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Rosie Henley

Victoria University of Wellington, rosehenley@yahoo.com

Rachel McKee

Victoria University of Wellington, rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz

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Going Through the Motions: Participation in Interpreter-mediated Meeting Interaction Under a Deaf and a Hearing Chairperson

Rosie Henley¹

Victoria University of Wellington

Rachel McKee

Victoria University of Wellington

Abstract

In multiparty meetings involving deaf and hearing participants, sign language interpreters are tasked to render talk ‘accessible’ to all by mediating differences across languages, modalities, interactional norms, and cultural statuses (Roy, 1989, 1993; Mindess, 1999; Van Herreweghe, 2002). Although this context of work is relatively common for interpreters, their practices and the interactional outcomes for participants are under-researched. This case study compares chairing and meeting practices under a deaf chairperson and a hearing chairperson, respectively. The impact of chairing on interpretability and deaf participation are discussed. An interactional sociolinguistics framework informs analysis of meeting data and retrospective participant interviews. Analysis shows that deaf participation is qualitatively different and experienced as more accessible under the deaf chairperson due to temporal alignment with the deaf chair, reduced conflict between visual inputs, and more confidence to clarify information and bid for turns. Interactional features that limit or enhance deaf participation are worthy of attention by interpreters and regular participants of interpreter-mediated meetings.

Keywords: multiparty interaction, interpreting, mixed meetings, chairing.

¹ Correspondence to: rosehenley@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

Multiparty meetings involving significant numbers of deaf and hearing participants and interpreters are conducted bimodally across two languages (a spoken and a signed language) and include a third modality: written texts. In such meetings (henceforth referred to as ‘mixed’), sign language interpreters are tasked with mediating differences between deaf and hearing participants in language, modality, interactional norms (Roy, 1989, 1993; Mindess, 1999; Van Herreweghe, 2002), and subject positions. Although mixed meetings are a common work context for sign language interpreters, their practices in mediating meeting discourse and the interactional outcomes for participants are surprisingly under-described in the research literature. Research to date suggests that mixed meetings tend to follow spoken discourse norms, which presents challenges for interpreters and deaf participants (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Bristoll, 2011; Dickinson 2010). Such meetings are commonly chaired by a hearing person, with deaf members in the minority — but not invariably so. Recognition of sign language (e.g. in New Zealand) has increased deaf representation in professional, governance and advisory group meetings, and seen more instances of deaf chairpersons leading mixed meetings. The practices of a chairperson directly affect whether interaction facilitates or inhibits the interpreting process and the direct participation of sign language users (Van Herreweghe, 2002). This case study breaks new ground by examining the different ways in which a deaf and a hearing chairperson respectively facilitate meeting interaction with consideration for deaf interactional norms and the interpreting process. We investigate how their differing chairing practices affect interpreting and deaf participation in mixed meetings. Two authentic meetings of the same governance group (chaired by a deaf and hearing chair respectively) were filmed and transcribed, from which samples of interaction are qualitatively analysed. Retrospective interviews with meeting participants captured their perceptions of accessibility and interpretability of the meetings.

In the next section, we review literature on key aspects of meeting interaction, including the role of a meeting chair, to situate the study in a wider context. Studies documenting challenges and strategies of signed language interpreters in mixed meetings are then reviewed as background to our study, which seeks further empirical insight into these interactional challenges.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Meetings

Meetings are an established way in which information is shared, decisions are made, and relationships built and maintained in organizational life (Asmuss & Svennevig, 2009; Angouri & Marra, 2010). Analysis of discourse in spoken language meetings has largely centred on critical discourse analysis of the discursive construction of leadership and identities in workplace meetings (e.g., Holmes, Marra, Angouri, Stubbe). Issues in intercultural meeting interaction have also been investigated (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1995; Chan, 2005), showing that pragmatic differences across cultures limit the extent to which some interlocutors contribute (Tannen, 1984), or may prompt overt challenges to dominant cultural norms in meeting structure (Holmes, Vine, & Marra, 2020).

Meetings of reference, advisory and governance groups represent a specific meeting type where time constraints and a task-based agenda leave little opportunity for rapport-building and knowledge-sharing between members (Gabrielsson, Huse, & Minichilli, 2007). In addition, as the purpose of such groups is to gather perspectives from different sectors of the community, there is usually inherent distance between the schemata of the group participants and that of government administrators or the institution they are advising. Groups concerned with deaf matters or services often include multiple deaf participants. In such groups, participants may possess very different levels of contextual knowledge related to the meeting content, and, significantly, differ in their understanding of the distinctions between deaf and hearing interactional norms and how to accommodate these. Without explicit opportunities to discuss and build inclusive meeting practices, these groups may default to ‘standard’ meeting practices, which inadvertently favour the interactional norms of the majority culture (Holmes, 2013).

2.2. The Chairperson

Meeting-talk is created through the cooperative effort of two parties, the chair and the group (Bargiela & Harris, 1995). The role of a chairperson is a distinguishing feature of meetings and confers specific rights and obligations which are implicitly understood and discursively supported by interlocutors (Angouri & Marra, 2010). The chair is charged with managing the agenda and ensuring that the business of the meeting is achieved within the allocated time (Mitchell, 1997, p. 164). To this end, the chairperson generally oversees turn-taking; however, the style in which they do so can vary markedly. Some chairs allow speakers to self-select and intervene only when interaction becomes disorderly (Van Herreweghe, 2002, p. 89). Others exert more control by allocating turns to speakers using names and other indicators. This occurs most often in large or formal meetings (Larrue & Trognon, 1993, p. 181) where the authority of the chairperson tends to be heightened and they commonly initiate topic shifts, and bring about and articulate decisions (Bargiela & Harris, 1997, p. 207). The chair can also play a critical role in managing interaction in ways that mitigate potential power asymmetries between participants and allow for diverse or opposing perspectives to be heard (Lazzaro-Salazar, et al, 2015). This feature of the chair’s role has, to date, not been explicitly examined in relation to how interaction is managed within the context of ‘intercultural’ or mixed meetings. The next sections will review evidence about turn-taking within unimodal, same-language, and within bimodal, bilingual group contexts.

