

**Strategies Used by Interpreters
to Mediate Communication for
Deaf Students in Tanzanian
Universities**

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies employed by sign language interpreters to mediate communication for deaf students in Tanzanian universities. Data for the study were generated through interviews and observations from twelve sign language interpreters from three universities in Tanzania. The data were analysed thematically and the analysis was informed by the Demand-Control Schema. The findings indicate that interpreters employ several strategies to enhance the accuracy of the information they render to deaf students. Strategies such as fingerspelling, nonce signs, initialism, preparation, and tandem interpreting favour interpreters and deaf students. Others, like mouthing and writing, benefit interpreters but compromise deaf students' access to communication. The findings further indicate that other strategies such as omission, the use of stories, and the taking of breaks enable deaf students to access communication but burden interpreters. We recommend that interpreters should consider the effect of their strategies before employing them in their rendition.

Keywords: *Sign language, Tanzanian Sign Language, interpreting, strategies, deaf students, communication*

Introduction

Using sign language interpreters to mediate communication for deaf students in Tanzanian universities has become a common practice owing to the increase in the enrolment of deaf students in universities. Statistics from the Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU) indicate that, for the past three years, the number of deaf students enrolled in different universities in the country has increased exponentially. For example, in the academic year 2021/2022, 138 deaf students were enrolled (TCU, 2022). This number almost doubled in 2022/2023

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when 213 deaf students were enrolled (TCU, 2023). This increase in the enrolment rate of deaf students is attributed to the recognition of Tanzanian Sign Language (TSL) as one of the languages that should be used in schools (URT, 2014), the adoption of inclusive education (URT, 2009), and the establishment of different accommodation services (such as sign language interpretation) to cater for the needs of deaf students in universities.

Although the professionalisation of sign language interpreting in education settings started in the 1950s in some parts of the world (Ball, 2013), in Tanzania, the field is still in its earliest stage of development. Literature shows that although the admission of the first deaf student to the university dates back to the 1990s, sign language interpreting service did not start until 2005/2006 when the first profound deaf student was admitted to the University of Dar es Salaam (Tungaraza, 2012). This was a hallmark in the inclusion of deaf students in universities. Years later, after the move by the University of Dar es Salaam, other universities started offering interpreting services to deaf students as well.

The primary role of interpreters is to facilitate communication between deaf students and hearing people (students and instructors) by clearly communicating what each individual says (Alkharji & Cheong, 2022; Caselli et al., 2020; Schick, 2007). This mediation is needed because, given the nature of their disability, deaf students cannot access direct communication (Lang, 2002) since they cannot understand spoken communication from hearing people (instructors and students) (Marchetti et al., 2012). Therefore, interpreters are considered to be the ears of deaf students in universities, and their role is to bridge communication between these students and their hearing counterparts (including instructors).

Given the importance of interpreters to deaf students' access to communication, it is recommended that interpreters working in universities should be highly qualified. Additionally, they should possess the necessary skills relevant to the university discourse (Napier, 2002). Some ideal qualifications for interpreters working in universities include a degree in educational sign language interpretation and a certificate from a recognised organisation as proof of knowledge related to interpreting in educational settings (Schick, 2007). Furthermore, Pirone et al. (2018) observe that interpreters should possess excellent language skills (both spoken and signed), intercultural competencies, and exhibit a high level of professionalism.

Due to the increase in the enrolment of deaf students and the high demand for interpreters in universities, there is a growing shortage of qualified sign language interpreters (Powell, 2013). To address this shortage, universities employ special education graduates majoring in hearing impairment to provide interpretation services to deaf students (Adade et al., 2022; Semunyu & Rushahu, 2023). Scholars generally agree that university interpreting differs from community interpreting (Powell, 2013; West Virginia Department of Education, 2016). Higher education setting is linguistically unique and is characterised by the presence of different degrees or fields of study and the use of

specialised vocabularies which might not have readily available signs for the interpreters or deaf students to use (Smith & Ogden, 2018; Woodall-Greene, 2021). In this regard, the standard practice is assigning interpreters based on their expertise, and one interpreter is assigned to interpret for one student (Winston, 2004). In addition, providing training and preparation materials is essential for empowering the interpreters to do their job effectively.

