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**Playing! It's All for Fun! Or is it?**

**An Examination of Play in the Field of Sign Language Interpreting**

By

Jazmin Vollmar

A thesis submitted to Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

©December 2021



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

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Thesis

Professional Project

Titled:

Playing! It ' s all for fun! Or is it?

An Examination of Play in the Field of Sign Language Interpreting.

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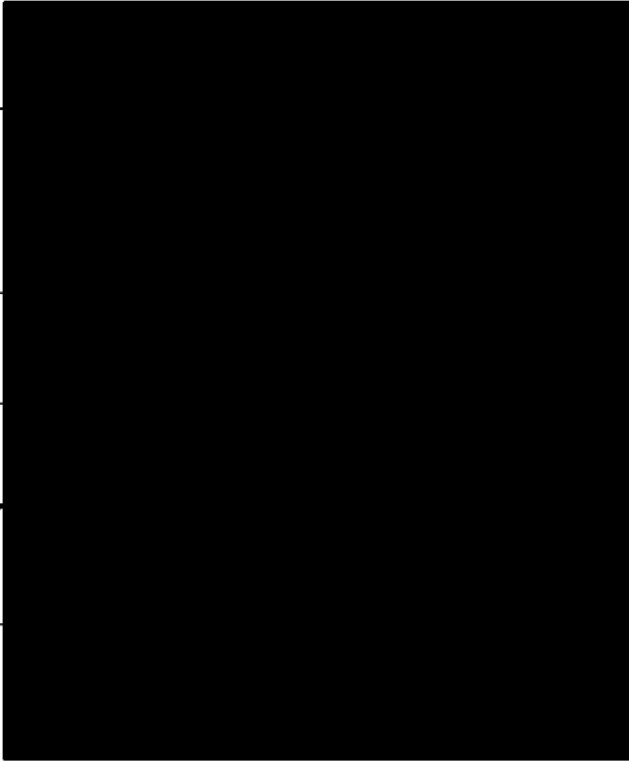
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This thesis about interpreters and play is the culmination of my 15 years of experiences of acting, improv interpreting, and teaching converging in an academic realm. I have to acknowledge my most favorite person in the world, my husband, Ryan. He was so supportive during the trying times of grad school. I also want to thank Dr. Wanette Reynolds, who encouraged me to go to grad school, wrote my recommendation letter, and served on my thesis committee. Thank you to all the participants who were part of this research. This would not have been possible without you. Thank you to my very good friend Jana, who has been my friend and mentor since I arrived to this field. Thank you to my other good friend and super brain Grace, who listened to me talk about grad school the whole 18 months. This thesis is for those whose believe in the power and benefits of play.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Playing! It's All for Fun! Or is it?**

#### **An Examination of Play in the Field of Sign Language Interpreting**

By

Jazmin Vollmar

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

Western Oregon University

December ©2021

This thesis examines the impact of guided and exploratory language play by interpreters. Interpreters in the current study participated in a pre-survey, engaged in an ASL language play group that engaged in language play through the phone app Marco Polo, reported their experiences in a nine-part reflective journal on their ASL and interpreting skills, and took a post-survey. The timeline of the play group was one week, where participants completed all the components of the study.

Chapter one introduces the concept of general play and language play. It provides a definition of terms, which revolve around play and play groups, and states the problem of interpreting programs not providing the tools to play with language. It also provides the theoretical basis of this paper, which is grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The curriculum was built on the concept of scaffolding information found in the theory of ZPD. Chapter two provides the literature review defining play, its

benefits and impacts, play in the work place, and tangential subject of collaborative learning, which happens in play. The literature repeats several variables that were brought into the design of the study, such as creativity, flexibility, working with people, and level of enjoyment.

Chapter three discusses the mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative questions in the pre- and post-survey, with the “treatment” as the language play group and the reflective journal. The study was designed to provide a baseline data with the pre-survey and see if changes occurred after engaging in the treatment or play group. In the play group, participants played and watched language games using both languages ASL and English, which are described in full in the methodology section.

Chapter four is the discussion and results, which shows that interpreters increased in their ASL and English creativity, ASL fluency, and flexibility with teams. The data showed that most participants learned ASL by watching and copying others, and the data reported in the reflective journal supports the participants enjoyed watching others played the game by using terms like entertaining, educational, and curious. Chapter five is the discussion, which points to the importance of giving interpreters the tools to play with language and outlines how that can benefit their linguistic skills. Lastly, chapter six is the summary, the conclusion, that playing with language can benefit interpreters, and recommendations for researchers to continue studying interpreters’ linguistic development through play.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“We are built to play, and built through play” (Brown, 2009, p. 3)*

### **Background**

Imagine a park. On the west side of the park sits three stone chess tables and their chairs. On the east side is a baseball field full of children playing. In the north, stands an amphitheater where an improv troupe performs for a small audience. In the south is a dog park, where several off-leash dogs run at full speed in a game of chase. This is a park full of play opportunities, offering different types of games, since play comes in many forms (Eberle, 2014). Now close your eyes, and imagine your play place: what do you see?

Play is a biological process that has evolved in many species to promote survival, making animals smarter and more adaptable (Brown, 2009). It is natural for many species to play, and humans are no different (Brown, 2009). The broad definition of play is a voluntary, fluid, self-directed, process-driven activity with several characteristics such as creativity, imagination, and engagement. Play is voluntary, fun, out of the ordinary, purposeless, and focused by the rules, which have a wide range of flexibility (Eberle, 2014). To play is to lean into that biological process where we are voluntarily engaging in fun.

Even though play can be found in many species, humans are the biggest players of all, due to the size of our brain (Brown, 2009). Over the past several decades, play researchers agree that play is not easy to define, but it can result in a host of benefits (Brown 2009, Eberle, 2014; Hargraves, 2019), such as academic, cognitive, social,

emotional and physical benefits (Hargraves, 2019). Play can help develop creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and flexibility, and it can contribute to general cognitive development (Bergen, 1998; Brown, 2009; Hargraves, 2019). Consequently, research shows that those who are restricted in their play at a young age have challenges adapting to life as an adult (Brown, 2009; Gray, 2011; Hargraves, 2019).

As a sign language interpreter with two interpreting degrees, I can report that neither degree provided many play opportunities. In addition, the interpreting continued education credits (CEU) have shown little in the ways of play. This is in stark contrast to my bachelor's degree in acting, a curriculum that regularly engaged in play. This education included my training in improvisation with Dick Chudnow, the founder of Comedy Sportz (CSz Houston: Home of ComedySportz, n.d.). Both acting and improv were ways I engaged in play.

Central to my identity and experience is the fact that I am a child of a deaf adult (CODA) or a Deaf-parented person. My nephew is the fourth generation of Deaf people in my family, making ASL my heritage language, and English is my co-first language. My dad is an ASL teacher, so growing up, we played ASL games that I brought to the interpreting field. This experience helped me build a play-based language curriculum I use to mentor and teach. These experiences informed my study design on language play. As described by Crystal (1996), language play is when people change or alter language, both in function and form, for enjoyment, either alone or with other people. Engaging in language play develops metalinguistic awareness, which is defined as the “ability to talk about, analyse, and think about language independent of the concrete meaning of each word” (Kinsella-Ritter, 2016, p. 1).

The research on interpreters and language play is slim, suggesting the lack of play opportunities in interpreting programs and thus the potential growth opportunities afforded by play engagement. In fact, when examining play in the classroom, Bergen (2009) noted that playful methods in education are on the decline, which is unfortunate because fields such as science, math, and engineering are advocating for playful learning methods, as their need for innovative and creative thinkers increase. In addition, there is a growing body of research supporting play in the workplace leading to higher job satisfaction and as a result higher productivity (Aldiss, 2014; Dueck, 2017; Oswald et al., 2015).

