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Navigating Language Variety: ASL/English Interpreters "Giving Voice" to African American/Black Deaf Signed Language Users

By

Nicole Shambourger

A thesis submitted to

Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

June 2015

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WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED

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and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment of the requirements of this master's degree.

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To God be the glory!

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ABSTRACT

Navigating Language Variety: ASL/English Interpreters "Giving Voice" to African American/Black Deaf Signed Language Users

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June 2015

American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters working between ASL and spoken English make linguistic and cultural choices that impact the success of an interpreted event. One task is the selection of comparable vocabulary to best represent their clients' thoughts. This exploratory qualitative study was conducted to identify how ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning when African American English (AAE) is incorporated into signed language. Each interpreter simultaneously interpreted an ASL narrative into spoken English. Participants were asked to complete a demographic survey to ascertain whether social factors of age, race, ethnicity, experience, mode of language

acquisition, and/or age of language acquisition had any bearing on the interpretation. Following the collection of the interpreting sample and demographic data, two interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured format to provide insight into the strategic decisions made by the participants. The findings identify three strategic decisions interpreters used in lieu of incorporating AAE: omission, external processing, and discourse chunking. The overarching purpose was to collect empirical data that will lend itself to dialogues on how to best equip signed language professionals to meet the needs of African American/Black Deaf consumers.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters work in a variety of settings. One setting in particular, the Video Relay Services (VRS) setting will be highlighted. VRS allows individuals who use ASL as their primary mode of communication the opportunity to use telephone technology to communicate with those who do not use ASL. An interpreter's skill set can be uniquely challenged due to the nature of work in this setting, as calls are received from all over the United States; interpreters are sometimes tasked with handling diverse signing styles as well as signs that can vary by region and dialect.

Based on the layout of the call center, often an interpreter is privy to the work of their colleagues. There was an instance when an interpreter's spoken English interpretation changed from what some would call Standard American English to something that sounded completely different. The difference was unnerving. The words this colleague used did not sound like natural language but mirrored mockery. A dialogue was necessary to determine what the interpreter saw on the screen that prompted a change in language use. Sadly, the common denominator was African American/Black callers.

A shift in Standard American English was noted regularly at the call center. Other African American/Black interpreters noticed a similar occurrence. This left the questions: Why did interpreters alter their vocabulary and tone when African

American/Black callers were on their screen and what triggered their decision to modify their language use. The desire to know whether this phenomenon transcended the call center to other interpreting environments also arose.

Additionally, the published work, *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL: Its History and Structure* (McCaskill, Lucas, Bayley, & Hill, 2011), gained notoriety, and professional colleagues began discussions about signed language variation within the African American/Black Deaf community. The authors' empirical findings provided another avenue for examining variation, by identifying features that describe how Black and White signers differed. Over the years, interpreters shared anecdotal accounts of how they and their colleagues respond to and represent the differences. The impetus for this study was to learn more about what interpreters do when faced with culturally influenced signed variation. A quest for discovery resulted in the following research questions: "How would ASL/English interpreters portray the voice of African American/Black Deaf signed language users when working between ASL and spoken English?" and "How would ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning when an African American/Black Deaf signed language user incorporates African American English into signing?"

A qualitative discourse analysis study was conducted to answer these research questions. Participants completed a demographic survey and simultaneous interpretation of a simulated narrative speech working between ASL and spoken English. A narrative presentation style was chosen, as this fits the reality of more interpreters. Ultimately, not all interpreters have experience in the VRS environment.

Statement of the Problem

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual-spatial language used to transfer meaning through communication (Napier, 2013). ASL is akin to spoken languages as it possesses its own grammar and syntax (Bellugi, Poizner, & Klima, 1989). Deaf individuals who use signed language can communicate with those who do not know the language through the use of an ASL/English interpreter. When interpreting between ASL and spoken English, interpreters are tasked with selecting comparable vocabulary to best represent their client's thoughts. Interpreters consider the context—purpose, setting, and participants—when making their selections. There is also a consideration based upon the Deaf person's culture and identity.

Cokely (2001) affirmed that interpretation is a complex process, and cultural influences increase complexity. Cultural influences are also reportedly attributed to variations in ASL. Users of the language express themselves through their demographic lens. In addition, a Deaf person's age of language acquisition and dialect can influence their language production. These factors will also impact how an ASL/English interpreter renders a spoken English interpretation of a signed message.

The field of signed language interpreting, in contrast to other practice professions, is still in its infancy. Existing literature supports the occurrences of signed language variation and a distinct variety used by African American/Black signers (Aramburo, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Lucas, Bayley, McCaskill, & Hill, 2013; Lucas, Bayley, Reed, & Wulf, 2001; McCaskill et al., 2011; Woodward, 1976). However, the interpreters' process when working between ASL and spoken English with African American/Black Deaf sign language users who incorporate African American English into their signing

has not been investigated. Interpreters working in this modality consider cultural and linguistic choices that impact the success of an interpreted event. If an interpreter is not familiar with the language variety of this Deaf community subset, they may transfer meaning inaccurately. The focus of this study is to explore how interpreters incorporate African American English in their spoken English interpretation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how interpreters incorporate cultural nuances and African American English in their spoken English interpretations when working with African American/Black signed language users. Since there is no specific literature that speaks directly to this issue, this study was designed to gain empirical evidence. Recent signed language variation research outlines features present in African American/Black signers, Black ASL. This study focused on the incorporation of African American English into signing as this feature originated with Black signers (McCaskill et al., 2011).

ASL/English interpreters discuss sign variations but are often unsure of what to do when a signed message contains linguistic and lexical features that are unfamiliar. Some may wonder how adopting ethnocentric vocabulary and tone and inflection liberties will be perceived by the audience and colleagues. This study may bring some of the discussions held behind closed doors to the forefront with welcomed dialogue on how to meet the needs of the African American/Black Deaf consumers of interpreting services.

By identifying what interpreters do when interpreting between ASL and spoken English with African American/Black Deaf consumers, this study's results can be used to

begin a dialogue on how best to equip interpreters. The results can also inform interpreter education instruction by incorporating varied language models and cultural content into the curriculum. Interpreters can best represent the voice of African American/Black Deaf consumers when their eyes are trained to notice subtle shifts existent within this diverse community.

Theoretical Bases and Organization

Since this study was exploratory in nature, literature did not exist that specifically related to the area of focus. ASL language variation, the use of African American English, and language contact between ASL and African American English studies set the stage for exploration. Accounts of how ASL/English interpreters interpret between ASL and spoken English with African American/Black signed language users are anecdotal at best. In contrast, this study is focused on collecting evidence that would lead to further study of the African American/Black Deaf community and other minority communities, as each group has its own values, customs, and norms.

Limitations of the Study

ASL/English interpreters primarily work in face-to-face situations with the exception of a few settings (e.g., VRS and Video Remote Interpreting). In a live environment, interpreters can enhance their interpretation by relying on environmental cues. Conversely, this study utilized a prerecorded source text, which is not a natural environment for an interpreted event. As a result of using a prerecorded medium, interpreters did not have access to other visual aspects that would have been present in a live situation. Interpreters also did not have the opportunity to prepare beforehand, nor did they have the option to stop the video recording to ask for clarification or the ability

to rewind the tape in the event they wanted to stop and then start again. Without access to environmental context clues, interpreters transferred meaning without the benefit of using those clues as they would in normal interpreted interactions. Context clues aid in the success of the interpretation.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the constraints of time, only two of the 24 participants were interviewed. Each interviewee had more than 20 years of signed language interpreting experience, making it likely that their insights and perspectives could differ greatly from participants who had less experience. All 24 participants completed the survey and recording session. However, in light of the small sample size, the results of this study may not be generalizable.

Lastly, the camera angle was oriented to the laptop screen to record the source text and capture the interpreter's voice. However, the use of dual cameras would have provided additional data by capturing participant facial expressions when interpreting. Qualitative data could have been gathered about what physically happened when interpreters saw signer incorporate African American English into their signed narrative. Data relating to the interpreter's physical state could have assisted in making correlations between their physical state and decision making strategy, in turn providing further conclusions.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study was to investigate how ASL/English interpreters incorporate cultural nuances in their spoken English interpretations when working with African American/Black Deaf signed language users. Interpreters are tasked with making cultural and linguistic decisions during each assignment. The task of transferring meaning can prove more complex when working within this subset of the Deaf community, as some African American/Black users of signed language show evidence of language variation and the incorporation of African American English (AAE) into signed language. Interpreters who are unaware of the community's language variation and use of African American English utterances may misrepresent the signed message and thus affect the success of the interpreted event.

Up to the present time, researchers have not investigated how interpreters incorporate African American English into their interpretations when interpreting for African American/Black Deaf signed language users. The exploratory nature of the current study called for a historical review of the literature specific to ASL language variation, the use of African American English, and language contact between ASL and African American English.

Language Variation - ASL

In 1976, Woodward studied signed language variation through an ethnic and social lens by focusing on Black signers in Georgia. Woodward (1976) asserted that

southern Black signers developed a variety that differed from Whites as a result of language attitudes and educational policy. His assertion aligned with a 1965 study conducted by Croneberg, who also affirmed the educational setting as a basis for dialect variation. Woodward's work was pioneering in that it prompted further study of African American/Black signers and their unique variation. As a White researcher, Woodward experienced challenges in entering the African American/Black Deaf community and capturing their natural language. White researchers noticed a shift when studying southern Black signers, because the Black signers would alter their signing to accommodate the researchers (Woodward, 1976). Aramburo (1989) called this sudden shift code-switching. In doing so, Woodward (1976) reported that Black signers code-switched—took on more White English signs—when conversing with researchers, which impacted the ability of the White researchers to study their natural language.

More than a decade after Woodward's pioneering research, Aramburo (1989) conducted an empirical study to investigate sociolinguistic communication patterns: differences between Black signing and White signing, sign variation, and code-switching. Participants were informally interviewed, one-on-one, for 30 minutes to capture differences; they were also videotaped engaging in interactive conversations to see if Black signers sign differently during Black-Black interaction versus Black-White interaction. Aramburo noted: "Casual observation reveals that the signing of black deaf individuals varies as a function of the race of the other participants in a conversational setting" (pp. 113-114). Black signers signed differently when conversing among themselves in comparison to signing with White signers in terms of facial expression, body movement, and signing space (Aramburo, 1989). Aramburo studied evidence of

code-switching by focusing on a signer's production during Black-White interaction. Aramburo concluded that Black Deaf individuals used Black signs that are unknown to outsiders and that those signs were used and learned as a result of segregated educational facilities. Black Deaf students received their educational instruction apart from their White Deaf counterparts. When Black signers communicated with other Blacks, they used Black signs, but when communicating with White signers they used a more mainstream version of the language.