2.3. Turn-taking in monolingual, unimodal meetings

Studies of group discourse have found that different social and cultural groups manage overlaps, interruptions and turn-taking differently (e.g. Edelsky, 1981; Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001; Chan, 2005). Edelsky (1981) investigated spoken language turn-taking norms in small group meetings in America and found that interaction took two distinct forms. The first is the ‘singly-developed floor,’ in which one person speaks at a time (either through chair-allocated turns or self-selection), and overlaps are likely to be viewed as interruptions (Sacks & Schegloff, 1995). The second form, the ‘collaboratively-developed floor,’ was distinguished by speaker overlaps, and jointly-developed meaning. It tended to indicate a high level of interest in a topic or to build and maintain positive relationships between participants (Edelsky, 1981, p. 383).

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When speakers self-select in spoken language interactions, they do so by responding to subtle linguistic cues such as pauses, hesitations, or changes in another speaker's pace or tone (Tannen, 1984). These linguistic features signal Transition Relevance Places (TRPs) (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, p. 730). TRPs are fleeting interactional moments when a new speaker can insert a turn and legitimately take the floor without it being considered an interruption (Holmes, 2013, p. 389).

Parallel studies of sign language turn-taking norms in group interaction are rather scarce. In dyadic signed conversation, eye-gaze plays a critical part in interlocutors seeking and yielding turns (Baker, 1977; Martinez, 1995). Building on this, Coates and Sutton-Spence (2001) investigated informal interactions between small groups of deaf friends and found that signers occasionally adopted a collaboratively-developed floor but for the most part, sought to establish eye contact with interlocutors before beginning their turn, as the visual modality of signed language makes it difficult for interlocutors to attend to two speakers at once. They did so by waving towards or making eye contact with a current speaker, or tapping them on the shoulder, knee, or arm. Some interlocutors claimed the floor by strategically holding or repeating the first sign of their turn until sufficient attention was on them to begin in earnest.

To our knowledge, only one empirical study has described turn-taking in unimodal signed meetings. As part of a larger study, Van Herreweghe (2002) investigated a small deaf meeting and observed that in addition to previously described strategies, head nodding and the holding up of an open palm were further means of claiming a 'speaking turn' in this meeting. Participants collectively facilitated a singly-developed floor with speakers yielding turns by making eye contact with a new speaker. New speakers were found to pause before beginning their turn, to allow time for interlocutors to look at them. The chairperson intervened just once in the meeting to organise turns when speakers overlapped, implying that signed interaction is facilitated collectively rather than hierarchically. In addition, Van Herreweghe noted that input to group discussion was actively solicited from all participants, demonstrating the value that deaf culture places on full participation (p. 94).

2.4. Challenges of interpreter-mediated meetings

In contrast to the turn-taking norms shared by a 'same-language' group as described above, interpreter-mediated interaction context is complicated by factors that have been identified in previous studies, which we review below. These challenges relate to the temporal coordination of talk, and competition between visual and aural modalities.

A fundamental challenge in interpreted meetings is the temporal delay between a message being uttered by a speaker in one language, and delivered, via an interpreter, in another. A two- to four-second delay represents the optimal processing time for interpreters to properly understand a source message and render it coherently in the target language (Cokely, 1986). Lag time can create unnatural interactional pauses and disrupt turn-taking as interlocutors waiting for interpretation cannot discern and respond to TRPs as they occur (Roy, 1989). This can result in speakers overlapping, which is problematic for interpreters who can physically only interpret one 'voice' at a time (Roy, 1993, p. 54). Roy's (1989) investigation of turn-taking within a dyadic interpreted interaction between a deaf university student and his hearing professor found that beyond relaying the content of interlocutors' turns, the interpreter played a critical role in the coordination of turn exchanges between participants. The interpreter dealt with overlaps using four strategies: stopping one or both speakers, holding onto the content of an overlapping turn until the current speaker had finished and then producing it, first interpreting one utterance and then asking the other speaker to repeat what they said, or completely omitting one overlapping utterance. Roy noted the tendency of interpreters to give preference to the spoken word when signed and spoken turns overlapped but found that, in general, the interpreter managed speaker overlaps in ways which considered the role and status of each participant (Roy, 1993, p. 49).

Interpreter-mediated multi-party meetings have been little studied but are sites of communication inequity for deaf individuals in professional settings (Foster & MacLeod, 2003, S130, Bristoll, 2011). Dickinson's (2010) ethnographic investigation of workplace interpreting found that meetings within largely hearing organizations tended to follow the interactional norms of the hearing majority. She found that rapid turn-taking caused the interpreters to work fast, which reduced their ability to convey subtle cues which could indicate TRPs within the interpretation. This, compounded with the delay incurred by the interpreting process, limited the deaf participant's ability to contribute to the meeting. Furthermore, meetings frequently adopted a collaborative floor with speakers

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overlapping, leading interpreters to frequently omit whole turns, particularly contributions affecting rapport, such as back channelling, banter or small talk (Dickinson, 2010, p. 218).

Van Herreweghe (2002) studied two mixed meetings which occurred in a deaf context and involved significant numbers of deaf and hearing participants who interacted via interpreters. Although the hearing chairpersons knew some sign language, the meetings were run using spoken language. Van Herreweghe found that discourse leaned towards spoken interactional norms, with hearing speakers frequently self-selecting. This was problematic for deaf participants as interpreter processing (lag) time limited their ability to interject at TRPs (Van Herreweghe, 2002, p. 94). The interpreters managed speaker overlaps by employing the same strategies observed in Roy's (1989) study (described above), as well as an additional strategy in which the interpreter stopped interpreting and announced in sign that she could no longer do her job. This handed responsibility to deaf participants and/or the hearing Chair to resolve the issue of overlap, implying that the demands on interpreters in mixed meetings cannot be resolved by the interpreter alone, as might occur in dyadic interactions.

2.4.1 Speaker attribution

Knowing who is speaking contributes to our understanding of meaning, which can be challenging for deaf participants of interpreter-mediated multiparty interaction who perceive the voices of all hearing participants through the single voice of the interpreter (Metzger, 2000, p. 91). Hearing people can look at speakers and/or identify them by their voice, but deaf participants must watch the interpretation, which is slightly delayed, making it more difficult to visually identify changes of speaker (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Dickinson, 2010). Thus, in multiparty interactions interpreters often assume responsibility for indicating speakers. They do so by using participants' names, pointing and body shifts. Their choice of strategy depends on the interactional context, the time pressure on interpreters, and whether deaf participants can see the other interlocutors (Metzger, Fleetwood & Collins, 2004).