Researchers have found that play is an important medium for growth and learning, both individually and societally, and that it could benefit those who actively engage in it (Bergen 1998; Brown, 2009). Furthermore, people who have experienced play restrictions can become disadvantaged compared to their peers who were allowed and encouraged to play. The main question I seek to answer is: Can sign language interpreters also reap the benefits of play at all career stages?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sign language interpreters need to develop language fluency to serve the wide variety of language needs found in the Deaf community. As it stands, the current field of interpreting education has little to no research on play in interpreting. More research should be conducted on play, and the benefits of play for interpreters. This can help the field determine if play is a valuable tool for interpreting curriculum. Integrated language play, in particular, can be integrated into interpreter education to develop interpreters' language fluency. Play is a valuable tool in a curriculum; however, "play has been

undervalued as a curricular tool by educators and by parents primarily because the goals of learning, especially school learning, have often been defined narrowly in terms of mastering a set of basic academic skills” (Bergen, 1998, p. 9). Language play opportunities should be afforded to interpreters for the sake of language growth and development. Finally, Crystal (1996) stated there are crucial and unique components in play that contribute to social and cognitive development. In summary, research points to the importance of the role of play because it equips people with important and necessary skills for cognitive and social development, two crucial skills for interpreters.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine whether interpreters can benefit from engaging in language play. According to Crystal (1996), play has many of the factors needed for optimal language development, even though no one single element of play does all the work. Providing play opportunities for sign language interpreters can help grow their linguistic, interpreting, and social skills. Play can also be used to practice, as theorized by Piaget and Vygotsky (Crystal, 1996). Interpreters can use language play as a way to practice and develop their language skills.

This study contributes to the sign language interpreting discipline by highlighting the concept of interpreters engaging in language play. The results can help educators determine whether play can be a helpful tool for interpreter training programs and CEU providers. This curriculum was designed to infuse play using language improv games and collaborative learning to stimulate creativity, innovation, language development, and build community. Playing low-stakes activities provides chances for experiential learning to happen with minimum impact. This study aims to shed light on the importance of

language play, and highlight its potential for language growth. Restricting play in childhood can eventually lead to a lack of empathy and connection in their adult life (Brown, 2009). Likewise, I argue that restriction in play in the ASL and interpreting education can lead to undesirable qualities of individualism and contest, which hinders our ability to serve the Deaf consumers.

### **Theoretical Bases**

The theoretical framework applied to this study is Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the distance between development level and potential development in collaboration with more capable peers or guidance (Mcleod, 2019). In this theory, a More Knowledgeable One (MKO) is required to expand the learner's knowledge (Mcleod, 2019). In the current study, the MKO assist the players in expanding their knowledge and skills (Mcleod, 2019). The MKO provides the instructions and example of the game, and the student uses the model to guide their own performance (Mcleod, 2019). The learning happens when there is a social interaction between the MKO and the student. The MKO scaffolds the information to help the students grow their knowledge. Scaffolding consists of the activities provided by the educator, or more competent peer, to support the student as they are led through the zone of proximal development. Scaffolding, guided learning, and cooperative learning have the same meaning within the literature (Mcleod, 2019). This curriculum was designed to scaffold linguistic skills. The games focused on handshapes, which is a phoneme of ASL. Another game focuses on two-word phrases, and one focuses on full sentences. Playing is a great medium for finding peoples' limits, and it develops their skills (Bergen, 1998). Collaborative learning goes hand in hand with ZPD, as group members with varying

abilities means more advanced peers can help less advanced members operate within their ZPD (McLeod, 2019).

The second theoretical basis of this study is that playing benefits the player (Blakemore, 2018; Brown, 2009; Eberle, 2014; Hargraves, 2019; Pellis et al., 2011). This literature shows that engaging in play is beneficial in multiple ways, such as academic, cognitive, social, and so on. Play researchers and play advocates believe the future of education needs to focus on play as a learning medium (Bergen, 2009). Because play has many of the factors needed for optimal language development, there is not a single element of play that can account for doing the work (Crystal, 1996). Engaging in language play can help interpreters develop linguistic and interpreting skills, along with other compounding play benefits.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of this study is its sample size; six is not a representative number when reflecting the group of sign language interpreters in America. The sample profile was limited in diversity, age, gender identity, and location. Time was an overall limitation.

The timing of study is another limitation of this research, as it is hard to articulate play benefits in the span of one week, when they compound slowly over time. A longitudinal approach to this study could show how language and interpreting skills grow over a period of time. Having one language play groups was a limitation, as multiple language groups would result in more data. Another limitation were my tools. The play journal was a Word document, which only 50% of people filled out, but 100% of people



filled out the pre-survey, and 66% completed the post-survey. If I had used Google forms to make the play journal, it may have resulted in more data.

### **Definition of Terms**

**CODA:** Child of a Deaf Adult, which means a person who grew up with Deaf parents.

**Game:** The particular activity one is involved with, following a particular set of rules specific to this activity.

**Guided Play:** Play that is guided by a person who decided the game, teaches the rules, and gives the first example of the game.

**Improv:** Theatrical art that doesn't rely on a script, but instead relies on the players coming up with the material in the moment as they build the game using the philosophy Yes And.

**Language play:** When people change or alter language, both in function and form, for enjoyment, either alone or with other people (Crystal, 1996).

**Marco Polo:** An app where participants can send videos to one another and not have to watch them live. This functions sort of like Snapchat, but can be sent to up to 400 people per group (Carmen, 2020).

**More Knowledgeable One:** Someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept.

**Play:** A general activity that participants voluntarily engage in with several characteristics, such as direct involvement in the activity, learning and following the rules of a game, guidance, time, materials, etc.

**Play advocates:** Those who believe play is important for learning and growth and who want to provide play opportunities in academia.

**Play group:** A group of people volunteer to participate in where they actively engage in play with this particular group of people.

**Play Guide:** The person guiding the play, and ultimately the rules of the game. This person is responsible for explaining the rules of the game and giving the first example of the game.

**Yes And:** A rule followed in the art of improv where partners must accept every offer with a Yes and add to the game with an “and.”

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This literature review has been assembled to reflect the concepts being examined in this thesis. Researching play and its impact helped me understand what variables have been studied in the field of research, which allowed me to narrow down the variables in the study. Language play is mentioned because that is the specific type of activity this study engages in. It also examines play in the workplace, as this study is being conducted in the professional field of interpreting. Interpreting and play is examined, which resulted in interpreting and improv, so a section explains what improv is, as it was the original topic of this paper. In summary, this literature review is concept based and directly reflects the variables studied, the type of language play, and playing in a professional setting.

### **Play**

Over the past several decades, play researchers have admitted play is not easy to define (Brown 2009, Eberle, 2014; Hargraves, 2019). The broad definition of play is a voluntary, fluid, self-directed, process-driven activity with several characteristics such as creativity, imagination, and engagement, where structure comes from the mental rules and high levels of metacommunication and metacognition (Hargraves, 2019). Play is fun, out of the ordinary, purposeless, and focused by the rules (Eberle, 2014). Rules serve several purposes, such as organizing, making the play fair, keeping it interesting, and keeping it going. In addition, rules have a wide range of flexibility (Eberle, 2014).

Vygotsky defined “real play as having three parts: imagining a situation, assuming roles and engaging in role play, and following the parameters of the roles” (Bodrova et al., 2013, p. 113). For those who do not engage in play, there are consequences. Those who are restricted in their play at a young age have challenges adapting to life as an adult (Brown, 2009; Gray, 2011; Hargraves, 2019). However, that does not mean humans should stop playing after childhood; play is important for humans at all ages, due to their large brain size (Brown, 2009; Bergen, 2009). Adults can keep their mind and life skills sharp through play (Pellis et al., 2011).

