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Exploring deaf sign language interpreting students' experiences from joint sign language interpreting programs for deaf and hearing students in Finland

Ingeborg Skaten, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Gro Hege Saltnes Urdal, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Elisabet Tiselius, Stockholm University and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Abstract: Integrated university programs for deaf and hearing sign language interpreting students are rare. In Finland, deaf interpreting students have been integrated in the only university program for sign language interpreting since its beginning in the early 2000s. This article investigates the experiences of the deaf interpreting students and deaf sign language interpreters (n=5) who attend and have attended the program. We analyzed interview responses using critical discourse analysis and the concept of identity construction, and found that deaf interpreting students, despite some disadvantages, benefitted from the integrated program. We also found three identity positions (competent deaf identity, student identity, and professional DI identity) and support for recognition (Honneth 1996) in both the solidarity and legal sphere developed through the program.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; deaf interpreters; higher education; interpreting training; sign language interpreting; theory of recognition

Introduction

Signed language interpreters can be both deaf and hearing. Deaf signed language interpreters (DIs) interpret, for instance, between different national sign languages or within a sign language, e.g., different modalities in settings such as conferences and institutional talks. Hearing signed language interpreters work in similar settings, but they normally only interpret between spoken language and their national sign language. Furthermore, deaf and hearing sign language interpreters can work together in teams, for example, when a deaf

migrant seeks help from the host country's authorities or in court settings (Boudreault 2005; Adam et al. 2014; Olsen et al. 2018; Tester 2018).

However, education for deaf and hearing signed language interpreters may differ. In Europe, many higher educational institutions offer undergraduate programs in signed language interpreting (SLI) for hearing students; however, few are open to deaf interpreting students. Notable examples of such programs are the University of Hamburg, Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra in Portugal, the University of Iceland, and Humak University of Applied Sciences in Finland (Lindsay 2016). Although this article does not aim to cover deaf and hearing integrated programs globally, it should be noted that the United States also has such programs.

The few research studies about DI students' experiences of SLI programs or proposals for such programs have been conducted in countries where spoken English is the majority language, and the studies are not conclusive as to whether integrated programs with deaf and hearing interpreting students are a strength or not (Forestal 2005; McDermid 2010; Lai 2018). A few deaf students in the U.S. have reported on their experiences from integrated programs and stressed the negative experiences of being the only deaf person in the classroom (Forestal 2005). McDermid (2010) suggests that DI students' access to SLI programs may impact the role of the interpreter.

This article focuses on Finland and Humak University of Applied Sciences. Since the launch of its SLI bachelor's program in 2001, Humak has admitted both deaf and hearing interpreter students, with a total of six deaf students having graduated from the program. Humak is situated in the Light House, a multipurpose center owned by the Finnish Association of the Deaf, the Finnish Federation of the Hard of Hearing, and the Service Foundation for the Deaf (Lindsay 2016). The geographical location of Humak and the Light House enables cooperation between these two institutions, and the Association of the Deaf is a partner for the SLI program at Humak.

In a larger project (conducted in 2016), we investigated the experiences of former and present SLI students, both deaf and hearing, as well as faculty members of the SLI program at Humak. The aim of this project was to investigate what it takes for an SLI program to create equal opportunities for deaf and hearing students to become professional sign language interpreters. This article will not discuss SLI education in general (on SLI education in general, see, Marschark, Peterson, and Winston 2005; on interpreting education, see Sawyer 2004) but report on only one part of this larger project, namely the perspectives of the DI

students. We focus on how they articulate their experiences of being students in an integrated SLI program, whether they feel recognized by their fellow hearing interpreting students and their teachers, and how they perceive their recognition by the SLI profession and market after graduation.

The authors of the present article have more than 30 years of experience combined as SLI educators in Norway and Sweden. Furthermore, two of the authors consider themselves members of deaf society and have more than 20 years of professional experience as hearing signed language interpreters in Norway. Unlike Finland, Norway's higher educational institutions have only since 2016 opened up SLI programs at the bachelor's level to DI students. As countries begin to integrate deaf students into their SLI programs, it seems important to explore deaf students' experiences in such a program. The authors hope the results of this study will be valuable both when starting new integrated SLI programs as well as when further developing current programs that include both deaf and hearing students.

Background

Deaf interpreters and Deaf identities

In this article we define a professional deaf interpreter as a deaf person having interpreter training and being paid for their services. However, in the literature there is no uniform definition of a "deaf interpreter," and the term is not restricted to professional, trained interpreters only. Adam et al. (2014: 16) define a deaf interpreter as "a Deaf professional who undertakes both inter- and intralanguage interpreting, as well as translation from a written or a spoken language to a sign language." Furthermore, they state that contexts and settings where professional DIs work may differ and that their position may have implications on how to handle codes of ethics (see also Russell 2017). The role of professional DIs is described as language or linguistic brokers (Forestal 2011; Adam et al. 2014; Rogers 2016), cultural brokers or communication mediators (McDermid 2010), communication facilitators (Boudreault 2005), or even ghost writers (Adam et al. 2011). According to Boudreault (2005), deaf bilinguals have acted as communication facilitators within deaf communities long before DIs were regarded as professionals, which in the United States began in 1972, when the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) formally recognized the role of the DI.