Literature has further shown that since deaf students have outnumbered the interpreters (Kisanga, 2019), the interpreters are assigned to interpret in courses in which they have no expertise, and they are not given materials for preparation (Majoro, 2021; Woodall-Greene, 2021) contrary to the requirement of interpreting. Worse still, one interpreter interprets for three or more students in class and works for one to three hours in a single class (Fobi, 2021; Lehloa, 2019). Therefore, this paper sought to examine the strategies employed by sign language interpreters in universities in Tanzania to cope with interpreting assignments and enhance deaf students' access to communication.

Methodology

This study was conducted in three universities in Tanzania, namely, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) (Mwalimu Nyerere Mlimani Campus), located in Dar es Salaam, Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE), located in Iringa and Archbishop Mihayo University College of Tabora (AMUCTA), situated in Tabora. These universities were purposely selected because they have full-time interpreters who provide interpreting services to deaf students. The data for this study were generated through interviews (including face-to-face, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews) and observations from a sample of twelve interpreters: three from UDSM (Mwalimu Nyerere Mlimani Campus), two from MUCE and seven from AMUCTA. All the interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, which was the interpreters' preferred mode of communication. The interviews were scheduled at the interpreters' convenience and were conducted in the Special Unit office(s) in the respective universities. All the interviews were conducted between June and December 2023. The interviews ranged between 14 minutes and one hour. During the interviews, the participants were asked about their educational background and experience in sign language interpreting, where the interpreters learned the language and the strategies they used to cope with the interpreting assignment. This helped identify the interpreters' strategies and the reasons behind their choice. In addition, a total of 10 observations were also conducted. During observation, we observed the setting (the venue), the instructors, deaf students, how interpreting is undertaken, and other factors contributing to the interpreters' choice of coping strategies.

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper was informed by Demand Control Schema propounded by Dean and Pollard (2013). The main assumption of the theory is that there is an interplay between the demands of interpreting and the control options that the interpreter is equipped with to cope with those demands. This means that if the interpreter has enough control options, it is likely that they can provide an accurate

rendition. In contrast, if the interpreter does not have enough control options, they might be unable to provide an accurate rendition. The theory also highlights that interpreters' control options can be exercised before the interpretation (pre-assignment controls), during the interpreting (assignment controls), or after the interpreting (post-assignment controls). Dean and Pollard (2013) further postulate that some of the control options employed by the interpreters are liberal, and others are conservative. Liberal controls involve a greater degree of action or overtness, while conservative controls are characterised by a lack of action or more reserved or prudent behaviour. The theory posits that if interpreters' controls are too liberal, they become unethical, thus considered ineffective, and may result in missing communicated information.

On the other hand, if their controls are too conservative, they may be ethical and practical. This means that some of the strategies interpreters employ help them cope with interpreting assignments, but they adversely affect deaf students' access to communication. Similarly, other strategies enhance interpreters' renditions and, in turn, enable deaf students to access communicated information. In this regard, the theory helped to identify the strategies that favour both the interpreters and deaf students and those that are beneficial for interpreters but affect deaf students' access to communication. The following section presents and discusses the study's findings.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results of interpreters' strategies to cope with the interpreting assignment. The findings are divided into three main themes: strategies that favour interpreters and deaf students, strategies that benefit interpreters but compromise deaf students' access to communication, and others that enhance deaf students' access to communication but burden the interpreters.

Strategies that Favour Interpreters and Deaf Students

This section discusses the strategies that favour interpreters in coping with interpreting assignments, increasing the accuracy of their rendition, and enhancing deaf students' access to communication. Verbatim extracts from interpreters support each of these strategies.

The Use of Fingerspelling

Fingerspelling involves using different handshapes to present letters of the alphabet and spell out different words (Hill et al., 2019). Fingerspelling is an essential skill that all interpreters are supposed to be equipped with. The findings indicate that all the 12 interpreters who participated in the study employed fingerspelling in their rendition. However, the contexts that prompted them to use this strategy differ, as is evident from the view of one interpreter in excerpt (1).

1. *Fingerspelling is used for words that do not have signs, such as jargon or words whose signs have not been formed, difficult words, or new words (SLI12, AMC).*

The opinions provided by SLI12 suggest that, given the infancy of TSL, there is a lexical gap in different fields. When interpreters encounter jargon, a new or difficult vocabulary, they fingerspell them to render the information. Additionally, interpreters fingerspell unfamiliar vocabulary in the fields they are interpreting. It should be noted that in universities, interpreters are assigned to interpret in different courses that deaf students take regardless of the interpreters' field of specialisation. Because of this, they encounter a lot of unfamiliar or specialised vocabulary that does not have equivalents in TSL. This prompts them to employ fingerspelling.