In 1998, Lewis examined features apparent in Ebonic speakers and African American Deaf signers. When speaking, African Americans have a tendency to exhibit facial expressions and possible exaggerated body movements (Lewis, 1998). These features are also present when African Americans sign (Aramburo, 1989). Lewis (1998) used videotaped narratives of African American signers to investigate linguistic variation in a marked Ebonic form. He noted rhythm, head movement, and body posture variations. This stylistic form was referred to as Ebonic-style signing (Lewis, 1998). Like Aramburo (1989), Lewis also noted a code-switching behavior present within the African American Deaf signing community. He reiterated a point shared by other researchers: African American signers sign differently with those who are within the group versus those outside the group (Aramburo, 1989; Woodward, 1976).

Lucas, Bayley, Reed, and Wulf (2001) studied the lexical variations between African American and White signers, exploring how a shift in language use appeared over time. Since Woodward claimed a variation based on ethnicity, Lucas et al. (2001) looked for a diverse sample with respect to region, ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. To accomplish this, researchers sought a contact person in each

community that would be studied. The contact person was Deaf, known and respected by the community, living within the community, and acting as a key asset for assembling the group of participants. The participants were placed into groups of three to seven to examine specific lexical items and videotaped for three phases of interaction: free conversation, interviews, and response to picture and finger-spelled stimuli. The 207 participants were native or near-native ASL users who learned to sign at a young age and represented three age groups (15-25, 26-54, and 55+) to account for those educated under different Deaf education language policies. In an effort to secure a representative sample, researchers focused on seven locations. According to Lucas et al. (2001), these locations—representative of large and successful Deaf communities—would yield regional variation and would showcase diversity. During the free conversation segment, participants were the only parties in the room. A Deaf researcher conducted interviews with two participants from each group discussing their background, social network, and language use patterns. All participants were shown 34 stimuli from lexical variation work conducted previously. Hand shape, location, and handedness parameters were studied. The research analysis was based on 140 responses from four locations that yielded data from both African American and White signers. When looking at sign variation, Lucas et al. (2001) reported that of the 34 signed samples, African American signers used 28 signs that were unique to that community. This study affirmed previous claims of lexical differences in the areas of handedness, body and mouth movement, and use of space. The results showed African American signers code-switched during monologues and were influenced by African American spoken English. Black and White signers exhibited phonological variation regardless of age (Lucas et al., 2001).

African American English

Since the 1960s, linguists have studied spoken English dialect variations within the African American/Black community. Black English Vernacular was rooted in West African languages and English language contact (Lewis, Palmer, & Williams, 1995). The label used to designate this community-specific dialect has evolved over time. Linguists currently refer to this variation as African American English.

Labov (1969) focused on the logic of nonstandard English used by African American/Black students. He refuted the work of educational psychologists who stated a lack of economic resources as the source of educational disparity for African American/Black students. He deconstructed the myth of "verbal deprivation" (p. 179), and looked at student's language use and intelligence. Verbal deprivation, as defined by educational psychologists, is a child's lack of verbal stimulation in their home environment that affects the child's ability to speak in complete sentences, name common objects, or convey logical thoughts. Labov surmised that students possessed the ability to communicate but are often impacted by a teacher's attitude towards their language. He called for fellow linguists to explore this variation to provide evidence of opposing the view of "verbal deprivation."

Labov's (1969) study considered language patterns of younger children, while Fordham (1999) analyzed the discourse styles of a group of high school students. The students used Ebonics and refused to adopt the Standard English dialect provided through the curriculum. According to Fordham (1999), students used standard dialect with school administrators while using a Black discourse style with others. Language was seen as a way to identify with the group. Use of a Black discourse style conveyed meaning.

Students realized the necessity of standard dialect use for classroom success, although they referred to this form of language use as "acting White" (p. 279). Fordham (1999) also characterized students' actions as "leasing a dialect," (p. 283), which in turn meant using standard English during the hours of nine to three as a means for academic achievement. By "leasing," students retained their power by choosing to conform or not to conform, as they desired.

Wolfram's work in this specialty spans over five decades. He collaborated with Van Hofwegen to conduct a longitudinal study that examined the progressive use of African American English (AAE). A total of 32 children were followed for the first 17 years of their lives. The researchers established six age milestones as points for review. Each child's language use was assessed using a Dialect Density Measure (DDM), which calculated token-based measures consisting of the number of words used. Five factors of focus were related to demographic, social, and self-regard as well as how each affected external factors. The results indicated peak and valley periods of AAE use, which the authors labeled as trajectories: *roller coaster* (a high level of AAE use, followed by a decline, a sharp increase, only to decline again) and *curvilinear* (AAE use is relatively high, there is a decline, which is followed by an increase over time). Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010) also indicated insignificant differences in terms of gender, school racial density, racial peer contacts, and Afro-centrality. Van Hofwegen and Wolfram concluded a correlation between mother's and child's use and age/grade.

Research studies previously mentioned (Fordham, 1999; Labov, 1969; Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010) examined the use of African American English by African American/Black people. Subsequently, signed language researchers observed a similar

phenomenon in African American/Black Deaf signers, which resulted from language contact between African American Black Deaf and non-deaf people.

Language Contact - ASL and African American English

Researchers show evidence of a distinct signed language variety, coined "Black ASL." McCaskill, Lucas, Bayley, & Hill (2011) investigated the structure of Black ASL. The incorporation of African American English (AAE) into signing was one of eight linguistic features studied. The researchers videotaped 96 African American signers in the southern United States from two groups: those over 55 who attended segregated schools and those under 35 who attended integrated schools. In six of the 17 states, Black signers were videotaped during free conversation and interviews. When considering the usage of African American English in Black ASL, McCaskill et al. (2011) observed a greater prevalence in youth. All examples of African American English were represented by those under the age of 35. The participants had consistent intrusions of common words, phrases, and gestures when responding to interview questions. African American English was more visible with this group due to mainstreaming of the students (McCaskill et al., 2011). In a mainstream environment, Deaf students were integrated with their peers, in constant contact with hearing African American English speakers and focused on learning spoken English. Additionally exposure to African American English was gained through movies and media (McCaskill et al., 2011). This study also identified other unique Black ASL linguistic features: a larger signing space as well as facial expression and body movement variations, which are consistent with other researchers who focused on this segment of the population (Aramburo, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Lucas et al., 2001).

Interpreter Process

Language variation—ASL. Lewis (1998) referred to instances when African American Deaf signers code-switch. When the switch happened, the African American/Black interpreter would also code-switch by abandoning Standard English for Ebonics. He attributed this occurrence to the interpreter's ability to recognize "visual cues" (p. 235) to trigger the shift.

Clark (n.d.) investigated how interpreters convey a message while maintaining the integrity and the vocabulary selected to represent an African American style of ASL. Her work focused on the Northwest region of the United States. Clark considered what happens when an interpreter works in an unfamiliar cultural context and encounters unknown signs. She recounted a personal experience of working a funeral service for an African American Deaf woman. While the interpreter coordinator secured five interpreters (three African American and two White), the African American interpreters were tasked with interpreting from English into ASL. The White interpreters assigned to the ASL to English portion of the assignment were not able to capture the tone of the speakers signed communication due to the signer's style (Clark, n.d.).

Language contact—ASL and African American English. A study conducted by Lewis, Palmer, and Williams (1995) considered attitudes of both African American and White interpreters on the use of Black Deaf sign variation and the use of Black English Vernacular. The study included 10 interpreters (five White and five African American) who lived and/or worked in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. Interpreters were grouped according to race for study sessions. Participants completed a questionnaire to report the hours worked per week, number of years in the field, source of

language training, and preferred interpreting settings. Participants also responded to language attitude questions. In each group, four of the interpreters were nationally certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID), and one was not RID certified but was state certified. The last page of the questionnaire included 10 Black English Vernacular terms or phrases for participants to define. To discuss feelings about the questionnaire, a short debriefing session followed. According to Lewis et al. (1995), the African American interpreters would decide to use Black English Vernacular depending on the audience and perceptions from their peers. On the other hand, White interpreters would opt to use a Standard English translation.

Code-switching and the interpreting process was the focus of a second study conducted by the previous researchers. Four certified interpreters, two African American and two White, interpreted a seven-minute videotaped lecture given by an African American speaker who code-switched from Standard English to Black English Vernacular. The study was designed to see what interpreters did when the switch occurred. It was reported that a corporal shift was present in each interpretation (Lewis et al., 1995). The corporal shift was represented by an eye gaze shift to the right and slightly upward of the signer's space when assuming the role of the character. While code switching was present in the source message, there were no differences in the interpreter's affect to match the shifts made by the speaker.

Three years later, Bruce (1998) wrote about cultural terms used within the African American/Black Deaf community that were borrowed from African American English. She discussed how usage of these terms would impact the ability of an interpreter to transfer meaning when working from ASL to spoken English. According to Bruce

(1998), vocal inflection on the part of the interpreter was necessary to reflect meaning best suited for the signed message.

Deaf and interpreter perspective. Lightfoot (2008) investigated interpreting culturally sensitive content in the Video Relay Service (VRS) setting from a consumer and interpreter perspective. In 2007, this exploratory study was conducted during the Deaf People of Color Conference consisting of interviews and surveys examined perceptions and experiences of interpreters and Deaf people of color with an underlying goal of informing interpreter training. Eight interviews were conducted. Of the eight participants, five were interpreters from various racial/ethnic groups and three were Deaf people of color. Three of the five interpreters in this study were nationally certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID). The survey data yielded 85 participants (23 interpreters and 62 Deaf people of color). A review of the data brought light to four areas: message comprehension, politically correct language use, miscues of cultural information, and managing culturally sensitive information. Deaf consumers of color reported the need to repeat their signed message to accommodate some interpreters who did not understand (Lightfoot, 2008). On the other hand, interpreters of color reported issues with comprehending young African American/Black signers who used African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In reference to politically correct language, consumers reported a preference for interpreters to interpret what they see and not to defer to politically correct language. According to Lightfoot (2008), miscue types were omissions, deletions, and substitutions, which resulted in a lack of implicit meaning transfer. Both participant groups noted the management of culturally sensitive information. Lightfoot (2008) reported on "interpreter-centric interpretations" (p. 23),

where an interpreter assigned meaning based on their experience and culture and not the meaning signed by the Deaf person of color, thus skewing the meaning.

