

A Bilingual, Bicultural Interpreter and Researcher Navigates Blurry Boundaries
and Intersectionality

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved April 2011 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2011

ABSTRACT

A researcher reflects using a close reading of interview transcripts and description to share what happened while participating in multiple roles in a larger ethnographic study of the acculturation process of deaf students in kindergarten classrooms in three countries. The course of this paper will focus on three instances that took place in Japan and America. The analysis of these examples will bring to light the concept of taking on multiple roles, including graduate research assistant, interpreter, cultural mediator, and sociolinguistic consultant within a research project serving to uncover challenging personal and professional dilemmas and crossing boundaries; the dual roles, interpreter and researcher being the primary focus. This analysis results in a brief look at a thought provoking, yet evolving task of the researcher/interpreter. Maintaining multiple roles in the study the researcher is able to potentially identify and contribute “hidden” knowledge that may have been overlooked by other members of the research team. Balancing these different roles become key implications when interpreting practice, ethical boundaries, and participant research at times the lines of separation are blurred.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support and insight from my thesis chair and committee during the process of writing these reflections. They worked to share perspectives serving me to view my work with an etic eye, stepping beyond my raw starting place. I am thankful too to my research colleagues in this project. Your willingness to let me look at and share our team's inner communications and our practice of discourse will change the face of cross cultural/linguistic research approaches making it possible for Deaf and Hearing to be more willing to collaborate. The support of Spencer Foundation grant monies is making this ground breaking type of work in the field of Deaf Education possible, and I am humbled to be a part of the study. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my husband and daughter for their patience listening to readings of scholars and multiple drafts throughout my process of self-analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Intersectionality: In-Between in Different Ways	3
2 ROLES: INTERPRETER AS ETHNOGRAPHER	9
Positionality and Ethical Considerations of Both Roles	12
3 METHOD	14
Figure 1	15
Interpretation Processes	16
Figure 2	19
Cultural Bound Meanings and Language	24
4 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND THE NEED FOR REFLEXIVITY	26
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIX	32

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As a hearing child of two culturally Deaf¹ parents (CODA), my childhood was bilingual and bicultural. My home community shared the majority language of American Sign Language, and cultural practices of the Deaf; outsiders to this were the mainstream English speaking, American population that share an unspecified Hearing culture. This personal experience impacts my role as a researcher, allowing me to occupy an in-between space in our ethnographic study of deaf early childhood education. I bring to this study not only my bilingualism and interpretation skills, but also what LeVine (1973) has described as a bicultural perspective and knowledge that can be a powerful tool in ethnographic research. I am also a professional American Sign Language/English interpreter whose interest in deaf children's acquisition of language and culture has led me to combine the profession of being an interpreter with graduate studies in educational anthropology. Combining the responsibilities of interpreter and researcher, in the study I have taken on the roles of language facilitator, cultural mediator, and sociolinguistic consultant.

In this thesis I describe and analyze events during the research process in which I used my bi-cultural knowledge, in-between positionality as a hearing

¹ The concept 'culturally deaf' is used here to describe members of a linguistic minority community; one that identifies membership by a shared sign language, educational experience, and barriers to the American mainstream culture (Croneberg, 1965). "D"eaf is used as an identifier of a cultural position, rather than a physiological status, which would be referred as "d"eaf (Woodward & Erting, 1975).

child of Deaf parents and as an interpreter that sometimes acts as an ethnographer, and interpretation skills to mediate interactions between deaf and hearing researchers and informants (Hensley, 2010).

In the field of professional sign language interpreting an interpreter generally presents clients with the end product of her work, but not the process the interpreter used to get there. The process of interpretation I am using in the study is different as it is an open-process approach used to facilitate meaning making by discreetly using input from all parties involved, minus the interpreter's personal perspective. This is a form of professional practice that Goffman, in his distinction of "front stage" and "back stage" work, describes as "idealization": "In those interactions where the individual presents a product to others, he will tend to show them only the end product, and they will be led into judging him on the basis of something that has been finished, polished, and packaged." (Goffman, p. 52). In our ethnographic study I have taken open-process interpreting a step further by sharing with the researchers for whom I interpret more of the "back stage" or, to use another Goffman phrase, the "dirty" work of interpretation. I also at times provide discursive input to further inform the meaning making process.

My multiple roles in the study add more layers to the study's "multivocal" approach, which uses a video cue of a day in a preschool to elicit perspectives of a variety of informants (Tobin et al, 1999; 2009). This thesis provides a unique glimpse at how an open-process, multivocal approach to interpretation, where the interpreter plays an intentionally active role as a cultural mediator and meaning maker, can function in scholarly research. I also compare what is gained and lost

with this approach compared to other approaches to interpretation used in ethnographic research and the challenges of balancing language, culture, and traditional versus non-traditional² interpreting approaches in research in deaf culture.