Napier (2005) posits that fingerspelling is an appropriate interpretation method in university lecture contexts. This is because, in addition to helping the interpreters to cope with unfamiliar or technical words, it also helps deaf students to learn new vocabulary (Schick 2014). The findings of this study concur with those of Nicodemus et al. (2017), who found that interpreters employ fingerspelling for technical terms and scientific vocabulary in academic settings or when unfamiliar with a particular sign. It can be argued that fingerspelling is an appropriate alternative to other strategies that may result in the loss or distortion of the communicated information. This strategy enhances interpreters' rendition and helps deaf students to access communication.

Creation of Nonce Signs

Nonce signs are ad hoc signs created on the spot to cover for signs the interpreters have forgotten or signs that do not exist. Interpreters create nonce signs because some lecture concepts lack signs in TSL. Due to this lexical gap, interpreters create nonce signs to cope with the lecture and provide accurate renditions.

Most of the nonce signs that interpreters create are developed based on the interpreters' creativity. Some of these signs are created through loan translation. This happens when the interpreters create a sign by literally interpreting the meaning of a concept from spoken language. During the interview, the interpreters highlighted some situations that prompted them to create nonce signs and the process involved in their creation. One of the interpreters explained:

- 2. We always create nonce signs. However, the sign that we create is not used in all classes. What we do is agree on the sign that we will use. You may find that the sign I use in my class is the same as that used by a second-year student taking the same course. Therefore, only these students will be familiar with that sign. In my class, we use the sign I-SIMU for ISIMU.² However, when we say that we'll fingerspell the word I-S-I-M-U, this word*

² ISIMU 'linguistics' is signed as I-SIMU. This means the interpreter use the letter I and the sign for SIMU 'phone', which is formed using a Y handshape with the thumb positioned near the ear and the little finger near the mouth to depict the shape of a phone.

becomes difficult. So, we use I-SIMU. We sign 4 ✓ if it is phonetics (SLI11, AMC).

The views of SLI11 in excerpt (2) suggest that nonce signs are created for temporary use and are limited to a particular class. The use of nonce signs was also evident during observation. In various lectures, the SLIs were seen creating nonce signs for concepts they were unfamiliar with or lacked signs in TSL. Examples of these nonce signs include KIARIFU ‘predicate,’ signed with a combination of K and the sign for AMBIA, ‘tell’; COMPASS, signed by combining C and the sign for DIRECTION; VODAFASTER, signed by fingerspelling the word VODA and then using a sign for HARAKA ‘faster.’ This strategy was found to be used when the TSL sign for the concept was available, but the interpreters forgot it. In this case, they create nonce signs to avoid fingerspelling the concept whenever they encounter it. It is important to note that once a nonce sign is created, it is formalised and used by interpreters to refer to that concept.

Nonetheless, these nonce signs are known by few people who work together, that is, only deaf students or interpreter(s) in that class and not in other classes. In other words, every interpreter creates a nonce sign for their students. Therefore, the same concept might have several nonce signs used by different interpreters and students. This strategy favours interpreters and deaf students because it reduces the level of omission to interpreters and helps deaf students access what the instructor is communicating. The findings of this study align with those of Semunyu and Rushahu (2023), who report that interpreters create signs when they encounter concepts that do not have signs.

The Use of Initialism

In this strategy, interpreters use the initials of a word to stand for a sign of a particular concept. The findings indicate that interpreters employ this strategy when they do not know the sign for a specific concept or want to avoid fingerspelling the entire word. Although it is common for interpreters to fingerspell unfamiliar words, sometimes they fail to do so because of the length of the word or when they do not know its correct spelling. Moreover, they avoid fingerspelling the word to save time. One interpreter remarked on the use of this strategy.

