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Interpreters and Interpreter Education

This chapter is about the profession of American Sign Language/English interpreting in the United States and the education required to succeed in that profession. It begins with a chronological summary of the most compelling research in the field, as well as issues that show the field's beginnings and reflect a vision for the future. The chapter continues with a look at relevant research and the evolution of the task of American Sign Language/English interpreting, the role of interpreters, quality control, the current status of interpreter education, and goals for the future.

Interpreting: Defining the Task

Task Analysis: The convention

The task analysis information from the 1984 convention of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) was a seminal work in the field of interpreting and interpreter education that was the result of many circumstances that overlapped and intermingled to bridge from the past to the future. In 1983, seven people met for two and a half days at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, and again in 1984 at Madonna Col-

lege in Livonia, Michigan.¹ The purpose of these meetings was to begin a task analysis of the interpreting process. Cokely's (1992) interpreting miscue research, the early work of Colonomos, and the expertise and experience of the entire group led to the outlining of the tasks of interpreting and transliterating (McIntire 1986).² Their work was reviewed by a group of 20 deaf and hearing people and resulted in the activities that were presented to and discussed by the participants at the 1984 CIT convention.³

One specific goal of the 1984 convention was to provide a forum for educators, leaders, and consumers to investigate, in a structured and informed way, the activities of interpreting and transliterating, and the approaches taken toward teaching these activities. In the first article in the proceedings, Cavallaro and Cook (1986) described the task analysis approach to understanding interpreting, transliterating, and interpreter education. Task analysis provides a means for (1) identifying instructional objectives that are necessary for the achievement of instructional goals; (2) sequencing the content of instruction necessary to meet the instructional goals; and (3) evaluating learner performance (attainment of instructional objectives) (Cavallaro & Cook, p. 7). This approach targets

observable, overt behaviors and attempts to describe these behaviors explicitly for the practitioner.

From that introduction, participants of the convention were directed to analyze the tasks outlined for them related to interpreting, transliterating, and teaching based on the following criteria (Cavallaro & Cook, 1986):

1. All tasks should be stated in observable, measurable terms.
2. No critical steps should be omitted.
3. All of the subtasks should be relevant to the main task.
4. No trivial subtasks should be included.
5. The subtasks should be arranged in a logical order.

In a response to Cavallaro and Cook, Rust (1986) suggested a further goal for this task, the development of a theory of teaching interpreting, something that we do not yet have.

From this starting point, many new understandings, beliefs, and assumptions have become widespread in the field. One of the most basic accepted beliefs is that there are specific tasks that make up the whole of interpreting, and that these specific tasks can be taught. The exact nature of these tasks, the sequencing of these tasks, and the ways of teaching these tasks, were yet to be investigated.

Task Analysis Since the Conference

Following the work of the 1984 task analysis convention, two major models of interpreting have had a tremendous impact in the field: Colonomos's integrated model and Cokely's process model. Our current understanding of the task of interpreting has been greatly influenced by the contributions of both. Although these models were in the beginning stages of development before the convention, and both authors contributed to the task analysis work, the Cokely model seems to have had more influence on the convention, while the Colonomos model spread after the convention. Each of these models provided insight into interpreting and has had a tremendous impact on how interpreters view the task and on how educators teach it. Taylor (1993) has added to this early research with additional information on the task.

Colonomos: The Integrated Model

Colonomos (1992) has focused interpreter education on the process, on what is happening inside the interpreter's head during the actual task. She estimated the success of a product by the amount of control and responsibility the interpreter assumes in the process of interpretation. In other words, effective interpreters make informed, educated decisions about what to produce based on meaning analysis. Ineffective interpreters make no decisions; they simply move their hands or mouth without processing the speaker's underlying meaning. Colonomos proposes that interpreters process source messages for meaning by analyzing the source language for goal, for language variable, cultural variables, ideas, presenter's feelings, personality, and style, and also process contextual features.

Colonomos's (1992) pedagogical model of the interpreting process is based on her theoretical model and focuses on the three main aspects of the process: concentrating (C) on the source message (i.e., the incoming message), representing (R) the meaning, and planning (P) the target text (i.e., the produced message). An interpreter is able to analyze the process used to produce the target text and can focus practice and improvement activities on the area that appears to be interfering with that process.

As Colonomos was developing her model, the interpreting field was moving forward toward the 1984 CIT convention on task analysis. Colonomos was on the planning committee for the convention, and she was active in the implementation of the meeting as well. Colonomos had an active role in the convention and also learned much from it. As she says, "I believe I did contribute many of my perspectives that were incorporated into the final document [CIT task analysis]. It was a wonderful exchange of ideas and discussion/debate about various elements of the interpreting task. I'm sure I left there wiser and with many more questions to think about" (Colonomos, personal communication, October 26, 2001).

