

Interpreter Preparation Conversations:

Multiple Perspectives

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In recent years there has been a trend to employ teams of signed language interpreters in a number of contexts in order to best address the needs of the interpreting assignment. There have been a number of factors identified that necessitate the need for teams of interpreters. The rationale utilized for employing a team is often based on the complexity of the work, the importance of providing the most accurate work by reducing the cognitive and mental fatigue that can occur in assignments where only one interpreter is working, and the length of the assignment. In many North American contexts, these factors have shaped hiring practices and interpreter education practices. A pressing reason to employ teams of interpreters has been to reduce the number of repetitive-motion injuries, and to reduce the fatigue experienced by interpreters (Demers, 2005). In addition, there are prevailing notions that the use of two or more interpreters may improve the accuracy of the interpretation, enhance the psychological support the interpreters provide for one another, and contribute to the professional development of the interpreters (Frishberg, 1986; Solow, 2000). Stewart, Schein, and Cartwright (2005) cite an interview with an interpreter educator in which accuracy is cited as a primary reason to use teams. The expectation is that team interpreters will correct incorrect signed and spoken interpretations and support the actively working interpreter by filling in unheard or miscued speech.

Frishberg (1986) identified several circumstances requiring the use of teams of interpreters, including the spatial arrangements of the room or number of participants, the length of the assignment, and the varieties of language or communications systems used in an interaction. Both Shaw (2003) and Cokely (2003) have explored the nature of interpreters working in teams. Shaw examined how interpreters who have been hired to monitor the work of other interpreters working in legal settings function as part of a legal team, serving both courts and defense attorneys. Her findings reveal that the linguistic and cultural skills of the

monitoring interpreters must be of an exceptional quality in order to be able to discern what interpreting errors must be brought to the attention of the courts. Her work also reveals the ways in which monitoring interpreters' interactions with teams of interpreters can affect the quality of the overall work presented in a courtroom. When major errors in the interpretation have been brought to the attention of the court, there are numerous benefits, from saving the court time in costly retrials to allowing proceedings to continue after the corrections are made in a way that is efficient and supports the judicial process. Cokely reported significant discrepancies between the behaviors interpreters identified they would use to ask for support and the actual behaviors that they used to request support. His study showed interpreters in preliminary meetings mentioned 7 behaviors that they would use to ask for support, but during the actual interpretation there were 16 different behaviors that were used by them to request support.

The two national professional organizations representing signed language interpreters in North America, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), have both cited the need for effective interpreting in teams in their Codes of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct. Both Codes of Ethics explicitly note the need to demonstrate professional accountability for one's work, and to collaborate with team members in a manner that reflects professional standards during all phases of assignments (AVLIC, 2000; RID, 2005). More recently, Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) undertook a research project to identify the competencies needed by interpreters in order to address the gap between interpreter education and readiness to work. The authors cite wide-spread agreement among educators, consumers, and interpreter practitioners about the various skill sets required by practitioners that allow for self and peer analysis of interpreting performance, and the human relations and professionalism competencies that underlie team performance.

Despite these beliefs and agreed upon work practices that support the use of teams, some research has shown that an interpreting team does not always monitor the interaction, communicate well within the team, or provide effective support (Russell, 2002, 2005). In that study, a significant number of interpreting errors were not consistently corrected by teams of interpreters, leaving the court unknowingly with interpreting errors on the record. The study also revealed interaction patterns between team members that affected the success of the team experience.

The study demonstrated how these interaction patterns among interpreters affected the Deaf witness, who in turn lost trust in the team. Clearly the goal is for conscientious and competent interpreting teams that can ensure that the interpretation is effective and accurate. It seems that such a goal is not always achieved for a number of possible reasons, including a lack of interpreter education and interpreting experience, a lack of assignment preparation by interpreters working as a team, and an inability to adequately manage the interpreting process as a team. This chapter attempts to further our understanding of the nature of the work of interpreters functioning in teams by exploring the data that were collected as part of a larger study. That data examined the ways in which interpreters prepare to work together and prepare consumers to work with them. The perceptions of multiple perspectives on team interpreting, from the lens of interpreters, Deaf witnesses, and non-deaf expert witness, lawyers and judges will be highlighted.

THE STUDY—OBJECTIVES, METHOD, AND PARTICIPANTS

One of the research objectives of the study conducted in 2000 was to investigate the preparation strategies of interpreters when working together as a team, including the specific ways in which the interpreters prepare with each other prior to beginning the interpretation, and how they prepared the lawyers and Deaf witnesses to work with interpreters. This research objective was embedded within a larger study of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting use in criminal trials (Russell, 2002, 2005). The mock trials were based on real court cases and involved the use of lawyers and judges, Deaf witnesses, and a non-deaf expert witness. The trials were taped in a moot courtroom within a law school. The discourse was not scripted, and the interpretation was videotaped in order to allow for complete discourse analysis of the work at the conclusion of the trials. Further analysis of the data as it relates to preparation strategies has been conducted for this chapter.