My dual roles as interpreter and ethnographer on this project brings with them varying degrees of insider/outsiderness to both deaf and hearing cultures causing me to reside in-between the two. During times in the research when my interpreter position is foregrounded, I am more inside Deaf culture, as I am using my language and cultural knowledge of both the informant and the researcher. However, my role as an ethnographer pulls me further outside, or into the mainstream hearing culture, as I am neither an expert nor native to the culture of research. The research team also holds various degrees of insider and outsider status. I find myself centered between the extremes, floating somewhere in-between. As Arzubiaga et al (2008) write, “Recruiting insiders [to participate in conducting research] is based on the assumption that culture is cohesive” (p. 318). I bring to the study and the task of interpretation *my* understanding of Deaf culture, an understanding which is not identical to that of an insider.

Intersectionality: In-Between in Different Ways

My involvement in this ethnographic study initially was limited to the role of the project interpreter. I was hired as a professional American Sign

² Traditionally the interpreter maintains a functional role to transmit one message in one language into another language impartially with the least possible personal interference. Nontraditional processes of interpreting may involve a meta-analysis making internal processes more external.

Language/English Interpreter to interpret³ in the early stages of this ethnographic study in schools for the Deaf. The project is a study of how children learn to be members of Deaf culture in Deaf Kindergartens in France, Japan, and the United States. There is not a single Deaf culture – there are many. The study may eventually expand to include Deaf cultures in other countries. The conceptual framework posits Deaf culture as nested within the larger national cultures and also as intersecting identities. Deaf culture in the US is in ways both like and unlike Deaf culture in Japan. The study, which is funded by the Spencer Foundation, is in the first of three years of research.

In the field of professional sign language interpreting maintaining dual roles while interpreting is strongly discouraged because of the danger of role confusion between roles such as teacher/interpreter, relative/interpreter, or as in the case of this paper, researcher/interpreter. Early in this study it became clear that the multiple roles I occupied presented potential conflicts that could negatively impact the study, but could also, if acknowledged and handled artfully, have the potential to enrich the study. Temple (2002) argues that it is important to view interpretation not as a linear, straightforward sequence of translating, but rather as a social process, an exchange and unfolding, and as a negotiated and co-constructed discourse.

³ For the purpose of this paper, the term ‘interpret’ is used to describe taking one language and giving its linguistic, cultural equivalence in another language in person versus ‘translate’ which is done in writing and can be done previously with drafts and editing.

The research team in this study initially consisted of a (hearing) expert in the field of early-childhood education and of Japanese preschools (Joseph Tobin), and an (oral deaf) educator of education (Joseph Valente). As a master's student as well as an experienced interpreter who had interpreted many graduate courses, including some on research methods, I had the feeling from the time I was invited to interpret for the project that sharing my insider knowledge gained from growing up surrounded by a Deaf community could potentially benefit the research. As I struggled to define my position as an interpreter in this study two additional scholars joined the research team: a (Deaf) professor at Gallaudet University (Thomas Horejes), with expertise in Sociology and Deaf Studies, and a (Deaf) graduate student in early-childhood education (Patrick Graham), with experience as a kindergarten teacher of deaf children. As the team grew and the project became more ambitious, my intellectual interest grew as well and I decided to step down from my initial role as a hired professional interpreter. My role then became redefined as a member of the research team who also interpreted, when needed. This delineation between the roles of interpreter and researcher is not always clear or easy to maintain.

In this study, the research team members occupy various positions that can be placed along a continuum ranging from insiders to outsiders of Deaf culture. The team members hold different perspectives on deafness, Deaf culture, and deaf language issues. While some members of the research team share the culture of deafness with the informants, other members of the team share knowledge of educational practices the informants have experienced and/or teach. These varied

positions allows for emic perspectives to inform the etic and vice versa, with insiders and outsiders seeing different things in Deaf schools and asking different questions of Deaf informants. I maintain a position of an 'in-between' member of this ethnographic team. I am in-between the roles of interpreter and researcher, and in-between cultures of Deaf and the majority population, Hearing.