The Colonomos model has been integrated into basic beliefs of the interpreting field for many years. Colonomos has presented this model widely, and many educators use some form or segments from it. Unfortunately for the field, a detailed explanation of this model has never been written or sub-

stantiated by research. Interpreters and educators have not had the opportunity to study it, discuss it, and implement it. And, because there is no quotable source, no written document from which to draw, educators have different versions that may or may not include elements of their own thinking as well as those of Colonomos. The dearth of published, empirical research prevents the model from progressing to a theory, as defined by Rust (1986). One may believe that it works, and see results from applying it, but there is no documented evidence.

Cokely: The Process Model

In his work originally published in 1984, Cokely (1992) provided the field with its first research-based model of sign language interpreting, the process model. Cokely proposed a seven-stage model. It illustrated the path an interpretation takes from initial production in the source language to the final form produced in the target language. He did not claim this to be a step-by-step, linear process, but proposed that many of the processes co-occur during the overall interpreting process. The steps are: message reception; preliminary processing; short-term message retention; semantic intent realization; semantic equivalence determination; syntactic message formulation; and message production.

Cokely (1992) systematically analyzed the types and frequencies of miscues that occur in interpretations. These were additions, omissions, substitutions, intrusions, and anomalies. These categories provided a way for interpreters and consumers to judge the quality of interpretations and a way for interpreting educators to begin reanalyzing their approaches to teaching. Cokely summarized this by writing:

Miscues are, in and of themselves, singular instances of behavior, instances in which the meaning of the interpretation differs from the meaning of the source text. After identifying miscues in a piece of work, or across several pieces of work, one then seeks possible patterns in the miscues. To form a pattern, the type of miscue must be relatively identical and the probable cause must also be identical (there could be several possible causes for a specific miscue). This then enables one to identify strategies that can address the cause of the miscue pattern. However, a miscue is merely a single instance of behavior; a piece of work contain-

ing only one miscue (virtually impossible, but for sake of argument we will assume that we have found such a piece of work) contains no pattern. . . . Certainly there are some miscues whose cause/motivation is inexplicable (i.e. anomalies), and may fall into the category of what you call "random errors." I suspect that there are very very few "random errors"; rather in the case of "random errors" I believe that we simply do not have enough material to find the pattern . . . we simply need more data. (personal communication, February 21, 2002)

Cokely's model has been published and presented at workshops as well. However, the research publication (Cokely, 1992) is not easily understood and integrated by the every day practitioner. To those without a research background, it can appear to be a string of unfamiliar terms and boxes with arrows that require much analysis before understanding and use. The Cokely model usually requires in-depth training and is not frequently available to interpreting educators. However, those who have studied it find its depth and breadth to be a valuable teaching tool.

If we compare the acceptance and spread of the Colonomos and Cokely models, the former appears to be much simpler than the latter. Cokely proposes 7 major stages and more than 20 substages. There appears to be a simpler three-stage process in the Colonomos model, usually presented to the audience in a more familiar sequence of a chronological progression. This is in comparison to Cokely's complex flow-chart approach. However, when analyzing the three-stage Colonomos model, there are between 28 and 30 factors and subfactors to consider. So, although equally complex, the Colonomos model may appear more familiar to interpreter educators. Both are in use in interpreting education programs in the United States.

Taylor: Developing a Diagnostic Tool

Taylor's (1993) research added another dimension to the field. Taylor's original goal was to investigate interpretations using the assumptions of Cokely's process and Colonomos's integrated models. But she faced the same dilemma that many interpreter educators face: these existing models assume pre-existing English and American Sign Language (ASL) skills. Her data showed that interpreters do not necessarily have those skills. She needed to categorize

and work with the skills in her population of interpreters. Her research provided the field with clear evidence of this dilemma of trying to train interpreters without first establishing adequate language skills. She investigated interpretations to develop a diagnostic tool that would help interpreter educators evaluate errors. Again, the field was presented with a very valuable and essential beginning step in improving interpreter education, but most interpreter educators have not incorporated this work into their teaching.

A major difference in Taylor's approach to analyzing interpretations is that her early research categorized errors based on target features when the source language is English and the target language is ASL: fingerspelling, numbers, vocabulary, classifiers/size and shape specifiers, structuring space, grammar (all language-based features that are prerequisite skills for interpreting), and the two interpreting skills of interpreting and composure and appearance (Taylor, 1993). Her more recent research (Taylor, 2000) categorizes errors based on target features when the source language is ASL and the target is spoken English (sign to voice).

Cokely's (1992) findings gave us insight into where and why experts provide less-than-successful interpretations. Colonomos's approach provided a structure for looking at the interpreter's process. But the question that Taylor's work addressed is where, when, and under what circumstances novices can produce expertly. This information provided a valuable stepping stone to understanding the sequencing of teaching texts in interpreter education, the placement of entry-level interpreters, and the recommendation of skill enhancement activities for novices.