The term "deaf identity" is similarly ambiguous. The literature reviewed for this article suggests that rather than a single deaf identity, it would be more fruitful to discuss deaf identities in the plural. Researchers find there is a diversity of identity categories for deaf

people (e.g., Leigh 2009). Here, we do not aim to exhaust the concepts of deaf identities, but rather we recognize that the deaf identity is not a monolithic, static concept (cf. Kusters et al. 2017 for arguments on deaf communities). Deaf identity, for the purposes of this article, is used as a contrast to non-deaf and does not intend to exclude any other possible identities, in the same way as we use “student identity” as a contrast to non-students.

A final terminological distinction made in this article is “competent deaf,” which is not used as an externally ascribed label for a deaf person and their competencies, but rather is based on an individual’s conception of themselves. Holcomb’s (1997) definition of self-concept as an individual’s concept of their identities, abilities, and perceived worth, is understood in light of Epstein’s self-theory model, in which the self-theory is developed through interaction with significant others (i.e., other deaf people). Therefore, this article uses the term “competent deaf” in this particular context and in line with this theoretical framework given our understanding of the self-concept of our participants.

Sign language interpreting in Finland: Rights, rules, and regulations

The Finnish authorities responsible for provision of SLI services are the Ministry of Work, the Ministry of Social Affairs, or the Ministry of Education (European Forum for Sign Language Interpreting 2011). The ministries have delegated the financial administration of SLI services to KELA, the Social Insurance Institute of Finland (Finnish Association of the Deaf 2015). KELA’s responsibility to pay for interpreting services has expanded to include regulations on the interpreting agencies’ management of the interpreters’ available.

All interpreters in Finland work for an agency, and two of the interpreting agencies, Viparo and Miral, have deaf owners (Markus Aro, personal communication, 30 May 2017). The fact that interpreters work for an agency is not unique to Finland (De Wit 2016). However, the organization of resources for interpreting means that agencies are not always free to set up the most appropriate interpreting team (for the agency and the deaf client). KELA has to approve the funds before an agency, for instance, can appoint a team of two interpreters (deaf and hearing) instead of one (hearing) to a certain meeting.

Method

Participants

Five former and current DI students (n=5) participated in this study, all of whom either were at the time of the study or had been DI students at the bachelor’s program in sign language

interpreting at Humak. The participants' experiences covered the whole period of DI education at Humak (2001–2016). Though there are few participants in our study (n=5), they are representative of the DI education at Humak as they cover both early and later cohorts of students (N=6) (Lindsay 2016). The participants all had Finnish Sign Language (FinSL) as their L1 and attended a school for deaf children during their primary education. Participants also had previous experience with signed language interpreting and work experience in different signed language contexts.

Initial recruitment efforts were made by email to Humak. The request was forwarded to possible participants along with an informational letter about the project. This first round of recruitment was unsuccessful, which may be because the researchers were not known to the DI community in Finland. One of the research team members then contacted an acquaintance who was a former DI student at Humak. This person agreed to participate in our study and then recruited the remaining participants in the study.

The interviews

The interviews were conducted using an interview plan that was developed for this project from our own experiences as interpreter trainers and practitioners and from our work opening our programs to DI students. The interview plan contained five questions about the participants' educational background and interpreting experience, followed by questions about the interpreting education and about being a DI student and a professional DI. One of our assumptions, based on anecdotal evidence, was that deaf and hearing interpreters might approach ethical guidelines and similar aspects differently, and questions on this subject were therefore added (Böser 2015).¹

DI students were interviewed in their first language (FinSL). Since none of the researchers know FinSL (as we are SLI trainers from Sweden and Norway), all the interviews were conducted by the first two authors named in this study, who are fluent in Norwegian Sign Language (NSL), through sign language interpreting between spoken English and Finnish Sign Language. The interviewers' NSL fluency contributed to the understanding of the participants' responses and allowed for some interaction before and after interviews. We conducted five interviews, which each lasted 1–1.5 hours. The interviews were videotaped using two cameras at different locations in the interview room to capture both the interviewer

¹ The interview guide is available upon request from the corresponding author.

and the interviewee. In total, the interviews generated 6 hours and 15 minutes of recorded data. All of the recordings were transcribed by a signed language interpreter from spoken English to written English text, including pauses, smiles, and laughter. We used a signed language interpreter for the transcription since we felt it was important that the transcriber was familiar with specific vocabulary and could identify specific signs if necessary. In order to prepare for the analysis, all transcripts were read individually by all three authors and then again together as a group before we started the analysis stage.

