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Becoming HEARING: Describing Co-Construction of Expert ASL/English Interpreter Deaf-World Cultural Competence

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Abstract

This article describes deaf and hearing expert interpreter participants' perspectives on Deaf-World cultural competence (DWCC). DWCC is a concept explicitly and implicitly embedded in the Conference of Interpreter Trainer's (CIT's) mission statement. American deaf and mainstream cultures coexist and interpreters facilitate communication between individuals not sharing a common language. The author completed a qualitative study and dissertation, and relied on expert deaf and hearing participants' responses given during narrative interviews. Participants described their lived experience entering and maintaining ties to the Deaf-World. The inquiry explored participants' identity transformations as they came to be described by their deaf-conferred ASL label, *HEARING*. Salient concepts raised in this article include a proposed description of interpreter DWCC, and a tacit seven-step process of Deaf-World connections, the *interpreter affiliation/alliance narrative* (IAAN). Being ascribed ASL/English interpreter status includes co-constructed community and cultural connections between two language worlds explained comprehensively via the interpreting spectrum (IS).

Keywords: Deaf-World cultural competence, interpreter affiliation/alliance narrative, co-construction, interpreting spectrum

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Becoming HEARING

Becoming HEARING: Describing Co-Construction of Expert ASL/English Interpreter Deaf-World Cultural Competence

1. Introduction

The Deaf-World is a zenith in the lifeworlds of ASL/English interpreters. Deaf citizens have created space within majority mainstream America (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). The ASL/English interpreter discipline was developed under the auspices of the American Deaf-World (Cokely, 2005) and without deaf/hard of hearing/deaf-blind citizens, there would be no need for interpreters. Interpreters claim to be bicultural/bilingual sociolinguistic mediators of information (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). However, Smith (1996) stated most professional interpreters are neither bilingual nor bicultural. At the heart of the Deaf-World lies its indigenous culture and expert interpreters in this inquiry reported Deaf-World connections. Interpreters are taught in interpreter education programs (IEPs) to associate with deaf communities. The inquiry and article were informed by the following research question: How do the work and lifeworlds of deaf and hearing expert ASL/English interpreters reflect their lived experience within the Deaf-World and their Deaf-World cultural competence (DWCC)? Co-construction of DWCC is foregrounded in this inquiry.

The mission statement of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) incorporates deaf-centric pedagogy in the preparation of interpreter practitioners. DWCC attributes are found in mission assertions:

- Increase students' knowledge about:
 - the deaf community
 - linguistic rights of deaf individuals
 - the preservation of ASL
- Ensure that students exhibit:
 - cultural fluency
 - sensitivity to issues of privilege
 - deepening cross-cultural awareness
 - interpreting practices based on the norms and values of the deaf community
 - abilities to identify arenas for the sharing of the above ideas (Conference of Interpreter Trainers, 2016)

Becoming HEARING

Student interpreters clearly must gain linguistic fluency, but the development of cultural values through work in the affective domain is no less significant. Interpreters are to be fluent in at least two languages, the L1 (A or first language) and L2 (B or second language), and C1/C2 representing *concomitant cultures* (Seleskovitch, 1978), or American deaf and mainstream cultures. An interpreter's L1/C1 and L2/C2 would be informed by multiple sociolinguistic considerations such as exposure to spoken English or a visual language such as ASL. Some interpreters are multilingual/multicultural and work with L/C3 or L/C4 and these considerations were not included in the present study. This inquiry focuses on bilingual/bicultural interpreters, chiefly second language interpreters and to a lesser degree in participant number but not importance, interpreters with deaf parents (IDPs, also known as children of deaf adults or CODAs)

Few studies (Rasmussen, 2012) have investigated or assessed interpreter DWCC. Students learn about Deaf-World culture through courses such as Deaf Culture and Community or Deaf Studies. It is not clear, however if IEP curricula adequately cover second culture development and DWCC, or effectively teach DWCC. The subject is too important to trust to inadequately researched pedagogy. Do ASL/English interpreters need to possess DWCC to effectively accomplish their work? The expert interpreters in this study said yes, they do.