Omissions—A New Approach

An experimental study was conducted to analyze omissions by Auslan/English interpreters (Napier, 2004). The aim was to determine factors that influence interpreters' omissions, to ascertain whether interpreters' omissions were conscious or unconscious, and to explore reasons why the omissions occurred. A university lecture was the setting of focus. When meaning is transferred, it should be based upon a linguistic and cultural understanding (Napier, 2004). By building on omission categories from other researchers, Napier (2004) adopted five categories: conscious strategic omissions, conscious intentional omissions, conscious unintentional omissions, conscious receptive omissions, and unconscious omissions. This taxonomy accounted for the spectrum of omissions from cultural mediation to a state of being unaware of information that was not included. All 10 participants were Auslan interpreters who made a total of 341 omissions. Omissions were apparent in each of the five categories. Factors that influenced the occurrence of omissions were context of the situation, familiarity with the environment and participants, and knowledge of the topic (Napier, 2004).

Summary

Black ASL is a language variety that has roots in the era of segregation and exists as a result of educational policy (Aramburo, 1989; Lucas et al., 2013; Lucas et al., 2001). Researchers have studied this variation pre- and post-integration. Today, Black Deaf students primarily attend schools where they are mainstreamed with hearing students (Lucas et al., 2013). Their presence in these schools presents another variable for

variation: language contact with African American English and subsequent incorporation into ASL. According to Lucas et al. (2013), those under the age of 35 are more likely to incorporate African American English into their signing.

African American signers differ from White signers with respect to linguistic and lexical features. Use of signing space, facial expression, and body movement are the main linguistic features reviewed (Aramburo, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Lucas et al., 2001). African American signers often use signs that are unique to their community and show evidence of code-switching (Aramburo, 1989; Lucas et al., 2001; Woodward, 1976). Code switching is evident when African American signers converse with other African American signers. This situational variation also applies to the work of Aramburo (1989). He reported on how an African American Deaf person uses the language based on who is involved and present, much like the words used by their non-Deaf counterparts (Fordham, 1999).

African American/Black signers can produce ASL in a unique manner (Aramburo, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Lucas et al., 2001). Researchers report a difference in aspects such as signing space, body movement, and facial expression. As a result of language contact, African American/Black signers also incorporate African American English into their communication (Lucas et al., 2013; McCaskill et al., 2011). The presence of these features in ASL could impact the success and/or failure of an interpreted event.

Scholarship does not exist that provides empirical evidence of how interpreters incorporate African American English into their interpretations. Interpreter-focused literature provides anecdotal accounts in addition to suggestions on how best to interpret

from an African American Deaf perspective. Additional study is necessary to provide insight into what interpreters do when faced with culturally specific content. Armed with evidence-based interpreter responses, discussions can begin on how best to equip signed language interpreting professionals.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods used for data collection and analysis. The purpose of this study was to explore how American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters navigate the language variety existent within the African American/Black Deaf community. The study also examined how meaning was transferred when African American/Black Deaf signers incorporate African American English (AAE) into signing. A discourse analysis approach was used to ascertain whether the presence of community-specific linguistic and lexical features impact the spoken English interpretation.

Design of the Investigation

In order to understand how ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning, participants simultaneously interpreted a simulated ASL monologue text. Simultaneous interpreting is the process of interpreting into the target language while the source language is being delivered (Russell, 2005). A demographic survey instrument was used to learn more about the interpreter's background and how social factors may impact their interpretation. Semi-structured interviews were added to gain participants' perspectives, discuss their response to the ASL text, and to further explore correlations between interpreter demographics, their interpretation and their exposure to the African American/Black Deaf community. A qualitative approach was used to identify themes and patterns and to describe what occurred.

Deception. Although the use of deception within research studies introduces the possibility of ethical challenges, there is a history of its use within social science research (Barrera & Simpson, 2012; Clarke, 1999). To more completely address the research question, deception was used in this study in the form of information withheld from participants. A call for participants was sent via email to nationally certified ASL/English interpreters who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The call recruited participants based on the premise of examining an interpreter's process when interpreting between ASL and spoken English (see Appendix A). The study actually explored how the participant interprets for an African American/Black Deaf person whose signed message included specific linguistic and lexical features. This approach was not used to mislead participants but to capture their natural response to the signed message. If participants had been told the study would examine their interpretation of an African American/Black Deaf person who incorporates AAE into their signed message, there was concern that they would focus on this specific feature, African American English, and pull focus away from the holistic message. Deception was used to maintain the integrity of the interpretation and prevent unintentional adaptation of their interpretation.

Population. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) sets standards for professional interpreters. Interpreters earn certification from RID "if they demonstrate professional knowledge and skills that meet or exceed the minimum professional standards necessary to perform in a broad range of interpretation and transliteration assignments" (RID, 2015, para. 1). Using certification as an inclusion criterion for the study provided a baseline for interpreter knowledge and skill. The goal

was to recruit a sample from RID by convenience sampling, which asks for volunteers from a professional network who meet a set of characteristics (Hale & Napier, 2013). Potential participants were eligible for the study if they were interpreters who held national certification and resided in the Washington, DC metropolitan area (including Washington, DC and suburbs of Maryland and northern Virginia).

This locale was selected for a few reasons. It was convenient, as the researcher lives in this area. There is also a large Deaf and interpreting community. ASL/English interpreters working in this community gain exposure to a diverse Deaf population with varied signing styles due to proximity to Gallaudet University, an educational environment focused on educating deaf and hard of hearing students. Interpreters also have the opportunity to interpret in a variety of settings.

A search to locate nationally certified interpreters in the Washington, DC metropolitan area utilized RID's "Find a member" online database. In January 2015, a call for participants was emailed to those who opted to have their email listed on the website (see Appendix A). The call included the purpose of the study, participant responsibility, time commitment, and researcher contact information. A total of 43 interpreters responded to the call. Their responses were received via email and were manually captured in an Excel spreadsheet noting timestamp and contact information. Due to the number of responses received, those who replied to the call for participants were sent a response via email providing four dates and appointment times for the recording session. Scheduling was based on participant preference and response time.

Source Text. Signed language variation studies conducted within the African American/Black Deaf community cite linguistic and lexical study features (Aramburo,

1989; Lewis et al., 1995; Lewis, 1998; Lucas et al, 2013; Lucas et al, 2001; McCaskill et al., 2011). This study was designed to focus on the signer's facial expression, signing space, body and head movement, incorporation of AAE into signing, and constructed action/constructed dialogue use and the participant's spoken English interpretation. A narrowed focus was assumed, which examined the use of African American English in the interpretations.

A videotape review and online search were conducted to locate an ASL text that included lexical and linguistic features necessary for study. There were few videotapes with African American/Black Deaf signers. The videos reviewed were used primarily for training purposes and did not include the features described above. An online search yielded numerous African American/Black signers, although none captured the true essence of the features studied. The limitation of publicly available source material prompted the creation of an ASL text to avoid perceptions and bias based on the outward appearance. Therefore, a 10-minute video created specifically for this study was infused with the linguistic and lexical features previously mentioned. The narrative chronicles the presenter's background, including language use, educational environments, parental perspective, and identity struggles.

In qualitative research, the researcher brings their own background and perspective to the selection and interpretation of data (Malterud, 2001). In this study, the researcher is a second language user who learned ASL in adulthood. To validate the use of linguistic and lexical features for study, the video was viewed by several African American/Black individuals: Deaf language consultants, Deaf community members, and interpreters.

ASL language model. To find an African American/Black Deaf person who would naturally incorporate the linguistic and lexical features for study, informal meetings were conducted with community stakeholders: African American/Black Deaf language consultants, members of the African American/Black Deaf community, African American/Black interpreters, and professors. A list of potential ASL models was developed. A language consultant recommended an ASL professor. This professor is knowledgeable about Black ASL and language variation studies. The ASL professor agreed to become the language model for the study.

The language model received her primary and secondary education in a school for the Deaf as well as in a mainstream, public school. After graduating from a community college, she transferred to Gallaudet University where she received her bachelor's degree in ASL with a minor in Deaf Studies and Linguistics. She holds a master's degree in Sign Language Teaching. She is currently a full-time professor for Gallaudet's Department of ASL and Deaf Studies. In 2013, she received the first Dr. Nathie Marbury teaching award. She aspires to obtain a doctoral degree. Her research will be centered on the African American/Black Deaf community.

At the time of the recording, the language model was also younger than 35 years of age. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, African American/Black Deaf people in this age group more often than not attend public schools and come into constant contact with their African American/Black peers. Based on her age, her educational background and language contact within the African American/Black community, the model may be more likely to incorporate AAE into her signed language production (Lucas et al., 2013; McCaskill et al., 2011).

The language model chosen for this study started learning African American English terms while spending time with her family members. While at Gallaudet University, she was exposed to Deaf students who were born in the United States as well as other countries and used various signing methods. She also began to incorporate AAE into her signing in certain environments. This language model was ideal due to a command of ASL and natural incorporation of AAE into her signed language.

Data Collection

Recording session. To investigate how ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning, participants simultaneously interpreted an ASL source text into spoken English. The recording sessions were conducted face-to-face in a meeting room. The meeting room was set up with a laptop placed on a round table, the source text video was cued, and a video camera was placed in a stationary position behind where the interpreter was seated in the room. The participants sat facing the laptop and the video camera was positioned behind the participant to their left. The camera angle was oriented to the laptop screen to record the source text and capture the interpreters' voice.

When participants arrived for the recording session, they consented to video recording (see Appendix B). Participants were provided a context for the source text video, which included the setting, participants, and purpose. Recording session logistics were also explained. In this case, participants were responsible for pressing play on the video when ready to begin interpreting. When they pressed play, they saw the video title and a prompt to begin interpreting in the form of a countdown from five to one. After the countdown, the screen faded to black and they would began interpreting when the ASL language model appeared. The source text was 10 minutes in length. Participants were

given one opportunity to interpret the text and could not rewind the video. Additionally when the source text ended, the screen faded to black again. At that point, participants were instructed to leave their seat to alert the researcher so the researcher could stop the video camera.

To reduce observer's paradox—the presence of the researcher impacting their interpretation—the researcher explained all logistics, started the video camera, then exited the room (Bell, 1984; Schembri, 2008). The meeting room location, setup and logistics were maintained for each participant.

Survey. In signed language variation studies, researchers consider social factors and their impact on language use. Those studies focus on region, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. To solicit data about participant background and to determine whether age, race, ethnicity, gender, experience, and/or age of language acquisition have any bearing on the interpretation, this study considered a similar list of social factors, in addition to national signed language interpreting certification. For signed language interpreters, certification is a measure to attest to minimum standards of skill and knowledge (RID, 2015).

A demographic survey was developed and administered through Google Forms (see Appendix C). To gain responses to social factors, a closed-question format was used with an exception of the ethnicity question where participants had the option to select all applicable groups. Participants who agreed to further contact, if necessary, submitted their email address.

The survey link was sent via email to participants with confirmed appointments for a recording session. It was not necessary to collect this data from those who did not

complete both tasks. Participants were asked to complete the survey prior to their recording session.

