

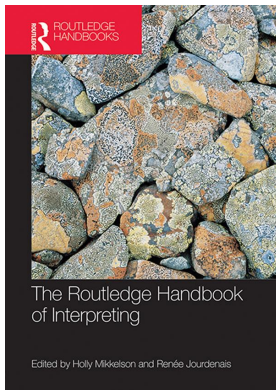
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8

COMPARING SIGNED AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

Jemina Napier

Introduction

Historically, signed language interpreting has been treated separately from spoken language interpreting in terms of theoretical discussions, research, education, and professional practice. However, there is growing recognition that signed languages should be included among all the languages to be considered in terms of interpreting practice. The interpreting studies field has recognized the value of contrasting spoken and signed language interpreting and then bringing discussions together under the single umbrella of interpreting studies. This shift was made particularly evident with the publication of Pöchhacker's (2004) book *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, which makes many references to various signed language interpreting research studies and publications. The shift is further evidenced through increasing cross-linguistic and cross-modality collaboration in the education of interpreters, in research on interpreting, and in the number of publications that feature discussions of spoken and signed language interpreting issues across genres of interpreting practice. (See, for example, Chapter 6 on consecutive interpreting.)

Although there are many similarities, there are still some distinct aspects of signed language interpreting practice and professionalism that diverge from spoken language interpreting norms. This chapter discusses the similarities and differences between the two types of interpreting in terms of the historical development, the current situation, research findings, training, and future directions.

Definition of terms

Modality: The mode of language expression being utilized, whether spoken or signed.

Bimodal interpreting: Interpreting that occurs between a signed and a spoken language (e.g., British Sign Language and English).

Unimodal interpreting: Interpreting that occurs either between two signed languages (e.g., British Sign Language and American Sign Language) or between two spoken languages (e.g., English and Spanish).

Directionality: The working language direction of the interpretation, e.g., English to French, or German Sign Language to German.

Intralingual interpreting: Interpreting by restructuring the message in a different way within the same language.

History/early developments

There are many major contributors to the evolution of our understanding of the similarities and differences between spoken and signed language interpreting. A particular contribution to bridging the gap between signed and spoken language interpreting scholars and practitioners has been made by those that have either written about both spoken and signed language interpreting to illustrate examples of interpreting practice or process, or have conducted research that has made an impact on both sides of the proverbial interpreting divide. As mentioned earlier, Pöchhacker (2004, 2010) provides reference to both spoken and signed language interpreting research to illustrate examples of the ‘turns’ and paradigms in interpreting research. Shlesinger (2009) is also well known for her support of signed language interpreting research. Mikkelson, who specializes in spoken language legal interpreting, has worked closely with the signed language interpreter educator Solow, to provide the joint training of interpreters from refugee communities (Mikkelson and Solow 2002) and I, personally, have worked closely with spoken language interpreting research and educator colleagues to promote joint training and research opportunities. Grbić and Turner – both originally from the signed language sector – have also written about generic interpreting issues by contrasting signed and spoken language interpreting practices and role (e.g., Grbić 2008; Turner 2007). Roy’s (2000) seminal research, which revealed how interpreters manage turn-taking (which was based on the analysis of a signed language interpreter), has made a particular impact in the field of interpreting studies, and is one of the most widely-cited studies in both spoken and signed language interpreting literature; and newer scholars such as Xiao, who comes from a spoken language background, are breaking new ground by examining signed language interpreting practices in China (Xiao and Riuling 2009; Xiao and Li 2013). Ultimately, in the last decade in particular, the work of all these authors has led to an increased dialogue across language and modality boundaries in interpreting studies, which is evident through more frequent publications featuring work from both spoken and signed language scholars, such as Valero-Garcés and Martin (2008) and Nicodemus and Swabey (2011).

In terms of historical development, the key contrast between signed and spoken language interpreting is in relation to the nature of the professionalization process, which was influenced by how interpreting was formalized as a profession and who chose (or was chosen) to become an interpreter.