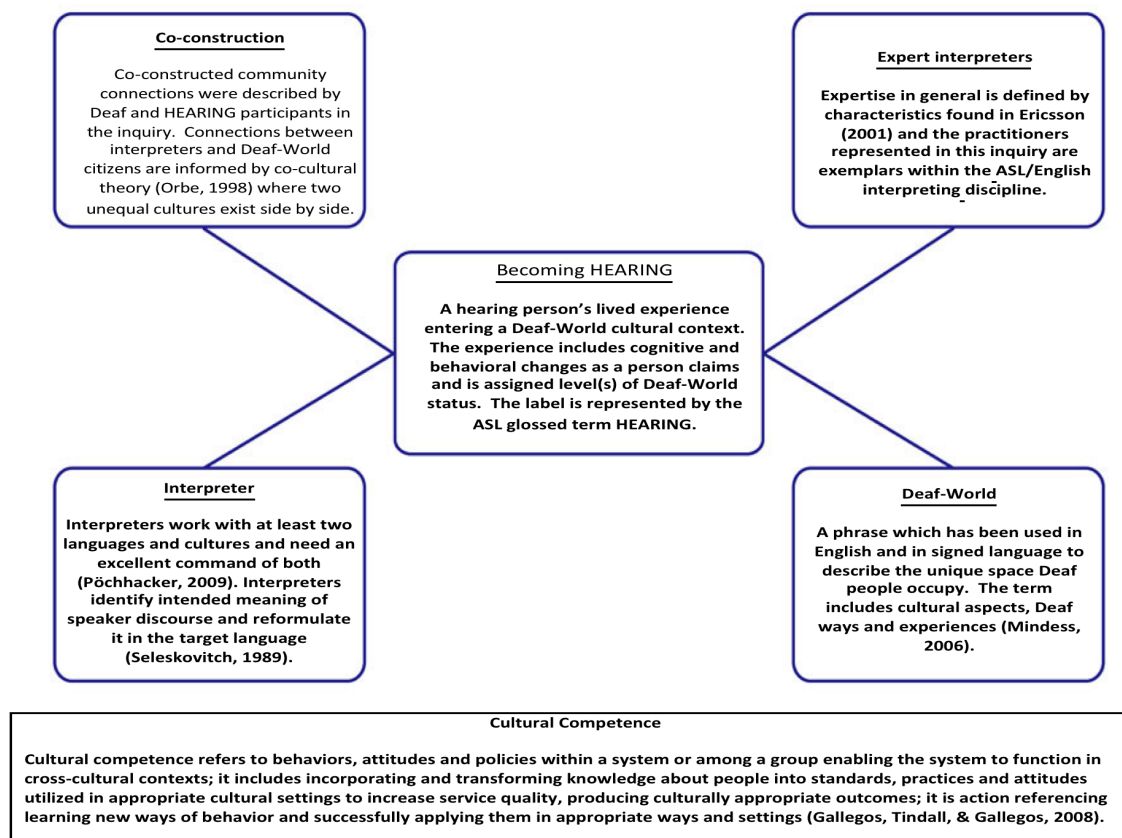
Culture traditionally has not played a powerful role in L2 teaching (Lange & Paige, 2003), but it should; to achieve expert status, the participants in this study agreed that preservice and working interpreters must be responsive and connected to deaf communities (Cokely, 2005). ASL/English interpreter DWCC develops via the co-constructed, meaningful interactions of interpreters within local as well as global Deaf-World communities. The teaching and assessment of interpreter DWCC would enhance IEP curricula.

2. Understanding Literature by Surveying the Title

The title of this article originated from the dissertation, *Becoming HEARING: A Qualitative Study of Expert Interpreter Deaf-World Cultural Competence* (Subak, 2014). Inquiry literature was informed from interdisciplinary perspectives such as Deaf studies, ASL/English interpreting, psychology, anthropology, intercultural studies, second-language acquisition, and translation and interpreting studies. Various components of the title are amplified in Figure 1 and explained below.

Becoming HEARING

Figure 1. Title amplification



2.1. Becoming HEARING

Bauman (2011), in his ASL video biography on Gallaudet University's website, recalled 'becoming HEARING' at the age of 21. While employed at a deaf residential school, he recognized that as a hearing person, deaf persons saw him as different, as not deaf (Padden & Humphries, 1988). I credit Bauman with the meaning behind the phrase *becoming HEARING* to describe one's journey to Deaf-World connection.

Deaf researchers Padden and Humphries (1988) described non-deaf persons as *others*. HEARING is written in capital letters representing ASL gloss, and is a deaf-conferred identifier for others who communicate via aural/oral language. The Deaf-World is central in the work of interpreters, and acknowledging the marginalized Deaf voice through the use of the ASL glossed lexical item HEARING honors a deaf-centric stance.