2.4.2 Written documents: A third modality

Documents are commonly presented at meetings to supply participants with auxiliary or last-minute information. Hearing people commonly skim relevant written information while listening to discussion or verbal presentations, particularly if the words that they hear align with what they see on the page. In contrast, deaf people perceive sign language visually and so cannot easily read a document and follow group discussion simultaneously (Dickinson, 2010, p. 234). Van Herreweghe (2002) found that participants in an all-signed meeting paused discussion so that documentation could be read. This did not occur in the mixed meetings or in the meetings in Dickinson's study (2010) in which frequent references to documentation competed with deaf participants' need to watch the interpreter and forced a choice between one source of input over another. As 'managers of intercultural interaction' (Roy, 1993, p. 61), Van Herreweghe suggests that interpreters in mixed meetings have a responsibility to speak up when cross-cultural, (or, in our view, cross-modality), issues such as these occur (2002, p. 96).

2.5. Chairing practices in bimodal meetings

The chairperson plays a pivotal role in moderating talk in interpreter-mediated meetings in order that deaf interlocutors can participate equitably (Van Herreweghe 2002). The mixed meetings in Van Herreweghe's study followed interactional 'rules' where speakers raised their hands to visually indicate when they wished to contribute and were allocated turns by the chair (2002, p. 79). Van Herreweghe's study concluded by recommending that chairpersons of mixed meetings should: a) closely control turn-taking so that only one person speaks at a time; b) pause to allow for interpretation when responses are called for from participants; c) frequently scan the room to see who wishes to speak; d) monitor that deaf participants are watching the interpreter and that time is given for documents to be read before group discussions continue (2002, p. 103).

The recommendations that Van Herreweghe makes for interpreters and chairpersons of mixed meetings make no explicit reference to whether collaboration between them should occur, or what function this might serve. Data transcripts do, however, suggest that the interpreters used discourse markers to communicate discreetly and directly with the chairperson when deaf participants were struggling to gain the floor (2002, p. 87). Our study expands previous work by explicitly examining collaborative interactions between the chairperson and the interpreter and

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considering how chairing practices, (including those recommended by Van Herreweghe), take into account the challenges that both interpreters and deaf participants navigate in mixed-meeting interactions.

3. Method

Building on existing literature about interpreter-mediated multiparty discourse, this case study examines data from a meeting chaired by a deaf chairperson and a hearing person in order to contrast deaf participants' experience of meeting 'accessibility' when the meeting is facilitated directly in their language, versus when meeting facilitation is mediated by an interpreter. Retrospective interviews with participants give us access to their perspectives on aspects of the meeting interaction upon which we could otherwise only speculate (Talmy, 2010). The aim is to shine a light on specific interactional features that are problematic in mixed meetings in order that interpreters and meeting participants may be better prepared to cooperatively address them.

This study takes an inductive reasoning approach to answer the research questions: How do a deaf and a hearing chairperson, respectively, facilitate mixed meeting interaction in ways which take into account the interpreting process, and what are the impacts on deaf individuals' participation?

3.1. Context, Participants and Data Collection

The context for data collection was a series of meetings of a governance group in the deaf sector. This group was selected because they were experienced in working together as a mixed deaf/hearing group and they were known to the researchers. Participants specified that only the first hour of two separate full-day meetings could be filmed due to the sensitive nature of the meeting content. 'Meeting A' was run by the nominated hearing Chairperson, and 'meeting B' by the deaf Deputy Chairperson. Collecting data from the same meeting group allowed comparison of interaction under a deaf and a hearing chairperson in a parallel context. These meetings were standard governance meetings in which the opening sessions followed a standing agenda and was closely controlled by the chairperson (Bargiela & Harris, 1995, p. 209). They took place at a conference venue not connected with the institutional identities of members represented in this group. Meeting time was tightly constrained, as most participants had flown in from different locations for the meetings. The group was comprised of deaf and hearing professionals, community representatives, consumer representatives and observers. Hearing participants had varying levels of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) competence. The group had been meeting together regularly for over two years, however the interpreters in these meetings varied.

Participant information is presented in Table 1. Limited demographic information is included in order to maintain anonymity.

Table 1: Participants

	Deaf participants (D#)		Hearing participants (H#)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Meeting A (Hearing Chair)	1	2 + 1 observer	3	7 + 1 observer
Meeting B (Deaf Chair)	1 + 1 observer	2 + 2 observers	1	5 + 1 observer

Not included in the numbers above are the two interpreters who were engaged for each meeting. INTERP1 and INTERP2 worked at meeting A and INTERP2 and INTERP3 worked in meeting B. None of the interpreter participants had worked regularly with the group.

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Table 2: Interpreters

	<i>Years of interpreting experience</i>	<i>Gender</i>
<i>Interpreter 1 (INTERP1)</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Interpreter 2 (INTERP2)</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Interpreter 3 (INTERP3)</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>F</i>

The first author set up the cameras and left the room during the period of recording. Recorded data was reviewed and two excerpts that exemplified interactional problems were selected for close analysis. These were translated (in the case of NZSL utterances) and transcribed using ELAN annotation software which allows for data to be chronologically presented. Nine meeting participants (five deaf and four hearing) were available to participate in phone or video interviews to discuss their experiences and observations about the meetings. Two hearing participants provided written responses to the interview questions.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and responses categorized thematically. For the purpose of illustrating examples of the discourse, transcripts presented in this article are simplified to show only the content of speaker turns and some relevant non-manual features (such as eye gaze) where they serve a specific function in an exchange. NZSL signs are glossed in upper case, and speech is in lower case. Transcripts show the chronological order in which utterances occurred.

