

May 2016

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Williamson, Amy (2016) "Lost in the Shuffle: Deaf-Parented Interpreters and Their Paths to Interpreting Careers," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 3.

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Lost in the Shuffle: Deaf-Parented Interpreters and Their Paths to Interpreting Careers

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Abstract

Deaf-parented individuals have experiences as child language brokers (Napier, in press) and as native and heritage users of signed language (Compton, 2014) prior to engaging in a formal interpreter education program or seeking training to become an interpreter. Anecdotally, deaf-parented interpreters say that educational opportunities do not meet their specific needs and skill sets but instead are designed for the L2 user of signed language. A goal of this study was to expand the limited research that currently exists in the field of interpreter education as it relates to L1 users of American Sign Language (ASL)—specifically, deaf-parented individuals. This study finds that they are achieving national credentials and education and training as interpreters through some coursework, formal and informal mentorships, and workshops, usually after already entering the field through informal induction practices within the deaf community. Participants in this study outline specific areas of skill weaknesses and share their perspectives on educational offerings that they have found most beneficial. The results of this research can benefit the field of signed/spoken language interpreting by influencing curriculum design and teaching approaches so that the unique demographic of deaf-parented interpreters is recruited to and retained within the profession. This article presents some of the principal findings pertinent to induction practices and interpreter education from a larger study of deaf-parented interpreters (Williamson, 2015).

Keywords: Coda, deaf-parented interpreter, interpreter education, heritage language, deaf, induction practices.

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1. Introduction

In the United States (US), the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) plays an important role in the certification of American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters. The RID was founded in 1964, by deaf individuals and individuals with deaf family members, alongside other bilingual professionals who served the deaf community in religious, educational, and governmental institutions (Ball, 2013; Winston, 2004). The need for ASL–English interpreters in every cradle-to-grave event for deaf people has increased since the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. The induction practices of ASL–English interpreters has moved away from being rooted within the deaf community, with hearing individuals typically evolving into interpreting through networks and informal induction practices, in which the deaf community functioned as gatekeepers by ushering along hearing family members and signers who showed promise (Cokely, 2005; Hunt & Nicodemus, 2014). Instead, individuals are making career choices to become interpreters and are learning signed language and about the deaf community through structured classes and formal interpreter education programs. This change in induction practices of ASL–English interpreters means that “deaf individuals are being asked to give their trust to someone they have not met before, who has no prior or even current connection to their community, and who might not understand their values and culture” (McDermid, 2009, p. 111).

A need for established educational standards emerged as the interpreting industry grew. Today, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) requires those sitting for a certification test to show that they have completed a degree or have gone through an alternate pathway assessment system to ensure qualifications equivalent to schooling (RID, 2011). This educational requirement, although it helps the people being served by interpreters because it increases interpreters’ knowledge base, may be a barrier preventing community-evolved interpreters from becoming ASL–English interpreting professionals.

ASL–English bilingual individuals have functioned as interpreters or linguistic and cultural brokers between the signing and nonsigning majority communities. Deaf individuals themselves have also served this function in various capacities (Adam, Carty, & Stone, 2011; Forestal, 2011). Deaf-parented children often serve this function within their deaf families (Napier, in press). Students who have one or more deaf parents are native users and heritage learners of the signed language (Compton, 2014). These students had been exposed to signed language and deaf culture and had interpreting or language/culture brokering experience before they entered a formal program or attending any training to become an interpreter/translator (Napier, in press). Anecdotally, deaf-parented interpreters say that interpreter education programs and opportunities of continuing education for spoken language/signed language interpreters are, for the most part, geared toward individuals learning the signed language as a second language (Williamson, 2012).

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2. The Problem

There is little research examining the educational needs of the deaf-parented student who has experience as a language broker and is a heritage user of a signed language. The induction practices of deaf-parented interpreters into the profession of signed/spoken language interpreting have not been studied. Anecdotally, ASL–English deaf-parented interpreters say that educational opportunities do not account for their experience as signed language users and cultural brokers. Yet standards for the industry of ASL–English interpretation require a postsecondary degree, or equivalent, prior to certification, and an increasing number of states require licensure before interpreters are allowed to work in that state (RID, 2014). Ensuring the availability of educational opportunities to meet the particular needs of deaf-parented students will create a more appropriate pipeline through which native users of ASL may achieve certification, licensure, and education to a standardized level of service for consumers of interpreting.

2.1. Purpose and Significance of the Study

In order to determine the best approach to educating deaf-parented interpreters, this exploratory study was designed to identify, describe, and examine the experiences, skills, and induction practices that a native user and heritage language learner of ASL utilizes on their path to professionalization. This article focuses on the findings of formal and informal induction practices of deaf-parented ASL–English interpreters that were part of this larger study.² Results of this study may be used to implement improved practices within interpreter education programs (IEPs) that are specific to deaf-parented interpreters. Analyzing deaf-parented interpreters' on-ramp experiences creates a more complete understanding of this subset of ASL–English interpreting students and can serve to validate anecdotal evidence.

Language use, educational background, and technological innovation have all impacted the deaf community in various ways, making the community dynamic and less homogeneous over time. The deaf-parented student/interpreter brings to the classroom various experiences as heritage users of signed language with language brokering experience as diverse as their parents' backgrounds. This study provides a snapshot of the experiences of the deaf-parented interpreters who are a product of the individualized upbringing of their generation. Caution should be exercised in applying these findings to future generations of deaf-parented students.

3. Review of the Literature

Individuals who themselves hear and have at least one signing deaf parent are bimodal bilinguals and often grow up acquiring some level of fluency in both a spoken and a signed language (Pizer, 2013). Bimodal bilinguals who have at least one deaf parent are often referred to as children of deaf adults (Codas) (Bull, 1998). Deaf individuals who have at least one deaf parent are sometimes called deaf Codas but are most often referred to as “deaf of deaf.”