Aside from interactions within the deaf community, persons who hear generally do not introduce themselves as, or self-identify as 'hearing.' It is not typical for a descriptor to be used to proclaim auditory status. However, once affiliation with the Deaf-World is established and when making introductions, a 'hearing' person may self-identify or avow (Salzmann, 2004) Deaf-World connection. A hearing person will be identified in ASL as HEARING and may be ascribed (Salzmann, 2004) connection to the Deaf-World by deaf persons. Holcomb (2013) discussed typology of hearing persons by terming non-signers who hear *hearing*, and persons with Deaf-World affiliation *HEARING-BUT*. Deaf-World connected individuals who are ascribed the term HEARING-BUT are sometimes referred to as *partners* (Ramos, 2003) or *allies* (Baker-Shenk, 1986) by deaf citizens.

Becoming HEARING

Standardized application of HEARING as an identifier is not an expected outcome of this discussion. Instead, my focus is on the use of HEARING as a symbol marking the mostly imperceptible cognitive processes interpreters experience as they develop DWCC and become the ‘other’ (Padden & Humphries, 1988) within the Deaf-World.

2.2. Co-construction

A discussion of co-construction between deaf/hearing community members is informed by the concept of unequal cultures coexisting. Freire’s (1970) seminal work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, discussed cultural power differentials between dominant/nondominant cultures, as he studied vulnerable populations and found issues related to oppressors/the oppressed. Baker-Shenk (1986) took Freire’s work and applied it to the Deaf-World and interpreters, citing power differentials between hearing interpreters and deaf consumers. This work has ties to *co-cultural theory* (Orbe, 1998), a theoretical framework grounded in the work of feminist scholars. Orbe proposed co-cultural theory to highlight ways marginalized groups confront power issues, preferring the term *co-cultural* to a minimizing label such as *subculture*. He derived the theory from a phenomenological framework describing unequal cultures containing social hierarchies. Using co-cultural theory to understand the relationship between interpreters and deaf consumers disassociates disability and deafness for a perspective of two cultures with differing levels of social capital (Fleischer, 2013). Such a perspective may expand the description and help to mitigate cultural dynamics regarding oppression, marginality, and audism (Bauman, 2008; Gertz, 2003; Humphries, 1975) in American deaf communities.

Interpreters are part of the social and legal fabric of deaf communities; Smith (1996) described interpreters being welcome, protracted guests in the Deaf-World. Interpreters are invited into deaf communities and it would behoove them to exhibit willingness to develop suitable cross-cultural attributes (Gallegos, Tindall, & Gallegos, 2008). Subak (2014) found cross-cultural competency occurred as interpreters learned to effectively comport themselves as deaf and mainstream cultural sojourners.

2.3. Expertise

The inquiry sample consisted of deaf and hearing interpreter participants considered “experts,” as informed by Ericsson (2001), including being credentialed ASL/English bicultural/bilinguals. The participants in the study (a) had attained superior performance by being actively engaged in interpreting work; (b) had attained excellence via continued improvement over at least a decade (with the exception of one deaf participant); (c) had engaged in structured activities to improve specific aspects of performance (professional development through Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf [RID] professional development CEUs); and (d) proven engagement in deliberate interpreting practice (Ericsson, 2001).

Participants were working practitioners who may or may not have matriculated from IEPs and who passed the certification exam offered by RID or collaboratively between the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and RID. Knowledge/skill pass levels were set by the organizations’ administrations, and include data taken from current linguistic and cultural research (RID, 2013).

2.4. Describing interpreters via the interpreting spectrum (IS)

Figure 2. Interpreting spectrum

$$Ll1 + Dd1 + Cc1 + Ss1)^t + (Ll2 + Dd2 + \mathbf{Cc2} + Ss2)^{tm} (P) = I \quad [(Ll3 + Dd3 + Cc3 + Ss3)^{tm}]$$

The algorithm in Figure 2 was informed by Gile’s (1995) effort model, in which symbols represent a variety of work (efforts) within the interpreting process such as C for coordination and M for memory effort. The algorithm was developed to situate Deaf-World culture (in bold above, Cc1 for some interpreters with deaf parents, IDPs) into interpreters’ lifeworlds. The outcome was the unintended development of the *interpreting spectrum* (IS)

Becoming HEARING

theoretical framework. The IS includes interpreter-requisite attributes of first language (L1) fluency; D1, first-language discourse analysis abilities; and C1 (first culture) and S1, first-language soft skills knowledge and aptitude. The same attributes would apply to one's second language/L2 context. More formal aspects are represented by uppercase letters and less formal characteristics are written with lowercase letters. 't' corresponds to *temporal considerations*, 'm' to *motivational factors*, 'P' represents *interpreting processes*, and the 'I' stands for the *interpreter*. Some IDPs' L1 I/C c 1 experience would reflect ASL and Deaf-World culture. See the Results section for expanded explanation of the IS.