In comparison to the spoken language sector, signed language interpreting became professionalized first in community settings, whereas spoken language interpreting gained professional recognition first in conference settings. There is documented evidence of signed language interpreting provided in courts and other contexts from as early as the 1600s in the Ottoman Court (Stone 2012), and in the London courts in the 1700s (Stone and Woll 2008). In more modern times, signed language interpreters were working with deaf people in medical, legal, and other public service settings before they started working at conference level (Grbić 2006; Napier 2011a). Signed language interpreters were thus accustomed to working bilaterally, in dialogic, interactive contexts long before the formal recognition of community interpreting as a profession in the spoken language sector. In fact, in the UK from 1928, the Deaf Welfare Examination Board included an interpreting task as part of its examination procedures; and in the USA the first professional signed language interpreting association was established in 1964 in recognition of the need to formalize the work that many people were doing in the Deaf community. This served to provide an infrastructure for the development of signed language interpreting as a

profession (Napier and Roy in press). Since 1964, professional signed language interpreting associations have continued being established worldwide, for example in Sweden (1969), Canada (1980), Finland and Scotland (1982), England, Wales and Northern Ireland (1987), Australia and Japan (1991), Austria (1998), Kosovo (2006) (Napier and Goswell 2013), and the most recent in Iceland (2014). The signed language interpreting profession is still emerging in many countries, which is why associations are still being established, and the *World Association of Sign Language Interpreters* was only constituted in 2005. These associations have traditionally adopted codes of ethics from neighbouring spoken language interpreter associations and feature the same key tenets of impartiality/neutrality, accuracy/ fidelity, and confidentiality as would be found in spoken language codes (Rodriguez and Guerrero 2002), although changes are also evidenced (see later discussion of community influence in this chapter).

Bontempo provides more detail in her discussion of the professionalization of signed language interpreting in Chapter 7, but authors such as Cokely (2005b) and Stone (2008) have documented how traditionally signed language interpreters have ‘evolved’ from the Deaf community: they were selected by community members not only for their sufficient technical signing skills, but for having the right attitude towards the community, its language, culture, and customs. Long before formal training programmes were available, signed language interpreters were typically recruited from people who had either grown up in the Deaf community, that is, hearing people who had deaf parents and used sign language at home (Children of Deaf Adults – Codas), or they were teachers of deaf children or welfare workers who worked closely with members of the Deaf community (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2010). The salient difference between signed and *conference* spoken language interpreters in this regard is that: (a) previously you could not choose to be a signed language interpreter, you had to be chosen; and (b) the notion of being a ‘schooled’ interpreter (Cokely 2005b), that is, that one could apply for a university training programme in signed language interpreting, is relatively recent.

However, when comparing the advent of professionalization between signed and spoken language *community* interpreting, the difference is not so stark. Research has shown children from immigrant families often serve as the family interpreter/mediator/communicator when the family relocates to another country (Orellana 2009) because the children acquire the majority language more quickly than their parents. This practice has been referred to as ‘child language brokering’ (Hall and Guery 2010), in order to distinguish it from that of professional interpreters. In such contexts, young people have been found to broker for their parents and other family members, particularly in public service settings such as legal and medical appointments (Tse 1996), and therefore they are effectively functioning from a very early age as non-professional community interpreters (for a broader discussion of non-professional interpreting, see Chapter 26 in this Handbook). The most mature and linguistically-proficient children are typically chosen by their family members (Orellana 2009). This same phenomenon has also been found to be true of Codas, who often begin brokering from a very young age and then fall into working as professional signed language interpreters as adults (Napier in press). Both spoken and signed language child brokers report feeling positive about their brokering experiences, and feeling honoured and proud to have been chosen to perform such a role. In fact, it has been suggested that the bilingual skills of these child language brokers should be harnessed as a form of giftedness, and that young bilinguals should be encouraged to pursue interpreting as a professional career choice (Napier in press; Valdes *et al.* 2003; Angelelli 2010). Therefore, within minority communities, regardless of language modality, it would seem that in fact interpreting is regarded as having high status, as only particular young people are chosen to perform this task. Perhaps this should be considered the more elite form of interpreting? To be chosen by your community to fulfil such a role is indeed an honour, but more research is needed to better understand why it

happens and also to educate service providers and families about the need to utilize professional interpreting services wherever possible.