Born in a mixed deaf and hearing family I grew up surrounded by both Deaf and mainstream (hearing) worlds, each with separate languages and cultural practices and norms. However, I did not know there was such thing as Hearing and Deaf until I was taught that these differences existed. I, along with the other hearing members of my family, do not fully share a Deaf identity with our Deaf family members because we can hear. I refrain from identifying myself as Deaf, however I grew up as insider to the Deaf community. As Mudgett-DeCaro writes: "I may be Deaf in many ways, but I am not deaf" (1996, p.283). And yet, having grown up in a Deaf family using sign language before using a spoken language I am not fully a member of hearing culture. For example, like my Deaf relatives, I prefer to have eye contact with the people I converse with; ASL is my preferred mode of communication; and I carry awareness of having been born into a culture of which I could never be a full member but of also coming to mainstream hearing culture as a sort of immigrant. Patricia Mudgett-DeCaro (1996) uses the concept of marginality as a figurative space between the Hearing and the Deaf community; bicultural-bilingual individuals (like me) sometimes have a well-developed understanding of two communities, while maintaining a complicated membership status in both (p. 283).

Beyond hearing versus not-hearing and signing versus not signing, there are deeper cultural differences between the Deaf and hearing worlds, differences that members of both cultures often are not fully aware of. Like the children in our study, I learned to sign before I learned the language of the mainstream population, or more simply, before I learned to speak. Like the adult Deaf members of the research team I learned what it means to be (culturally) Deaf from the deaf community. The difference lies in the source of the cultural transmission; unlike the Deaf members in the team, who grew up with hearing parents, I learned about the Deaf community in the home from my parents. My interactions growing up with the larger Deaf community further reinforced these customs of communicating in sign and functioning appropriately, according to the customs of Deaf culture⁴.

Preston (1994) analyzes the process of cultural transmission from deaf parents to their hearing children and the unique identity position this gives to the child. The hearing children of deaf parents are “in-between” cultures. Padden & Humphries (1988) describe this unique predicament by saying, “Hearing children of Deaf parents represent an ongoing contradiction in the culture: they display the knowledge of their parents – skill in the language and social conduct – but the culture finds subtle ways to give them an unusual and separate status” (p.3). This separate status can sometimes be stigmatizing, and as a result I learned how to be hearing from outsiders to my family in order to perform “hearing” when I needed

⁴ The Deaf community includes Deaf individuals and their families, hearing and deaf, that identifies with, and/or agrees with the concept of a larger Deaf culture.

to do so. Reactions from those outside to my family's deafness indicated a need to anticipate, what Goffman (1963) calls, "normative expectations" (p.2).

I learned as a child to acknowledge the differences between the 'hearing' and 'Deaf' cultural and linguistic worlds and to "code switch" between the two languages and cultures. However different these cultures, the concepts "Deaf" and "Hearing" are intertwined and interdependent (Preston, 1994). As this project develops further I am finding the boundaries of Hearing and Deaf to be less clearly defined, much like the blurriness I am finding in my role as project interpreter/researcher. Like Preston (1994), I am interested in "what happens when cultures collide" (p.9).

Chapter 2

ROLES: INTERPRETER AS ETHNOGRAPHER

In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski (1922) defines the ethnographic method as an outsider to a culture using first hand observations and interviews with insiders mixed with interpretations. The ethnographer acts as a culture's chronicler and explicator. The ethnographer's responsibility is to report and explain the beliefs and a practice of insiders in their own terms, from their own (emic) perspectives, for it is the native informants who are the true authorities on their culture. Much of the work of ethnography involves translation of emic terms and categories into the terms and categories of the anthropologist and his or her audience back home.

Like an ethnographer, an interpreter studies an event that involves discourse. And both must consider cultural beliefs and practices, positionalities, and language norms. According to the Professional Standards Committee for Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2007), a professional interpreter "makes communication possible between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear." A good interpreter's interpretations in both directions are informed by and incorporate cultural information. This notion of incorporating cultural information is only mentioned briefly in this Standard Practice Paper, but it is a key practice of skilled interpreters. Coursework regarding not just ASL but also the norms and beliefs of Deaf Culture is required in most interpreter preparation programs.

Finally, the interpreter and ethnographer both must consider the nuances of the words being used and the different meanings these words carry and the consequent potential for mistranslation and as a result misunderstanding. Translations and interpretations of words and concepts done by native versus non-native users of the spoken and signed languages can have huge impact on the research findings. In many studies lay interpreters or bilinguals lacking professional training do translation and interpretation. Researchers aware of the limitations of such approaches realize the need for back translation of the original translations, or for the use of teams of interpreters (Jentsch, 1998; Esposito, 2001). But there has been very little published in scholarly journals on the value of employing the services of a professional interpreter.

In many ways the role of the interpreter mirrors that of the ethnographer, however this is not explicitly so. Professional interpreters are expected, and trained, to maintain a level of separation and anonymity that makes them least intrusive to the communication setting. Any sort of direct participation is discouraged outside of anything deemed necessary for facilitation of communication. The ethnographer is concerned with understanding in the moment of research to better share the voice of the informant to others at a later time through presentation or publishing; the interpreter is more concerned with the discourse that takes place in the period in which they are hired, long term implications of interpretation is a concern that has recently been brought to light in the field of professional interpreting. A significant difference between the two roles is how they enter these roles: the interpreter serves a function and specific

role that is needed to support communication, the other parties involved do not always have a choice that the interpreter is present; whereas the ethnographer has gained permission of those involved and there is choice to allow the researcher to gain access and entry into this insider view of people's lives for that moment.