2.5. Cultural competence and DWCC

Cultural competence is controversial, and in need of development to decrease challenges regarding empirical efficacy (Gallegos et al., 2008). Attributes regarding cultural competence would be applicable to systems or individuals to enhance responsiveness toward marginalized co-cultural (Orbe, 1998) groups such as American deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

While conducting the literature review, I found multiple terms describing life between two cultures. Some expressions included *biculturalism*, *intercultural competence*, and *pluriculturalism* (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007) and contain inherent differences not explicated here. For purposes of this inquiry, it was necessary to select one term on which to focus to avoid multiple term confusion and overreach.

Noted leaders in intercultural study Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) draw a distinction between intercultural *sensitivity* and intercultural *competence* by describing intercultural knowing (sensitivity) and doing (competence). The ability to assess one's orientations toward cultural difference is measured by Hammer et al.'s (2003) intercultural development inventory (IDI). Although the tool represents solid baseline information measuring ASL/English interpreters' orientations toward cultural sensitivity in the deaf community (Rasmussen, 2012), there still would be a need to evaluate interpreter DWCC characteristics. DWCC would include avowing/ascribing deaf ways and experiences (Mindess, Holcolmb, Langholtz, & Moyers, 2006). Interpreter DWCC would incorporate enacting beliefs, values, and behaviors regarding the Deaf-World. It would include transforming interpreters' knowledge about deaf people into standards, practices, and attitudes (Gallegos et al., 2008) and would include both cultural sensitivity and action. A proposed description of DWCC appears in the Results section.

3. Method

3.1. Inquiry Frameworks

I employed a basic interpretive qualitative approach as the main method of study, informed by various frameworks. *Phenomenology* is ubiquitous in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002), and provided footing for the study, helping to foreground participant authentic experience (van Manen, 1990). *Narrative inquiry* encouraged in-depth reporting by participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) demonstrating cross-cultural similarities found in inquiry themes. *Heuristic research* includes intense interest/personal experience with the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1990) and fit this inquiry because of the author's experience as an L2 ASL/English interpreter. Emancipatory disability research is concerned with confronting power imbalances often seen in research with marginalized groups (Sullivan, 2009). *Emancipatory philosophy* encourages nonmaleficence and beneficence while conducting research (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). As such, the inquiry sought to dignify the deaf voice and foreground the restrained interpreter voice. *Currere narratives*, in-depth autobiographies, were discussed by Pinar (1975, 2000) who was a curriculum studies reconceptualist. Participants reflected on and described deaf-centric cross-cultural autobiographical experiences, making currere narratives the driving force in this inquiry.

Becoming HEARING

3.2. *Study Design*

Two overarching aims framed the inquiry: (a) to interview 13 expert, credentialed, interpreter participants in three phases; five HEARING participants in the first (pilot) and second phases and three deaf interpreter participants in the third phase, and (b) to disseminate information about interpreter DWCC. Data collection methods for all phases included semistructured, responsive (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) interviews, currere narratives (Pinar, 1975, 2006), field notes, and a deaf peer debriefer to assist with data analysis. I conducted one semistructured (Merriam, 1998) interview per participant, asking phenomenologically based main and probe questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) to capture participants' attitudes about interpreter DWCC. Participants were from various geographic locations representing dissimilar local/global deaf communities; however, as NAD-RID or RID credentialed practitioners, homogeneity in narratives was evident due to Deaf-World cultural knowledge and shared experience.

Using open-ended interview questions facilitated participant sharing of experiences and examples of cultural competence (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Additional salient study attributes are described below.

3.3. *General Data Analysis*

Interview data collected were categorized (Schram, 2006) and themes were determined (Merriam, 2002). Categorical aggregation (Stake, 1995) led to exceptional descriptions of interpreter DWCC. Data analysis with the peer debriefer included further reduction of data, labeling of higher-order themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and incorporating Deaf-World and general theory.