Taylor's (1993) conclusions were clear: while many target productions were labeled "interpretations," the greatest proportion of errors was due to weak or nonexistent language skills and not due to interpreting skills. In other words, the interpreters were not able to begin thinking about interpreting because they did not have language skills that were adequate to produce meaningful messages. Taylor's contribution has led to some changes in the field, but a frequent complaint relayed during a survey conducted in preparation of this chapter was that language skills were not adequately addressed within the imposed limits of the institution.⁴ ASL requirements for entry into interpreting education programs are rare.

All three of the above models looked specifically at language use at the sentence level, with some influence from social and external context (e.g., use of vocabulary in sentences and phrases). More recently, the task has been expanded to include a broader view of interpreting as a discourse process. Discourse analysis seems to be the appropriate level of analysis for interpreters. Roy's (1989, 2000) work presented this approach with an in-depth analysis of a social interaction between interlocutors who use ASL and English. Her work influenced Wadensjo (1998), among others, and she has made a significant contribution to the field of sign language interpreting and education. Roy (2000) recognized the influence an interpreter has on an interaction: "interpreters shape events differently for all the participants. . . . the presence of an interpreter changes the event" (p. 47). This level of analysis is unprecedented in the field, but it is the level of analysis for the future.

Interpreting: Defining the Role

Research

The professionalization of sign language interpreting and interpreters is still evolving, although the actual work of the interpreter has been occurring for generations. The everyday role and responsibilities have been described for the field in three primary texts available for interpreting students: Neumann Solow's (1982) *Sign Language Interpreting: A Basic Resource Book*, Frishberg's (1986) *Interpreting: An Introduction*, and Humphrey and Alcorn's (1996) *So You Want to Be an Interpreter*. All are quite comprehensive and deal with the daily considerations of a professional interpreter. There is discussion about the history of the field, including organizations and ethical considerations for specific interpreting settings. Environmental considerations are also discussed: where is the ideal place for an interpreter to sit/stand? What kind of lighting is appropriate during a movie? and so on. This kind of information is important and can often determine success of the interpreting assignment.

Reliable research in the field of professional sign language interpretation is sparse. There is a plethora of "articles" that are actually handouts distributed at workshops and conventions. These papers are often taken as documented fact rather than

as proposed approaches and methodologies. The field also has reaped the benefits of research on spoken language interpreting, and attempts are made to adjust the information to the special needs of sign language. There are also the models of the interpreting process that are grounded in scholarly research, as discussed earlier (see Cokely, 1992; Taylor, 1993). It is only in recent years, however, that research has addressed interpreting as a dynamic event and tried to analyze the actual role of the interpreter in the interpreting process. As Roy (2000) noted:

Interpreting for people who do not speak a common language is a linguistic and social act of communication, and the interpreter's role in this process is an engaged one, directed by knowledge and understanding of the entire communicative situation, including fluency in the languages, competence in appropriate usage within each language, and in managing the cross-cultural flow of talk. (p. 3)

This discourse approach to interpreting asks as many questions as it answers and intersects all the facets of an interpreter's education, both academic and social. It would be helpful to take a step back to see how this approach evolved, beginning with the work of Seleskovitch.

Seleskovitch

The work of Seleskovitch (1978) was some of the earliest in the field of interpreting to truly investigate the role of interpreting in human communication, and specifically the role of the interpreter in the "trilogue" that occurs whenever interpretation happens. This recognition of the trilogue rather than the dialogue was an essential one for the field of sign language interpreting. This approach is slowly being incorporated into many interpreter education programs.

Seleskovitch is a spoken language interpreter. She began her research on the differences between the results of translation, which includes the luxury of time and resources, and the results of conference interpreting, with the imposition of time constraints and often limited resources and constrained working conditions. Seleskovitch (1978) defined the possibilities of interpreting under optimal conditions; she also realistically described the challenges, problems, and results when conditions for adequate interpreting were not met. She stated that

interpreting "has displayed abundant evidence of its potential, but because it has not been sufficiently studied or defined, it is not always in a position to realize that potential today" (p. 147). This conclusion about spoken language interpreting in 1978 is, sadly, a perfect description of the current state of ASL/English interpreting in the United States.

Seleskovitch (1978) presented the basic structure that most current interpreters use to discuss the interpreting process. She first discussed the need for understanding the source message and the need to analyze it deeply, thoroughly, and spontaneously. Her discussion of understanding of meaning is the basis of our understanding of interpretation today. Seleskovitch thus provided us with a wealth of information and approaches for the field of ASL/English interpreting. Her approach is reflected in the Colonosmos model (see above) and the works describing interpreting from Neumann Solow (1981), Frishberg (1986), and Humphrey and Alcorn (1995), among others. The research being conducted on interpreting by Roy (2000) and Metzger (1995) also reflect the essential understanding of the task as presented by Seleskovitch. Many interpreters and interpreter educators are familiar with Seleskovitch's work; it is work that the field can still learn much from, and to which we owe a great deal of our current understanding of our tasks as interpreters.