3.1. How Many Interpreters Are Deaf-Parented?

Deaf-parented interpreters, individuals who are either deaf or hearing and have at least one deaf parent, have been an overlooked demographic category within signed language interpreting research. The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) conducted a needs assessment survey of practitioners of interpreting during the fall of 2014 that asked respondents to identify if they were deaf-parented. Of the 1,878 total respondents, 208 (11%) identified as having at least one deaf parent (NCIEC, 2014). In a survey conducted among 335 British Sign Language/English interpreters, Mapson (2014) found that 13% of the respondents identified as Codas. These results should be examined cautiously because the sample size in each of these studies is small.

² To see the findings of the entire study, see Williamson (2015).

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3.2. *Native and Heritage Language Users of Signed Language*

Within the community of signed language users, few people are native users because they are born to nonsigning hearing parents. The majority of native signers are hearing children of deaf parents rather than deaf individuals themselves (Compton, 2014).

Heritage users of a language are individuals who grow up learning a minority language from their parents and do not have any formal education in that language (Compton, 2014). Although the definition of heritage language and heritage learners is still not precise in the literature, these terms may be applied to the experience of hearing children of signing deaf parents. According to He (2010), “the term heritage language has been used synonymously with community language, native language, and mother tongue to refer to a language other than English used by immigrants and their children” (p. 66). Valdés (2001) defines a heritage language learner as “a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English target language is spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in it and in English” (p. 38). Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) expands the definition of heritage language learner to “a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language” (p. 221). By these definitions, Codas are heritage users of their parent’s signed language.

3.3. *Child Language Brokers*

Child language broker (CLB) is the term used to describe a child who is more fluent in the majority language and brokers communication and cultural nuances between the child’s parents who use a minority language and the community that uses the majority spoken language (Hall & Guery, 2010). CLB is often seen in immigrant families where parents have varying degrees of competency in the majority language of their new home. Children in these families, who are immersed in educational settings, acquire the majority language more quickly than do their immigrant parents. This greater fluency leads to instances of language and cultural brokering to bridge the communication between their parents and the majority-language-using community. Napier (in press) found in her applied research project—which replicated existing CLB research with deaf-parented individuals who are both deaf and hearing—that out of 210 respondents, 99% reported brokering for their parents either in the past or currently. In Napier’s study, the parents used a signed language that was not the language of the majority community.

3.4. *Deaf-Parented Interpreters Are Different Than Other Interpreters*

Both Adams (a non-Coda) and Preston (a Coda) found that deaf-parented individuals often feel the tension of straddling both the deaf and hearing communities, with language the crux of that intersection. Preston (1994) explored the identity and role of hearing deaf-parented individuals through extensive interviews with 150 American Codas. Adams (2008) identifies the Coda’s status as a separate and autonomous group, not deaf and not hearing, with their own identity. In autobiographical narratives elicited from 26 Codas, 12 hearing and 12 deaf, Adams (2008) identified common themes, labeled as “middleman,” “misfit,” “foreigner,” and “glass ceiling.” The “misfit” theme was the most common for the Codas across the lifespan. Preston (1994) and Adams (2008) found the hearing deaf-parented individual’s audiological status becomes conflated with their identity and they are left feeling as if they are misfits in both the hearing and deaf communities because they do not feel like either. How this tension impacts a deaf-parented individual’s on-ramp experience to interpreter education was not found in the literature.

3.5. *American Sign Language/English Interpreter Education*

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education’s (CCIE) Accreditation Standards were developed to give stakeholders within the ASL–English interpreting profession a common understanding of the knowledge and competencies that students of interpreting need to acquire (CCIE, 2015). Carter (2015) conducted a survey of

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IEPs' entry requirements and found there to be no standardized process for establishing baseline skills and knowledge for acceptance into these programs. Only 14 of the over 130 ASL–English IEPs are accredited by CCIE (2015) and follow any set of standardized guidelines in interpreter education. The lack of standardization within IEPs can result in wildly varying competencies among graduates. Without standardized requirements for language competency in the working languages of the interpreting students prior to admission into interpreter education, instructors are tasked with language instruction instead of focusing on interpreting theory and practice (Roy, 2000; Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004). IEPs, in general, are not designed to train students who possess ASL fluency prior to admission (Roy, 2000).

Godfrey (2011) first conducted an analysis of survey data collected in the 2009 NCIEC (IEP) Needs Assessment with a focus on the readiness to credential gap and the characteristics of successful IEPs. Her findings demonstrated that the programs with more out-of-classroom learning opportunities, connections with the deaf community, and stringent language entrance requirements are more likely to have graduates successfully achieve credentials at or soon after graduation.

Outcomes of an IEP should be the same regardless of the skills brought into the program; however, it cannot be denied that deaf-parented students enter these programs with a different skill set and experience than non-deaf-parented students. Incoming IEP students may represent polar opposite starting places. Deaf-parented students are native users of the signed language, heritage language learners of the signed language, and they have connections with the deaf community and experience as child language brokers (Adam et al, 2011; Ashton et al., 2013; Compton, 2014; Napier, in press).

3.6. *Perception of Deaf-Parented Students/Interpreters*

There are few examples in the literature of deaf consumers, interpreters, or interpreter educators being asked about their perceptions on deaf-parented interpreters, but when a distinction is made, the results are notable. Stuard's broad-scope (2008) qualitative study explored the deaf community's preferred characteristics of interpreters. This study looked at cultural affiliation, acceptance within the deaf community, and whether parentage influences an interpreter's qualifications. Stuard asked of both the hearing and deaf study participants, "Does the Deaf consumer perceive that an adult child of Deaf parents would be more qualified to interpret than an adult child of hearing parents because of access to American Sign Language from birth?" (2008, p. 92).