4. Results: ASL/English Interpreter Cross-Cultural Co-Construction

Main findings of the inquiry included a proposed description of interpreter DWCC, and a participant-described tacit seven-step process of Deaf-World connections, the *interpreter affiliation/alliance narrative* (IAAN). The study found that becoming a HEARING interpreter within the Deaf-World requires co-constructed community and cultural connections between two language worlds, as identified within the IS.

4.1. *Description of DWCC*

I propose a general description of DWCC as the co-construction of avowing Deaf-World efficacy/alliance, being ascribed deaf sanctioned status, and demonstrating amenability to deaf ways locally and globally. The definition may apply to all persons with deaf community connections, such as interpreters, teachers, counselors, and others.

4.2. *The IAAN*

Findings reported by expert deaf and HEARING participants characterized avowal and ascription. Aggregated data described the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) as co-constructed community and cultural connections leading to Deaf-World affiliation or affiliation/alliance. At the heart of co-construction processes of ASL/English interpreters becoming Deaf-World culturally competent are the core concepts of avowal/claiming and ascribing/assigning status to HEARING persons desiring entrance into deaf communities. *Avowal* is how one presents to others, and *ascription* is what other people perceive and communicate about one's presentation of identity (Collier, 1998; Fong, 2003). A participant describes co-constructed composition of DWCC as follows:

Honestly I am not sure if deaf people themselves initiate interpreter involvement in the community. What I see, for the majority of interpreters, is that there is a fascination with the language and community. . . . I think they [interpreters] initiate the contact and try to enter into the community, but the community is the force that allows them entrance. . . . I think the community is resistant to

Becoming HEARING

most who try to enter. There is what I call a testing phase, where someone is sized up, they continue to learn the language, someone keeps an eye on them, and they are deemed to be acceptable or not. Once they start to learn the language we can see that they're getting better and better, that they are able to communicate with us. Then they start to learn about culture, develop cultural sensitivity, learn about the norms and values of the community. . . . The community says, that person understands us . . . and comes in closer. The invitation is extended to a deeper involvement. . . . Also there is a test of the person's attitude toward the deaf community. Does the person have a good attitude, is the person positive about the deaf community, is the person willing to use the right approach, ask the right questions, approach the community in an appropriate manner? If that is the case, then deaf people are the ones who control opening or closing the door to entrance into the community. . . . I have seen some hearing people run headlong into the community thinking that they have the right to do that. The door is closed to them but they burst through it anyway. That doesn't work.

The deaf peer debriefer and I agreed that the quote was an inclusive synopsis of how hearing persons enter the Deaf-World. The quote was reported from an expert, seasoned Certified Deaf Interpreter participant, his perspective informed by years of interaction with hearing interpreters. The sentiments represented a Deaf-centric perspective on how outsiders enter sacred DeafSpace (Bauman, 2014). After identifying the quote as salient, we then looked for evidence of quote themes. We utilized an inductive process to develop seven steps found in the body of the quote.

Figure 3. Interpreter Affiliation, Affiliation/Alliance (IAAN) Narrative

1. Early interactions with Deaf-World citizens or authentic bicultural affiliation
2. Hearing person initiates interest in the Deaf-World
3. Deaf community members take note
4. Hearing person continues contact with the deaf community
5. If deemed acceptable, deaf community members test the hearing person (gatekeeping)
6. Hearing person draws in closer, or not, based on deaf community gatekeeping
7. Repeat until person becomes HEARING (an affiliate or ally, such as HEARING-BUT; Holcomb, 2013) or remains hearing (the opposite of *deaf*; Padden & Humphries, 1988).

The natural sociolinguistic acquisition processes CODAs and SODAs experience regarding Deaf-World culture as a C1 (deaf culture) or C2 (American mainstream culture [AM]) may preclude some steps such as the testing phase L2 interpreters may experience. One CODA and the SODA participant did not describe instances of testing. One CODA participant did describe a difficult testing phase after moving to a geographic location far from her hometown. Table 1 provides IAAN attributes of each of the HEARING participants in the study.