Prior to interpreting the trials, interpreters were assigned to teams of two per each 90 minute trial, and each interpreter worked two trials with a different interpreter on each occasion. The preparation conversations held by interpreters were then tape recorded for later analysis. In addition, the interpreters were recorded when speaking with the lawyers, expert witness, and Deaf witnesses prior to the trials. At the completion

of the trials, the researcher interviewed the interpreters about their work and team processes. The interviews were semi-structured and the interpreters were invited to reflect on their experiences, guided by several general questions that probed their impressions of their work, including their preparation strategies, reflections on what had worked well in the interpreting and what had not been as successful, and what they would do differently in the future. Finally, interviews were held with the expert witness, the lawyers, and the judges about their perceptions of the interpretation and the processes they observed as consumers of the interpreting service.

The four Canadian interpreters who participated in this study included three females and one male. Three interpreters held national AVLIC certification at the time, and one did not hold certification; however, the interpreter was selected based on the experience s/he had in legal interpreting. All of the interpreters possessed a minimum of 5 years interpreting experience in legal settings, had a minimum of 15 years experience using American Sign Language (ASL) and interpreting in non-legal settings, and three of the interpreters had significant experience and training in legal settings (1000–3000 hours). Of the four interpreters, one had Deaf parents. None of the interpreters had worked with each other prior to these trials, which necessitated the need for explicit conversations about how the team processes would be implemented. All of the interpreters reported regularly working in team contexts in legal and other settings.

Two female Deaf persons participated in the study as Deaf witnesses. Both attended a school for the Deaf, used ASL as their preferred language, and had experience using professional interpreters. Nine lawyers participated in this study and each had practiced criminal law for a minimum of three years and had at least 150 hours of actual courtroom experience. Four of the lawyers had limited experience working with either a signed or spoken language interpreter, and three of the lawyers had been exposed to some professional development during their legal training about working with interpreters and Deaf community members. Finally, there were three judges who were part of this study. One had extensive experience working with spoken language interpreters using aboriginal languages, the second judge had never seen a signed language interpreter before this experience, and the third judge had limited experience with both spoken and signed language interpreters.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data were coded and analyzed for the themes that emerged, using descriptive and pattern codes based on qualitative analysis methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The following themes emerged from the interpreters' preparation conversations, and from the interviews with all participants.

Interpreter Preparation Conversations

Prior to interpreting the trials, the interpreters were given 45 minutes to prepare with each other, and then had additional time to prepare with the witnesses and the lawyers. The conversations held between the interpreters demonstrated that these four interpreters had a series of questions or a framework that was commonly used to begin their collegial conversations. The questions concerned these topics

- Sharing the work—The interpreters addressed how to manage the interpreting process, with one team choosing to split the work by language considerations. In that situation, it was determined that one interpreter would perform the ASL to English interpretation during the Deaf witness testimony, and the second interpreter would perform the English to ASL interpretation. The three other teams chose to split the work based on time periods of 20 minute blocks, where one interpreter would assume the active interpreting position for 20 minutes and the second interpreter would offer support by monitoring the work and correcting errors when needed.
- Interpretation Accuracy—The interpreters identified strategies that would support meaningful and effective interpretation while facilitating the interaction. For example, they spoke of how they would monitor each other's work and offer information to correct or supplement an original interpretation. These strategies involved taking notes to support the interpretation, providing visual and auditory feedback to the interpreter about their work, stopping speakers or signers for clarification, as well as the use of signals to stop speakers/signers in order to manage the interpreting process.

- Strategies to Support Each Other—The interpreters identified behaviors that would be required and requested by the active interpreter when s/he needed the support of the monitoring interpreter. As in the Cokely (2003) study, these included: leaning towards the interpreting partner, indicating what they needed, eye gaze, and tapping each other. While two of the four interpreters discussed the role of notes in consecutive interpreting, there was no mention of whether the notes would be used as a communication vehicle between the two interpreters when requesting or offering support to each other.
- Signals—The interpreters discussed the signals that they would use to provide each other with information to correct or adjust interpretations and the signals that they would use to ask participants in the interpreted event to pause or repeat a message. Two of the four teams reached an agreement that before stopping a participant, the active interpreter would seek support through an interpreter feed. These teams indicated that an interpreter feed was seen as the provision of information by the other interpreter who was not in the active interpreting role. The information could be an omitted word or phrase, a word or phrase that corrects an inaccurate interpretation, or could involve the other interpreter taking over the active role if the feed required was lengthy and was going to disrupt the process. Most teams indicated a preference for information to be signed in ASL by their interpreting partner, if the interpretation was from English to ASL, as in the case of working with the non-deaf expert witness. When the interpreting involved the Deaf witnesses, the teams indicated they preferred to be supported by spoken English feeds as the interpreters were standing next to each other to provide the interpretation. Position appeared to drive the choice of information being offered in spoken English or in ASL (standing beside each other, or facing each other). Also, two interpreters identified areas of interpreting weakness that they wanted the monitoring interpreter to attend to, and presumably have the interpreter feed the correct information, for example, “I will probably miss the fingerspelling” or “Just tell me if I have the tense wrong.” Finally, it should be noted that none of the interpreters in their preparation conversations addressed the volume of the feed in spoken English, which again

is similar to the Cokely (2003) study. It may be that the interpreters understood that the feed in spoken English was to be whispered; however this was never explicitly stated.