Ethical and methodological considerations

The research was conducted in Norway with data collection in Finland in accordance with the Norwegian Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees 2016) and approved by the data protection authority for research, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

There are also a few important issues concerning this type of research that are worth discussing here. First, the population of professional DIs and interpreter students is small, and thus the anonymization of sources is of the utmost importance. This was not explicitly demanded by the participants but regulated by the Norwegian Guidelines for Research Ethics. All the quotes in the following sections are therefore anonymous, and all five participants are quoted. Moreover, the interviews were interpreted, which raises ethical issues about the validity and reliability of the data. It is both technically and linguistically demanding to interpret, and an interpreted utterance is always only one version of the original (Hale 1997). Furthermore, there is also always the risk of participants not expressing their honest views for reasons of trust or power (Mellinger 2020). It nevertheless seemed crucial for the project to give the participants a possibility to communicate in their first language. Our initial contact with the sample population assigned interpreters (two per interview) for the interviews. As this person was trusted in the community of professional DIs, we assumed that the assigned hearing interpreters were competent and trustworthy. In the interview situation, it was only the deaf participants who could express themselves in their first language. The language imbalance meant that there was a risk of misunderstandings or limitations in the communication during the interview. In this context, however, it seemed most important that the deaf participants could express themselves in their own language.

The fact that the researchers are hearing signed language interpreters and interpreting trainers may have steered the focus of the research and risked limiting the researchers in

carrying out a completely inductive analysis. It also means that the researchers are active in the same field as the interpreting trainers at Humak as well as the interpreters we interviewed. Researchers will always have preconceived expectations and knowledge, however, and there is always a risk that this will skew the analysis. Therefore, awareness of this risk is key (Dahlberg and Nyström 2001). However, as Patton (2015) also remarks, concrete knowledge of the subject matter means that the researcher knows what questions to ask.

The researchers experienced a very open and collegial atmosphere during the interviews, which might have stemmed from the participants seeing the researchers' a priori knowledge as an advantage. Participants commented, "I think it is a very good idea that you are doing this work" and "Sounds good [that you would like to hear my experience]." Of course, it was important to be clear to our participants about our double role as researchers and interpreter colleagues and about the goal of our research – namely, creating equal opportunities in interpreting education.

Critical discourse analysis as method of analysis

The aim of the critical discourse analysis is to see the discursive practice as part of the social practice and thereby both reveal and contribute to social change. A discourse is a system which constructs reality for its agents through the institutionalization of stories and practices that will be considered to be more or less normal and create a regularity in social relationships (Fairclough 1992). In our analysis, we use the concept of recognition (Honneth 1996), which can be given in three different spheres: the private sphere, the legal sphere, and the solidarity sphere. The latter two spheres are of interest to the present study, and our analysis is based on Honneth's understanding of how recognition can be used to understand social practice. A lack of recognition in a certain sphere will entail exclusion or the denial of certain rights (Honneth 1996). Table 1 provides an overview of the legal and solidarity spheres. Each sphere consists of concepts contributing to recognition, such as rights (in the legal sphere) or shared values (in the solidarity sphere), while other concepts hinder recognition, such as violation of rights (in the legal sphere) or negative affirmation (in the solidarity sphere). Finally, Table 1 provides examples of the different spheres, that is, the contexts where acts of recognition can take place or be hindered, for instance at KELA (in the legal sphere) or in the deaf community (in the solidarity sphere).

Table 1. The legal and solidarity spheres of recognition (based on Honneth 2006) and how they are manifested in our data

| | Legal sphere | Solidarity sphere |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Concepts contributing to recognition</i> | Rights as the base for the perception of equality | Different forms of shared values contributing to participation and self-worth |
| <i>Concepts hindering recognition</i> | Violations due to discrimination or a lack or disrespect of rights | Violations due to negative affirmation of values, a lack of values for different ways of living (stigmatization, social exclusion) |
| <i>Arenas</i> | Schools, social institutions, etc. | Different groups with shared values |
| <i>Examples from our data</i> | Interpreting education, school authorities, KELA (the Finnish Social Insurance Institute) | The deaf community, the student community |

Construction of identity as method of analysis

Identity is constructed within discourses that are culturally accessible to an individual and therefore can be used in communication with others (Burr 2003). Burr also understands identity as a subtle weave of many threads; not only are the discourses different, but they can also be contradictory or even antagonistic. Fairclough (1992: 64) mentions three key functions of the discourse: to help construct “‘social identities’ and ‘subject positions’ for social ‘subjects’ and types of ‘self;’” to “help construct social relationships between people,” and to “contribute to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief.”