### **Language Play**

To understand the design of this study, the term “language play” needs to be defined and clarified. According to Crystal (1996), language play is when people change or alter language, both in function and form, for enjoyment, either alone or with other people. Language play can help people find their limits and challenges or grow their knowledge and expertise. According to the literature, metalinguistic awareness grows from language play (Crystal, 1996). Metalinguistic awareness is the “ability to talk about, analyse, and think about language independent of the concrete meaning of each word” (Kinsella-Ritter, 2016, p. 1). Language play can serve as a way for interpreters to develop their linguistic skills, and engage comfortably in language development. A language play-group can give interpreters a space to play, practice and learn.

### **The Impacts of Play**

In order to study the outcomes of play, the literature of the impacts of play need to be examined, as they are “multifaceted, supporting cognitive, emotional, social and physical development” (Hargraves, 2019, p. 3). These outcomes include training for the

unexpected and skills for cooperation (Spinka et al., 2001), the ability to interpret ambiguous social cues (Bodrova et al., 2013, p. 113; Pellis, 2010; Spinka et al., 2001), as well as flexibility and creativity (Aldiss, 2014; Bergen, 1998; Brown, 2009; Burke 2016; Dueck, 2017; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Lopushinsky, 2021; Roque-Cignacco, 2020).

Training for the unexpected is a crucial skill in interpreting, as every job an interpreter goes to is different from the last. Play research cites play to be energizing, pleasurable, and livening (Brown, 2009). Play is a profound biological process, evolved in many animal species to promote survival. It shapes the brain and makes animals smarter and more adaptable.

Since play is already a profound biological process, playing is a natural activity to engage in. This is especially true when coupled with the fact that interpreting students are both trying to develop language skills and interpreting skills, which are two different skills. In addition, Brown (2009) mentioned play makes complex groups possible and fosters empathy. Empathy is an important tool in the field of interpreting, as interpreters are working with people. In addition, the Deaf community is a complex social group, and to be a sign language interpreter is to have a unique relationship with the Deaf community. Interpreters are serving the Deaf community. They are part of the Deaf community, yet being an interpreter in the ASL community can force interpreters to have unnatural boundaries.

Brown (2009) labeled the qualities of play. It has inherent attraction and gives us freedom from time and improvisational potential. It allows new behaviors, thoughts, strategies, ways of being, seeing things in different ways, and fresh insights. However, the current view on adult play is that it is unproductive, a waste of time, and sinful

(Brown, 2009). However, the impact of play is multifaceted, supporting cognitive, emotional, social and physical development including: well-being, including higher self-efficacy, higher expectations for one's success, intrinsic motivation, and positive attitudes toward the early childhood setting or school.

### **Play's Cognitive and Social Benefits**

Play has long been seen for its cognitive benefits, such as exploratory skills and discovery that can be supported by play, the skills of using abstract thought and symbols, communication and oral language skills, verbal intelligence, imagination, and creativity. In addition, reading, writing, and mathematics can be developed through play (Hargraves, 2019). Play also encourages important learning dispositions, engagement and participation, and the integration of different cognitive processes. Play develops self-regulatory executive function skills (such as controlling attention, suppressing impulses, flexibly redirecting thought and behavior, and holding and using information in working memory), metacognitive skills, and problem-solving. Social and emotional benefits include social skills such as making friends, empathy, expressing emotion, and conflict resolution. Play can also build resilience. Physical benefits may occur through the development of large and small body muscles and motor skills, while the physicality of play is associated with improved cognitive function, behavioral and cognitive control, and academic achievement (Hargraves, 2019).

### **Play in the Workplace**

The research shows play in the workplace is beneficial and should be encouraged. Leisure time is being eroded due to working days getting longer. As a result, there is an increase in stress-related illness and depression (Aldiss, 2014). Stress is the reason for 60-

80% of workplace accidents, and an estimated 80% of doctors' visits. Workplace stress leads to an increase of almost 50% in voluntary turnover (Lopushinsky, 2021). Workplace policies and procedures discourage playful activities (Roque-Cignacco, 2020). However, research shows that play in the workplace can decrease absenteeism, stress, and health care costs (Burke, 2016; Dueck, 2017). Play at work is linked with less boredom, burnout, and fatigue in individual workers (Aldiss, 2014; Dueck, 2017; Lopushinsky, 2021). Play activities boost employees' emotional states and improves staff morale and energy levels (Dueck, 2017; Roque-Cignacco, 2020). Employees having fun tend to be more creative (Aldiss, 2014; Bergen, 1998; Brown, 2009; Burke 2016; Dueck, 2017; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Lopushinsky, 2021; Roque-Cignacco, 2020). Play can result in people being more flexible (Aldiss, 2014; Roque-Cignacco, 2020). Workplace play strengthens social interactions, which can lead to greater collaboration at work (Aldiss, 2014; Association for Psychological Science, 2017, Burke 2016; Dueck, 2017; Lopushinsky, 2021; Roque-Cignacco, 2020). Happy employees are more productive and increase profits (Aldiss, 2014; Dueck, 2017; Oswald et al., 2015). In summary, employees who invest in their happiness through play at work or who work to make meeting fun will produce a host of benefits both to the employer, employee, and the company as a whole. The current philosophy of work being a serious and stressful place is hurting employee morale and productivity.

## **Improv**

Improv is a form of guided and exploratory play. Improv means performing something completely unplanned and made up based on suggestions from the audience. (Benjamin & Kline, 2019). In order to perform without a script, improvisers use the

central framework of Yes, And. “Yes” meaning to radically accept whatever reality has been set, with the “and” being about building within that established reality (Elisabeth, 2019). Improv is deemed successful when participants accept each other’s reality by making offers in a shared context that builds the narrative (Barker, 2019). This structure of improv requires players to support each other through teamwork and communication (Benjamin & Kline, 2019); therefore, improv can develop these skills. To perform improv is an art; however, its primary function is a training technique (Cecco & Masiero, 2019). These training techniques learned through improv requires a certain collaborative attitude that requires removing judgment and trusting others (Cecco & Masiero, 2019). Like play, the benefits of improv can be learning to embrace your fear, to value of collaboration, to build a great ensemble troupe, to understand the importance of creativity and discovery, to lead—and to follow, and to develop better listening skills (Daskal, 2018). It’s all helping us write that script in real time (Elisabeth, 2019).

### **Play in Interpreting**

There is no literature about interpreters and playing, but there is literature about improv and interpreting from Cecco and Masiero (2019) who stated that including drama in education can benefit social skills, build teamwork, and increase self-esteem. It also can reduce the fear of failing or making mistakes. Cecco and Masiero (2019) stated improv and interpreting have commonalties: Both actors and interpreters are performing with an audience; neither improvisers nor interpreters will be 100% percent sure of the content. The same publication supports interpreters learning the skills of improv because it helps them deal with unknown situations: “Interpreters must be aware that anything can happen in real interpreting situations, and still customers always require the highest



standards of performance, it is impossible to fully anticipate what will be” (Cecco & Masiero, 2019, section 2.0).

### **Collaborative Learning**

As mentioned in the theoretical study, collaborative learning can be an integral part of the ZPD. Improv and play can result in collaborative learning. There is an underlying culture of individualism and competition that gets in the way of many current reform efforts. Collaborative learning represents a new and different value system, one that regards teamwork, cooperation, and community as just as important as academic achievement (Leigh-Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 14). As Mindess (2014) said: “Self-reliance is a preeminent value among Americans” (p. #). Those values can directly conflict with a service position like interpreting, where collaboration is necessary to perform the job.