3.2. Analysis

Analysis in this study was exploratory and data-driven (Hale & Napier, 2013, p. 83). Video excerpts were analysed using an Interactional Sociolinguistic approach to discourse analysis (Marra, 2012, p. 5) to identify interactional features including practices around speaker attribution, speaker changes, temporal coordination of turns and competing sources of visual input, such as written documentation. The scope of analysis in this study was kept deliberately wide and includes elements over which interpreters had no control. This aligns with Interactional Sociolinguistic tenets which consider meetings as ‘collaborative endeavours’ (Marra, 2010) and allow us to examine how meaning is negotiated and co-created by participants, taking into account interlocutors’ social, political and cultural positions (Holmes, 2013, p. 373).

We take a qualitative approach to fine-grained analysis of interactional features that emerge in the meeting discourse, which is then used to support findings about how deaf agency and participation differed between the two meetings. Observations of the overall recordings of meeting interaction inform analysis of the excerpts we analysed more closely.

Data from retrospective interviews was analyzed thematically and is presented alongside analysis of discourse data as a way of illuminating specific interactional features and the ways which meeting participants experience these. The insights of participants (from retrospective interviews) are used to warrant and triangulate analysis of meeting discourse.

Both of the authors are practicing interpreters, and our experience working in similar contexts is a filter that informs, but possibly biases, our understanding of the processes and participant positions identified in this study.

4. Findings

Findings are presented in subsections, each of which relates to specific interactional features that affected deaf participation and/or the interpreting process, as follows: turn-taking and allocation, asking questions, motions and voting, timing of discourse, managing written documents and visual attention, and deaf sense of agency. Collaboration between the interpreter and the meeting chair is also addressed. Excerpts of data are presented in transcript form to illustrate qualitative analysis. Relevant excerpts from participant interviews are included in each

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section, as applicable to the topic. Quantitative data is reported to illustrate how deaf participation differed in the two meetings.

4.1. Turn-taking and turn allocation

In these meetings, participants generally raised their hand when they wished to speak and were allocated turns by the Chairperson. The Chairpersons in both meetings allocated turns to speakers by stating their names. This is a documented feature of hearing meeting discourse (Larrue & Trognon, 1993), but turns are conventionally allocated differently in deaf small group meetings, using combinations of eye-contact, facial expressions, pointing or an open palm gesture rather than participant's names (Van Herreweghe, 2002; Metzger, Fleetwood and Collins, 2004, p. 133). Example 1 (meeting B) shows the deaf Chair allocating a turn to D2 using her name sign² and then pointing towards her with his eyebrows raised:

Example 1

Chair:	GOOD/OK. ANY MORE MATTERS-ARISING? HAND-UP (D2 NAME-SIGN)(points towards D2)
INTERP3:	(eyebrows raised) great . . . any other matters arising? (D2 name) ? (points and nods at deaf Chair)
D2:	(hand up looks at Chair)

Whether name signs are regularly used to allocate turns in face-to-face signed-meetings or other formal group contexts remains unresearched. The potential advantage of this strategy is that it specifies exactly which participant is being given the floor, which may be effective in a large group such as this, particularly when they are seated around a rectangular table and cannot easily see one other. It also could allow economy of effort by the audience as names identify speakers immediately, whereas pointing is indirect – the viewer must still look in that direction to identify the referent. In spoken language, it is considered polite in this context to allocate a turn by name, rather than to simply point, or to say “Yes...?”. The fact that the deaf Chairperson pointed as well as using D2's sign name could be evidence of him adopting a bicultural chairing style incorporating both deaf and hearing discourse norms. It is also possible that he used name signs in order to accommodate the interpreting process, as it signals explicitly to the interpreter both who to focus on as the next speaker and their language identity, as well as enabling them to verbalize a name rather than an indexical point. By stating a participant's name to allocate a turn, the chairperson simultaneously covers the speaker attribution which relieves the interpreter of this duty.

Analysis of data from meeting B showed deaf participants beginning their turn immediately in response to the chairperson's use of this turn allocation strategy, rather than waiting for the group and the interpreter to look at them before beginning to sign as might be expected (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). It was interesting to note that those hearing participants who were familiar with visual interactional norms, such as H1, also responded immediately to the chairperson's use of their name sign. This suggests that this strategy could potentially be adopted as an effective means of turn allocation in mixed meetings. It must however be noted that this direct interaction between the deaf Chairperson and H1 resulted in some interactional confusion on the part of the interpreter who appeared surprised and stopped interpreting, looking swiftly away from the deaf participants to ascertain who was speaking and what she had missed. How interpreters respond to unexpected participant codeswitching in mixed meetings has not been explicitly researched but is worthy of further investigation. Strategies such as the use of name signs in turn allocation should potentially be explicitly discussed with interpreters so that they may be prepared.

² Individuals known to the Deaf community are referred to by personal name signs which may index a personal trait or relate to an individual's written name. Name signs are not generally used in direct address or to gain an addressee's attention, but rather as third person reference, (McKee & McKee, 2000).

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4.2. Asking questions

In their follow-up interviews, three of the deaf participants expressed a feeling that deaf participants asked fewer questions in hearing-chaired meetings. D5 observed that having direct and immediate interaction with the deaf Chairperson left less room for misunderstandings:

When the meeting is facilitated in NZSL, I know what I am dealing with, and the questions that I ask make sense in the context of what the facilitator has just said. So then I'm not worrying about whether I am saying things that the hearing people in the room think are wildly off-topic or completely obvious . . . I definitely hold back at times when a meeting is chaired in spoken English. (D3)

Analysis of the video data does not show a marked difference between the meetings in this regard. Deaf participants raised their hands six times in meeting A and seven times in meeting B. These comments may then signal that when a meeting is run in spoken English, deaf participants have more unanswered questions either due to a lack of clarity in the interpretation, or from the additional cognitive effort they must make when following frequent speaker changeovers through the single 'voice' of one interpreter. The outcome of deaf bids for the floor are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Failed turns

<i>Hearing-chaired meeting A</i>	<i>Deaf-chaired meeting B</i>
<i>D1 and D3</i>	<i>D2</i>

D1 and D3 each raised a hand and then lowered it in meeting A. This might be because spoken discussion had moved on and deaf participants perceived that the appropriate moment to raise their point (the TRP) had passed. Interpreter processing time potentially contributed to this. In meeting B, D3 raised her hand and began to sign her turn, but INTERP2 continued with her English-to-NZSL interpretation and did not give voice to D3's utterance. This may be due to the fact that each interpreter in this study alternately worked fifteen minute shifts 'actively' interpreting in both language directions rather than dividing the work so that each interpreter worked in one language direction (sign-voice or voice-sign) for the duration of the meeting, which could have enhanced deaf participation (Van Herreweghe, 2002).