Here, we draw on Jørgensen and Phillips’ (2002) definition of the term “professional identity” as a collective identity or imagined community based on the belief of a common identity. Such an identity should be understood as a subject position, a meeting point for discourses and practices that construct the identity and allow for the subject to speak it—or in Hall’s (1996: 5) words, identities are “points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.” The subject is fragmented and the identity is organized according to relationship: you are something because there is something else you are not. The delimitation is not only made between oneself and the other, however: by closing one identity, individuals can construct an identity that allows them to belong to a collective identity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Social change is driven forward when individuals change identity position and, for instance, close one position in order to open up and develop another. These shifts in position manifest in our study participants. For example, participants close the identity position *deaf* in order to open up the identity position *student*. In our analysis, using the linguistic tools of discourse analysis, we find these types of manifestations on the word level, for instance, in the choice of pronouns.

The transcriptions were analyzed manually. After an initial inductive analysis of the transcriptions, we could see a pattern in the text, whereby we constructed the following orders of discourse for further analysis: deaf community, education, profession, and market. These orders of discourse affect one another and indicate discourses available to DI students. We interpreted how the participants experienced recognition (or not) in the legal or solidarity spheres based on how they drew upon different discourses, related to the above-mentioned orders of discourse. Transformation of recognition (from no recognition to recognition, and vice versa) is a driving force for social change. Figure 1 shows the interlocking orders of discourse and the different spheres of recognition they represent.

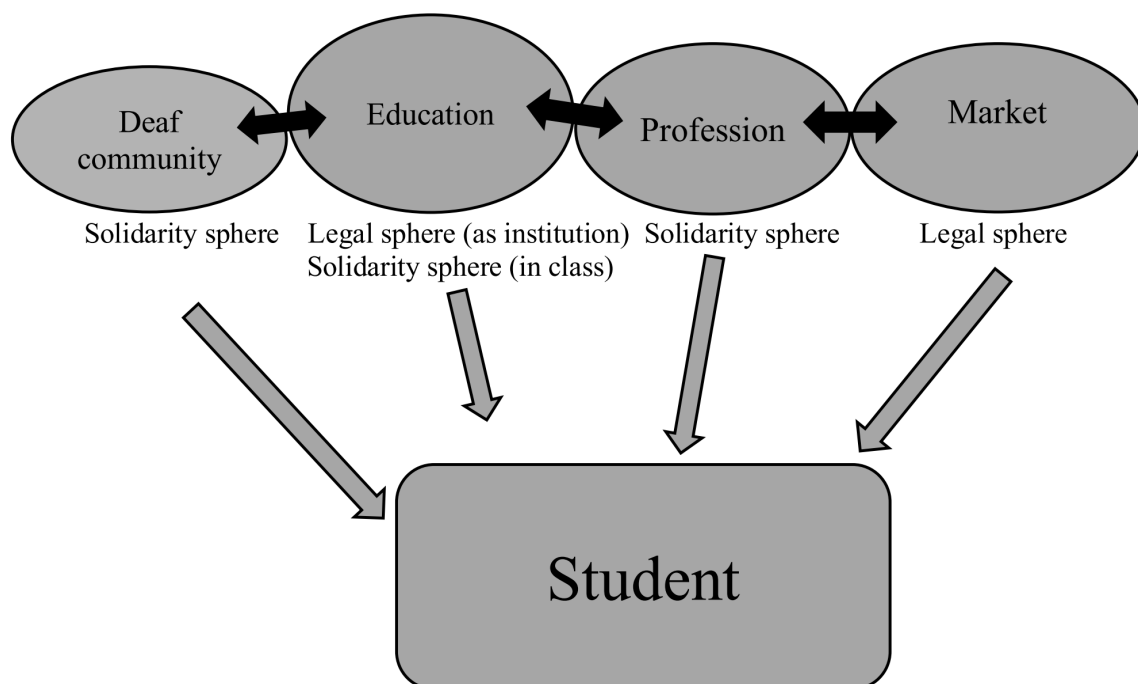


Figure 1: The relationship of the interlocking orders of discourse and spheres of recognition in our data.

Choice of pronoun in relationship to social belonging

The focus of this article is deaf students in SLI programs, and by analyzing the participants' narratives, we identified three different identity positions. By using the first-person plural "we" or "us," the participants seem to draw demarcation lines for themselves and others and to open and close different identity positions. The participants use of "we" or "us" could indicate three possible positions: first, being a member of a deaf community, thereby articulating a deaf identity (e.g., "at that time, the situation for deaf people—we couldn't really study good sign language"); second, being a (deaf) student, that is, articulating one's identity as a student or as a deaf student (e.g., "when we were separate—deaf students

together and hearing for themselves, in the small group—I feel we were very active because we were only six deaf students”); or third, being a professional DI, that is, articulating a different identity than hearing interpreters or than deaf non-interpreters (e.g., “they [i.e., deaf people] are used to having us [i.e., the DIs] as interpreters now”). For the purpose of our analysis, on the basis of the pronoun use in the participants’ discourse, we constructed three different collective identity positions: *competent deaf identity*, *student identity*, and *professional identity*.