Table 1. IAAN attributes of HEARING participants

Participant	Cultures C1, C2, C3	Initiated D-W entrée	D-W Noticed	Continued	Testing	Drew in Closer	Active now
A	AM, deaf, Jewish	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
B	Deaf, AM	N (IDP)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
C	AM, deaf Jewish	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Becoming HEARING

D	Af-Am, AM, deaf	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
E	Caribbean Is,AM, deaf	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	?
F	Deaf, AM	N (IDP)	Y	Y	Y	N then Y	Y
G	It-Am, AM, Deaf	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
H	AM,JW, Deaf	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
I	AM, deaf	N Soda	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
J	AM, So Af, deaf	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	?* *deceased

The above attributes exemplify fundamentals of Deaf-World connectivity. The sojourner should know how to conduct oneself and to employ cross-cultural behaviors appropriately (Collier, 1998). Deaf and mainstream cross-cultural literacy requires preparation and repetition in a bicultural milieu.

Eight out of 10 HEARING participants described active avowal toward and ascription from Deaf communities. Two participants had avowed and been ascribed status in the Deaf community at one time; however, status at the time of the interview was tentative. Both participants had negative experiences within the Deaf-World, causing them to reduce time and affiliation to it. However, all participants claimed the importance of Deaf-World connections.

4.3. Interpreting Spectrum

The IS paradigm would allow students to deeply assess the range of salient characteristics in their sociolinguistic toolbox. Currere work could be incorporated in L C1 and L C 2 algorithm contexts. Discourse (D 1 2) analysis classes could be informed by deep investigation of both language contexts. Students could explore the demand-control schema (Dean & Pollard, 2011) and soft skill (S 1 2) development. Faculty members in both interpreting and ASL courses could work with students to reflect on and assess the amount of quality time students spend immersed in a visual environment. If inadequate engagement with Deaf communities was noted, sociolinguistic gaps could be corrected so not to undermine ASL and DWCC development.

The bolded symbols in Figure 2 are second culture contexts, **Cc2** and **Ss2**. Symbols relate to DWCC and navigating global or local cross-cultural settings for second language interpreters (AM culture for some IDPs). Interpreters should possess cultural knowledge and finesse in mediating formal and informal level interpreting situations. Soft skills required to perform essential duties of an interpreter include adaptability, receptivity to feedback, creative/critical thinking, collaboration, and negotiation skills (Russell, 2014).

Interpreters hail from American mainstream, Deaf-World, or a multitude of other macro- or microcultural sociolinguistic environments. If other cultural contexts are salient, they could be included in a separate cultural context symbolized by L3. Examples of additional cultural contexts include Latino/a, African American, and Asian American cultures. Microcultural contexts would be housed within the lower case 'c' symbol and placed in either the L11 or L12 context, depending on the saliency of the cultural affiliation. They could include situations such as religious affiliations, gender identity, video gamer, or other microcultural contexts. We do not acquire C2 and C3 attributes in a vacuum; we utilize aspects of C1 contexts to attain subsequent cultural attributes.

The small 't' symbol represents temporal seasons in which the individual acquires his/her various cultural contexts. Work by Baker (2011) and Cummins (1991) categorizes bilingualism into sequential, circumstantial, additive, subtractive and other descriptor attributes of when/how a person acquires bilingualism. L2 interpreters would primarily learn ASL as a second language later in life, thus most may be English-dominant bilinguals (Kannappell, 1980). IDPs would be examples of bimodal bilinguals (Grosjean, 2008), learning languages from within a Deaf-World context. Discerning students' rationale or motivation for learning ASL and being in the Deaf community would require a series of pedagogical critical and complicated conversations (Pinar, 2006). Why one learns an L2 is crucial information and is encapsulated within the 'm' symbol of the framework.

Becoming HEARING

The ‘P’ symbol stands for processing. Cognitive work of interpreters incorporates sociolinguistic contexts and mental representations seen in process models from scholars such as Cokely (1992), Colonomos (1989), Gish (1986), and Gile (1992, 2009), among others to describe the lifeworld of the ‘I’ or interpreter. As can be seen in the IS, development of interpreter DWCC occurs within spaces occupied by interpreters and Deaf communities in that a Deaf-World context will make up either the L1 or L2 side of the interpreter sociolinguistic experience. Interpreters should be prepared to avoid cultural missteps during d/Deaf-hearing interactions and may be equipped to do so if thoroughly working through a framework such as the IS.