- Preparing the Lawyers—The interpreters addressed how they would prepare the lawyers for the needs of the interpreters in the legal settings and how they would deal with the legal discourse. All the interpreting teams had prior basic information about the legal case (nature of the charges, names of witnesses, time frame for the alleged offense) and they identified questions that they would like to ask the lawyers. They also identified aspects that they would like to share with the Court that could ensure the interpreting went well.
- Shared Meaning, Contexts, and Experiences—Three out of four of the teams of interpreters spent approximately ten minutes of their time together exchanging information about how much experience each team member had in similar work settings. They posed questions to each other about their interpreting experience, especially in legal contexts, and tried to ascertain if they had common experiences from which to build upon for this assignment. The interpreters also spoke of their past experience with team interpreting, articulating their understanding of what it means to be a team player. For example, does it mean Interpreter A does twenty minutes of work, and is replaced by Interpreter B, with very little support or monitoring from the non-active interpreter, or does it mean that each share the responsibility for the success or the lack of success of the mediated communication event?
- Views of Interpreting Models—One of the interpreting teams also addressed how they conceptualized interpreting. For this team, both members identified how they viewed interpretation, especially during the Deaf witness testimony, as a communication event that involved interpreting as mediated communication, based on the constructed dialogue of the lawyers and the witnesses. As Pöchhacker (2004) describes, this meme of interpreting brings together language, cognition, interaction, and culture as a reference for interpreting. None of the other teams attempted to discuss their conceptual frames of reference for interpreting despite the fact such frames can impact on the nature of the team process. For example, if one team member views

interpreting as linguistic transfer void of cultural overlays and the other interpreter views the work as linguistic and cultural mediation, the Deaf witness is going to see two very different styles of interpreting within the interaction. This is what occurred in one trial and it is discussed in the Deaf Witness Interview section of this chapter.

- **Spokesperson**—One of the interpreting teams determined that only one of them would approach the lawyers to conduct the preparation conversation, taking on the spokesperson role. The other three teams chose to hold the conversations as a team.

Preparation Conversations with Non-Deaf Lawyers

All teams took the time to hold preparation conversations with the lawyers, and while there was consistency among the kinds of questions and comments made, there were also key differences demonstrated by one of the teams. For the team that had chosen a spokesperson, both interpreters were present for the meeting, and the spokesperson took the lead on the conversation. On two occasions the other interpreter offered additional clarification and responded to the lawyer's questions. All of the teams described the interpreting process between two languages, providing information laden with interpreter technical terms such as *the interpreting process*, *consecutive and simultaneous interpreting*, and *miscues*. The interpreters also took the time to discuss the signals that would be used to pause the lawyers, and these ranged from "I will look at you," "I will ask you to pause" to "I will hold up one finger." The interpreters also addressed how they would behave as a team and that there would be occasions when the interpreters needed to confer with each other about the accuracy of the interpretation.

During these preparation conversations, the interpreters did not ask questions about the content of the case or key documents that might be useful for them to view prior to beginning the trials. Nor did any of the teams ask the lawyers if they had questions for the interpreters. It is interesting to note that interpreters working in legal settings often report that they request and utilize materials in order to prepare for the work, and yet that did not occur here. While the mock trial context may have contributed to this factor, it may also be that what interpreters report doing and what they actually do in the area of preparation is different. It may also be a function of the amount of time the interpreters spent

with the lawyers, and if so, this speaks to the need to prioritize discussion items when there is a limited time so that all the key areas have been addressed.

Preparation Conversations with Deaf Witnesses

The interpreters also had an opportunity to meet with the Deaf witness prior to each trial. What emerged from those preparation conversations was agreement across all four teams that it was important that each team member have an opportunity to converse in ASL with the Deaf witness, in order to determine the witness's language style and preferences and to create a rapport that would facilitate effective interpretation. The interpreters also acknowledged that it was important for the Deaf witness to see their use of ASL in order for the Deaf witness to begin to trust the capabilities of the interpreters. The interpreters and the Deaf witnesses engaged in conversations that revealed information about the Deaf person's early school experiences, involvement in the Deaf community, and the nature of language in use as it applied to the consumer's use of ASL.

These conversations support the notion that in the case of interpreted interactions, the interpreters and the receiver are "co-participants in the co-construction of meaning" (Wadjensjö, 1998). The interpreters seemed to demonstrate an intuitive sensitivity that they could not just interpret in the courtroom without having some sense of the Deaf consumer's past experience and language use, as this would support the interpreter in the re-creation of the Deaf person's narrative within the courtroom context.