The article “8 Ways Improvisation Can Make You Into a Better Leader” (Daskal, 2018) highlights several values that closely align with interpreting: learning the value of collaboration, learning to adapt and be agile, developing better listening skills, and learning the importance of creativity and discovery. Playing is a great way to achieve collaborative learning. Leigh-Smith and MacGregor (1992) stated, “Collaborative learning represents a new and different value system, one that regards teamwork, cooperation, and community as just as important as academic achievement” (p. 14). The teamwork opportunity that improv provides could help those within the interpreting field be more supportive of one another.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The research question driving this study is: What is the reported experience of sign language interpreters who engage in language play? I used a mixed methods approach with qualitative and quantitative questions throughout the experiment to try to answer this question. The pre-survey and post-survey consist of multiple choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions. The data collected before and after were analyzed and compared for change. The data collected showed how the play group affected those variables being investigated. I designed a Marco Polo language play group based on the ZPD steps to grow one's knowledge. I was the MKO to guide and educated the participants. The research shows that engaging in play benefited the players, building on this theory interpreters who engage in language play would experience linguistic and interpreting benefits.

### **Design of the Investigation**

The design of this research had several components: a pre-survey (Appendix A), joining Marco polo language play group, play journal (Appendix B), and post-survey (Appendix C). Correspondence took place through email, where volunteers consented to participate, received the pre-survey and post-survey as Google forms, and completed a play journal as a Word document. Participants documented their consent in the experiment through a confidentiality and anonymity agreement (Appendix A).

For the language play group, participants in the play group downloaded the free Marco Polo app. Then, I opened up Marco Polo, clicked the profile icon, clicked “create

group,” and added each participant to the group. Because I was the MKO, or play guide, I was the first person to send videos in the group. I sent a total of five videos, instructing and exemplifying the language games. In the first video, I set the ground rules that the play space is bilingual and bimodal, and there is no right or wrong, only exploration. My goal was to implement non-restrictive parameters as to avoid restricting the play experience. In the second video, I explained the game “Handshapes,” where players choose an ASL handshape and made as many signs using that handshape until they got stuck. The third video explained “the language spectrum,” a game of my own design, where players sign one English sentence in four different places on the ASL-English language continuum, starting with Signed Exact English, Pidgin Signed English, ASL, and finally visual vernacular (see Appendix D). However, this continuum was not shared with the participants. In the fourth video, I explained “number phrases,” where players chose two handshapes that are numbers and made as many phrases as possible using those two handshapes. In the fifth video, I explained “Word Association: metalinguistics awareness,” a game of my own design, where the player examines a sign conceptually, and phonologically. In order to execute this game, they start with a concept, for example an apple, and examine the form, function, history, properties of an apple. Then the player analyzes the phonology of the sign, stating its five parameters, and what are other signs that share those individual parameters. For example, the location of the sign APPLE is produced on the cheek. Another sign produced in this area are AUNT and GIRL. The handshape is X, which another sign with the handshape X on the face is the nose EAGLE, which also shares the movement of APPLE, two twists of the wrists.

Participants were given seven days to complete the experiment, which consisted of watching my videos, recording video of themselves playing the language game, watching others play the game, and filling out the play journals. The play journal gave insight to the difference between watching and playing the games. Playing the games is more active and riskier, whereas watching the games is more passive and educational. After they returned play journals, they took the post-survey, which helped establish comparative data for before and after the play group. The before and after data was exciting as it showed language creativity and team flexibility improved. It also showed that interpreters had fun.

Every activity was voluntary, and participants could exit the study or choose not to participate in an activity at any time. The study gathered a sample based on the fact they are professional sign language interpreters. This study did not have any disqualifying factors based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and so on.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The results documented are from the data collected from October 6-13, 2021, which include the pre-survey, play journal, four videos per participant, and the post-survey. Some of the variables examined were ASL skills, ASL and English creativity, flexibility with team, and how the participants felt playing and watching the games.

The data were analyzed in several ways. The Google forms were downloaded into Google spreadsheet. I copied the first tab into the second tab and made extra columns to aggregate numbers and create open coding systems. The three data sources analyzed were the pre-survey, play journal, and post-survey. The open-ended questions were coded into themes using an open coding system based on frequency of words and similarity of

concept. For example, when asked “How do you develop ASL?” the raw data used words such as mimic and copy. For the qualitative data, I used a word cloud. I took averages of the quantitative data and presented them in charts, such as the average game fun rating, where participants circled specific numbers rating their experience of fun. The qualitative data gathered from play journals were analyzed for their positive and negative connotations, as well as frequency of words. The data gathered about their skill development was analyzed to see if this Marco Polo language play group was conducive to language development. Data were also compared between the pre-survey and post-survey, which shared 12 quantitative and qualitative questions, of which four quantitative questions were compared as a pre- and post-number.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, I present the results and discussions of the findings. The purpose of this study was to document the experience of interpreters who engaged in language play. The findings are presented in three sections: the pre-survey, play journal and post-survey. Data were gathered from the six participants who returned the pre-survey, three who returned the play journal, and the four who returned the post-survey.

### **Population**

The sample, a total of six people, were recruited through email. Their ages ranged from 30 to 52. One identified as male, and five identified as a female. Of the six participants, two identified as Black/African, while four identified as White/Caucasian. Their education ranged from bachelor's degree to a master's degree. Of the participants, five had completed Interpreter Education Programs, and one had not. Participants' certifications varied from National Interpreter Certification, Educational Interpreting Performance Assessment, to Certified Interpreter, Certified Transliterators. Their working experience varied: freelance, postsecondary, Video Relay Service/Video Remote Interpreting, K-12, legal, medical, and religious settings. One participant identified English and ASL as their first language, while the other five identified English as their first language.

### **Pre-Survey**

The pre-survey focused on several themes, collecting demographic information, their interpreting education and experience, their language development, and their views

on play. The pre-survey provided data for that created a baseline for comparing data from the post-survey.

### *Language Development*

I was interested in how the interpreters describe their language development, acquisition, creativity, and interpreting skills. Respondents gave a short-answer response to these questions. I also asked about how creative they feel in each language, as creativity is a factor studied in play.

Respondents were asked how they develop English. Of the six, five indicated that they read, three said they wrote and conversed, two listened, and one used a resource, and recorded their language for practice and development.

Respondents were asked how they develop ASL. Four out of six specified they used conversation and practice, three indicated they sought feedback on their language, and two indicated through they watched and copied others. Participants are using the written language to develop English, but ASL does not have a written language. Therefore, developing ASL requires other people, while developing English can be done independently.

When asked how they develop interpreting skills, three indicating they talk and collaborate, while two watched their teams, practiced, and went to workshops. Only one takes notes and played. I think it is interesting that only one respondent played to develop their language, while others did not consider play as part of their interpreting development.

Participants were asked how they acquired ASL. Four learned through formal education, and the Deaf community, three learned through Deaf family, and one learned with Deaf parents.

When asked if participants had a language practice routine, only one person said yes; four said no; one answered maybe. A language practice routine can be compared to an exercise routine. For example, some people practice growing their vocabulary before a test. The results here show that the majority of participants do not have a language practice routine. When asked if they play with language, only one responded yes. When asked if they had the tools to play, only two responded yes. If interpreters do not have the tools to play with language, they do not play with language, which means they do not develop a language practice routine. When asked how often participants played games in their ASL education, they only answered rarely, sometimes, or never.