In Stuard's (2008) study, hearing interpreters reported perceiving deaf-parented interpreters as having intuitive practicality and cultural awareness. They also reported that Coda might have better ASL-to-English skill because of early exposure to ASL, and both deaf and hearing respondents reported that qualifications of an interpreter should be based on skill, motivation, education, and certification, not just parentage (Stuard, 2008). Hearing interpreters reported a belief that deaf-parented interpreters lack interpersonal skills, have inappropriate boundaries, and have issues related to control/helper roles and confidentiality (Stuard, 2008). McDermid (2008) interviewed interpreter educators and had similar, conflicting, findings in their participants' comments about deaf-parented/heritage language learners.

Among Canadian interpreter educators, McDermid (2008) found deaf-parented students had an overall positive impact on the IEP. Coda students "brought to class a higher level of sensitivity to deaf culture and more awareness of deaf people than their non-Coda peers. They were described as advanced students and were seen as willing to help the other students when asked for advice" (McDermid, 2008, p.118). In contrast, instructors also reported that Coda students had lack of knowledge of deaf culture, weak ASL and English language fluency, and found general issues with attitude among deaf-parented students. Two of the deaf instructors in the study said, "Coda students ended up disagreeing with them a lot and had gotten into arguments over how to sign things" (McDermid, 2008, p. 119) and a hearing instructor felt that "some of the (Coda) students enrolled because they thought it would be a fast way to get some kind of job but then later found the college experience overwhelming" (McDermid, 2008, pp.119). Her participants also reported Coda students interpreting while on a placement when they were specifically told not to; expecting to breeze through the program because they signed better than their classmates; and struggling emotionally as they grapple with understanding their Coda identity and their relationship with their deaf parents.

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The finding from Stuard (2008) and McDermid (2008) speak to both the value a deaf-parented interpreter brings to the profession and the need for appropriate training for deaf-parented interpreters as recognized by interpreter educators and deaf consumers of interpreting services.

3.7. *Critical Mass in Interpreter Education*

Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, and McLain (2007) define *critical mass* in education as the level of representation of a particular minority group of people in an educational environment that leads to comfort and familiarity for the student. This, in turn, promotes retention and persistence for the minority student. They found that when more Latino faculty were represented on campus there was also an increase in the success and aspirations of Latino students on campus.

How critical mass is defined within IEPs for deaf-parented interpreters and other minority groups remains to be determined; however, West Oyedele (2015) examined the relationship between the presence of African American/black faculty or classmates in IEPs and the participants' persistence in matriculating through the program. When West Oyedele asked participants about the number of African American/black educators, guest presenters, or mentors and classmates they were exposed to during their interpreter training, she found that a majority had no educators (76%), guest presenters (57%), or mentors (72%) who were African American/black. West Oyedele contends that these numbers suggest a lack of critical mass for African American/black interpreters who are matriculating through IEPs. Without a critical mass of minority students, African American/black students are less likely to persist through their educational experience.

There is currently no research available that identifies the number of deaf-parented interpreting students or faculty who are engaged in IEPs. Maloney (2015), in her survey of IEP faculty in the U.S., found that 9.9% of the 99 respondents identified as Coda. What constitutes a critical mass for deaf-parented interpreters and whether it makes a difference for the students' experience is not yet shown in the literature.

4. Study Design

This mixed-methods exploratory survey of deaf-parented interpreters was conducted in August 2014. The survey included adults who were at least 18 years old, had at least one deaf parent, either had ever worked as an ASL–English interpreter, and identified as deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda. The survey aimed to elicit demographic characteristics and induction routes into the profession of ASL–English interpreting. A total of 121 questions were presented in English. The questions were a mix of Likert-scaled statements, multiple choice items, attitudinal rating scales, and open-ended questions. The survey design was based on adaptations of the needs assessment survey conducted by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC, 2010), the survey of demographic and self-identification information for heritage learners of Mexican descent (Gignoux, 2009), the National Heritage Language Survey (Carreira & Kagan, 2011), and the survey conducted by Napier (in press) in her study of CLB.

4.1. *Participants*

751 eligible respondents participated in a survey that was distributed electronically using network and snowball sampling (Hale & Napier, 2013). The researcher's personal email and social media network, Facebook and Google groups that are specific to individuals who are deaf-parented, and the large-scale databases of the RID membership and the email distribution network coordinated by the NCIEC all served as routes of distribution for the study.

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4.2. *Data Analysis Procedures*

Through the use of applied thematic analysis (ATA; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012), word search and keyword-in-context techniques were used as a foundation for identifying and describing themes among the qualitative data found in open text-box responses. Descriptive statistics were applied to the quantitative data collected from the completed questionnaires.

4.3. *Methodological Limitations*

The length of the survey instrument, the use of written English as the language of the survey, and the method of survey dissemination may have limited the scope of this study. The survey took many respondents as long as 45 minutes to complete. The survey was conducted in English, which may have been a barrier for native bilingual respondents who were more comfortable in ASL than written English.

Finally, survey dissemination was conducted primarily through social media channels. Potential respondents who were not tied into their email or social media during August 2014 may have not had the opportunity to participate in this study. The survey was disseminated through snowball sampling, so there is no way to know how many people it actually reached.

The researcher used social networks available to her as a white, female, hearing, middle-aged, and mid-career interpreter with deaf parents. The survey may not have reached younger, newer interpreters or older, more seasoned interpreters. Neither deaf-parented interpreters who are deaf nor interpreters of color may have been as represented as they might have been otherwise.

5. Findings

5.1. *Respondent Characteristics*

Of the 835 people who responded to the survey, 751 (89.9%) met the eligibility requirements. A majority of the respondents (68%) identified as hearing, white, and female.

Respondents spanned all age categories, with the smallest representations at either end of the age spectrum: 18–25 years (5.3%) and 66+ years (6.5%). All other age categories were fairly equal.