Results

Here, we categorize our results according to the three different identity positions that we identified when analyzing our participants’ narratives and their discursive practice. Within the three different identity positions, we provide examples of discourses of both recognition and non-recognition in their narratives.

Competent deaf identity

The participants in our study all described themselves as being part of a deaf community, which meant for them that they had expertise in signed language and deaf culture; as one of our participants put it, “I grew up in a deaf community. I have always been with deaf people.” All our participants went to a school for deaf children during at least part of their basic education, and all of them started their education in a school for deaf children. During their formative school years, participants were thus exposed to a sign language-speaking community outside the family and were socialized into deaf culture.

We interpret their solid grounding in signed language and deaf culture as a confidence which contributed to the development of their habitus or identity not only as deaf but as *competent deaf* in the educational context. Another contributing factor to this identity is grounded in their work experience prior to their SLI program, with all of them having worked in what they labeled “the field of signed language,” for example, as a translator, interpreter, or teacher. Some also had editorial experience (e.g., lexicographic research, publishing, signing the news, translating news) within the Finnish Deaf Association and Finnish Sign Language News. These assignments indicate recognition as competent deaf in the solidarity sphere within the deaf community.

Being recognized in this way played a part in motivating this cohort to apply both to higher education and to this specific program. Though deaf people have always acted as DIs,

the professionalization of their services is very recent (Forestal 2005; Adam et al. 2014), and many of the participants point to the fact that not even their own community understood how a deaf person could become a professional interpreter: “Even deaf people were asking, ‘Why do we need [professional] DIs?’ [...] And I felt so criticized for choosing this path of interpreting. People are saying, like, ‘How do you find work?’ and ‘Why would you do that?’”

The fact that our participants’ description of themselves could be abstracted to “competent deaf” also meant that they identified themselves, and were identified, as strong contributors to the learning environment at the SLI program. As one of our participants put it: “I see that the other [hearing] students gain a lot from me being there with them. [...] The [hearing] teachers ... they always take advantage of me, so they will ask, ‘Oh, how do you sign this?’ So they also gain a lot from me being there.” Another participant added, in regard to the hearing students, that “their gain was that we were present.” According to this same participant, “Maybe the hearing people, maybe the hearing students found it very nice and totally new: ‘Wow, the signed language world! I want to learn all about it!’ But for me it was sort of ... I don’t know ... I’m deaf.” Having their hearing classmates and teachers benefit from their knowledge thus seems to be a positive factor for them in being recognized as competent deaf and thereby confirming this identity in the solidarity sphere. However, as we will explore below, this was not necessarily as beneficial for their identity as students.

It is important to note that this recognition is done within the solidarity sphere and not within the legal sphere (see Figure 1), meaning that the participants are recognized as competent deaf by peers and people around them but not by a formal system. The data suggest that hearing teachers contribute to the recognition of DI students in the solidarity sphere in this situation, although they in other situations are instrumental for recognition in the legal sphere (e.g., by grading exams, since exams are based in the legal sphere). A reason for their being part of the solidarity sphere in this case may be that the hearing teachers describe themselves as allies to the deaf community (cf. Kusters et al. 2017).

Student identity

Identity is constructed through discourses available to the individual. The first cohort of DI students did not have an available discourse of *deaf interpreting student*. Participants therefore both constructed their identity as DI students and contributed to social change. Before the first cohort of the SLI program, neither the *deaf interpreter student* nor the *deaf*

professional interpreter identity was accessible to deaf people in Finland. Even though our participants used interpreters from a young age (which is common in the Nordic countries), none had a vision when they were young of being a professional interpreter themselves (cf. Forestal 2005): “When I was younger, I never heard of anyone being a professional DI—it kind of came as a surprise.” As another participant stated: “I wanted to have an occupation. But I was wondering whether I could really be an interpreter, because I did not feel like an interpreter.” Certain individuals, however, stated that they had interpreted in international contexts and thereby served as spearheads (cf. Adam et al. 2011). According to one of these trailblazers, “I really liked this kind of work, and it was my kind of work. I found it very interesting, and then [...], when they started up the first program, I decided to apply.”

Our analysis shows that participants had different motivations for enrolling in the SLI program, ranging from personal curiosity to external demand for formal qualifications. We also understood from our participants’ narratives that when the first cohort of deaf graduates from the interpreting program started working, their social practice led to a social change, and these professional DIs served as role models for future professional DIs: “So I could see those [...] people working, and I thought I could do the same” (cf. Forestal 2005).