**Table 1**

*How often do you play games in ASL education?*

How often do you play games in ASL education?	Participants
Rarely	4
Sometimes	1
Never	1

Putting this data together demonstrates that interpreters feel they lack the tools to play with language, and interestingly, they did not play games in their education. As a result, they do not use language play as a tool to develop their interpreting and language skills. That being said, I was interested in how fluent people feel in ASL, without the tools to play with language. From a scale of one, meaning not fluent, to ten, meaning very fluent, participants answered with an average of 8.3. In addition to fluency, I was interested in participants' view of their own ASL creativity, on a scale of one to ten. The



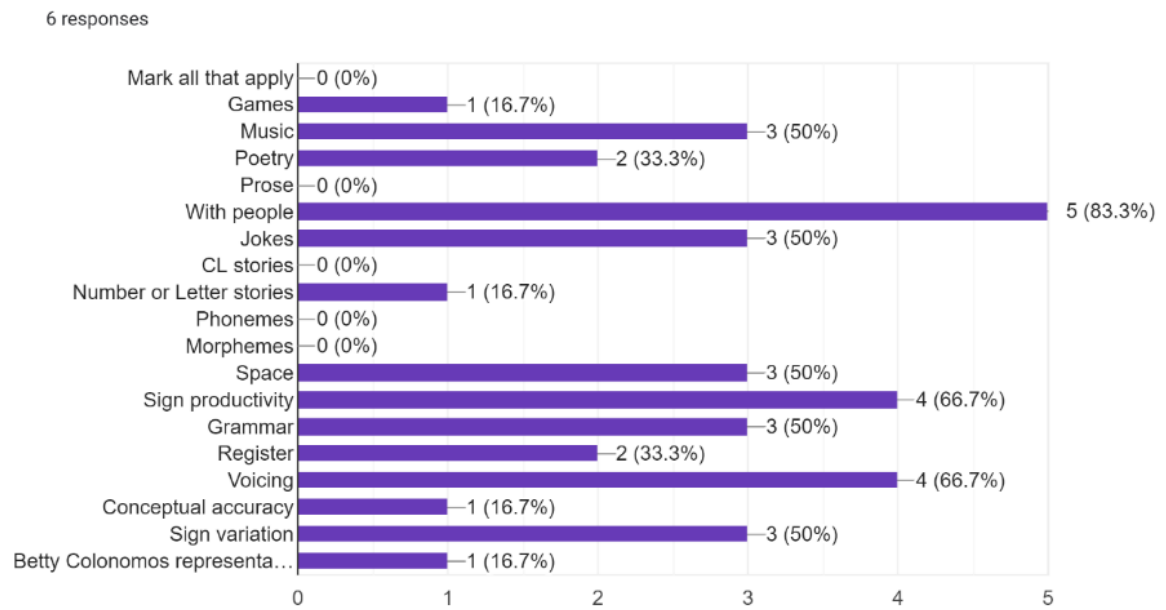
average answer was 6. However, when asked how creative people were in English, they answered an average of 6.3.

### *Language Play*

This study is all about language play; I was curious as to how the participants play with language. I was interested in their ASL education, whether they play with language, and if they even have the tools to play with language. I asked people how they played with language, with a list and check all that applied. Note this is not an exhaustive list.

**Figure 1**

*How do you play with language?*



This chart shows that participants play with language in English and ASL, in a variety of ways. It is interesting to note that playing with language can be done with any language and any modality. I found it interesting that the most clicked answer was “with people.” People do engage socially in games as a form of fun and entertainment together.

When asked if they liked playing with language, 5 of 6 answers were *Yes*, and one was *not sure*. When asked what their view on play was, words like “helpful,” “important

for development and mastery,” “essential learning activity,” “growing older people stop playing out of fear of judgment,” and “play is not encouraged.”

A variable discussed in play literature is flexibility, so the pre-survey asked how flexible they feel with their teams, with 1 being not flexible at all to 5 being very flexible, go with the flow. The word flexible was not defined; therefore, the participants were using their own definition. Participants answered with an average rating of 4.6 for flexibility.

As someone offering an activity-based learning space, I was curious to know what type of workshops they preferred; they could answer as many as applied.

## **Table 2**

*What types of workshops are preferred?*

What types of workshops are preferred?	Participants
Mix of activity and lecture	3
Activity only	2
Lecture only	1
Do not like attending workshops	1

I was interested in what participants were hoping to pick up from this workshop. Two respondents were looking for how to play; others were looking to grow and learn by picking up skills that could benefit them now and later. One was looking to better their interpreting skills.

## **Play Journals**

Three participants filled out their play journals. Participants filled in the blank when asked how they felt about playing the games. Respondents answered using one to two words each. The words they used to describe their feelings for playing the games were different than the words used to describe watching the game. While playing, the

word challenged came up three times, but while watching the word most frequent word was impressed. These data indicate that playing and watching are two different processes, as playing feels challenging and takes that brain exercise, in the same way physical exercise takes energy. However, watching is a passive activity, and can result in entertainment, education, and curiosity.

**Table 3**

*How participants felt playing games*

Responses	Frequency
Challenged	3
Excited	2
Happy, joy, delighted, enjoyed, engaged, silly, confused, frustrated, alright	1

When asked how they felt about playing the games, participants filled in the blank with the words represented in the chart, using one to two words per game per participant. I collected each word documented for each game and noted the frequency of the words. These words were written by several different participants. This table represents the frequency of the word respondents used to describe how they felt playing the games. The data represents the entire population and is only sorted by word frequency.

**Table 4**

*How participants felt watching others play games*

Responses	Frequency
Impressed	3
Intrigued	2
Bored, enlightened, educated, interested, entertained, happy, curious, fascinated	1

### ***Rating Game Fun***

Each participant was asked to rate the level of fun for each game, with 1 being not very fun to 5 being very fun for each game. Fun was self-defined by the respondent, with a total of 16 total ratings total, with an average of 4 for all ratings. Because research has shown that having fun is a crucial part of successful learning through play, I was curious to see if the curriculum I designed was fun. Not everyone enjoyed every game, but every game was enjoyed by someone.

**Table 5**

#### *Fun rating*

Games	Average Fun rating
Handshapes	4.3
The Language Spectrum	3.6
Number Phrases	4.3
Word Association: Metalinguistics Awareness	3.6

When asked if they enjoyed the exploration of sign language on a scale of 1 not enjoy it very much to 5 enjoying it very much, participants averaged 4.3 on enjoying the exploration of sign language in the games. This is important as well, because again if players are not enjoying the aspects of the game, they will not enjoy playing. A crucial part of play and benefiting from play is the freedom from time, which occurs when enjoying play.

**Table 6**

#### *Enjoyment of the exploration of sign language*

Games	Average rating: Enjoyed exploration of sign language
Handshapes	4.8
The Language Spectrum	4.6
Number Phrases	4.6
Word Association: Metalinguistics Awareness	4.3

## ***Benefits***

When asked if this game could benefit their sign language on a scale of 1 to 5, the overall average was 4.5. Even though this is a predictive question, the fact that participants answered with high scores is promising to what the power of language play can do for sign language interpreters.

**Table 7**

*Could this game benefit their sign language*

Games	Average rating: Benefit sign language skills
Handshapes	4.6
The Language Spectrum	4.6
Number Phrases	4.6
Word Association: Metalinguistics Awareness	4.3

When asked if this game could benefit their interpreting skills on a scale of 1 to 5, the overall average answer was 4.3. Participants rated the games higher to benefit their sign language skills than their interpreting skills. This is interesting, as it shows these particular games can do more their sign language skills than their interpreting skills.

**Table 8**

*Could this game benefit interpreting skills?*

Games	Average rating- Benefit interpreting skills
Handshapes	4
The Language Spectrum	4.6
Number Phrases	4.6
Word Association: Metalinguistics Awareness	4

When asking if this game made the participant feel more confident, the overall average was 3.6. This is where a longitudinal study would be beneficial to see if the

confidence in their interpreting and language skills grow with more language play and a wider variety of games.

**Table 9**

*Feeling confident*

Games	Feel more confident
Handshapes	3.3
The Language Spectrum	3.3
Number Phrases	4
Word Association: Metalinguistics Awareness	3.3

These answers were pretty low in comparison to the average number for the fun rating and the question of enjoying the exploration of sign language.

***Open-Ended Responses***

The ninth question was “Anything else about today’s game?” Documented were the word following words: “fun” (five times), “challenging” (four times), “this game is great” (two times). Games were called fun to play, and fun to watch. Other noteworthy phrases included “gained a lot more from watching,” “think about language perspectives,” “I thought more after this,” “I found myself thinking about other handshapes,” “a rich experience to grow,” “an interesting experience to see,” and “fun to play and think about.” These comments show that playing with language can stimulates the brain and people are still thinking of the games after they are done playing, which gives them benefit and practice.