Since the early days, professional practices have become more aligned between signed and spoken language interpreting in both community and conference settings, although as of yet, there is no systematic, separate (university-level) conference interpreter training for signed language interpreters (see later section on regulation and training).

Although we see similar footing in terms of professional recognition by examining the historical development of spoken and signed language interpreting, there are some differences in current practices and trends.

Current situation/trends

Essentially, signed language interpreters share the same values and aspirations as their spoken language counterparts in relation to norms of behaviour (role), standards, ethics, professional associations, regulation, testing, and training. As with the broader interpreting field, signed language interpreting practice is diverse, with wide variation internationally in terms of stages of professionalization, provision of interpreter training, and certification. In this section I will concentrate on those issues that centrally provide a point of comparison between spoken and signed language interpreters by focusing on discussion of professional practices, community influence on interpreting practice, regulation and training, and research findings.

Professional practices

If you ask any spoken or signed language interpreter for their definition of interpreting, it is likely they will give you the same answer. The goal for any interpreter is to ensure that two or more people who do not use the same language come to understand the same message. Over time there have been many psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic theories with regards to the interpreting process and construction of meaning which have influenced notions of the role of the interpreter (Roy 1993; Shaffer 2013), and more research is needed to better understand how we ‘do’ understanding and engage in the juggling act that is interpreting (Turner 2010), but essentially the process is the same regardless of whether the languages are spoken or signed. However, when you drill down a little more, it can be seen that the professional practices of spoken and signed language interpreters are slightly different in terms of language modality, interpreting mode, and directionality.

Spoken language interpreters work unimodally, that is, the two languages between which they interpret are in the same mode: the languages are audio-verbal languages that are produced and heard one word at a time in a linear fashion. Signed language interpreters, however, work bimodally. Signed languages are not visual representations of the spoken word, but have their own grammatically distinct structures that are capable of complex and abstract expression, equivalent to (but different from) any spoken language (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1998). So signed language interpreters work between two languages that function in different modalities: a spoken language (linear), and a signed language, which is visual-gestural and simultaneously incorporates the use of various articulators including the head, facial features (eyes, eyebrows, mouths, lips, cheeks), shoulders, body, both hands and fingers, and the space in front of their body to co-construct lexical (content) signs and convey temporal and grammatical information (Johnston and Schembri 2007). It can be particularly challenging for signed language interpreters to work bimodally, as succinctly explained in relation to interpreting between English and British Sign Language (BSL):

BSL encodes visual information as a matter of course. Let us imagine what might seem like a fairly straightforward piece of information: person X recounts how he went into a pub, bought a pint of beer, and was short-changed by the bar-tender. We know that in English we could embellish this account in all sorts of ways, but a typical BSL account would include certain types of visual information automatically; it would be more unusual to exclude those than to include them. Thus, we may well be able to glean from the BSL account what kind of doors the pub had, e.g., double swing doors, a single swing door, a door with a round knob or a door with a vertical handle; we may be able to discern that the bar-tender was a large man with stubble and a cigarette hanging out of his mouth; we may be able to tell that the counter was curved, that the place was crowded and X had to elbow his way in and so on. Now it is quite possible to present all of this information in the English language. However, when we say 'I went into a pub' in English we do not typically add information which indicates how we went in, what kind of door we opened, what kind of handle it had, and so on. In BSL, not only is it typical to include such information, it is often unavoidable.

(Brennan and Brown 1997: 121–2)

It could be argued that spoken language interpreters also have the challenge of finding appropriate meaningful equivalents in each language, but in this instance, signed language interpreters have to decide what visual information to retain and what to omit, both of which can have a major impact on the message delivered.