Roy

Roy (2000, p. 53) noted that "Not much has been written about the views or perspectives" of the individuals who actually participate in an interpreted event.⁵ She therefore examined the interpreter's perspective in one given interaction, and particularly on the potential influence the interpreter can have in any conversation. Her analysis, at the discourse level, focused on the turn-taking within that given interaction. "Exchanging turns is at the heart of the way people talk back-and-forth to each other" (p. 4). Roy's findings, however, gave us much more than simply the interpreter's perspective. She concluded: "the interpreter is not solely responsible for the success or the failure of an interpreting event. All three participants jointly produce this event and, as such, all three are responsible for the communicative success or failure" (p. 124). The interactional model she offers supports the work of interpreters in an unprecedented way.

Interpreting is the process by which people whose discourse systems are different communicate with each other in face-to-face interactions. Interpreting, then, coincides or happens within these processes and so is intimately bound up in discourse processes. Roy (2000) paved the way for Wadensjo (1998) and Metzger (1995) when she noted that interpreters “influence interaction via their own participation” (p. 34). Her work is also a challenge to interpreter educators to review and revise their courses to reflect the results of ongoing, quality research. Wadensjo’s work is another step in this evolution.

Wadensjo

Wadensjo (1998), focusing on spoken language interpreting (specifically Swedish/Russian), also analyzed the interactive role of interpreting. Her work serves the ASL/English interpreter well. Wadensjo stated, “if interpreting is to be acknowledged as a profession . . . in the everyday life of public institutions and organizations . . . we need to have well-founded and shared ideas about what interpreting . . . is all about, what interpreters are good for, and about preferred standards to apply in various situations” (p. 4).

Wadensjo’s (1998) work was tied most notably to Simmel (1964) and Goffman (1959) insofar as she emphasized that “the number of people in groups and organizations influences the social interaction that takes place in them” (p. 10). Wadensjo presented a groundbreaking analysis of “interpreter mediated encounters” (p. 93) and relied on Goffman’s work on social interaction. Wadensjo, like Roy, focused on the potential influence of the interpreter in any conversation.

Wadensjo’s (1998) analysis began with a thorough explanation of the *communication pas de trois* “there is reason to believe that interactions involving three or more individuals have a complexity which is not comparable to interaction in dyads” (p. 11). She stated that her goal was “to explore how the interpreter-mediated conversation is qualitatively different from encounters where the participants communicate directly” (p. 12). Her *pas de trois* clearly identified the unique conversation involving two people with an additional third person. This analysis of an actual interpreted encounter also included a comparison of ideal interpreting and actual performance, a detailed analysis of specific utterances, and an in-depth discussion of “neutrality”

and all its nuances. Finally, she described the con-founded role of the professional interpreters who “are well aware of the fact that interpreting involves a complexity of activities” (p. 285).

Wadensjo’s research has influenced the field of sign language interpreting in a positive way. The field has just begun to address the position of interpreter as one who has the potential to influence the interaction between two interlocutors. There are still numerous working interpreters and educators who support the “act as if I am not here” approach to interpreting. But Wadensjo’s (1998) work elevated that dated approach to a more social one in that she addressed the presence of a third party and the ramifications from that third party’s role.

Metzger

The next advance in thinking about interpreting was Metzger’s work, which built on the research about sign language interpreting by bringing a further sociolinguistic foundation to the study of the role of interpreting. While Seleskovitch (1978), Wadensjo (1998) and Roy (1989, 2000) discussed the interpreting role as that of a triad with the interpreter in the middle, Metzger (1995) revealed a slightly different picture. She characterized the interpreted encounter as consisting “of two overlapping dyads, interpreter-Deaf participant and interpreter-hearing participant, with the interpreter as the pivotal overlap engaged in both dyads” (p. iv).

Understanding interpreted interactions from this perspective yields complexities that go beyond those raised by prior research. More than simply expanding the picture of interpreted interaction, Metzger (1995) revealed these many new complexities. She discussed each participant’s frame of the interpreted encounter—what each believes is happening and expects to be happening. In addition, the concept of “footing” influences the encounter. Each participant has his or her own perceived role and perceptions about the roles of the other participants. But, more than that, Metzger revealed the “interpreter’s paradox” (p. 34). While most interpreters and interpreter educators have assumed the basic neutrality of the interpreter in any interaction (indeed, deaf consumers depend on this) Metzger made it clear that the interpreter is far from a neutral participant. “The interpreters are both participants in the interaction and conveyors of the dis-

course" (p. 175); they have tremendous "power to influence discourse" (p. 204).