Debriefing. The research protocol used deception, which withheld information about the purpose of this study. To inform participants of the aim of the study, a debriefing script was developed (See Appendix D). This script outlined the true purpose of the study and gave participants an opportunity to withdraw their participation. The debriefing script was adapted from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Office of Grants and Faculty Development (UW-O, 2012). Email addresses provided during the survey were used to contact all participants for debriefing and to gauge interest in participating in an interview. If a participant did not provide their email address during survey data collection, their email address was retrieved from their initial response to the call for participants.

Interview session. Semi-structured interviews were added to the study design later. This qualitative method was intended to include the participant perspective. The interview session was designed to learn more about the participant's background and experience working with members of the African American/Black Deaf community. Interviews were also used to discuss their decision-making process when interpreting between ASL and spoken English. Participants who completed the survey and recording session were emailed a debriefing script. Included in the script was a statement requesting that participants reply to discuss the study further.

Interviews were conducted one on one using Zoom, an online video conferencing platform that allowed for flexibility in scheduling. A list of possible interview questions

was developed (see Appendix E). The session was conducted by asking follow-up questions and using probes based on their responses.

Data Analysis

Survey. Survey responses received from each participant were automatically captured in a Google spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was used to sort and tabulate fact-based responses. Each participant provided their email address for follow up.

Recording session. The ASL language model and researcher transcribed the source text. The specific time markers where African American English was incorporated into signed language was noted. When participants completed their recording session, their files were transferred from the video camera and saved onto a password-protected laptop. The recording files were transcribed to accurately represent their spoken English discourse. The notations that had previously been made to identify the occurrence of AAE in the source text were used for further analysis. First participant transcripts were reviewed in comparison to the source text as a whole. The participants' transcripts were then examined for evidence of AAE use. With this in mind, transcripts that did not provide evidence of AAE were set aside for another review.

Review of the transcripts consisted of marking the transcript based upon the source text content before and after the use of AAE. As a result, interpretations that did not incorporate AAE were placed into three categories: omission, external processing, and discourse chunking. Discourse chunking is the segmentation of dialogue arranged into chunks (Midgley, 2003). In the source material, there were seven instances where the signer incorporated AAE into signed language. Qualitative methods were used to

note what was said to identify patterns or themes, and quantitative methods were used to count the frequency of omissions, external processing and discourse chunking.

Interview session. All study participants were emailed a debriefing script. A statement within the script asked participants to respond with interest to discuss the study further. Thirteen of the 24 participants responded with interest. Due to timeline constraints, two participants were chosen at random using an Excel random number generator formula.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one using Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. Interviews were recorded and a transcript was created for both sessions. Responses were noted in an Excel spreadsheet to identify themes, patterns, and relationships.

In this chapter an overview of the methods used for discourse analysis were described. As stated previously, methods of discourse analysis vary greatly. Since there are no prior research studies focused on the interpreter's use of African American English, this study was designed to best answer the research questions. Ultimately, the study aims to encourage future examination on the topic. By acknowledging the signed language variety of the African American/Black Deaf community, signed language professionals can gain insight into how best to interpreter for community members who incorporate AAE into their signing.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the research findings on how ASL/English interpreters "give voice" to African American/Black Deaf people when interpreting between ASL and English. Participants simultaneously interpreted a narrative signed by an African American/Black Deaf person. The narrative focused on the personal experiences of the presenter, including her background and identity struggles. Participant data are reported in three categories: survey, recording session, and semi-structured interviews.

The source language message included utterances of the signer incorporating African American English into signed language. In this chapter, the researcher reports on the findings from the spoken English interpretation in comparison to the lexical items used within the signed message. To learn more about the participants, results of the demographic data collected are shared to provide insight into the influence of various social characteristics. Lastly, interview data offers participant perspectives and more explanation about their thought worlds when interpreting into English.

Presentation of the Findings

Data was collected over a three-month period from January through March 2015. It was expected that anywhere from one to five interpreters would respond to the call for participants; a total of 43 interpreters responded. This overwhelming response, contrary to expectations, necessitated establishing a system for effectively managing the recording session as a lone researcher. The system took into consideration the potential participants

and their response to the initial call. When responding to the initial call, many potential participants stated their preference as to the time of day or specific days that would accommodate their busy schedules. In an effort to establish a more manageable sample, those who responded were given the option of four dates and times over the course of one week to meet for the recording session. Once dates and times were sent to potential participants, 24 were confirmed for a recording session.

The sample is comprised of a total of 24 nationally certified interpreters who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The survey was completed online prior to the recording session appointment. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and constraints of time, two of the 24 participants were chosen at random for interview.

Interpreter Demographics

The 24 participants are all ASL/English interpreters who are nationally certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) and live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Respondents were asked to complete a fact-based survey to collect demographic data. The data collected provided insight into the participant's background and was used to determine whether social factors such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, experience, mode of language acquisition, and/or age of language acquisition would have any bearing on the interpretation. As a condition of this study, only those who participated in the recording session were asked to complete the survey.

Of the 24 participants, 23 were female and one was male. The field of American signed language interpreting is a female-dominated profession. Moreover, study participant figures were comparable to professional statistics provided by the national certifying body. In the 2013 annual report of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf,

Inc. (RID), the membership was reported to be 87.3% female and 12.6% male (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., 2013).

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the participants (42%) were between the ages of 36 and 45. Conversely the smallest percentage (8%) represented were those over 56. Thirty-three percent of participants were between the ages of 26 and 35, which closely mirrors the ages of those in the largest group of participants.

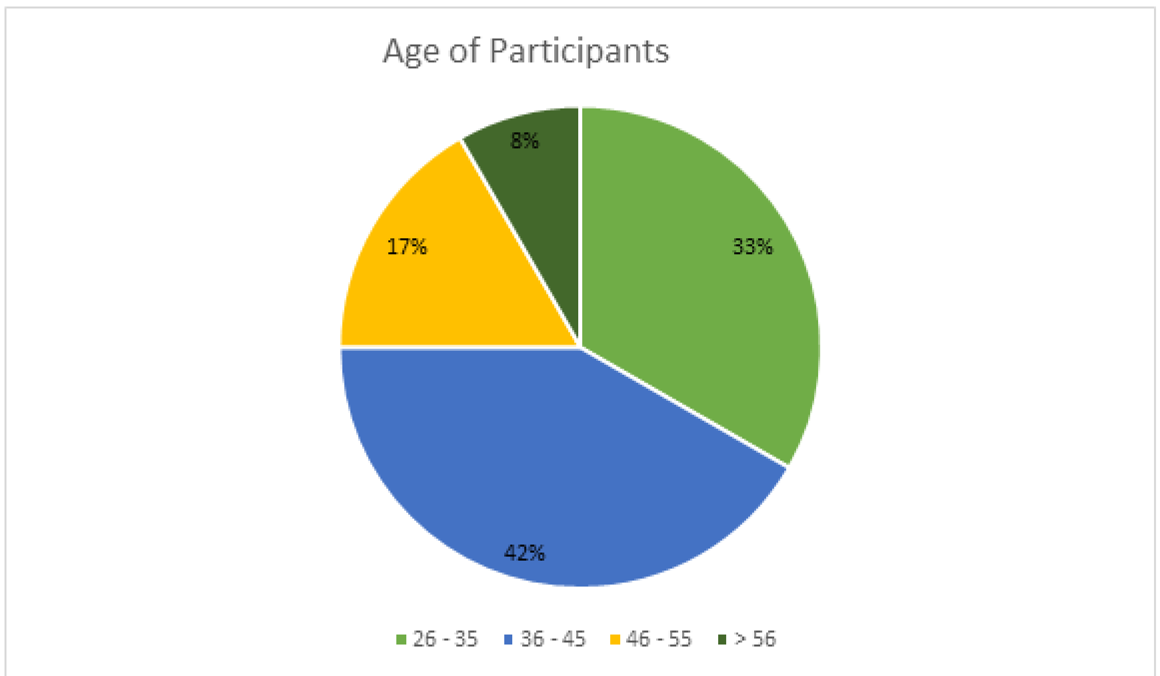

Figure 1. Age of Participants

Participants were asked to specify their ethnicity. This question provided participants the option to select one or multiple categories that reflect their identity. A greater percentage of participants (59%) identify as White (see Figure 2). As in the RID data, the majority of interpreters are White. Of the 9,345 members who reported their ethnicity, 87.71% were Euro-American/White. The largest minority group who reported their ethnicity was the African American/Black population at 4.7%. In this study, eight

participants identify as African American/Black. This figure represented 35% of the sample studied. This number may reflect the higher percentage of African American/Black interpreters who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The second largest minority group reported by RID was the Asian American/Pacific Islander group at 1.82%. This study included one Asian or Asian American participant, 4% of the study population, in addition to one biracial (African American or Black and White) participant, also 4% of the sample.

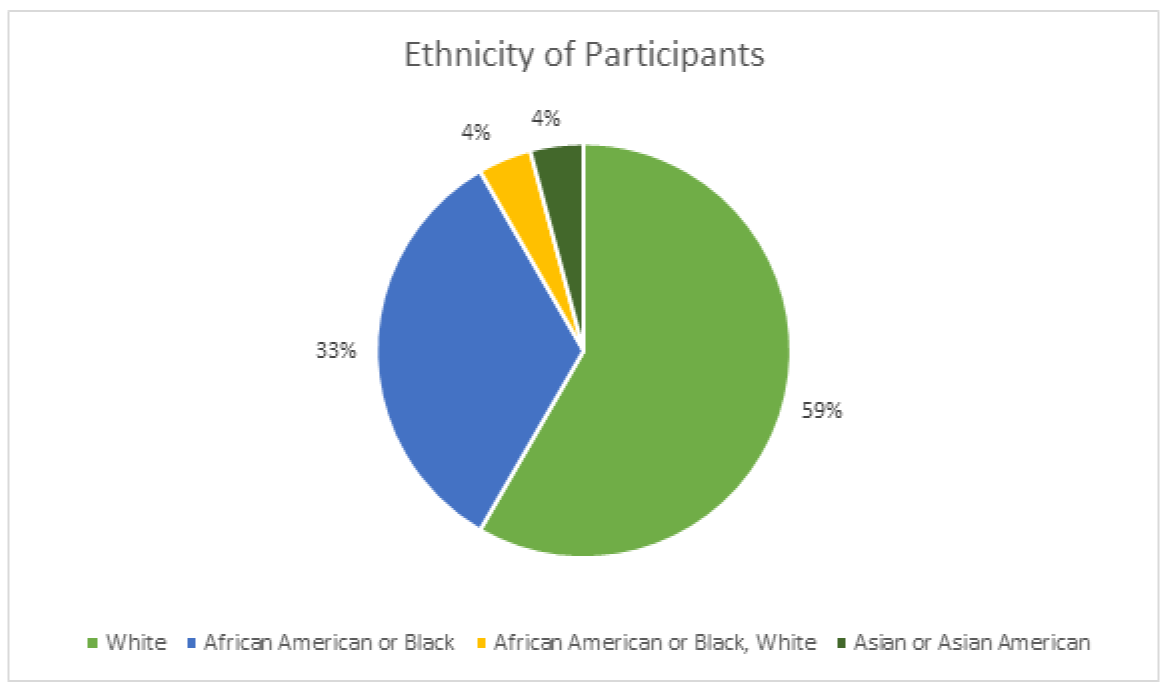

Figure 2. Ethnicity of Participants

Since ASL/English interpreters enter the profession through a variety of pathways, participants were asked to identify their path of language acquisition as well as their age when acquisition began. Although the language acquisition question allowed for only one response, one participant noted that she learned in all environments and methods provided. Participants primarily learned American Sign Language (ASL) in formal classroom settings (see Figure 3). This includes primary, secondary, and

postsecondary education but is not limited to those specific environments. This label encompasses all environments where a student attended a class. A greater number of study participants, a total of 16 (67%), were trained in formal settings. This group is considered second language users, as their language acquisition occurred later in life. In the field of American signed language interpreting, many interpreters are second language learners making them analogous to study participants.