The fact that signed language interpreters work bimodally also influences the nature of the 'translation style' that they adopt (Napier 2002), as they are susceptible to the influences of language contact. Language contact essentially involves transference of linguistic features from one language to another at different levels of language (Clyne 2003). A common form of language contact between a signed and spoken language is that of code-mixing (Lucas and Valli 1992), also referred to as code-blending (Emmorey, Borenstein and Thompson 2003). Code-blending between a spoken and signed language (such as English and American Sign Language) involves words being mouthed on the lips or manually coded (fingerspelled) while the signer is still using linguistic visual features of the signed language. Lucas and Valli (1992) suggest a variety of sociolinguistic factors that influence deaf people's use of blending between a signed and a spoken language, one of which is the formality of a situation. Interpreters have also been found to adopt blending in their bimodal interpreting, especially in formal presentations in conference or university settings. Adopting a more 'literal' translation style, interpreters have been found to effectively incorporate aspects of the spoken language into their signed language interpretations through following the grammatical structure of the spoken language, using mouthing and/or fingerspelling, in order to provide access to formal, academic or technical language or to emphasize particular terms (Davis 2003; Napier 2006; Metzger and Quadros 2012). Code-mixing is also used in spoken languages when a bilingual person switches from one language to another during a conversation, and it regularly occurs between bilingual users of more than one spoken language. It can occur either intersententially or intrasententially at an individual or multiple lexical level (Clyne 2003), yet to use it in spoken language interpreting would only be acceptable when a term from one language is borrowed into the other as an established, conventional calque. For example, in Chinese Mandarin the term 'p.p.t.' – pronounced pee-pee-tee – is borrowed from English.

Bimodal interpreting also has an influence on the interpreting mode (or technique) used by signed language interpreters. In order to avoid the audio 'clash' between two spoken languages

being used at the same time, spoken language interpreters typically work simultaneously in conference settings when appropriate equipment is available, and in consecutive mode in face-to-face dialogic communication in community settings (see Chapters 5 and 6). Occasionally simultaneous whispering (*chuchotage*) is used when monologic presentations or structured question-answer interactions are used in formal contexts such as smaller conferences/seminars or in court. For signed language interpreters, however, one language is silent so there is no interference between the two working languages. For this reason, signed language interpreters most commonly work simultaneously in all contexts. But research has shown that it can be more effective for signed language interpreters to work consecutively (Russell 2002), especially when complex information is being presented. Padden (2000), in fact, argues that signed language interpreters should consider interpreting in consecutive mode more often so they can operate in one language modality at a time, whereas when working simultaneously the two modalities co-occur and thus put additional strain on the interpreting process.

Thus far, I have provided a comparison between unimodal and bimodal practices of spoken language and signed language interpreters with the assumption that the signed language interpreters can hear, and thus are working between a spoken and a signed language. However, there are some signed language interpreters that do work unimodally between two signed languages. These are *deaf* interpreters who work in a variety of contexts (Boudreault 2005). Deaf interpreters work in conference settings either by reading from written speech-to-text autocue, or by 'reading' the message in another signed language where the hearing interpreter is in a relay function. In community settings, deaf interpreters typically work from another relay interpreter. For example, a spoken English presentation may be relayed from English into BSL by a hearing interpreter, and then interpreted from BSL into American Sign Language (ASL) by the deaf interpreter for the American conference audience (see also Chapter 11 on conference interpreting). Another issue that is different between spoken and signed language interpreters who work specifically in conference-like settings is in relation to working languages and preference for directionality, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

What provides the most interesting point of comparison with spoken language interpreters, however, is the fact that deaf interpreters working in community settings (e.g., medical, legal) often work intra-lingually *within* one signed language. A deaf interpreter is typically employed in these settings along with a hearing interpreter when the hearing interpreter is unable to effectively communicate directly with a deaf client, for example, where the client uses idiosyncratic signs or gestures, or 'home signs' which are unique to a family; uses a foreign sign language; has minimal or limited language skills; is deafblind or deaf with limited vision; uses signs particular to a given region, ethnic or age group that are not known by the hearing interpreter; or is in a mental state that makes ordinary interpreted communication especially difficult (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2010; Stone 2012). Deaf people's experience of making themselves understood non-verbally, their first-hand knowledge of diverse communication and personal backgrounds in the Deaf community, and their ability to conceptualize experiences and ideas through the eyes of a deaf person can give them a repertoire of visual communication skills that hearing interpreters cannot necessarily emulate. In these contexts, the deaf interpreter takes the message from a hearing interpreter, who is signing in an established sign language (such as BSL), and re-frames the message into a different form within the same signed language. For example, a doctor speaks in English / relayed from English into BSL by a hearing interpreter / interpreted from BSL into a more basic, visual form of BSL by the deaf interpreter for a deaf patient who has limited language skills. It could be argued that spoken language interpreters also work intralingually when working between different varieties of the same language (for example between standard French and the variant spoken in New Caledonia), although this has not been presented widely in the literature as such.