As evidence that this research is making the shift to practice, conventional wisdom now holds the view that interpreters have a definite impact on the communication event. In fact, as one respondent to the survey stated, "everybody is different when an interpreter is there." It was also noted that "[interpreting] is more difficult when they try to ignore us" (S. C. Phan, personal communication, August 29, 2001). Assuming that an interpreter's presence will ensure smooth and successful communication is an obsolete approach to the task. Each participant, including the interpreter, must put forth an effort to support the interaction, and we have come to realize that interpreter's effort is often the greatest (see Metzger, 1995; Roy, 2000; Seleskovitch, 1978; Wadensjo, 1998). There is debate over whether the interpreter is a third participant or a member of one of the dyads, but it is now generally accepted that interpreters are not invisible. The longer we hold on to that perspective, teaching it in our programs and to consumers, the more difficult our task is. Another response to the survey indicated that "not only is the style of communication influenced, but the content [in a more intimate interchange] is also influenced" by the presence of an interpreter. Another respondent noted that "misunderstandings . . . reveal a lot about what's happening" and it might be beneficial to "allow discomfort to occur." Acknowledging the differences in communication styles between the two participants would potentially support the role of the interpreter and clarify his or her footing, as discussed in Metzger.

Quality Control in Interpreting and Interpreter Education

Evaluating Interpreting Skills

In the United States, the field first began evaluating and certifying interpreters in 1972, when the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) began offering a performance-based certification test. This test used stimulus source tapes and required the applicant to perform live interpretations in front of a panel of evaluators. Those evaluators rated the applicant on the spot, and the applicant either passed or failed. Questions about interrater

reliability and the validity of the test led RID to review and revamp the system. After extensive research and testing, the new RID certification tests were first offered in 1989 and are still used, with some modification, today. There are three parts, a written test and two skill tests. The written test is administered separately, and applicants must receive a passing score before registering for the skill tests. One of the skills tests uses videotapes to assess interpreting skills (ASL to English monologue, English to ASL monologue, and interactive dialogue), and the other assesses transliteration (English-based signing to English monologue, English to English-based signing monologue, and interactive dialogue). RID also has developed certification tests for specialized fields such as legal interpreting, oral interpreting, and a test for certifying deaf interpreters.⁶

Many interpreters and consumers believed that the standards of this test were too high, requiring a level of skills not necessary for many jobs. In fact, most believed that beginning interpreters needed several years of experience working as interpreters before they could pass the RID certification. Due to this dilemma and due to the number of unskilled interpreters working without RID certification in areas such as public schools, some states developed their own certification tests. These are often called "quality assurance" screenings to indicate that they are not certification and that they test skills below the level of RID. These are often scored on a scale of 1–5, and interpreters need to receive a score of 3 or above to work in most states. In truth, interpreters scoring below this are rarely terminated from their jobs, and common practice has been to provide in-service training and waivers of skills requirements for as long as 5 years or more. In most states, interpreters who have already passed the RID test are not required to pass any additional quality assurance screenings at the state level.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has also developed an interpreting skill test. Although there has been some friction between RID and NAD over which skills should be tested, the level of skills tested, and the approach to testing, in recent years RID and NAD have been collaborating to develop a new certification test that will be jointly administered and recognized by both organizations at a national level.

The establishment of such national tests in the United States significantly raised the level of interpreting and the recognition of interpreters in this country and gave credibility to the field. It was a giant step in the professionalization of the field. Unfortunately, many environments, most notably the public education system, have failed to move toward recognition of certified interpreters. For many years, the common practice has been to place those not yet ready to interpret for adults in the schools with deaf children. The schools, unwilling to pay for professional, skilled interpreters and often unable to find skilled interpreters, have allowed these unskilled people to work without certification or evaluation of any kind. It is encouraging that within the last 3–5 years, more and more states are addressing the need for skilled interpreters, establishing active requirements for interpreting skills for those working with children. A nationally available assessment tool, the Educational Interpreting Performance Assessment (Schick and Williams, 1993) is also being adopted in many school systems. The failure to satisfy established skills requirements has resulted in the termination of unskilled educational interpreters.

Evaluating the Teaching of Interpreting

The Issues

At the same time that RID, NAD, and various states have recognized the need for quality control of interpreting services, the CIT recognized the need to assess quality in interpreting education programs. Numerous members of CIT have, for approximately 20 years, contributed to the authorship of the current National Interpreter Education Standards (1995). This document identifies “the knowledge, skills, and perspective students need to gain in order to enter the field of professional interpreting” (p. 1). A look at these Standards can help one understand the critical parts of a successful program, as well as recognize the “benchmarks for assessing and enhancing student outcomes, evaluating and updating faculty, and improving curricula and related practices” (p. 1). This document was approved by the general membership of CIT in February 2002.