Of note is the content of deaf participants' turns in the two meetings. Table 4 represents requests for clarification by deaf participants.

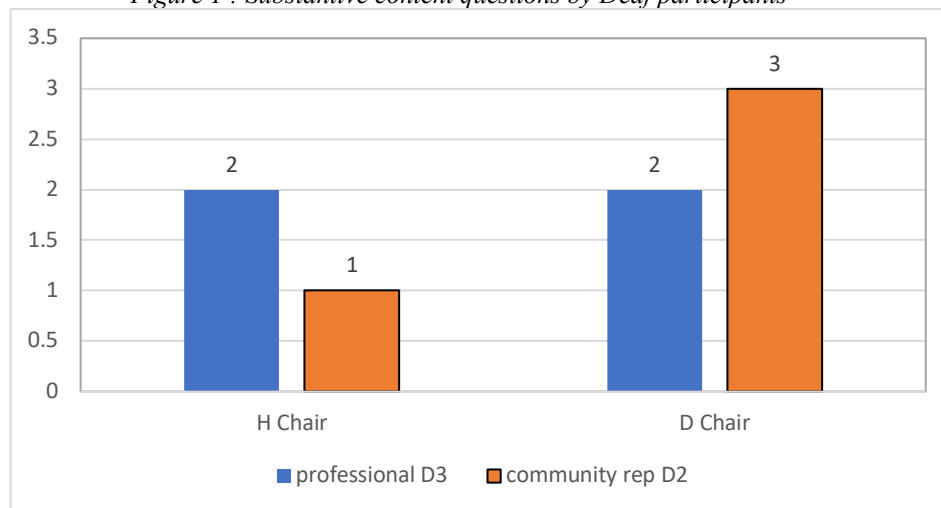
Table 4: Requests for repetition or clarification

<i>Hearing-chaired meeting A</i>	<i>Deaf-chaired meeting B</i>
<i>D1 requests clarification</i>	<i>(none)</i>
<i>D1 asks for repetition</i>	

Deaf participants only clarify or ask for repetition in meeting A, implying that information was more comprehensible in meeting B. The deaf community/consumer representative also asked more substantive questions when the chairperson was deaf, as shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 : Substantive content questions by Deaf participants



Furthermore, in meeting B, the deaf professional representative employed in the sector directly asked hearing speakers to add background information to contextualize their discussion for the benefit of deaf community participants. This suggests there is perhaps more scope assumed within deaf meeting norms for communication to be collectively moderated in ways that promote deaf participation, by allowing for clarification of contextual information.

4.3. Managing motions and voting

Both chairpersons worked to ensure deaf and hearing participation when calling for members to raise a hand to move, second or vote on group decisions. They built in pauses after making each formulaic request to create time for the interpretation to be produced and for all participants to respond at the appropriate time before discussion moved on.

Analysis of meeting A showed an interesting pattern whereby deaf participants frequently responded to these requests before the chairperson had finished their utterance, as we see in example 2 below:

Example 2

CHAIR:	agenda sorry in those minutes (<i>looking at D1</i>) yes (D1 name)
INTERP1:	-IN-DOCUMENT MINUTES from me just um one small minor thing. I was (<i>pointing to D1</i>) (<i>leaning forward</i>)
D1(<i>hand up looking at INTERP1</i>)	ONE VERY-SMALL-THING ME NOT-SURE I-THINK CONFUSING

In example 2 we see that D1 begins his turn while the interpreter is still signing. Such an assertive move could be motivated by his awareness that interpreting processing time puts deaf participants at a disadvantage in terms of claiming a turn. D1 summarises this recurring experience:

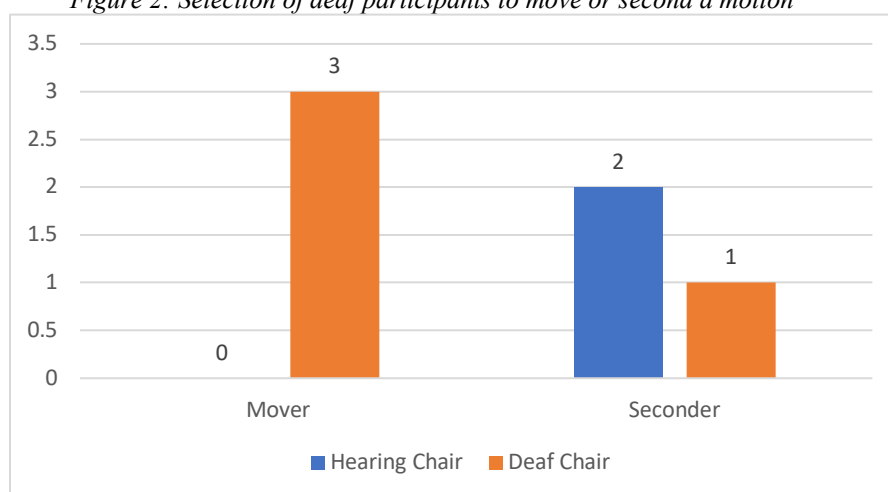
When the hearing Chair says something, it has to go through the interpreter before it comes to us. And by that time other people might have their hands up to say something. So, we are always a bit behind. (D1)

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In contrast, the hearing participants in the meeting directly perceive the chairperson's calls for information and can respond immediately. During formal decision-making in meeting A the hearing participants appear more relaxed than the deaf participants, raising their hands more slowly and holding them lower. Deaf participants frequently raised their hands before the interpretation of calls for response was complete. This did not occur in meeting B, which may have been due to differences in content and group makeup, but could provide evidence that deaf participants' familiarity with meeting protocols are key to ensuring that they can participate more equally with the hearing people present. This knowledge also affects whether they can contribute to ratifying the chairperson's role by responding in the expected ways at the right time. What is evident is that deaf participants are making conscious effort (Haug et al., 2017) to compensate for temporal misalignment in the interpreted interaction.