Now that the differing professional practices between spoken and signed language interpreters have been outlined, another issue to consider in terms of similarity and difference is the influence that the minority language community has on interpreting practice.

Community influence

One particular point of difference between spoken and signed language interpreters is the way in which deaf people themselves have influenced the evolution and change of the interpreter role as well as perceptions of ethical behaviour. Deaf people have a strong vested interest in informing the working practices of signed language interpreters; perhaps because deaf people's usage of interpreters is more frequent, across more domains, and lasts for a lifetime (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2010). In many countries now, especially the USA and UK, there is a strong trend to encourage 'deaf-led' signed language interpreting services, whereby deaf people themselves are front and centre in the delivery of those services (see for example, <http://remark.uk.com/interpreting> – accessed 29 Sept. 2014). This philosophy promotes the idea of a 'deaf translation norm' (Stone 2009) thus urging hearing non-native signers to consider culturally appropriate ways to interpret information from and into signed language so that it is meaningful to the participants (Cokely 2001).

Deaf people were integral in the shift to professionalization. With the adoption of human rights (disability) legislation in many countries, beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, which reinforced the rights of linguistic minorities, including deaf people, in terms of access to education, employment, and services through accommodations (such as interpreting), deaf people were able to assert that they no longer needed help, just access. This perspective initiated the shift from a situation where hearing people who worked in various roles in the Deaf community (e.g., teacher, welfare worker) and who did interpreting 'on the side', to a situation in which interpreting was viewed as a profession in its own right.

The change in perception from 'helper' to 'professional' was assisted by the fact that conference interpreters working simultaneously in a booth have proximal distance from their clients, giving rise to an interpreter role that promoted impartiality, neutrality, and distance. Early discussions of signed language interpreting clearly endorse adhering to such a 'conduit' model of interpreting in order to be seen as professional (Frishberg 1990; Solow 1981). However, it was not long before this model was hotly debated in the Deaf community and at related conferences, whereby vocal deaf people were pointing out that the model of distance and impartiality did not marry with the values of the Deaf community, as deaf people felt it important to have a say about who could enter their community and be exposed to their language and culture (e.g., Phillip 1994) (see also my earlier discussion of 'evolved' versus 'schooled' interpreters). This debate was also echoed in the professional signed language interpreting community, with recognition that adoption of such a model did not meet the needs of the Deaf community and also did not allow for natural intercultural communication to occur (Pollitt 1997; Mindess 1999).

We then saw a shift to what was referred to as the bilingual-bicultural/ally model (McIntire and Sanderson 1995), where deaf people recognized that in order to best meet their communicative needs, they needed to work collaboratively with signed language interpreters. As a result of signed language interpreting research (see section on research below and Chapter 7 in this volume), we are now at a point where the interpreter is recognized as a participant in the interaction, and deaf professionals, in particular, are very clear about how they want to work with interpreters, what they need, and what they expect. In fact they are leading the way in articulating the need for interpreters to participate and interact with interlocutors in the workplace (Hauser, Finch and Hauser 2008; Dickinson 2008). Based on authentic data of interpreter-mediated

communication analysed in various languages (see introduction section above and also the discussion in Chapter 7), a model of 'interpreter as participant and co-constructor of meaning' is now widely acknowledged in spoken language *community* interpreting literature too. It might thus be said that signed language interpreters and the Deaf community trail-blazed the notion of interpreter role (Turner 2013).

In recognition of this shift in the interpreter role, it was also asserted that the codes of ethics for signed language interpreters were not written in a way that reflected what interpreters really needed to do to ensure effective communication (Tate and Turner 1997). Thus, in an attempt to further embed the values of the Deaf community into signed language interpreting practice, Cokely (2000) suggested that codes of ethics should be revised to account for the rights and expectations of the various stakeholders in any communicative event (i.e., deaf people, interpreters, hearing clients, interpreting service agencies), and that key principles in codes of ethics should be re-framed to allow for more flexibility in professional conduct (Lenham and Napier 2003). As a consequence some professional signed language interpreter associations, such as the American, Canadian and Australian associations (the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, RID; the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada, AVLIC; the Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association, ASLIA) have revised their codes of ethics to establish new 'Codes of Professional Conduct' (Swabey and Mickelson 2008); but only the Canadian and Australian codes clearly embody the values outlined by Cokely by specifically outlining the values of the association in their codes.