5. Discussion

Individuals who are Deaf, hearing, and HEARING live in divergent sensory cultures (Bahan, 2010). Interpreters are purportedly able to interface between Deaf and hearing persons as bilingual, bicultural mediators (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Sherwood, 1987). By definition, interpreters work with at least two languages and cultures and require excellent knowledge and skill (Pöschhacker, 2009) of aforementioned sociolinguistic attributes. However Fant (1990) questions interpreters’ aptitude to carry the bilingual/ bicultural title. Smith (1996) stated most professional interpreters are neither bilingual nor bicultural. Grosjean (1996) wrote bilingualism and biculturalism do not necessarily co-occur.

The stated purpose of the original inquiry was to investigate meaning of interpreter DWCC, and the aim was achieved. The study addressed minimal representation of practitioner voice, qualitatively describing lived experiences regarding ASL/English interpreter DWCC. Participants did not disappoint in telling rich narratives of their lived experiences of crossing cultures and life in unpredictable borders between hearing and Deaf worlds.

Participants described early currere (Pinar, 1975, 2006) events as important (Badiou, 2006) and impactful in their personal and professional lives. It does not seem coincidental that eight out of 10 HEARING participants met d/Deaf individuals before the age of 14, and all 10 met someone d/Deaf by age 19. Badiou (2006) discussed disruptions when an event breaks through one’s consciousness, a phenomenon that may have occurred with participants in this inquiry. I was surprised to learn about participants’ exposure to d/Deaf individuals at an impressionable age, especially since they were able to recall and clearly describe impactful past events. Perhaps participants’ early experiences encouraged the development of intrinsic empathy toward d/Deaf persons.

6. Implications for Interpreter Education

Culture does not play a powerful role in general L2 teaching (Lange & Paige, 2003) and requires a more prominent place in IEPs. If interpreters need to be connected to Deaf communities (Cokely, 2005), how would connections be made without DWCC? Implementation and assessment of interpreter DWCC could only enhance IEP curricula. Unfortunately, with the scarcity of topic data (Rasmussen, 2012) and largely anecdotal means of assessing interpreter DWCC, progress has been minimal. In CIT’s mission tenets, there is desire for students to increase knowledge of the Deaf community. However, how would important knowledge be acquired without cultural access? Attaining CIT mission tenets may prove problematic if students do not exhibit cultural fluency.

Teaching students to apply empathic reasoning to culturally sensitive areas would be a significant outcome of cross-cultural pedagogy. Deep currere reflections may guide students to explore why they selected ASL/English interpreting majors. A Deaf-centric, impactful cross-cultural curriculum could assist faculty in program planning. As students are exposed to Deaf-World pedagogy, they should be guided by seasoned, culturally astute instructors. IEP faculty would require professional development in areas such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al., 2003) or Hofstede’s (2001) five-dimensional model of culture.

Becoming HEARING

7. Suggestions for further research

There is scant research regarding co-construction of interpreter DWCC (Fant, 1990; Rasmussen, 2012). Possible topics for future research reflect the extremely complicated (Pinar, 1975, 2006) cultural conversations that are required between Deaf citizens and ASL/English interpreters. One topic relates to ASL/English interpreters' worthiness of the bilingual and bicultural label based on the Pöchhacker (2009) definition of excellent command of at least two languages/cultures. Researching assessment of IS attributes would foreground acceptable interpreter bilingual/bicultural aptitude levels. This research focused on expert interpreters. Further research should compare subgroups within the overall interpreting community, such as recently certified interpreters. Research areas of subgroups could compare commitment levels of Deaf community interaction, IDI scores, and decision making in cultural situations. Finally, research recommendations include an instrument to measure intercultural competence such as the IDI. Also, a tool to target ASL/English interpreters' specific DWCC could be developed by adapting an instrument such as the Deardorff (2009) model of intercultural development.

8. Conclusion

American deaf communities, including culturally competent and peripherally affiliated interpreters, embody sociolinguistic space within the fabric of American society. Attributes impacting the preparation of preservice (student) interpreters to enter the Deaf-World and to become culturally competent practitioners are stated with intention in CIT mission statement assertions. Faculty members have the choice to include crucial DWCC data. If working interpreters find their affiliation or alliance to deaf communities minimal, they should take steps to increase DWCC. Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals in deaf communities could explore the role DWCC plays in their lives as bilingual/bicultural citizens and as they interface with ASL/English interpreters. The development of co-constructed, cross-cultural skills could be applied in interpreting work, and a variety of general areas in our 21st century cosmopolitan world.

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