Only one team specifically addressed how they viewed interpreting as interaction in their preparation conversation, but all of the teams through their actions demonstrated an awareness of the concept of meaning as articulated by Wilcox and Shaffer (2005). Wilcox and Shaffer suggest that meaning is not something objective to be found in the words and constructions of language, but rather it is co-constructed between participants in an immediate social context. The interpreters demonstrated this concept by conversing in ASL about topics that would help the interpreters understand how the Deaf person may construct their specific narrative for this specific situation, knowing that the narrative would unfold through the questions asked by lawyers. The interpreters did not probe for details specific to the case, but rather, spent the time focusing on exchanging information between themselves and the Deaf

person. For example, the interpreters also shared their personal language journey narrative about how they came to interpreting, where they learned ASL, and the nature of their Deaf community interaction in the city in which they reside. Unlike the preparation conversations with lawyers, here the interpreters did not explicitly describe how they would work in the court. It may be that the interpreters assumed that the Deaf consumers had a great deal of experience using interpreters and this was not needed. However neither Deaf person in these mock situations had experience with interpreters in courtroom settings, adding to the reality of the simulation.

Preparation Conversation with Expert Witness

Each trial included expert witness testimony and the expert witness made themselves available to the interpreters for a brief conversation prior to the trial. Three out of the four interpreting teams chose to engage in conversation with the witness. What emerged from the preparation conversations was an emphasis by the interpreters on their needs to the exclusion of the needs of the witness. The interpreters stressed that they would be taking turns interpreting the testimony, how they would stop the witness during consecutive interpreting, the process they would use to correct errors and what they needed to do in order to provide successful interpretation. One team addressed the area of witness goals within their testimony. However, the other teams did not ask the witness about the nature and scope of their testimony and areas that the witness would likely highlight. All of the interpreting teams requested a summation of the witness's qualifications based on the person's résumé. None of the teams explored whether the expert witness had questions or concerns about working with interpreters.

Deaf Witness Interview Results

The Deaf witnesses commented on the trials from the perspective of being able to share their narrative and how effective the interpreting had to be in order for them to feel like they had meaningful access to the judicial procedures. It was interesting to note that the Deaf witnesses expressed the most comfort with the interpreter with the least amount of courtroom experience. They reported that the interpreter appeared to be a fluent and natural language user, and was confident when present-

ing the interpretation. There was strong agreement between the witnesses that this interpreter was also able to consistently present the work in ASL with near native-like fluency. The witnesses acknowledge that all of the interpreters were fluent in ASL. There were times however that the interpretation reverted to more English-like work, which was less comprehensible to the witnesses. The native-like fluency in ASL created a sense of comfort and trust for the witness. The witnesses noted that this interpreter also demonstrated sensitivity to the Deaf witnesses' emotional states when preparing for the trials by not asking specific case details, but rather engaging in conversation. Through this conversation, the Deaf witnesses felt confident that the interpreter would understand their messages and be able to represent their voices and experiences in the courtroom.

There were several themes that emerged across the interviews with Deaf witnesses, as it related to the team interpreting process. The themes included

- Conferring: Purpose and Effect on Witness—Deaf consumers reported being distracted by the interpreters who appeared to be over-conferring with their team member. Each time the interpreters would visibly pause and confer with each other, the Deaf consumer questioned how well they understood the witness's use of ASL. While the witnesses acknowledged that they would like the interpreters to stop them if the interpreters were not sure, they also said that when it occurred several times they began to lose faith in the abilities of the interpreters.
- Error Correction—Deaf witnesses questioned how clear it was to the judge and the lawyers when the interpreters corrected themselves; as Deaf witnesses they could not hear what the interpreters said and hence wondered what strategies the interpreters used to make it explicit that it was an interpreting error versus the witness changing an answer. One Deaf witness reported that s/he appreciated when the team addressed errors by one interpreter signing contemporaneously what the other interpreter spoke to the court about the error and the correction needed. This strategy was only used by one of the four teams.
- Interpreter Behavior: Nervousness and Team Processes—This theme was raised often in the interviews conducted with the Deaf witnesses after the trials. The witnesses indicated that

when the interpreter demonstrated nervousness, as visible on his/her face and hands, it influenced the witnesses who then tried to change their linguistic use of ASL to ensure the interpreter could understand them. Further, the Deaf witnesses commented that when the interpreters had very different linguistic styles, for example, when one interpreter had a native style of ASL and the other interpreter had less native-like use of ASL, it was challenging for the Deaf witnesses to adapt to the style differences after the interpreters switched. One witness described it as watching a tennis match, where your brain has to switch back and forth watching the two different players. A significant incident in one trial led a witness to comment that how the teams functioned together in the courtroom had a dramatic impact on his/her courtroom testimony. During the trial, the two interpreters were to have exchanged places, relieving each other during the English to ASL expert witness testimony. When Interpreter A indicated it was time to switch, Interpreter B responded in ASL indicating that s/he was fine and would continue to interpret. Despite three attempts by Interpreter A to relieve Interpreter B, no switch took place, leaving the first interpreter to work an hour in duration. The Deaf witness could see the interaction but other members of the court who do not use ASL had no awareness of the situation. This decision not to switch resulted in an increase in interpreting miscues, and perhaps more importantly, left the Deaf witness with a negative impression of this team's ability to share the work professionally.

