

2012

## ***Editorial* Putting Interpreter Educators to the TEST: Testing, Ethics, and Technology**

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### **Recommended Citation**

Napier, Jemina M. (2012) "*Editorial* Putting Interpreter Educators to the TEST: Testing, Ethics, and Technology," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol4/iss1/2>

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# ***Editorial***

## **Putting Interpreter Educators to the TEST: Testing, Ethics, and Technology**

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Welcome to the fourth volume of the *International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE)*. I am delighted to announce that this will be the first of two volumes to be published this year. The second volume is due in November 2012; this will be a special issue that will feature papers on educating interpreters that were presented at the *Critical Link: Interpreting in the Community* conference in Birmingham, UK, in July 2010. Momentum is increasing for the journal, and we have already allocated papers to volumes in 2013, so please do remember that there is a rolling call for manuscripts and submit something for consideration in the Research or Commentary sections. If you are not sure where your manuscript might fit, do not hesitate to contact me as the Editor, or any member of the Editorial Board, for advice.

As with previous volume, this issue has articles concentrated on particular themes. It features a balance of manuscripts submitted by spoken and signed language interpreter educators and researchers, whose findings and discussions are applicable across the languages and modalities of our work. The three key themes of this volume are those that particularly TEST interpreter educators:

- **Testing**
- **EthicS**
- **Technology**

Each of these three areas has been an underresearched component of our work in educating and training interpreters, but are all increasingly becoming important issues for us to consider.

Language testing research is a long established area of speciality in applied linguistics (see Brown, 2005; Hughes, 1989; McNamara, 2000), which has significance in interpreter education as much of the testing protocols have been developed in relation to testing linguistic and communicative competence. There is now an emerging

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body of research that focuses on translation and interpreter testing. Various research studies have investigated the challenges in setting and rating tests for interpreters (e.g., Angelelli, 2006; Bernstein, 2000; Clifford, 2005; Stansfield & Hewitt, 2005) and translators (e.g., Goff-Kfoury, 2004; Kozaki, 2004); and recently, Angelelli and Jacobsen (2009) produced an edited volume that focuses specifically on issues in translation and interpreting testing. Yet discussion of testing in signed language interpreting is scarce (see Russell & Malcolm, 2009; Leeson, 2011). This scarcity is somewhat surprising considering that this is an area that we as interpreter educators constantly grapple with when considering program entry and exit testing (as discussed by Bontempo & Napier, 2009). What assessment is needed to ascertain if someone has the aptitude to be an interpreter? How do we decide if someone has the competence to qualify from an interpreter education program and go out into the real world as a practitioner? How do we verify whether a practitioner deserves certification or accreditation in his or her country of practice?

For this reason it is heartening to see two contributions in this volume that discuss testing with interpreters, from two different perspectives. Lisa Diamond, Maria Moreno, Christy Soto, and Regina Otero-Sabogal explore factors for bilingual staff who work in a healthcare setting and are tested on their language competence to be able to function as interpreters, with a focus on Spanish-English interpreters in the United States. Jim Hlavac, Marc Orlando, and Shani Tobias discuss intake tests for a short interpreter-training course for students using a variety of different spoken languages in Australia. Each of these articles identifies the complexities for designing, administering, and validating the results of interpreting tests in their different contexts.

Another emerging area of research and discussion in interpreting studies focuses on the ethical decision making of interpreters; some might even argue that it is “trendy” to discuss ethics (Mikkelsen, 2000). The notion of ethics is neatly summed up by the ethicist Peter Singer:

Ethics is about how we ought to live. What makes an action the right rather than the wrong thing to do? What should our goals be? These questions are so fundamental they lead us on to further questions. What is ethics anyway? Where does it come from? Can we really hope to find a rational way of deciding how we ought to live? If we can, what would it be like, and how are we going to know when we have found it? (Singer, 1994, p. 1)

In the last decade, practitioners and researchers in spoken and signed language interpreting have become much more engaged in exploring questions such as those posited by Singer in relation to interpreting. There is greater discussion in the literature about what we mean by ethics in interpreting, and about the impact of our decision making on the outcome of the interpreter-mediated communicative event as well as on the participants who rely on the interpretation (e.g., Cokely, 2000; Hoza, 2003; Janzen & Korpinski, 2005; Katan & Straniero-Sergio, 2001; Lipkin, 2008; Rodriguez & Guerrero, 2002; Rudvin 2007; Tate & Turner, 2001).

A popular approach to ethical and professional decision making in signed language interpreter education has been proposed by Dean and Pollard (2001), who adapted Karasek’s (1979) demand-control theory to examine the complex occupation of signed language interpreting. *Demand-control theory* is a job analysis method useful in studies of occupational stress and reduction of stress-related illness, injury, and burnout. Dean and Pollard have described sources of demand in the interpreting profession, including environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal demands. They suggest that interpreters can use “decision latitude” and implement various controls to deal with the demands placed upon them. An updated description of their theoretical application and an argument for ethical decision making as applied to interpreters of all languages can be found in a more recent publication in the journal *The Interpreter & Translator Trainer* (Dean & Pollard, 2011). The demand-control schema has been promoted and widely adopted among signed language interpreter educators (particularly in the United States) as a framework for the analysis of interpreting assignments, role, and ethics (e.g., Dean & Pollard, 2006; Forestal & Williams, 2008; Witter-Merithew, 2008). As much as more published discussions of ethics in interpreting emerge, and the teaching of ethics and ethical decision making to interpreting students proliferates, there is still a dearth of research that investigates how interpreters behave ethically, and on their perceptions of ethical practice. Thus Liz Mendoza’s article in this volume is timely, as it provides an overview of an empirical study of processes of ethical decision making by novice and expert American Sign Language interpreters, and it gives us food for thought in how to use this knowledge base in teaching interpreting students. Although her paper is not strictly about ethics alone, Ali Hetherington’s article in this volume discusses research on supervision and

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the signed language interpreting profession in the UK, which has a direct impact on ethical practice for interpreters.

The Commentary section features three articles that all focus on technological aspects of interpreter education. The advent of video and digital technology has made a significant difference to what we are able to do inside and outside the classroom as interpreter educators, and the articles provide an overview of how each of the authors uses technology in their classrooms to enhance the student learning experience. Della Goswell in her article and Judith Collins, Granville Tate, and Paul Hann in theirs describe how they use the annotation software ELAN to teach students how to gloss and analyze their interpretations. Tom Cox shares how he provides feedback to students using YouTube functions to annotate video clips. In the student section, an article from a graduate student at Gallaudet University, Erica Alley, provides another discussion of technology in her review of the literature on video remote interpreting and exploration of the implications for educating video remote interpreters. Finally, in the open forum section, CIT's resident technical expert Doug Bowen-Bailey and Dr. Sherry Shaw from the University of North Florida have a conversation about online learning, which concludes the technology theme.

The next convention of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers is taking place in Charlotte, North Carolina (see the announcement later in this journal), and I encourage readers who are spoken and signed language interpreter educators to attend. The program is always full of robust discussions of research-based and reflective teaching practices. The first volume of IJIE in 2013 will be dedicated to papers presented at this conference, so if you are not able to attend in person, you will at least be able to read about some of the interesting work taking place in our field.

To end with a quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." This journal seeks to provide more to interpreter educators and researchers in terms of evidence-based knowledge, so we can progress our thinking in theoretical and practical terms about interpreter education. This volume advances our understanding of **testing**, **ethics**, and **technology** in interpreter education, and thus provides us with a little more evidence for some of the core principles of interpreter education. Happy reading.

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