**Post-Survey**

The post-survey asked some of the same question the pre-survey about playing with language, confidence, and flexibility. Asking the same questions in the pre- and

post-survey allowed for comparison, to see if participating in the language play group had an impact on the interpreters.

### ***Team flexibility***

Flexibility was a quality mentioned in several research papers as a result of play. Interpreters work with consumers and teams, so flexibility is a quality worth studying. “As an interpreter, how flexible do you feel with your teams?” The average was 4.9.

### ***Language***

I asked them to rate their language creativity and fluency, because creativity is another quality play researchers have found play can improve.

**Table 10**

#### *Post-survey comparison*

Question	Pre-survey
ASL fluency	8.3
English creativity	6.3
ASL creativity	6
Do you have the tools to play with language?	33% Yes
How flexible do you feel with team?	4.6

“Currently, how fluent do you feel in American Sign Language?” Participants answered on a scale of 1 to 10, and then I averaged their answers together to get a total average of the group, which is an ASL fluency of 8.5.

“How creative are you in English?” Participants answered on a scale of 1 to 10, and then I averaged their answers together to get a total average of the group, which is an English fluency of 7.75.

“How creative are you in ASL?” The average answer was 7. Participants answered on a scale of 1 to 10, and then I averaged their answers together to get a total average of the group for ASL creativity, which is 7.

“Do you feel you have tools to play with language?” To this two answered yes, while one responded sort of.

When asked what participants learned from this workshop, one participant mentioned they don't engage in language play as much as they should, while another commented playing with language is fun, and they will continue to do it. Another commented playing with language is simple, they just need encouragement. Finally, one participant commented that they learned a lot through playing with language.

When asked how are you feeling now that it's over, one participant responded with indifferent, two that they were intrigued and inspired to play more, and another they are continuing to think about the games. When asked if they would take this workshop again, 75% responded yes, and 25% responded they would if it was live instead of through Marco Polo.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

Overall, the pre-survey showed that participants were open to the concept of play, but they were not given play opportunities in their ASL training. When asked “How often did you play games in your ASL education?” one participant answered rarely, one answered sometimes, and one answered never. Only two participants answered yes that they felt they had the tools to play with language. The pre-survey also revealed that participants developed their English and ASL skills differently, with (80%) relying on the written language of English to develop, while (66%) relying on other signers to develop their ASL. This was shown in the data as participants used positive qualitative words to describe watching others play games, such as impressed, enlightened, educated, entertained, and fascinated.



The play journals showed that each game was fun, with an average fun rating of 4 out of 5. This is a high percentage, showing that these games were fun. This achieves the goal of being enjoyable play as opposed to being hard work. When asked if the games benefited their sign language skills, participants answered with an overall rating of 4.5. Another high percent number indicating these games benefited their interpreting skills with an overall average answer of 4.5. When asked if these games made participants more confident, this was a lower score at 3.6. The qualitative data collected about playing games included the following words: joy, happy, enjoyed, excited, delighted, engaged, silly, challenged, confused, frustrated, alright. Most (64%) of these words are connotatively positive, while 6% of these words (i.e., “challenged”) can be positive or negative, and 18% were associated with negative feelings. Data collected about watching the game included the words inspired, intrigued, enlightened, educated, interested, entertained, happy, impressed, curious, fascinated, and bored. Almost all (90%) of these words are considered to be a positive experience, while 10% of these words are considered to be a negative experience.

The pre-survey showed how people develop their language. It was interesting to see the majority of participants say they develop their English from reading and writing, while developing their ASL with other people, whether it be through conversation or watching them. This supports the idea that a Marco Polo play group is beneficial for people to play and see others play, as comments were made that they enjoyed watching other people and, in addition, learned more. One participant remarked they gained more from watching, because it helped them feel more comfortable and gain a better understanding of the game. Another participant responded that while watching others

play they were “playing along” with them and thinking of different directions than them. This can result in the creativity and flexibility the literature references as a result of play. This study was designed with watching and playing benefits the interpreters in different ways. The data show that playing and watching made people feel different. While playing participants reported feeling challenged, practicing and playing with language is meant to be that play as in practice, expanding their knowledge. It is an exercise that requires mental energy, in the same way that physical exercise require physical energy. The words participants reported for watching indicated watching were a more about a passive activity, as they used words such as entertainment, education, and piqued curiosity.

I am not surprised to see that each participant believed the game could benefit their interpreting and ASL skills, as playing these ASL games has benefitted my skills, personally, and the skills of the students who have studied language play with me. Many of the participants responded that these games made them think about language, handshapes, sentences, language structure, and more. They were inspired to play along while watching and kept the game going themselves as they continued to explore the games.

**Table 11**

*Pre- and post-survey comparison*

Question	Pre-survey	Post-survey
ASL fluency	8.3	8.5
English creativity	6.3	7.75
ASL creativity	6	7
Do you have the tools to play with language?	33% Yes	50% yes
How flexible do you feel with team?	4.6	4.9

Overall, comparing the data from the pre- and post-surveys, the participants reported an increase in the overall average in flexibility with teams, ASL fluency,

language, English and ASL creativity, and an increase in the number of people who felt they had the tools to play. Language play clearly has the potential to improve a number of different skills, and I hope this research is just the start.

### **Connecting the Theory**

The theoretical basis of this thesis is that playing can benefit those who engage in play. Furthermore, interpreters playing with language can benefit their linguistic and interpreting skills. Play can open people up to new possibilities (Brown, 2019), as indicated by the participants who said that watching the games was just as informative as playing, and it helped them become comfortable with the game. The results show in the question “how flexible people feel with their team,” where there was a 6% increase in feeling more flexible with their team. The results show a 2% increase in ASL fluency. Note these results are a self-reported idea of what it means for them to be fluent, and flexible with teams. The idea that the benefits of play compound is also present in the findings, as participants remarked that they continued to think of the games, their handshape, and others handshapes and performances long after the game had concluded. Participants also remarked that these games were challenging to them, in a positive way. The games also helped them assess their own language.

The sample size of this experiment is small, but participants showed overwhelmingly that this was a fun experience where they learned a lot. As Hargraves (2019) stated, play is a valuable medium through which to learn. Watching and playing language games helped these interpreters learn about their language and interpreting skills. It also stimulated a language part of their brain that continued to stimulate long after the moment was over, as they continued to play the game with themselves.

The qualitative data in the play journals were overwhelmingly positive, with 28 total words, with only 14% of words describing a negative experience, and 85% of the words describing a positive experience. I think it is interesting there were fewer negative experiences watching the games than playing the games. This makes sense because filming yourself playing a game is a high-risk activity in comparison to the low risk, passive activity of watching the game.

### **My Findings and the Future of Play**

My findings suggest that there is benefit for interpreters engaging in language play and in language play groups, with language play guides. This research stands on the shoulders of play research giants such as Brown (2009), Hargraves (2019), and Bergen (1998, 2009), who have already demonstrated that engaging in play will benefit the player. Interpreters can benefit by engaging in play in several ways. Play can help them develop language and interpreting skills, feel more confident, have a place to watch and learn from others, as that is how people acquire ASL. Because ASL is an unwritten language, there will always be a need for ASL-receptive opportunities to develop language and skills. These games helped participants think about language on a deeper level than they were used to. Two participants commented that they continued to think about these games long after they were done playing and watching. Participants also reported an increase in their flexibility with teams, language creativity, and ASL fluency, and more felt they had the tools to play with language after.

Educators need to recognize the value of language play and its place in the field. Interpreters need to be provided with language play, which can't happen without programs that provide the tools to play with language. As participants mentioned, little to

no games were played in their ASL education. As I mentioned, no games were played in my interpreting education, both academic and continuing education credits. While participants mentioned how they engage in language play, when asked if they play with language, five answered *sort of*, while only one answered *yes*. When asked if they felt they had the tools to play, one responded *yes*, while five responded *sort of*. When asked if they played games in their ASL education, three said *rarely*; one answered *sometimes*; and one answered *never*.