- Notetaking: Purpose and Disposal of Notes—Deaf witnesses reported that they noticed some interpreting teams taking notes during the use of consecutive interpreting, however no mention was made pre- or post-trial to the witness about what the notes were to contain and how they would be used. Deaf witnesses reported that they would have preferred the interpreting teams explain this in the pre-conference meeting, so that all had a shared understanding of the purpose of the notetaking, and most importantly, how the notes would be disposed of after the trial.
- Preferences: Confident Interpreter—The Deaf witnesses in this study reported that they were most comfortable working with the interpreter who appeared the most confident and had the most natural language use in ASL. Ironically, this turned out to

be the interpreter with the least amount of legal interpreting training and experience. This interpreter has Deaf parents and over 15 years of interpreting experience in a variety of non-legal settings.

JUDGES AND LAWYER INTERVIEW RESULTS

All of the lawyers in this study indicated that they appreciated the preparation conversations and seven of the nine lawyers commented that they had never experienced this approach with spoken language interpreters in similar trials.

“I was surprised when they told us what they were doing. I have never worked with a signer before but the spoken language interpreters never tell us what they are doing! I appreciated this approach.”

While the lawyers indicated they appreciated this opportunity, they also reported feeling overwhelmed by the content of the conversation. For example, the lawyers expressed that the interpreters described what it was they would be doing, using terms that were unfamiliar to the lawyers (e.g. interpreter miscues, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, support, and active interpreter, etc.), and the interpreters seemed to be “controlling” at times. The lawyers also said that they would have appreciated the use of examples when describing the nature of interpreting.

The lawyers viewed the interpreters as professional and appropriate for the setting, but they would have preferred the conversation to be more like a dialogue versus a monologue. In terms of a dialogue, the lawyers expressed surprise that the interpreters did not ask trial specific questions in order to establish a complete frame of reference. As with the Deaf witnesses in this study, the judges and the lawyers had considerable questions about the manner and the frequency in which interpreters were conferring with each other. The judges noted that they thought the interpreters appeared professional in their interactions with the lawyers and the witnesses, but they did not understand why the interpreters were “checking” with each other. The lawyers recalled that they had been told how the team would function prior to the trial, but they had not understood that this conferring behavior was related to error correction and they were not prepared for the frequency that this would occur. One lawyer stated, “I started to wonder if they knew what they

were doing. I felt concerned about how often it occurred and I didn't understand why they were doing this."

Error correction was a critical element that the lawyers reported that they had hoped the interpreters would address in the preparation conversations but they did not feel this was handled effectively. Some of the lawyers also felt the conferring interfered with their line of questioning, as they were distracted by it and the frequent pauses altered the lawyer's "flow of questions." The judges commented on the fact that they would have preferred the Crown prosecutors to review some of these basic interpreting behaviors with them prior to the trial. While the judges understood the need for conferring, they also recommended that the interpreters always seek permission prior to conferring, and to indicate why they are conferring with each other. If the conferring takes more than a few seconds the judges would rather that the question/answer be repeated, and that they will direct that interaction, not the interpreters.

Neither the judges nor the lawyers understood why the interpreters were displaying attending behaviors such as nodding affirmatively at the Deaf witness during testimony. The interpreters reported this behavior was a form of backchannel feedback to the witness to indicate that the interpreters understood them, and this is an appropriate convention in signed language use. The lawyers and the judges viewed the behavior as "encouraging the deaf witness." Again, this was not addressed in the preparation conversations, and given the lawyers and the judges differing levels of experience with minority language forms, let alone ASL, it would have been helpful information.

One judge and several lawyers expressed a preference for one team member over another when performing the ASL to English work, indicating that they preferred the interpreter who made clear statements of error correction, for example: "Interpreter correction—that was 12 people not 10," and the interpreter who appeared to be able to convey the emotional affect of the witness. None of the lawyers and the judges was comfortable with the interpreters' use of the phrase "interpreter miscue" to describe an error. All of the lawyers expressed surprise at how effectively the interpreters were able to convey the emotions of the Deaf witness. They had anticipated this would be an area of weakness, and suggested that this specific topic would have been helpful to canvas in the preparation conversation.

Unlike the Deaf witnesses, the judges and the lawyers had no awareness of the team that experienced the difficulty over exchanging active

interpreting positions, and when made aware of it during the interview, they expressed a view indicating such behavior was inappropriate during an interpreted court interaction, and that when these interpreter-to-interpreter messages are not available to the court it creates issues for them.

Finally, the lawyers and the judges reported that positioning of the interpreters was not something addressed in the preparation conversations, and yet was one of the elements that were problematic. For example, the lawyers reported being surprised that the interpreters would need to have their backs to the lawyers in order to face the Deaf witness, and at one point in a trial, the judge requested the interpreter change positions so the judge could see them more clearly, which changed the sight lines for the Deaf witness. This situation took several minutes to resolve in order to ensure the judge understood why the interpreters had to be positioned as they were in order for the Deaf person to be able to see the interpreter and have access to the testimony of the witness. This problem could have been avoided if the Crown prosecutor had a clearer understanding of what the courtroom positioning requirements were and then s/he could have oriented the judge prior to the trial.