Most of the respondents (92.3%) reported having two deaf parents. The remaining respondents reported having one deaf and one hearing parent (6.7%) or one Coda parent and one deaf parent (1.1%). Most respondents (90.7%) identified their audiological status as hearing; the remaining 9.3% indicated being deaf, hard of hearing, or late-deafened.

When asked about racial and ethnic backgrounds, respondents were allowed to choose more than one category. A large majority (87.1%) of respondents indicated that they identify with a white race/ethnic background. The lack of representation among interpreters of color is an issue across the board, with 3.3% identifying as Latino/a, 1.6% as Black/African American, 0.1% Asian, 2.8% mixed race, and 5.1% identified as Other/prefer not to answer.

In terms of educational or professional preparation, 61.7% of the respondents reported having completed an associate degree or higher. Only 6.92% of the respondents claimed having no college experience. The scope of this study does not include an examination of socioeconomic status and its effect on higher education outcomes, it was notable that a significant portion (79.1%) of the deaf parents did not attend college, or did attend but did not

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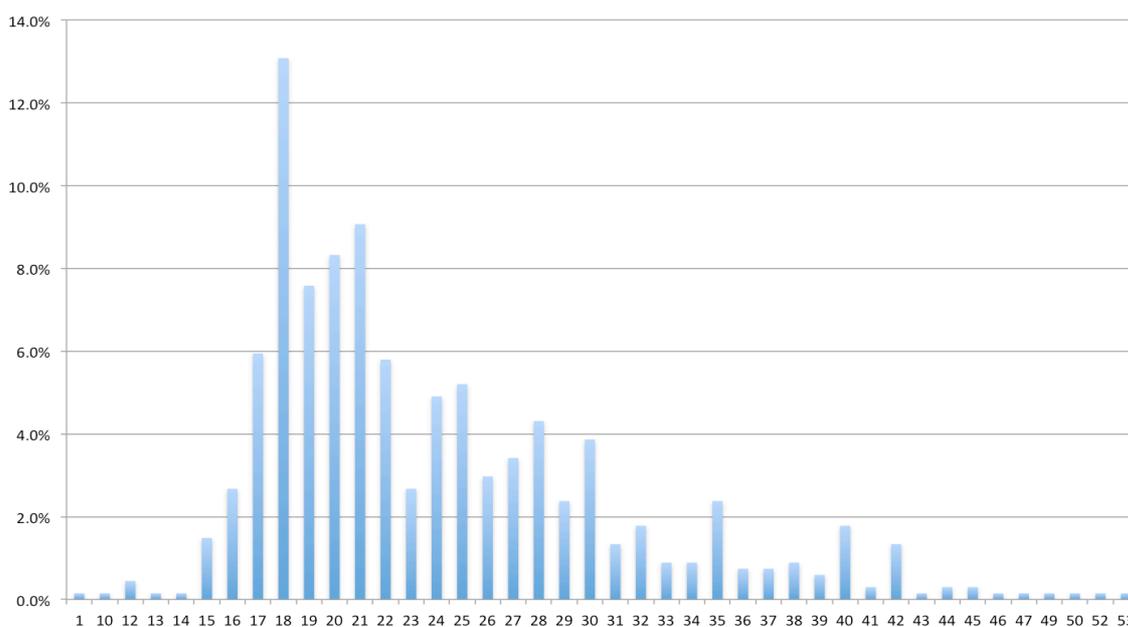
complete a degree. Many other factors³ influence and confound a question about educational setting and language for deaf individuals, making the responses a complicated analytic prospect.

Of the total respondents, 86.7% held a nationally recognized interpreting credential, which, for the purposes of this survey, was labeled “certified.” Of the respondents that were currently working as an interpreter (673), 22.3% were not certified as compared to 46.4% of the respondents who are no longer working (78) and did not hold certification while they were working.

5.2. Respondents’ Professional Status

Professional interpreting was defined as what it is not: rather than language brokering for family, and perhaps not with credential, respondents were asked to report at what age they were first viewed as a professional and compensated interpreter. Responses ranged the life span, as seen in Figure 1, but were clustered between the ages of 17 and 22, with 49.8% of the respondents entering the field during that age range.

Figure 1. Age of respondents at the time they began professional interpreting



Deaf-parented interpreters enter the field from various entry points, both formal and informal, and so assessing the readiness-to-credential gap within this population can be difficult without a marked starting point to measure from. Table 1 shows that most respondents who were currently working as interpreters at the time of the survey reported having worked for 21–30 (21.01%) years and attaining a nationally recognized credential within 1–4 years (44.03%). For the most part, respondents reported attaining certification within 5 years (61.73%). Almost half (49.4%) of the 12.23%, ($n = 85$) who reported not having a credential at all had been working as an interpreter for fewer than 5 years.

³ These factors refer to the many complex issues found within the deaf community and the field of deaf education. Language modality and educational placement, among other aspects of the deaf educational experience, are difficult to quantify and cannot be fairly discussed within the scope of this study.

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Table 1. Number of years respondents have worked as an interpreter cross-tabulated with the number of years before attaining credential(s)

How long to get credentialed?	How long working as an interpreter							Totals	Percent
	Less than 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	more than 40 years		
I have no credential	42	16	10	4	4	7	2	85	12.23%
0 years	23	40	17	12	13	13	5	123	17.70%
1-4 years	20	52	46	43	69	52	24	306	44.03%
5-9 years		7	29	14	29	10	19	108	15.54%
10-15 years	1		2	11	20	8	3	45	6.47%
16-20 years				2	9	3	1	15	2.16%
> 21 years	1				2	7	3	13	1.87%
Totals	87	115	104	86	146	100	57	695	100%
Percentage	12.52%	16.55%	14.96%	12.37%	21.01%	14.39%	8.20%	100%	

5.3. Respondents' Language Profiles

Respondents were asked to list what skills they wanted to improve in both ASL and English. Table 2 lists the most common themes found in the responses for both languages. The question did not differentiate between expressive or receptive skills in the language. In both languages, vocabulary is cited as the area most in need of improvement. To drill down on this question further, in the ASL language category respondents reported wanting to improve their knowledge of regional signs, technical signs, and the vocabulary of young people. Receptive and expressive uses of vocabulary were mentioned, but usually in the context of interpreting (e.g., "Vocabulary to use while interpreting in a variety of very specific specialized topics") as opposed to general conversation. In the English language category, the responses around vocabulary improvement were stated more generally than was found in the ASL language category. Some of the responses in this category were: "more rich vocabulary," "increase vocabulary," and "broaden my vocabulary."