Within the formulaic opening sections of both meetings, deaf participants reported being able to participate equally. The video data shows that deaf participants raised their hand on three occasions in each meeting when the chairperson called for individuals to move or second a formal decision. Figure 2 shows that under a deaf chair, there were three instances of a deaf participant being selected as a mover and once as a seconder, and two instances of seconding under a hearing chair. (Deaf observers in these meeting did not have voting rights, and numbers should be read with this in mind.)

Figure 2: Selection of deaf participants to move or second a motion



In both meetings, the deaf and the hearing Chairpersons appear to alternate between choosing deaf and hearing participants as movers and seconders. This suggests that they are cognisant of their obligation, as chair, to oversee turn-taking and decision-making in a fair and democratic manner that considers power differences between interlocutors. (Lazzaro-Salazar, 2015). In meeting A, deaf participants are recorded as seconding rather than moving proposals, potentially due to interpreting time lag. In meeting B, the deaf chairperson chooses deaf participants as mover and seconder of the first motion. Thereafter, while deaf participants are recorded as moving the next two motions, the deaf chair visibly looks towards the hearing participants to second decisions. Interestingly, while deaf participants seemed to raise their hands almost before the interpretation was finished in meeting A (hearing Chair), they seem to hold back in meeting B (deaf Chair). On several occasions in meeting B, deaf participants do not raise their hands at all but look towards the hearing participants as if to give them an equal chance to respond. This suggests that deaf participants are highly aware of the temporal disjunction created by differing language modalities and interpreter lag time and that they work harder to monitor and compensate for this under a hearing chairperson. It also provides evidence that participants use their meta-awareness of interactional constraints to construct participatory meeting practices.

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4.4. *Timing of discourse*

Time constraints around the meeting were mentioned by most participants in the follow-up interviews. Hearing participants observed that time was a limited resource which added urgency to group discussions. For some deaf participants, time pressure was seen as a cultural setting, with the group described as following ‘hearing time’ where speed was valued over collective understanding.

Analysis of video data from meeting A showed that the hearing chairperson took time to respond to questions from deaf participants and built frequent pauses into the interaction. However, four deaf participants commented that it was the rhythm of the meeting which differed under a deaf chairperson. Analysis of meeting B showed that the deaf chairperson paused after each agenda item to look around the room. He accompanied his eye-gaze with other discourse markers, jutting his chin slightly forward and raising his eyebrows. These NZSL features signal that he is checking participants’ understanding of the discussion and is opening the floor for further discussion if needed. The deaf chair also tended to look towards the deaf participants more often than the hearing participants, perhaps because they returned his gaze while hearing participants frequently looked down at their papers. Deaf participants reported this direct engagement between themselves and the deaf chairperson as increasing their alignment and their ability to participate:

The chairperson runs the meetings, so when the deaf chairperson was chairing, I felt I could relate to him directly and that I could participate well because we understood each other. With a hearing chairperson, I don’t feel like I relate or connect directly with her because she speaks, and everything goes through a third party, so we don’t really have that direct relationship because we interact through the interpreters rather than with each other. (D4)

Interestingly, the hearing chairperson made a similar observation:

One thing in running a meeting that is quite difficult . . . Is um . . . trying to keep morale up. You know, because you don’t get a lot of feedback from deaf people. You know, like, I can’t hear if their voice is happy. Does that make sense? Or I can’t hear if they are, like, “Oh really (rolling eyes/resigned)”. I can’t hear that stuff, so that’s quite tricky. (Hearing Chairperson).

Loss of information about prosody and affect in interpreted discourse (Stone, 2009; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014) may contribute to the hearing Chairperson’s sense that deaf participants did not give much feedback. In theory, speaker tone should be present within the interpreted message, yet the interpreters reported finding the meeting-talk fast and challenging to interpret. This may have limited their capacity to reflect speaker tone.

Analysis of meeting data also suggests that pauses between utterances may have felt longer in the source language as they were more naturalistic, creating a momentary sense of ease or rest. In contrast, within the interpretation, interpreters appeared visibly alert and focussed during these pauses, often looking down or towards a new speaker while waiting for the next utterance. This behaviour may also account for the perception of deaf participants that the deaf Chairperson paused more than the hearing Chairperson to check for group understanding. The lack of eye contact offered by interpreters during pauses within spoken turns potentially denied deaf participants the opportunity to bid for a turn in meeting A, given that deaf people generally seek to establish eye contact before beginning to sign (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). In contrast, the deaf Chair in meeting B made direct eye contact with participants during pauses as if checking for understanding and inviting possible questions or clarifications. Deaf participants’ sense of ‘hearing time’ may, therefore, be coloured in part by the way in which interpreter-mediated interaction is perceived and produced, and by who is in control of interactional timing, rather than the actual pace of the talk.

4.5. *Written documentation and managing visual attention*

Our analysis confirmed that the visual-spatial modality of signed language has a profound impact on the participation of deaf participants in group interactions. While hearing participants in an interpreted meeting can look

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at each speaker, deaf participants largely train their gaze on the interpreter to follow the talk, with only peripheral access to other visual cues occurring (Sandler and Lillo-Martin, 2006). Participants in spoken language meetings use eyegaze and other non-verbal markers in their communication repertoire (Huisman, 2001). Evidence of this is seen in meeting A, where, on four occasions, the hearing Chairperson unsuccessfully attempts to allocate D1 a turn or to signal that his comments have been noted by nodding and looking pointedly at him. D1 seems oblivious to these visual cues as he busily looks between his papers and the chairperson, demonstrating that bi-modal interpreted meeting discourse – especially under the time pressure of a meeting - loses some layers of contextual, or pragmatic meaning. This reduces the coherence of the interaction for those who are primarily relying on the interpretation (McDermid, 2015). It is also challenging to chairpersons.