3. *Yes, if they are not first years, we’ll use initials. We use initials based on the experience of deaf students. If the word is ‘curriculum,’ we use C accompanied with mouthing. If it is ‘phonology,’ you sign FNL. We do not fingerspell all the time (SLI9, AMC).*

The interpreters’ remarks in excerpt (3) imply that they employ this strategy as an alternative to fingerspelling. Sometimes, the interpreters fail to fingerspell some words because they do not know how they are spelt. For this reason, they use the initials of a word accompanied by full-mouthing. The interpreters employ mouthing in this strategy because the same initial occasionally refers to different words. What is interesting about the use of this strategy is that it is used for deaf

students who are competent in sign language and are experienced in working with interpreters.

During observation, the interpreters used C for COMPASS, P for PREPOSITION, V for VARIABLES, E for EMPIRICAL, and TP for TEACHING PRACTICE. Additionally, interpreters use initialism to cope with the instructor's speaking pace. It was also found that most instructors are not used to working with interpreters in their classes. In this case, they speak very fast, which makes it difficult for interpreters to process information and retrieve signs. It is important to note that due to modality differences between sign language and spoken language, the amount of time it takes to produce and process information is different as well. Therefore, for the interpreters to produce accurate rendition, the instructor is supposed to speak moderately. If the instructor speaks too fast, it is difficult for the interpreters to follow and produce accurate signs for each concept. The interpreters' use of initialism enables them to cope with the instructor's speaking pace and to render the communicated information.

Preparation before the Interpreting Assignment

In sign language interpreting, interpreters must prepare themselves thoroughly before the assignment. They are supposed to know what the lecture will be about and obtain materials beforehand so they can go through them to look for signs they might not be familiar with. As pointed out earlier, since interpreters sometimes interpret outside their field of specialisation, it is paramount to prepare themselves beforehand so that they can produce accurate renditions.

During the interviews, the interpreters disclosed that although they do not always receive materials from the instructors, sometimes they prepare for the assignment. Regarding the preparation they usually do, one interpreter stated:

4. *First, if I know I have a session tomorrow, I always get to work very early. Secondly, I always prepare my mind for the assignment. I settle all the things to make sure that the assignment goes well. If you interpret when you are preoccupied, you cannot perform. You will never deliver anything, not because you don't know how, but because your mind is not there (SLI3, MNC).*

From the interpreters' explanation in excerpt (3), it can be argued that interpreters do three types of preparation before the interpreting assignment – mental, subject, and signs preparations. In mental preparation, interpreters prepare their state of mind and eliminate all psychological issues that might affect their composure during interpreting assignments. This indicates that interpreters know the effect of psychological noise on interpretation. Dean and Pollard (2013) argue that interpreters' ability to recognise and control their intrapersonal demand is the first step toward providing accurate rendition.

In the case of subject preparation, it was found that sometimes, the interpreters consult instructors and obtain lecture notes. This helps them know what will be

taught and prepare themselves with the vocabulary likely to be used. This enables them to provide accurate renditions to deaf students. In cases where they do not receive materials, they search the internet for anything related to the course to familiarise themselves with the content. Besides, the interpreters posited that they use a sign language dictionary to update themselves with the signs likely to be used in the course. This helps them reduce the omission rate and thus ensure that deaf students access what was communicated by the instructor.

Stressing the importance of preparation, the National Association of Interpreters in Education (2019) posits that prior preparation is essential in ensuring effective rendition, and for this to happen, interpreters should have access to lecture materials. Preparation helps interpreters to reduce the cognitive load of retrieving signs. In addition, Powell (2013) argues that interpreters can perform well when they have enough time for preparation. The author further posits that if preparation is done before the assignment, interpreters can cope with the demands that might appear during the interpreting assignment. This study's findings align with Fobi (2021), who found that interpreters prepare themselves before the assignment by going through the lecture handout to update themselves on the lecture content. This helps them to provide accurate rendition. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with those of Semunyu and Rushahu (2023), who also found that interpreters familiarise themselves with the content by consulting the internet. This helps them prepare and practise the signs likely to be used in the lecture and thus enhance their rendition. Following these revelations, it is arguable that preparation is crucial for interpreters and deaf students as it enables interpreters to provide accurate renditions and helps deaf students access what the instructor communicates.