CIT members began the long process of describing and evaluating teaching in interpreting programs in 1989. At that time, CIT received a

grant from the Funds for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education program at the U.S. Department of Education and began to pilot test an approach to rating interpreter education programs. As a result, a series of issues papers and member responses were presented to the membership at the tenth biennial convention of the CIT, in October 1994 in Charlotte, North Carolina. These papers were based on many years of effort, energy, and input by the CIT membership to understand and establish standards for interpreter education. While at the convention, the members participated in meetings to discuss the appropriateness of standards that would, potentially, lead to a process for evaluating the quality of interpreter education programs. Cathy Cogen, then chairperson of the Standards Committee, instructed the membership to “remind each other about our shared vision for the field and second, to build the momentum and energy” necessary to “realize this vision” (Cogen, 1995, p. 3). Thus the wheels were set in motion. No longer were the issues and ideals the work of a committee, albeit a broad reaching and evolving one; the entire membership became involved in a dialogue of fundamental issues and standards, issues that Cogen characterized as “the heart of what we do . . . central to the direction the field will take in the coming years” (p. 3).

The papers were available to the membership before the convention, and the task was well publicized. There were four fundamental issues: faculty qualifications, diversity in interpreting education, proficiency, and entry level to the profession, as well as the overarching issue of levels of education, which hearkened back to Lane’s 1985 suggestion to the profession: “If interpreting is to continue to grow and improve, if it is to be truly a profession and not a trade, then interpreters must know their foundations” (cited in Frishberg and Wilcox 1995, p. 16). The challenge to the field was, at that time (and still is today) to build a strong academic foundation so that the field will be acknowledged as a serious discipline. Frishberg and Wilcox (1995) asked the difficult questions, all associated with academic credibility:

we must expect differences among our educational programs, acknowledge that graduates of community and technical colleges are well-prepared for some interpreting tasks, and not

for others, recognize that graduates of university programs with bachelors' and more especially masters' degrees are prepared for most interpreting tasks as well as many administrative, instructional and supervisory roles, anticipate that new roles and new educational foci will emerge. Our hope is that this paper will provoke all of us to tune the definitions of what the strata should be. (p. 18)

The vision of a qualified faculty supports the academic credibility that interpreter education so desperately needs: "an academic credential is necessary both as a basic requirement of academia and because it is valuable to the teaching of interpreting" (Winston, 1995, p. 21). For years, interpreter educators had no standards against which to measure their qualifications. While a qualified faculty member is important to a program and to the students it serves, the institutions of higher education have a responsibility to provide "support and encouragement for faculty to obtain further education" (Winston, p. 22).

One respondent to our survey said, "We have to do the work to find good Deaf teachers"; this is a problem often acknowledged by interpreting faculty. However, it appears to be much more complicated than this. Despite the opportunities for educational advancement for deaf people (as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act), the Deaf community has yet to achieve the "critical mass" necessary to satisfy the need for ASL teachers and interpreter educators. Search committees in higher education find it difficult to develop a pool of qualified deaf applicants (R. Peterson, personal communication, September 20, 2001). Many programs include members of the local Deaf community in numerous activities: guest lecturers in Deaf Culture courses, talent for in-house videotapes, members of a program's advisory board, and so on. But the number of tenure-track, full-time deaf interpreter educators in interpreter education programs is quite small. Even when there is a qualified instructor, he or she is often responsible for the ASL courses in the curriculum (usually because there are also few ASL instructors).

The lack of commonly applied standards is also reflected in the expectations of faculty qualifications. To date, only two programs have addressed this issue. The first, the Teaching Interpreting Program at Western Maryland College, was a landmark

program that offered an MA degree in teaching interpreting. The coursework focused on teaching interpreting, and graduates were able to document their skills as teachers. Unfortunately, this program closed and has not been officially reopened to students as of this writing.

The U.S. Department of Education has recently recognized the need for faculty training and education and is currently supporting one program to design, develop, and offer curriculum for teaching interpreting educators. This program, Project TIEM.Online, is a web-based university program offered through the University of Colorado at Boulder <http://www.colorado.edu/slhs/TIEM.Online/index.html>. The program is completely dependent on federal grant support, and its continuation will be in question at the end of the grant.

The National Interpreter Education Standards outline ways to define and assess faculty qualifications. However, few programs have incorporated these standards in hiring. Although most faculty need to have some type of academic degree because their institutions require it, little else is required from faculty except that they be practitioners or deaf. Knowledge of the field, of teaching interpreting, and of teaching and assessment are advantages, but are often not criteria for hiring all faculty. Thus, faculty qualifications are still an enormous issue in providing quality in interpreter education programs.

The second specific issue addressed the importance of creating "a place of prospective, qualitative production of an egalitarian, supportive environment" (Stawasz, 1995, p. 27). Interpreter education programs were encouraged to "recruit a diverse student and faculty population" (Stawasz, p. 27) and to "assure that the curriculum fosters the attitude of acceptance and respect of the diversity in the population" (p. 28). The work of an interpreter is with the general public, which implies meeting a variety of members of different populations, and it was important that CIT promote diversity in an explicit manner.

