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Dissertation Abstracts

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Dissertation Abstracts

In this section, we regularly feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral or masters theses, in order to inform our readers of current research relating to interpreter and translator education. If you have recently completed a master's or PhD thesis in this field and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200–300 words to citjournaleditor@gmail.com.

Becoming HEARING: A Qualitative Study of Expert Interpreter Deaf-World Cultural Competence

Leah Subak

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Degree: PhD dissertation, Kent State University, 2014

Deaf-World and American mainstream cultures coexist. Deaf-World citizens adhere to values and norms, communicate via American Sign Language (ASL), and at times utilize interpreter services. This inquiry focused on signed language interpreter development of Deaf-World cultural competence. Cultural competence includes learning and applying behaviors across multiple sociolinguistic contexts.

Through qualitative interviews, expert Deaf and hearing participants described interpreter Deaf-World connections. The inquiry explored participant meaning making regarding lived experience as participants described examples of becoming known as HEARING, ASL gloss for a representation of interpreters' auditory status.

Data, coded in aggregate, described examples of Deaf-World cultural competence including HEARING participants' avowed Deaf-World affiliation/alliance and ascribed Deaf-World efficacy; and Deaf participants avowed Deaf-World alliance and efficacy- as well as conditionally ascribed interpreter affiliation/alliance. Findings indicated becoming HEARING includes building coconstructed community and cultural connections leading to Deaf-World affiliation/alliance. Participants described a tacit seven-step process of Deaf-World connections, the interpreter affiliation/alliance narrative (IAAN).

“The Work is You”: Professional Identity Development of Second-Language-Learner American Sign Language–English Interpreters**Danielle I. J. Hunt***Gallaudet University, Washington, DC, USA: danielle.hunt@gallaudet.edu*

Degree: PhD dissertation, Gallaudet University, 2015

In this study, I examined the lived experiences of seven American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters who learned ASL as a second language. The methods employed for this study included autophotography and coresearcher driven photo-elicitation interviews, followed by semistructured phenomenological interviews for further data collection. For study grounded in a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, I addressed the following research question: How does a group of ASL–English interpreters experience the development of a professional identity? Professional identity is only one part of many identities that develop and change over time. The review of the literature focused on translation and interpreting studies, language and culture as a part of identity, identity formation and development, second-language learners, and signed language interpreting.

From the data sources three superordinate themes emerged: the evolution of an interpreter self, the work as an extension of self, and being and becoming—the current professional identity. Several subthemes and threads also emerged and are discussed in depth. Implications for the field include issues related to defining terms in the field; second-language learning and integrating into deaf communities; interpreter education curriculum, pedagogy, and climate; understanding workplace experiences and interpreter role; and relationships with other interpreters.

The Translation of Event-Structure Metaphors Rendered by Deaf Translators from English to American Sign Language**Daniel Ray Roush***Eastern Kentucky University: Daniel.Roush@eku.edu*

Degree: PhD dissertation, Gallaudet University, 2015

This dissertation characterizes the handling of various Event-Structure Metaphors (ESMs) in English to American Sign Language (ASL) translation by analyzing linguistic and conceptual metaphors in translation from the perspectives of Descriptive Translation Studies and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The data is based on a small translation corpus of American political speeches rendered by translators who are Deaf. The study affirms that the theoretical “Location” and “Object” branches of conceptual ESMs that have been formulated for spoken languages also exist in ASL. Often, the same ESM branch is maintained in translation from English to ASL, but not always. This study proposes that a “Container” branch be added as a third, major ESM based on metaphor shifts seen in the translation data. These shifts between English and ASL may indicate potential preferential metaphorical conceptualizations that influence translators’ decisions in re-construing metaphorical expressions.

Examining Oppression and Discrimination Among American Sign Language–English Interpreters

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Degree: MA thesis, Gallaudet University, 2014

Signed language interpreters have reported experiencing discrimination and oppression in the workplace, which may affect their motivation and performance on the job as well as their lived experiences as professionals. This exploratory study surveyed 1,385 American Sign Language–English interpreters regarding their experiences with discrimination and oppression in the workplace, with the aim of documenting and describing this perceived phenomenon. Results indicated several areas of concern from diverse groups of interpreters. Interpreters who are members of minority groups on the basis of race and hearing status reported feelings of not being valued by colleagues, facing barriers to attaining professional leadership positions, and experiencing discrimination from hiring entities. These findings provide a window into the experiences of professional interpreters regarding possible discrimination and oppression in the workplace. The results may influence how interpreter agencies conduct their practices and how interpreter education programs prepare students for sensitive issues in the workplace.

The findings are relevant to interpreting education because they 1) address issues of safe learning environments, especially for students from minority groups, and 2) point to the need for training on cultural sensitivity and respect toward colleagues.