References to written information in meetings are problematic for deaf participants and potentially require the interpreter to intervene if discussion continues while documents are read (Van Herreweghe, 2002). Both Chairpersons in this study paused group discussions when documents were tabled or referred to, as seen in example 3 from meeting B:

Example 3

Chair:	WHICH PAGE <i>(points to D2)(looks down at document)</i>	
INTERP3:	have there been an update or a decision around those? what page are you on? Page 3 <i>(pointing at D2) (points at chairperson)(points D2)</i>	
D2:	DONATION UPDATE? DECISION?	THREE

Within this example, it is evident that, as a deaf person, the chairperson cannot initiate discussion until he himself has finished reading. In contrast, the hearing chairperson established a silent-reading rule in meeting A, not for her own benefit, but to accommodate for the competing visual demand that written information represents for deaf participants. In her interview, the hearing chairperson commented that she was often unsure when to resume discussion as deaf people often looked up from their reading but then looked down again. Several deaf participants in their interviews reported feeling rushed in meetings and noted that functional differences between a deaf and a hearing chair such as around the need for dedicated reading time were also symbolic, with visual interactional norms elevated under a deaf chairperson.

4.6. Deaf participants' sense of agency

Most of the meeting-talk in this study occurred in spoken English as the members who delivered reports, presented information, and answered questions in the meetings were mainly hearing professionals. As a result, hearing participants could immediately comprehend, respond and relate to these speakers while deaf participants were not only slightly distanced from this level of participation by their roles and statuses (largely representing the community/consumer voice), but also by relying on interpretation for substantially more of the interaction.

Analysis of the discourse certainly suggests that deaf participants were more agentive under a deaf chairperson. It must, however, be noted that this comparison is based on a tiny sample and the two meetings differed in content and membership. In the deaf-chaired meeting, there were six deaf and seven hearing participants, while at the hearing-chaired meeting there were four deaf and eleven hearing participants. Group make-up was seen to influence interactional choices, as D5 commented: "If there are more hearing people in the meeting, you tend to have to bow to the hearing way of doing things." It is, however, interesting to note that H1 responded immediately to the deaf chairperson's turn allocation in meeting B, but in meeting A, resisted attempts by other deaf participants to give her a speaking turn using visual discourse markers, deferring instead to the hearing chairperson to allocate turns. This implies that having a deaf chairperson in meeting B 'authorizes' the privileging of NZSL discourse norms. It also reinforces the significant role the chairperson plays in shaping accepted meeting norms and culture.

Several deaf participants reflected that having a deaf chairperson potentially put hearing participants at a disadvantage:

So, the tables are turned, and THEY have to wait until the deaf people have finished. They maybe get to see what it is like for us to be always a bit behind the speaker. (D5)

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Only one of the hearing interview participants attended both meetings. She reflected that having a deaf chair did not make a difference to her personally and observed that:

A deaf person knows how to manage an interpreter and the group better. They seemed to pace things differently and if they needed to take the time to fully listen and understand something, they made the space to do so rather than diving onto the next person who had their hand up. So, they made sure that the conversation didn't move on until they and everyone around the table had understood the full message. When the meeting was chaired by a deaf person, I observed that the deaf participants had a greater level of confidence. (H1)

These observations suggest that the deaf Chair is following signed meeting norms whereby collective understanding and participation is actively solicited by the chairperson (Van Herreweghe, 2002). The deaf Chairperson's skill in running interpreter-mediated interaction no doubt stems from experience. Deaf people use interpreters more frequently than hearing people and tend to have an awareness that their participation via an interpreter is limited. They often collaborate more overtly with interpreters, moderating interaction in ways that complement the interpreting process (Haug et al., 2017; Napier, 2007). In contrast, the hearing Chairperson had not worked with interpreters before joining this group. With no formal guidance, she professed to learn 'the rules' around how to interact with deaf people via interpreters 'on the job.'

4.7. *Interpreter contributions to coordinating interaction*

If the chairperson is the rightful manager of turn-taking in meetings, it is interesting to consider how easily they can retain control of this function in interpreter-mediated meeting talk. Interpreters in these meetings appeared to subtly 'coordinate' interaction (Roy 1993) so that deaf participants could get the floor. In example 2 INTERP1 ends her signed interpretation of the chairperson's request for amendments and leans forward, pointing briefly at D1 who has his hand up for a turn and is beginning to sign. INTERP3 does a similar thing in example 1 meeting B, briefly pointing and nodding at the deaf chairperson with her eyebrows raised to indicate that he can take a turn. One could argue these interpreters were simply 'relaying' (Metzger, 2000) information about TRPs to deaf participants. Alternatively, the interpreters may be signalling to those deaf participants who are poised to take the floor that they, the interpreter, is ready and available to interpret their turn. Or, more likely, this is, in fact, an interpreter-initiated turn-allocation signal: "You can talk now". This kind of strategy has been documented in the interpretation of prepared monologues by deaf speakers (Napier, 2007). Our data reveals that at times in these meetings, deaf participants and interpreters collaborated directly with one another to manage the timing of bids for the floor.

The role of chair also includes 'sanctioning inappropriate conduct' (Angouri & Marra, 2010, p. 619). Theoretically this is potentially undermined when interpreters intervene to remind speakers to speak one at a time, in order to be able to interpret. Such interventions occurred in both meetings, however the fact that it was done politely and respectfully seemed to mitigate any perceived challenge to the Chairperson's authority. In fact, both Chairpersons commented favourably on these interjections, viewing them as appropriate and helpful:

It's a good reminder to me to take stock and check around the room as to what's . . . you know . . . what's actually going on. It probably means I have got distracted from everybody. (Hearing chairperson.)

However, the hearing Chair reflected that being interrupted was unnerving at times. This is evidence not only that interpreter-generated interventions should be timed and expressed in ways which promote a sense of collegiality between the interpreter and the speaker (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014), but that this is particularly relevant to interaction with a chairperson.

Through the practices outlined above, interpreters may intentionally or inadvertently subvert or support the authority of the chair to allocate turns, as a by-product of mediating visual and spoken norms for turn-taking (Henley, 2017).