Expert Witness Results

The expert witness post-trial interview revealed several issues. The witness was interested in why the one team chose not to have any conversation prior to the trial, and this left the expert witness with a reduced trust level for the interpreting work of this team. The expert witness also suggested that the team that asked about the goals or nature of the testimony inspired confidence, leading the witness to believe that their interpreting work would be stronger. The witness noted that all of the interpreters who engaged in preparation conversations asked about academic and professional qualifications that provided them with a frame for the qualifying part of the court accepting the witness during the trial. However, the witness had a briefing article prepared for the court that identified key areas of testimony and examples that would be offered. The witness indicated that they would have been willing to share it but none of the interpreters asked if such a document existed. This document would have been useful to the interpreters and points to additional questions that could have been asked in the preparation conversations.

Interpreter Interview Results

The interpreters in this study were also individually interviewed at the conclusion of the trials. The data reveal that the interpreters confirmed that forming a team is more than physically coming together to share the work. It requires a commitment to hold conversations pre- and post-trial, and to have strategies to address situations that can arise during their work. Two of the four interpreters reported that they have their preferred interpreters with whom they like to work, indicating that those interpreters have strong interpreting skills and similar working styles to their own. Two interpreters reported that when in their home communities, they often do not hold conversations prior to the work—“They simply arrive and hope all goes well.” The interpreters identified elements of their work that were successful as a team, and the one team acknowledged that because they had never worked together, and didn’t know each other prior to this study, they struggled to work effectively and professionally with each other. This team had a significant disagreement during the interpretation, and when the interpreters were invited to reflect on why this may have occurred, one interpreter identified that s/he had formed an opinion of the other team member’s competencies and/or lack of experience, and this affected her/his decision to continue interpreting for over one hour, believing the quality of her/his work was superior to the other interpreter’s. This incident led to frustration between the two interpreters, along with feelings of anger and a sense of power imbalance. The Deaf witness reported that the incident led them to mistrust the team and it heightened his/her own anxiety about testifying. In this situation, had the interpreter honored the original agreement reached in the preparation conversation, and if the second interpreter had been more professionally assertive, this incident would not have occurred.

When asked about error correction, and the notion that working in teams results in increased accuracy, the interpreters reported that they felt they had managed the errors well and that the work was successful. However the analysis of the data showed several instances where team members did not correct the errors made by their colleague. This resulted in an inaccurate court record, and as with most mediated communication events, the consumers of the interpreting services are not in a position to know if the interpretation is accurate.

As reported in Russell (2002), there were numerous errors that were not corrected by the interpreters working in teams. Table 1 shows the number of interpreting errors per target language and by trial.

When error correction and the monitoring of each other’s interpreting work was probed in the interviews, two responses were given: “I thought the interpreting WAS accurate and I agreed with my colleagues’ interpreting,” and “I knew they had it wrong, but I didn’t think the error was significant to correct for the court.”

These responses invite investigation about how to increase the abilities of interpreters to analyze their own work and about how court interpreters are trained in terms of ensuring the court has access to the most accurate record possible, regardless of how minor the correction may be.

By far the most relied upon strategies of all four interpreters when needing support from the monitor interpreter was to lean their upper torso or tilt their head towards that person in order to receive the spoken English feed. During the ASL to English work all four interpreters accepted support that was signed by the monitor interpreter but it was not clear in the data whether the interpreters asked for support, or if it was simply offered. The lawyers questioned the use of this behavior and were not sure what it meant between the two interpreters.

After the trials, the interpreters identified that they could have been more diligent in gaining preparation information from the expert witnesses and content specific information from the Crown prosecutor. If they had information in advance, it may have resulted in less conferring, or interpreter clarifications of the lawyers. For example, the team knew

TABLE 1. *Number of Interpreting Errors per Target Language and by Trial*

Discourse Event	Target Language	Trial 1-S*	Trial 2-C*	Trial 3-C	Trial 4-S
Expert Witness	ASL	21	5	27	32
Direct Evidence	ENG	22	3	3	27
Direct Evidence	ASL	17	1	3	18
Cross-Exam	ENG	7	0	1	7
Cross-Exam	ASL	8	1	2	9

* Note: “s” means simultaneous interpreting and “c” means consecutive interpreting

the charge being dealt with was sexual assault. However, they neglected to ask for the location where the alleged offense took place. In the trial the interpreters had to ask the Crown to repeat the name of the town, but had they asked for this information prior to the commencement of the trial there would have been no reason for the interruption.

All of the interpreters acknowledged that they lacked effective note-taking strategies, and that the notes they took did not support effective interpretation or effective teamwork. During one trial, the interpreters had to stop the proceedings in order to gather paper and pen as opposed to having it ready in case they needed the material.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETERS WORKING IN TEAMS

Based on post-trial interviews, all the interpreters were able to identify aspects that could have been handled differently. All four interpreters acknowledged that there was content-specific information that they had neglected to ask of the Crown prosecutor. Upon reflection, the interpreters expressed concern that they had spent too much time attending to what was needed for the interpreting to go well and not enough time with some of the specifics of the trial.