A third issue of quality assurance in interpreting education is the lack of entry and exit criteria for interpreting students. Historically, this was a non-issue because most interpreters gained their proficiency in ASL by socializing with members of the Deaf community. As our profession addressed the need to educate more interpreters, this concept of proficiency was somehow clouded. At the time of

the CIT convention, there was concern that the growing need for interpreters would require more interpreting education programs. Monikowski (1995) cautioned that “knowingly accepting students into programs without requiring exemplary skills in both ASL and English fosters a linguistic façade which mars our professional standards and offends the intelligence of the Deaf community” (p. 33). To date, there has been little progress to require entry-level skills in many programs, and the challenge remains of teaching students how to interpret when they do not have adequate language skills.

It is clear that from the time of the CIT convention to today, not much progress has been made in this area. In the past, an interpreter’s education was based in the Deaf community, but in recent years, the shift has been to formal education in an academic setting (Peterson & Monikowski, 2001). The price for this transition has been costly. In an effort to gain academic credibility, the field has, for the most part, lost the social interaction and relationships that apparently served the previous generations of interpreters so well; although, in retrospect, relying completely on the community for one’s interpreting skills was a risky proposition. Perhaps what has been lost is the foundation in the language that one acquires when interacting with the members of the community. The gain has been the in-depth analysis of the interpreting task.

The community-based interpreter had the approval, trust, and support of deaf consumers. And the interpreter was the recipient of the in-group knowledge that made the difficult work worthwhile. Today, many students have the required academic credentials but few, if any, of the relationships with the members of the Deaf community. The issue of trust must be addressed. “It takes tremendous faith to give one’s words and ideas over to another person to convey” (P. S. Kraemer, personal communication, August 3, 2001). In the past, knowledge about the interpreter’s “community history . . . [was the deaf individual’s] instrument to measure trustworthiness” (Kraemer, personal communication). Today, for many students, the Deaf Club is an alien place, perhaps reserved for a class observation assignment. Deaf elders are often unknown to the students and, without an experienced mentor, the work is seen as a detached activity, detached from the very community that gives life to the profession. “Students who have only [an] academic basis for learning interpreting suffer from a

lack of experience with real Deaf people; those who learn in the community lack a grounding in the linguistic and theoretical background necessary [to succeed]” (Kraemer, personal communication).

It must be stated, however, that conventional wisdom also says, in the words of one survey respondent, that a quality academic program “can outmatch the community-taught interpreter if the academic program has a strong community component.” There has been an ongoing discussion in the field of second language acquisition regarding which setting is better—the natural or the educational (Ellis, 1994). Although in recent years there has been a realization that when one attempts to argue for one setting over the other, one is essentially comparing apples and oranges, there is a strong belief that “in natural settings informal learning occurs . . . from direct participation and observation” and there is “emphasis on the social significance of what is being learnt rather than on mastery of subject matter” (Ellis, p. 214). The work of an interpreter centers on social interaction with members of the Deaf community. It is essential to bring back as much community interaction as possible into current interpreting programs.



Although clarifying what “entry level” means to the profession was of extreme importance to the 1994 CIT conference, no issue paper was offered. There were, however, five papers presented that addressed this issue in an effort to continue the dialogue among the members (Frishberg, 1995; Mentkowski, 1995; Patrie, 1995; Robinson, 1995; Stauffer, 1995). To date, there has been little research on the issue of what “entry level to the profession” should be.

Currently, there are no commonly used and recognized standards for recognizing success or effectiveness for interpreting instructors, for students, or for interpreter education programs. Conventional wisdom says that students must “know” ASL, but there is neither a standardized method of assessing this knowledge nor any extensive research that addresses such skills. Educators certainly can see the benefits of teaching students who have conversational ASL skills, but when asked to be specific, comments from our survey included: “when they can hold a conversation on general topics”; “when they can [explain an academic article] in ASL.” Often, honesty prevailed: “our reality is that the majority of preparation programs are at the [2 year degree] level and combine language learning

with interpreting.” There is the occasional 2 year program that is “fortunate to have had supportive administration and a model in the prerequisites of the nursing program which allow us [to require two years of ASL].”

The same is true for exit criteria: how does one assess whether the student, although he or she passed all required courses, is ready to interpret? Individual programs have established internships that give students the opportunity to work with a supervisor, and this is infinitely better than simply passing courses. But there is no standard for the field; one comment from a survey respondent was undeniable: “Firm statements from CIT and RID regarding . . . the separation of language learning and interpreting are long overdue.”

National Interpreter Education Standards

The current National Interpreter Education Standards, approved by the CIT membership in  and officially adopted in , have two major sections for assessing interpreter education programs: general criteria and specific criteria. The general criteria deal with five issues: sponsorship, resources (including faculty qualifications), students, operational policies, and program evaluations. The specific criteria address the description of a program (including its mission statement and philosophical approach), curriculum design, prerequisites, and content requirements. These standards represent an enormous amount of work from many interpreter educators. The entire document has moved the field of interpreter education forward in immeasurable ways; it represents the hopes and dreams of a profession.