The Use of Tandem Interpreting

Tandem interpreting occurs when two or more interpreters work together on the same assignment. In this arrangement, interpreters work in turns. Each turn may take 15 to 30 minutes or more based on the length of the assignment, the agreement between interpreters, or the complexity of the assignment. In this strategy, when one interpreter is active, the other is passive and provides ongoing support. The findings indicate that although this strategy is rarely used, it is commonly employed in lectures lasting two or more hours. However, when other interpreters are free, they interpret in tandem, even in one-hour-long sessions. Therefore, for a one-hour session, the interpreters take turns every 30 minutes, as one of the interpreters explained:

5. *For now, because we are two, what we do is, if the sessions do not collide, we attend one session together. When we attend the session together, we interpret in turns; I interpret for 30 minutes, and he interprets for 30 minutes. It means you get time to rest (SLI5, MKC).*

The interpreters' views in excerpt (5) indicate that this strategy helps them have time to rest and refresh their minds. It also enables them to regain their energy

and provide accurate rendition. In light of this argument, Woodall-Greene (2021) argues that tandem interpreting reduces fatigue and allows interpreters to interpret for a longer time than when they are working solo. It also ensures the accuracy of information rendered and provides full access to deaf students.

Two things are noteworthy. The first is on the duration of turn-taking, and the second is on how tandem interpreting is conducted. In the former, it was found that there is no specified time for turn-taking in the first university, while in the second university, turn-taking takes place after every hour. In this university, interpreters rarely work in tandem for lectures lasting for one hour. Occasionally, they interpret in tandem in lectures lasting for two or three hours. In the latter, it was found that how tandem interpreting is conducted is rather unusual. The common practice is for both interpreters to sit together in the classroom to provide ongoing support. However, this rarely happened in the two universities. It was observed that, in most cases, when one interpreter was in the classroom providing the service, the other interpreter was away (either in the vicinity of the class or sometimes in their offices) waiting to be notified (by their fellow interpreter via text a message) when it is their turn to interpret.

This study's findings partly concur with Fobi's (2021) findings on tandem interpreting. Fobi reports that interpreters use tandem interpreting to cope with stress emanating from a long duration of interpretation. This was also found to be the case in the current study. On the other hand, the current study's findings partly contradict those of Fobi (2021). In this case, the author stipulates that active interpreters always seek assistance from their fellow interpreters once they encounter unfamiliar vocabularies during interpreting. However, this was not the case in the current study because interpreters often do not sit together in the classroom during interpretation. Generally, it can be argued that regardless of how tandem interpreting is conducted, it reduces the interpreters' burden and enables them to do their work effectively.

In summary, the findings have shown that using fingerspelling, nonce signs, initialism, preparation, and tandem interpreting helps interpreters cope with unfamiliar vocabulary, jargon, and complex words. In turn, this enhanced the accuracy of their renditions and deaf students' access to communication.

Strategies that Benefit Deaf Students but Burden Interpreters

This section discusses the strategies that enhanced deaf students' access to the communicated information. Although these strategies are advantageous to deaf students, they burden the interpreters because sometimes they make them overstep their boundaries to ensure that deaf students access accurate information.

The Use of Writing

In sign language interpretation, the primary role of the interpreter is to interpret everything the instructors communicate. However, during the interviews, the interpreters disclosed that sometimes they stop interpreting so that they can write for deaf students as well. The findings indicate that in

classes where interpreters work in tandem, the passive interpreter writes for the deaf student. Nevertheless, the same interpreter must write for the student for lectures with one interpreter. Although this strategy seems to be unusual, when interpreters were asked about the motives behind the use of writing, one of them commented:

6. *A student fails to understand a particular concept, and they ask, 'What does it mean?' You clarify again. The meaning of this sign is this: you fingerspell. If they fail to grasp what you've fingerspelled, you take their exercise book and write for them (SLI5, MKC).*

The interpreters' response in excerpt (6) indicates that writing is commonly used to aid deaf students in understanding signs that they are unfamiliar with or concepts that interpreters have fingerspelled. If the students failed to grasp them, probably due to the interpreters' pace of fingerspelling, the interpreters write. The students read them and look for their meaning. The findings also indicate that writing helps interpreters to cope with complex vocabulary.

Besides, it helps them cope with unfamiliar vocabulary and is used as an alternative to fingerspelling. In addition, this strategy helps deaf students to learn signs they were unfamiliar with. Despite the usefulness of this strategy to deaf students' access to communication, it burdens the interpreters because sometimes they find themselves doing the job meant to be done by other people, such as note-takers. It was observed that interpreters at AMUCTA commonly used writing since the university does not provide note-takers to deaf students. In this regard, the interpreters assume the role of note-takers as well.

The Use of Mouthing

Mouthing is the voiceless articulation of words by the signers when signing a particular sign. Mouthing occurs concurrently with the sign being signed, and it resembles the articulation of spoken words. Mouthing is part of some signs, including homonyms in sign language. However, during observations, it was noted that interpreters used full mouthing by articulating every word the instructor said; that is, they spoke as they signed. When interpreters were asked about the motives behind the use of mouthing, one of them said:

7. *In most cases, those who are not competent in signs can lip-read. So, when you are interpreting, you use mouthing so that they can get the message (SLI8, AMC).*

The excerpt in (7) shows that mouthing is employed to help deaf students understand what the instructor is saying. However, one of the interesting things about this strategy is that there were disparities among interpreters on the language they used during mouthing. Some mouthed in English, while others do it in Kiswahili, regardless of the instructors' language. Bank et al. (2016) posit that mouthing should be done following the spoken language of the hearing community, which surrounds the deaf community. Nevertheless, it can be argued

that interpreters' use of either mouthing is influenced by students' language competence and/or preference or the influence of the first language. Research indicates that most deaf students are not competent in sign language because most are born in hearing families where sign language is not the means of communication, while others become deaf later in life (Rowley, 2018). For these reasons, they are exposed to sign language late. Consequently, they have a weak language background and rely on lip-reading and signs. This also prompts the interpreter to use Kiswahili mouthing to assist them in lip-reading. According to Proctor and Cormier (2023), mouthing may help a signer unfamiliar with a particular sign understand it. Despite the usefulness of this strategy to deaf students' access to communication, it slows down the pace of interpreting because the interpreter interprets each word. Furthermore, it changes the style of interpreting into transliteration.

Strategies that Favour Interpreters but Affect Deaf Students

This section discusses strategies that favour interpreters in their rendition but affect deaf students' access to communicated information. Verbatim extracts from interpreters complement each of these strategies.

Omission

Omission happens when the interpreter consciously or unconsciously leaves aside some of the communicated information. Although the interpreters' role is to relay all information communicated by the instructor, it was found that sometimes they skip some of the information. This strategy was employed when the interpreters were unfamiliar with the presented information or did not hear what was said. It was also used when the interpreters could not catch up with the instructors' speaking pace or when they believed the information communicated was unimportant. During the interview, the interpreters disclosed that they use omission strategically to render important information only. In this case, one of the interpreters remarked:

8. *You listen and decide, of all the things that were said, what was important. You interpret the point that you think is important. You ignore the rest because they might be useless to a deaf person (SLI1, MNC).*

The interpreters' responses indicate that they omit information that they consider unnecessary or unimportant to deaf students. They believe that deaf students do not want detailed information; instead, they want them to relay only important information. In this case, interpreters filter only information they consider vital to deaf students. However, it is unclear how interpreters can determine unimportant information, given that they interpret in fields they have no expertise. This suggests that sometimes they omit information that is important to deaf students.

Besides interview data, omissions were noted during observation in all the lectures. This ranges from omitting a single word to a large chunk of information. For example, in one lecture, the interpreter was seen omitting

words such as SPICES, ZINGI EMPIRE, PLAUGH, MORPHOSYNTAX, PROCASTINATION, PESTLE RUBBER, and ROMANIA. In another instance, the interpreter omitted the lecturer's joke about WANYALUKOLO. As pointed out earlier, interpreters often interpret outside their field of specialisation and sometimes without prior preparation. For this reason, they encounter a lot of unfamiliar terms, and because they do not know their signs, they decide to omit them.

The findings of this study align with Heyerick (2021), who found that interpreters omit information when the instructor communicates too much information, when the instructor is too speedy, when the material presented is too complex, or when the instructor repeats information. In this case, omission helps them to produce a clear and comprehensive interpretation. It is worth noting that although omission helps the interpreters cope with the interpreting assignment, it also compromises deaf students' access to communication because sometimes interpreters omit vital information.

The Use of Stories

One of the codes of conduct of interpreting is that interpreters are expected to interpret everything that the speaker says and refrain from offering personal opinions or adding any information that the speaker did not communicate. However, during the interviews, the interpreters disclosed that sometimes they deviate from the interpreting assignment and start having conversations or stories with deaf students. This was also evident in several lectures observed. In the lectures, interpreters occasionally signed what the lecturer did not communicate. The observation further revealed that interpreters were not interpreting what the lecturer was saying; instead, they were in the middle of a personal conversation with a deaf student. Although this seems unusual and against the codes of conduct of interpreting, interpreters argue that they use this strategically. This is evident in the views of SLI9, who said:

9. *Sometimes, the deaf cannot follow because they are tired. They can no longer pay attention to the lecture and interpreting. Therefore, as an interpreter, you have to deviate from what the teacher is teaching and use stories or anything that will not tire them more. After that, you continue interpreting what the teacher is saying (SLI9, AMC).*

Excerpt (9) indicates that interpreters employ a storytelling strategy to help deaf students refresh their minds due to tiredness. It is important to note that due to the modality of sign language (visual-gestural), deaf students rely on vision to understand what is communicated. In this case, they cannot maintain focus for a long time. They need to have frequent breaks so they can follow smoothly. However, because most instructors are unaware of this, they lecture continuously without allowing interpreters and deaf students to rest. This makes it difficult for the students to remain focused due to exhaustion. To relieve these students from exhaustion, interpreters devised ingenious strategies for narrating stories or cracking jokes in the middle of interpretation.

Despite the effectiveness of this strategy, it has adverse effects on deaf students' access to communication. This is because the stories used do not relate to the topic being lectured, and the lecturer is usually unaware; hence, they keep lecturing. As a result, due to a lack of communication between the interpreter, deaf student, and course instructor, the student misses vital information.

Taking Breaks

Sign language interpreting is demanding physically and mentally. The interpreters spend a lot of energy due to the manual nature of the language. In addition, rendering information between languages of different modalities is mentally exhausting and draining. For these reasons, interpreters are supposed to work in tandem or take frequent breaks. The findings of this study indicate that due to the shortage of interpreters, in most cases, they do not work in tandem. Also, the instructors do not give interpreters time for a break, and they do not observe lag time. As a result, interpreters do not have enough time to process information or rest. In this regard, they give themselves a break, even amidst the lecture and interpreting assignments. This was pointed out by one of the interpreters who said:

10. *I keep interpreting until I'm exhausted. It is now the agreement between you and your student; let's rest for these ten minutes. But as the interpreter, I must notify the lecturer that I'm taking a little rest if you can bear with me a little. But that rarely happens. Most lecturers don't pay much attention to this (SLI3, MNC).*

The excerpt in (10) indicates that breaks should happen after the agreement between the interpreter, the deaf student, and the instructor. However, it was found that, often, the instructors do not give interpreters time to rest. Even when interpreters decide to break, the instructors continue with the lecture. Taking breaks during the interpreting assignment was also observed in some lectures. In one instance, the interpreter left the venue, leaving the deaf student with no one to provide the service. The interpreter came back after five minutes. The interpreter delineated that he did so because he was tired. Therefore, getting out of the class helped him stretch and regain his energy. Although this strategy seems to work in favour of the interpreters, it compromises deaf students' access to communication. This is because when the interpreter is resting, the lecturer continues with the lecture, and there is no one to mediate communication for deaf students. Consequently, deaf students miss information communicated by instructors.

Generally, using these strategies seems to favour interpreters more than deaf students. However, they do not add value to deaf students' access to communication. Instead, they cause these students to miss much of the information communicated.

Conclusion

This study has presented and discussed interpreters' strategies to mediate communication for deaf students. The findings have indicated that interpreters are crucial in mediating communication for deaf students. Nevertheless, they encounter various challenges, including a lack of specialisation and preparation, and a long duration of interpreting. However, the interpreters developed various strategies to cope with the challenges and enhance their rendition. The choice of strategies is influenced by various factors, such as interpreters' ingenuity, students' language competence, instructors' speaking pace, duration of interpreting, and lack of specialisation. Although some coping strategies were ingenious, some compromised deaf students' access to communication. Strategies such as preparation, fingerspelling, creation of nonce signs, and tandem interpreting seemed to help the interpreters cope with assignments and enhance deaf students' access to communication, whereas taking breaks, omission, and use of stories benefited the interpreter but compromised deaf students' access to communication.

On the other hand, strategies like writing and mouthing help deaf students access a substantial amount of communicated information but burdened interpreters. This means that not all strategies can benefit interpreters and deaf students. Therefore, interpreters should consider the effect of their strategies before they decide to use them.

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