In conversation with spoken language interpreters, it seems that the minority language communities for which they interpret do not have the same influence on the working practices of spoken language interpreters. This could be for several reasons: (i) Spoken language interpreters are likely to belong to the same ethnic group as the client (Gentile, Vasilikakos and Ozolins 1996), and therefore they *are* members of the community for whom they interpret, and are seen as able to represent the needs of that community. This is different for the hearing interpreters of the Deaf community, who may be accepted by the Deaf community (Padden 1980) but they will never be considered as true members of the ethnic group due to the fact that they can hear, so therefore they feel a debt to that community for granting them entry. The notion of reciprocity in exchange for that permission is a strong value in the Deaf community (Phillip 1994). (ii) Spoken language interpreting is referred to as a homogeneous profession, but in fact is heterogeneous as it involves a myriad of languages, communities, and cultures (Rudvin 2007). For minority language communities, then, trying to influence the working practices of interpreters may be challenging considering the many communities and cultures represented. Signed language interpreters, on the other hand, typically work with one community, one language, and one culture (in a particular country). For this reason, it may be easier for that community to have such a strong influence on the working practices of those signed language interpreters as they are unique to their context.

Although the level of influence that the Deaf community has on the signed language interpreting profession appears to be different from that of other language groups on spoken language interpreters, one area of similarity between signed language and spoken language *community* interpreters is the notion of trust between interpreters and the minority community for whom they interpret. Edwards, Temple and Alexander (2005) explored the experiences of 50 minority ethnic people of Chinese, Kurdish, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Polish descent living in two major cities in the United Kingdom who needed interpreters to gain access to and use a range of services in the community. They found that the interpreter's personal character and level of trustworthiness are important in people's understanding of what makes a good interpreter, leading them to prefer those drawn from their own informal networks (i.e., family and friends). Moreover, they concluded that trust may offset consumers' concerns about interpreters'

bilingual competence. The same has been found with the Deaf community: Napier and Rohan (2007) and Napier (2011b) elicited perceptions from deaf Australians through a diary survey study and focus groups, and found that trust was a key factor in determining their level of comfort in working with individual interpreters. In this sense, it could be said that the spoken and signed language minority communities have an influence on the practice of interpreters, as they identify those interpreters who are most trusted by members of the community.

In terms of current trends, one final area to compare between spoken and signed language interpreting is in relation to the similarities and differences in regulation and training.

Regulation and training

Even though the Deaf community is recognized as a linguistic and cultural minority (Ladd 2003, Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996), the provision of signed language interpreting still typically falls under disability legislation and funding in most countries, as opposed to provisions for interpreting for migrant populations. For example, in Australia, signed language interpreting provision comes under the remit of the Australian Federal Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs. Aboriginal interpreting services also fall under the umbrella of this department. Community interpreting in all other spoken languages, however, is the responsibility of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Consequently, the regulation of spoken and signed language interpreting varies from country to country. Based on a snapshot of a range of nations worldwide (Napier 2009), it can be seen that there are essentially three different models of regulation that dictate the standards, entry-to-practice competencies, and certification processes for signed language interpreting in relation to spoken language interpreting:

- signed language interpreting-specific – regulation through a deaf/ sign language-specific body that has its own policies, procedures and processes (e.g., Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf for testing and certification, and the Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers for programme accreditation in the USA);
- mapped – regulation occurs through a signed language interpreting-specific body that has its own policies, procedures and processes, but the competencies are mapped onto the same standards as spoken language interpreters (e.g., Signature in the UK, and the National Vocational Qualification framework and National Occupational Standards for Interpreting for all languages); and
- integrated – where spoken and signed language interpreters are regulated and accredited through the same system and organization (e.g., the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia, which accredits all languages through testing and training programme approval).