By being admitted into Humak, the participants were recognized as DI students in the legal sphere. But such recognition was not as straightforward as one might think. From a legal recognition perspective, being admitted to the program means that a person is a student. But the education plan and the education system, which are part of the legal sphere (see Table 1), also need to be adapted to the students for the legal recognition of the student identity to come into effect. When the first cohort of students attended the program, many of them had the feeling that the education was not adapting to them and that it therefore failed to acknowledge them as students – or as one participant put it, “It would’ve been nice to have everything [...] ready for the deaf student also.” Another participant pointed to the fact that DI students were assigned a different role in the classroom: “The hearing students would ask something, and the teacher would go, ‘You can ask your deaf co-students!’ And I was trying to ... like, I felt that I was there to study also. I was not there to teach!” One participant even stated emphatically, “I’m not a teacher, I’m a student!” The last two quotes carry a double message: in the solidarity sphere, the DI students are recognized as competent deaf but not as students. This is confirmed by one of the teachers, who spoke admiringly of the “encyclopedic knowledge” of the program’s DI students, adding that “we have to appreciate the knowledge they have, the knowledge of signed language.”

Over the years, Humak has developed their program to be more flexible toward DI students. An example is that DI students' previous relevant courses and practice are accounted for in Humak's interpreter program, which thereby gives them a curriculum more adapted to their needs (for example, not having to attend beginner signed language classes). This acknowledgement contributed to recognition in the legal sphere, as reflected by one of the participants: "I was really satisfied that they could see my past and all the experience I already had. They took notice of that, and they understood that I didn't have to do it all again."

For many students, there is an available discourse on the students' future professions, one that contributes to the students' construction of a professional identity. As pointed out above, the first cohort of DI students, in 2001, did not articulate previous knowledge of a discourse on professional DIs but were instead instrumental in constructing that discourse on their own. In the interviews, they underline how the presence of deaf teachers contributed positively to their education: "There were so few deaf teachers that there wasn't really ... It would have been nice to have deaf teachers in interpreting and translation also. But they only had the language classes ... I think both hearing and deaf could have benefitted from that." During this period there was a lack of deaf teachers, and the few deaf teachers who taught at the program were not teachers of interpreting. Therefore, a deaf teacher could not have been a role model as a professional DI. In the context of constructing the identity of the professional DI during the program, one of the participants made a striking comment: "One thing that was clearly missing is the role and the identity of the [professional] deaf interpreter. We never discussed that, even if some of us had work experience and some didn't. This is something that wasn't really discussed enough."

Another area where the discourse of the professional DI can be developed during education is the practical placement, that is, the onsite training assignment, which is an integral part of interpreting education but nonetheless modeled for hearing interpreting students. For our participants, such practical placement consisted of observing and practicing interpreting onsite at various institutions where signed language interpreting is used. Traditionally, practical placements were planned for hearing students. The lack of opportunities for DI students in practical placement becomes a barrier to the creation of the discourse of the professional DI. Our participants provided examples of their practical placement experience: "I didn't have any place to go to practice educational interpreting, so what I got to do was just follow the hearing students when they practiced. So I was just

taking notes. I was checking what kind of signs they are using. I didn't benefit from that at all. They got their practice—I didn't get anything.” The participants also gave examples of how such sessions can transpire today: “[I was in] a hearing class with hearing pupils and a teacher, and I just had to sit there—there was no option. [...] But I think now it's easier to find [practical placement opportunities] because there are deaf pupils integrated in the hearing classes. [...] Here you could have a [professional] DI in front of the class with a hearing interpreter as a feeder.”

The motivation for becoming a student differs between the first cohort of students and the later cohorts. As we saw above, the first cohort did not have a clear vision of their future. For more recent students, an institutional change created another motivation to become a student. KELA and its impact on the provision of signed language interpreters in Finland is described in the section on signed language interpreting in Finland above. A specific change pertaining to the working conditions of signed language interpreters is KELA's change of requirements of qualifications for professional interpreters: “Until last year I could use the old degree that I have, but now KELA [...] want stricter rules about who can do the interpreting. So I need some extra courses.” This institutional change has affected the professional DIs' perception of recognition in the legal sphere.

The quotes in this section indicate that, in our participants' experience, the construction of discourse and the change in social practice was not externally driven by the institution, but rather internally, from themselves. However, later institutional changes also contributed to social change.

Professional identity

As shown above, our participants started to construct a *professional deaf interpreter* identity during their studies, despite the lack of discourse on professional DIs, the lack of role models, and challenges to their choice of profession. There was clearly an opportunity here, a possibility for change; nevertheless, the first graduated professional DIs had trouble taking on the professional identity. They felt that they lacked a discourse as a professional DI, and this lack could lead to socially awkward situations: “I was a bit ashamed telling [deaf] people that I was a [professional] deaf interpreter. Because people would go, like, ‘Oh, you're a [professional] deaf interpreter. What's that?’” We do not interpret this quote as the participant being ashamed of being an interpreter, but rather as signaling insecurity from having to explain the role and the profession. Within the deaf community, deaf people have a tradition

of interpreting, but there was a lack of a culturally accessible discourse on *professional DIs*. Although the first graduates had gained recognition in the solidarity sphere as DI students among their peers, they did not automatically gain recognition in the solidarity sphere by the deaf community as professional DIs.