The remaining participants learned signed language through their Deaf parent(s), extended family members, or members of the Deaf community. Of those eight, three are Deaf-parented interpreters (one with one or more Deaf parents), one learned from family members, and four learned from the Deaf community. All 24 participants started learning ASL by the age of 25. Eleven learned between the ages of 19 and 25, 10 between the ages of 6 and 18, and three before the age of 5.

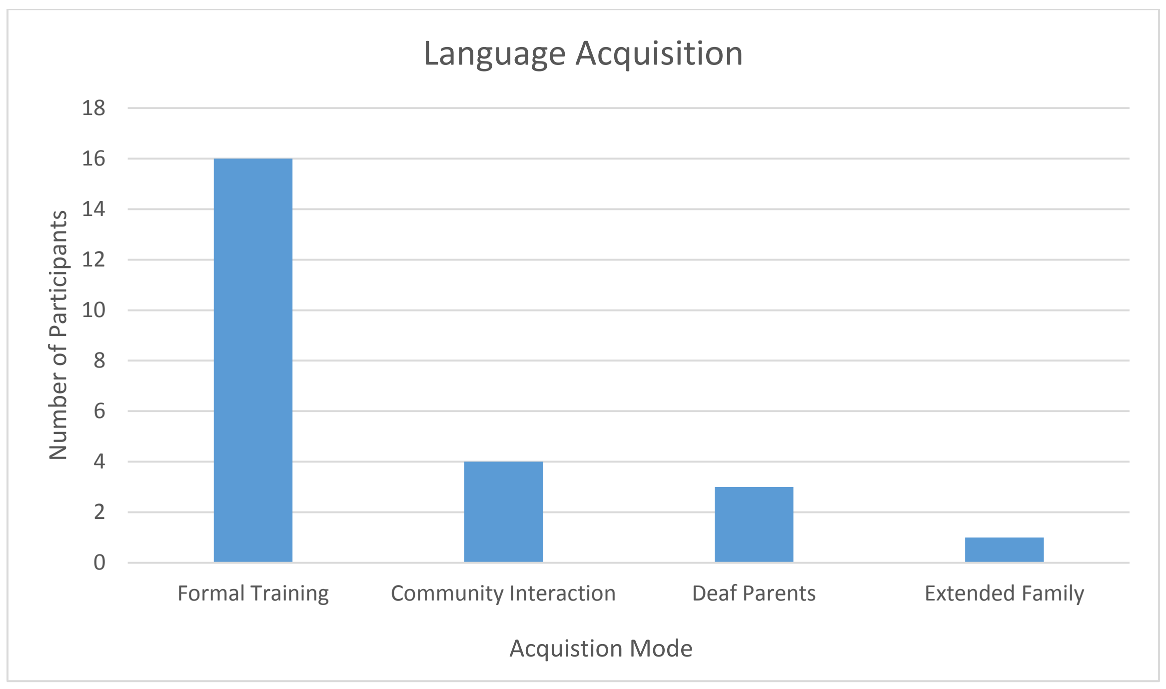

Figure 3. Mode of Language Acquisition

In regard to language acquisition, participants were asked to identify which region they lived in when they started learning ASL. This question was included to determine whether their geographic region influenced their interpretation. The regional categories used are those outlined by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) (see regional information in Figure 4). Following the map of RID, the United States is broken into five regions, and, as shown in Table 1, participants reported living in all five regions when language acquisition began. A greater number of participants lived in Region 2 (Southeast) when they started learning signed language.

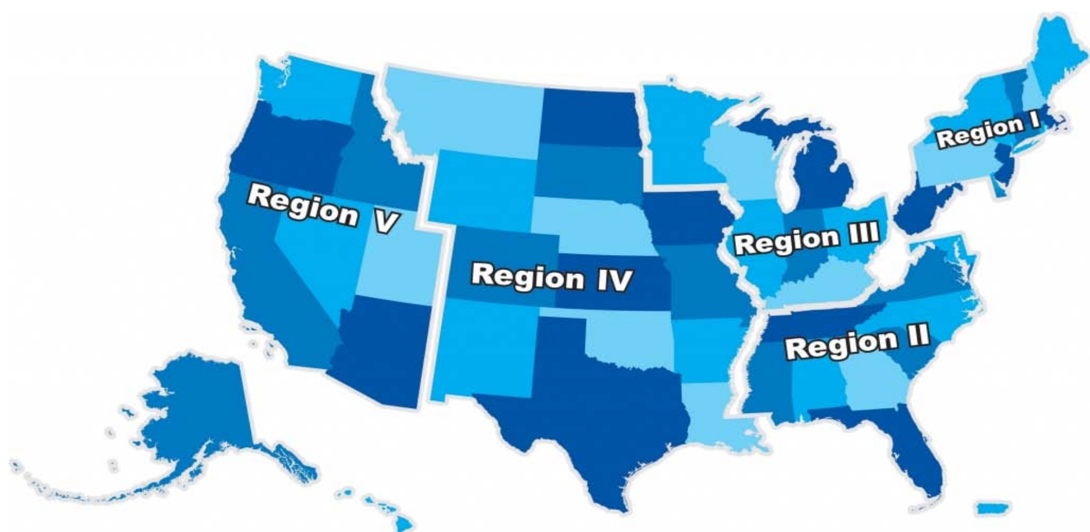

Figure 4. RID Regions Map (RID, n.d.)

Table 1

Geographical Regions of Language Acquisition

Geographical Regions of Language Acquisition	Number of Participants
Region 1 – Northeast	1
Region 2 – Southeast	9
Region 3 – Midwest	2
Region 4 – Central	4
Region 5 – Pacific	8

Participants were asked to select the number of years since earning national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID). Since Participants were asked to select the number of years since earning national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID). Since holding a certification is a measure of professional knowledge and skills, this question sought to elicit whether or not the number of years the participants were certified had an effect on how they managed the source material content. Of the 24 participants, 71% have been certified anywhere from six to 15 years (see Figure 5). For the category of 16-20 years, there were four participants (17%). Those in the minority were those who have been certified more than 20 years and those with fewer than five years, 4% and 8% respectively.

In addition to earning certification, participants were also asked how long they have worked as an interpreter. This question gathered data about their length of work experience to determine whether or not experience impacted their ability to manage the source text content. There were 11 participants (46%) who had been working as interpreters for 11-15 years. The second largest reporting were six participants who have worked over 20 years (25%).

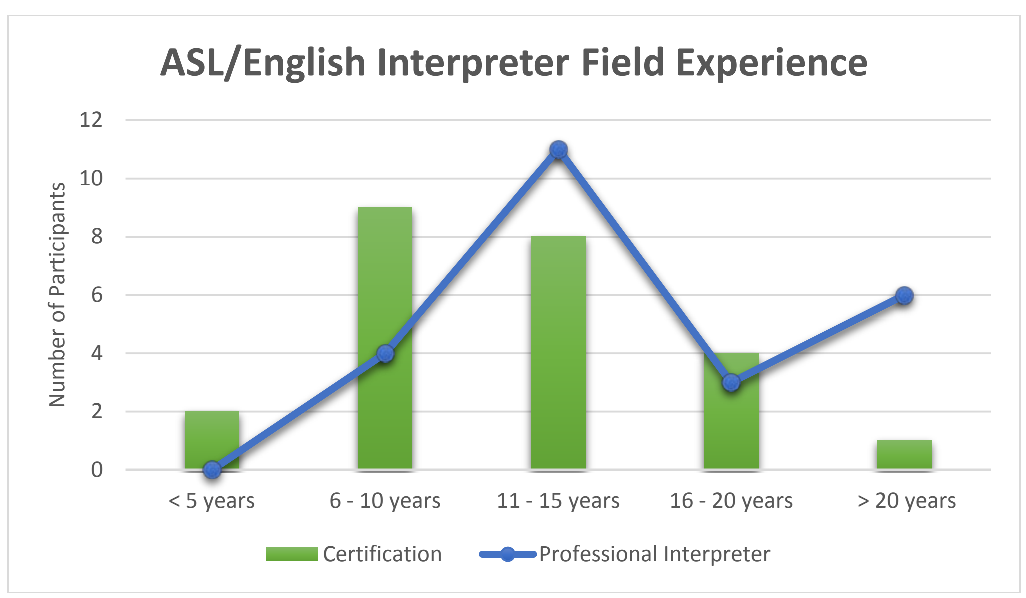

Figure 5. ASL/English Interpreter Field Experience

Recording Session

The 24 participants were all ASL/English interpreters nationally certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. They interpreted into English a 10-minute source text that purposefully included lexical items borrowed from African American English and incorporated into signed language. There were a total of seven instances in the source video where anywhere from one to five utterances from African American English were represented in listing form by nine signs (see Table 2). Three of the signs used were repeated within in the seven instances. English gloss labels, shown in all capital letters, were uniquely assigned to each sign.

Table 2

Lexical Items

	Lexical Items	English Gloss
1		MY BAD
2		MAKING MONEY
3		TIGHT
4		THAT'S RIGHT
5		HONEST (one-handed)

6		HONEST (two-handed)
7		FS(bad)
8		(CONTENT) NOT GOOD
9		FOOL

The aim of the study was to learn what participants did when they saw the nine utterances borrowed from African American English. Data analysis would determine whether the participants incorporated and/or omitted AAE or skewed the interpretation of signed message.