While the interpreters met and prepared to act as a team in the interpreted interaction, after analyzing the data, there were unasked questions that may have been helpful to the teams. These questions may have reduced the impact of some of the errors that occurred in the trials and may have addressed some of the concerns expressed by the witnesses, lawyers, judges, and expert witness. The proposed questions include

- **How will we handle frozen text, such as oaths, in a consistent manner?** The interpreters did not share their interpretations for the oaths, which is text that is standard and predictable. The interpreters working during one trial had different versions of the oath for each time it was administered to the interpreters, the expert witness, and the Deaf witness.
- **What specific lexical choices might we need for this assignment?** The interpreters did not discuss with each other some of the specific lexical choices that arose in the trials, and had they done so it may have reduced the incidence of English-like signs, or source language intrusions that occurred in the English to ASL work.

- **What specific details of this case should we ask the lawyer to review with us?** This question could have been helpful in order to gain information about content or process. For example, the scope of the expert witness testimony, and the document that was submitted as an exhibit from this testimony was information that was available prior to the trial but the interpreters did not ask for it, so the lawyers did not provide it.
- **If we need to use notes during the trial, which one of us should take the notes and what symbols or structure would enhance the notes?** This question may have helped the interpreters find a better system for creating notes as opposed to the word-for-word strategy that was used in one of the trials. During trial three, one of the interpreters began taking notes while working with the expert witness. When the notes were examined after the trial, it was clear the majority of points were written verbatim from the spoken English. The interpreter then read the notes and presented the consecutive interpretation. The notes, when taken down in a verbatim fashion, actually interfered with providing meaning-based interpretation as when working from the notes, the interpreter's work demonstrated a greater tendency to follow the English grammatical structure and there were several source language intrusions based on the English. Prior to reverting to the note taking strategy, the interpreter's work was able to adhere to ASL grammatical principles and had fewer English source language intrusions.
- **Which one of us will tell the witness/lawyers about the purpose of the notes and how they will be destroyed at the end of the trial?** During the post-trial interview with the Deaf witnesses, both witnesses expressed concerns about the use of notes. While both Deaf witnesses were familiar with interpreting processes, neither of them had experienced interpreters taking notes during the interaction. The witnesses worried that the notes might be taken from the courtroom and be seen by others. For both Deaf witnesses, confidentiality was of paramount importance to them in all phases of the legal interaction, and they saw the notes as one possible breach of confidentiality if not disposed of properly.
- **If appropriate, what questions do we want to ask of the expert witness?** Three of the four interpreting teams held brief

conversations with the expert witness prior to the trials. However, in an interview with the expert witness after the conclusion of the trials, the witness expressed some concerns. First, one of the teams had not approached him/her at all, so the witness worried that the team would not understand the testimony, which then led to a reduced level of trust for the interpreting work of this team. Second, the witness also observed that two of the teams had engaged in the preparation conversation primarily from their perspective, focusing on the needs of the interpreters to the exclusion of the needs of the witness. Third, the expert witness had a summation document for the court, and had the interpreter asked about any documents or reports, the expert witness would have shared them with the interpreters. However, none of them inquired about this possibility. On a positive note, according to the expert witness, one interpreting team asked questions to determine the purpose of the testimony and areas of testimony that would be stressed in this trial, which led the witness to comment that he/she felt this team was creating a schema for the discourse that was about to take place in the courtroom.

DISCUSSION

This study involved four interpreters and as such, the results cannot be said to reflect all interpreters and nor are they intended to be generalized to a broader interpreter population. However, the study does provide rich information about preparation and team interpreting practices in this context. The four interpreters in this study are experienced practitioners, and yet the data reveals that the preparation conversations held with each other, and then with consumers were strongly oriented to the needs of the interpreters and overlooked aspects that were seen as crucial to consumers. While this study takes place in a legal context, it does suggest that there are opportunities for interpreters to carefully consider the perspectives of the consumers using their services and the context in which those services are provided in order to determine key questions that address the needs of the consumers. All of the consumers in this study have provided insight into questions that could have been posed that would have shaped the interaction in positive ways and these ques-

tions could easily become part of the interpreter's repertoire of preparation questions. It is interesting to note that several of the lawyers saw the interpreters as controlling and would have appreciated more of a dialogue preparation conversation versus what they perceived as a one-way monologue.

The judges in this study identified that they could have benefited from an orientation, either in print form, or through the crown prosecutor, prior to the trial. Several of the questions raised by the judges and lawyers stemmed from a misunderstanding of what the interpreters were attempting to do, especially in the area of error management and conferring between the interpreters. While the interpreters believed that they had addressed error management in their preparation conversations, from the lawyers' and judges' perspectives, this area was not effectively handled. There appear to be significant opportunities to examine the language and examples that interpreters use when attempting to describe their work and how they will perform in a given setting.

While Cokely (2003) reported that just 20% of the interpreters in that study identified linguistic or interpretation process issues that might create problems during the interpretation, in this study we see two out of the four interpreters address this area. It may be that the legal context created more awareness within the interpreters of the gravity of errors. However, as Cokely points out, it is highly desirable that such a discussion takes place as it helps to alert the monitor interpreter to potential areas where support might be needed. If all of the interpreters had been able to identify their linguistic and interpretation limitations, perhaps the error rate in this study would have been reduced by bringing the monitoring interpreter's attention to those aspects. The interpreters had introduced the concept of using a team as one vehicle to increasing the accuracy of the work, and yet there were significant errors that did occur and were not corrected by the team. As our field continues to document our practices it would be helpful to have comparable studies that examine the performance of interpreters working alone, so that comparisons could be made that would inform our evolving practice.