According to the participants in this study, they did not engage in language play often in their interpreting education. The benefits of playing in the field of interpreting could result in: flexibility, which is necessary to work with an array of consumers and teams; creativity, which can help develop language and stretch abilities; collaborative learning, which is a vital skill to acquire; and ASL skills. Another benefit of engaging in play is the ability to hold more social complex relationships and be more empathetic. It is possible playing may also reduce horizontal violence in the field and promote the development of empathy and flexibility in social situations, which can help interpreters to adapt to the varying situations they work in.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The intended audience of this study is interpreters and interpreter educators, both sign and spoken language, and spoken and signed language instructors. This study could apply to all working interpreters, keeping in mind that language games should be geared toward that language's modality, whether it is signed or spoken. Playing should not just be seen as language acquisition curriculum, but as a way to practice, develop, and improve language and interpreting skills.

This study set out to document the experience of interpreters who intentionally engaged in language play. This research is grounded in Vygotsky's theoretical framework the Zone of Proximal Development, which states that playing can help individuals find the limits of their knowledge, and with more knowledgeable peers, grow beyond those limits. (Mcleod, 2019). This study asked what happens when interpreters engage in language play, examining variables from the literature such as language creativity, language development, attitudes toward play, flexibility with teams, fun ratings for the games, and how they felt watching and playing the games.

To get a baseline for participants' knowledge and feelings about language play, I made a pre-survey that established a starting point for participants language fluency and creativity, and flexibility, and so on. The data showed the majority of participants learn ASL by watching and copying, which was the play opportunity provided with the Marco Polo language play group. Participants self-reported their experience in the nine-part reflective play journal, where they expressed their experience and thoughts about how

these games could have an impact on their language and interpreting skills. The data reported showed participants believed these games could help them improve their interpreting and language skills. The data also indicated people enjoyed watching others play with language just as much as they enjoyed playing with language. Some indicated they learned more from watching others play, than playing the game themselves. This was in alignment with how participants learned ASL, by watching and copying others.

The post-survey heavily mirrored the pre-survey, which gave me the opportunity to compare the pre- and post-treatment data. This study required a MKO, who was titled the play guide, to help participants find and expand their own knowledge and development. The curriculum was developed under the theory of ZPD by scaffolding games, mirroring linguistic scaffolding, one word, two-word phrases, sentential and metalinguistic exploration. The MKO provided instructions and demonstrations of the games.

The results showed an increase in ASL fluency, ASL and English creativity, and flexibility with a team. Participants reported positive experiences playing and watching, and they gave average fun ratings to games consistently over 3.5 out of 5. The pre-survey data points to participants developing ASL skills through watching, copying, and mimicking ASL users; the play group provided a space to watch and acquire. In the end, data showed that participants had increased skills and acquired tools to play with language.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Conducting this play research requires a More Knowledgeable Other to create the play space and teach the curriculum. I suggest play researchers get improv training to

learn the play attitude of “Yes And.” Improv teaches a variety of games that can be altered to create countless games. It also teaches how to create a play space, bringing games, rules, and examples to the play group.

The study could have a larger, more diverse population to explore demographic influence on outcomes. The duration of the study could be longer and could include more games. Aspects of the study could be studied more in depth, such as the impact of watching versus performing play. Some further research questions could include: do people have a preference versus watching or playing, or do they have different thoughts following a play session when playing versus watching. The study could include two separate journals for watching and playing. More data could be gathered by studying methods of ASL acquisition and interpreting development in the classroom.

Regarding the tools in the study, I suggest making the play journal in Google forms because more people filled out the Google forms than the Word document. In addition, the Google form conveniently displays data. The pre-survey and post-survey in Google forms were effective in gathering data. This research can be done on other video platforms, as long as they can post and view all videos.

For those who want to engage in play, or re-learn how to play, I recommend taking an improv or acting class, as it is important to learn how to play outside of your adult context. Because the current view on adult play is sometimes looked at as unproductive, practitioners must unlearn this concept to accept the notion of play. I recommend that practitioners engage in this language play and reflect on their experiences. Once they learn how to play improv games, they can bring play opportunities to fellow interpreters. As our culture continues to explore and invest in



playful methods in the school and workplace, interpreters must also explore and invest in these playful methods a way to practice and develop.

The data in this study indicate that interpreting and ASL education are not providing many play opportunities. As a result, not all interpreters feel they have the tools to play with language, which can lead to a lack of language development routines. Serving the ASL community as a sign language interpreter requires a spectrum of language expertise. Each place on the ASL-to-English language spectrum requires an intricate knowledge of how English and ASL features are overlapping to create meaning and understanding for the consumer. Participants reported feeling more creative in both languages after engaging in a language play group. The increased language creativity is consistent with the research that playing results in increased creativity (Aldiss, 2014; Bergen, 1998; Burke 2016; Brown, 2009; Dueck, 2017; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Lopushinsky, 2021; Roque-Cignacco, 2020). Educators and presenters who provide play opportunity can equip interpreters with play tools and thus contribute to the development of interpreters playing.

Playing is natural and fun, and it makes us smarter (Brown, 2009). Playing makes us more flexible, creative, and empathetic (Brown, 2009). Playing with language can enhance linguistic and interpreting skills. Not all people believe in that play is productive, as shown in society where play time gradually gets lessened and more structured the older we get. Linguistic skills can be developed by leaning into language play, as humans are the biggest players of all (Brown, 2009). Play can help keep higher brain processes active by generating play-based problems to solve, which can help keep brains operating

at full speed (Bergen, 1998) This is great for interpreters as they are performing several functions at once.

For interpreters, engaging in language play can help develop language, interpreting skills, flexibility, and creativity. It is crucial to provide language play opportunity for interpreters to provide them with tools to practice and develop. It is even more important that educators understand play should not be undervalued as a curriculum. Play groups can give interpreters an environment to stimulate their language development, through watching and playing. Play can help reframe the ideas about language development and stretch their language skills. A language group can contribute to language growth. As the data showed, ASL is developed from watching others sign. Interpreters need to be flexible, creative, and empathetic. The field can normalize play by providing play opportunity through language play groups led by play guides. The goal of interpreting education should be to equip the interpreter to better serve the Deaf community. Let us reframe how we develop language and interpreting skills by adding a fun and exciting way to build skills and community.

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## **APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT**

PLAYING, IT'S ALL FOR FUN, OR IS IT?

Playing, it's all for fun, or is it?

Section 1: Information and Consent

Dear Colleague,

My name is Jazmin Vollmar, and I am a graduate student at Western Oregon University (WOU) in the College of Education working toward a MA degree in Interpreting Studies.

I am researching language and play under the supervision of Amanda Smith. The results of this study will aid in my professional project I am developing for my graduation requirement. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board.

I am conducting a research study seeking to understand if and how interpreters play with their American Sign Language and English language. For the purposes of this study, an Interpreter is a blanket term that includes interpreters who work between American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English.

### **Who is eligible?**

Participants in this study must be 18 years or older. They must be currently working in the field as an ASL interpreter as their primary career.

### **What to expect**

To participate in this research, you are agreeing to the following conditions: giving me your email address, filling out a pre-survey, joining and participating in a language play group over the app Marco Polo, completing short journal entries during the activities, and completing a post-survey.

### **Confidentiality**

All responses will be kept confidential but the data may be published and/or used in presentations. You may choose not to answer or opt out of the research at any point without consequence.

### **Risks & Benefits**

Risks include emotional discomfort or self-consciousness in the play group. Participation in this will add to the body of knowledge in the field of sign language interpreting and increase understanding on best practices for developing language through play.