In Table 2, the thematic category of fingerspelling is represented within the ASL language skill category among 6.34% ($n = 47$) of the respondents. In analyzing the open text-box responses within this thematic category, 46.81% ($n = 22$) specified expressive fingerspelling (e.g., needing to slow down) and 25.53% ($n = 12$) specified receptive fingerspelling as areas in need of improvement. The remaining 27.66% ($n = 13$) did not specify whether they needed improvement in expressive or receptive fingerspelling.

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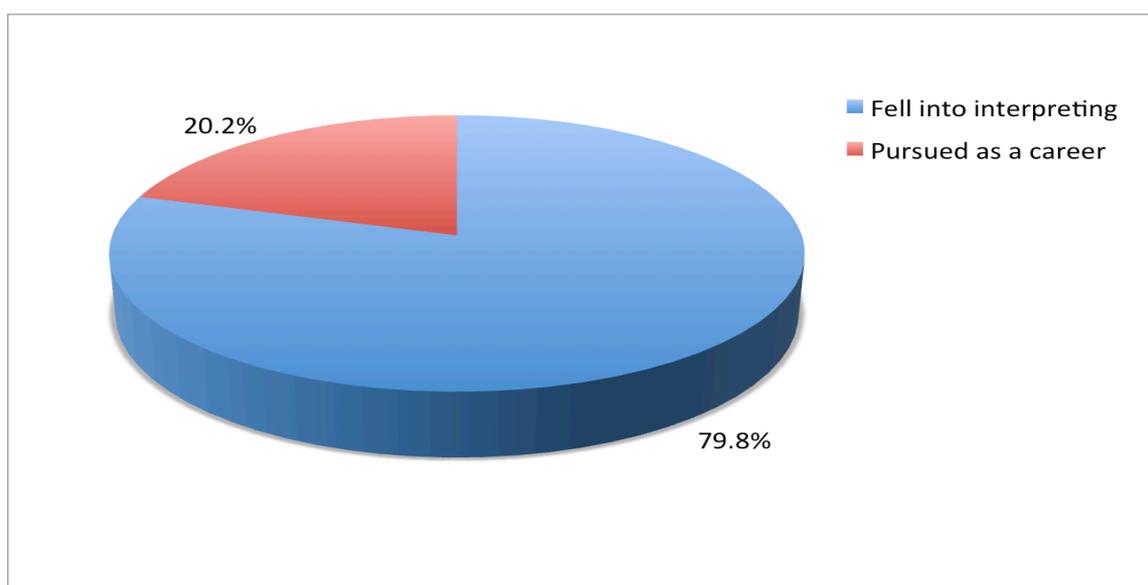
Table 2. Skills respondents reported wanting to improve in ASL and English

ASL (<i>n</i> = 737)	English (<i>n</i> = 704)
Vocabulary (188) 25.51%	Vocabulary (235) 33.38%
Classifiers/Use of space (108) 14.65%	Grammar/Grammatical structure (106) 15.06%
Grammar (100) 13.58%	Written expression (93) 13.21%
Fingerspelling (47) 6.34%	Vocal production (prosody, pronunciation, etc.; 66) 9.37%

5.4. Interpreting and Interpreter Training

A minority of respondents (20.2%) replied that they intentionally pursued an interpreting career; 79.8% replied that they fell into interpreting as a career (Figure 2). Around one third (34.8%) of the respondents reported having a sibling who was currently working or had worked as a professional signed language/English interpreter. Only 34.9% of the respondents' parents suggested or encouraged them to become an interpreter when they grew up.

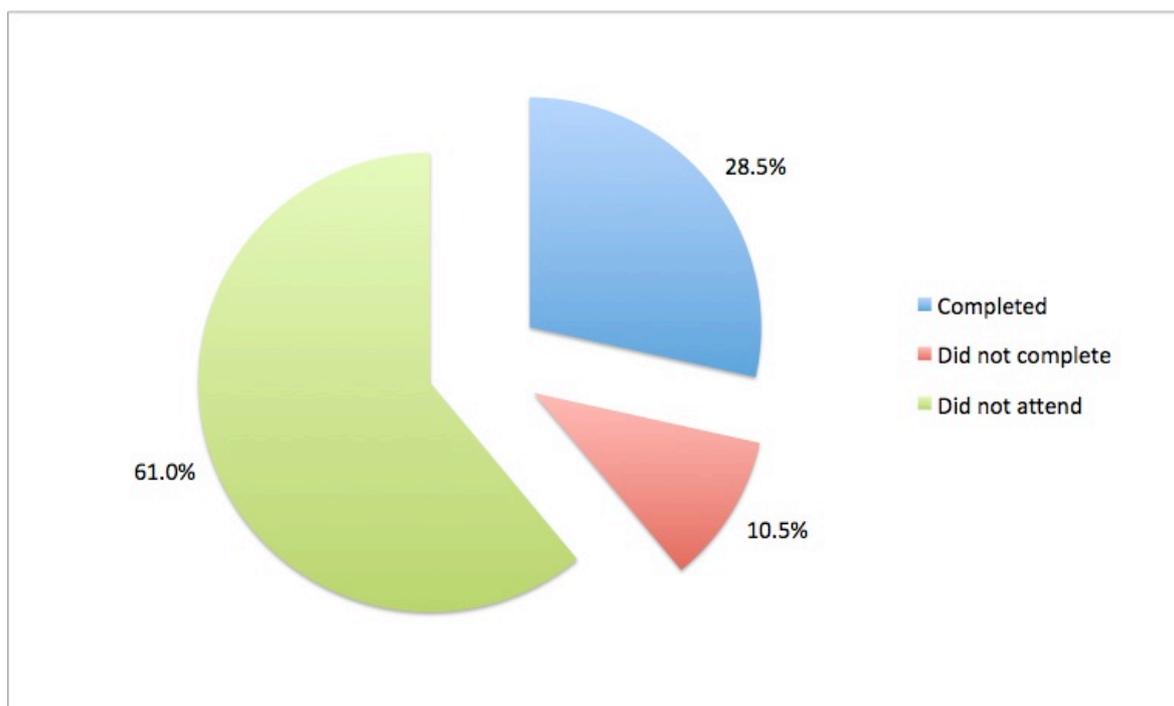
Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who reported entering the interpreting profession intentionally versus entering in a happenstance fashion