Participants who did not use African American English terms in their interpretations are accounted for in three strategic categories: omissions, external processing, and discourse chunking. An omission was noted if the target message did not

contain a referent to the signs in the source message. During external processing, the participant paused from the target message interpretation and verbalized what they saw happening in the source message. The participant then continued their target message interpretation. Discourse chunking was used when the participant provided a target message interpretation but did not include a referent to the signs used in the source message. The interpretation was more general in nature and oftentimes did not include specific details. The findings are presented based on the seven listing form utterances. Table 3 shows utterances in lexical form, the type of interpretation strategy employed, and participant percentages based on the strategy used. The utterances are shown in all capital letters representing their English gloss.

For utterances two through seven, most participants used an omission strategy. Omissions occurred anywhere from 33-100% of the time (see Table 3). Utterance five included one sign, which was omitted by 100% of study participants.

One participant used external processing for utterances two and seven. The participant clearly saw the signs and identified them as a reflection of words used in a previous utterance. For utterance two, she said, “these are obviously all words that I don't really have access to, but they’re signs in the Black community that reflect words used in the Black community.” In the same way, she responded to utterance seven by saying, “and then these are the same terms that she brought up when she talked about meeting Black deaf people.”

Discourse chunking strategies were used more often for utterance one. The target message interpretation made reference to the utterance as words, terms, jargon, or slang. This strategy was used by 67% of the participants.

One participant used African American English in her interpretation of utterance four. Of all 24 interpretations, this participant is the only one who used African American English. She said, “people would say like, oh, bad, champ, or whatever.”

Table 3

Interpreting Strategies

	Utterance	Omission	External processing	Discourse Chunking
1	MY-BAD	33% (8)	0	67% (16)
2	MAKING MONEY; TIGHT	50% (12)	4% (1)	46% (11)
3	THAT’S RIGHT; HONEST (one-handed)	87% (21)	0	13% (3)
4	FS(bad); HONEST(two-handed)	83% (20)	0	13% (3) *4% (1)**
5	HONEST (two-handed)	100% (24)	0	0
6	HONEST (one-handed); FS(bad)	83% (20)	0	17% (4)
7	HONEST (two-handed); HONEST (one-handed); NOT GOOD; FOOL; TIGHT	67% (16)	4% (1)	29% (7)

*4% (1) - interpretation included African American English

Interview Session

Interview sessions were added subsequent to survey and recording session data collection. Initial data analysis showed evidence of patterns of the use of omission and discourse-chunking strategies. For the most part, participants did not use African American English in their interpretation. Semi-structured interviews focused on sharing the interpreter’s perspective with the researcher. Of the 24 study participants, two were chosen at random for interview.

Interviews were conducted, because looking at only the video-recorded data, which consisted of comparing their interpretation to the source material and counting instances where they used African American English, would not have provided insight into their interpretations. Interviews allowed participants to explain some of their

interpreting process decisions. As stated previously during the recording session results, participants overwhelmingly omitted the African American English terms. Only one participant used African American English on one occasion. Interviews were structured to learn why this occurred. It was suspected that the lack of African American English use was because interpreters do not have frequent exposure to the African American/Black Deaf community and thus would not have access to the vocabulary necessary to represent the signs in spoken English. Participants were asked about their current and previous exposure to the African American/Black Deaf community. Additional questions elicited information about their interpreting strategies when they see unfamiliar signs and how they ensure accuracy under those circumstances. Frequency counts, presented in isolation, would not aid in explaining the strategies used in the participant's target message.

As indicated in the methodology chapter, the interview sessions were conducted one-on-one via Zoom, an online video conferencing platform, approximately two months after the recording session. Interviews took place after recording sessions were transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review the source material before answering questions about the recording session.

Jill and Leah (see Table 4) are pseudonyms assigned to the interview participants to maintain their confidentiality. Both have worked in the field of signed language interpreting for more than 20 years. Although their entry into the field differs, each has maintained national certification for a minimum of five years. Jill learned sign language before the age of 25, while American Sign Language is the first language Leah learned. Both of Leah's parents are Deaf and use ASL.

Table 4

Interview Participants Demographics

	Jill	Leah
Age	36 – 45	36 - 45
Ethnicity	African American/Black, White	White
Language Acquisition (age)	19 – 25	< 5
Language Acquisition (method)	Formal training	Deaf parents
Certification (years)	11 – 15	6 - 10
Professional Experience (years)	> 20	> 20

Interview sessions were conducted two months after the recording session. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was given the option to review the source material video. The offer was suggested to refresh their memory and to add to the discussion as each articulated what they saw in the source message, how they responded to what they saw, and how they felt about their target message interpretation. Both participants declined the offer for similar reasons. Jill said, “It’s still fresh on my mind,” and Leah commented, “It feels like yesterday. It was a striking enough experience to remember.”

Interview with Jill. Jill was asked to share her thoughts about the presenter’s signing style. She responded by saying:

> It felt to me like, well if I were to put it in a hearing context and draw a parallel. I would put it in the context of a hearing Black child who goes to an “academy of excellence” and knows how to speak to the teachers, knows what the teachers want—as far as register, language, vocabulary choice—and then gets home and within the family has whatever the home dialect is. And can code switch between the two. What I felt like I saw was that code switching.

Jill mentioned the term “code switching” in her response. This term refers to a shift a person makes in their discourse. Researchers have studied the presence of this shift when African American/Black community members converse with those outside their race (Fordham, 1999). There is also research that points to this occurrence in the language use of African American/Black Deaf people (Aramburo, 1989; Lewis, 1998; Woodward, 1976). This shift sometimes occurs when those with whom one is communicating does not share the same race as the speaker or signer. Jill was asked to explain what cues or evidence she noticed when “code switching” occurred. She described the switch:

> At one moment she’s the presenter introducing herself to the audience, in one way, then “code switches” to and now I’m going to tell you about my family, what shaped me and made me who I am. She uses role shifts. She knows how to communicate with white folks but this is how I communicate in my life. I noticed a difference when she was having a conversation with friends versus communicating in the school environment.

After considering the presenter’s style, questioning focused on the pace of the presentation. This question was used to gauge whether the speed of the message impeded the interpreter’s ability to interpret into spoken English using African American English. Jill felt the pace of the presentation would have felt more like a normal pace if she had time to prepare with the presenter beforehand. She would have preferred to ask questions such as, “What’s your goal? What’s the main point? Are there any signs you will use that I might need to know?”

Although she hypothetically considered what her interpretation would have been if she had time to prepare for the assignment, she stressed the importance of preparation.

As a follow-up, Jill was asked what she does in situations when she does not have time to prepare in advance with the Deaf person and when she sees signs she does not know. She said:

> With live situations, I can stop the presenter to ask for clarification. And if I can't do that, I can use closure skills. That's what's nice about having a team. Maybe what I didn't catch, my team caught. But with video I can't stop it and go back.

When the ASL model incorporated African American English (AAE) into signed language, she typically did so by signing the utterances in listing form. Each list included anywhere from one to five expressions. These expressions incorporated in signed language result from language contact between the African American/Black community and Deaf members of the community. As Jill explains what she saw in the source material, she mentioned a listing of terms. The listing she referred to was the incorporation of AAE into signed language. She was asked to describe what she saw. She giggled before responding to say:

> At that moment, I thought, oh this is what we are getting tested on. The next thought I had was if this was a real life situation, I would have had some sort of exchange with the person. I thought about what I would normally do on an assignment. I would prep to know more about the audience, context and vocabulary. Also the Deaf person would share specialized vocabulary. Also thought about the signs I don't know and how to make a coherent sentence out of them.

Jill shared her final thoughts at the end of the interview session. Her parting words were:

> In this area it is not out of the norm to check in about signs or fingerspelling. It's a hallmark of the area, since there are so many transplants. I typically feel like I can handle just about anything. But there are still situations that I am not going to be the best match—putting ego aside. It's humbling but also necessary and healthy to remember that there are communities out there that I'm not well acquainted with and that I might not have all the vocabulary and community knowledge. That's an area that I can work on.

Interview with Leah. During the recording session, all participants were provided the context for the source material. Jill and Leah were asked about their initial response when they saw an African American/Black presenter on the screen. Leah's reply was:

> Because I know about a current body of research going on right now with interpreting and Black Deaf Americans, I thought oh, ok I think this is where this might be going. To be honest part of that is because I so rarely see images of black deaf Americans on samples. Then I thought oh crap this is going to show where I am weak.

Leah was also asked to consider the pace of the presentation and to provide an assessment of the presenter's signing style. She said:

> It was clear in a way that people pace themselves to get information across. It tends to be slower and clearer. It was a very nice pace. It was set up like she was somebody sharing this information with a room of individuals while standing on a stage. But when she showed examples of Black ASL, it would go faster. At that point maybe she was showing a more conversational style.

When transcribing the recording sessions, it appeared as though participants interpreted with ease at certain points in the message and did not understand, for whatever reason, other parts of the message. To gain the participants' perspective on accessing the message, Jill and Leah were asked if there were portions of the signed message that were easier to understand than other portions. Leah responded:

> Anytime it was just sharing information, then I felt comfortable with that. When it was just storytelling, I felt like I could do that. But once it shifted over to vocabulary items that I don't really know it was difficult. Like for example when she was giving the Black ASL. It's not even like I knew it and I wasn't comfortable saying it. It was that I didn't even know what the equivalent was. I couldn't even go from specific to general. I could not do what I wanted to do with the material, which was to actually represent what she was trying to say.

When participants completed their recording session, many wanted to speak about the source material and share their reaction. To learn more about what the participants wanted to share in the moment, Leah was asked how she felt after completing the recording session. She openly shared:

> I was thinking I could have done a better job. Wow, there's a whole lot of stuff I didn't realize I didn't know. I knew when I was missing stuff. And conscious of when I missed stuff. When my anxiety levels go up it's even harder to think through what the signs could possibly mean.

Although Jill and Leah have worked in the Washington, DC metropolitan area for a combined total of 13 years, they shared that they do not work with members of the African American/Black Deaf community often. They also recalled having limited

exposure to the community in the area where they learned sign language. When considering how an interpreter who does not work within the community prepares for the assignment and how interpreters can equip themselves to interpret effectively, Leah's response was tailored to Deaf minority members at large. She said:

> When I work with minority community members they are a professor in a class, so their language is more educational ASL. I think there is a fair amount of accommodating that goes on by many of the minorities. They are accommodating to the majority culture as far as language use. Interpreters need exposure to Deaf people from all minority cultures. The images we see are White Deaf Americans. I do realize that I live through my privilege. But if I want to be a more well-rounded person, I need to go out to deaf gatherings for the minority groups. I would hope there were workshops about the topic where we could go to and learn.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to learn how ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning when interpreting between ASL and spoken English. The presentation of the findings represents participants' demographics, decision-making strategies, and perspectives. The perspective of two participants is not generalizable to all study participants but provided insight into their decision-making process and could shed light on the decisions of other participants.