## Questions

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact me [jvollmar20@wou.edu](mailto:jvollmar20@wou.edu) or my faculty supervisor, Professor Amanda Smith, [smithar@wou.edu](mailto:smithar@wou.edu).

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (503)838-9200 or [irb@wou.edu](mailto:irb@wou.edu).

Please contact me or my adviser with any inquiries.

Thank you,

Jazmin Vollmar

Western Oregon University

[jvollmar20@wou.edu](mailto:jvollmar20@wou.edu)

1. Email \*
2. I acknowledge I am 18 years older, and I understand what this experiment is asking of me, and I volunteer to participate in this experiment understanding that I may withdraw at any time. \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I am a willing participant
- No, I am not willing to participate in this

### Demographic

3. What state do you live in?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your gender identity?
6. Which categories best describe you? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- Native American, Indian, Alaska Native
- Asian, Asian American
- Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, Spanish origin
- Black, African American
- Middle Eastern, North African



- Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander
- White, Caucasian
- Prefer not to answer
- Other:

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Mark only one oval.

- Some high school
- High school graduate, diploma, GED
- Some college Trade/technical/vocational training
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree Some graduate school
- Master's Degree
- Some professional or doctoral school Professional Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Other:

8. Which of the following would you consider your native language(s)?  
Check all that apply.

- American Sign Language
- English
- Spanish
- Arabic
- Cantonese
- French
- German
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Other:

9. Currently, which of the following languages would you consider yourself fluent in?  
Check all that apply.

- American Sign Language
- English
- Spanish
- Arabic
- Cantonese
- French
- German
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Tagalog

- Vietnamese
- Other:

10. Which certifications do you hold? Check all that apply.

- No certifications
- NIC
- CDI
- SC:L
- SC:PA
- Ed:K-12
- NIC Advanced
- NIC Master
- CI
- CT
- NAD III
- NAD IV
- NAD V
- BEI 1, 2, OR 3
- CSC
- MCSC
- OTC
- Other:

11. Which best describes you currently? Mark only one oval.

- I completed one or more Interpreter Education Programs
- I am currently a student in my first Interpreter Education Program
- I started an Interpreter Education Program and did not finish
- I was never a student of an Interpreter Education Program
- Other:

### Section 3: Interpreting Work

12. On average over the past year, how many hours do you work as an interpreter per week? Mark only one oval.

- None
- 1 -10 hours a week
- 11 - 20 hours a week
- 21 - 30 hours a week
- 31 - 40 hours a week
- More than 40 hours a week

13. Currently, in what settings are you working as an interpreter? Check all that apply.

- Freelance
- Post-Secondary
- VRS/VRI
- K-12
- Legal

- Medical
- Religious
- N/A
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Previously, in what settings have you worked as an interpreter? Check all that apply.

- Freelance
- Post-Secondary
- VRS/VRI
- K-12
- Legal
- Medical
- Religious
- N/A
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4: Playing with language**

15. What is your view on play?

16. As an interpreter, how flexible do you feel with your teams?

*Mark only one oval.*

	2	3	4	5	
not flexible at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very flexible, go with the flow

17. How did you acquire ASL?

18. How did you acquire English?

19. How often did you play games in your ASL education?

- Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Very often

20. Currently, how fluent do you feel in American Sign Language?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not fluent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very fluent

21. How creative are you in English?

Mark only one oval.

Not creative    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Very creative

---

22. How creative are you in ASL?

Mark only one oval.

Not creative    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Very creative

---

23. Like a yoga practice or weightlifting routine, do you have a "language development routine or practice?"

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- Sort of
- Maybe
- No
- I don't know

24. How do you develop ASL?

25. How do you develop English?

26. How do you develop interpreting skills?

27. Do you play with language?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- Sort of
- No
- I don't know

28. Do you feel you have tools to play with language?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- Sort of
- No
- I don't know

29. How do you play with language?

*Check all that apply.*

- Mark all that apply
- Games
- Music
- Poetry
- Prose
- With people
- Jokes
- CL stories
- Number or Letter stories
- Phonemes
- Morphemes
- Space
- Sign productivity
- Grammar
- Register
- Voicing
- Conceptual accuracy
- Sign variation
- Other:

30. Which type of workshops do you prefer to attend?

*Check all that apply.*

- Lecture base
- Activity base
- A mix of both
- Online
- I don't like attending workshops

31. What are you hoping to learn or pick up in this workshop?

32. Do you enjoy playing with language? Explain

## APPENDIX B: PLAY JOURNAL

### Game 1:

1. This game is fun
  - a. Not fun 1 2 3 4 5 very fun
  
2. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ playing this game
  
3. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ watching this game
  
4. Did you enjoy the exploration of the sign language?
  - a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so
  
5. I feel this game could benefit my sign language
  - a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
  
6. I feel this game could benefit my interpreting skills
  - a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
  
7. This is a game I will continue to play
  - a. Yes No Maybe feelings
  
8. Did playing this game make you feel more confident?
  - a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I felt way more confident
  
9. Anything else about today's game:

**Game 2:**

10. This game is fun  
a. Not fun 1 2 3 4 5 very fun
11. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ playing this game
12. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ watching this game
13. Did you enjoy the exploration of the sign language?  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so
14. I feel this game could benefit my sign language  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
15. I feel this game could benefit my interpreting skills  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
16. This is a game I will continue to play  
a. Yes No Maybe
17. Did playing this game make you feel more confident?  
b. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I felt way more confident
18. Anything else about today's game:

**Game 3:**

19. This game is fun  
a. Not fun 1 2 3 4 5 very fun
20. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ playing this game
21. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ watching this game
22. Did you enjoy the exploration of the sign language?  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so
23. I feel this game could benefit my sign language  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

24. I feel this game could benefit my interpreting skills  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
25. This is a game I will continue to play  
a. Yes No Maybe
26. Did playing this game make you feel more confident?  
c. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I felt way more confident
27. Anything else about today's game:

**Game 4:**

28. This game is fun  
a. Not fun 1 2 3 4 5 very fun
29. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ playing this game
30. I felt \_\_\_\_\_ watching this game
31. Did you enjoy the exploration of the sign language?  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so
32. I feel this game could benefit my sign language  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
33. I feel this game could benefit my interpreting skills  
a. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely
34. This is a game I will continue to play  
a. Yes No Maybe
35. Did playing this game make you feel more confident?  
d. Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I felt way more confident
36. Anything else about today's game:



## APPENDIX C: PLAYING, IT'S AL FOR FUN, OR IS IT?

**\* Required**

1. Email \*

2. What is your view on play?

3. As an interpreter, how flexible do you feel with your teams?

*Mark only one oval.*

1	2	3	4	5	
not flexible at all					Very flexible, go with the flow
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

---

4. Currently, how fluent do you feel in American Sign Language?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not fluent											Very fluent
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How creative are you in English?

*Mark only one oval.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not creative										Very creative
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How creative are you in ASL?

*Mark only one oval.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not creative										Very creative
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Like a yoga practice or weight lifting routine, do you have a "language development routine or practice?"

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- Sort of

- Maybe
- No
- I don't know

How do you develop ASL?

How do you develop English?

How do you develop interpreting skills?

Do you play with language?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- Sort of
- No
- I don't know

Do you feel you have tools to play with language?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- Sort of
- No
- I don't know

How do you play with language?

*Check all that apply.*

- Mark all that apply
- Games
- Music
- Poetry
- Prose
- With people
- Jokes
- CL stories
- Number or Letter stories
- Phonemes
- Morphemes
- Space
- Sign productivity
- Grammar
- Register
- Voicing

- Conceptual accuracy
- Sign variation
- Other:

What did you learn from this workshop?

Do you enjoy playing with language? Explain

How are you feeling now that it's over?

Would you take this workshop again?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- I don't know

# APPENDIX D: COMPARATIVE ASL/ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONTINUUM

