An exploration of deaf interpreters' experience of professional autonomy and the source text: a qualitative and autoethnographic study

by

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Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on the lived experience of ten deaf interpreters and their sense of professional autonomy in interpreting situations and takes an autoethnographic approach which supports the research. The study chose to focus on how deaf interpreters access source text as a way to research this topic. The study addresses the significant gap in sign language interpreting studies literature due to the scarcity of research on the experiences of deaf interpreters. Most sign language interpreting studies tends to focus on hearing interpreters. This study gathers the views and experiences of deaf interpreters using qualitative interviews. Interview data provides narrative understanding of professional autonomy as expressed by the participants as factors that influence interpreting decisions and professional status. The theory of professional autonomy frames the research widening our understanding of deaf interpreting as a profession. The aim is to address the central research question 'can deaf interpreters be considered as having professional autonomy?' The results show that deaf interpreters have a complex relationship with their professional autonomy and are often more aware of it when they feel its absence. The lack of and content of existing professional interpreting courses for deaf interpreters compounds the problem. The research notes the implications for the future of deaf interpreters and discusses the limitations of the research. The study's contributions to knowledge of sign language interpreting are also acknowledged. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations around professional training for deaf interpreters and that the developing profession of deaf interpreting requires further research.

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Explanatory notes - terminologies

General terms

PDF – Person from a deaf family

D/deaf school – A school which only D/deaf children attend

Mainstream school – A school where deaf and hearing children are mixed e.g., two deaf pupils and 28 hearing pupils in classroom, or a school that has a specialist deaf unit

F/S – Fingerspelling

Oralism – The system of teaching profoundly deaf people to communicate by the use of speech and lip-reading rather than sign language

Interpreting sources – For example STTR or a feeding interpreter

Stagetext – Company who provide captioned performances for deaf and hard of hearing people

RSLT – Registered Sign Language Translator

RSLI – Registered Sign Language Interpreter

BA – Bachelor of Arts

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

SLI – Sign Language Interpreting

DI – Deaf Interpreter

STTR - Speech-to-text reporter

ENT – Electronic notetaker

MLS - Minimal language skills

SSE – Signed Support English

IS – International Sign

NCIEC – The Proposed Deaf Interpreting Domains & Competencies

DELK – Deaf Extralinguistic & Knowledge

NMF – Non-manual features

L1 - L1 refers to a person's first language

L2 - L2 refers to a person's second language or the language they are currently learning.

Sign Languages

BSL – British Sign Language

Mother tongue in ISL – the language which a person has grown up signing from early childhood is Irish Sign Language

Terms relating to organisations

CACDP - Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, now known as Signature. This is a registered charity aimed at raising standards of communication between deaf and hearing people.

BSLTA – British Sign Language Training Agency, Durham University

SASLI – Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreter

SRLPDC - The Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community

SLIS – Sign Language Interpreting Services

NRCPD - The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People, a training and professional development organisation that exists to protect those who need or book support by holding a register of communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people.

BDA – British Deaf Association

ASLI – Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Signamic - an organisation providing courses such as British Sign Language, Interpreting and Translation

UCLan - University of Central Lancashire

Signature - the leading awarding body for deaf communication qualifications in the UK.

AoHL - Action on Hearing Loss, a UK national charity helping people who are confronting life-changing deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

DWEB – The Deaf Welfare Examining Board

IRP – Independent Registration Panel

DRI – Deaf Relay Interpreters

WFD – World Federation of Deaf

WASLI – World Association of Sign Language Interpreter

NVQ – National Vocational Qualifications

UK – United Kingdom

USA – United State of America

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The professional autonomy of interpreters is a developing area of enquiry and one which, to date, has not addressed the work of deaf interpreters. While it is encouraging to see deaf interpreting becoming an ever more established career, the need to explore this is more urgent than ever as we look forward to continued growth in the field. There are a greater number of deaf interpreters formally working in the community and in the public sphere than ever before which is a significant shift considering the interpreting model that has been dominant for so many years. Historically, hearing sign language interpreters have been well known to members of the deaf community who sometimes referred to them as people "interpreting for the deaf" (Pöchhacker, 2004:17). This concept of the interpreting process involves the sign language interpreter's ability to deliver a message between deaf and hearing people through spoken and signed language. This benefits both Deaf and non-signing people to understand each other in terms of language and cultural perspectives. The hearing interpreter's work is described as 'the "live and immediate transmission" of discourse that is spoken or signed' (Metzger, 1999:3).

The majority of sign language interpreters in the United Kingdom are hearing people who use their hearing and vocal faculties in combination with skill in British Sign Language (BSL) to perform interpreting duties. In the UK context, they are professionally trained to use two languages, BSL and English, to interpret for deaf and hearing people who wish to communicate with each other. The process involves the interpreter hearing the spoken words (i.e., English) then interpreting the spoken message into BSL and vice versa. The difference between BSL, indeed all signed languages, and English or spoken languages is in modality and structure (Rathmann, Mathur, Meier, Cormier and Quinto-Pozoz, 2002). For example, people who communicate in spoken English use their vocal faculties to produce sounds which are mapped against specific words and grammatical combinations. The vocal elements are then received by the auditory faculties and processed accordingly. This modality is applicable to hearing sign language interpreters. BSL, on the other hand, is mediated through visual faculties. People who communicate in BSL use their hands, body and facial expressions to convey meaning. Deaf interpreters use BSL because of its visual-manual modality given that they cannot depend on their auditory faculties.

According to Napier (2015), BSL/English interpreting – whether performed by deaf or hearing interpreters - involves the reception and comprehension of a message in one language and the reproduction of the meaning in a second language This may happen simultaneously or consecutively. Simultaneous interpreting requires interpreters to use memory skills to deliver and work from the source language into the target language and vice versa. In order to be able to do this, hearing sign language interpreters must be functionally bilingually competent in BSL and English. However, as Bontempo and Napier, (2011) argues, individuals who are bilingual or fluent in BSL and English do not automatically qualify as interpreters without professional training. In order to practice, they must be professionally trained and hold an interpreting qualification.

The term 'deaf interpreter' refers to deaf people who work as sign language interpreters. Deaf interpreters (DIs) practise in a variety of ways, in collaboration with hearing interpreters and as lone workers. Sometimes the skillset and approach of deaf and hearing interpreters overlap but more often they are different, most fundamentally in that DIs themselves are deaf either since birth or deafened later in life. A hearing interpreter works and interprets with deaf clients during their work hours but will then go home and be involved, for the greater part, in the hearing community (Adam et al, 2014) although it must be acknowledged that there are hearing interpreters who go home to deaf family members or socialise regularly with deaf people. This fundamental difference means that other factors around access to information, relationship with and approach to deaf culture and Deaf and hearing people's primary/first language also differ (ibid; Bourdieu, 1991). The focus of this study is deaf interpreters – an area of research that has received very little attention in sign language interpreting (SLI) research. Most SLI studies tend to focus on hearing sign language interpreters. This gap is significant given that deaf interpreters have, for many years, been using their specific knowledge of deaf culture to provide an essential service to the deaf community in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Deaf interpreters are employed to provide interpretation and translation services, most commonly between a signed language and other visual and tactile communication forms used by individuals who are Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Deaf-Blind; translation between a signed language and written texts; and interpretation between two signed languages (Adam et al, 2014 and Stone, 2009).

The term 'Interpreting Source' is defined in this thesis as the medium by which the deaf interpreter receives the source text from which they then interpret into the final target text. There are two main ways to facilitate this: Speech to Text Reporter (STTR) or by a 'feeding' interpreter. STTR technology includes autocue, sometimes known as tele-prompter, which has text pre-loaded and displayed on a monitor as well as live captioning done in real time. The process of working live from a spoken source has a number of labels such as Captioner, STTR, Electronic Note-Taker (ENT) and, for the purposes of this thesis, the umbrella term STTR will be used. The deaf interpreter then reads the typed version of the spoken text and interprets into the required target language. The second type of source is the 'feeding' interpreter; a sign language interpreter who interprets the original source text into a shared sign language so that the deaf interpreter can further interpret into the required target language.

During my MA at the University of Leeds, (BSL/English Interpreting, 2011) my research focused on deaf interpreters and my thesis was titled *'The Barriers Deaf Interpreters Face'*. As a working deaf interpreter, it has been my experience that the modern world welcomes the growing opportunities for deaf people to break into the sign language interpreting profession. There is growing awareness that deaf interpreters can provide an interpreting service comparable with hearing interpreting professionals (Boudreault, 2005). It is therefore essential to educate purchasers and service users in working with deaf interpreters, wherever and whenever appropriate. This study addresses the professional autonomy for deaf interpreters in the workplace using how they choose to access source text as a lens by which to interrogate the concept. We know very little about the factors that influence their decisions on the selection of different interpreting sources, i.e., whether to use an autocue or a hearing feeding interpreter. This study attempts to fill this gap by collecting and analysing the stories of ten deaf interpreters who participated in the research. The purpose of presenting the stories of deaf interpreters is to understand the variety of considerations that influence our decision-making process regarding the most appropriate interpreting sources.

In this chapter, I introduce the research topic and present a description of the research rationale, aims and objectives, theoretical framework and the overall structure of the dissertation. As the deaf author of this dissertation, using an autoethnographic approach to the research allowed me to include my reflections on my school and further/higher education experience in order to offer a more rounded picture. This extends to include my experience of working as a deaf

interpreter. The reason for presenting a self-narrative is to address issues of potential bias by making transparent the research process and allowing readers to see my identity as the researcher. By including my story in the research, I acknowledge that I am an 'insider researcher' (Tedlock, 2000) due to my deaf identity and the strong grounding I have within the British deaf community. The term *insider researcher* is defined as researchers who identify with the culture of the community under study and who contribute knowledge primarily for the benefit of that particular community (Reinhartz, 1997). I acknowledge my insider researcher status in order to reveal how certain aspects of my own background, subjective experience and motivations influenced decisions around data collection and data analysis, as well as my interpretation of the data. My story is presented in section 1.1.

1.1. Situating my researcher self: a personal narrative

As author of this dissertation, I took the decision to put myself into a public space in the study, discussing my own personal and professional story about myself as a researcher to help address issues of bias and subjectivity in the research with the idea developing from there. I am a deaf interpreter and I chose to present this research using an autoethnographic frame (Wall, 2006 & O'Connell, 2017), because I began to see the benefit of writing my story as a way to acknowledge the 'insider knowledge' of the subject under investigation that I would be using. According to Harding (2004), philosopher of feminist and postcolonial theory, the insider researcher uses insider knowledge of a community and applies concepts from academia such as postcolonialism in order to frame this knowledge in a way that makes the culture, beliefs and values of the participants accessible to readers. Adam et al makes the connection between the concept of insider researcher with those of us researching the deaf community from the perspective of someone who lives within it (Adam et al, 2014). The insider perspective is very much a part of me as lived experience (Alcoff, 1991) as I am a member of and involved in both the Deaf community and the Sign Language interpreting profession. I decided to write my personal account in the belief that it will lead to a better understanding of the social world which I inhabit. I believe the connection between my own past and those of my participants should be presented in this qualitative study to make clear our shared experiences, understanding of deaf culture and the sign language interpreting world.

I am the fourth of five children, the second of three deaf children in my family. My older brother, the first deaf child in our family, was my role model and inspiration growing up. He

went to a school for deaf children from which he brought sign language back into our home, my first experience of learning sign language. I communicate with family members using a combination of gestures, sign language and home signs. In my early years, I was completely unaware of the existence of British Sign Language until my older brother introduced it to me. I started attending a school for deaf children at the age of three but the school policy did not allow us to communicate in BSL, especially in the classroom. Only spoken language (spoken and written English) was permitted. When I was five or six years old, my older deaf brother taught me more about BSL. After I left school, I joined the deaf social club centre and became a regular member. At the club, I developed interpreting skills which I would now call 'language brokering' (Napier, 2021). I volunteered to interpret for other deaf members but was not an interpreter *per se*. I had done no formal training and did not have a qualification in interpreting. As a child, I often helped to translate or interpret for my brothers and sisters during special family occasions and also at public events. At the time, I did not know of the term 'language brokering' nor would I have understood its meaning, referring as it does to people who work between two languages: in this case, spoken and sign languages.

The deaf club centre arranged events where a hearing person might give a talk and there would be a hearing BSL interpreter present. I was often asked to act as 'relay interpreter' by taking the spoken message - interpreted by the hearing interpreter into BSL - and re-transmitting it to the deaf audience. I would translate the meaning of the message very much unaware that I was actually taking on the role of interpreter. What I did not understand was why some deaf people could not follow the hearing interpreter's rendering of the message. McKee (1996) and Mathers (2009) posit that some of the factors for this might be because hearing interpreters may be missing aspects such as shared language and cultural features. Without my assistance, the community were missing out on important information, and it was at that point I developed the desire to become a deaf interpreter.

These early language brokering experiences taught me to appreciate the value of providing high quality access for deaf people. The desire motivated me to work as a television presenter, translator and interpreter. My interpreting skills were honed through my work on television, websites, DVDs and mainstream media programming. It was from these experiences that I was able to practice working with autocue technology. Understanding the language and cultural needs of the Deaf Community, I was able to share the learning from my childhood with other deaf people and contribute a valuable service to deaf community members. This was a very

rewarding experience and I enjoyed working with other deaf and hearing sign language interpreters. I prefer to work as an interpreter and/or translator at conference events, in medical and other dialogic situations as well as in the academic field. My main preference is to work with a 'feeding interpreter' which, as explained in chapter 2, refers to the process where the hearing interpreter works from spoken English into a national sign language, with the deaf interpreter then working from that national sign language into International Sign or the other required target text (Adam et al, 2014; Jobse, 2015).

I have had experience of working with feeding interpreters in conference settings and have found that rapport that can be built when working with colleagues goes a long way to support an effective target language translation. My experience with working from autocue or text is based mainly in work for television and media. The text can be read multiple times, rehearsed and then a live interpretation of that is recorded. I have yet to have the opportunity, however, to work in such a way in a conference setting but would gladly embrace the challenge. Given my own range of experience as a deaf interpreter, I wanted to use this study as a site of exploration of the experiences of deaf interpreters because of its near absence in the wider sign language interpreting research of the UK context. Moreover, as a deaf interpreter myself, my lived experience of the work was a key factor in what drew me towards this research topic. Knowing how the qualification and training routes vary across the United Kingdom and the challenges involved in joining the profession, I felt this research could be a useful contribution to seeing positive future change. When gathering the data, I was very aware of my internal struggle in both the focus groups and the interviews. The struggle was me finding a way to not insert myself into the discussion in a way that would steer it or colour the points being raised. The deaf community is small and the deaf interpreting community even smaller. Consequently, I knew each of the participants before they joined the study and was aware that I was seeing their contributions through the lens of my prior relationship with not just them but their background, history and place in the community. Reviewing the data at a later date brought about similar struggle and keeping myself aware of this was essential. In this situation, with so much shared history, language, experience and culture between myself and the participants, the idea of being a neutral researcher was not entirely plausible and the best I could do was to stay aware of how I might potentially influence the data analysis. There may be issues raised by the participants that I did not find myself naturally drawn to or other issues that excited me and these decisions are based on my experience as a deaf person and a deaf interpreter. Keeping

myself reminded, however, of the aim of the research and the core questions I wished to address strengthened my approach.

1.2 Research background

As explained elsewhere, this study discusses the experience of deaf interpreters and the factors that influence their decision-making processes in interpreting practices with specific focus on how the DI receives the source text. To date, there is a lack of agreement on the best term by which to define deaf interpreting. Since deaf interpreters have been involved in a number of different roles and functions, they have been ascribed a variety of labels such as 'relay interpreter', 'intermediary', 'translator', 'facilitator' or 'mirroring interpreter' (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992; Boudreault, 2005; Napier et al, 2006; Stone, 2009). It should be noted that these terms are considered problematic by other scholars in the field and that the term deaf interpreter (DI) is preferred. (Adams et al, 2014). Each of these terms is explored in the next chapter (see section 2.2) and I will give a brief description of each to provide context to the study.

The term 'relay interpreter' was in widespread use during the 1980s and early 1990s to describe deaf people who relay information from one language (e.g. BSL) to another (e.g. written English) for members of the deaf community (Bienvenu & Colonomos, 1992). Deaf people have also been referred to as 'translator' in that they translate from the source or original text to the target language (Stone, 2009). The term 'facilitator' emerged when hearing interpreters encountered difficulty communicating with deaf clients and it became clear that deaf people better facilitated the communication exchange between the parties involved in these situations (Boudreault, 2005). Mirroring, on the other hand, is a term used to describe 'the task of replicating every grammatical feature of the message signed by the presenter, someone in the audience, or even by another … DI or hearing interpreter' (Boudreault, 2005:329). While Adam et al (2014:117) calls this 'shadow interpreting' while 'mirroring' implies the task of copying and replicating the interpretation.

Boudreault (2005) expresses concern that the many different labels could cause confusion amongst the public, consumers and deaf people themselves. As Boudreault (2005) maintains, these labels can be misleading where people might assume that the role of deaf interpreters relates only to certain tasks. As a result, we do not have a label that includes all of the different tasks that deaf interpreters perform and is collectively accepted with relatively little

research that agrees on the most suitable term. This is unfortunate because there is little awareness of the difference between deaf people as interpreters and as translators (Boudreault, 2005; Stone, 2009), the latter of which is often used in everyday practices to mean interpreting. Both interpreting and translating are language-based activities with the difference being the medium. The interpreter translates orally or through signs whereas the translator mainly works with written text. More recently, Wurm (2010) and Leneham (2007) have identified the key issue in understanding the difference between translation and interpreting as whether a text can be reviewed, edited and polished, until satisfied with the end product.

Boudreault (2005) identifies another cause for concern, which is that people often assume that sign language interpreters are always hearing people. They may not understand how deaf people could actually function as interpreters if they cannot hear or understand the speaker. The difference between a hearing and deaf interpreter is not, however, only to do with the level of hearing. It has more to do with having a 'translation norm' (Stone, 2009), a historically deaf, bilingual role which refers to the gift or innate ability that some deaf people have to translate and interpret for other deaf people. This skill can originate in their childhood classroom experience, when they were able to tap into their skills in sign language as well as other visual and tactile forms of communication (Leeson and Lynch, 2008) to interpret for their classmates.

As Boudreault (2005:324) notes, 'A very common situation in a classroom at a school for the Deaf or even in a higher education context is that the hearing teachers do not communicate or transmit their ideas clearly'. It has been noted that hearing teachers who lack fluency in sign language and/or do not have appropriate sign vocabulary or grammar (Ladd, 2003) have historically had an adverse effect on the learning of Deaf children and students. In every class it is highly probable there will be one Deaf student who possesses knowledge and skill enough to follow the teacher and, using his/her bilingual skills, can share the information in the lesson with his/her classmates (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992; Boudreault, 2005; Stone, 2009; Adam, Carty, and Stone, 2011; Adam et al, 2014). After leaving education these young Deaf people often migrate to the environment of the Deaf club, bringing their interpreting skills into the Deaf community, a practice referred to as ghost writing which is explored later in the thesis. The notion of Deaf people working as interpreters has not been widely recognised or recorded but it is not a new concept. Deaf people who function as interpreters have always been present

in the Deaf community (Bienvenu & Colonomos, 1992; Stone, 2009; NCIEC, 2009; Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005 and 2011; Adam et al, 201 and 2014) although very little research has been undertaken on any aspect of their work due to a myriad of factors which includes a lack of awareness about their work.

In the late 1980s, Deaf interpreters (DIs) were starting to attract attention throughout the world, for example at the first ever European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI) seminar. At that inaugural event, in 1988 in Glasgow, Clark Denmark gave a presentation about Deaf Interpreters and later gave another presentation entitled *Deaf Interpreters - 25 years on, a personal perspective and actual phenomena* at the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreter's (SASLI) 25th Anniversary conference in Edinburgh, in 2007 (Clark Denmark, Personal Communication, 30th August 2011 and 28th October 2014).

DIs have been working as interpreters in a range of settings for many years, (ASLI, Deaf Interpreters Conference, 2011). Adam et al (2014) ask how deaf Interpreters are positioned in various interpreting settings and demonstrate how important it is for DIs to have full access to the source text, either through a sign language feeder or an autocue.

DIs, like all interpreters, work from source to target text. While my thesis makes mention of the way DIs participate in team interpreting in a number of chapters, this is not the focus of the research. I would, however, like to take some time to define team interpreting and describe these aspects of the activity: hearing interpreters (HI), deaf interpreters (DI), teamwork between DI and HI and, lastly, use of the STTR. These aspects are being discussed here as they have an impact upon a DI's professionalism, their capacity to interpret, categories of interpreting and guidance for interpreters.

Russell, D. (2011), themselves hearing interpreters, define a 'team' as more than two interpreters working together. The reason for having more than one interpreter is to avoid exhaustion and burnout: including physical and cognitive/comprehension in the process of working from one language to another. Each interpreter in the team is active as the primary interpreter for between 20 to 30 minutes while the co-worker supports the primary to make sure nothing is missed, inaudible or inaccurate. The authors impress upon the reader that 'two heads are better than one' (2004:89), and more information about the research around team interpreting can be found in section 2.8.

Team interpreting brings together a group of people with complementary skills who work together to achieve the task at hand. That can be in a large piece of work such as a conference with multiple presentations and participants or it can be for a single client who is best served by having a number of different approaches from various interpreters all working together for the same goal**.** While some teams choose the above approach when breaking up a large piece of work, a more contemporary approach is to think about natural breaks e.g. a new presenter or a change of topic or someone challenging the current speaker.

Sforza (2014), in her research led by deaf interpreters, looks at the difference between deaf-deaf interpreting teams and other team interpreting approaches. Her research focuses on the feeding interpreter (see section 2.3.2) – meaning a deaf interpreter feeding another deaf interpreter – and targets three categories of linguistic strategies, one of which is use of facial expressions, e.g., eye gaze or head nod (2014:23). The supporting interpreter (called the non-rendering interpreter here) is still in a position of feeding and affirming the active interpreter's reception of the source text.

Napier et al (2006) looks at the work of a hearing and deaf relay interpreter team, working together for a variety of reasons such as the use of foreign sign language, idiosyncratic or home signs and minimal language skills (MLS) being used in the interaction. In these situations, the hearing interpreter is unable to communicate with the deaf client and a deaf relay interpreter is used. This means the hearing and deaf relay interpreter work in a team on the same assignment. There are a number of strategies to consider including how the deaf relay and hearing interpreter work together using best practice to deliver the appropriate information to the client. This includes addressing issues such as how much information should be taken from the spoken language and interpreted into the national sign language in order for the deaf relay interpreter to render that appropriately in the target language. At times, these strategies can include the use of literal interpretation, fingerspelling and communication props.

Adam et al (2014) looked at the use of speech-to-text reporting (STTR) in the United Kingdom, which allows deaf interpreters to work from the source text to the target. The USA use a different name to describe this technology: communication access real-time translation

(CART), also known as tele-prompter or autocue. This equipment is normally found in a television setting and facilitates the deaf interpreter being able to work from the English text on the monitor and rendering the appropriate target text.

My understanding of team interpreting is defined by my experience of working in a variety of situations including as an individual, in a trio, a small or large group, as well as the context, e.g., conference/congress or assembly, and resonates with the research described above. A team, in my view, is interpreters working together regardless of whether they are hearing or deaf, active or supporting, and is defined by the support and guidance offered and received throughout the assignment. For the purposes of this thesis, my definition of team interpreting for deaf interpreters is the people with whom they work in order to receive the source text whether that is a hearing or deaf interpreter or a STTR or spoken language interpreter. There are gaps in the research literature around how deaf interpreters work with other feeding interpreters, both deaf and hearing, with many interpreters not yet considering STTR as part of the team. I have noted that deaf interpreters tend not to interact with STTRs and this may be because they do not know how to work with them due to training not yet addressing this issue. My research aim is to examine the professional autonomy of deaf interpreters when working in a variety of teams including working with a feeding interpreter and a STTR and the impact this has on their professional autonomy. My main participant focus is with deaf interpreters who work in teams for the majority of their assignments.

In my thesis, however, I will be focusing mainly on the professional autonomy aspects of the deaf interpreter's work and will not be presenting research around team interpreting. I will also not be focusing on issues that arise in the transmission of source text to target, e.g., omissions or facial expressions.

Section 1.3 gives details of the research rationale in order to provide justification for doing the project. This is followed by a discussion of the research aims and objectives.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The idea for this study emerged when I read the literature on deaf interpreters and identified a gap relating to their experiences of decision-making around interpreting sources. What was particularly missing was an account of what factors influence the choices they make to meet the linguistic repertoire of deaf community members. As a deaf interpreter myself, this was

particularly significant because the lack of such important data means that researchers and service providers lack valuable information that would help enhance their understanding of interpreting involving deaf and hearing interpreters in the UK, for example, why some interpretations are less successful than others and how interpreter training can address that (Adam et al, 2010, 2011 and 2014). My decision to focus on deaf interpreters as research participants is influenced by the fact that I am a deaf interpreter myself. Deaf people are rarely given due recognition as professional interpreters despite the fact that they have been engaged in interpreting practice for over 40 years. There is also a failure among interpreting agencies to recognize deaf interpreters as autonomous professionals able to make independent decisions around interpreting sources. The problem can be caused by the lack of appropriate professional training for deaf interpreters, which in turn influences people's perception of them as non-professionals. Adam et al (2014:7) state that

> 'acceptance and recognition of the interpreter's language inventory, skills set, qualifications, and experience also differ between DI and hearing interpreters (Morgan & Adam, 2012): DIs are often treated differently and accorded a lower status than hearing interpreters'.

My ambition is to bring to light these issues and make visible deaf interpreters' status as autonomous professional interpreters. My aim is that research such as mine will contribute to the body of knowledge and enhance our understanding of the way deaf interpreters function as professionals which will in turn support interpreting agencies and service providers to change their perception of deaf interpreters.

It is only in recent times that many deaf interpreters have undertaken professional training courses from which they received interpreting qualifications (Adam et al, 2014). My motivation for this study stems from the belief that we need to study the experiences of deaf interpreters in order to better understand the complexity of the work including the relationship between deaf and hearing interpreters (Boudreault, 2005). Most researchers studying deaf people tend to be hearing and see deafness from a medical perspective, which creates images of helpless and dependent individuals. In order to position the study away from the medical model of disability, I choose to focus on deaf people's cultural and linguistic experiences. My argument is that the socio-cultural model and professional autonomy theory framework offers us an effective way of increasing our understanding of deaf interpreting practice.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study is framed within Davis' (1996) theory of 'professional autonomy' which is applied here in order to illuminate an understanding of deaf interpreters' experiences of interpreting. While Davis' (1996) discussion of autonomy relates to employed professionals such as accountants and engineers, his ideas have relevance to the research topic under study. Davis draws on a body of literature on the reaction of professionals who have been denied autonomy and subsequently developed a concept of professional autonomy. The idea of professional autonomy has rarely been considered as a conceptual framework in SLI research. In fact, little or no research is available that addresses the question of whether or not deaf interpreters can be considered autonomous professionals. As noted by Holcombe (2014) in a study of video relay interpreting, one of the key features of the sign language interpreting profession is the concept of autonomy. Using the aspect of how the source text is accessed, the professional autonomy can be explored in more detail. At this point, I must state that the application of professional autonomy theory to this study is still relatively new so research such as this is exploratory in nature (Alley, 2019). It is my intention to try out this concept as a novel way of looking at the experience of sign language interpreters, a departure from previous approaches. Further discussion of the concepts of professional autonomy and decision-making therein is presented in the next chapter.

1.5 Research questions

The aim of this research is to explore the following main research question and a number of sub questions:

- Can deaf interpreters be considered as having professional autonomy?

In order to engage with some of the fundamental issues of this research as expressed in the rationale above, this study will also attempt to answer the following questions:

- How have deaf interpreters experienced autonomy in making interpreting decisions in the interpreting profession and process?
- What factors influence deaf interpreters' preferences for receiving source text in interpreting?
- What factors influence the decisions that deaf interpreters make regarding interpreting choices?

The questions put to the participants offered them the opportunity to explore their experiences of interpreting and reflect upon their practice. Their thoughts, feelings, views and experiences will provide a context to the discussion on deaf people's important role in the sign language interpreting profession. The aim is to present their stories and contribute to knowledge in the following ways:

- The findings will provide grounds for further research and theory development in the area of deaf interpreters' professional autonomy and decision-making processes that shape their use of interpreting resources;
- The findings will fill a gap in the existing literature on sign language interpreting;
- The results will provide an alternative perspective to sign language interpreting in order to provide deeper insight into the dynamics of the many variations of interpreting situations;
- The study will add to extant literature on deaf interpreters and the valuable work produced by Adam et al (2014) and Stone (2009).

In the context of the above, I follow Boudreault's (2005) argument that sign language interpreting should be studied from the perspective of deaf insider researchers in order to inform good practice.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

There are seven chapters in this dissertation, including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature on sign language interpreting in general with a particular focus on deaf interpreting. The literature review is arranged in categories based on relevant themes linking to the project's research topic. Chapter Three then focuses on the Theoretical Framework used in the research which looks at the concept of professional autonomy and the impact on deaf interpreters' work. The research methodology is presented in Chapter Four where I discuss the various methodological considerations including research design, data collection stages and the writing up of the thesis. Furthermore, I justify the decision to use qualitative research to try to understand the experience of deaf interpreting. These chapters contextualise the discussions of the results obtained from interview data, which are presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Six discusses the results of the study according to themes identified

in the transcript. These discussions are supported by comments drawn from the literature review and are illuminated by theories on professional autonomy. Chapter Seven not only summarises the research but also draws conclusions from the findings supported by themes identified in the literature review. This chapter is structured around a summary, discussion and recommendations for future research.

1.7 Relevant themes and terminologies

British Sign Language and deaf identity are the two main themes that form the basis of this study on deaf interpreting. I will explain each in the following sub-sections.

1.7.1 British sign language

British Sign Language (BSL) is the primary language of the British deaf community and is used in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. By definition, BSL is a visual-gestural language which makes use of space and the movement of the hands and other parts of the body to convey meaning. Linguists have argued that BSL is governed by all the grammatical features necessary for human languages to function (Brennan, 1986). BSL has legal recognition in Scotland (BSL (Scotland) Act 2015,) and the British Sign Language Act, covering England and Wales was passed in April 2022. Contrary to popular belief, there is no universal sign language. There are many different national sign languages in much the same way as there are many different spoken languages (English, French, Spanish etc.) around the world (Sutton-Spence and Woll, 1988). BSL is grammatically different to other signed languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) (Boudreault, 2005; Adam et al, 2014). All national sign languages are the sign language used by deaf people from their own respective country (Sutton-Spence and Woll, 1999). For example, Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the native sign language of the Republic of Ireland and is used by Irish deaf people in their daily lives. It must be acknowledged that national sign languages are subject to the effects of migration patterns and colonialization so can bear some relationship to each other. For example, as discussed here:

> '[…] People say our signs [in Singapore] come from Australia, China and America. So I am worried that [this means that] we do not have our own sign language […] Also, why are there so many signs for the same thing? Which is the right sign? […] why can't everyone just sign the right way?'
>
> Excerpt from private correspondence, 1994

When there is an international gathering of deaf people from different countries, International Sign (IS) is often used. IS is a form of contact signed communication that includes a combination of signs derived from different national signed languages (Hansen, 2016). At international conference events, deaf interpreters sometimes work between two languages, one of which is International Sign. Sometimes they interpret into International Sign from a written source text presented on autocue or a live feeding interpreter and vice versa.

1.7.2 Deaf identities

Most researchers studying deaf people come across the distinction between the terms 'deaf' and 'Deaf'. It might be useful to unpack that here a little. The term 'deaf' has been used historically to refer to people who see themselves as people with a hearing loss whereas 'Deaf' has been used to describe those who identify themselves as being part of a cultural-linguistic minority group; the Deaf community. These distinctions evolved to distinguish between the medical and social and cultural implications respectively (Woodward, 1972). For example, the term *deaf* contains medical definitions of hearing loss/deafness with the emphasis on repairing or fixing the *loss* for the former and a sense of pride in a linguistic community for the latter. This is changing in the twenty-first century with an increasing number of people choosing to use 'deaf' as an inclusive term for all those with hearing loss regardless of primary language (Friedner and Kusters, 2020)). Although as author of this dissertation I continue to choose to identify myself as 'Deaf', denoting a political stance that challenges the discriminatory acts and exclusive practices faced by my community, in the interest of clarity, I will avoid making this distinction and use the term 'deaf' throughout the dissertation to refer to deaf people who use sign language.

Some other terms that need clarity include the words 'Sign Language' which is used in this study to encompass the various signed languages around the world. Where possible, national signed languages are referred to by their abbreviation: for example, Irish Sign Language (ISL); British Sign Language (BSL); American Sign Language (ASL). For the purpose of this study, the term 'deaf interpreter' will be used to refer to deaf people who work as interpreters.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research topic, rationale and aims and objectives of the study and discussed the theoretical and methodological components of the research. It starts with a narrative account of my family and my experience as a student attending a school for deaf girls

and an account of my career development as a deaf interpreter. I situated my story in this research as early as possible to familiarize the reader with my background in order to make clear my motivations for doing the research. The next chapter contains a review of the literature from which I provide a detailed background of the history of deaf interpreters in the UK and abroad.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on deaf sign language interpreters, an emerging field in the area of sign language interpreting (Boudreault, 2005; Stone, 2009; Adam et al, 2011, 2014; Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992; Forestal, 2005, 2011). I review the literature on deaf interpreting in terms of its origin and evolution as well as the various roles and functions within it. I also include a discussion of the qualification routes open to deaf interpreters in the UK, of the various training programmes on offer in the UK (Adam et al, 2011 & 2014; Bienvenu & Colonomos, 1992; Boudreault, 2005; Stone, 2009; Forestal, 2005, 2011). I will discuss the different interpreting resources that deaf interpreters use and the factors that influence their decisions on engaging with a feeding interpreter or auto-cue in order to receive source text.

2.2 Deaf interpreting: origin and evolution

The origin of deaf interpreting can be traced to a shared experience of deaf education where many deaf children performed as interpreters in the classroom, passing on teachers' instructions to their peers. These children were usually hard-of-hearing students and were in the minority among a large number of deaf, sign language using students. They had the ability to hear and lip-read spoken language instructions from the teacher at a time when teachers had no understanding of sign language which, in fact, was forbidden in the classroom as Batterbury (2012) explains, 'The banning of sign languages in schools in 1880 saw the practice of oralism, in which spoken language was used as the medium of instruction'. The majority of deaf students could not follow their teachers' instructions and relied on their peers for support. The classroom was the place where 'relay interpreting' was commonly practiced when the teacher was not looking. The history of deaf interpreters, however, goes back much further. According to Carty, Macready and Sayers (2009), there is evidence of deaf people engaging in interpreting as early as the 17th century. The authors cite an article published in 1680, which reported a husband writing down an account of his wife's personal story, which she relayed to him in sign language as part of a Puritan Church examination in Weymouth, Massachusetts. The Paris Banquet of 1834 is another event where deaf people teamed up with a hearing interpreter to interpret for deaf and hearing members of the audience (Stone and Russell, 2013). These accounts give us evidence that deaf people have been performing interpreting duties for centuries. However, it is not clear whether or not they did the work on a voluntary or

professional basis. Since then, deaf people have been practising as interpreters in a variety of settings which I will now explore in more detail.

2.2.1 Residential schools

Scholars argue that residential schools for deaf children, particularly the classroom, was the setting where deaf people first engaged in interpreting for their peers (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992; Stone, 2009; NCIEC, 2009; Boudreault, 2005; Forestal, 2005, 2011; Adam et al, 2011, 2014). Many deaf interpreters have residential school experiences themselves. They often lived in school as boarders for most of their childhood and learned to communicate in BSL with peers, despite school policies banning the language. Most of the teachers were hearing people who had no BSL competence and some deaf students functioned as 'relay interpreters' (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992) or 'language brokers' (Napier, 2021) in the classroom. Napier notes that children with residual hearing often got the 'call' from their peers to interpret class instructions and relay information. For some deaf people, it may be these formative experiences of interpreting which helped them develop the confidence to interpret or translate for other deaf people when they became adults.

It is important to understand the background of these interpreting experiences in the classroom as it will give context to this study. The need for interpreting was a response to the problem of communication barriers to education in the classroom. It was the result of difficulties experienced by deaf children. At the centre of this difficulty was a policy that did not allow deaf children to use BSL. Education policy at the time was founded on 'oralism' a term that describes a teaching approach that uses spoken language communication and rejects sign language as a language of instruction in the classroom. Ladd (2003) argues that oralism operated a monolingual approach to education. I maintain that the prohibition of sign language inspired an unexpected level of resistance from deaf children, who were subjected to punishment for using BSL. They were forced to use speech and hone their listening skills which created barriers to accessing information. The aim of oralism is the integration of deaf people into society where they would be expected to communicate with hearing people using a spoken language. Instead of integration, deaf adults formed their own community by meeting at the deaf club centres on a regular basis. The idea that deaf people should be integrated into society came from hearing people who had visions of a 'normal' society and a perception that deaf people were isolated individuals. Educators ignored the fact that some deaf children engaged in sign language interpreting because their peers could not follow the teachers' instructions.

Interpreting was evidence that deaf children needed BSL for access to information though this was denied them. It was also evidence that the policy of oralism was a failure in the classroom. This is something that has been ignored since to acknowledge it would mean acknowledging that the policy failed deaf children and that BSL was their natural language.

2.2.2 The deaf social club centre

As far back as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, deaf people have been known to hold regular social meetings at deaf club centres in different parts of the UK with many of the clubs led by deaf people. Religious leaders, known as missionaries, began to take control and pursued their own agenda regarding how deaf people should socialise (Ladd, 2003). The mission of these clubs became to provide spiritual guidance and instructions as well as services to deaf people. Some of them developed into welfare associations with the aims of providing social welfare information and support. Following an International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in 1880, which called for a ban on sign language in education around the world, deaf people began to assert themselves. One of the deaf activists, Francis Maginn, founded the British Deaf Association (BDA) in 1890 (British Deaf Association) in response to growing concerns about oralism and the missionaries' control of clubs. However, control in the running of the BDA soon followed the same pattern with hearing people taking on control of the organisation. The situation remained unchanged until the 1970s when deaf people were able to regain some control. Social workers were employed in the centre to provide services for deaf people but the fact that they could not sign meant that interpreters had to be present for one-to-one meetings. The missionaries functioned as interpreters.

At the same time, deaf people regularly attended the deaf club centre where they socialised with other deaf people. As Adam, Carty and Stone, (2011) report, it was common practice for some deaf adults to use their translation and interpreting skills learned in school to support other deaf club members. Their interpreting skills were bartered with some deaf members offering to provide carpentry or tailoring work in exchange for translating letters, newspaper articles and other documents (see Mindess, 2000; Ladd, 2003). By the 1980s, there was an increasing demand for deaf interpreters to work in court cases involving deaf people (Stone, 2009). There was also a concern that hearing interpreters were unable to interpret for deaf people with unique sign language idiolects. The lack of professional interpreting courses for deaf interpreters started to become problematic.

2.2.3 Media: participation and interpreting

BSL became visible on television screens in the UK after the launch of the deaf magazine programme *See Hear* on 11 October 1981. The programme was presented in BSL with subtitles on the screen. Soon afterwards, BSL interpreting became a regular feature of many television programmes replacing subtitles as the preferred option of the deaf community. Since then, deaf interpreters have consistently provided translation and interpreting work in television (Duncan, 1997; Collins and Walker, 2005; Stone, 2009; De Meulder and Heyerick, 2013). They translate and interpret from the source text into the target language providing a BSL translation of programmes such as the day's news, current affairs and drama series. Deaf interpreters often work on pre-recorded programmes ranging from children's programmes to documentaries and current affairs. The reason BSL is often preferred over subtitling is that, for many deaf people in the UK, BSL is their preferred language (Sutton-Spence, 1999). It is quite different from English in terms of grammar, phonology and syntax (Sutton-Spence, 1999). Deaf people also need access to facial expression in order to read the tone and emotional context of the message, which BSL offers. Facial expression is not available in subtitling.

Duncan (1997) and Stone (2009) report that a debate developed in the early 90s over whether hearing interpreters should work on television or only deaf interpreters should be employed. The availability of autocue, video footage and scripts raised the question of whether or not deaf interpreters working on television had the autonomy to do this without the presence of a hearing interpreter although there is no existing literature that focuses in detail on this aspect. It is a useful point to raise here as this research deals specifically with the experiences of deaf interpreters and their perception of their own professional autonomy with regard to accessing source text.

2.2.4 Legal and mental health interpreting

Forestal (2005) suggests that an important aspect of sign language interpreting in legal settings is the delivery of accurate interpreted information. The concern about hearing interpreters not being able to understand a deaf client who uses variations of BSL or IS highlights the need for deaf interpreters in courtroom settings. As Forestal points out, the purpose of hiring a deaf interpreter is to deliver accurate interpreted information in culturally appropriate ways that are more likely to be understood by the deaf client. Additionally, deaf interpreters are often required to work with medical professionals to ensure accurate information is delivered. They have the competency to grasp the full context of the client's use of BSL and pass on accurate

information without omitting important details (Morgan and Adam, 2012). Collins and Walker (2005) agree that this is crucial, particularly where BSL or English are not the client's first language. The risk being that, without this kind of interpreting, incorrect information could affect a patient's diagnosis and treatment. The level of professionalism required for deaf interpreters to provide this service in legal and medical settings means that the concept of their autonomy needs to be more fully researched and addressed. The literature suggests, however, that many deaf interpreters receive no professional training, which often has a negative effect on the fee they are paid. This may impact on their autonomy as professional interpreters in legal and medical settings.

2.2.5 Conference interpreting

Since the 1990s, deaf interpreters have been interpreting at international conferences for deaf delegates and presenters using different sign languages. This work usually involves a hearing interpreter feeding the information in one sign language to the deaf interpreter, who then interprets into the target, usually different, sign language for the audience. For example, the conference presenter's spoken English (source text) is translated into a signed language (signed source text), which is then translated into International Sign (IS) or another sign language. In reverse order, a delegate could direct a question to the platform using IS, which is signed to the deaf interpreter who then interprets the message into BSL for the hearing interpreter who renders the information into spoken English (Turner, 2007). Turner (2007) calls this practice 'indirect interpreting' due to the language chain that takes place (see Figure 1). In some cases, deaf interpreters may prefer to work without a feeding interpreter, often thought of as working solo, in a conference setting, accessing the source text via the scrolling text on a monitor or television typed by a palantypist or speech-to-text reporter (STTR) (Adam et al, 2014; Stone and Russell, 2014).

Another key practice that deaf interpreters use at conferences is 'audience design'. Although my research focuses on the input received by DIs rather than the output of the target text, audience design is discussed briefly here as the quality of the input often determines the quality of the output. Audience design refers to how the speaker adapts their presentation with a target audience in mind. This may influence interpreters' strategies and decision-making when translating from the source language into the target language. Audience design represents 'an important component of skopos and [is] crucial to translation as communication' (Hatim and Mason 2005:134). For example, Hatim and Mason noted that

skopos refers to 'the specification of the task to be performed' (2005:10) and the purpose and quality of translation. Skopos theory explains the 'aim', 'function' or 'purpose' of the interpreters' decision-making process in relation to the linguistic needs of the audience (Pöchhacker, 2004). Both skopos theory and audience design are relevant to interpreters' decision-making process. The existing theory on these concepts does not address how they impact on the professional autonomy of interpreters.

2.3 Why hire a deaf interpreter?

For me, it is important to address this question in order to be clear about the contribution deaf interpreters make to the sign language interpreting profession and to the deaf community. Mathers (2009) states that DIs have unique linguistic skills that they employ in interpretation in comparison to the sign language interpreter who can hear. Deaf people who have spent long periods in isolated circumstances or been institutionalised may have their sign language skills affected. As specialists, deaf interpreters have the distinctive ability to communicate with deaf individuals across a range of language practices including those with minimal language skills (MLS). They also have knowledge of deaf culture that allows them to communicate with those who have undeveloped sign language skills due to an inadequate education system that excludes sign language. Deaf interpreters are hired to work with other deaf people including deaf foreign nationals, individuals with mental health difficulties and those who use idiosyncratic signs specific to a particular location or institution. Deaf interpreters also provide 'touch interpreting' services for deaf-blind people (Collins, 2014). As Adam et al. (2014) argue, their extensive knowledge and understanding of deaf culture and the deaf community is valuable.

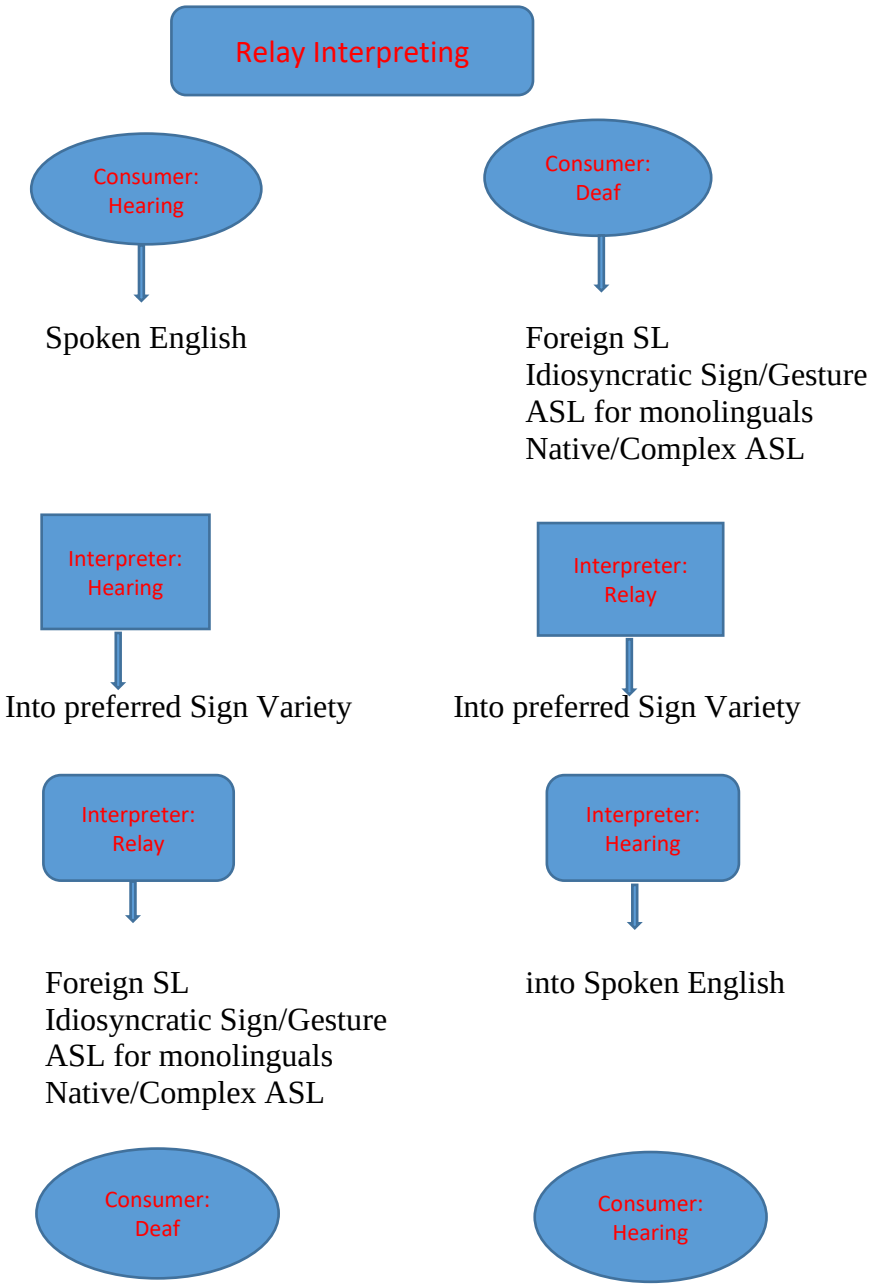
The article, *Proposed Deaf Interpreting Domains & Competencies* (NCIEC, 2009) describes extralinguistic skills, known as Deaf Extralinguistic Knowledge (DELK), that DIs possess as a result of their lifelong interaction with the Deaf community. DELK indicates the specialist knowledge and skills of the DI when considering 'the domains of Consumer Assessment, Language and Communication Foundations, Interpreting Process and Professional Development' (ibid: 1). In addition to the specialist DELK, NCIEC noted that DIs should also possess generalist, interpreting competencies such as those taught on general interpreting courses. In order to clarify the reasons for and benefits of working with deaf interpreters, it is necessary to discuss the various roles and functions that they are able to perform.

2.3.1 Relay interpreter, translator, and ghost writer

2.3.1.1 Relay interpreter

In the era before deaf interpreting was professionalised, the most common term to use was 'relay interpreting' (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992) (see Chapter 1). This could be said to have contributed to deaf interpreters being further rendered invisible, hidden and unrecognised with no professional training and qualifications. Figure 1 shows the processes involved in relay interpreting where there is 'at least one hearing and one D/deaf consumer and an intermediary interpreter (hearing)' (Bienvenu and Colonomos, 1992:70). For Napier et al. (2006:143) relay interpreting 'encompasses a whole range of scenarios where a single interpreter is unable to bridge the communication gap between the clients. Deaf relay interpreters were almost like a sub-culture within the wider sign language interpreting profession. They did not receive any professional training due to the lack of accredited courses and assessment procedures specifically for deaf people. The lack of knowledge of interpreting processes and practices may have affected their ability to be autonomous and self-directed in making decisions about appropriate interpreting resources.

Figure 1. Relay Interpreting Process (from the Bicultural Centre, 1990)



2.3.1.2. Translator

One of the specialist skills used by deaf interpreters identified by Wurm (2010) is translation. Translation involves interpreting from written text to BSL or from BSL to written text. Wurm notes deaf interpreters' ability to translate from written text into sign language and vice versa for television broadcasts or video recordings, website uploads and DVD presentations (Xiao et al., 2015). In the UK, for example, some of the programmes broadcast on BBC television feature in-vision BSL/English interpreting. Deaf people have been known to work as

translators, translating written English text from an auto-cue into BSL. Amongst the most well-known television programmes that use BSL on screen is the BBC production, *See Hear*, which has been running for over 30 years since the early 1980s. When hearing people are interviewed on television, open subtitles and in-screen interpreting are provided (Canton, 2012; Stone, 2009). Many deaf interpreters have worked in the media. Duncan (1997) suggests that advances in technology made it possible for deaf people to work as translators and argues that the principal challenge facing the media was to improve both the rate and quality of live English transcription to the point where deaf interpreters were able to access the source text live and in a manner akin to that of their hearing colleagues. Duncan states,

> 'that we should also expect the translations of native Deaf users into Sign Language to be better than those of hearing interpreters. Looking at languages in general, it seems to be the case that most translation work - and most of the best translations - into any language are done by native users of that language, not by native users of the language of the original work. Translations into one's native language will generally be more fluent, more idiomatic, more felicitous. They will be preferred by most readers. Why should the general rule be any different in the case of Sign Languages?'
>
> (1997:3)

Duncan questions whether hearing interpreters have the bilingual skills necessary for translation work given the lack of experience and knowledge of 'being deaf' (Taylor, 1993; McKee, 1996; Xiao et al., 2015). These authors noted that deaf interpreters engage in a genre of translation work known as 'sight translation' reading the source text (English) and spontaneously translating that into the target language (BSL). In sight translation, the interpreter takes chunks from the source text and turns them into smaller meaning units (Xiao et al., 2015), which helps deal with long and complex sentences. Professional autonomy in translation studies is an area as yet appropriately researched.

2.3.1.3. Ghost writers

As stated in Chapter One, the term ghost writer has been used to describe the process, as described by Adam, Carty and Stone to refer to deaf interpreters' unique translation practices

at social venues (2011:375). In some cases, deaf people volunteered to write letters for other deaf people who would sign the content that was to be written in English. In that sense, Stone attests to the bilingual competency of deaf interpreters by stating they 'have always contributed to their community by […] translating English documents (ranging from letters and newspapers to official correspondence and subtitled television broadcasts)' (2009:165). Deaf interpreters were selected to carry out these tasks because they had the confidence and trust of their peers.

In this section, I have discussed the various roles and functions of deaf interpreting in order to describe their unique interpreting skills and to show how deaf interpreting started and evolved into a profession. Many of the terms used to describe the different interpreting skills and practices have been a cause for concern, which highlights the need for research on developing an all-encompassing term that includes all these aspects of deaf interpreting. I have also raised the issue of the lack of professional interpreting courses for deaf people which may contribute to the autonomy of deaf interpreters.

2.3.2 Intermediary and facilitator

2.3.2.1 Intermediary

According to Pöchhacker, intermediary interpreters are 'bilinguals [who] function as messenger, guide, and negotiator' (2004:147). This applies also to the work of the deaf interpreter. In an intermediary interpretation, the hearing interpreter must work closely with the deaf interpreter's rendition. The hearing interpreter 'feeds' the source text to the deaf interpreter who then changes the register and style to match that of the target language.

This is where the term 'feeding interpreter' is created to refer to deaf and hearing interpreters working together using a variety of sign languages - including International Sign - at international conference events (Jobse, 2015). The hearing interpreter works from spoken English into a national sign language followed by the deaf interpreter working from the national sign language into another national sign language or IS. Napier et al provide an example as follows:

> 'A representative of the Japanese Federation of the Deaf is presenting at an International Deaf conference. A deaf interpreter is up on stage ready to interpret into International Sign. The relay chain is: Japanese Sign – Japanese – English – Auslan – International Sign.'

(2006:144)

The relay chain is effective when deaf and hearing interpreters work as a team with the hearing interpreter positioned opposite the deaf interpreter (Adam et al., 2014).

Deaf interpreters work with hearing sign language interpreters who function either as an 'intermediary' (Ressler, 1999), 'co-interpreter' (Stone and Russell, 2014) or 'feeding interpreter' (Jobse, 2015). The term 'feeding interpreter' has already been defined and those who take on this position need to be experienced in working with deaf interpreters (Ressler, 1999).

In other situations, deaf interpreters work solo or with other feeding interpreters, again both deaf and hearing, using various kinds of autocue equipment in international and national conferences. For example, the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) conference has previously employed two deaf interpreters to work from English text generated by speech-to-text reporting (STTR) from which they work to deliver a target text in British Sign Language (BSL) (Stone and Russell, 2014). This has now become standard practice for ASLI annual general meetings and conferences (ibid). Although processed in a slightly different way, DIs also work in the legal domain. The Witness Intermediary Service (The Ministry of Justice) supports those who require support with communication in the courts of England and Wales. Deaf intermediaries (often DIs) work in this capacity and are trained and regulated by the Ministry of Justice. The Scottish Court Service do not offer this service as yet given the devolved nature of the Scottish legal system.

2.3.2.2. Facilitator

Similar to relay or intermediary interpreting, the term 'facilitator' is used to describe a particular interpreting skill used by deaf interpreters to provide assistance to hearing sign language interpreters who are encountering major difficulties in comprehending deaf individuals' use of signing (Boudreault, 2005). This suggests that hearing interpreters sometimes encounter clients whose use of sign language is outside their ability. This might be due to a number of factors: the client's educational background, different levels of language competence, undeveloped and/or minimal language skills. Another possibility is the hearing interpreter's use of fingerspelling, which may not help the client understand basic English

words. Here is an example given by Boudreault, whose subject is American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting:

> 'Quite possibly, the person might not be unable to understand the name that is fingerspelled by the interpreter or even ASL signs such as MOM or SISTER[1]. The person may have developed her own gesture to identify a specific individual (or concept), so "sister" may be signed or gestured as LONG HAIR FRECKLES instead of the conventional ASL sign SISTER that begins with a hand configuration located at the chin and ends with this hand contacting the side of the other hand.'
>
> (2005:331)

The deaf facilitator, in these cases, brings a specific skill set not always available to the hearing interpreter which affords ease of access for the clients. Literature that describes or interrogates the professional autonomy of the DI in these various situations is lacking and leaves a gap in our understanding of the work.

2.4 Professionalism: deaf interpreter routes to training and qualifications

Traditionally, the worlds of medicine and law have been examples of professionalism with codes of behaviour, accepted standards of practice, and recognised expectations associated with their occupations. Adam, Carty and Stone (2011) assert that sign language interpreting is a profession and include deaf interpreters within that group. However, in the UK, deaf interpreters have been striving for full professional status for many years with limited success (Stone, 2009; Adam, Carty and Stone, 2011). Despite evidence of their unique set of interpreting skills, they have rarely been recognised as professionals. One reason is the lack of accredited training courses available for deaf interpreters despite a growing number of hearing students who have access to recognised interpreter training courses. Currie highlights the problem in the following extract:

> 'For too long our training programmes have had insufficient Deaf involvement […] we, the interpreters, need more highly trained Deaf

[1] Capital letters are used throughout this report as a means of glossing sign languages. Words that have been fingerspelled are glossed as capital letters with a hyphen between each letter.

> people to both assist in our learning and to work alongside us as equally valued interpreters.'
>
> (2009:3-4)

As a result, deaf interpreters have had little opportunity to obtain any formal interpreting qualifications, which impacts on their ability to gain professional status and, I argue, autonomy.

In 1988, deaf community leader and BSL presenter Clark Denmark delivered a presentation on deaf interpreting at the first ever European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI) seminar in Glasgow. It was here that the idea of deaf interpreting attracted the attention of delegates. In 2007, Denmark gave another presentation at the 25th year anniversary conference of the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) in Edinburgh. He reflected on the development of deaf interpreting in the UK over those 25 years (Denmark, personal communication, 30th August 2011 and 28th October 2014). Denmark expressed concern about the barriers to training routes, qualifications and employment opportunities for deaf interpreters (Canton, 2012).

Another deaf community leader, John Walker, asks, 'can a Deaf person be working as an interpreter?' (2008:54). This issue has been debated nationally in the UK, in Europe and beyond. Walker's presentation at the EFSLI 2008 conference, *Third Language Interpreting,* was aimed at Deaf people who work as interpreters and encouraged them to get involved with the politics of interpreting in order to achieve the goal of professionalisation. He explored the dynamics of interpreting and deaf interpreters' journeys towards professionalisation in that field. Walker concludes that there is a need for future training opportunities for deaf interpreters in order for them to work effectively as professionals and with hearing sign language interpreters. In his view, more research is required on deaf interpreting.

Former president of EFSLI, Liz Scott Gibson, argues that deaf interpreters have a major role in the interpreting profession. As she states,

> '[deaf interpreters'] contribution as native users of sign language and their direct involvement in the culture and the community of sign language users means that they have particular expertise not readily available to hearing learners of sign language. I have seen for myself

> how these skills are especially relevant when working with Deaf children, deaf people experiencing mental health issues and those with special language needs - and of course those who may be economic migrants or refugees. Looking back, we were 'ahead' of ourselves in 1988 - the timing wasn't right... but it is good to see that today, Deaf people are able to access professional interpreter training, and more and more are joining the interpreting profession. As colleagues, they have much to offer.'
>
> (Personal communication, 15th October 2014)

As the comments from Denmark, Walker and Scott-Gibson explain, deaf interpreters can make an important contribution to the interpreting community. It is important now to look at the literature to discuss the UK situation in regard to interpreter training courses particularly since the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 was signed into law.

2.4.1 United Kingdom

There are only a few courses for students wishing to become interpreters in the UK at the moment but none, at the time of writing, that have deaf students actively working towards the qualification. My own experience at University of Leeds in 2011 is one of few of which I am aware. Although I was accepted onto the course and had a positive experience, having achieved the qualification, the programme was primarily designed for hearing students and adaptations were made as the course progressed. Interpreting activities were adapted from spoken English-to-BSL to written English-to-BSL and relay interpreting activities were included to give me practical tasks. The Leeds course is no longer running, and a number of other universities have closed their programmes over the last decade with only the University of Wolverhampton and University of Central Lancashire still offering courses. In Scotland, Heriot-Watt University is the only institution currently offering a MA in British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies), taking students from entry level to registration as professional interpreters, with Queen Margaret University offering stand-alone modules which cumulatively award either Master of Science or Postgraduate Diploma certification targeted at post-qualification professional interpreters. Although there have been a few deaf students who graduated and qualified as interpreters from higher education institutions, none of these courses currently have deaf students in their cohort.

Signature, an organisation that functions as a sign language qualification awarding body, promotes and supports the teaching of British Sign Language. In September 2011, they released a Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation qualification for deaf translators (Signature, 2009). This course was the first of its kind in the UK. It was geared towards deaf people fluent in BSL and with a good command of written English. The course provided deaf people with an opportunity to gain a recognised deaf translator qualification, allowing them to work in television, website presentations and other media outlets. Once qualified, the successful candidate becomes eligible for full registration with the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCDP) as a Registered Sign Language Translator.

Leeson and Venturi (2017) state that there are two national organisations concerned with sign language interpreting in the United Kingdom (UK). These are the aforementioned NRCPD and the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP). While the NRCPD holds a register of sign language interpreters covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI – now known as SRLPDC) has a register that covers the whole of Scotland. Leeson and Venturi highlight that among the 65 million people living in the UK there are an estimated 70,000 sign language users, and there are an estimated 5,000 deaf BSL users among the 5 million people in Scotland.

2.4.2 Scotland

In Scotland, The Scottish Registers of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (SRLPDC) (formerly SASLI – Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters) holds a register of interpreters including deaf interpreters at 'registered' and 'trainee' level. To become a member, deaf interpreters must hold an interpreting qualification and pass an interpreting skills test. When people apply for membership, they must hold a BSL/English interpreting qualification to meet the entry criteria outlined in the SRLPDC registration policy. Before they register, they have to do a skills exam to find out their strengths and areas for improvements. This forms part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme. Registered members must follow the SRLPDC Code of Ethics and Standard Professional Practice. There is a route to trainee membership for those who achieve partial entry qualifications rather than full qualifications. In that case, they must show their commitment towards achieving full registered membership of SRLPDC within a maximum of two years. During this time, they

must be mentored by a registered interpreter. Full registration normally happens after this period. Leeson and Venturi (2017) suggest that benefits of registration include professional recognition of competence and commitment to work according to the required standard of practice.

The autonomy of SRLPDC is evidenced by the fact that it holds a register of interpreters and has developed a Code of Ethics and Standard Professional Practice for its members. This means sign language interpreters are required to meet specific criteria for registration such as qualifications and level of experience. Once they are registered, they have autonomy insofar as they make decisions using their professional judgement as well as follow codes of conduct outlined by the registration group. This helps maintain quality assurance standards so that members are competent enough to practise interpreting. A four-year BSL/English interpreting undergraduate course is currently provided at Heriot-Watt University, accredited by NRCPD. The former SASLI submitted a funding proposal which was verified in 2008. From this, in 2009, the Scottish Government established the Building Bridges project with the aim of increasing the number of BSL/English Interpreters working with the deaf community in Scotland. One part of the project was an Apprenticeship Training Scheme, open to both deaf and hearing people who wished to become BSL/English Interpreters. However, there appears to be a discrepancy in that they did not consider embedding any guidance on the ratio of deaf to hearing students they accepted. Unfortunately, SASLI engaged nine hearing students and only one deaf apprentice to participate in the scheme (Llewellyn Jones and Lee, 2014).

2.4.3 England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The Deaf Welfare Examining Board (DWEB) founded the UK Register of Interpreters in 1929. Outside of Scotland, interpreters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland normally register with NRCPD. The NRCPD, formerly known as the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP), was an organisation established in 1982 for the registration of sign language interpreters. CACDP did not give recognition to deaf graduates of interpreting training courses because their qualifications did not match the National Occupational Standards in Interpreting. In 1987, the number of registered members was 62 and this number grew steadily over the years. According to Leeson and Venturi (2017), the increase in numbers of registered sign language interpreters made it necessary for an independent organisation to take the lead in matters of policy and professional standards.

In 2002, an Independent Registration Panel (IRP) was established to administer the registration of BSL interpreters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In August 2006, the Deafblind Registration Panel was established to administer the registers of lip-speakers, STTR operators and interpreters for deafblind people. This panel added a register for speech to text and manual notetakers in 2008. On 1 January 2009, both the Independent Registration Panel and Deafblind Panel closed permanently and the NRCPD was established in their place. The board members of NRCPD included those drawn from the earlier organisations alongside new members.

According to Leeson and Venturi, NRCPD has 1,600 interpreters and translators on its register, including deaf interpreters, deafblind interpreters, lip-speakers, notetakers, sign language interpreters, sign language translators and speech to text operators (Napier et al, 2022). NRCPD provides information on the routes through education and on to accreditation and expects competency in a spoken language native to the UK and Ireland. Applicants must hold a recognised interpreting qualification and those without the full qualifications, such as trainees, can be registered provided there is an expressed commitment to gain a qualification. They must show the required standard of training or work experience and demonstrate awareness of professional boundaries.

Despite the training, qualification and professional registration initiatives described above, the provision of training and registration for deaf interpreters in the UK is quite limited. As things stand, it remains difficult for deaf people to get access to interpreting qualifications and professional registration can be problematic.

2.5 Deaf interpreters' decision-making process

As highlighted in Chapter One, there is very little research on the factors that influence deaf interpreters' decision-making process in relation to the choice of interpreting sources. This gap has been noted by Sheneman (2016) in a study on professional ethical decisions relating to deaf interpreters. Sheneman's research came from a recent change in RID's Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) training program which was upgraded in 2013 to include a written exam on the Code of Ethics. The findings reported were based on interview data collected from thirteen deaf interpreters who took the Code of Ethics exam. The results suggest that the level of training that deaf interpreters receive impacts on their decision-making capabilities. The study informants indicated that deaf cultural intuition shaped by experience and training acts as a guide for ethical decisions and could inspire the development of a specific code of ethics for

use by DIs. This is done through information sharing and cultural mediation. The study's conclusion recommended a piece of comparative research on ethical decision-making by hearing interpreters and by deaf interpreters but did not address the issue of how DIs perception of how their professional autonomy is impacted.

2.6 Factors that influence deaf interpreters' decisions

According to Forestal (2011), deaf interpreting is a 'multifaceted activity' involving a wide range of interpreting processes which may be complicated given that they often work collaboratively with a hearing sign language interpreter. This might take place in a conference setting where decisions have to be made regarding interpreting processes, strategies, techniques and the type of materials and sources to use. Power dynamics in team interpreting and interpersonal relationships between deaf consumers and hearing interpreters also come into consideration for deaf interpreters. The findings reported in Forestal's research indicate that interpretation works better when deaf and hearing interpreters work together collaboratively rather than as separate individuals. Interpreting decisions would depend on the communication needs of deaf audience members such as the use of sign language, English and nonmanual features. The deaf interpreter has to take into account a number of factors such as communication styles, age, gender, educational background, occupation, along with the deaf consumers' expectations and level of understanding of the purpose of the meeting. The deaf interpreter would take note of the vocabulary and sensitive information to be discussed and consider factors such as the needs of the deaf consumer, whether to use signed supported English (SSE) or BSL. As Forestal states, such background information is an important resource that can be used to determine the needs of the consumers and to make decisions about interpreting resources.

Once deaf interpreters obtain the necessary information from deaf consumers, the next step is to decide which interpreting resources are available to deaf interpreters and deaf consumers include 'feeding interpreter' and/or autocue technology involving STTR reporting. Apart from Jobse's, (2015) very little research is available that studies these interpreting resources in depth. There is also a gap in knowledge regarding the ways in which deaf interpreters engage in bimodal interpreting. This is because the term bimodal interpreting has hitherto been applied solely to hearing sign language interpreters (Napier and Leeson, 2016). Bimodal interpreters work between two languages produced and perceived in different modalities (e.g. sign language and spoken language). I argue that deaf interpreters work bimodally as I believe

bimodal interpreting does not necessarily involve the 'aural-oral modality'. Deaf interpreters use the 'visual-gestural modality' – hand shape, body movement, fingerspelling and facial expression. They translate written source text into BSL which is expressed through the visual-gestural modality. They also translate from written English into BSL. For example, at a national conference, deaf interpreters work from autocue created by a STTR operator. The deaf interpreter reads the source text from the monitor or television and interprets the message into the target sign language (Stone and Russell, 2014). This has now become standard practice at national and international sign language interpreting conferences. These situations are often high pressured and require a careful balance between the colleagues working together. Issues of professional autonomy can and do arise but there is little existing research which addresses the issue.

2.7 Research on team interpreting

I have made clear that I am not researching team interpreting but that it has to be acknowledged in this thesis as a part of an interpreter's work life. Unless working solo, all interpreters can be said to be working in teams, but the collaboration of teamwork is not the focus of this thesis given how complex it is. To include this as part of the research focus with the depth the subject requires risks diluting the focus and foregrounding of the deaf interpreter experience that I wish to retain. It is, however, useful to address the aspect here. It is only in recent times that research on deaf interpreting has been conducted by Stone (2009), Stone & Russell (2014), Bentley-Sassaman and Dawson, (2012), De Meulder & Heyerick, (2013); Sforza, (2014), Jobse, (2015) and Tester, (2018). The findings from Bentley-Sassaman and Dawson (2012) discovered that roles and responsibilities, strategies, trust, training and professional autonomy (see Chapter Three) between deaf and hearing interpreters were issues that were related to the gap in learning of both deaf and hearing interpreters around learning how deaf-hearing interpreting teams work. Similarly for hearing interpreters, there is a need to learn how to accept and work with deaf interpreters in the profession. Stone and Russell's work, for example, has been particularly helpful in enhancing our understanding of how hearing interpreters provide 'feeding interpreting' for deaf interpreters during a conference event. Ressler's (1999) study on intermediary interpretation allows me to discuss the importance of hearing interpreters working closely with the deaf interpreter's rendition of the same source text. The subject of feeding interpreting is significant for this study. Ressler's work was particularly useful in providing information about different sociolinguistic features of interpreting such as pausing, eye gaze and head nodding. Ressler's findings clearly show there is a need for more research into the

deaf and hearing interpreter relay team considering very few such teams have been professionally trained to work together. Team interpreting is an area of study that is significant. Most previous research has considered the strategies employed by hearing-hearing or Deaf-hearing interpreting teams, but Sforza (ibid) investigates the strategies employed by deaf-deaf interpreting teams. Sforza's (2014) exploration of deaf-deaf interpreting teams is useful to enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences between this type of team and deaf-hearing interpreting teams. The results of Sforza's study show that deaf interpreters work well as a team.

Like Ressler (1999), Jobse's (2015) research provided much needed context for this study in terms of strategies used by deaf and hearing interpreters when working as co-interpreters. Jobse highlights the importance of advanced preparation for each assignment for deaf and hearing interpreters and recognises the need for both deaf and hearing feeder interpreters to receive training. This idea has been borne out by Russell and Shaw's (2016) findings which suggest that communication breakdowns regularly occur and that strategies must be in place to repair them discreetly, quickly and efficiently. As hearing feeding interpreters themselves, Stone and Russell state that it is the 'responsibility [of deaf interpreters] to enrich the message to match the Deaf audience members' needs' (2014:249). Interestingly, Adam et al. (2014) believe that this responsibility should be shared as a team rather than as individuals. The authors suggest that team preparation is crucial to work more effectively together and build up a solid working relationship based on trust (see also Nicodemus and Taylor, 2014). Research on preparation is few and far between and often fails to include the work of deaf interpreters. This is just one of the gaps in the literature where the experience and work of DIs is evident.

2.8 Summary

This chapter reviewed national and international literature on deaf interpreting and, where relevant, literature drawn from research on hearing SLIs. It also highlighted in each of these areas the lack of research which addressed questions of professional autonomy. What is clear from the literature is that research on deaf interpreting is a recent phenomenon despite the fact that deaf people have been engaged in the practice of interpreting in schools and deaf social club centres for many decades. There is evidence that deaf interpreting is a growing profession and has become professionalised particularly in the United States and United Kingdom. However, a distinct lack of awareness of the significant role of deaf interpreters in the sign

language interpreting profession persists. This may be due to, in no small part, the relatively small number of registered deaf interpreters compared to their hearing colleagues. The ratio of deaf to hearing interpreters varies from country to country but as reported here there is a significantly small number of deaf interpreters in many countries throughout the world. The lack of training opportunities highlighted in this chapter may contribute to the low number of deaf interpreters.

The chapter has provided a detailed discussion on the development of deaf interpreting in the United Kingdom and worldwide. The discussion looked at DIs as professionals, showing how the profession started and developed over the years. What is most significant is that deaf interpreters bring something from their own life experience to have a deeper understanding of how to communicate with deaf people, something that hearing interpreters, generally, do not have (Mathers, 2009; Adam et al., 2014). As Mindess notes, interpreting 'without a grounding and appreciation of the cultural implications is like trying to hang pictures in a house with no walls' (2006:16). If we do not have a 'cultural framework that holds the house together, the pictures – words and signs – will crash to the floor' (ibid). This chapter, therefore, increases our understanding of the significance of deaf interpreters by gathering and analysing what is available in the existing literature and highlighting the gaps therein.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: Autonomy, Professional Autonomy and Audism

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the key concepts identified in the literature on autonomy, professional autonomy, and audism and explore how these concepts relate to deaf interpreting. I begin by discussing some of the evolution of the concept of autonomy in philosophy followed by Davis' (1996) concept of professional autonomy and explore what the author means by 'individual autonomy' and 'organisational autonomy'. These ideas on professional autonomy are presented in order to highlight the relationship they may have with the sign language interpreting profession with the aim of illuminating an understanding of autonomy with regards to deaf interpreters. The literature on professional autonomy of both deaf and hearing sign language interpreters is scant; a gap which has a potentially significant impact on how we understand sign language interpreting as a profession. Therefore, it is professional autonomy as it refers to such professions as teaching which will be used to discuss how deaf interpreters may be accommodated by this framework. The professions that are often held up as examples of those with professional autonomy, such as teachers and accountants, can include the interpreting profession since they all have a relationship to the public interest as well as a defined route in formal education, qualifications and expected performance levels. It should be remembered that the phrase 'professional autonomy' does not only mean an individual in a profession having the ability to make decisions without interference but also the opposite situation where they are without that ability and, therefore, are unable to deliver and maintain their work as professionals.

Additionally, in order to take into account the context in which deaf interpreters train and work, it is necessary to include a discussion of the concept of audism, a term coined by Humphries in 1975 which refers to societal discrimination against people on the basis of hearing loss. An understanding of these theories and ideas will help us be more aware in general about autonomy itself while also appreciating the factors that influence deaf interpreters' interpreting decisions and their level of autonomy in the wider sign language interpreting profession.

Alongside this, my personal and professional experiences are described using an autoethnographic approach to try to shed some light on how cultural and linguistic differences form part of the deaf interpreters' landscape. My own subjective narrative is explored as a way to contribute to our greater understanding of the social world.

3.2 Autonomy

The term 'autonomy' comes from the Greek *autonomos* formed by *auto* (self) and *nomos* (law). From this concept, I understand autonomy to mean the one who creates and follows her or his own laws; having 'self-discipline', 'self-regulation' or 'self-rule', the latter also being defined as 'liberty' (Philosophy Terms, 2021). Autonomy is the individual's ability to choose their own direction and forms part of the basis of a democratic society, an example of which being freedom of speech. It relates to making important decisions without the need to consult others (Brock, 2003). The term is found in the discipline of philosophy and has evolved in Western thought from its earliest discussion in ancient Greece, where it had its roots in the idea of individualism and the ability of an individual to exercise control. Individualism and autonomy address the needs, thoughts, and lives of each person, their ability to decide the direction their life will take and what belief system they adopt. Autonomy is considered to be unlimited and existing without impediments thus affording a person the ability to satisfy their wishes and desires. But, while this is the ideal of the concept, the reality is that individuals have their autonomy restricted by class, relative wealth, gender, and interaction with the autonomy of others. As this research report states:

> 'To exist in a society where autonomy is valued, therefore,
> means to respect the preferences of an individual albeit based on a
> rationalist assumption that the individual will consider carefully
> their thoughts and actions.'
>
> (Riksbanken Jubileumsfond)

Historically, these ideas have had a major impact on the way we consider personal, moral and political autonomy right up until the 21st century. Many philosophers have turned to and written on the concept of autonomy, Plato (428BCE – 347BCE) being one of the earliest and still one of the most influential thinkers affecting Western thought. His writings on subjects such as politics, religion, and the nature of the republic could be said to be still shaping the

way many Western countries conduct themselves in the world. Plato defined autonomy as the concept of having the ability to decide for oneself the shape and direction of one's own journey in life and he positions it as part of a broader way of thinking in terms of control over the self, religious, ethical or political beliefs. It is notable that, in his dialogues with Cratylus and Socrates, a very early mention of sign language is used to demonstrate that human beings' desire to engage in dialogue, to understand these greater ideas and truths, can be satisfied in either spoken or sign language.

> 'If we hadn't a voice or a tongue, and wanted to express things to one another, wouldn't we try to make signs by moving our hands, head, and the rest of our body'
>
> (Plato, as cited by Salvi, S. et al, 2021)

Many hundreds of years after Plato, Immanuel Kant wrote extensively on the topic and is one of history's most important and influential names in philosophy. Born in 1724 and dying dead in 1804, Kant worked on a vast range of subjects including Psychology and Anthropology as well as influencing what we think of now as modern Neuroscience. The Enlightenment, the period in which Kant was developing his ideas, encouraged the principle of the individual and a personal moral framework that is based in reason and thought. His focus was on humanity and he was mainly interested in human behaviour and ways of thinking. He described his Categorical Imperative (CI) as having its basis in rational principles that must be followed by the autonomous human being and had roots in the Enlightenment movement which emphasised reason and the individual (autonomy) over the received wisdom of tradition (heteronomy). The former presuming an inherent regard for the individual as a moral and thinking being with an end, or objective, that is deserving of respect. For Kant, autonomy was based on reason, with the presumption that other individuals likewise had autonomy that should be respected.

> 'At the heart of Kant's moral theory is the idea of autonomy. Most readers interpret Kant as holding that autonomy is a property of rational wills or agents. Understanding the idea of autonomy was, in Kant's view, key to understanding and justifying the authority that moral requirements have over us.'
>
> (Zalta, E.N., Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021)

He further divided the concept of autonomy into personal, moral and political and stated that these categories were not reliant on the influence of any external moral framework on an individual. Nineteenth-century economist and philosopher, John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873), on the other hand, saw autonomy as influenced by an outside world which has an impact on a person's thinking and actions. His position was that it is not possible to form a moral autonomy without taking into account the context of the wider society in which an individual is raised. An individual strives for what they wish to achieve and for ways they can contribute and further advance humanity. Implicit in that idea, therefore, is the concept that each citizen has her own ambition, her own voice, and thoughts which are valid. The means by which that end is achieved will have a purpose and an effect that could impact on other individuals and will consist of planned and measurable action. Such action must be practicable, not reduced to abstracted discussion but drive the process towards achieving the ends. Personal autonomy, as viewed by Kant, requires the individual to be strong-minded with a well-developed understanding of their own moral code. In contrast, John Stuart Mill acknowledged the role the wider society's morality has on an individual's behaviour, judgement and decisions. For him, these ideas are not separated from politics, social values and the linguistic and cultural aspects of society.

This idea of voice and political validity of thought is something that the deaf community still, in the twenty-first century, continue to struggle for. The Covid-19 pandemic is raging as I write and an ongoing protest from the deaf community in the UK at the lack of equal access to central government briefings has become a legal challenge (Where is the Interpreter, 2020) This happened in the USA around the same time with a legal challenge beginning in 2020 where a group of deaf activists sued the White House for having no interpreters at national crisis briefings and won the suit. The White House, in 2022, hired two full time ASL interpreters as permanent staff. One of these is a hearing feeding interpreter and the other is an on-camera DI interpreter (Arnold & Porter, 2021). In this instance, the collective autonomy of an organisation, such as the government, failed to consider the personal autonomy of deaf people. It is no wonder, therefore, that the same can happen to deaf people who choose to work as professional interpreters resulting in a limiting of their professional autonomy. These 'impediments' as Kant would have defined them, coming from external sources and affecting the individual, include societal audism, access to education, access to interpreter training programmes and negative perceptions of DIs by hearing colleagues and organisations.

3.2.1 Individual and organisational autonomy

There are two basic forms of autonomy: individual and organisational (Brock, 2003; Davis, 1996). Davis (1996) argues that professional autonomy is the way professions (e.g. careers in medicine, physics, nursing) develop their own ethics so that professionals apply a widely accepted ethical code to their own practice. The principle of professional autonomy is that professionals have the freedom to use their professional judgement in their practice without interference or influence from authority (Davis, 1996). The term professional autonomy is often applied to the medical profession where doctors use their professional judgment in the treatment and care of patients which they do on the basis of their qualifications and knowledge of medicine. Brock (2003) and Davis (1996) define professional autonomy in terms of the autonomy of *individuals* and the autonomy of *organisations*.

Individual autonomy

As previously described, autonomy is the idea that each person will have the ability to make their own choices free from other people's influence. In the real world, however, we have to work with people and will, of course, be influenced by their decision-making but continue to have our own autonomy as far as we are able. According to Brock (2003), individual autonomy refers to individual professionals who make decisions on their practice in the moment without permission from their professional body or consent from organisational superiors. Brock argues that a professional individual's autonomy is restricted when he or she needs consent from his or her superior. An individual's autonomy may be impacted by the professional organisation's regulations and ethics of conduct. Davis (1996) defines individual autonomy as an individual having control of his or her own work rather than being controlled by a client or employer. Given the context in which deaf interpreters work, structural audism and societal expectations of deaf people, they may not be yet able to claim this fully, but my argument is that this level of autonomy could and should be a concept that is extended to deaf interpreting professionals.

Organisational autonomy

Organisational autonomy or collective autonomy is, in contrast, the ability of a community, for example indigenous peoples, ethnic, cultural, or linguistic minorities, to regulate themselves. In this concept, decisions are based not on each person's autonomy but on what is the best for the collective. We also see this when a professional institution or agency has control over its own code of ethics and standards for admission to the profession including licensing and certification. For example, autonomy exists in an interpreting organisation, such as SRLPDC

or NRCPD, when the group regulates the way services should be provided. The group has control over what is considered appropriate interpreter qualifications, certification and recruitment and sets the standards of practice that professional interpreters must follow. At an individual level, interpreters have to find ways to organise and govern themselves and are autonomous in terms of being independent or working on their own. They are still, however, required to follow regulations and guidelines created by the interpreting professional bodies and, therefore, balance organisational and individual professional autonomy.

3.3 Professional autonomy

But what does it mean to be a professional? What are the features of being a professional? In literature focused on teachers, the term 'professional' is considered to be an indication of having done professional training and having acquired a knowledge base for teaching. According to Baggini (2005), to be a professional is to profess to be an expert in some field of knowledge while 'professionalism' refers to a particular quality of service or status, salary and conditions. The concept also covers professional work behaviours, attitudes oriented to performance of the highest standards, and a commitment to improve the service quality.

The term 'profession' relates to a type of occupational work and has traditionally been associated with the careers of physicians, nurses, teachers, the clergy or lawyers, solicitors, and advocates (Evetts, 2009). The concept of 'professionalisation' is the process by which a group develops the characteristics of a profession or occupation through training or qualifications.

For Frostenson:

> 'Professional autonomy involves the freedom of professional actors to define the nature of professional work with regard to its formal contents, quality criteria, entry barriers, formal education, control mechanisms, ethics, et cetera. The loss of professional autonomy is commonly seen as the hallmark of de-professionalisation, a process wherein professional people such as teachers, accountants, interpreters lose the ability to influence and the power to define the contents and forms of their own work, and fail to maintain the boundaries of their professional domains vis-à-vis other professionals, the authorities, market forces, or others.'

(Frostenson, 2015:20)

while it is described by Alley (2019), as

> 'The ability to use reason and ethics to guide one's own actions,
> and (b) the freedom granted by the professional community and society
> to make decisions and act in a particular manner.'
>
> (Alley, 2019:21)

In terms of the employment environment, management/employer relations can be affected by how far professional autonomy is supported. The impact on relations between employer and employee, as Brock states, come about when 'an individual's autonomy is typically reduced' and 'when one requires consent from organizational superiors (2003:58), and this is notable by the way that an individual's and organisation's autonomy impacts on work-related behaviour. Individuals can make decisions regarding an employment task without requiring authorisation from senior management. This is seen in the work of Davis (1996) when discussing employment in which professionals have reached a high level of performance and judgement without involvement or influence from what is considered their senior authority (see section 3.2.1).

Witter-Merrithew and Nicodemus define professional autonomy as 'the degree to which individuals —in this case interpreters — have genuine opportunities for informed and transparent decision-making while performing their work' (2012:57). Although the authors are discussing hearing sign language interpreters here, I argue that this definition also applies to deaf interpreters whose task could be said to be more complex given that they often work in a chain. As the authors stated, the professional status of an interpreter is partly determined by the degree of autonomy that they can exercise during an interpreting assignment. They state that the concept may be misunderstood as referring to the right of individuals to have total freedom in decision-making based on personal preferences and personal or moral autonomy or that interpreters make decisions and act without consulting other interpreters or participants. Witter-Merrithew and Nicodemus (2012) believe both ideas to be problematic because decisions may not be informed by the perspectives of all participants in the interpreting process.

Sign Language Interpreters working in VRS call centre environments are impacted due to what Alley describes as environments 'organised in a way that restricts the individual professional autonomy of communications assistants (CA) through the highly structured management of work in an attempt to standardise service provision and increase profit' (Alley:21). It seems that interpreters in this structure have very little professional autonomy which is sacrificed in favour of company reputation and opportunity for profit.

Witter-Merrithew and Nicodemus (2102) identify different fields in which sign language interpreters specialise including education, medicine, law, and mental health. I would add working in the media or on online platforms. Aside from the knowledge base they must have to be competent in the domain, interpreters also need to have wider knowledge which includes the deaf-blind community, refugees or immigrants and individuals with a limited range of sign language skills. Where an interpreter has professional autonomy, these specialist skills can be refined through dedicated practice in the field.

In a study on American Sign Language (ASL)-English interpreting, Witter-Merrithew and Nicodemus (2012) argue that professionally trained and qualified sign language interpreters are now considered professionals. According to the literature, however, this is a different matter for deaf interpreters and there is a lack of clarity around whether or not they can be classified in the same way. One reason for this is the scarcity of professional training courses available for deaf interpreters in countries like the UK. This has implications for their professional identity (e.g., professional status, career progression, promotion, remuneration and recognition). The idea of professionalism is that each person has equal status no matter their background, race or disability. As long as they have received appropriate formal education and qualifications from awarding bodies and can fulfil the professional code of ethics, they are deemed to be professionals. If we look to other professions as a comparison, such as teaching, we see that teachers are considered professionals because they have undertaken high-level training and obtained specific qualifications. They also become members of a teachers' professional body to which they pay an annual subscription fee and from which they receive updates on the profession. Although the situation in the UK is improving, this is not the same process for deaf interpreters or their positioning as professionals, as there is still the ongoing problem with the wider interpreting profession believing that deaf interpreters 'can't do it' (Boudreault, 2005:323). It is also worth noting the discussion in Chapter Two which addresses the issue of professional training for sign language interpreters. Courses are, in the main, still

geared for hearing sign language interpreters which has implications for the way deaf students learn and experience the profession which, in turn, has an effect on the professional relationship between deaf and hearing interpreters.

How an interpreter makes strategic linguistic decisions, I would argue, comes from the interpreter's sense of professional autonomy. Janzen states that these are 'represented as three poles: meaning, linguistic form, and the interpreter's strategies' (2005:7). These three elements help in the interpreter's decision-making and their approach to the target message and are all part of the autonomous decision-making process.

According to Boudreault (2005), deaf interpreters are expected to meet minimum standards of qualifications and experience in order to perform their duties in a similar way to hearing interpreters. Much like hearing interpreters, in order to be professionals, deaf interpreters are expected to have undertaken the appropriate professional training. This assesses a deaf interpreter's grasp of how to mediate, negotiate, translate and interpret and also their awareness of the context of interpreting situations and the ethics of interpreting practice. Similar to hearing interpreters, deaf interpreters must follow standards of practice and codes of behaviour in sign language interpreting.

In theory, the next steps after qualification and accreditation for hearing interpreters is to begin working with English as a source language and their second language being sign language. They develop more awareness of the need to monitor their work and learn how to prompt or take control of an interpreting situation where it is essential for clarity. Deaf interpreters, on the other hand, do not go straight to this kind of working situation, instead navigating the process of affirming their status as a member of the profession, deciding their preference for accessing source language as being from an STTR or a feeding interpreter and debating this with agencies and organisations. Their professional autonomy is restricted by these additional steps and by the structural audism so prevalent in society.

3.4 Audism in society and the interpreting profession

Ziebart (2016) argues that deaf people have been oppressed by members of the majority hearing population for centuries. The author states that the form of oppression experienced by deaf people is called 'audism', a term coined by Humphries (1975), and is defined as any act that results in 'dominating, restructuring and exercising authority over the deaf community' (Lane,

1992:43). It is a set of attitudes and behaviours toward deaf people that judge or belittle them on the basis of their inability to hear. Audist behaviour can come in many shapes and forms. These include treating deaf people as defective and abnormal and insisting that deaf people must become like hearing people (Baker-Shenk, 1986). Audism is the result of a belief in the idea that deaf people cannot take responsibility for themselves and must therefore be looked after by hearing people because hearing people know best (Jankowski, 1997).

Many deaf people report experiencing some form of audism (Lane, 1992) and this may account for Reinhardt's point (2015) that trust issues come from the historical relationships between deaf and hearing people. It follows, therefore, that there can be trust issues in professional relationships between deaf and hearing sign language interpreters given that past experience of audism may have impacted on whether deaf interpreters feel they can trust their hearing colleagues. Due to hearing people's role in the oppression of deaf people, trust becomes an important issue for both deaf and hearing interpreters to consider. Lack of belief in deaf people's ability to perform interpreting tasks effectively can also influence how the professional relationship develops and we can see this where deaf and hearing interpreters work together. This has significant impact on the autonomy of DIs who choose to work with hearing feeding interpreters.

As Ziebart (2016) states, audism is the result of hearing people's attitude towards deaf people. The author maintains that society's attitude towards deaf people and a general lack of awareness of deaf culture have both impacted on how hearing interpreters see deaf people and, therefore, deaf interpreters. Generally, hearing interpreters adopt a caretaker attitude, believing that deaf people need to be given directions and be told what to do and what not to do. Witter-Merrithew observes that negative beliefs about deaf people 'resulted in a model of interpretation that was paternalistic in nature [where] interpreters were directive with deaf persons (clients), telling them what to do' (1999:2). The image of deaf people as people unable to make independent choices has influenced the way hearing people respond to interpreting situations. Not only do they interpret for the deaf client, as they are expected to do, but they can additionally behave in a parental manner by taking action on behalf of the client without asking permission. Audism in society has an impact on how deaf and hearing people relate in their professional lives including in the field of interpreting. Zeibart maintains that society's attitude towards deaf people and a general lack of awareness of deaf culture have both impacted on how hearing interpreters see deaf interpreters.

The social model of disability may be a useful tool here as it states that barriers in society are constructed by society and not by the deafness or difference. The term 'diagnostic overshadowing' refers to the idea that people, such as health professionals, tend to see the disability rather than the person and that this leads to other factors in behaviour being disregarded. In 'Doing digital inclusion: disability handbook' it states that:

> 'Low English skills: Disabled people have lower literacy levels than the UK average, British Sign Language is the first language of many deaf people, rather than English. This means some disabled people find reading on-screen text difficult.'
>
> (Good Things Foundation)

.

These kinds of statements contribute to the creation of barriers for deaf and disabled people and, therefore, for deaf interpreters who encounter a lack of awareness and understanding about their profession.

We can see the evidence of this in the slow uptake of the employment of DIs in public facing work such as government briefings or parliamentary broadcasts. In contrast, the United States of America have many states currently working with DIs to provide public Covid-19 briefings and, in the previous Ebola outbreak, the New York local government similarly used DIs working with a hearing feeding interpreter standing off camera for feeding. We see same interpreting model being employed in multiple other countries around the world such as New Zealand, Ireland and Belgium as described by Blumczynski and Wilson (2022). Given the lack of interpreting available at a national level from the UK government during the Covid-19 pandemic, this raises the question of whether or not the UK still perceives deaf people as not as important or as capable as hearing people with their needs and rights overlooked on a regular basis. In this context, how then can a deaf interpreter hope to be perceived as a professional?

3.5 Summary

This chapter explored the concepts of autonomy, professional autonomy and audism and looked at the different terminologies that relate to the concept such as individual and organisational autonomy which helped to show the main concepts associated with being a

professional interpreter and how that impacts on the DI. It is clear that professional autonomy refers to decision-making that does not require detailed oversight from professional bodies or supervisors of each decision made in an assignment. Organisational autonomy is seen at the institutional level, where the professional body develops and controls its own code of ethics, standards for admission and certification.

This research argues that there could be an impact on deaf interpreters' autonomy due to society's perspective on disability as shaped by a medical model of disability engendering negative attitudes and ignoring the needs and rights of marginalised people. Sign language interpreters, in general, can be said to have professional autonomy in that they can, to a certain extent, choose or control what work they do. Deaf interpreters are often curtailed from having autonomy to determine aspects of their professional life in the same way in that they are restricted in their choices around their training pathways, routes to qualification and, the focus of this study, their preferred source text option.

Finally, the chapter discussed the challenges for deaf interpreters dealing with a system that is structurally audist. In conclusion, I argue that being a deaf interpreter involves more than just using professional knowledge and that having autonomy is a central part of being a professional sign language interpreter. These ideas will be further explored in Chapter Six where I discuss the research findings supported by evidence from the literature review. However, I now turn to a discussion on the research methodology in Chapter Four to explain the background to the qualitative research approach and data collection stages.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Research methodology context

This research was undertaken to gain an insight into deaf interpreters' experience of professional autonomy, in particular when receiving source text during an assignment. This aspect of the work of DIs was chosen as an attempt to keep a tight focus on the wider concept of professional autonomy given how large the subject, and therefore, the research could otherwise become. Other aspects that were considered include linguistic choices, team interpreting, inter-personal dynamics, and employment. A great deal of research has been done around linguistic and structural decision-making in interpreting with some including the work of deaf and hearing interpreters in teams. Very little has been done, however, about something as basic as how to access a source text as a deaf interpreter who cannot access the source directly. With no ability to justify their own choices if challenged on their interpretation from a source, given that they accessed it via a third party, professional autonomy is raised is an issue. We know very little about the factors that influence DI's decisions around why and how they choose to work with different interpreting sources, i.e., whether to use a STTR or a feeding interpreter except that they rely, in both circumstances, on a hearing person for access. Despite extensive search, there appears to be no literature that discusses this or identifies research on how deaf interpreters work from source text. There is, however, no discussion or explanation of how deaf interpreters work from the source text when they cannot hear the original speaker. I have taken an inductive approach to this research working with questions and concepts which have arisen throughout my career. This research will capture the perspectives, lived experiences and opinions of deaf interpreters.

To explore the gap in research as outlined above, an epistemologically social constructionist approach with an ontologically subjectivist understanding was taken with the definition of social constructionism as being knowledge and reality actively constructed through our relationships with and experience of the world. This approach was an obvious choice given that I position myself as a woman, a deaf person and one of the few qualified deaf interpreters working in the field in the UK. This intersectionality of identities perfectly positions me to conduct this research. The lived experience of being marginalised in many aspects of my life means that I see society as something to be deconstructed and considered rather than simply accepted at face value.

As stated in Chapter One, the four main research questions are: -

- Can deaf interpreters be considered as having professional autonomy?
- How have deaf interpterters experienced autonomy in making interpreting decisions in the interpreting profession and practice?
- What factors influence deaf interpreters' preferences for receiving source text in interpreting?
- What factors influence the decisions that deaf interpreters make regarding interpreting choices?

Based on this, an appropriate methodology that would allow me to capture responses to the research questions above was one that allowed for an exploration of the participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions (Creswell and Poth, 2016) on working as interpreters.

4.2 Which approach?

4.2.1 Qualitative research

Hale and Napier, among others, tell us that qualitative research on interpreting allows us 'to identify trends and themes, describe and interpret them, to discover and explore and speculate on relationships' (2013:16) and is appropriate for conducting interpreting studies research. As a method, it allows researchers to access the thoughts, feelings, and worldviews of participants about their own experience, in this research, of working as interpreters (Hale and Napier, 2013). In order to understand the nature of qualitative research, it is necessary to understand what this paradigm means compared to quantitative research methods.

Cohen and Mannion (1989) argue that quantitative research is concerned with gaining data, collecting, and comparing figures and defining situations in an objective, repeatable fashion (Patton, 1990). It seeks to test generalised findings or a theory using a truly random sample from a large population through probability sampling, in which each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned not with the empirical representation of a theory, but with developing a theory (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Therefore, it is essential that the data generated in this research has the potential to provide information that will contribute to building a theory. With this in mind, it was decided that the use of a qualitative research method was appropriate

due to the need to understand each participant's experiences and allow them to express their own opinions. Creswell and Creswell, 2017) identifies several features of qualitative research that are relevant to this study:

- Qualitative research is concerned with the meanings people accord to their lives, experiences, and the world around them
- It is concerned with a process rather than an outcome
- It is descriptive and inductive in that it attempts to develop a new theory from the data collected during the course of the research
- The researcher plays a significant role in data collection

Qualitative research, much like social constructionism, recognises that there are different perceptions of social reality that individuals hold about things which means that there is no single true perspective. This has already been identified in my previous discussion on my epistemological approach. There are diverse perspectives on the social world. Thus, qualitative methods allow the researcher to access multiple perspectives and the different ideas, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of participants. In this project, this was made possible by my interaction with the participants through our shared language, BSL, and our shared lived experience of being deaf. It was important for me to 'report faithfully' (Creswell, 1998:4) the different perspectives of the participants about their experience of sign language interpreting. It was also important that the deaf interpreters involved were comfortable about discussing personal and professional issues and expressing their opinions on them. I made it very clear that I was present as a researcher to gather their contributions based on their experiences and views Although I am someone well known in the deaf community, my personal narrative was not shared with the participants, and I did not contribute my views to the discussion. I was an active presence in that I was engaged with the discussion and not attempting to be a removed observer. My role was to make the best use of the time we had and keep the discussion on the topic areas I wanted to cover, so I facilitated any parts that needed steered back to those topics. As an insider researcher with a shared sense of community, I believe that I therefore more trusted by the participants to value their contribution. Qualitative research allowed this researcher and the participants to connect, grow and develop ideas and feelings about the research phenomena.

4.2.1.1 Snowball sampling

It was essential that the sample had the potential to provide information that would meet the research aims and objectives. It is for this reason that the sampling method used in this study uses non-probability sampling methods. In other words, certain people in a population have a greater chance of being selected for the sample than others, based on their association with the subject matter of the research, in this case, deaf interpreting. The sampling method used in this study is 'purposeful sampling'. According to Patton, the 'power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth' and 'information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the evaluation' (1987:51-52).

The research participants were purposefully selected on the basis of meeting certain criteria. The main criteria were that the participants were deaf and work as an interpreter or translator although I did not expect all participants to hold formal interpreting qualifications due to the lack of training opportunities available. Deaf interpreters were contacted by face-to-face information sharing with deaf community members. This is in line with my discussion in Chapter Two on the way community members became known as 'interpreters' in the community, supporting each other through school and on into adulthood. The research aimed to include those who had functioned as interpreters as well as those formally recognised as interpreters.

Facebook and email were also used as platforms for information sharing in BSL and written English. When using Facebook, I asked my contacts to pass on the information to anyone who might be interested in participating in the study. This is known as the 'snowball sampling' approach to participant recruitment. Hale and Napier (2013) suggest that snowball sampling is an effective means of networking and recruiting of participants to a study on sign language interpreting and to translation studies research. The study notice requesting participants from Newcastle and London was posted on Facebook and shared among Facebook group members in BSL and English. These two locations were selected as they were easy to travel to and were likely to have a higher concentration of deaf interpreters living in or around the area. This included my email contact details so that potential participants would be able to contact me to express their interest in participating in the focus group interviews. Participants were selected for face-to-face meetings throughout the UK. I confirmed and agreed with the participants that

their involvement would require approximately two or three hours of their time in total, at a location and time/date that was mutually agreed by the participant and the researcher.

4.3 Individual and focus group interviewing

Interviewing is considered an appropriate means of data collection when the focus of the research is the understanding and meaning that people have around experiences in their lives (Patton, 1990). The aim is to find out what is in and on someone's mind and 'gain information on the perspectives, understanding and meanings constructed by people regarding the events and experiences of their lives' (Grbich, 1999:85). Bell (1987) highlights a major advantage in the use of interviews in that ideas can be followed up, responses probed, and motives and feelings can be investigated, none of which could be achieved by questionnaire. The disadvantages with interviews are that they are time-consuming and can be highly subjective. However, the interview is most valuable when the researcher is interested in knowing people's beliefs, attitudes or values, which is the case in my research. Whether or not an interview is more valuable than a questionnaire depends on the extent to which the researcher is aware of exactly what he or she wants to know and what the possible range of answers might be.

Interviews were the main source of data in this project. Deaf interpreters were encouraged to share their experiences through responses to open-ended questions so that they could offer their own views about deaf interpreting within the world of sign language interpreting. Each of the five participants was asked the same set of questions with some sub-questions used as prompts to encourage participants to go deeper. Open-ended questions allowed participants to use their own language and to express their own perceptions or understandings on their own terms.

Interviews were conducted in British Sign Language (BSL) with participants who were currently working or had been working as DIs in the United Kingdom (UK). During the interviews I guided the discussion using the questions that had been prepared in advance (see Appendix C). Additional questions were only used to prompt the direction of the discussion and participants were able to freely express their opinions throughout. The focus groups were video recorded on two different cameras to ensure that all the participants were in the frame and the individual interviews conducted on webcam were also recorded using one camera to record both the participant and the researcher for data analysis purposes.

4.4 Focus groups and interview techniques

Two focus groups were arranged: one in Newcastle and one in London. These took place on the 24th of November 2015 and the 25th of November 2015 respectively. Each focus group had three participants and lasted for one hour with a total of six deaf interpreters participating. Five participants were unable to attend either location and were offered one-to-one interviews instead. These took place online using Skype as the meeting platform. Each interview was between thirty minutes and one hour long. The same questions and approach were used in both the focus group and interview situations.

I made it very clear to all participants that I was present as a researcher to gather their contributions based on their experiences and views.

4.5 Semi-structured open-ended interviewing

A series of open-ended questions were created to try and interrogate the experience of deaf interpreting from the participants' perspective. As the interview process developed, adjustments were made to the questions to capture the deeper thoughts of the participants. Data analysis used comparison of participants' statements to find links, and this was followed by the organisation of themes. The findings in Chapter Five are presented through the use of direct quotes from participants to support their ideas, concepts and theories that arose during the interview process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell and Creswell 2017). Thematic Analysis was used to discover emerging relationships in the data.

4.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important aspect of this research because, as Creswell and Poth, 2016)) states, it is impossible to separate the researcher from the phenomenon being studied and the participants. My role and personal characteristics as a researcher may influence decisions for the type of data that can be collected. I therefore use a process called reflexivity and identify myself as a reflexive researcher.

Etherington (2004) defines reflexivity as the study of the relations between the researcher and the community or group who are the focus of the research. The aim of using reflexivity in the research process is to lead to a better understanding of the social world being studied and how the research was conducted. I started this process by locating my personal narrative in Chapter

One of this study so that readers will be familiar with my background and motivations for doing this research. While engaging in the reflexive process, I asked myself the following questions about my motivations:

- Is there another way of looking at things?
- How are my views, opinions and thoughts about the participants' experiences affecting the research process?
- In what way can this be made clear in the writing?

These questions were asked to allow me to reflect on my own experiences and to study the meaning behind the participants' lived experience of translating and interpreting during childhood and adulthood. As a necessary requirement of the qualitative researcher, I must now discuss the research design by setting out in detail the structure and style of the research process (Creswell and Poth, 2016)).

4.7 Participants

Type of interview	Gender(s)	Location
Focus group	**Two females and One male**	**Newcastle**
Focus group	**Three females (1 withdrew)**	**London**
1-1 interview	**Three females & two males**	**Online via skype**

A total of ten deaf interpreters responded to the call for participants from throughout the United Kingdom and two locations were identified in which to hold the focus group sessions. It was hoped that most of the participants could access one of these locations. One participant from the London group decided to withdraw from the research project after the focus group was filmed and all their contributions were omitted from the data. A further five participants took part in individual interviews via Skype because they could not manage to attend one of the two locations. The age range of participants was from 40 – 65 years old. Some participants attended deaf schools, others mainstream schools and, in some cases, they attended both. All participants were PDFs (Person of a Deaf Family) (Napier, 2021), which could mean being related to deaf

parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or even cousins. This was not a condition of inclusion in the research but coincidental.

Table 1: Participants' background information

Participants	Family background	School (s)	Training	Focus group or 1-1 interview
Susan	PDF[2]	Deaf & Mainstream	Yes	Focus group
Elizabeth	PDF	Deaf	Yes	Focus group
Zoe	PDF	Deaf & Mainstream	Yes	Focus group
Matthew	PDF	Deaf	Yes	Focus group
Rachel	PDF	Deaf	No	Focus group
David	PDF	Deaf	Yes	1-1 interview
Michael	PDF	Mainstream	Yes	1-1 interview
Hannah	PDF	Deaf	Yes	1-1 interview
Ann	PDF	Deaf	No	1-1 interview
Lucy	PDF	Deaf	Yes	1-1 interview

Table 1 above presents the background information of the participants in terms of family, education, and training. Information on the entry route to professional training and work experiences was considered. Eight participants identified BSL as their first language and all were fluent in the language. Two participants were able to speak and lip read and the rest had basic skills in speaking and lip reading or wore hearing aids. The participants held a range of

[2] Person from Deaf Family

both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and one participant holds a PhD. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

4.8 Data collection

The choice of data collection method for this study is individual and focus group interviewing. This approach fits well with the research aims and objectives and the research questions that I seek to answer.

4.8.1 Interview guide

Before proceeding with the construction of an interview guide for this project, my first step was to reflect on my research and interpreting experience and ask myself a series of questions, using myself as a guide as to whether or not these questions would yield appropriate responses. This process allowed me to create an interview guide consisting of a series of robust, open-ended questions. During the interview, analytical questions were asked in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the individual's feelings and opinions. In order to encourage feedback on a topic, I tried to encourage a response by referring to another information source without breaking confidentiality. This was beneficial because it helped conversations to flow and encouraged participants to offer their opinions that were either different or similar to the comments of other participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016). In order to gain the highest response possible, I put together questions in an encouraging and open structure. My questions were open-ended and, after the first interview, I had the original set of questions adapted following feedback and based on information received during the interview. This first interview helped me with the direction of subsequent interviews because of the wide range of information offered by participants. In addition, each interview helped me narrow down the focus of the topic and I was able to identify themes and categories that emerged naturally. Table 2 displays the topics or categories that were chosen to be explored with the participants and which formed the outline of the interview guide.

Table 2 Interview guide topics

Topic	**Objective**
Childhood	To identify early experiences of interpreting in the family home.
School	To gain an insight into their own perceptions and experiences of interpreting in school.
Career as interpreter	To chart the journey from relay interpreter to professional interpreter.
Deaf interpreters' experiences of interpreting/translating and their decision-making.	To gain insight into their opinions, thoughts and feelings about their experience of interpreting. To identify factors that influence their decision-making.

4.8.2 Research ethical guidelines

Ethical conduct is an important part of qualitative research because the benefits of qualitative research must be protected (Creswell and Poth, 2016)). As Creswell points out, 'a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of quality reports' (1998:133).

Ethical approval was received from Heriot-Watt University School of Social Sciences (what was formerly the School of Management and Languages) Human Research Ethics Committee on 19th October 2015. This approval includes principles of do no harm, confidentiality, informed consent, and openness and transparency. These principles are important because the interests of the participants need to be safeguarded and this includes protecting the identity of participants. Participants were therefore given pseudonyms. It was necessary to provide

reasonably informed consent to each participant. Reasonably informed consent means informing the participants of the purpose of the study, the benefits to be gained from the information received, and the risks and rewards as a result of participation, ensuring their understanding by allowing them to express their views. It was equally important that the participants understood their right not to participate or to withdraw at any time. I explained this in BSL, in understandable and clear terms and avoiding academic jargon where possible. In terms of validity and credibility to the research work, a consent form was constructed (Appendix A). This form included a short description of why this research was being carried out. Permission to be video-recorded and quoted was requested. In addition, participants were informed that videorecording could stop at any time during the proceedings.

4.8.3 Transcriptions

After the interviews, with the assistance of a BSL/English interpreter, I translated the BSL to written English to produce transcripts for the purposes of analysis. The interpreter's role was to proof-read and assist in refinement of my own translations. It is never straightforward to translate from BSL into English for reasons such as those suggested by Stone & West, (2012) and Temple and Young, (2014), so I added notes to indicate the BSL phrases that cannot be explained in English, e.g., some participants did not actually say who the person was that they were talking about (e.g. their co-worker or feed interpreter), but I was aware of who the participants were talking about through their use of referents. Also, most of the participants used the shorthand term 'feeding' which means 'feeding interpreter'. I included additional notes to show the NMF (non-manual features) used by participants, which more fully described the meaning, although not conveyed through manual signs. I wrote notes to myself after each of the interviews were transcribed, and then revisited and analysed the data in the transcripts and found emerging themes. All of this additional work was necessary given that BSL is a three-dimensional language and the task of transcribing it placed it in a one-dimensional, linear written code. The actual practice of transcription is fundamental to examining data from interviewing deaf people (Hale and Napier, 2013; Temple and Young, 2014). Temple and Young state that in qualitative research, it is useful to 'use transcription [of sign language data] as a means of transforming data into a more manageable medium for purposes of data analysis' (2014:142). This is the necessary first step that makes analysis possible, as the production of the transcript from the camcorder-recording is itself an analytical process.

During the transcription process, I was already starting to recognise which data, in my opinion, would be most useful and relevant for answering my research questions. This process of

transcription and marking the text helped guide the thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At the same time as transcribing the data, I noted for example, specific interests and/or quotes and data items to keep for later discussion in the results chapter. I then revisited and re-interpreted the data in the transcripts in light of emerging themes. Ladd (2003) suggests that the actual practice of transcription is fundamental to examining data from interviewing deaf people. This provided backup evidence of what the deaf interpreters said and helped me to see patterns and key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006 and 2022). I worked closely with the BSL text and ensured that the transcription was as faithful as possible. I am satisfied, having checked with informants for accuracy, that the transcripts closely represent data derived from the interviews.

4.8.4 Thematic analysis

Part of the task of data analysis was to identify themes relating to how deaf interpreters' experience interpreting/translating, how they make decisions on the basis of their knowledge of deaf culture and the deaf community and where professional autonomy is being exercised. The analysis initially involved looking at each question raised in the focus groups and interviews to find out what methods DIs used when working from English source text into BSL. More specifically, I wanted to see deaf interpreters' own views and opinions about their work and experiences of interpreting. I decided to use written English for data analysis purposes as this allowed everything to be laid out clearly on paper, using different coloured highlighters to create categories of information, and this was helpful for the process of thematic analysis and manual coding. Further it ensured that the analytic process was accessible to non-BSL users as well. This will be discussed in more depth in the data analysis chapter (Chapter Five).

4.9 Organising and categorising data

Initially, all the primary data were prepared in a similar format. Breaking the transcripts down into smaller components was an initial attempt to develop categories, which illuminated the data. Here are the reflexive questions that I used for data analysis purposes:

- What are the factors that influence deaf interpreters' decisions to use particular interpreting sources?

- Are they being influenced by external factors or by their own knowledge and skills as interpreters?
- Why do they make these choices?
- Did they feel they were able to make autonomous decisions about choosing the method of access?
- Did they feel they were able to make autonomous interpreting decisions while engaged in working with that method of access?
- What choices do they make in working practice when working with hearing sign language interpreters and/or STTR operators?

When the BSL transcriptions into English were completed, I used thematic analysis, adapted from Braun & Clarke (2022), as a way of gathering evidence and describing it in detail by identifying and analysing similar patterns. Thematic analysis consists of six phases — phase one: familiarisation with data; phase two: generating initial codes; phase three: searching for themes; phase four: reviewing themes; phase five: defining and naming themes; and phase six: producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

By combining the significant patterns that emerged during data analysis stages, an initial picture of how DIs experienced professional autonomy and/or impediments to that began to be identified. From these categories, theories on autonomy in interpreting emerged through identification with certain key words and phrases that the informants used during the interviews.

4.10 Autoethnography

I note here that autoethnography plays a part in this research study and is used in conjunction with a qualitative approach. By engaging in autoethnography, I am acknowledging aspects of my own experience that are echoed in the participants' responses particularly around notions of personal and professional autonomy, and audism in society. By acknowledging that I too struggle with my own sense of autonomy, I am able to more effectively describe the challenges of working with people who have little or no understanding of how to work with deaf people and deaf interpreters. The voices of intersectionality are so often lacking in academic research and yet are crucial if diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives are to be represented and understood more fully. For deaf women in academic research, the space to describe and explore our experience is often crowded out and this thesis therefore uses

autoethnography as a qualitative research method to remedy that. The focus group participants in this research are given space to have their experiences and beliefs expressed and captured and I approach this as an ethnographer. As individuals, they each bring their own rich knowledge base and lived experience which is, arguably, more valid than anything written about them by academics.

4.11 Writing up

Initially, I worked closely with one, registered and qualified BSL/English interpreter throughout the process of writing up this thesis. The interpreter was a member of staff at Heriot-Watt University, which meant she had experience of working with academic texts and most importantly she was the only interpreter I worked with throughout my research. This meant that we developed a close working relationship, and she became familiar with my work and working style.

The method we chose to adopt was that I filmed myself, signing short sections of text in BSL and uploaded them to a dedicated One Drive folder, which was shared with the interpreter. The One Drive folder had different subfolders for each chapter of the thesis and each of the video clips was numbered so the interpreter would be aware of the correct sequences of the texts. She then downloaded the clips and translated them from BSL to English. Every few weeks we would meet up for a full day working together to go through the text to make sure that we were both satisfied that her translation was accurate and properly reflected the detail of what I wanted to express.

For the participant's quotes, included in this document, I selected them from the full data set and noted the time signature of each of the quotes I wanted to use. When the interpreter and I met, we then watched the selected part of the video interviews together and she translated my selection into written English. The quotes were written up in a separate document and I later decided where to insert them into the main text.

The second stage of the thesis was written while working with a different registered sign language interpreter, with work starting in the first lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020. Work was conducted online consisting of conversations around shaping the thesis, the focus of the research as well as translation and editing. As Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, more in-person sessions were arranged. Documents were shared and translated in

conjunction with video clips which I sent via WeTransfer for translation and inclusion in chapters.

The processes outlined above required more time than would have been required had I written the thesis in English myself but had the benefit of making sure that I was able to express my thoughts clearly and succinctly in my first language, BSL. This approach had many benefits although the time required for the technical aspects of filming and uploading video clips was considerable.

4.12 Limitations

I acknowledge that all my participants are PDFs as well as the sample size being relatively small although larger than research in this area to date, but it does reflect the population of deaf interpreters available in Britain. While the original methodology plan was to use focus groups as the sole data gathering approach, the need to accommodate participants with individual interviews had an impact on how the data was collected. The dynamic that existed in the focus group where multiple people contributed to a wider discussion was not present for those in interviews. My input in the focus group was reduced since the participants generated much of the discussion themselves while my role became more of an interviewer rather than an interlocutor in the interviews. This meant that I had to be more aware of finding a balance between leading the conversation and allowing the participant the space to share their views. I acknowledge, therefore, that the environment in which the data was gathered differed between the two situations.

The participants were not all working full time as practicing interpreters which means that they had a smaller pool of experience to draw from. This limited the data in a way which may have limited the themes that were drawn from it. Similarly, restricting the geographical locations to Newcastle and London may have limited the pool of participants that might have possibly been involved. Perhaps including locations around the rest of the UK in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales or other cities in England may have positively influenced the results.

In terms of method of data generation and collection, focus group was the preferred option but it is perhaps a limitation of the study that other approaches were not considered. In retrospect, offering a pre-focus group survey or questionnaire may have gathered some of the more practical information around educational experiences or types of interpreting work undertaken

in their career as would being open to receiving additional comments from individuals if they wished to add anything to the discussion at a later date. Both of these may have bolstered the results and discussion chapter. It did not occur to me till much later that a workshop in which case studies were used to generate discussion which could be related to the lived experience of the participants would have been an interesting and informative approach to take. This would have had the added benefit of distancing the participants from the work a little which may have encouraged them to be even more free with their views.

4.13 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the methodology and methods used in the study. It provided justification for selecting qualitative research tools instead of quantitative methods and the appropriateness of qualitative research for the study is explained. It also discusses the research process including sampling methods, the sample, participant recruitment, individual and focus group interviewing processes, data collection methods, transcription, and the approach to data analysis. In Chapter Five, I present the results of the study with a detailed discussion of each theme arising from the participants' contributions.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five presents research findings on participant responses on their work as deaf interpreters who use autocue or a feeding interpreter. Each theme is unpacked here according to categories that capture the feelings, views and opinions of ten deaf interpreters who participated in this study in relation to the concept of professional autonomy. The major questions for the research were: The following themes were identified:

- Provision and Choice
- Human resource and Technological resource
- Interpreting autonomy and Personal autonomy
- Considerations regarding ownership

The research findings are organized around the aforementioned four themes and the following sub-themes: preferences, domains, choices, decisions and relationships.

For many of those who have no experience of the deaf community, some of the concerns of the deaf participants presented below will seem of little concern or even trivial. For some deaf interpreters, however, steeped in the systemic audism of the education sector and wider society, the act of overtly choosing or making a decision that affects their working life can feel momentous.

The participants were asked questions about decision-making regarding technical choices as well as decisions made before and during their assignment with particular focus on the way the source text is accessed. The themes are organised in such a way as to allow me to capture the journey of an interpreting assignment from the time it is allocated to or accepted by the deaf interpreter and how that interaction impacts on the choices and technical work undertaken. This, in turn, addresses the issue of autonomy both on a professional and a wider personal level and ends on participants' thoughts on ownership of language, culture and work practice.

5.2 Provision vs choice

Most participants reported that they did not have a choice over their preferred method of working, with the technical aspect often decided in advance of them accepting the assignment. Michael made the point that things have changed a little and that he was aware of this being the case much more in previous assignments. He reflected on how little decision-making power the deaf interpreter had.

Michael This happened mainly in the past with certain jobs giving me no choice. I just had to accept the situation as it was.

Lucy and David, however, disagreed that it was a thing of the past. Lucy discussed how she was still rarely asked about her preferences by interpreting agencies with the organisation making the decision for her.

Lucy Some of us had made a request about auto-cue provision…the organiser decided on feeding interpreters.

It seems that Lucy had the confidence to ask the specific question about how the source text would be received but that the decision was made without her. Her comment is revealing in that the choice of a feeding interpreter system here is made without any discussion of the DIs preference.
David supported this.

David The decision was always with the organiser or the interpreting agency. It could be either method [autocue or feeding interpreter] as long as the guest speaker is speaking.

David described an assignment in which he was booked to work on the platform of a conference where two feeding interpreters were provided. On arrival, however, he found that Stagetext was also in place and that a monitor showing the written text was placed at his feet in his eye-line. Knowing the STTR operators as being a highly skilled team, he found himself beginning to work automatically from the English written text rather than from the interpreting team.

David The two feeding interpreters hadn't even got a chance to start so they were a bit redundant and could have gone home.

While David was partially joking when he made this comment, he was also asserting his ability to work directly from the Stagetext as a source. His initial assumption that he could dispense with the interpreting team changed when he realised that he was able to receive different information from both teams that helped him create a more effective interpretation. Although there is little training on using both ways to access the source text, namely feeding interpreters and STTRs, David grasped the opportunity.

In terms of the provision of a feeding interpreting team,

David When an agency tells me they're booking their own feeding interpreter I say no, and I book and bring my own. I prefer it this way because I don't like it when I arrive to find that I don't like the interpreter who will be feeding me which means I have to be polite and can feel quite stuck. So, I prefer to book and bring my own and I let the agencies know that I'm doing this.

Where David feels his autonomy challenged, he finds the solution is to book his own preferred feeding interpreter. Agencies and/or organisations who are responsible for booking interpreters appear to have autonomy that conflicts or supersedes that of the DI. Participants reported being unable to negotiate choices or preferences, with the agency making those decisions arbitrarily.

David We have Access To Work (ATW) available to us so it's possible to use that to pay for a feeding interpreter.

Access to Work (ATW) is an employment support programme provided by the UK Government which helps disabled people in the workplace through a combination of financial and practical assistance (www.gov.uk). The ATW budget means that DIs have more control and are more empowered in their role knowing they can bring in a colleague of their choosing. This is a strategy used by many DIs.

As mentioned earlier, David felt strongly that the decision was his own to make but that it was still made by the organiser. This means that agencies have the autonomy to decide what source access is offered to the DI. As a participant, David was clear that he prefers to use specific

feeding interpreters but that the agency still has the autonomy to provide whatever is available on the day. The question then becomes how agency and DI professional autonomy can co-exist and which one has more authority.

In terms of domain, Michael offered a very good example of how domain impacts the decision-making process of the DI.

Michael If I was forced to work with an autocue in a mental health assignment, I would be firm in saying no. It would be impossible for me to respond in the assignment.

He went on to point out that mental health assignments are more effective where there is a feeding interpreter in place as such a domain has implications for his own skillset.

Matthew Naturally, there are jobs where you have to do a lot of learning yourself before you begin, such as NHS work or when you need to understand medical and health issues in more depth. The DI has to research, read, understand definitions, and even watch material online to understand jargon and meaning. This is being well-prepared. Working with a feeding interpreter, regardless of whether they are deaf or hearing, it's all about trust in their ability and knowing their signing style. We have to know each other and how to work together well.

An interpreter makes hundreds of choices and decisions in every interpreting assignment. Deaf interpreters do this too but with the added layer of how to communicate with hearing clients as well. Matthew's example talks about how this process happens in a professional setting.

Matthew There was one occasion where a hearing interpreter wasn't available due to the GP appointment being very last minute, so I went with the deaf client and used paper and pen to communicate with the GP. I would write down what the client said in English, show it to the GP then translate into BSL what the GP wrote in response. My question was whether or not I was allowed to do this kind of job even though it went very smoothly.

Matthew decided to go ahead with the assignment when there was no hearing interpreter available and expresses here his sense of doubt about his professional autonomy given that he has direct access to both source texts. The strategy he chose, to communicate with paper and pen, was put in place with the knowledge and permission of the other interlocutors in the interpreting triad. With all of them content to go ahead with the conversation, the appointment was successfully completed but left Matthew wondering if it was an appropriate strategy to adopt, if he was 'allowed' to work in this way. There may be an impact on other professionals, such as GPs, in that it requires them to adapt to working with a deaf interpreter. It should be acknowledged that this can be a challenge for all when learning how to work together in an effective manner.

Something similar is expressed here by Ann when she says,

Ann Where I work, autocue is the only option. There is no other choice given. In this domain, on-screen programming, there is no suggestion or discussion with the DI regarding access to the source text.

Ann goes on to talk about another issue that arises in this domain over which she feels she has no autonomy

Ann It's because there is no choice over the programming. I am given the assignment even though I know the programme isn't suitable for translating for deaf people. All I can do is make sure that the deaf audience understand me. I have rules that I follow and first of those is that I fully understand the programme so that I can be sure the deaf audience will understand me. If I don't understand the programme, they won't understand me.

Ann is expressing here her experience of a lack of autonomy not only regarding her choice of ways to access the source text but her exclusion from the process of choosing the source text for broadcast in the first place. She is clear, however, that regardless of the text, she has to fully understand it first before she can competently translate it for the audience.

On a related note, Hannah cites a British Deaf Association (BDA) conference event as an example where she found that taking the needs of the audience into consideration was necessary.

Hannah For the British Deaf Association Annual General Meeting in a Deaf Club, I preferred to work with a feeding interpreter because the auto-cue would affect the audience members and could create a lack of rapport with them. The Deaf Club is a deaf space, and it is important for the deaf audience to feel empowered and included. Using an auto-cue could have meant the audience felt that I was cleverer than them by being bilingual and able to read English. It was better to receive the source text in BSL from a feeding interpreter.

Making decisions regarding the method for receiving source text impacts on how the audience receives the message. Hannah suggests that, at BDA community events, the use of an autocue would not be appropriate due to historical associations with cultural and linguistic oppression and the perceived power of the English language.

There were broad issues raised by participants around where decisions can be made that then have an impact on the way DIs work. One of the main issues raised by the participants was how feeding interpreters make translation decisions that omit or retain certain parts of the source text. In essence, the relay or pivot interpreter controls the information that is fed to the DI. Participants, for example, raised concerns about being fed what felt like a summary of the information.

Michael I am responsible for the interpretation and giving the full information to the audience and I need the full information to be fed to me by the feeding interpreter rather than them feeding me a summary of the source text. If they feed me a summary, the information available to me that I can use to interpret is limited and I have less ability to make interpreting decisions myself.

The following comment elaborates on this concept.

Matthew [One day] I worked as an IS interpreter at an international conference in Newcastle. A hearing feeding interpreter fed me [the source] in Sign which I interpreted into IS….it was difficult because her first language was English, and she relied on English word order and vocabulary. I would rather have worked with a deaf feeding interpreter who would feed me in BSL.

The ‘English word order’ that Matthew referenced during the interview is Sign Supported English or SSE. Sign Supported English (SSE) is a British term and considered outdated in 2022. There is no exact definition of what it includes but is generally considered to be BSL signs arranged following English grammatical rules. Matthew had wanted the information fed to him in BSL in order to minimise the number of elements of meaning which are dropped, adapted, or summarised. Since it was rendered in SSE, he struggled to access the meaning of the message and, as a result, he felt he could not give a full interpretation. Some of the participants indicated a preference for finger spelling, a feature of both SSE and BSL. David, for example, explained that, in a courtroom setting, legal jargon can be difficult to interpret. He indicated that the feeding interpreter using finger spelling to spell a legal term would allow him to interpret the message for the deaf client. Similarly, Michael is commenting on the need for the fullest source material possible in order to render the best possible interpretation for the audience. This raises questions about how interpreters make decisions as they translate and how those decisions impact on their colleagues.

Michael also suggests that familiarity with the audience and environment is important to him.

Michael The feeding interpreter [must have] an excellent memory and knowledge about deaf culture and the environment they are working in, including the people who are in attendance.

This touches on the idea of relationships and was raised multiple times in the conversations. David offered this perspective on working with a feeding interpreter and expressed what he sees as an advantage of working with a hearing interpreter over technology.

David A feeding interpreter can show emotion through facial expression like the look that says ‘ooohhh be careful’. These clues are not usually present in autocue or English text.

He also stated:

David A feeding interpreter interprets as usual, but they also need to add information necessary to feed me information.

Hannah acknowledged that the feeding interpreter's own cognitive worldview influences how the source text is interpreted and subsequently fed to the deaf interpreter.

Hannah The hearing feeding interpreters make the choice based on their thoughts, beliefs and values. They have control of the information being interpreted.

Hannah implies in this quote that she is controlled in her ability to interpret by the cognitive worldview and interpreting decisions of the feeding interpreter which, in turn, has an impact on the target audience. She does not raise the issue of the human operator of autocue or STTR who may also omit or add information in their process of producing a text.
David specified further his preference,

David I have my own preferred colleagues and in particular I prefer a Child of Deaf Adult (CODA) interpreter. I've also worked with a deaf feeding interpreter. There aren't many opportunities to work in that way because there aren't enough DIs so it isn't really fair to say who my favourite is because there is so little choice. I worked with [name omitted] before at a conference and that was good and … I feel we are on the same wavelength.

This quote tells us that DIs have their preferences and, here, it is for CODA interpreters. They also enjoy working with other DIs as feeds but the opportunities to do this are few and far between. Due to the low numbers of DIs, choice is severely restricted and so CODA interpreters are the next preference. But the need to feel 'on the same wavelength' is significant if the work is to be of high quality.

5.3 Human vs technologies

Each participant had their own views and opinions on how and when they made choices when accepting an assignment and how they negotiated the method of receiving the source text. The human (feeding interpreter) can be more flexible to deal with given that the encounter is face to face and includes emotions, empathy, facial expressions, and a three-dimensional interaction. Working with another human being, rather than a machine, gives the DI the opportunity to clarify meaning. The technological (autocue) option is more likely to work well when working on a translation task as it is a direct line to the source text and is often used when filming on camera. One issue is that there are no guarantees that the technical components will not break down making the task much more difficult. It can, however, mean that the DIs'

decision-making is more autonomous, and this can be seen as respectful provision. It does also require negotiation with the autocue/captioning operator.

The interpreter has to navigate multiple decisions that have their basis in an experience that is specific to being a member of the deaf community within a wider, majority hearing society. A choice made in the moment is based on this extensive lived experience – both positive and negative – and the potential repercussions on the interpreting situation and the interpreter herself. This raises the question of how much professional autonomy the interpreter actually has. In terms of professional contexts, Michael pointed out that it was the experience of deaf interpreters which was the basis of their professional autonomous decisions. He stated that he felt it best for a deaf interpreter to work with a feeding interpreter because,

Michael There is a connection and intimacy with another interpreter. This is not possible when using autocue.

Despite this, Michael expressed feeling unsure whether working with a feeding interpreter or an autocue would be preferable in all domains and recognised that other deaf interpreters might have different preferences. In effect, Michael is commenting on the need for autonomous decision-making for the deaf interpreter employed for the task. Zoe offered this perspective which was similar to Michael's view in terms of the triadic or monologic interpreting environment. She expressed a strong feeling that a medical assignment is more likely to be effective when working with a feeding interpreter.

Zoe There are options in, for example, medical appointments where working with another person allows me to clarify [meaning]. Choosing to work with an autocue would make it an impossibility as it would raise the question of how a response could be made.

Some participants are very clear when it comes to making decisions about which method they would choose. For example, Matthew points out here that he is confident in making his choice between autocue technology and a feeding interpreter.

Matthew It is clear when to use autocue and feeding interpreter. It's important to have a human being as a feeding interpreter so that there is interaction, emotion,

empathy. Technology has no emotion, no three-dimensionality, and no facial expressions and this is what you depend on in that situation.

David stated a similar preference for using an autocue in the court setting for similar reasons, in order to have access full information.

David They were playing the transcript of the interview and I was accessing it on STTR. They never give you a copy to read so you do it live straight from the conversation. But there was extra information on the recording that wasn't on the STTR transcript such as environmental sounds of doors banging and other things, so the written text had errors in it. So working with a hearing feeding interpreter was beneficial there because they could give me all that information and I was able to include it in my interpretation.

David made the further point that, regardless of who the feeding interpreter is, hearing, CODA or DI, there is still message loss in the translation process.

David …to my mind, having a deaf interpreter work from a written text to sign language in order to feed me means that I'm already receiving a message with some loss of meaning and my additional translation process only further reduces the original text. Moving the screen so that I can see it and do a direct translation from it avoids additional loss of meaning so I'd work that way if possible.

Lucy stated that she felt confident in making the choice and preferred a technological solution for certain circumstances.

Lucy I use autocue when I want to interpret from English to BSL…I like working from English text.

One issue that came up regarding working with an autocue or STTR was the need for the operator to swap with their co-worker every 20 minutes. This creates a few minutes of a pause which can cause stress on the interpreter.

David I went to ask the STTR why the captions had stopped being generated and I was shocked to find that it was due to the changeover between the co-workers. I thought something had broken down because people were putting up their hands and pointing. I'm not sure if the audience understood what was creating the problem.

Some of the participants felt strongly that STTR is not the best or most effective way to work in specific domains such as a court setting since it is a mono-directional way of producing language.

Deaf interpreters make decisions based on their need in a specific situation. Take this example from Ann. Media assignments generally mean working with autocue technology but where the English speaker changes tempo multiple times, more than simple autocue may be needed.

Ann I had interpreted the Queen's Christmas speech for a number of years, but this was some time ago. I hadn't done it for a while but was assigned it again last year. I presumed the Queen would deliver her speech at the same, quite slow tempo as before but got a surprise that, this time, she was speaking quite quickly. I had to bring in a feeding interpreter who could give me behind-camera signals to help me take control of the timing of my interpretation.

In this instance, Ann felt she needed both autocue and a feeding interpreter so she could receive the full source text. Participants were asked to discuss the idea of whether or not deaf interpreters have the choice or can negotiate what will be available for source text access and what they felt was good practice.

As cited previously, Matthew is clear that there is a choice to be made regarding using autocue or a feeding interpreter, but Lucy gives a more detailed response about the kind of feeding interpreter that she chooses.

Lucy I'm more comfortable working with deaf interpreters. I struggled when a hearing feeder interpreted for me. Sometimes I got confused. Later I learned that the feeder had omitted some details from the source (speaker/text). I prefer

to work with deaf interpreters because they use [appropriate] facial expressions which help me to make the right interpretation.

From Lucy's perspective, having an interpreter who is deaf themselves is a preferred choice. In contrast, Michael's view is that it does not particularly matter whether the feeding interpreter is hearing or deaf, as long as he is comfortable working with them and knows them well.

Michael I work well with a feeding interpreter whom I know quite well. Before an assignment, we agree on certain strategies to deal with problems or difficulties when they arise. So, when I miss something or the feeding interpreter is not clear, I move my left foot and the feeding interpreter knows I need the information repeated.

In this way, Michael puts in place a pre-agreed strategy, a signal to alert the feeding interpreter that something should be repeated. Michael explains that this cue does not cause a distraction for the audience. Other strategies included information being finger spelled and numbers written and held up by the feeding interpreter. Similarly to Ann, David makes choices that are more than either/or and has strategies in place that draws upon both ways to access the source text.

David If I can't follow the note-taker, I look at the feeding interpreter. I can use either one of them. A feeding interpreter can feed me the intonation through facial expressions, which is useful to ensure the emotional content of the speech.

And Michael points out the need for being able to choose your co-worker:

Michael I've worked with feeding interpreters in the past but once, at a large conference, [there was] a rota of different feeding interpreters. I don't think this was a good idea. One of the feeding interpreters fed me without eye contact because they were watching the speaker. It was difficult without eye contact. [maybe] the feeding interpreter [was not] aware of what they were doing. They didn't know how to build rapport with me as the deaf interpreter […] I asked the feeding interpreter to repeat something, but they didn't see me.

Some of the participants were clear about the factors involved when choosing between human and technological resources.

Hannah The feeding interpreters have their own translation, which they feed to me in BSL…I have experience of doing conference interpreting through a feeding interpreter [but] I did not get full information.

In this situation, Hannah is receiving her source text from a feeding interpreter, a human resource. She seems to be looking for a different kind of feeding technique here, however, something more akin to signed English including fingerspelled lexicon. This is in direct contrast to Michael who preferred a BSL feed.

Michael I found it difficult to translate SSE into BSL. SSE is difficult to read and take in. It is hard to follow.

Participants discussed the issue of trust in making sure that information shared is accurate. Michael believed that technology was reliable for receiving source text through auto-cue.

Michael I feel more confident that the information passed through autocue is accurate.

Participants point out that they need to feel confident that they received the correct information to work with and that they can carry out their work completely. The data suggests that deaf interpreters have confidence in working with an autocue. They find they can trust the technology. The same holds true when working with hearing interpreters with whom they have worked before.

Zoe When the message comes to me and I trust the feeding interpreter, television subtitles and/or papers, it gives me confidence.

And added that domain is an important consideration.

Zoe If it was a court interpreting assignment, I would definitely rather work with a STTR. No way would I rely on a hearing person! Although, if the interpreter was really good and I knew them then that would be fine but if I don't know

them, then I'd insist on STTR. With all the challenges you get in court, I need to know and control the translation I'm producing.

It's a good point she makes that, given the choice, she'd opt for the STTR but the identity and ability of the feeding interpreter on offer is a factor in her decision.

Michael maintained that deaf interpreters are more intuitive than hearing interpreters in understanding the needs of deaf people. In his view, deaf interpreters have empathy from a shared experience of oppression. He argues that the feeding deaf interpreter is able to deliver the source text using a full range of BSL features such as facial expressions, body language and eye-brow movements.

Michael When I work as a mirror interpreter, I'd prefer to work with another deaf interpreter in the role of feeding interpreter. I think they know best what other deaf interpreters want. They use clear signs…In my experience deaf interpreters are highly skilled.

Participants mentioned how important it is for a STTR to have prepared in advance and to have the necessary skills, qualifications, and training to work with deaf interpreters. When there is trust in the relationship with the notetaker, deaf interpreters feel confident and can then focus on their own work without being concerned about spelling mistakes or fear of missing information.

Some participants expressed a preference for working with a feeding interpreter with whom they have worked before as familiarity enhances confidence. Having a solid relationship built over time can also be good for gaining trust and confidence. In contrast, Michael feels that this is not necessary with STTR operators

Michael I never make a point of meeting the note-takers for preparation. I expect them to know how to do their job. They usually sit at the back of the room, so I don't see them. If it is an event where I've worked before, for example, the ASLI conference, I wouldn't bother about them…there should a large screen at the back displaying yellow text and bold font etc.

Michael is content to let the note-taker get on with their job and differentiates the note-taker and the deaf interpreter's work as having two separate functions.

Some deaf interpreters appear to be unable to ask for both types of access due to cost implications, but Michael was lucky enough to have both methods available to him.

Michael I find it an advantage. I don't have to worry about technical problems. I can focus on interpreting.

He commented that hearing interpreters were able to offer additional details of information to him.

Michael For example, the interpreter might let me know if the atmosphere of a meeting has changed because there is silence in the room. Small details like that are important for the deaf client.

Extra-linguistic information can benefit everyone ensuring that nothing and nobody is left out. There are more examples provided here in David's response.

David Yes, they [interpreter] told me about the speaker's intonation and non-manual facial expressions…they told me her face is very sad, her home was broken into and she was raped. This is in the Congo…where the armed men raped this mother in front of her children and then killed the children when they'd finished. The mother saw this happen and she explained the horror of these men, so I made sure to add emotions into my signs which meant that my translation matched her presentation… I had already read the presentation so was able to match it perfectly and having that support around her voice intonation meant I could work and control how I translated. If I didn't have that I could easily have translated something that looked very different to her presentation.

Other participants suggested there should be mutual trust in the relationship between deaf and hearing interpreters. In their view, trust is based on confidence in the other's ability to translate accurate information. Trust is present when the deaf interpreter does not doubt the integrity and

accuracy of the feed text. The deaf interpreter can then focus her or his effort on interpreting to the deaf client. Here is an example:

Zoe For medical appointments and one-to-one meetings, I work with two feeding interpreters who work with me regularly. I trust them and they trust me. We have a good working relationship.

5.4 Interpreting autonomy vs personal autonomy

Interpreting autonomy develops out of the training we receive on the profession and the undertaking, the code of ethics, and our understanding of boundary and role. Personal autonomy develops from our understanding of the world and our relationship to it, our values, and ethics. Any distinction made between these two is artificial since they are so interconnected. Our professional work is influenced by our personal autonomy, and this is not, in itself, a bad thing. The real world is a place of diversity in terms of race, gender, and many other aspects, all of which have an impact on interpreter behaviour, understanding of language and translation. An individual's values and opinions have an impact on the decisions and choices made as an interpreter, some of which are shaped by whether autonomy is societally granted or withheld.

Like some of her colleagues, Lucy's preference is not for a feeding interpreter who is hearing but rather someone who is deaf and is aware of potential omissions that the hearing feeding interpreter may make. As cited in the previous section, she highlights the difference between hearing and deaf feeding interpreters regarding the use of facial expression. She describes an event in which the hearing interpreter seems to have omitted some information crucial to meaning, which affected Lucy's understanding of the message and relates this to a lack of facial expression.

Most participants, however, do not get to choose their preferred method of working as this is often decided in advance by a third party before they accept the assignment. This could mean that deaf interpreters routinely face a negation of their professional autonomy. Autonomy is exercised in any domain in which a deaf interpreter works where their decision-making power about how the assignment is undertaken is affected, where they are physically located during the assignment, and with whom they choose to work. Most of the study's participants were clear that a feeding interpreter was the most appropriate resource when working in a court

setting although they also talked about the lack of choice around who that co-worker would be. Given that legal/court interpreting is a specialism in the interpreting profession, there are fewer feeding interpreters available, which restricts the deaf interpreter's autonomous choice. Moreover, there is little training available in how deaf and hearing interpreters work in such a setting. David tells us:

David Interpreting for a court case needs effective preparation and good teamwork skills.

While striving for a high-quality interpretation in the legal field, David's experience shows this is not always available. In this example, David worked with two hearing feeding interpreters in court. The following day one of the feeding interpreters was replaced by another hearing sign language interpreter. The change had an impact on the interpretation.

David There had just been a changeover in interpreters at that point, but I had seen the evidence was a leather coat that had two zips [indicates on either side of chest, horizontally] and then buttons all the way down in the centre. But when the new interpreter took over, the translation offered to me was zip-up-the-middle. If I hadn't had prior knowledge and seen the evidence, I might have accepted that as an accurate feed and I would probably have had to take the responsibility for the error when it came from the feeding interpreter.

While David had expected that he would have continuity of co-workers throughout the court case, this was not what happened. This may have had unforeseen consequences, but it impacted the rest of the assignment. In this case, it would seem that communication in the team was less ideal than it should have been. David had no way of knowing which signed translation was the correct one and, on reflection, he felt that preparation was crucial for the interpreting process to be effective.

Preparation is crucial for any assignment, and it helps to be clear about roles and responsibilities. Michael expressed a clear understanding of the STTR's role and responsibility, and he has strategies in place. Here, Michael talks about the importance of working differently

with a STTR in the conference domain based on whether or not they had worked together before.

Michael You never meet the STTR, not really because you know your job and the STTR is usually placed at the back of the room so you can't see anything. But, if it's an ASLI event [the organiser], they know what is required for example a large TV monitor I can see so there is less to be concerned about. If it's a different situation, perhaps a new assignment for me, I would definitely have a discussion with the STTR.

Michael is one of the only participants to raise this idea of creating a relationship with the STTR in the conference domain and it is his awareness of the primary source text which has led him to develop such a coping strategy.

For Ann, her personal autonomy impacts on her professional autonomy in terms of how to access a source text that is sound-based. This is something she has no choice or control over. Interestingly, she did not suggest talking to the autocue operator about any kind of visual aid to support her. Obviously, a DI will know that a fast scrolling autocue means the speaker is speaking quickly but here, Ann is expressing frustration at needing to bring in a feeding interpreter to guide her rather than there being a technological solution for what she wants. Her professional autonomy is dependent on another human being.

Ann I wish there was some kind of technology that could embed a visual image of the sound volume as well. I wish we had that as it would really help but, unfortunately, it isn't available yet. Knowing how loud the sound was would really help me. I'm lucky in that I'm a native BSL user. Some deaf people can hear the sound and that helps them with speed, but I can't hear it so if there was a visual volume image that would be a great help.

Some of the participants indicated a preference for finger spelling from a feeding interpreter. For example, David explained that there are challenges when interpreting in a courtroom setting. He talks here about the need for precision when interpreting.

David It means that English words like ‘hit’ can be fed as h-i-t (fingerspelled) so that there’s no doubt over what kind of blow happened and how that word came to be introduced whether from the source speaker or the feeding interpreter.

Michael commented on the use of SSE by a feeding interpreter and argues that finger spelling works well when more clarity is required in the feeding interpretation.

Michael Finger spelling is better because it makes the context clear. Finger spelling also helps keep the translation as neutral as possible.

A strategy such as fingerspelling may be suitable and appropriate for some deaf interpreters’ but there is not one size fits all. For example, in this situation, Zoe was given a choice regarding how to be present in a theatre production and was able to make decisions about this which reflected a sense of her professional autonomy as an interpreter.

Zoe Panto is a different skill. The deaf audience really enjoyed having a deaf interpreter for panto because the rules are different from a hearing interpreter. I’m allowed to interject and gee the cast on. Hearing interpreters don’t do that. So, it’s different and I really enjoyed it. For example, most hearing interpreters stay within their boundaries, follow the code of conduct and stay professional and I’m not talking about theatre here, I’m talking about panto, it’s supposed to be about the audience having fun, about the kids enjoying themselves with their families. But hearing interpreters stand at the side and don’t get involved. It’s rare to see a hearing interpreter get involved. But I did. I don’t care about the rules. It was about the audience having fun and the deaf kids getting excited. I do believe that there are different rules for deaf and hearing interpreters.

Zoe expresses the belief that there are sets of rules that are different for hearing and deaf interpreters, in this case in the context of pantomime productions. There is no evidence to support this but she’s stating here that deaf interpreters are allowed to be more involved in the show than hearing interpreters, which raises many questions. Zoe’s aim was to make the panto an equivalent experience for deaf children and their families through her approach and

it raises the question of why she feels hearing interpreters are not allowed to do the same. For a DI rooted in the deaf community and culture, rapport with the audience can support this but there are hearing interpreters who are, likewise, rooted in the deaf community and culture so the question becomes whether or not they are allowed or able to create that rapport with the deaf audience too. We do have some hearing interpreters highly skilled in working theatre and panto in this manner so a blanket statement which says only DIs can do this may not be valid.

In this quote, Hannah is describing her need to be able to make autonomous decisions as a professional regarding the omission or inclusion of certain details. Here she is addressing not just the input of the source text, but how that impacts on her decision-making when creating the output, the target text.

Hannah Sometimes I just don't fingerspell because there's just no time and I think about whether or not there will be subtitles or there's an image on screen with that information already in it. I ask myself if it's really important to fingerspell this and, if it's not, I don't. It's a cultural thing. Hearing culture insists on the names of things and people, but deaf culture doesn't so you have to weigh up what is best for the translation.

Her professional autonomy is married, here, to her personal autonomy in that she is using her understanding and knowledge of the deaf community as a deaf interpreter so that she can calibrate what will be most effective and efficient in terms of target text for the deaf audience.

The concept of control was discussed often in the focus groups, with the role of relay and interpreter being questioned. When a deaf person is also a deaf interpreter, professionals can lack awareness of how deaf professionals work and can misunderstand the deaf interpreter's role and responsibility. The way hearing professionals view deaf people can be conflated with how they see deaf interpreters and they act accordingly. Here, Lucy talks about the impact this has had on her when working.

Lucy I was booked to work with a deaf elderly person. The information I was given was that there was a mental health difficulty and they explained some of this

to me. I was thinking this was prep for the assignment, but they presumed I would be asking the deaf person the questions. I had to explain to them that I was booked as a deaf relay interpreter, they thought I was from the John Denmark Unit (JDU) and they didn't know what a deaf interpreter was. They thought I'd come to explain things to the client, but I repeated that I was there as an interpreter. We went ahead with the assignment, and they'd already told me that the client didn't know how to count. I let the client know that I was deaf and that I was going to interpret for them. I signed the numbers 1 – 5 and asked the client what numbers came next. Of course, the client counted up to 13 before the hearing professionals stopped everything in a panic. I think they'd been asking the client the questions without taking into consideration the cultural issues involved.

In this quote, Lucy demonstrates both her professional and personal autonomy in relation to her decision-making in the interpreting assignment. Initially, she has to defend and define her role, explaining how it can work in a triadic interpreting situation. But her personal autonomy comes to the fore as she takes control of the situation and offers support to the deaf client. Lucy's aim here was to ensure that the professional sees the client and that that the client understands the assessment questions. This issue, of a DI being well equipped to ensure comprehension, was discussed a number of times by the participants.

The relationship between working interpreters is crucial, which is why co-working has been a focus of research in recent years. Hannah raises the issue of the need for a close working relationship between the DI and the feeding interpreter and that it needs to be based on mutual trust and respect for each other's personal world views and core values. In her view, interpreting is a complex process whereby hearing interpreters' values, beliefs and norms can often influence how they interpret meaning. She emphasised that effective professional and personal autonomy in their work skills depend on the two interpreters being aware of each other's values and beliefs.

Hannah The feeding interpreter and I have to be on the same page in order to be able to connect with deaf people in the audience. One day a French speaker was talking about science, a subject I knew nothing about. The interpreter had to figure out how to feed me in a way I could understand. The interpreter and I knew each

other very well. We were able to find cues and recognise each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Hannah experienced here how the working relationship is affected by the amount of professional and personal autonomy both interpreters have or take. In another part of the conversation, Hannah raised the issue of how, when the feeding interpreter does not offer a source text that is usable, the DI can't, therefore, deliver an effective target text.

Hannah: I struggled to understand the meaning of the interpretation…could not do an interpretation for the deaf client.

On a related aspect, Hannah raises the point of how preparation for an assignment is part of working effectively as well.

Hannah Good preparation is important. My aim is to empower the deaf community in getting full access to information rather than summarised or partial versions of the speech. I always ask for advance information before a meeting or conference event.

Zoe also emphasised the importance of good preparation. She gave an example of when she was preparing to interpret for a pantomime performance.

Zoe Before the show I worked with a hearing sign language interpreter by reading the play script, and we watched the preview together. We were able to get an idea of what the play was about and see the action on stage.

Zoe worked with a feeding interpreter from start to finish to prepare for the unexpected, such as dealing with intonation and behaviour.

Zoe I highlighted the cultural issues […] with the interpreter […] then I watched the play without an interpreter and followed the script. […] something unexpected happened like the word 'bomb'. I was not sure how to interpret it. I was surprised [….] we were on the ground floor interpreting live on the stage […] we worked through the play. One time I signed too fast or fell behind without

following the sequences of actions. […] I was not able to process information in my head.

Zoe used her visual memory here rather than live processing and found that the technique was something that worked well and was comfortable to use.

5.5 Considerations regarding ownership

Ownership, in the context of this thesis, relates to the cultural understanding that deaf interpreters possess, which affords them the space to make appropriate decisions - which a hearing interpreter may be reluctant to take - as well as accepting the responsibility for the outcomes of their actions. Being responsible for your work as well as accepting and learning from your mistakes is a key aspect. The data from this research shows that ownership and personal autonomy are closely linked. Additionally, taking ownership has the benefit of building trust and an ethos of support with other people. A team of interpreters cannot thrive without a culture of accountability as this keeps everyone motivated to work together toward a collective, defined organizational mission.

A sense of ownership over the work and the language can even be seen in preferences regarding who DIs wish to work with. Often, participants expressed the idea that choosing a PDF feeding interpreter was their preference. Here, David talks about why he prefers to work with a PDF feeding interpreter.

David I prefer to work with PDF feeding interpreters because we have similar experiences and sense of belonging such as being involved in a deaf family and a deaf club…it is easy to adapt and match signing skills.

Deaf clients in mental health settings may feel more confident when working with a DI in that there is a safety net of having someone in the room who has a shared community understanding. The deaf community is a collective group and shares similar traits in their behaviour which may be why deaf clients find a DI more effective.

Matthew In a psychology setting, a deaf client is more comfortable with a DI as there is more depth that can be offered. The hearing interpreter can leave the deaf client out of the conversation when they speak and exert control over the deaf

client, which means the client withdraws. A DI is more open with the deaf client and more detailed information is able to be passed on.

Ann talked about taking ownership over her work by making choices as a DI and observes that professional autonomy can be compromised where DIs experience the longer-term effects of marginalisation.

Ann My priorities are that I have native Sign Language knowledge, that I have knowledge of regional signs, linguistics, that I'm well prepared and that I understand the material. If I have all that then it should come quite naturally to me. If I find myself struggling or unsure, then it goes back to having a gap in my knowledge. I also advise people not to be afraid to say no to a job. Some people feel they have to accept every job, which only leaves them open to criticism when they struggle with the material.

Another example of taking ownership over the work is expressed here by Lucy as she describes the decision to emulate the body language of the presenter of the source text as part of her audience design.

Lucy We agreed that I would copy the body language of the speaker and offer that to the feeding interpreter who would then pass it to the platform interpreter. For example, if the speaker used facial expressions, pointed, moved their hands around or put them on their waist, the platform interpreter would do the same so you would have two people on the platform doing very similar movements.

This is attention to detail in the interpretation which goes beyond the usual expectation of transfer of information from source to target. Interestingly, Lucy raises the point around the work of DIs as feeding interpreters and favours this as a way forward.

Lucy [they] are native signers […] and make excellent feeding interpreters […] hearing feeding interpreters tend to use very little facial expression. Their faces are usually blank which makes it difficult to receive subtleties in the source text such as intonation, tones, nuances and facial expressions.

Lucy expresses the idea that L1 sign language users incorporate facial expression as an integral part of their language use which is what DIs need from their feeding interpreter. Many hearing interpreters are L2 users and may, therefore, have more limited linguistic skills.

Taking ownership of the job, the material and the technicalities around that emerged as an important theme in the data. Many of the participants talked more about feeding interpreters than STTRs with many reporting little contact with the latter. Trust emerged as a strong aspect of this theme where open communication was crucial. Hannah describes a situation where her feeding interpreter behaved as Lucy describes.

Hannah Hearing interpreters tend to put on blank facial expressions which makes it difficult for the deaf interpreter to find clues.

David believes it is important to scan the audience and determine where members of the deaf community are located before making eye-contact with them. Part of his job, he believes, is to identify their reaction through facial expression and adapt his interpretation accordingly: a process known as back-channelling. This might include finger spelling academic jargon and explaining what it is or adding information to give clarity.

David Some of the audience may be bilingual but all should have equal access to the original information through the deaf interpreter, regardless of how they are fed.

His strategy is to keep himself aware of the audience design which adds to how he prepares for the assignment and his relationship to the wider audience.

David It is helpful to know who the audience members are so that I can use an approach that meets their needs.

David takes on an extra responsibility here when thinking through his audience design so that he creates and maintains a rapport with the audience.

David stated that he was able to make decisions about interpreting without the control and direction of hearing people. When asked how he does this, he responded:

David When the script was handed to me, I'd read and analyse it myself. When I notice there is jargon, I'd ask deaf people about their signing. I adapted the interpretation….as some of the audience members could read and others couldn't.

This means that David, as a deaf man, may have rapport with the deaf community, which allows him to tap into that collective community sense to share information.

Michael also raised the issue of a relationship with the audience and expressed the view that deaf interpreters need to be more aware of the needs of deaf audience members; their sign language skill level and educational background as well as their knowledge of the topic being discussed.

Michael A deaf interpreter can create rapport with the audience through awareness of their habitus. I had to ensure that my interpretation matched their H-A-B-I-T-U-S. I remember the best advice given to me by another interpreter when I was working at a conference for the first time. He told me to look at different members of the audience when I was interpreting and to make eye-contact with different people around the room, people that I didn't know. Then at break time, to go and find those same people, have a discussion with them and get to know them. In that way, it helps my audience design to be clear.

Michael's aim in connecting with deaf audience members was to find a way to shape his interpretation better. The concept of habitus as a part of this sense of ownership over the task at hand is an interesting one and will be explored in chapter six.

5.6 Conclusion

The five main research questions as outlined at the beginning of this chapter were the framework within which the participants' contributions were gathered. Participants offered their experience, views, and concerns in a free-flowing discussion. When analysed, the data showed a range of perspectives often overlapping but often in contrast to each other across a broad spectrum of considerations around how professional autonomy in DIs is impacted by decisions made about accessing source text. Four main themes were established:

- Provision and choice
- Human resource and technological resource
- Interpreting autonomy and personal autonomy
- Considerations regarding ownership

and this chapter has presented participants' comments on those themes. Within each theme, there are further sub-themes to help structure the chapter. These are:

- Preferences
- Domains
- Choices
- Decisions
- Relationships

Participants expressed opinions that were often at variance with each other in terms of the most appropriate way to access the source text in specific domains and contradicted each other and, sometimes, themselves regarding preference of human or technological access. For this reason, there was no one-size-fits-all approach that could be taken when presenting the data except to offer their experiences and understanding of the nature of the relationship with access to source material. It is notable that data is noticeably scarce on how DIs view their relationship with STTRs in the profession but there was universal agreement on the need for choice, for them to have professional autonomy to choose what works best for them in that situation. These and many other points will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The data gathered in this research and presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six offers discussion and consideration of the points raised as they are unpacked using Davis' framework on autonomy (1996). The following categories will be used to structure the discussion:

- Experience of working in a chain using STTR and/or feeding interpreter
- Professional and personal autonomy
- Decision-making regarding accessing source text.
- Impact of domain on decision-making regarding accessing source text
- Audience empowerment and the impact on the DI
- Access to linguistics and pragmatics when working in a chain
- Debate on characteristics and skill level of feeding interpreters and STTRs
- Professional qualifications and training

6.2 Experience of working in a chain

There is little or no research that discusses deaf interpreters' experience of working with and accessing source text through a feeding interpreter, a human resource, and/or via technology. This research questioned how accessible a source text can be where professional autonomy is unexamined. In the default or traditional approach, we deaf interpreters 'borrow' the ears of hearing interpreters or STTRs in order to access the source material and, to date, there has been no detailed discussion about who those colleagues might be except that they are interpreters who are generally trained and qualified professionals. The focus of existing research has mainly been on the concept of teamwork or team interpreting, whereas my research is an attempt to highlight the question of how that feeding interpreter or STTR operator impacts access to the source text and what the issues are for DIs in making choices. While the participants in this study raised the topic of how to work with feeding interpreters and what they needed from them, there was little discussion about how the relationship was created; if the two interpreters met before the assignment to find agreement on what form the feed should take and what specific aspects were required, for example.

Meeting with the feeding interpreter prior to an assignment in order to establish a language match as well as a collaborative approach is good practice and necessary if the ultimate service user is to feel they are receiving a complete and strong text. Every interpreter is a human being with their own set of opinions and values and the notion of the 'neutral' interpreter has been analysed many times (Metzger (1999). We only have to look at the concept of 'quality' to see how challenging it is to define, given that everyone brings their own perspective to what that means in terms of interpreting. We create professional standards as a way to establish a level playing field from which we can judge this. A feeding interpreter has their own translation of the source text that they create and feed to the DI. My own experience of working with a feeding interpreter (FI) has been varied but it has struck me that there is something to be considered around how long that interpreter has been working in the field. Working with a FI who has been an interpreter for over twenty years has often given rise to a more collaborative relationship in which I am asked to detail what I want in the feeding process. Examples of this are such things as how information is to be given, strategic use of fingerspelling, and how communication between the FI and I would work in practice. Those FIs who have less than five to ten years' experience are less likely to initiate this conversation before beginning working with me. They are also more likely to translate the source material before feeding it to me, an instinctual response given that is their usual task but not the object of working as a FI. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a part in supporting an interpreter to work effectively as a FI and to be clear about their task and objective. Two types of feeding were identified in the data: the first being a complete translation in fluent BSL and the second being a reductive interpretation that appeared to have gaps or information omitted. Whilst there is no evidence of the quality of these translations and we cannot know what happens in a specific interpreting event, the impact of the DIs' perception of the feed on the DIs' work is clear.

The idea of accuracy is questionable. Each person who attempts to translate any text from and into any language does so in a unique way and word-for-word equivalency is essentially meaningless. Alongside this aspect is the idea which emerged in the data that DIs want to work with feeding interpreters who are themselves deaf. Shared culture and language, which created a different kind of working relationship, were strongly noted as being positive aspects of this arrangement. There is a presumption here, however, that all DIs have the skill set to work as feeding interpreters which may or may not be accurate. Assuming that the role of interpreter and feeding interpreter are interchangeable does not acknowledge the specialist

skills required for both roles. Additionally, this presumes that a shared language and lived experience both makes a significant difference and is enough to merit the belief that deaf feeding interpreters are better at the job of feeding interpreter. Narrowing this further to the idea that deaf feeding interpreters should themselves be from deaf families raises the question of whether or not DIs from hearing families have comparable skills. These are questions which have yet to be asked and researched in more depth and were surprising when they arose in a study which took its original focus as how DIs perceive professional autonomy when accessing source text. The data gathered in this research throws up many questions around the way DIs work with both feeding interpreters and STTR operators and we need to continue investigation of this aspect of our work.

The data offered no homogenous resolution to questions about this aspect of the work but opened up new avenues of thought to explore. Should the hearing feeding interpreter work from the spoken English source into BSL at a highly skilled level it may still present challenges for the DI working to the target audience although we need to ask more probing questions around why that is. As a DI myself, I believe all FIs should be highly skilled so that the highly skilled DI can do work at the appropriate level. Interestingly, however, I have encountered this challenge and have struggled in situations where highly skilled hearing FIs have fed me source text already translated which leaves me with no control to make translation choices for myself. This undermines the role of the DI. Simply opting to work from the STTR operator English text because it is assumed it is a full and accurate account of the source text may not be correct since human error is still a factor. Again, more questions are raised about exactly how aware DIs are of the role and practice of the STTR operator. Where limited or no information on the work of the STTR operator is a feature of DI training, the fact that they rarely occupy the same physical space as the DI, being hidden away at the back of the room only worsens the problem.

As mentioned before, every time we move between languages and cultures, some measure of loss is inevitable. Although the idea that translation loss when receiving text from feeding interpreters occurs through translation choice or error was expressed in the data, the study suggests we have more work to do around how DIs understand this process. The debate, therefore, is about the way DIs understand the material presented to them from the previous link in the chain. As Boudreault (2005) states, there are a number of approaches taken by DIs and perhaps the approach of mirror interpreting has something in the technique which could

be used to train feeding interpreters. It is important that the fullest possible source text is made available to the DI but, as yet no clear solution has emerged from the data about it could be made available without human influence. STTR, as a technological solution, appeared to be the one that believed to be able to offer it, but this does not, as previously stated, take into account the intralingual translation process that is taking place behind the technology. So, I ask the question of what actually constitutes 'full' information. Is a one percent loss considered a failure? From my literature review during this research, I have found no evidence that this area has been explored from the DI perspective as yet, which indicates that future research that is required.

The idea that a feeding interpreter can include information that is not always available through a STTR leaves us with a number of questions not least of all how accurate the assumption is, given that DIs cannot access the source text directly. Interestingly, the data suggests that feeding interpreters are more prone to receive criticism than STTR operators and DIs do not see these processes as occupying a similar territory.

On the subject of using written English as a communication tool where no feeding interpreter is present in a medical setting I note that this is the same strategy described in Chapter Two, section 2.3, that a deaf man used to converse with a religious leader on behalf of his deaf wife in 1680. Here we see how deaf people have been using this particular strategy for over three centuries and that they have multiple such strategies to hand should they be required. Cycling through various strategies until we find one that works for the situation is an act of personal autonomy in which our decision-making is within our own power. From a seventeenth-century church service to a twenty-first century medical situation, deaf people have found ways to communicate effectively on behalf of themselves. Deaf interpreters therefore are part of that lineage of deaf people building communicative bridges.

While we have some research on the work of feeding interpreters working with DIs (Ressler, 1999; Stone and Russell, 2014; Jobse, 2015; Tester, 2018) it tends to be focussed on hearing feeding interpreters. My research has data that includes deaf feeding interpreters, which takes us into a new place of thought and understanding. While DIs have a great deal of respect for hearing feeding interpreters but there is also evidence of issues around linguistics, sociolinguistics and sociocultural aspects. Janzen, (2005), Wadensjo (2012), Metzger, (1999), Russell & Shaw, (2016) all discuss the responsibilities of the interpreter in a triadic interpreted

interaction; the judgement that needs to be made regarding when to interrupt, how to ask for clarification or how to withdraw from the interaction. Each of these authors talks about the power and privilege inherent in the interpreter position and Russell & Shaw (2016), in particular, talk about the power dynamic that exists between deaf and hearing people and the interpreter's role within that. If we move this into the scope of this thesis, we can begin to ask questions about how much interpreters are aware of the power dynamic that exists between deaf and hearing interpreters when they work together.

Bringing questions about decision-making and autonomy to the fore and working through them as professionals could be a way forward to ensuring a more equitable working relationship. Although the aforementioned authors talk about the power dynamic and privilege that exists between deaf and hearing people they do not, unfortunately, address questions of trust, empathy or autonomy which could deepen the discussion about interpreted interactions. This is a new approach to the study of interpreting, one which includes the notion of autonomy as a fundamental aspect. We do not yet know the exact differences between the work of deaf and hearing interpreters so more study is required, discussed further in Chapter Seven, because understanding the strategies used by deaf interpreters and the impact these have on their ability to work and the work they produce can only be beneficial. Boudreault (2005) details the many aspects of communication work that deaf people do, including facilitation, interpreting and mirror interpreting, and one participant was clear that a deaf feeding interpreter was preferred for the latter type of work. Perhaps this is due to the sociolinguistic, sociocultural and lived experience that deaf people share, which is expressed in the sign language they use. As L1 interpreters, perhaps they are better equipped to work in this situation rather than L2 hearing interpreters. In contrast, medical situations often work well where a hearing feeding interpreter is in place, so domain exerts some influence here in that arrangements need to be tailored. More research is required if we are to understand the nature of this more fully. Only by doing this kind of research will we begin to be able to give more effective advice around domains and appropriateness of L1 and L2 interpreting provision that has choice, empathy and autonomy at its foundation.

6.3 Professional and personal autonomy

There is a general agreement in the wider interpreting profession that good preparation before an interpreting event is an important part of being a professional interpreter. I propose that where interpreters work in a chain, a clear understanding of their role and responsibility is also

essential preparation. Bently-Sassaman and Dawson's study states that interpreters must 'work out the logistics of where they will be standing for the assignment, discuss language preferences as they work together' (2012:24) and begins to touch upon the work required. They must discuss assignment details and decide what they need to do. Bently-Sassaman and Dawson's (2012) findings show that lack of preparation time affects the interpreting process and causes problems on the job. From the data collected in my research, it would appear that this is an area in which the DIs feel they lack professional autonomy. When deaf and hearing interpreters start working together without spending time preparing for the work it can lead to 'frustrations, misunderstandings, and prolong the interpreted event' (Bently-Sassaman and Dawson 2012:24). Napier et al., suggest that defining different roles 'depend[s] on a reciprocal, understood relationship between two parties' (2010:63). The importance of having an understanding of the different roles and responsibilities between all those in the chain surely arises from the need to develop strategies for negotiating with both feeding interpreters and STTR operators and feeling able to be clear about their needs. This, in turn, is based on the DIs sense of their own professional autonomy.

Adam et al. (2004) argue that deaf interpreters have additional knowledge and understanding about deaf culture and community, and this is affirmed in the study in the idea that feeding interpreters wish to have the opportunity to have a robust working relationship with the DI and have high levels of fluency, which includes appropriate facial expression. The data suggests that the facial expressions of DIs is different to that of hearing interpreters and it has an impact on the way a DI creates a target text. It would seem, therefore, that, aside from linguistic ability, facial expression is something DIs feel is important from a feeding interpreter. No matter how small or fleeting, the message and meaning that is contained in facial expression is a part of the text that DIs look for and grasp, whether that is a raised eyebrow or a small movement of the side of the mouth. The depth of meaning that can be gleaned from such expressions should not be underestimated and can make the difference between a target text that is appropriately equivalent to the source or one that deviates markedly. Collins & Walker (2005) raised the issue of misdiagnosis of deaf patients in interpreted medical situations when working with hearing interpreters. I would suggest that the nuance of facial expression may be a part of this wider topic. Without Non-Manual Features (NMF) such as facial expression that is closer to native fluency and includes understanding of cultural norms, there is a potential for communication to become problematic. Being the interpreter at the end of the chain, unable to process and create a target text because the feeding interpreter is ill-equipped in terms of facial

expression robs the DI of professional autonomy. Conversely, receiving a text that is robust linguistically and culturally, and with nuanced facial expression places the DI in a position where their autonomy is intact.

Given that the participants repeatedly raised the issue of the lack of tonal and environmental information available from an autocue as well as feeding interpreters who show little or not enough facial expression, it would be beneficial to do further research in this area. In essence, however, it goes back to the fundamental aspect of my research which is that DI professional autonomy needs to be examined so that they can more clearly explain their needs in a professional setting. Whether the DI is receiving the source text via a feeding interpreter or via a STTR, it comes down to the human beings who are delivering this service. They are the ones who access the source text first and make decisions regarding how it is produced and, currently, there are gaps in how DIs are able to negotiate with them.

The professionalism of hearing colleagues is also called into question in the data with concerns around how negative reactions from hearing team members created doubts around the professional autonomy of the DI. These same colleagues also reacted negatively when he interrupted the court proceedings to ask for clarification. As this thesis proposes, these incidents can be viewed through the lens of autonomy. Split second decisions made by the final member of the chain, so often the DI, are open to criticism and is a display of professional autonomy. Where it leads to hearing colleagues feeling aggrieved, however, suggests either a sense of feeling excluded from the interpreting process or unconscious audism which keeps the DI in the role of a client lacking autonomy. As a DI myself, there is both a bigger picture and a lived experience here. Hearing interpreters, for the most part, spend their professional lives working with deaf people who may have little or no autonomy in an interpreted situation. The HI becomes accustomed to this dynamic and the privilege it grants them (looked for or not) and then overlays this on the DI. For those of us working as DIs, however, this creates a tension between our own professional autonomy when working with a hearing FI. The only way forward is to begin to genuinely work through the challenge of changing the hearing interpreter community's responses when working with professional DIs, seeing them as equals in status in the space. Without this and given how every interpreting moment impacts on the next interpreting moment, the risk of the message becoming corrupted is significant so, in order to avoid this, the relationship between feeding and deaf interpreters with relation to professional autonomy requires urgent attention. The

relative status between hearing and deaf interpreters may still not be equal and is an area to continue to discuss. Whether from an abundance of experience in court relative to a DI's inexperience or from a sense of hearing privilege, a hearing sign language interpreter can impact negatively on their sense of professional autonomy in a profound way.

6.4 Decision-making regarding accessing text

Although the term autonomy was not used in the original data collection, experiences that related to Davis' (1996) concept of professional autonomy both individual and organisational were evident including choices to have both ways to access source text available and the benefit of working with a feeding interpreter who could offer environmental and emotional information. Forestal (2011) discusses the importance of environmental information as a resource from which to draw meaning and emphasises that this is part of what makes us human beings. Therefore, interpreters' decision-making capacity is informed by the environmental information they can glean and may account for the expressed preference of a feeding interpreter over a STTR. The extra-linguistic information that can be offered through a feeding interpreter supports the DI in having autonomous control over their own interpreting process. As a platform DI working before an audience, the DI can see and respond to the physical reactions of the people receiving the message which contributes significantly to their interpretation. So, it would be fair to say that DIs work with extra-textual information to create a target text. Further to this point and in relation to the reference to Sutton-Spence (1999) made in Chapter Two, section 2.23 of this thesis, deaf people often express a preference for accessing text via BSL rather than subtitles. This is unsurprising, given that it is their first or preferred language. But working with both STTR and feeding interpreters rather than having to make a choice between these strategies, means that the DI can feel free to be an autonomous professional who has control of the amount of detailed text they receive. The idea, however, that the written text is invulnerable to error, however, remains a problem and the issue of how DIs are trained is the dominant one here.

That feeding interpreters are vulnerable to loss of meaning in the translation process but not STTR operators, while not a valid idea is, perhaps, due to the visibility and relationship with feeding interpreters while STTR operators often exist in a hidden and separate space. This is a gap in research that needs to be addressed. While it is rare to see STTR in a chain with DIs outside of the conference environment, it can be seen in a court setting. Wherever it occurs, we need to begin to form relationships between the operators and the DI in the same way that we

do with feeding interpreters. This impacts on the training of DIs but also on the training of STTRs with the potential for joint training around how we work together. As DIs, we can suspect meaning loss from a feeding interpreter but have no evidence to support that suspicion. It is concerning that training has yet to include working with the STTR as an aspect of the DI work, which leaves cultural and linguistic issues unaddressed.

6.5 Impact of domain

Working solely with STTR in court is problematic in that it is a one-dimensional representation of the language being used. In contrast, a feeding interpreter offers three-dimensional understanding of the language in the court. Given the complexity of court language as well as background noise and environmental distractions, it would be difficult to be sure that either the STTR text or the feeding interpreter were more accurate and there is a marked lack of clarity in how DIs make their choices with little to evidence that negotiation and discussion with the STTR operators is available in order to agree an approach. In fact, there is a sense that responsibility is shifted from the DI's shoulders to the operator's. If we accept the presumption that the feeding interpreter's text has omissions and a reduced amount of information, should we not assume the same for the STTR operator's text?

The point already raised in this chapter, however, about the lack of relationship in general between DIs and STTR operators does raise questions about how we as a profession begin to have conversations with the operators and request that this information is included. At no point in the research did any of the participants talk about this kind of negotiated relationship, which would meet their needs in the situation. This is not something that is discussed in the profession, and it would be a fruitful continuing research undertaking given that we may be presuming STTR operators cannot provide this kind of information when, perhaps, they can. This would, of course, have repercussions on and be dependent on the skillset of the operators themselves as well as their level of awareness of deaf culture and the DI's approach to their work.

In terms of the use of STTR in the mental health domain, the mono-directional aspect of the approach in that it only moves from spoken language to written text but cannot then work from sign language to written text. The idea of having additional personnel and technology in a room with someone who is struggling with their mental health is also something to consider. The need to consider the comfort of human contact in this kind of situation should be paramount and using a feeding interpreter was part of that. Being able to clarify, to ensure the comfort of

the deaf person helps to ensure that communication channels are clear and that there is transparency in the process. Working with a STTR in this domain does seem to lack the ability to achieve these essential elements and there is no evidence that we have a way to resolve that. Unlike working in court or the mental health domain, the use of STTR when in a conference situation is a more comfortable solution for some DIs and tends to be seen as a more accurate rendition of the source text.

The data often raised concerns over the quality of the work of hearing feeding interpreters which is, a valid response to the experiences of DIs who can feel sceptical that the feed they are receiving is as full and accurate as it can be. Interesting questions about how much responsibility a DI should or does take on in an assignment were raised by this in that a lack of faith in the ability of a colleague can lead a DI to assume too much or too little responsibility which comes with risk. My experience of training as a DI informed my understanding of how FIs and DIs can work effectively together due to the fact that I studied alongside hearing colleagues. As we worked through the course, we learned how to work together to unpack translation and find more depth and useful strategies. Unfortunately, the opportunity to train in such an environment is largely unavailable in the UK at time of writing so building trust and rapport between HIs and DIs is still a challenge. It is hoped that this will change. A conversation that is also required regarding what criteria should be in place for feeding interpreters and whether or not it should be a docu1ment that all agree to before the assignment takes place.

6.6 Audience empowerment and the impact on the DI

As discussed in Chapter One, the education of deaf children and the language issues that are present have been contentious topics for many deaf people which leads DIs to consider whether working from a visible English text source in a deaf source may lead to them being misconstrued as arrogant due to their bilingualism. They are aware of the historical associations of oppression created by the use of English as a written and spoken language. This is an example of an awareness of the audism that elevates the use of spoken and written English over the use of BSL and the oppressive nature that this can create. Instead, working from a feeding interpreter source allows access to that visual and dynamic process. This avoids the potential inference of arrogance and fosters a positive relationship with the deaf audience while using the language shared with the audience to consolidate that. In a sense, this is using professional autonomy and extending it to include the audience, to bring them

with the interpreter in the interpreting process to make the event as comfortable as possible. It places the audience's needs as a higher priority than the interpreter's and highlights the importance of the deaf community being positioned at the centre of interpreting provision and honouring the deaf space.

Additionally, the range of deaf audience members for whom an interpreter creates a target text in a conference setting is worth considering in this context. Being aware of the varying levels of access to the English language that may be present, the choice to centre those with limited access as the target audience is a way of prioritising their need for information derived from a shared understanding of the need for access. To support this approach, the data suggests that the DI can seek out deaf audience members at break times in order to do informal language match checks which is in direct contrast to the more traditional and usual actions of interpreters, deaf and hearing, spoken and signed language, who take breaks together and in a separate space, away from the conference audience. In my own experience, L1 fluent DIs and HIs have differing approaches to break times. For many HIs, being able to revert to their first language, spoken English in this case, is how they counter the stress of working in a high stress environment such as a conference. With perhaps only two DIs in the team, this means an environment where sign language becomes a minority language in the space which raises the question of what a safe space for deaf interpreters looks like. There is also a question of ownership of sign language that touches on the informal language match checks the data suggests as a useful action to take. For many HIs, stepping into the deaf space at break times can feel disrespectful and they retreat to a separate interpreter space. Given the changes to the way deaf and hearing signers interact over the last thirty years, however, this may not be necessary. Rapport between many deaf and hearing signers in social situations has improved so, perhaps, this is something that can be carried over to the professional sphere. DIs have a different question to answer around break times when working with a shared language and culture being a given. I have noticed, however, that DIs do not automatically move to be with deaf audience members during informal times at conferences. While meeting at the buffet or coffee line can be useful, it brings into question our professionalism if we linger there too long.

This approach is also one in which the deaf community is centred in the interpreting process and it raises questions about how we as a profession have and should behave in these settings. While there is a need to take breaks, have a moment to clear your head as a professional, is

there not also a need to create a feedback mechanism with the target audience, to check for language match and to build a relationship with the deaf community? For some of us in the interpreting profession, the break times in assignments are often when we prepare for the next section of the job, reading materials, reminding ourselves of structures and vocabulary. For others, that time is best used conversing with the target audience and ensuring a language match is in place with the aim that feedback improves the next piece of work. There is criticism from and about both perspectives on this issue with the main criticism being that the latter are less professional in their approach.

6.7 Debate on criteria for feeding interpreter/STTR

Fluency and quality of interpreting are key aspects that have emerged in this research and we need to ask ourselves what kind of criteria we should be using when choosing feeding interpreters. In the profession today, how many interpreters, deaf or hearing, could and would choose to work as feeding interpreters? The skills, understanding, ability to make relationships with DIs, ability to use a range of approaches are just some of a long list of qualities and abilities required. High level of skill in BSL should be a principal criterion for working as a feeding interpreter and not something acquired through on-the-job training. In essence the DI's linguistic access depends on the skill of the feeding interpreter which, therefore, must be at least comparable to their own. Where a DI can struggle is when fed a text that feels so reduced it becomes challenging to work from in any meaningful way. It may account for the strength of feeling in some of the participants' comments that a feeding interpreter must be a CODA or PDF in that there is an assumption that there would be a shared understanding of the culture, experience and language. While this may be true, my question is whether this is actually true of all PDF/CODA interpreters. Not all of these interpreters used BSL in their early lives, some used it only marginally, while others were fluent at a young age or came back to it at a later age. There can be no automatic assumption that by having the label PDF as an interpreter equates to being highly skilled. In my own practice as a DI, I have learned over time to choose my FI very carefully and not simply based on skill level. Although fluency in BSL is paramount, the ability to work with me and give me the space to take the lead in an interpreting situation is also of great importance. It is not my experience that only PDF/CODA interpreters have this skillset. Since there is as yet no research comparing PDF and non-PDF feeding interpreters' work, these are questions we cannot resolve in this study, but which would be usefully interrogated in the future.

Working as a feeding interpreter has long been recognised as legitimate work for hearing interpreters and there are many who, whether formally or ad hoc trained, offer high quality and collaborative service. In the case of deaf interpreters who work perhaps from STTR or as mirror interpreters, they offer us another way of thinking about how to access a source text. One of the issues here is that training for interpreters in how to work effectively with DIs is rare, which limits opportunity to learn and practice. While it is not within the scope of this study, it is plausible to suppose that, for some hearing interpreters, it may be that embarrassment is a factor in their reluctance to try this kind of work with nervousness around their use of BSL as their second language. For some DIs, nerves may similarly play a part given that English may be their second language. There may also be concern regarding how deaf and hearing interpreters work together without feeling that the power balance between them is unequal or that professional status is compromised. When we are focused on a positive and effective outcome, however, collaboration is the natural by-product.

This is summarised by saying that we need to begin to create a list of criteria that defines the characteristics of an effective feeding interpreter and STTR operator. Perhaps it is time that we addressed what the appropriate qualifications are for such a role and whether or not STTR operators should be required to have a qualification in BSL if they wish to undertake this kind of work.

6.8 Professional qualifications and training

Professional training and qualifications are generally understood to mean courses, workshops and seminars which deaf interpreters attend in order to develop their knowledge, skills and competence in sign language interpreting. Deaf interpreters are required to attend professional training courses to complement any interpreting skills learned in school or at deaf club centres (Carty et al, 2011) as it is necessary for them to apply professionalism to their practice. For some deaf interpreters, qualifications are obtained either locally or nationally and others undertake courses provided by international organisations such as the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI). Many access interpreting courses through Signature and NVQ in the UK. The choice of courses seems to be governed by factors such as availability in the area where deaf people live, course venues, cost and, of course, personal level of interest and motivation to become a qualified interpreter. In my case, an opportunity to be part of a part-

time academic interpreter training course at the University of Leeds meant that I trained alongside hearing students. I was the only deaf person in the group and found the experience useful and informative, particularly modules which dealt with theory and practice. For many deaf people, this kind of course is unsuitable or unavailable and the opportunity to benefit from learning with hearing people training to become interpreters is lost.

In Chapter Two, it was highlighted that barriers to training exist for deaf interpreters. Currie (2009) indicated the absence of deaf students on interpreter training courses and we know that a lack of training courses is a significant barrier, with deaf people having to travel long distances to attend (see section 2.4). Deaf interpreters registered with interpreting bodies and institutions in which they are bound by codes of ethics have to follow accepted codes of behaviour and standards of practice. In that sense, their autonomy is tied to the organisation's code of ethical conduct for professional interpreting practice. The comments from Liz Scott Gibson (2014) and John Walker (2008) quoted in Chapter Two (see section 2.4) support the view that there should be professional training courses for deaf interpreters at university level.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the issues raised by the data and attempts to view these from various perspectives, raising questions and highlighting the kinds of debates the profession would do well to have. Each of the points outlined in the chapter require further consideration in terms of how DIs work with feeding interpreters and STTR operators and what good practice would be in an effective collaboration. The discussion also raise questions around what future training should include. The next chapter will offer some conclusions to the research, and a discussion of the implications and recommendations.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Summary

This research addressed the concept of professional autonomy as related to deaf interpreters with particular focus on the how they access the source text and the factors affecting their decisions and choices in an interpreting assignment. The central research question of this study was: can deaf interpreters be said to have professional autonomy?

While this question guided the research process, the following questions were used to explore some underlying deeper issues in the study:

- What factors influence deaf interpreters' preferences for receiving source text in interpreting?
- How have deaf interpreters experienced autonomy in making interpreting decisions in the interpreting profession and process?
- What factors influence the decisions that deaf interpreters make regarding interpreting choices?

Chapter One offered some background to the research and my reasons for choosing it as a topic as well as establishing the context in which the research took place. I described the historical context of the work of deaf interpreters where deaf people were practising as interpreters on a voluntary basis for many years in schools and in deaf social club centres. There is evidence that deaf children have been practising 'relay interpreting' and translations for other deaf children since their school days (Adam, Carty & Stone, 2011). As adults, they used the interpreting skills they developed in school to work as 'relay interpreters' at deaf social club centres (Bienvenu & Colonomos, 1992. Chapter One also included my own personal experience as a deaf person working in the sign language interpreting profession, taking an autoethnographic approach throughout the research (Wall, 2006 & O'Connell, 2017). This was done as a way to address bias and subjectivity in the research. As a deaf interpreter, I bring an insider perspective in this study in that I have 'situational knowledge' (Harding, 2005) of deaf interpreting and acknowledge that I do not claim objectivity in this research. I also described how I selected the research participants for individual and focus groups interviews and introduced the deaf research participants working as deaf interpreters. Lastly, I asked the principal question that concerned the research, which is whether deaf

interpreters can be said to have professional autonomy or not. The research asked what stops deaf interpreters from having professional autonomy with regard to how they access source text.

In Chapter Two, the available literature on this subject was reviewed, which also offered evidence of the visible presence of deaf interpreters having been involved in the work of interpreting for many years across multiple domains. The literature review describes the various approaches deaf interpreting has taken and can take such as relay, facilitation, and mirroring to name a few, as well as interpreters' function as ghost writers and sight translators in the deaf community. While there is some literature on the work of DIs, there has been no discussion on the idea of professional autonomy in relation to the working experiences of the deaf interpreter. Since most of the available research on sign language interpreting is centred on the work of hearing interpreters, the gap was clear and this research, focusing on the views, opinions and feelings of deaf interpreters, is an attempt to contribute to that.

Chapter Three introduced the concept of autonomy (Davis, 1996; Kant, 1784; Stuart Mill, (1863) and framed it in the context of the professional autonomy of deaf interpreters as well as noting the presence of audism in society. It offered a broad perspective on autonomy and how it impacts on our decision-making ability in work and everyday life as well as our relationship with authority. Individual and organisational autonomy was explored and the impact these have on the working lives of deaf interpreters with particular reference to how they access source text. Given that the source text is often in spoken language and the DIs access this either through a feeding interpreter or a STTR operator, professional autonomy becomes an issue where control of the source text is in the hands of a third party. Audism, as something that impacts on autonomy, cannot be underestimated. As Ziebart states, 'The hearing majority has oppressed the Deaf minority throughout history' (2016:3) and, in the work of deaf interpreters, audism persists. From the earliest days at school where a negative attitude towards deaf achievement is evident to workplaces that presume deaf people cannot do particular jobs, audism is a lived experience. Organisational autonomy is more powerful than the personal autonomy of deaf people throughout their lives.

Due to the nature of the research questions, I made the decision to take a qualitative approach to the study which is described in Chapter Four. I justified this decision in the knowledge that

qualitative methods allowed me access to the thoughts, views and opinions of the research participants. The research questions provided opportunities for the research participants to explore their experiences of interpreting and to help me understand their level of autonomy in their decision-making process. In order to better understand these issues, I framed the study within Davis' (1996) concept of professional autonomy. I noted that Davis (1996) uses the terms 'individual autonomy' and 'organisational autonomy' to contrast two perspectives of professional autonomy while Kant (1755) described the concept of individual autonomy based on personal, moral and political understanding.

The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. Themes were considered and discussed in the context of Davis' (1996) concept of professional autonomy at an individual and organisational level. All data was presented in Chapter Five and provided an insight into deaf interpreters' experiences of interpreting and the factors that influence their decision-making. All the interpreter participants of the study had their own varied views and opinions on decisions regarding how they chose to work with the source text. Sign language interpreters tend to favour working with feeding interpreters to access source text as well as the more recent innovation of having deaf feeding interpreters. Deaf interpreters work less often from STTR text, but the participants were aware of it as an option although much of their understanding was superficial and lacked depth regarding the human element of the operator, which was mostly absent from their discussions. While DIs were aware of their autonomy, their reflection on using it in their work with feeding interpreters and STTR operators seemed to suggest that they lacked greater understanding.

Chapter Six discussed the data and used the following structure:

- Experience of working in a chain using STTR and/or feeding interpreter
- Professional and personal autonomy
- Decision-making regarding accessing source text.
- Impact of domain on decision-making regarding accessing source text
- Audience empowerment and the impact on the DI
- Access to linguistics and pragmatics when working in a chain
- Debate on characteristics and skill level of feeding interpreters and STTRs
- Professional qualifications and training

No single approach to accessing source text could be identified given how context, domain, sense of autonomy and other conditions affect decision-making by DIs. Instead, the participants offered their experience and opinions on the work they do.

I now draw conclusions from the research findings and note their implications for the deaf interpreting profession. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and the contributions to current knowledge on sign language interpreting, as well as recommendations for further study.

7.2 Conclusions

The following main conclusions can be made from the analysis of the results and discussion:

1. Collaborative working with FI/STTR is either not fully embraced or understood
2. Knowledge and awareness of ethics and boundaries is an issue
3. Training and registration for DIs remains problematic or difficult to access
4. Addressing the gaps in training and awareness of communication professionals.

7.2.1 Working collaboratively

While there is more concern among DIs around working with feeding interpreters more often than working with STTR operators, the role and responsibilities of each were not consistently understood. Since both of these roles often represent the first person to access the source text, this is significant. Having access to a working source text is crucial for the DI who sits at the end of the language chain. Understanding the process that the feeding interpreter and the STTR operator undergo as well as the impact that has on the work of the DI is critical and the effect on professional autonomy cannot be underestimated where the process is either misunderstood or inadequate. For many STTR operators, the first time they meet a deaf person who uses sign language may be in the work environment. They, therefore, may lack knowledge about the language and culture of the deaf community unless their training specifically addresses this. For many DIs, the fact that STTR operators tend to be positioned in a part of the room that is rather hidden from the rest of the audience or participants means that it may not occur to DIs to seek out a relationship with them. The visibility of feeding interpreters as part of the deaf community and people who use sign language helps to create a relationship with DIs that is rarely present with STTR operators. This contributes to a sense that STTR operators are more ‘hearing’ than feeding interpreters and therefore provide a

more accurate text from which to work. This is a form of internalised audism wherein hearing people who access spoken English are considered more knowledgeable than deaf people who use sign language. This accounts, in part, for the participants' presumption that a STTR text is more accurate than the text produced by a feeding interpreter. While interpreters are a visible part of the deaf community, STTR operators tend to sit outside the community and relationships are, therefore, less likely to evolve. Additionally, at the time of writing, only two STTR operators in Scotland hold any high-level qualifications in BSL making communication between the majority of operators and DIs challenging. From a personal perspective, further interrogating the relationship between signing STTR operators and DIs, such as myself, would be an interesting next step in this research.

It should be noted, however, that communication between DIs and feeding interpreters is also problematic given the long history of deaf people being excluded from the learning of their own language while hearing people have much greater access to it. Coupled with the natural suspicion that has arisen from the lived experience of being a member of a marginalised community, which may explain the often contentious relationship and inconsistent expectations that were noted in the data between DIs and their hearing feeding interpreters. The lack of training on the hearing interpreter process contributes to this.

Finally, there is the issue of technology. The frustrations of the participants regarding the lack of information on tone or environmental/emotional information when working with STTR was clearly expressed. Without access to information about the kind of technology being used by the operators, DIs feel unable to state their needs and ask for more collaborative working. This contributes to a sense that they lack the professional autonomy which would allow them to approach the operator and request support, e.g., changes to font colour to make the text more legible. Whether or not the technology allows for the capacity to adapt fonts to different speakers or offer environmental information in a live situation is moot when we consider the kind of cognitive load a STTR operator already carries.

7.2.2 Ethics and boundaries

Issues such as preparing well for an assignment, how interventions in the interpreting process are handled and dealt with, and how organisational autonomy impacted on their decision-making capacity can be expressed as frustrations around ethics and boundaries. When professional autonomy is threatened or under question, DIs identify this as paternalism and a

sense that they were not trusted to make important decisions for themselves based on the client's needs. This comes from a place of having been a marginalised community for many years who experience audism as a routine part of their lives. For those DIs who are untrained, there can be a presumption that intervention by a hearing interpreter is a form of audism. Indeed, it may be an audism attitude they are experiencing since hearing interpreters work with deaf clients for the majority of their career and can struggle to see deaf interpreters as colleagues whether they are trained or not. This may be a question of not whether the DI is trained but how they are trained. As someone who trained alongside hearing interpreters, who shared the same room and education process, I have found that this brought an increased respect for me as an interpreting professional that is evident when we now work together. There are some DIs who have chosen to train in courses established for deaf people only and, whilst I respect this position, having some opportunities to work with hearing trainee interpreters in that time could bring the added benefit of raising awareness among them with the resulting improvement in professional working relations.

Even a relatively basic task such as preparing for an assignment can raise issues of status and professional autonomy with deaf and hearing interpreters unsure of the boundary of their role. The knock-on effect of this on the assignment can be significant with further effects on future working relationships.

7.2.3 Training and formal registration

The lack of a structured system or framework for deaf interpreters to learn on the job appears to be a serious issue. Interpreters registered with registration bodies such as NRCDP must have completed an approved course and submit certain levels and types of continuing professional development (CPD) annually in order to maintain their professional status. This supports them in developing and improving their knowledge base. Without these kinds of learning opportunities, deaf interpreters, if not part of a registration body, tend to fall behind in their own learning. For those who are untrained and unregistered, continuing professional development needs to be carefully considered.

The evidence from this research suggests that a minority of those working as DIs have had formal training and hold interpreting qualifications (see Chapter Four). There was also criticism of interpreting agencies and events organisers who approached deaf interpreters as having little

professional autonomy. This is compounded by the lack of formal qualifications among the profession, which tends to influence perceptions of them as non-professionals.

This suggests that training that incorporates autonomy would benefit everyone in the team. Training and qualification routes are still a problem and have an impact on how DIs engage in professional work activities. We have yet to reach a place where deaf and hearing interpreters are seen as equivalent professionals. This may be down to factors such as a lack of training programmes, as well as opportunity to work with colleagues and build the bridges required to collaborate.

The truth is that we have little evidence to guide us as to how training courses for deaf interpreters should look, whether they are separate courses specifically for deaf students or we should create an integrated model of interpreting training where deaf and hearing students learn alongside each other. In my experience as a deaf interpreter and member of the deaf community, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that deaf students tend to prefer a space that is solely for deaf people as it allows them to feel confident when they are working in a shared language environment. As someone who has tended to be a 'guinea pig' in training courses such as the PG Diploma BSL-English Interpreting and the later MA BSL-English interpreting, my experience is of being the only deaf trainee in a group of hearing trainees. My unique perspective is that I learned a great deal from training alongside my colleagues so I would advocate for opportunities for deaf and hearing interpreters to come together at certain points throughout their training.

In terms of limitations, this study involved interviews with ten deaf interpreters, all of whom are PDF, which can be viewed as a small sample study. While the sample is not representative of the whole deaf interpreting population, there is a level of diversity in the sample that is characteristic of said population. I acknowledge the limitations of the study, one of which is the fact that the use of the key word 'autonomy' was never introduced to the participants in either the focus groups of the one-to-one interviews. At that time, the focus of the study was wider and trying to capture responses from participants regarding why preferences for working with a feeding interpreter or captions occur. Autonomy as a concept emerged as I worked through the data and I acknowledge that, had I discussed it with the participants, the data may have been different. The fact that the concept of professional autonomy emerged so strongly from the data indicates that it is a rich seam for further research. The use of the theoretical

component of the study on professional autonomy as a research methodology is exploratory in nature and this study offers the first step in developing the concept as it relates to the deaf interpreting profession.

7.2.4 Addressing the gaps

If we consider the human element that is the feeding interpreter and the STTR operator there are questions around how aware they are of what the DI needs when receiving a text. This takes us back to the qualification and registration process for these communication professionals as well as to the training itself that they received. While audience design is part of that training, it may be that this does not include the concept of working collaboratively with a DI.

While we can discuss what makes a good or a bad translation, we do not discuss what makes a good translation that will support the work of the DI. Both the STTR operator and the feeding interpreter more generally work with and to an audience or a client and not directly to a DI as part of the communication chain. The usual direct relationship with the audience is changed when the DI, this third person, is in the relay position which means that the work of the primary communication professional is not directed at the wider audience. Instead, it is directed at the individual deaf interpreter who is then responsible for processing this and presenting the text to the wider audience. A feeding interpreter, rather than being the one to create the finished text, must be able to make decisions around the needs and demands of the deaf interpreter rather than their own. Therefore, a general or introductory conversation around how to work in a team is not enough. It requires a depth of understanding in the relationship that is currently not the norm. While there is research that addresses the practicalities of feeding, it does not address the relationship required to the necessary depth. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the relationship between STTR operators and DIs who have little or no access to training on how to work with a DI or may never have met a deaf sign language user. They cannot, therefore, be expected to know what a DI needs from the text the operator produces not least because there is so often a language barrier in place. Additionally, cultural and linguistic barriers risk societal audism becoming an issue in the relationship.

Ressler's research (see Chapter Two) which describes the difference in the target text of a hearing sign language interpreter when working to the wider audience compared to working

to a DI, gives us strong evidence that the processes are not the same. Notable differences between the two targets texts suggest that additional fingerspelling as well as other features are included in the text offered to the DI. This happens because the DI themselves has requested this because they wish to process the information themselves rather than have the hearing interpreter process it first. This kind of attention to the autonomy of the DI is not yet a routine part of the work of feeding interpreters or STTR operators. There were very few times the participants talked about any kind of pre-assignment conversation with STTR operators, who largely operated in a separate space, while the conversations with feeding interpreters tended to be brief. The lack of awareness on the part of the communication professionals is rooted in their training which emphasises working for the wider audience as their main objective without acknowledging and including the working relationship with the DI. This gap, and the corresponding gap in the training of DIs on the work of the STTR operator and feeding interpreter, however, has significant impact on the work of the DI.

7.3 Implications and contribution of the study

This research study has provided an insight into deaf interpreters' experience of interpreting and the factors that influence their decision-making and the impact these have on their level of autonomy in the interpreting profession. This research contributes to the knowledge and awareness of those who work with deaf interpreters whether they are communication professionals, agencies who provide communication professionals and the wider deaf community. It is an academic resource upon which future study can be based as well as material that can inform those who book and/or work with interpreters as part of their employment or those who work with the deaf community. The findings of this research evidence that DIs are aware, either by its lack or its presence, that they have professional autonomy and highlights the need to address more carefully the implications of how source text is accessed. The research can be used in the training of other communication professionals so that they have a greater understanding of how to work effectively with deaf interpreters. Addressing the concept of professional autonomy as an interpreting profession alone will not resolve the issues that arise when communication professionals work together and it will be important that the findings of this research be shared as widely as possible so we can begin to question where autonomy breaks down and how to resolve that. It is hoped that in sharing this research, we find ways to work together more effectively in the future.

7.4 Recommendations for further study

Following on from the conclusions in this chapter, the following recommendations are offered.

7.4.1 Working collaboratively

Much of the frustration that the participants expressed regarding working collaboratively could be resolved if appropriate research and training was put in place. It is my recommendation, therefore, that training programmes or development courses for DIs should include the opportunity to think about and practise working with both feeding interpreters and STTR operators particularly those operators who have high level sign language qualifications. This would allow them to focus on how the relationship works best for both parties and find strategies that resolve potential challenges. This should include discussions about how source texts are accessed in terms of linguistic challenges such as jargon, cultural references and repair strategies. With the opportunity to see first-hand how these other communication professionals process from an audio source text into either written text or a signed interpretation, DIs will have a greater understanding of the task. Topics for discussion should include cognitive load, how and why lexical choices are made and the impact on the final target text, how omissions in a text affect the DI and how cultural references can be managed. Practising with both a feeding interpreter and a STTR operator, together or as separate tasks, will give DIs the space to learn more about the work and process, roles and responsibilities of both these professionals. It would be beneficial to the profession if this was an area that was attracted further research which could be used to increase our understanding. It is also my strong recommendations that deaf interpreters and deaf interpreter trainers be at the heart of the development of this training and lead much of the research that is so greatly required.

7.4.2 Knowledge and awareness of ethics and boundaries

Given that the subject of ethics and boundaries is a core part of the curriculum in interpreter training, it is no surprise to note that more than half the participants, which I believe was a representative sample of the profession at the time the data was collected, had undertaken no formal training. For some of them, a sense of ownership of the language and culture was enough to feel able to work as DIs. There were, however, a number of questions about their decision-making which they expressed in the research interviews. For this and many other reasons, it is

my recommendation that a research that focuses on ethical considerations in interpreting, broaden its parameters to include the work of deaf interpreters. Research that interrogates the different ethical awareness and sense of boundaries that exist between deaf and hearing interpreters in professional contexts enriches the whole interpreting field and would offer us insights into how collaborative working in teams functions as well as contribute to the development of the deaf interpreting profession specifically. Furthermore, training courses should be developed that are targeted at deaf people wishing to, or currently working as untrained deaf interpreters. These should be in a range of settings, including academia and community, so that a broader range of the community is captured with widening access schemes implemented to ensure deaf people see interpreting as a valid profession. . These courses should consider opportunities for joint training with hearing interpreters on audism, paternalism and professional autonomy as well as ethics. My own experience as a professional deaf interpreter has been informed greatly by participating in joint training and the benefits are clear. A scoping study to better understand the numbers of DIs in the country and their qualification routes would be beneficial to the profession as a first step. As previously stated, at the heart of the development of these courses should be deaf interpreters and deaf interpreter trainers.

7.4.3 Training and qualifications

It is my recommendation that criteria are established for those working as feeding interpreters that specifies the skillset required for such a task. Whether the interpreter is hearing or deaf, the profession requires guidance on how we nominate and work with feeding interpreters in professional situations. It is further recommended that training incorporates strategies for working with STTR, agencies and other service providers.

It is clear that professional training and qualifications are vital for deaf interpreters. Therefore, the lack of university and professional training courses specifically for deaf interpreters should be addressed by UK Sign Language interpreting bodies. Deaf interpreting modules should be incorporated into undergraduate and postgraduate courses and effort should be made to reach out to the deaf community to offer information and awareness about the profession of deaf interpreting. This could take the form of targeted open days with specific invitations issued to bring in as many members of the deaf community as possible.

At the time of writing, professional autonomy is still not, in my experience, an aspect that is covered in initial training or CPD. Therefore, training that discusses professional autonomy should be incorporated into interpreting programmes with specific CPD opportunities created for deaf interpreters. The learning from this should be rolled out to interpreting agencies and other relevant organisations who would benefit from a revaluation of how deaf interpreters are perceived in the industry. Training that incorporates a focus on personal and professional autonomy would benefit everyone in the profession.

7.4.4 Addressing the gaps

In my professional life so far and at the time of writing, I am aware of no available documents that specify the criteria required to work as a feeding interpreter (whether deaf or hearing) and it is my recommendation that this should be developed as a matter of urgency. Until now, we have not considered this an essential aspect of the profession but, based on the data collected and the results presented in this research, there is an inconsistency regarding the perception of what makes an effective feeding interpreter as well as a lack of understanding of the process they undertake. Team interpreting research has addressed this to a certain extent but has not, at the time of writing, included the effect of aspects such as power and privilege or audism on the relationship between DIs and feeding interpreters, STTR providers, agencies and wider organisations. In Scotland in 2022, there are only two STTR operators who hold BSL qualifications, with a few more who are jointly qualified in the rest of the UK, and I recommend that this becomes more widely common practice.

It is recommended that scholars consider the professional autonomy of deaf and hearing sign language interpreters as a viable research topic that will enhance our understanding of the sign language interpreting profession in terms of knowledge, training, team working and CPD. The participants of this study expressed clear and specific preferences of how to access the source text through a feeding interpreter or STTR. Some preferred to work from their shared language and had additional specifications regarding what kind of language was being offered. Others preferred to work from the written English text offered by the STTR with questions raised, therefore, about what nuance can and cannot be offered within that. Both these approaches to accessing source text are valid but whether or not they are equivalent is another question. There is a need for training and a wider range of opportunities for DIs to practise as well as a greater examination of what exactly individual DIs need from other communication professionals with whom they work.

While there are still a number of unanswered questions and a great deal of research to be done, what we can be sure of is that addressing issues such as power imbalance, privilege, audism, and autonomy would be achieved by teaching the history of the deaf community and the deaf interpreting profession. The result could be deaf interpreting professionals developing positively and confidently while working at the equivalent status to their hearing colleagues. From these recommendations, it is hoped that we see positive movement in the relationships and practice of deaf interpreters as we build from this research. This thesis is offered as a basis for future research to enhance the professional work and status of deaf interpreters as an equivalent part of the wider interpreting profession.

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Appendices

Appendix A Consent Form

Deaf interpreters and translators' preferences for receiving source text during interpretation and translation work

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore Deaf Interpreters' preferences and choices of how to deliver from English source text into British Sign Language, designed by Clare Canton, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a professionally qualified experienced interpreter. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to partcipate in a focus group with two tasks: the first round will be a group of Deaf interpreters discussing the researcher's questions, and the second round will be individual interviews with the researcher. Please read this form and ask any questions before you decide whether to participate in the study.

Background Information

The study is designed to research Deaf interpreters' preference of receiving source text.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, the study requires approximately two days in total of your time at a location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. You will be asked to complete a consent form. If you decide to participate, you will sign this form, thereby providing your consent to participate in the study

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks to you from taking part in this study. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study; however, your participation will increase understanding about the quality of interpretations that Deaf interpreters can produce when working alone and/or working in a relationship with a hearing interpreter as feeding.

Confidentiality

If you agree to participate in this study, you are allowing your interview to be shared confidentially by the researcher and two supervisors. Your work will be uploaded and maintained on a secure server with password protection. Your work will be not be kept longer than 5 years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with any of the participating institutions, including Heriot-Watt University. If you decide to participate, but change your mind at any point during the taping session, you can withdraw from the study, including up to four weeks after completion of the videotaping session. If you withdraw under these conditions, your data will immediately be removed from the study. There are absolutely no consequences to withdrawing from the study.

Contacts and Questions

The ethical aspects of this study for the interviews in Scotland have been approved by the Heriot-Watt University School of Management & Languages Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through James Richards (j.richards@hw.ac.uk).

Statement of Consent

Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, you may withdraw from the study up to four weeks after completion.

I consent to participate in the study.

_____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix B Participants' background questionnaire

Deaf interpreters and translators' preferences for receiving source text during interpretation and translation work

Thank you for participating in the focus groups in Newcastle or London and/or the 1:1 interviews on webcam to discuss deaf interpreters and translators' preference for receiving source text during interpretation and translation work, which was recorded on video. The following questionnaire aims to collect background information about participants, in order to cross-reference with themes identified in the data. The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. When you have completed the questionnaire, please email it back to me at cc522@hw.ac.uk. Many thanks!

Participant background questionnaire

PARTICIPANT CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Name: 2. Gender: Male Female

3. Age: 4. Ethnicity:

5. City/town you grew up in: _____

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND USE

7. Please tick any of the following descriptions that apply to you:
   - Person from Deaf Family ☐ (Yes: go to Q.8, No: go straight to question 9)
   - Trainee interpreter ☐
   - Trainee translator ☐
   - Qualified interpreter / translator ☐
   - Qualified interpreter ☐
   - Qualified translator ☐

8. Who in your family is Deaf?
   - Mother ☐
   - Father ☐
   - Sibling ☐
   - Grandparent(s) ☐
   - Aunt/ Uncle ☐
   - Cousin(s) ☐

8a. Is your first language British Sign Language (BSL)? __ Yes __No

9. Rate your proficiency in BSL.
(0 = No proficiency, 1 = low proficiency, 5 = highly proficient/native-like)

1 2 3 4 5

10. Rate your proficiency in English (i.e., ability to speak and/or lipread English).

1 2 3 4 5

11. Rate your proficiency in written English.

1 2 3 4 5

EDUCATION

12. Which school did you go to?

☐ Deaf ☐ Mainstream ☐ Both

13. What is the highest general degree or educational qualification you hold?

_____
__

14. What interpreter/translation training course did you do?

_____
__

15. What interpreting/translation qualifications do you have?

_____
__

Researcher use only
Researcher name:
Date of interview:
Participant ID:

Appendix C Interview questions

Research Question:-

What are Deaf interpreters and translators' preferences for receiving source text during interpretation and translation work?

Auto-cue technology	Feeding interpreter
Equipment auto-cue as technology	Feeding interpreter as human
Preparation (work alone)	Preparation (two or more people) working in a team
Strategies:- What do DIs want from auto-cue technology? Relationship between DI and addressees via technology such as STTR (Speech-to-text reporting), Comprehension? Affirmations? Different modes of interpreting? Coping techniques?	Strategies:- What do DIs want from a HI? Relationship between the DI & HI? Comprehension –back channelling? Affirmations? Different modes of interpreting? Coping techniques?

DI – Deaf Interpreter
HI – Hearing Interpreter

Sub-questions:-

1. Do you prefer one of these methods? Why do you prefer one of these methods?

2. What are you doing? Reading or watching? Simultaneous or consecutive interpreting/ translation?

3. What are your interpreting/translation strategies? When using auto-cue technology and/or feeding interpreter?

4. What is the effectiveness of the different feeding approaches? E.g. DI work from STTR input and DI work with HI. Do you have a choice of HI to work with? What happens if you have never worked with them before?

5. What works well well and what does not work well?

6. Does the company, which purchases your services, give you the choice to use either a feeding interpreting or an autocue? Do they look for your co-worker or provide the auto-cue technology?