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Upon entering the profession of interpreting, 39% ($n = 293$) of the respondents reported attending an IEP for any length of time (Figure 3). Of those attending an IEP ($n = 293$), only 28.5% ($n = 214$) reported actually completing the program, with the remaining 10.5% ($n = 79$) not completing. Respondents (10.9%) indicated that in some cases they attended two or more IEPs.

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who attended and/or completed an IEP



Respondents were asked in an open-ended question why they did not complete an IEP program. Ninety-two (12.25%) text responses fell into several thematic categories, as seen in Table 3. The most commonly cited reason for not completing an IEP was issues with instructors/classmates/programs (38.04%, $n = 35$).

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Table 3. Respondents' reported reasons for not completing an IEP

Category	Representative comment
Issues with instructors/classmates/programs (38.04%, n = 35)	<i>The teachers did not know how to work with me. I already had the skills and most of the time they were spoon-feeding everyone else and I was left bored. I tried to find ways to challenge myself with topics to research but the teachers were not supportive of anything I did outside the curriculum.</i>
Picking and choosing classes within the program (19.57%, n = 18)	<i>I wanted and needed to take specific courses relating to medical interpreting, ethics, professional responsibilities, etc.</i>
Attaining certification or a job as an interpreter while in the program (17.39%, n = 16)	<i>Achieved CI and CT mid program</i>
Logistical issues like moving/money/time (10.89%, n = 10)	<i>Had to work to support family (parents)</i>
Being currently enrolled in a program (7.6%, n = 7)	<i>I'm currently in the program.</i>
Deciding to not pursue interpreting (3.26%, n = 3)	<i>Got bored and realized I didn't want to become an interpreter</i>
Health reasons (3.26%, n = 3)	<i>I was involved in a car accident that rendered my arm useless (until I had surgery).</i>

Respondents who did not attend a formal interpreter-training program respondents reported that mentoring, learning from the deaf community, and workshops contributed to their interpreting education. They also said:

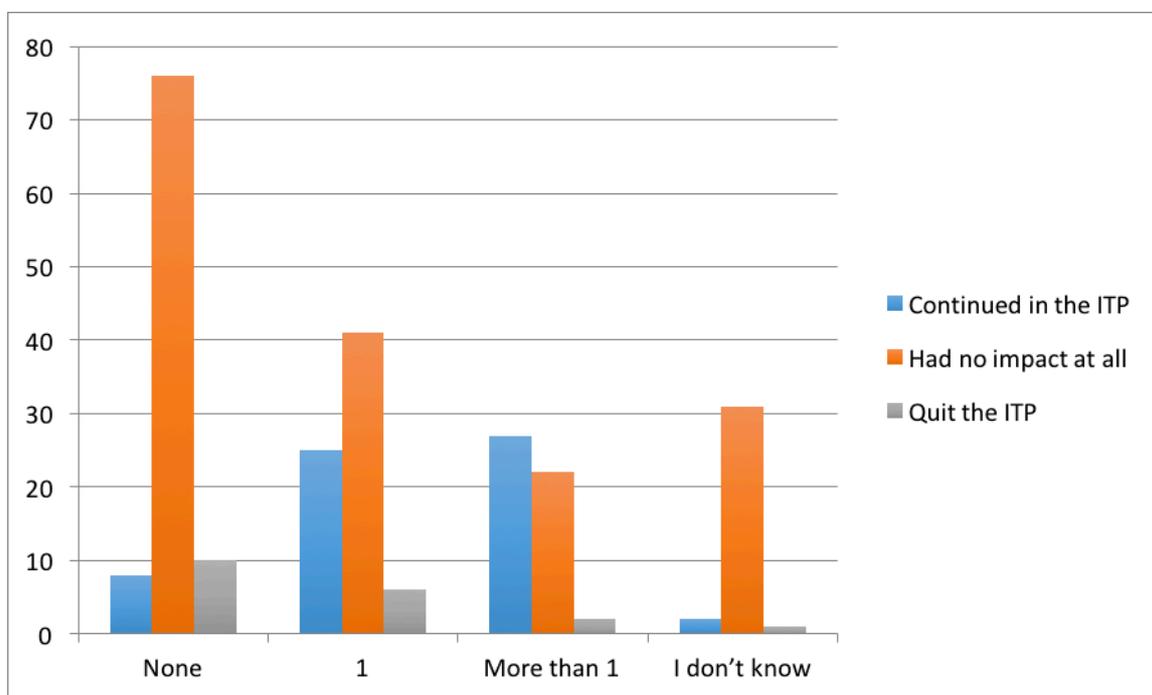
Listened to Deaf people and what they wanted via conversational interactions. Attended workshops and generally observed professionals and emulated the behaviour I found had merit.

I never took any steps apart from getting certified. I was given an interpreter job at the age of 19 before I was certified.