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5. Discussion

The most obvious difference between the two meetings was the prevailing language and modality in which each meeting was facilitated, with the deaf Chair using sign language and visual discourse norms, and the hearing Chair using spoken English and modified aural discourse norms. Analysis of discourse and participant reflections indicate that the linguistic, cultural, and temporal alignment between deaf meeting participants and a deaf Chairperson enhanced their sense of agency and involvement in the meeting, compared to their experience with a hearing Chairperson. Central to this was the deaf Chair's management of interaction according to visual discourse norms, and his awareness of the effects and requirements of the interpreting process. For example, the third modality of written text typically presents difficulty for deaf participants in interpreted meetings run according to hearing discourse norms. In the case of the deaf-chaired meeting, suitable pauses for reading were built in, as the chairperson himself read the meeting papers. Furthermore, his use of visual discourse cues (gaze, pointing, name signs) to allocate turns and to direct attention towards various speakers or documents, gave deaf participants immediate (in fact, advantaged) access to the flow of interaction. Deaf participants described a subtle but significant difference in interactional timing under the deaf Chair which contributed to a perceived difference in accessibility. Even though a significant amount of floor time was allocated to hearing speakers by a deaf chairperson, deaf participants asked more substantive questions, clarified less, and reflected that they participated with more ease and confidence (i.e., agency) under a deaf chairperson.

In contrast, analysis of a meeting with a hearing chairperson showed deaf participants to be making more effort to visually track interaction, frequently shifting their gaze between the interpreters, the hearing chairperson, other participants, and the meeting papers. They also expended effort to anticipate requests from the hearing chairperson during formulaic decision-making (motions and votes), often raising their hands before the interpretation of these utterances were complete, to offset the expected interpreting delay. Overall, findings showed that deaf participation in mixed meeting interaction facilitated by a deaf chairperson is qualitatively different, and experienced as more accessible, than under a hearing chairperson. One participant suggested that a more equitable balance of participation across a series of meetings might be achieved if they were facilitated alternately by a deaf and a hearing chairperson.

All participants expressed the belief that meetings should be conducted in ways that are inclusive, participatory and embracing of deaf cultural norms, given the group's mandate for governance of deaf-related services. Several participants noted that chairing and meeting practices which incorporated visual interactional cues had evolved in their group over time and had improved the interpretability of meetings and accordingly, deaf participation. Furthermore, our analysis shows that when the chairperson took more responsibility for coordinating turn-taking, explicitly identifying speakers (for example, using name signs), and ensuring that deaf participants had time to read, the interpreters' burden of coordinating or mitigating misaligned turns was reduced. Effective chairing practices observed in this study focused on managing temporal and visual (mis)alignment within the discourse, and support Van Herreweghe's recommendations (2002).

Although this was a small study, our findings suggest that deaf participation in mixed meetings may be compromised by issues such as lack of eye contact with the interpreter, which occurs when an interpreter is managing tasks in addition to relaying content, such as indicating speaker changes or a bid for a turn, or looking away to hold the floor for a continuing speaker. Additional demands arise for the interpreter when participants read aloud (in English or in signs), or simultaneously listen and read written information. It is in the interests of deaf participation that interpreters be conscious of these layers of interactional/modality management work in meetings and consider which coordination tasks or accommodation strategies could be shared with a meeting chairperson.

6. Conclusion

The features, challenges, and outcomes of interpreted interaction in formal meetings involving deaf and hearing participants are under-documented in the research literature. One likely reason is that multi-party bilingual interaction is complex to capture and analyze. For this reason, our study took a case-study approach to describing and comparing features of discourse in two meetings chaired by a hearing and a deaf Chairperson respectively. Our

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analysis addressed how chairing practices impact interpretability of interaction and the contingent effects on deaf participation (i.e., accessibility). In addition to micro-analysis of discourse, we elicited participants' retrospection on their experiences of the meetings. We found that both deaf and hearing Chairpersons adopted strategies to mitigate temporal misalignment created by interpreting and the disjunction between visual and aural participation cues, especially in relation to turn allocation, speaker attribution and reading texts. Under a deaf chairperson, analysis showed that deaf participants asked more frequent and substantive questions, and they described feeling more comfortable asking for clarification and following the flow of interaction - since they could directly follow the deaf Chairperson's gaze (without watching an interpreter), and utilize his natural pauses for looking at documents. Under the hearing Chairperson, deaf participants made more obvious effort to visually track speaker and activity changes, and they compensated for anticipated interpreting delay by raising a hand to second or vote on motions before the hearing Chair had finished uttering invitations to do so. Both deaf and hearing participants expressed an awareness that facilitation by a deaf chairperson increases deaf participants' sense of agency in the meeting. While findings of a case study are not necessarily generalizable, our findings suggest that the language, mode and manner of chairing a mixed meeting impact deaf participation and the scope of the interpreter's role in meetings. A deaf, signing chair flips the prevailing cultural order in meeting interaction, which, as also described in other mixed ethnicity workplaces, is felt more acutely by participants of minority cultural status who are more sensitive to the socio-pragmatic norms that are operating at any given time (Holmes, Vine, & Marra, 2020, p. 20).

With respect to interpreter practices, we observed that interpreters in this context collaborated implicitly or overtly with the Chairperson to regulate the floor and mitigate potential miscommunications. Both Chairpersons regarded interpreter interventions to alert them to signed/spoken overlaps as helpful and within the scope of their role. In addition to relaying talk, interpreters collaborated with deaf participants to optimize the timing of bids for the floor, through the use of gestures, eyegaze and non-manual signals; in parallel, they used averted eyegaze to maintain the floor for, or direct attention towards, hearing speakers.

Little attention has been given to investigating interpreters' potential cooperation with a chairperson and participants in facilitating mixed deaf-hearing meetings. Empirical evidence from discourse analysis articulates specific interactional practices and their effect on deaf participation, and this can inform both interpreters and meeting participants about the practical dynamics of 'accessibility' beyond just engaging interpreters. It also highlights the need for interpreters to be prepared to perform specific additional interactional management tasks in ways that contribute positively both to the chairperson's role and to group dynamics (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014). We discuss interpreter-participant cooperation in more detail in a subsequent article based on this study (Henley and McKee, in preparation). Although interpreters cannot independently resolve the challenges of mixed meeting interaction, our findings underline the premise that all parties contribute to the construction of interaction. We suggest that close attention to discourse processes is an important foundation in the training and practice of interpreters. In the interpreting workplace, explicit dialogue is needed between sign language interpreters, chairpersons and meeting participants to share their differing knowledge about strategies that enhance accessible interaction in this context. Indeed, we found that meeting participants and interpreters in this study were keenly interested in the aims and outcomes of this analysis.

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