The first cohort of DI students reported that there were no immediate job openings for them when they graduated. Instead they had to seek their own opportunities: “When I graduated, nobody wanted to hire me, nobody wanted to give me a job. And then the only option was to start your own company. And I had no experience of that, so I just had to learn as I went along.” The lack of recognition of deaf professional interpreters in the legal sphere could help explain the lack of job opportunities. By changing the social practice and starting their own companies, the first cohort of graduates contributed to social change. The fact that they were able to do so can be interpreted as a new recognition in the legal sphere.

Our participants reported on situations in the deaf community when they actively worked to construct their identities as professionals and distinguish themselves from their community. Whereas Friedner (2018) showed how hearing interpreting students negotiated their legitimate position as interpreters for the deaf community, a community they did not necessarily naturally belong to, our participants negotiated their legitimate professional identity in a community they did naturally belong to but where they were not necessarily seen as professionals (cf. also Adam et al. 2014): “In the beginning, it was all mixed, but I mean ... ‘Why do you come here? What do you do?’ They [deaf people] started chatting and I told them, ‘No, no, no, I am working.’ I think they [deaf people] are used to having us as interpreters now.” One participant talked about the name tag as a distinguishing feature: “When I work as an interpreter, people say ‘hi’ and come to talk, and I have [...] to keep them away from me, and just try to work. [...] But the name tag helps, because my people come to me and when they see the name tag on my shirt, they say, ‘Oh, you’re working today – I’m sorry!’” However, according to one of our participants, there is one important difference between professional deaf and hearing interpreters in handling the relationship with the deaf client. In situations with deaf immigrants, this participant feels that they also become representatives for the Finnish deaf community and responsible for including deaf immigrants: “When [...] the [interpreter] assignment is over [...], I write down the address [to the Finnish Association of the Deaf]. Okay. I know where the deaf association is. [...] For a [professional] DI, I think it is different [compared to a hearing interpreter]. [...] As a

[professional] DI, I am sort of trying to help them to be a part of society and part of the Finnish deaf community.”

Despite the differences described above, our participants say that the interpreter’s role is the same for professional deaf and hearing interpreters, with one typical comment being, “I think it’s the same. Yeah. It’s the same. No difference. That’s my opinion, I think there is no difference.” At the same time, they point to a performance-related difference between deaf and hearing interpreters: “You know, the ethical rules, they are completely the same for both interpreters. But the way they interpret and express themselves is completely different.” The quote reveals an ambiguity that is not further explored by the participants. The first cohort of DI students did, however, mention that it would have been good to have the possibility to discuss the code of conduct with an experienced professional DI.

According to our participants, professional deaf and hearing interpreters may differ in language knowledge and skills, and one participant points out that a team of professional deaf and hearing interpreters is the optimal solution for a successful interpreted event: “If you work as a pair, you have the whole package.” Professional deaf and hearing interpreters do in fact work together, for instance, in refugee hearings: “Refugees don’t know Finnish Sign Language [...]. It is important to have a deaf [professional interpreter] there to sort of bridge the gap between these people.” Other examples of situations with professional deaf and hearing interpreting teams are deaf-blind interpreting, interpreting for children, and international conference interpreting. Our participants also mention that there can be assignments when they are not working in a team with hearing interpreters and that they also do translation work. Their professional DI identity is thus made up of different areas of expertise.

Finally, recognition in the legal sphere is only possible if the discourse of professional DIs has manifested within the institutions in that sphere. We have seen that the participants gained this kind of recognition as they established themselves as professional DIs. However, when KELA took over the allocation of funding for the interpreting services, as mentioned above, our participants report that the situation changed for the professional DIs. Their reports suggest that the change led to less recognition for deaf professional interpreters in the legal sphere: “But then there is always, ‘Who pays for the interpreter?’ and if there is a hearing participant, ‘Why do you need a [professional] DI?’ and all this bureaucracy.” Another participant put it like this: “KELA has their own attitude towards professional deaf and hearing interpreters. That’s a bit different, so they [deaf and hearing interpreters] are not

really equal [...]. You know, there is no problem with me working with hearing interpreters. It's more about KELA, who assigns the interpreters." Tester (2018) describes hearing sign-language interpreters both as gatekeepers and enablers for professional Dis; this may be true for Finland as well. However, in the Finnish case, KELA acts as a gatekeeper and possibly as an enabler for Finnish professional DIs.

In conclusion, in the analysis of our participants' narratives and their discursive practice, we have identified the three main identities reported above. We have described how we interpret their experience of becoming and being a professional DI and how they have constructed their discourse on professional DIs and contributed to recognition in the legal and solidarity spheres. Below we discuss how their discursive practice has contributed to social change but also how other discourses contribute to or challenge such change.