Figure 4 shows the relationship between having and not having an instructor that is deaf or deaf-parented and the impact on the deaf-parented student continuing or quitting a program. A total of 138 (47%) of the 293 respondents reported that there were deaf-parented instructors in their first IEP. When asked about how well the IEP met their needs, 87.7% (n = 287) responded either some aspect was *good* or *very well*. While there are factors not accounted for in this cross-tabulation that may influence program satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is a positive correlation between having deaf-parented instructors in the program and general overall satisfaction with the program.

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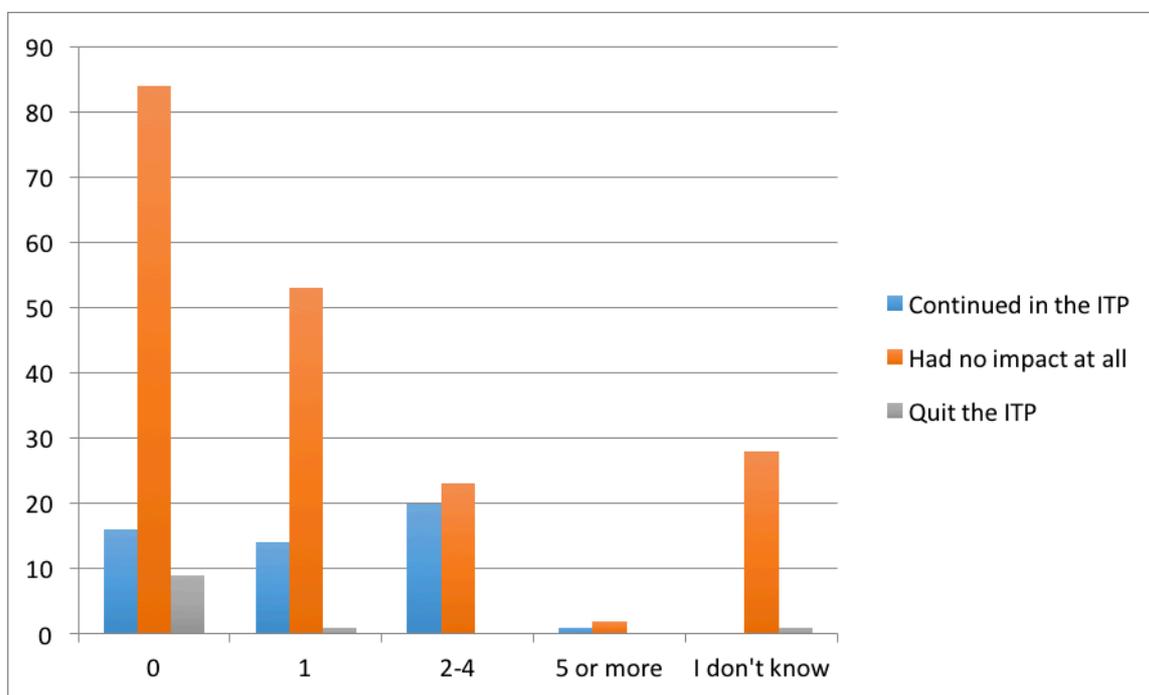
Figure 4. Relationship between presence of deaf-parented instructors in interpreter education program (IEPs) and subsequent impact on experience



Similarly, respondents were asked how many deaf-parented classmates they had in their program and whether having or not having these classmates had an impact on their program experience (see Figure 5). A total of 127 (43.3%) of the 293 respondents reported that there were one or more deaf-parented students in their first IEP program and 88.2% ($n = 258$) of them rated the program *some aspects were good* or the program did *very well* in terms of meeting their needs. Although there are factors not accounted for in this cross-tabulation that may influence program satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is a positive correlation between having deaf-parented classmates in the program and general overall satisfaction with the program. Respondents with no deaf-parented classmates were more likely not to complete the program. This finding suggests that a critical mass of deaf-parented students could aid in retention and persistence in completing an IEP.

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Figure 5. Relationship between presence of deaf-parented classmates in interpreter education program (IEP) and subsequent impact on experience



Of the students that attended IEPs ($n = 293$), 58.4% reported testing out of or being exempt from a curricular or program requirement. These exemptions were exclusively reported to be ASL, fingerspelling, and deaf culture classes.

Respondents were asked to name courses, workshops, and other forms of training that were most helpful on the path to becoming a professional interpreter. Many valued their training in ethics and professional conduct, linguistics, and deaf culture/studies. Training from deaf instructors or training that was geared specifically for deaf-parented interpreters were mentioned as most helpful to becoming a career interpreter:

ASL linguistics classes that were taught by deaf instructors, having classes taught in sign “felt like home.” Learning about ASL as a language and formal instruction of ASL grammar, I was able to see that I was a native signer. That gave me validation and confidence in my skills.

When I attend workshops given by those who have deaf parents and design the content for those who have deaf parents as well, I am able to better understand and apply what is being taught.

In contrast, courses, workshops, and forms of training that were reported to be least helpful were vocabulary-driven, fingerspelling, or general ASL courses. There were repeated reports of training conducted by biased and/or unqualified presenters as most unhelpful. The conflict in responses between what was helpful and what was not helpful may be accounted for in pedagogical approach or characteristics of the trainers, as seen in these representative comments:

ASL courses. The instructors were often unqualified and did not explicitly teach grammar—they were mostly focused on vocabulary . . . which was already a strength of mine.

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I feel any workshop I've gone to where the presenter has a very obvious bias against Codas and/or hearing people were useless and worthless. Pitting one group against another discredits anything that would've made for an educational experience, and just breeds more resentment.