In terms of training, signed language interpreter training has been well-established in further and higher education for many decades, especially in the USA where there are over 150 interpreter training programmes at associate, bachelor's, and master's levels. However, as with spoken language *community* interpreter training more generally, in countries where the signed language interpreting profession is still emerging, training is initially offered on an *ad hoc* basis in the form of short, intensive courses to eliminate 'unsatisfactory social practice' among inexperienced and/or untrained interpreters (Grbić 2001), until the field becomes more professionalized.

Based on the historical perception of 'deafness as disability', the majority of university signed language interpreter training programmes are housed in education, social services, special

education, or rehabilitation departments, but we are beginning to witness a new trend in which programmes are integrated into languages or linguistics departments alongside spoken languages, where spoken and signed language interpreting students are taught alongside one another either in the same programme or complementary programmes (e.g., Heriot-Watt University in the UK, Macquarie University in Australia, and Graz University in Austria). This is a positive paradigm shift that reiterates the fact that spoken and signed language interpreters undertake similar tasks and thus can be trained in similar contexts.

Signed language interpreter training in universities has a long-established focus on dialogue interpreting, in recognition of the fact that the majority of signed language interpreting takes place in the *community*; and interpreters are thus trained to work consecutively and simultaneously in a range of public service settings (Cokely 2005a). The only specific course for signed language *conference* interpreting is offered at the Sorbonne (Séro-Guillaume 2010). University, *spoken* language, conference interpreter training programmes are more established, on the other hand, and there is no clear model for dialogue interpreter training in the spoken language interpreting sector (Pöchhacker 2013). Signed language interpreter training models could assist in providing a missing link between spoken language conference interpreting and spoken language community interpreting training.

One distinct difference between spoken and signed language interpreter training is the fact that for signed language interpreting students, there is no ‘Deafland’ where students can go and live to immerse themselves in the language and culture of the deaf community. In spoken language interpretation programmes, on the other hand, it is frequently a requirement that students spend time completely immersed in the language and culture. For example, Heriot-Watt University in Scotland requires its third year spoken language students to spend one year in the country of their language. At the same university, as an alternative solution, BSL students are required to undertake two six-month community placements in organizations where BSL is used by deaf staff every day. This is the only programme in the world (and at least the only one in the UK) that has such a requirement.

A recent popular approach to bridge this gap is to encourage student engagement with the Deaf community through ‘service learning’ in signed language interpreter training programmes (Shaw 2013). This approach introduces students to experiential as well as classroom learning, whereby students participate in Deaf community activities (e.g., answering phones at interpreting service, visiting elderly deaf patients, providing child care to a deaf family) or provide pro-bono interpreting in low-risk situations; so students learn about ‘the significance of membership in a community while reflecting on the importance of reciprocity and the symbiotic nature of learning and living’ (Monikowski and Peterson 2005: 195). The difference between service learning and the immersion experience described above is that during the immersion (community placement) experience, the students are expected to use the sign language every day and enculturate themselves to Deaf community norms. In service learning, however, students are required to develop projects that are of direct benefit to the Deaf community.

Research bridging signed language interpreting and spoken language interpreting

Other chapters have given in-depth overviews of research findings in conference, community, and signed language interpreting studies, so for the purposes of this chapter I will focus on those studies that have had an impact on both spoken and signed language interpreting, or have directly compared spoken and signed language interpreting, or signed language interpreting studies that draw heavily on replication of existing spoken language interpreting research frameworks and findings for analytical purposes.

