students and professionals in Toulouse, they have begun to feel the need for SLIss to specialise in some fields and thus, be given the same status as other spoken language interpreters. Nonetheless, during her Master's degree, she trained to be able to interpret in any field possible. Specialization has to be done with experience but also with continuing education. She is convinced that interpreters have to keep training in order to better their practice — both technically and ethically.

Aurélia Le Roy
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Aurélia Le Roy has been a Sign Language interpreter for 17 years. She works for Interpretis — an interpreters' company in Toulouse, South of France. She had the great opportunity to benefit from a work-study contract during the last year of her Master's degree; she was introduced to an aeronautical company where she discovered a specific field as well as a company's jargon and culture. Very early then she was stricken by a specific challenge of our job: how can we work in very technical fields that we are not aware of yet, moreover where technical or scientific signs are not created yet? She wrote her Master's degree thesis on this topic and more specifically on technical signs in the aeronautical field. She was taught to 'think visual', to draw a picture in Sign Language to respect its natural expression and so that the concept will be better understood. She has been interpreting until now in academic courses (I.T. and computer programming, biology, mathematics, etc.) and also for Deaf professionals in specific fields (aeronautics, research in cosmetics, engineering, etc.); thus, being deeply convinced that a thoughtful practice would foster Deaf students and professionals recognition as well as sign language recognition, she has always been trying to link a concept to a visual representation in such fields. Obviously such a reflection is much more effective when built up with Deaf students and professionals themselves. It allows us to cross linguistic, technical and cultural points of view and thus contributes to a positive cooperation together.

She is still driven by this challenge but also by the legitimacy interpreters assign themselves to find a quite-meaningful sign, then to debate it until it becomes a neologism while remaining within the right ethical framework. Those insights should be extended also to the sign's validation and to sharing the issues it raises.

Rights, right?

Proceedings of the 2023 efsli conference
Thessaloniki, Greece

The conference investigated the division of duties and rights of professional interpreters within the evolving dynamics of the Deaf and hearing communities in the 21st century.

From the emergence of the sign language interpreting profession to the present day, interpreters have explored and adopted a range of professional identities. Sign language interpreting developed into a profession primarily in response to the needs of d/Deaf people. Initially, around the world, "interpreters" were often family members, neighbours, or friends who assisted d/Deaf individuals during times of communication difficulty.

This historical context highlights the inherently fluid nature of the profession, shaped by various factors such as d/Deaf emancipation movements, disability legislation, educational trends within the d/Deaf community, advances in linguistic and sociological research, and the growth of interpreter associations and unions. In such a dynamic field, the boundaries between duties and rights remain fluid and often difficult to define.