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Dissertation Abstracts

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Dissertation Abstracts

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In order to inform our readers of current research on translator and interpreter education and training, we regularly feature abstracts of recently completed theses. If you have recently finished a master's or PhD thesis in this field and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200–300 words, along with details of the institution where the thesis was completed, the year in which it was submitted, and a contact email address. Submissions should be sent to Dissertation Abstracts Section Editor Carol Patrie at carol.patrie@gmail.com.

Exploring Learner-Centeredness within an American Sign Language/English Interpreter Training Program

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PhD dissertation, Texas State University, 2013

Key Words: ASL/English interpreter education, learner-centered, interpreter training, adult education

The aim of this single-case study was to explore learner-centeredness for seven, full-time faculty members who teach in an American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreter-training (IT) program at San Antonio College (SAC) in San Antonio, Texas. A more thorough understanding of what it means to be learner-centered, the influences that contribute to learner-centeredness, and how learner-centeredness is modeled in the classroom may benefit multiple stakeholders.

The site chosen for this study, the department of ASL/English IT at SAC, is unique in several ways including the number of students enrolled and the number and diversity of full-time faculty. In addition, the department has developed an innovative service-delivery model for interpreting services that allows for more control of the student internship experience. Also, the department is the only ASL/English IT program in Texas to require passage of state certification for interpreters as a graduation requirement. Finally, it is the only ASL/English IT program in Texas with accreditation by the Collegiate Commission on Interpreter Education, (CCIE) and with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, (THECB) Exemplary Status designation.

The results of this study highlight critical domains that distinguish learner-centered instruction from the more traditional, teacher-centered paradigm. In addition, this study identifies characteristics of deaf culture and a visual language like ASL that may foster learner-centered behaviors. Finally, this study borrows from teacher theory to help explain how faculty members may struggle with defining learner-centered teaching while excelling at describing learner-centered behaviors.

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The Role of Self-Confidence in American Sign Language Interpreters: A Field Study of Sign Language Interpreters in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

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Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 2012

Key Words: ASL interpreting, interpreter training, self-confidence, self-efficacy, positive self-talk, language anxiety

In seeking to determine the underlying causes of and strategies for overcoming poor self-confidence in American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting students, the author conducted a series of 15 interviews with Interpreter Education Program (IEP) students, novice interpreters, experienced interpreters, and experienced interpreters/interpreter educators. Results indicate that positive self-talk, deep breathing, meditation, and yoga were all techniques used by interpreters to ameliorate the effects of anxiety and self-doubt—thereby allowing interpreters to maintain composure and effectively complete the interpreting assignments. It was also indicated that differentiating between one's self-worth as an individual and one's skill as an interpreter was helpful in allowing interpreters to persevere despite experiencing lapses in self-confidence.

Assessing Interpreter Intercultural Sensitivity

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PhD dissertation, Union Institute and University, 2012

Key Words: American Sign Language, Applied Linguistics, Deaf Studies, Sign Language Interpreting, and Intercultural Communication.

Signed language interpreters, who work regularly between at least two languages and between at least two cultures, must be sensitive to cultural differences and able to respond to these differences in an effective and efficient manner. In today's era of global citizenship, interpreting agencies, organizations, educators and mentors, as well as society in general prize intercultural sensitivity. Yet, to date, in an extensive review of the literature, no empirical studies of this population have been uncovered. No base line has been established. This research study used the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to assess the intercultural sensitivity orientations of 189 American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. This study expanded the use of the IDI to a new population, signed language interpreters, and described normative standards for this group. The study was exploratory in nature in that it investigated carefully defined degrees of intercultural sensitivity. It also explored potential correlations between stages of intercultural sensitivity and certain population descriptors, such as demographics, credentialing, motivational factors, and linguistic and cultural exposure. A profile emerged that showed that the population under study, as a group, had a developmental orientation (DO) in minimization (97.43), which tends to overvalue cultural commonalities and undervalue cultural differences. The spread of orientations was wide, with slightly

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more than half in minimization and the remainder almost equally divided between ethnocentric and ethnorelative worldviews. When interpreters try to develop a shared vision, approximately one-quarter will want to discuss differences whereas the remaining three-quarters will want to focus on commonalities. In addition to investigating the IDI development scores of interpreters, this research study also tried to determine whether or not there were significant differences in the intercultural sensitivity of various interpreter groupings in terms of demographic and background variables. Of myriad factors, only age first learned (linguistic and cultural exposure) proved significant for ages 13–15 (positively correlated with DO) and for ages 0–2 and ages 3–5 (negatively correlated with DO).

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams

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PhD dissertation, Universidad de Alicante, Spain, 2012

Key Words: Aptitude, modes of interpreting, domains of skills, certification exams, perceived levels of difficulty

The author sought to discern whether or not success in one mode of interpreting on the oral certification exams for court interpreters—administered by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts—exams that act as the most important gatekeepers to the profession in the United States, could potentially indicate performance aptitude for the other two modes. To answer this question, the author used a three-pronged approach. First, she examined recent scholarship that examines the three modes of interpreting, considering case studies and theoretical models in order to break down each mode into discrete domains of skills and abilities that may or may not predict success on the Consortium certification exam. Next, a study was carried out in which over 36% of court interpreters in one U.S. state in the Spanish/English language pair at three levels of expertise articulated their *perceptions* of the three modes of interpreting in relation to their experiences in testing and training, their use of the three modes while practicing in court, and perceived levels of difficulty of each mode. The perceptions articulated by practicing professionals did *not* wholly align with the outcomes one would expect based on theory, making the posing of questions of aptitude on an empirical level more urgent.

The ensuing statistical analysis of a data set containing nearly 6,000 raw exam scores generated substantial data supporting the relationship between success in the simultaneous mode and overall success on the Consortium certification exam, strengthening the legitimacy of considering the implementation of a bifurcated testing model for court interpreter certification, especially for languages of lesser diffusion for which full versions of oral exams do not yet exist.