Both the spoken and signed fields of interpretation have benefitted greatly from the work of Cynthia Roy (2000) and Cecilia Wadensjö (1998), which has influenced our understanding of the role of interpreter as participant in the interaction and co-creator of meaning from a sociolinguistic point of view. However, very little interpreting research has directly compared spoken and signed language interpreting. Earlier psycholinguistic research examined the interpreting process through the analysis and comparison of spoken and signed language simultaneous interpreting, and the examination of interpreter memory recall (Isham and Lane 1993, 1994). In fact, Isham (1995) claimed that research into signed language interpreting could contribute to a better understanding of the cognitive process of interpreting in general. Gran Tarabocchia and Bidoli (2001) report on a study comparing the working memory of five spoken language interpreting students to one professional Italian Sign Language (LIS)/Italian interpreter's performance, and found that the LIS interpreter obtained similar results on an LIS working memory span task as five spoken language interpreting students did on an Italian listening span task. More recently, Nicodemus and Emmorey (2012) examined perceptions of preferred working language direction of spoken and signed language interpreters and found that spoken language interpreters typically prefer, and feel more proficient, interpreting from their second into their first language (L2-to-L1) and perceive L1-to-L2 interpreting to be more stressful and tiring; but that signed language interpreters not only preferred but also felt more proficient working from their L1 to L2, and that native signers largely expressed no directionality preferences. The only other studies in this category have compared predictors for success in spoken and signed language interpreting students: (i) Shaw, Grbić and Franklin (2004) held focus groups with spoken and signed language interpreting students to explore their perceptions of how readily they can apply language skills to their interpreting studies. They found that both spoken and signed language students quickly realized the difference between bilingual competence and interpreting competence. (ii) Stauffer and Shaw (2006) administered a personality questionnaire to 1379 spoken and signed language interpreting students, but did not find any significant predictive characteristics.

One other point of comparison between spoken and signed language interpreting research is where signed language interpreting researchers have replicated spoken language interpreting studies to examine processes or products in signed language interpreting. For example, in replicating aspects of the methodology of previous studies of working memory capacity and spoken language interpreting (such as Zhang 2009; Liu *et al.* 2004), a mixed methods study to investigate working memory and effects of directionality on interpreting performance was conducted with 31 professional Auslan (Australian Sign Language)/English interpreters (Wang 2013; Wang and Napier 2013). After completion of two interpreting tasks, a listening span task, and a working memory task, Wang found no significant correlations between the professional interpreters' working memory capacity and their simultaneous interpreting performance, suggesting that the professional interpreters' working memory capacity is not closely associated with their simultaneous interpreting performance. Another example involved the replication and application of Wadensjö's taxonomy to signed language interpreting in healthcare to explore the concept of 'accuracy' (Major and Napier 2012). The findings supported Wadensjö's work in identifying that interpreters use a range of strategies to produce an accurate interpretation, including expanded, reduced and close renditions.

Future directions

Given the slow emergence of more collaboration between spoken and signed language interpreting researchers, the future looks bright, with possibilities of increasing collaboration and

replication of research across modalities. The publication of the first spoken and signed language co-authored book on interpreting research methods (Hale and Napier 2013) is a major positive step in this direction. Shlesinger (2009) called for more replication of interpreting studies in order to test phenomena across different languages, and the same applies to replicating work across modalities. It is also hoped that spoken language researchers will consider replicating methodologies from signed language interpreting studies too, to enrich our understanding of interpreting processes and products. Another positive step is to see greater international collaboration between signed language interpreting researchers (Shaw 2006), and theoretical constructs that have emerged in the signed language sector being shared with the spoken language sector (Dean and Pollard 2011). Greater interaction across the interpreting sector can potentially lead to increased collaboration in terms of service delivery, standards, training, and professional representation.

Further reading

Hale, S., and Napier, J. 2013. *Interpreting Research Methods: A Practical Resource*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

This book provides an overview of how to approach conducting research in interpreting, with examples from spoken and signed language interpreting research studies.

Napier, J. 2011. Signed language interpreting. In K. Windle and K. Malmkjaer (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the development of the signed language interpreting profession, practice and research, with discussion of the current situation and future directions.

Napier, J., and Roy, C. in press. (eds), *The Signed Language Interpreting Studies Reader*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.

This edited volume brings together seminal articles in signed language interpreting, which have moved the field forward in terms of understanding processes and practices.

Nicodemus, B. and Swabey, L. 2011. (eds), *Advances in Interpreting Research: Inquiry in Action*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

This edited volume features various chapters on interpreting research from spoken and signed language interpreting scholars.

Pöchhacker, F. 2004. *Introducing Interpreting Studies*. London: Routledge.

This seminal book provides a thorough overview of the development of interpreting studies as a discipline, drawing on spoken and signed language interpreting research.

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