

2012

Dissertation Abstracts

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Recommended Citation

Stuard, Victoria; Hale, Kimberly J.; and Stauffer, Linda K. Dr. (2012) "Dissertation Abstracts," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol4/iss1/11>

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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 will regularly feature abstracts of recently completed theses in each issue. 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.

Perceptions of Interpreter Qualification by Deaf Consumers and Hearing Interpreters

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This study sought to meet a need in educational literature for documented perceptions of deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters, with or without certification regarding perceptions of interpreter qualification. This study was exploratory in nature and investigated the similarities and dissimilarities in perceptions of salient qualities that deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters believe a qualified interpreter should possess relative to interpersonal skills, sign language skills, and formal education; explored whether cultural affiliation, acceptance by the deaf community, and parentage influences interpreter qualification; measured the salient qualities deaf consumers seek in hearing interpreters; and solicited deaf consumers' opinion on what makes a quality interpreter training program. The research design for this study included a mixed methodology comprising quantitative and qualitative methods. Perceptions of interpreter qualification with regard to interpersonal skills, sign language skills, formal education, and cultural connections with the deaf community were obtained from 63 deaf consumers and 75 professional hearing interpreters through a five-part researcher-designed survey with Likert-scaled and open-ended questions. Qualitative survey methods were used to code responses and identify emergent themes in open-ended survey questions.

Findings included similarities in the perceptions of deaf consumers and professional hearing interpreters in relation to the importance of interpersonal skills, sign language skills, and formal education, with differences noted in the desired length of formal education of interpreters by deaf consumers. This study found that (a) socialization with the deaf is necessary and strongly supported by the deaf to achieve linguistic and cultural competency in addition to formal education; (b) the subjective quality of trust influences the choice of a less qualified interpreter by deaf consumers; (c) qualification of interpreters should be predicated on evaluation; and (d) there is a preference for deaf involvement in training interpreters in informal and formal educational settings.

The findings imply that proactive leadership in developing, revising, and perpetuating interpreter training within a transformational environment should include increasing cultural, linguistic, and educational competency through building collaborative alliances with the deaf community to strengthen learning outcomes in training programs.

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American Sign Language-English Interpreting Program Faculty: Characteristics, Tenure Perceptions, and Productivity

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American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreting education, which began as a community apprenticeship and vetting process, has within the last several decades moved into higher education. Most recently, the number of baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting programs has continued to increase whereas the number of associate’s degree programs has remained steady. This shift to higher education and to four-year colleges in particular has received little empirical analysis. The overarching objective of this study, which was framed by a conceptual model of the relationship among employment context, faculty member characteristics, perceptions, and productivity, is to better understand how ASL–English interpreting education programs and their faculty fit within the academy. The first purpose was to describe the institutional context and professional and personal characteristics of faculty members within baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting education programs in the United States. A second purpose was to describe the faculty members’ and department chairs’ perspectives regarding criteria and requirements for tenure and the extent to which their perceptions were aligned. The final objective was to determine if employment qualifications and context predict perceptions and productivity. Data were collected from program websites, department chairs, and faculty members of baccalaureate-granting ASL–English interpreting programs in the United States. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data.

Analysis of the data indicated that relationships exist among components of the conceptual model. Employment context and faculty members’ characteristics included variables that were significant predictors of perceptions and productivity. Implications for policy and practice include expanding degree opportunities for current and potential faculty members, increasing tenure-track appointments, increasing scholarly productivity in traditional outlets, and increasing the diversity of faculty members.

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The Relationship Among Beginning and Advanced American Sign Language Students and Credentialed Interpreters Across Two Domains of Visual Imagery: Vividness and Manipulation

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[Apologies from the editorial team for the inaccurate publication of this dissertation abstract in Volume 3, 2011. This reprint features the correct abstract.]

Given the visual-gestural nature of ASL it is reasonable to assume that visualization abilities may be one predictor of aptitude for learning ASL. This study tested a hypothesis that visualization abilities are a foundational aptitude for learning a signed language and that measurements of these skills will increase as students progress from beginning ASL students to advanced language learners and, ultimately to credentialed interpreters.

Participants in this study consisted of 90 beginning and 66 advanced ASL students in five interpreter education programs in four southern states along with 68 credentialed interpreters. Students and interpreters were administered the Vividness of Visual Imagery (VVIQ) self-report questionnaire and the objective Mental Rotations Test, Version A (MRT-A). All ASL students and their instructors were asked to rate students' sign language competency on the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview Rating Scale. All participants completed demographic questions regarding their age, gender, ethnicity, parental hearing status, number of years using ASL, number of years working with deaf professionals who use ASL, and their interpreting credential(s).

Students and their instructors rated students' sign communication proficiency similarly. Beginning ASL students were rated significantly lower than the advanced ASL students by both instructors' rating and students' self-rating.

No significant relationships were reported (a) among beginning and advanced students and credentialed interpreters with respect to either the VVIQ or the MRT-A, or (b) among the students' VVIQ and MRT-A scores and instructors' ratings on the SCPI. There was suggestive evidence of an increase in mean VVIQ scores from beginning ASL students to advanced ASL students to credentialed interpreters, but not to the level of significance. When advanced ASL students and lower-level state credentialed interpreters were removed from analyses, a significant difference in visual vividness was reported. Nationally certified interpreters scored significantly higher than beginning ASL students on the VVIQ, but not on the MRT-A.