Implementing the Standards

The standards are rooted in a philosophy of self-study, an approach that offers the opportunity to compare a specific program with the standards of the profession. In the existing process, the CIT offers a member of the standards committee as a guide for the process, helping programs to organize documents, articulate philosophies, and explore curriculum. This requires a 2-year commitment from the program and its sponsoring institution. The self-study review is an excellent opportunity for a program to clearly see its strengths and weaknesses in specific areas and can also serve as an impetus for the sponsoring institution to make changes in an existing program. However, there is

no prestige in the field for the programs that have undertaken this self-study, and there is no tangible benefit. There is no competition among reviewed programs and non-reviewed programs. There is no outside economic benefit for any programs that have undergone review. It is hoped that the years ahead will bring change and that the self-study review will evolve into a bona fide accreditation program. This step will add to the academic credibility and professionalization the programs so desperately need. Like national recognition and certification did for the interpreting profession, national recognition and some type of certification of interpreting education programs will give credence to our work.

The self-study review process was originally a way for programs to conduct an internal review, using the standards as a gauge that reflected the conventional wisdom of the profession. It seems that, unless there is some kind of outside impetus attached to accreditation, the current approach of self-study will not move forward. For example, if the federal government required accreditation before awarding grants to those programs, there would be more interest from interpreter education programs. There is an effort underway to include more deaf professionals in the process by tapping into the expertise of the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA), although they have neither a self-study review nor an established accreditation process. And, since the standards require, as a prerequisite, that one has skills in both ASL and English, ASL teaching will not play a large part in assessing any interpreter education program. However, because it is essential that ASL courses prepare students for interpreting, the participation of ASLTA in understanding the language needs of interpreters is essential. The current self-study review process continues to move forward, with one program reviewed successfully (University of New Hampshire at Manchester), more in the process, and a commitment from CIT to continue offering the self-study review process and to investigate the accreditation of programs.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has presented an overview of the profession of interpreting and the educational programs that support the profession. The task analysis

from the 1984 CIT convention, as well as the seminal work of Colonos and Cokely (1992), laid the foundation for current interpreter education programs. In addition, Taylor's (1993) more recent work has become widely applied and has the potential to impact curricular improvements.

Research has given the field much needed academic credibility. The spoken language research of Seleskovitch (1978) set the bar for sign language research. To date, few have been able to match the quality of her work. However, in recent years, the number of research-based presentations at national CIT conventions appears to be increasing, and this bodes well for the profession.

The RID evaluation system and the collaboration between RID and NAD emphasize the need for qualified professionals. Because few individuals become interpreters without enrolling in an interpreter education program, the need for standards with which these interpreter education programs can be assessed is crucial. It remains to be seen whether the commitment from the field, currently being led by the CIT approach to self-study review, results in an accreditation process.

Lack of qualified faculty continues to be a problem. There is a need for formal programs that prepare the future faculty of interpreter education programs. Workshops and national conventions, although they provide useful information and are an excellent forum for collegial sharing and support, do not contribute to the academic credibility of our programs or of our faculty.

Generally, research on interpreting and interpreter education needs to be expanded. Many interpreter educators attend to the daily task of developing curricula, teaching classes, and organizing schedules, with little time for scholarly work in the field. Until the number of qualified faculty increases, the challenge of pursuing credible and reliable research will remain.

The growth of the profession has been slow but steady. There are more certified interpreters now than ever before, and there are more interpreter education programs now than ever before. As in any young professions, numerous issues need attention; too few people have too little time. However, it seems that the profession's initial stage of development has given way to an awareness of the need for academic credibility and recognition of standards to identify successful programs. As the millennium unfolds, we are hopeful that interpret-

ers and interpreter educators will continue to advance as professionals.

Notes

1. These people were Dennis Cokely, Betty Colonos, Janice H. Kanda, Sharon Neumann Solow, Donald G. Renzuli, Kenneth Rust, and Theresa Smith. This history was put together from information in CIT 1984 and from personal communications with Dennis Cokely.

2. Although Cokely's work was originally published in 1984, we are using the 1992 citation in our references because it is readily available to the public. Interpreting and transliterating are the mainstays of an interpreter's work. Interpreting is changing a message from one language to another language, American Sign Language (ASL) into English, and transliteration is process of changing "one form of an English message . . . into the other form, for example from spoken English into signed English" (Winston, 1989, p. 147).

3. We refer to the dates of specific events. All dates in parentheses are dates of publications. For example, the Proceedings from the 1984 convention were not published until (1986).

4. In an effort to share the conventional wisdom of those who currently teach interpreting students, we canvassed the entire CIT membership for their perspectives on a variety of issues. We are grateful for the participation of numerous interpreter educators who freely shared their thoughts and opinions. Some are quoted directly; others remain anonymous.

5. Roy's work was completed in 1989, but her 2000 publication is readily available to the public.

6. RID's approximately 3,646 certified interpreters are required to participate in a Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) and to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in order to maintain certification (Pam Jones, *RID Certification Maintenance Program Coordinator*, personal communication, February 1, 2002).

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