A large percentage of survey participants (74.2%, $n = 557$) expressed that there is insufficient deaf-parented-interpreter specific training to help develop their professional skills and knowledge. A little over three quarters of the respondents (76.1%, $n = 571$) expressed an interest in having separate training courses for the deaf-parented interpreter integrated into interpreter education, and 82.2% ($n = 617$) reported that deaf-parented and deaf students of interpreting could or should be educated together, separate from non-deaf parented students. Exploring these options within interpreter education appears to be beneficial to deaf-parented interpreters.

Open-ended questions were asked at several points throughout the survey to elicit additional comments about experiences entering the interpreting profession. The comments shared in these sections of the survey highlight attitudinal barriers faced by deaf-parented interpreters:

I have come to realize that living in the deaf world teaches you things that others who have not lived in that world may not get. It's just intuitive to do things sometimes. Interpreting is not so much about language (although that is important), it's about relationships, caring, and understanding.

It has been a struggle to obtain the "book learning" I desire because I have found that I have been constantly criticized/ridiculed/idolized by classmates who don't have deaf parents.

This research provides foundational data for further study. Defining and understanding the dynamics between and among interpreters of varying backgrounds in addition to implementing curricular adaptations in interpreter training programs may help to meet the needs of deaf-parented students.

6. Discussion

The findings of this mixed-methods exploratory study of deaf-parented interpreters who identify as deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda and who worked or had ever worked as an interpreter show that deaf-parented interpreters, demographically, look very similar to the larger population of ASL-English interpreters; however, they differ in some fundamental ways. They are heritage users of ASL with CLB experiences (Compton, 2014; Napier, in press; Williamson, 2015). These differences do not seem to be taken into consideration in IEPs, the current route of induction to the interpreting profession.

Deaf-parented interpreters are seeking interpreter education in a variety of ways, including attending formalized interpreter education programs, piecemeal or in their entirety, formal and informal mentorships, and short-term workshops. This study shows that deaf-parented interpreters often start working as interpreters at a young age, prior to or simultaneous with attaining education or credentials, and they do attain nationally recognized credentials.

A common theme among all reported induction routes was the need to fill in gaps in knowledge, and the benefit that deaf-parented specific education provides. Respondents sought to fill their knowledge gaps through formally structured programs, picking and choosing courses, attending workshops, and seeking out both formal and informal mentoring relationships without attending and completing a formal IEP.

Deaf-parented interpreters have been entering the profession at young ages, most doing so before achieving a postsecondary degree and without the initial intent of making a career as an interpreter. This type of on-ramp experience is not available to someone who is not already fluent in ASL or connected with the deaf and/or interpreting communities. Currently, RID requires an advanced degree or approval through an alternate system of documenting prior education and experience before an individual may sit for a certification exam. The current

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requirements imposed by RID will serve as a deterrent or gatekeeper to deaf-parented interpreters entering the field because the pattern of entry into the profession found among deaf-parented interpreters is not based on receiving education and training first.

Of the respondents that attended an IEP ($N = 293$), 58.4% reported being exempt from courses such as ASL, fingerspelling, and deaf culture. Respondents also reported that courses on ASL and deaf culture were most helpful and vocabulary was mentioned as the ASL skill that respondents most wanted to improve. Other, conflicting responses were made regarding the benefit of fingerspelling courses and workshops, but respondents reported that fingerspelling was a skill area that they wanted to improve. Additionally, respondents reported that language, culture, and linguistics classes were beneficial in understanding ASL and culture. Unfortunately, these are also the classes that are most often cited as the ones deaf-parented IEP students are exempt from. Respondents' indications of courses/workshops/trainings were least helpful were ones that were vocabulary driven, focused on fingerspelling, and in which the instructor's attitude or behavior were barriers to the deaf-parented interpreter's learning. The conflicting responses to these questions beg further analysis.

My analysis of reported language skills that deaf-parented interpreters want to improve, along with my analysis the courses and workshops that were reported to be most and least helpful makes it clear that deaf-parented interpreters believe they can benefit from the same course content that L2 users of the signed language are receiving in interpreter education. However, the current pedagogical framework does not completely meet the specific needs of the heritage language user. The findings in this study suggest that differentiated education would most benefit deaf-parented interpreting students to fill in the gaps in their knowledge while capitalizing on the language and brokering skills they bring into the classroom.

IEPs should strive to provide a critical mass of deaf-parented students, instructors, mentors, and guest speakers. As seen in this study, receiving an education in a setting with exposure to other deaf-parented students and professionals may ensure matriculation and retention through the program. This also can mean a stronger educational experience for all students. Critical mass can be achieved by creating heritage-language-learner classes that will then draw deaf-parented students into the postsecondary setting. Formal and informal mentoring should also be in practice to guide deaf-parented interpreters into postsecondary educational settings as instructors, mentors, and guest speakers. Employing a heritage language learner framework to the entire program of language learning and interpreting/translation will create an environment that will appeal to and attract to deaf-parented interpreters, one in which they are likely to feel that their unique needs as a learner are being met.

As native, heritage language users of American Sign Language with CLB experiences, deaf-parented interpreters bring in-group knowledge and experiences of the deaf community (Compton, 2014; Napier, in press). Second-language users of ASL, who often learn the language and learn about the deaf community through formal educational channels, lack this experience and knowledge (Cokely, 2005). Without a focused effort to ensure that deaf-parented interpreters have supportive and appropriate induction practices, the field of ASL–English interpreting may lose out on the opportunity to develop deaf-parented interpreters who do bring valuable knowledge and experiences to the profession. This research provides foundational data for further study of frameworks and pedagogical approaches that are differentiated for the deaf-parented interpreting student. Defining and understanding the dynamics between and among interpreters of varying backgrounds in addition to implementing curricular adaptations in interpreter training programs may help to meet the needs of deaf-parented students.

Acknowledgments

This article is a focused version of a larger body of work (Williamson, 2015) written as a result of this study. Questions about the larger study can be directed to the author. The author would like to thank the deaf-parented interpreters who participated in this study. Their willingness to participate will make a difference within the field of signed language/spoken language interpreting.

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