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## Editorial: Shared Learning Between Spoken and Signed Language Interpreters and Students

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# Editorial: Shared Learning Between Spoken and Signed Language Interpreters and Students

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*All views or conclusions are those of the authors of the articles and not necessarily those of the editorial staff or the publisher.*

In the second issue of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education* for 2018, we are pleased to offer a rich variety of research articles from both signed and spoken language interpreting educators and researchers. We are proud to continue the journal's focus on crosspollination between different modes of interpreting. There is so much that spoken and signed language interpreting educators, researchers, practitioners and students can learn from one another.

At our university, signed and spoken language interpreting students learn alongside each other in several courses, namely the introductory classes on interpreting role, ethics, and contexts for work, as well more advanced classes focused on health and legal interpreting. These shared classes first came into being because of a financial impetus. We were required to merge previously separate signed and spoken language theory classes to make more efficient use of resources at our university. We were lucky that we had the opportunity to redevelop the theory courses, which meant we could tailor them to be more relevant to both groups as well as to students from many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In the years following this merger, we have been struck by how many positives outcomes have arisen from something that initially was done purely for financial reasons. To begin with, we find a broad range of professional experience in the classroom including mature students who have come to interpreting from other careers (e.g. doctors, police officers, pathologists, court registrars, speech pathologists), as well as very young students who have just finished their secondary schooling. There is always a mix of native and non-native speakers of English. Some students also bring interpreting or translation experience to the classroom, whether through unqualified interpreting in venues overseas or through acting as child language brokers within their families (Antonini 2016; Napier 2017). These diverse backgrounds make for an extremely rich learning environment, particularly when it comes to discussing and debating aspects of the interpreter's role and ethical decision-making.

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In addition, we find these shared classes lead to an increased intercultural awareness amongst students, with students teaching each other. As one of our recent students told us:

“Sharing classroom space with spoken language interpreters created a unique learning environment. I learnt about different cultures and belief systems relating to the way various cultures approached the task of interpreting.”

*Amy Nash, BA NZSL-English Interpreting graduate, 2018*

We have had rich discussions about the ways people from different cultures talk about death and dying, and whether this topic is avoided or discussed openly and directly. This has then led to interesting classroom discussions on the role of the interpreter as someone who needs to convey illocutionary intent in a culturally appropriate manner.

In practical terms, we also see that our students benefit from learning how to work with interpreters of other language pairs. There will likely be times in their future professional practice when they work alongside other interpreters (for example, in a court setting), and their experience in our mixed classes will leave them better prepared for this work. There is crosspollination between spoken and signed language codes of ethics, which are based on similar values but also have key differences in the ways they are set out on paper. We also see students of different language backgrounds finding unexpected similarities in the interpreting challenges that they face. As one of our Samoan-speaking students recently told us:

“Learning in a shared classroom with spoken language and sign language students was an invaluable experience for me, I personally benefited from my sign language peers.”

*Bernice Ese, Graduate Diploma in Arts (Interpreting) graduate, 2018*

To give just one practical example, signed language interpreting students and students from Pacific language backgrounds (for example Samoan, Kiribati, Tongan in our recent classroom experience) are all working in languages that have had less exposure in a variety of domains and may have under-developed technical lexicons. We consistently see that these students, who struggle with finding linguistic and often conceptual equivalents for technical terms in English, have a lot in common with each other in the interpreting classroom, regardless of modality differences. These connections mean students feel less isolated and can help each other explore strategies for circumlocuting technical vocabulary that does not exist in their LOTE (Language Other Than English), for example in the health domain.

As Tsolidis (2001 p.104) reminds us, “students have as much to offer teachers as the other way around,” and we certainly find that we learn as much, if not more, from our students as they do from us. We bring our experience as interpreters and interpreting researchers, while students contribute their linguistic and cultural experiences and reflections. The shared learning between signed and spoken language interpreting students reminds us of how valuable it is to continue this into the world of professional practice. In this vein, we are pleased to present a thought-provoking variety of articles in issue 10(2) of this journal.