A demographic survey was included to ascertain whether social factors of age, race, ethnicity, gender, experience, mode of language acquisition, and/or age of language acquisition had any bearing on the interpretation. Insignificant differences were noted in all factors with the exception of ethnicity and mode of language acquisition. The

minority groups, African American/Black and Asian/Asian American, used omission strategies more than the other ethnicity groups. Participants who learned signed language in formal settings and through community interaction showed similar averages with respect to omissions and discourse chunking strategy use. However, Deaf-parented interpreters' omission strategy average was far less than the other mode of language acquisition groups. Since the study focused primarily on the use of African American English in their target message, a number of the social factors listed above did not necessarily impact their interpretation, as the participants used omission and discourse chunking strategies to manage the content.

A survey question regarding the region where participants learned signed language was intended to relate to the exposure or lack thereof to the African American/Black Deaf community. It was assumed that interpreters working in the Washington, DC metropolitan area would have more exposure to this subset of the Deaf community. However, both participants who were interviewed shared a different experience. Each reported a lack of African American/Black Deaf exposure in their previous community—where they learned signed language—as well as their current community. Without the benefit of interviewing all participants, it is difficult to surmise their level of exposure. However based on the frequency of omission strategy use, the study participants had limited exposure to the African American Black Deaf community members who use African American English.

Jill and Leah reported a limited exposure with the African American/Black Deaf community. Although Jill and Leah lacked exposure to this subset of the Deaf community, they recognized a difference in how signs are produced. Jill noticed a switch

in the presenter's signing style. Aramburo (1989) referred to this shift as code-switching in terms of changes in facial expression, body movement, signing space, and language used based on who is involved in the discourse. A variation in a signer's style was also researched in terms of rhythm, head movement, and body posture variations (Lewis, 1998). Lewis also labeled this stylistic form Ebonic-style signing. Leah also noticed a change in the presenter's signing style, referring to it as "giving Black ASL." She clearly recognized the incorporation of AAE into signed language but did not have access to the vocabulary to represent the expression by using African American English.

The interview participants were asked whether they felt interpreters in the Washington, DC metropolitan area have more exposure to African American/Black Deaf users of signed language. Jill felt it would solely depend on where they work. In contrast, Leah said:

> It seems there is a larger population of Black people here in general. I've come across more Black Deaf folks here than anywhere else I've been as well as more Black interpreters. DC is the mecca for Deaf people and interpreters, so you're more likely to get more people from a variety of backgrounds in each group.

Leah's statement aligns nicely with United States Census figures. In 2013, Black or African American individuals comprised 49.5% of the District of Columbia residents compared to the 13.2% nationally (United States Census Bureau, 2013). This number included those who only reported one race. It is fairly safe to reason that if the population figures for African American/Black people were well above the national average, it is likely the African American/Black Deaf population figures correspond.

Interpreting simultaneously from ASL to spoken English is no easy task. Interpreters working in dual modalities consider multiple factors that influence their decision-making process and vocabulary use. Padden (2002/2001) outlined four constraints: memory, language retrieval, attention, and competent articulation. A combination of factors can impact how an interpreter produces the target message. It appeared study participants dealt with the constraint of language retrieval. In this instance, participants attempted to select appropriate language in spite of not having the vocabulary to successfully use African American English in their interpretation. Assuming a level of complexity in the task, participant selection included those who already exhibited a standard level of knowledge and skill. The purpose was to investigate whether the participants would omit or skew the message based upon the incorporation of African American English (AAE) into signed language.

Participants, by and large, did not use AAE in their interpretation. They typically used three strategies: omission, external processing, or discourse chunking. The omission strategy was used more often than the other strategies. In the target message interpretation, participants included source message content before and after the utterance. Those interviewed explained the nature of their omissions as conscious decisions. Both clearly understood the signed message but lost clarity when they did not have access to vocabulary for specific signs. Jill used the analogy of a train derailing. She was on track, felt confident, and then something happened that changed her ability to express what she saw. Their decisions to omit align with "conscious intentional omissions" as described in Napier's taxonomy (2004, p. 125). With these conscious intentional omissions, interpreters were aware of their decisions. However, they were not

able to access the vocabulary necessary to interpret using African American English, they opted to break from the form of the source message. Jill described the instances as "moments of mental gymnastics."

Throughout her interview, Jill stressed the importance of preparation before an assignment and, once onsite, having discussions with the user of signed language. Since the source material sample was prerecorded and not indicative of natural language in use, participants did not have an opportunity to glean additional information and context clues from the speaker or the environment. Participants were given one opportunity to interpret. Not having the ability to prepare or to ask for clarification could have significantly impacted the interpreted message and caused a higher rate of omissions.

In contrast, a White, Deaf-parented interpreter is the only participant who used African American English and then external processing throughout her interpretation. An external processing strategy was used as a method of self-correction or to explain what she saw when she did not provide an interpretation. It appears that she was confident in her use of language and was not hesitant in using African American English. She also noticed the repetitive nature in the listing of expressions; conversely, it did not appear that any of the other participants noticed, because repetition was not reflected in their interpretation.

Participants who used discourse chunking strategies follow a message management strategy proposed by Gish (1987). Within this approach to interpreting, interpreters have a way of managing the source message content. If they are not able to produce all details in the target language, they opt to provide a general interpretation on a sentential or textual level rather than at a detail level. Once they have made the decision

to omit details and produce the interpretation at a more general level, they move on to interpret new information. Leah shared that she used this management strategy. When she was unable interpret by using specific terms and details she moved to more general terms. On average, participants used discourse chunking strategies 26% of the time. The way participants responded to each utterance was fairly similar. That is to say for utterance one, interpretations included words such as terminology, jargon, and slang. It appears participants wanted to provide an interpretation even though they did not know the English equivalent to the signs used.

During the introductory moments of the video (approximately five minutes), the ASL language model signed in a more standard form of ASL. This occurrence was not intentional when the video was designed. The second portion of the source material contained all seven utterances of the incorporation of AAE into signed language. When the ASL model felt more comfortable, she moved into a more natural form of signed language where she exhibited more of the variation features present within the African American/Black Deaf community. It was at this point when a number of the participants were no longer able to manage the signed message. Participants may not have known how to manage the content when they saw the incorporation of African American English into signed language. It was predicted that participants would become more prone to omission.

Additionally the video was replete with cultural and linguistic information that may have pulled the participants' focus away from the utterances. It seemed as though the participants did not notice the repetitive nature of the listing. At the same time, it might have been easier to use a discourse chunking strategy when signed items are

presented in a list. A simple all-encompassing phrase could provide a sense of equivalence.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how ASL/English interpreters transfer meaning when interpreting between ASL and spoken English with African American/Black Deaf users of signed language. The exploratory nature of the study targeted instances when the African American/Black Deaf user incorporated African American English into their signing. African American English (AAE) has been studied by linguists for quite some time in reference to the African American/Black community. Discourse styles and vocabulary used within the African American/Black community have been adopted and borrowed by the African American/Black Deaf community as a result of language contact. According to McCaskill et al. (2011), language contact occurred through movies, various types of media, and socialization with the Black community. Previous research studies have not provided empirical evidence of ASL/English interpreters working between ASL and spoken English with this community. This study aimed to collect initial empirical evidence that would encourage further study on African American/Black Deaf signed language users and interpreters.

Data was collected over three months through surveys, recording sessions, and semi-structured interview sessions. A total of 24 ASL/English interpreters with national certification who live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area participated in this study. Participation consisted of completing an online survey and interpreting an ASL narrative into spoken English. Two of the 24 participants were chosen at random for semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach was taken for data review and analysis.

Study participants used three strategies when interpreting between ASL and spoken English. Most opted for either an omission or discourse chunking strategy in lieu of using African American English. According to insight shared from two participants, their omission strategies were conscious decisions and thus were referred to in this study as "conscious intentional omissions" based on the Napier (2004) taxonomy. Those interviewed reported a lack of access to the vocabulary necessary to maintain the form of the signed message.

The frequency of omission and discourse chunking use can also be explained by the manner in which they were presented. Although interviewees reported the pace was fairly standard for a narrative, the seven utterances were presented in listing form and may have been overlooked by study participants based on the speed or pace of the signed message. Additionally when lexical items are expressed in a listing form, interpreters may not interpret each individual piece of discourse. A listing form may lend itself to a more general interpretation.

At the onset of this study, the researcher wanted to learn if interpreters would omit parts of the message or skew their interpretation because of the African American English incorporated into sign. Discourse chunking was one of three strategies used to interpret the signed message. The use of discourse chunking strategy did necessarily not skew the message but provided for a more general interpretation.

African American/Black interpreters overwhelmingly used an omission strategy. Whether their decision to omit the African American English was conscious or unconscious is purely speculative. There is a chance the African American/Black group of interpreters subconsciously felt empowered to use Standard English for research

purposes to sound more like the standard form of English or as Leah described it, "accommodating the majority culture" in terms of language use. There is also a possible connection to their mode of language acquisition. Six of the eight African American/Black interpreters learned signed language in a formal training environment. Whether they were trained in community classes or through an Interpreter Education Program (IEP), it is highly likely their trainers were White, as a small percentage of interpreter trainers are African American/Black. By the same token, West Oyedele (2015) reported that 76% of African American/Black interpreter students do not have access to African American/Black trainers. It is also likely the training materials used in the classroom did not feature African American/Black Deaf language models. It is quite possible that when African American/Black interpreters received training, the training did not account for variation or the use of culturally salient language features as represented in this study. Moreover, the African American/Black interpreters may not have had exposure to language variation similar to the interpreters representing the other ethnicity groups. Interpreters who received their interpreter training through Deaf parents or family members also may not receive the tools necessary to provide equivalent interpretations for the African American/Black Deaf community members.

Deception was used as a part of the study design. In an effort to capture an unfiltered interpretation, this study initially withheld information from participants. During the interview session both participants recalled moments when they felt the purpose of the study was different from what was stated in the participant call. It appears the interviewed participants were not accustomed to seeing an African American/Black language model on video in addition to a model incorporating African American English

into sign. The absence of training material that includes minority language models makes it difficult for interpreters who encounter a Deaf person who uses a non-standard form of ASL.

Attending training sessions relating to minority groups is a necessity. Mindess, Holcomb, Langholtz, & Moyers (2006) suggest becoming familiar with the cultures and norms of minority communities, as what is appropriate in one community may not be appropriate in another. Training centered on some of the basic cultural nuances of African American/Black people and African American users of signed language would assist interpreters in working towards equivalence.