The conferring behavior aimed at error correction was visible across all trials, and may have been greater than is typical in an interpreting setting. For example, these interpreters were likely very sensitive to the nature of the study, and were more attentive to errors, and yet they were not able to address all of the significant errors. Thus it would seem that this area would be an important area to explore across a number of

settings. Our dominant discourse has suggested that employing two interpreters will improve interpreting accuracy, and yet if we are not identifying our individual areas of linguistic and interpretation limitations, and we are not able to accurately monitor our work or the work of our colleagues, in practice, this may be a myth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETER EDUCATORS AND INTERPRETERS

There are several implications that emerge for the profession based on the results of this study, which could create opportunities for change. For interpreter educators, this is an opportunity to examine the ways in which we introduce interpreting in teams and the tools we provide to students in order to perform in an ethical and professional manner. This would lead to an evaluation of the curriculum focus we are using for team interpreting, and how we have integrated theory and practice. In this study it is noted that not all of the interpreters possessed strong linguistic analytical skills in order to assess their work and the work of their interpreter colleague. Educators would also assess the skills and competencies needed in order for interpreters to realistically monitor their own interpreting work and the work of their colleagues in a team. Further, there are opportunities to explore the ways in which educators model and teach problem solving and communication strategies that are a necessary part of effective team functioning. Finally, how interpreters prepare for the work has an impact on the end result, and this study has revealed additional aspects of preparation that could enhance courtroom interpreting, based on the multiple perspectives of our consumers.

CONCLUSION

This study reported the findings of preparation conversations held between interpreters, and among interpreters, lawyers, and Deaf witnesses. This study involved four interpreters and as such, the results cannot be said to reflect all interpreters and nor are they intended to be generalized to a broader interpreter population. However, the study does provide rich information about preparation and team interpreting practices in this context.

The experiences of signed language interpreters working in teams in order to provide effective mediated communication in an interpreted event reveal there are key issues to be addressed by teams prior to an event. In particular, interpreters need to have strategies for managing team communication and problem solving during and after interpreting assignments if consumers are to be well served. The four experienced interpreters in this study held conversations with each other, prior to the interpreted event, addressing their preferences for working together in order to provide an effective service. The interpreters then held preparation conversations with consumers, both Deaf and non-deaf. These conversations reveal that interpreters may in fact overwhelm consumers with details about the specific nature of linguistic and cultural approaches to interpretation, while completely missing the issues of importance for consumers.

Several themes emerged from the interviews held with participants after the interpreted events. For interpreters, themes of trust, assessment of colleagues' capabilities, and power issues between team members were highlighted. For Deaf consumers, the key themes that emerged focused on the lack of professionalism observed in some instances and the ways in which that may affect the consumers' ability to trust the team to convey their narratives in a way that will allow them to be heard by the lawyers and the judges in the study. Finally, the key themes from interviews with the judges and the lawyers centered on ways in which they did not understand the work of the interpreters and the questions they needed answered in order to feel comfortable with the interpreters prior to beginning the trials.

In addition, the study raises challenges to the prevailing notions or myths that have shaped our field like the notion that a team of interpreters ensures consumers will have the most effective and accurate interpretations. This study shows that interpreters are not, in fact, consistently monitoring each other's work and making corrections to work. Nor is it the case that all interpreters are functioning well as teams, and that does not go unnoticed by Deaf consumers, thus shaping future relationships with interpreters.

The results that are highlighted in this study invite further dialogue among interpreters about the kinds of conversations that should shape our preparation conversations and the ways in which those conversations can be held with consumers in order to address the pressing questions they have about working with signed language interpreters. Educators

have opportunities to examine the ways in which newcomers to the field are introduced to the concept of team interpreting, and the ways in which they can influence future practice. By addressing some of the myths and modeling different strategies that engender trust and that support effective interpretation, we will continue to ensure consumers are well served by the interpretation provided.

Finally, this study invites further research for comparative studies across various interpreting settings. There are many questions that emerge that would be helpful in order to advance our profession and to increase our capacity to build our teaching and interpreting practices on solid research and evidence. For example, how do consumers view language fluency as a measure of interpreting competence? Many of the errors that emerged in this study were errors of ASL to English comprehension, and yet Deaf consumers expressed confidence in the interpreters based on their use of ASL. What do lawyers and judges perceive as appropriate preparation and how that can be ethically gathered? What skills are needed by interpreters in order to effectively monitor their own interpreting processes and performances, prior to working as a monitor of another interpreter's performance? This study examined the work of four interpreters in a legal context, and there is increasing use of Deaf interpreters to work with non-deaf interpreters in such settings. What kinds of team related issues arise when forming such a team?

This study offers evidence-based research findings that should help shape the practices of interpreters who work in teams, and hold preparation conversations. It may also serve as a starting place for learning conversations that could be held among novice and experienced practitioners who wish to improve their team interpreting performance across a multitude of settings.

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