Discussion

This study has explored how deaf interpreting students describe studying SLI together with hearing interpreting students, how they are recognized both by their hearing peers and by their teachers, and finally how they are recognized post-graduation in the field and by the market.

Using critical discourse analysis, we have analyzed interviews with DI students and discovered three identity positions: competent deaf identity, student identity, and professional DI identity. We have shown that in the beginning of the SLI program, students articulate one identity position which seems particularly relevant to them in this context (competent deaf), that their discourse and other factors help them gain recognition in the social and legal sphere, and that this recognition allows them to articulate other identity positions (DI student and professional DI). Due to the recognition in the solidarity and legal spheres, later generations of students have immediate access to the two latter identity positions.

Another contributing factor to our participants being recognized in both the solidarity and legal spheres in terms of education is the location of Humak within the Light House center in Helsinki. This means that both students and teachers are part of a community of deaf policymakers. The close cooperation with Humak is also most likely important for the motivation to include DI students from the first launch of the program.

The DI students' narratives show that when the SLI program was new, they felt that they were not seen entirely as DI students and the program was not fully adapted to their

needs. Over the years, however, the program has changed to better suit DI students. Their narrative also shows that society only began regarding them as professional DIs when they conquered the market and created a new discourse. Finally, all of them expressed that despite minor disadvantages, there were overwhelming advantages to studying in a joint program for both deaf and hearing interpreting students, such as learning to work together in a team.

Our participants' discourse and social practice resulted in a social change (Fairclough 1992), namely a curriculum change for the DI students and job opportunities for professional DIs. Nevertheless, antagonistic discourses from the discourse order *market* (i.e., KELA) put this recognition at risk. Furthermore, according to Honneth (1996), recognition as such is not enough unless resources are also available. In this case it is KELA which, according to our participants, threatens job opportunities for professional DIs by allocating resources and questioning the need for DIs. The development that we have shown from non-recognition to recognition is now challenged by competing discourses, meaning that this is again a time of change.

The aim of our larger project is to investigate what it takes for an SLI program to create equal opportunities for deaf and hearing students to become professional signed language interpreters. The results from this study will contribute to that aim with the understanding of DI students' experiences from an SLI program. By understanding what helped our participants gain recognition as DI students, we have more tools to create an SLI program that will recognize DI students in both the legal and solidarity spheres and thereby work toward the goal of equal opportunities for all our students (deaf or hearing) to become signed language interpreters.

Conclusion

We argue that an education which seems to offer the same education to the two student cohorts does not necessarily create equal opportunities for the educational outcome. Our deaf participants have shown that compared to their hearing colleagues, they begin the SLI program with different previous knowledge, and their tasks as professional interpreters are somewhat different from their hearing colleagues. Thus, the exact same education will not provide equal opportunities to become professional interpreters for both groups. The DI students argue that this type of interpreting education needs to adapt to the different strengths and skills that the students bring into the classroom. Hence, in order to create not the same

but an equal outcome, the educational institution needs to be open to diversity in the educational program as well as in the training methods.

But diversity in the educational program is not enough. Both internal and external factors are important for DI students, such as access to a discourse on professional DIs, for instance, by having access to experienced professional DIs as role models and forerunners. Another important factor is recognition not only in the solidarity sphere, by fellow students and teachers, but also in the legal sphere, by curricula and institutions.

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Address for correspondence

Ingeborg Skaten
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
Postboks 7030
5020 Bergen
ingeborg.skaten@hvl.no

Gro Hege Saltnes Urdal
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
Postboks 7030
5020 Bergen
gro.hege.saltnes.urdal@hvl.no
ORCID: 0000-0002-9881-4250

Elisabet Tiselius (corresponding author)
Institute for Interpreting and Translation Studies
Stockholm University
106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
elisabet.tiselius@su.se
ORCID: 0000-0002-2285-6729

Bionotes

Ingeborg Skaten is an assistant professor at the department of Sign Language and Interpreting at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Norway (HVL). She has been a lecturer since the BA program started in 2004. She is a sign language interpreter and sociologist and has worked for the national deaf association for many years, five of them as editor of the Deaf magazine. The relationship between the profession and the consumer societies is one of her main research interests.

Gro Hege Saltnes Urdal is a senior lecturer in the Sign Language and Interpreting (SLI) program at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Norway, where she has been teaching since 2005. She completed her university degree in SLI in 1999, has worked as an interpreter in different settings, and currently does freelance interpreting. Her doctoral dissertation, defended in 2019, was titled *Students' acquiring of professional characteristics towards becoming interpreters for deafblind people: Development of evidence-based practice and Bildung-processes*.

Elisabet Tiselius is an associate professor in Translation Studies at Stockholm University. At Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Norway, she co-chairs research group Sign language, Interpreting and Communication. She is an active, state-authorized, EU-accredited spoken language interpreter, member of AIIC. Research interests include both spoken and signed language interpreting, such as expertise in interpreting, and non-professional interpreting.