Jill and Leah, the interviewed participants, have experience interpreting presentations between ASL and spoken English, but they typically do so in a college classroom setting. Leah candidly spoke to how she would not have access to this particular language variety because African American/Black Deaf people in the classroom would use a more standard form of ASL.

Although both Jill and Leah have more than 20 years of interpreting experience, they shared accounts of clearly understanding the signed message but losing clarity when they did not have access to the vocabulary for specific signs. Jill and Leah's transcripts were reviewed to check their general interpretation of the signed message. They provided an equivalent message for the most part, with the exception of the utterances and cultural shifts. Jill and Leah's interpretation called for a need for training and exposure to the cultural nuances used by African American/Black Deaf language models similar to the ASL language model in the signed message.

During the interview, Leah said "it was not like I knew it and wasn't comfortable saying it." This statement refers to anecdotal accounts of White interpreters feeling uneasy "going there"—adopting African American/Black centric vocabulary, tone, and inflection when interpreting into spoken English. White interpreters have shared a hesitancy of "going there" due to audience perception and sounding offensive as well as responses or reactions from their team interpreters whether African American/Black or not. Having a scholarly dialogue and developing and sharing best practices can diminish uncertain responses and take discussions from behind closed doors to the forefront. There will be no progress when conversations are only held in silos.

An option to providing the tools necessary for interpreting is to develop strategies for practical use. Once strategies are developed, providing an avenue for training would be the next logical step. Likewise spending time with members of the Deaf community we serve would assist in learning their cultural nuances and assessing what African American/Black Deaf people as well as other minority Deaf people prefer in terms of how best to represent their signed message in spoken English.

Future Research

When comparing the social factors against the strategies used, it was difficult to ascertain with certainty if those factors impacted strategic decisions. Future studies could control for social factors criteria through participant selection. Therefore, participant selection would be based on specific social factors, which would allow for greater comparison.

Lewis et al. (1995) used a debriefing session after participants completed the English to ASL interpretation and questionnaire. Doing so allowed for a discussion about

their feelings. After participants of this study completed the recording session, they wanted to debrief about the source text. Planning for this discussion would have given more insight into their strategic decisions and provided more concrete data. This data would have captured their thoughts about their interpretation and the source text as well as their emotional state. Having those discussions in the moment would have proven beneficial.

Often time interpreters are unsure of best practices when interpreting culturally specific terminology. A suggestion for future research is to gather the opinions of African American/Black people and African American/Black Deaf signed language users about their preference by expanding the work of Lightfoot (2008). By asking what they expect from the interpreter and what they would want interpreters to do when they incorporate African American English into sign in a professional context, interpreters will know how to respond. The results from this type of study could inform best practices when incorporated into interpreter education.

Conclusion

Deaf people in general do not fit into one mold. Variation is ever present. This study highlighted the language variety of African American/Black Deaf people. Becoming aware of cultural and linguistic features of African American/Black Deaf people will better equip interpreters to fully serve the interpreting needs of this subset of the Deaf community. This study targeted interpretations for the presence or lack of African American English; at the same time, it is important to remember that not all African American/Black Deaf signed language users incorporate African American English into their signing discourses.

Based on the research findings, it appears all roads lead back to training, exposure, and dialogue. To equip interpreters with the tools necessary to render successful, culturally equivalent interpretations, training has to become a priority. Although this may be true, few training modules have been developed. An open dialogue must precede training to develop a list of factors necessary for training. Deciding what items to include in minority-specific training materials would originate through socialization with minority Deaf communities. All things considered, effective interpreters need the tools necessary to provide equivalent interpretations. Training materials are essential for assisting in filling gaps in interpreter knowledge.

As has been noted, the art of interpretation is complex skill coupled with cultural nuances and linguistic variation that add to the measure of complexity. The African American/Black Deaf community relies on ASL/English interpreters to “give voice” in pursuit of effective communication. Express those precious thoughts by maintaining the integrity of the interpretation and silencing the internal voice of judgment, prejudice, and privilege.

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Appendix A

Script for Participant Recruitment

Dear Colleague,

My name is Nicole Shambourger and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University. For my thesis I am conducting a research study that examines an interpreter's process when working between American Sign Language and spoken English and would like to know if you are willing to participate. Participation would consist of answering a brief survey online and allowing me to record you while simultaneously interpreting. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes and the recording will take approximately 20 minutes. Your name and all identifying information will be kept confidential. If you are interested in participating, please contact me via email at nshambourger13@wou.edu.

Participants should meet the following criteria:

1. Nationally certified interpreter
2. Live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area

Thanks for your consideration,

Nicole Shambourger, CI & CT
Candidate for Master of Arts
Western Oregon University

(IRB #725)

Appendix B|

Recording Session Consent

I. Acknowledgement of video recording

I, ____, agree to be video recorded as part of my participation in the study conducted by Nicole Shambourger. I understand that my name will not be used and that my image will not be used in presentations and/or publications.

II. Confidentiality & Storage

I understand that the video will not include my name. I understand that the video will be kept in a secure place.

III. Access & Dissemination

I understand that access to the video will be limited to the principal investigator, Nicole Shambourger. I understand that clips from the video will not be used in presentations and/or publications.

____ ______________
Name Date

____ ______________
Signature Date

Appendix C

Consent to Participate in Research Study

My name is Nicole Shambourger and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University. For my thesis I am conducting a research study that examines an interpreter's process when working between American Sign Language and spoken English.

Your participation will consist of answering a brief online survey and allowing me to record you while simultaneously interpreting. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes and the recording will take approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data collected from you will be destroyed through deletion of files. You must be nationally certified, live in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and 18 or older to participate in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your survey responses will be anonymous. The recording will be collected for analysis but will not be shown in any presentations. The recording will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer to ensure the privacy of your identity. The results of this study will be used in my master's thesis, and may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your identity will not be used.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me via email at nshambourger13@wou.edu or my graduate advisor, Pamela Cancel via email at cancel@wou.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at 503-838-9200 or irb@wou.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Western Oregon University.

Participation in the survey will serve as your consent. You will be emailed a copy of this information to keep for your records. Thank you for your time and willingness to help further research for the field of signed language interpretation.

Sincerely,

Nicole Shambourger, CI & CT
Candidate for Master of Arts
Western Oregon University

Survey Questions

1. How long have you been working as an interpreter?
    - < 5 years
    - 6 - 10 years
    - 11 - 15 years
    - 16 - 20 years
    - 20 years

2. How long have you been certified?
    - < 5 years
    - 6 - 10 years
    - 11 - 15 years
    - 16 - 20 years
    - > 20 years

3. What is your current zip code?

4. How did you learn sign language?
    - Deaf parent(s)
    - Deaf siblings
    - Extended family
    - Neighbors/Friends
    - Community Interactions
    - Formal Classes (high school, college, community)

5. How old were you when you started learning sign language?
    - < 5 years old
    - 6 - 18 years old
    - 19 - 25 years old
    - 26 - 35 years old
    - > 35 years old

6. Which region did you live in when you started learning sign language? (RID regions)
    - Region 1 – Northeast (CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV)
    - Region 2 – Southeast (AL, DC, FL, GA, MD, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VA)
    - Region 3 – Midwest (IN, IL, KY, MI, MN, OH,WI)
    - Region 4 – Central (AR, CO, IA, KS, LA, MO, MT, ND, NE, NM, OK, SD, TX, WY)
    - Region 5 – Pacific (AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, UT, WA)

7. Please indicate your age.
    - 18 - 25
    - 26 - 35
    - 36 - 45
    - 46 - 55
    - > 56

8. Please specify your ethnicity. (Select all that apply)
    - American Indian or Alaskan Native
    - Asian or Asian American
    - Black or African American
    - Hispanic or Latino
    - Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
    - White
    - Prefer not to identify

9. If necessary, may I contact you for follow-up?
    - Yes
    - No

10. If you agree to follow-up, please submit your email address.

Appendix D

Debriefing Script

Thank you for your participation in the study, Navigating Language Variety. I would like to take a few minutes to tell you about the purpose of this study. The goal of this study is to explore how American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters navigate language varieties when interpreting between ASL and spoken English. This study will specifically examine how ASL/English interpreters handle Black American Sign Language varieties and African American English in a professional context. When you agreed to participate, the stated purpose was to examine an interpreter's process when working between ASL and spoken English. This purpose was used not to mislead you but to allow you to respond naturally and to maintain the integrity of the interpretation. If you were informed of the intended purpose you might have unintentionally adapted your interpretation and thus changed the results.

All of the information collected will be kept in complete confidentiality and there will be no way of identifying your responses with your identity. If you decide you do not want your data included in this study, please reply to this email, nshambourger13@wou.edu. I will not include your data in the study and it will be destroyed.

In the online survey, your follow-up question response was yes. If you are still interested in discussing the study further, please reply to this email, nshambourger13@wou.edu. The follow-up discussion will take place virtually.

Your participation was greatly appreciated and will help in furthering the field of American Sign Language/English interpreting and inform interpreter education instruction in incorporating varied language models and cultural content.

Sincerely,

Nicole Shambourger
Candidate for Master of Arts
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Appendix E

Interview Session Questions

1. Tell me about your interpreting background.
2. How long have you worked in the Washington, DC metropolitan area?
3. What interpreting settings do you work in?
4. How did you feel about interpreting the video sample?
5. Do you feel like you accurately conveyed the speaker's message?
6. What aspects of the message challenged you?
7. What aspects of the message came with ease?
8. If you learned sign language in a formal setting, how many of your professors were African American/Black?
9. If you learned sign language in a formal setting, did your professors use videotapes with African American/Black Deaf consumers for classroom practice sessions?
10. Do you work in the Video Relay Service (VRS) setting?
11. If not, why not?
12. If so, why?
13. Is there anything else you want to add?
14. Please expand on that.
15. Do you work with African American/Black Deaf consumers at least once a week?
16. In what settings do you work with African American/Black Deaf consumers?
17. Do you socialize with African American/Black Deaf consumers?
18. Do you attend training or community events sponsored by African American/Blacks?
19. What influenced your decision to include the African American English signed by the presenter?
20. What influenced your decision to omit the African American English signed by the presenter?
21. What things did you consider when interpreting the message?
22. Were there portions of the signed message that hindered your ability to interpret?
23. Would you like to add additional comments about the sample?
24. Why did you decide to omit the listing of African American English terms?
25. What influenced your decision to use constructed dialogue or to stay in narrator role?
26. Did you work with AA/B deaf in the community where you learned sign language?
27. Are you exposed to the African American/Black Deaf community in DC?
28. How often do you work assignment that require you to interpret presentations from ASL to English?
29. Do you typically feel comfortable when interpreting a narrative presentations or speeches?
30. Do you typically experience challenges when interpreting African American/Black Deaf consumers?