The four research articles included in this issue reflect the international and cross-pollinated nature of the journal, with contributions from signed and spoken language interpreting research. In our first such article, *Designated or preferred: A case study of a deaf academic and two signed language interpreters working together for a PhD defence*, Maartje de Meulder (Belgium), Jemina Napier (United Kingdom) and Christopher Stone (United Kingdom) discuss how signed language interpreters can work with deaf academics to ensure a successful PhD defense. Their groundbreaking study uses an autoethnographic approach based on reflections written by all three authors immediately following the PhD defense, and the article includes embedded video clips that illustrate their key findings. The authors discuss the implications of their study for interpreter education and ongoing professional development to ensure that deaf academics can have access to interpreters who are familiar with and skilled at negotiating academic discourse at this level.

In *Source Attribution in ASL-English interpreter education: Testing a method*, Laura Maddux (USA) describes a study in which experimental and control groups were used to test a new method for teaching student interpreters source attribution skills. This paper is not only of interest for its implications for signed language interpreting



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education, but also because it describes an effective method to conduct research on teaching methods in interpreter education in general.

In their article entitled *Relay Interpreting as a beneficial tool for Conference Interpreting training*, Fanny Chouc and José María Conde from the United Kingdom report on the way in which they prepare conference interpreting students for the practice of relay interpreting. The study presents students' perspectives on the activities and the impact these had on their own practice either as users or as providers of relay interpreting.

Three of our Finnish colleagues, Liisa Martikainen, Petri Karkkola, and Matii Kuitinen from the University of Eastern Finland, present findings in their article *Encountering change: Job satisfaction of sign language interpreters in Finland*. The authors report on the findings of an online survey comparing job satisfaction levels between signed language interpreters and Finnish workers in general. and. The authors discuss some of the factors that may have impacted the survey findings, including working conditions and changes in both the amount of work and the way it is now being organized.

In our Open Forum section, Oktay Eser (Turkey) and Miranda Lai (Australia) interview Niki Baras, who represents the Translator and Interpreter Division of Professionals Australia. In the interview, Niki Baras comments on issues affecting community interpreters in Australia from an industry point of view, including issues of social status, respect and sustainability, as well as the continued use of unqualified interpreters.

In keeping with the theme of this editorial, it is our pleasure to present dissertation abstracts from both spoken and signed language interpreting researchers. Adolfo Gentile is a well-known translation and interpreting scholar who has made an invaluable contribution to the development of the profession internationally. He completed his PhD dissertation entitled *A policy-focused examination of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia* at Monash University in Australia. Keith Gamache from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, completed his PhD dissertation on *Investigating the impact of ASL proficiency levels on ASL-English interpretation*, focusing in particular on the impact of select language features on the work of novice ASL-English interpreters. In IJIE issue 9(2) we explored situated learning in interpreter education (i.e. Valero Garcés 2017; Saltnes-Urdal 2017). Annette Miner's PhD dissertation, also completed at Gallaudet University, explores the perceived impact on interpreter education of situated learning activities: *the use and effectiveness of situated learning in American Sign Language-English interpreter education*. The final dissertation abstract is Dr. Hayley King's PhD dissertation, completed at RMIT University in Melbourne and focused on *Translator education in context: Learning methodologies, collaboration, employability, and systems of assessment*. Dr King conducted her research in two quite different contexts, namely Spain and Australia.

We are happy to report that 2018 has brought a wide range of submissions to the journal, most of them research articles, and we would like to remind our readers that we are also always interested in book reviews, interviews and contributions to the Open Forum. We would additionally like the journal to be a platform for students and practisearchers to publish their first work. We are making efforts to ensure that work published in the journal becomes easier to find in Google Scholar searches: this should make *IJIE* an even more attractive outlet for contributors.

We think it appropriate to end with a quote on cross-pollination, taken from a somewhat unusual source, namely Peter Lloyd who, with Steve Grossman, jointly developed a way to assist people in identifying creative solutions to problems:

“Just as in the plant world, where new life arises from the introduction of pollen from other plants, all great ideas arise from combinations of ideas that haven't met yet. In both cases, we call this process cross pollination. You get a greater diversity of ideas by collaborating with a greater diversity of creative people—people from a variety of disciplines, departments, cultures, ages, mindsets, motivations, and orientations.”

Peter Lloyd

It is our hope that this issue of *IJIE* will serve just such a creative end, resulting in a blossoming of new ideas and deeper understandings across our field.



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