In our study I began in the role of professional interpreter but then decided, in consultation with the project principal investigators, to combine the roles of interpreter and research team member. Part of my motivation for making this shift was that I found myself having too many insights and opinions to stay in the role of the neutral professional interpreter. I found myself feeling more kinship with the graduate students on the project who brought their own interests in the study, understood the central research questions and the logic of the researcher's methods, and shared a sense of rapport and camaraderie with the PIs that resulted in a comfortable exchange of ideas and input after interviews with informants. This did not happen all at once; rather, I gradually became a member of the research team and when I realized that my role had shifted, I had to figure out how to balance being a researcher on the project with following the standards of professional interpretation.

While the majority of my time on this project is spent either interpreting or acting as a researcher, my participation as the researcher does not happen easily. As I interpret I often find myself frustrated by being unable to participate and engage with informants. Balancing my participation has been a difficult experience throughout the project. As the team meets to discuss method, conduct interviews, and decide general logistics I act as the interpreter; this can result in

long meetings I interpret and am only able to add my minimal input when there is a lull in discussion, or I interrupt others to share my perspectives. My lack of personal involvement in these discussions leads to losing my voice on the team. A reassurance for me is that the group is seeking ways to find balance of my dual roles and recognize the language and culture challenges that we face.

Positionality and Ethical Considerations of Both Roles

As an ethnographer, I am bound by the standards set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my university. As a professional interpreter, as a protection of my consumers, the Code of Professional Conduct established by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf both guides and binds me. In both roles, both as interpreter and ethnographer, I am required to do no harm and to keep consumers/participants fully informed. My constant dilemma is balancing my dual roles. Special consideration is required to balance the dual roles as an interpreter and researcher. This led me to step down from the role of a paid professional interpreter hired by the team. I was becoming increasingly aware of the potential for my becoming active in the research to compromise my position as a neutral interpreter while at the same time too firm an adherence to the usual codes of professional interpretation would inhibit my ability to function in this project as an ethnographer. One solution I use is to refrain from asking questions while I am interpreting, and then, when the formal interview is over to ask questions of my own of the informant and then later to offer my own perspectives on the interview to the rest of the research team members. These post-interview

discussions sometimes happen immediately after interviews with informants; when this is not possible I make notes of issues to bring up later.

The positionalities and stations of the people involved in the research need to be considered by both ethnographer and interpreter because human interactions, relationships, and power can significantly impact discourse and information sharing. Deaf individuals are a minority, linguistically and culturally. They are a group that has been oppressed historically⁵. This oppression of deaf individuals by the mainstream society needs to be foregrounded in the minds of both the interpreters and the researchers in the studies of deaf culture.

Just as a researcher does not want to enter a project projecting the image of the oppressor, the interpreter also aims to act as an ally to the deaf individual despite the glaring characteristic that makes the interpreter like the oppressor, has the ability to hear, and possibly control information. In order to practice research in a meaningful way to the informants and to my research team I incorporate dialogue and analysis of discourse throughout my research involvement to gain trust and make my intent transparent.

⁵ Deaf peoples are still an oppressed group that relies on the Americans with Disabilities Act to safeguard rights of equality.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Using close reading of interview transcripts from two interviews and reflection I analyze three examples from the project to expand the notion of possible complexities and implications in using interpreters in research. In doing so I am pulling back the curtain on the process of interpreting, and describing and reflecting on the decision making process I went through during these challenging interpreting situations. Two of the three examples chosen involve four languages and three interpreters, adding to the complexity of the levels of discourse and analysis.

Following Geertz's (2003) model of ethnography as "thick description," and cultural interpretation, I combine a presentation of what happened in these interactions between researchers, informants, and interpreters, with my thinking process at the time of the interactions, and with my post-hoc reflections now on these events. The data I draw on is both video recordings of these events, notes I made at the time, and the notes I made while reviewing the videos. As Geertz points out, data collection: is not a "rote act" but rather "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render." (Geertz, 2003, p. 150).

Early in the study two members of the research team, Joseph Tobin and Joseph Valente, interviewed a Deaf informant (Patrick Graham, who was then a kindergarten teacher and who later joined the research team) while I functioned as

the ASL interpreter. In this segment the informant was watching a video prompt. Periodically the informant and/or the ethnographers interrupted the video with questions, or comments about what was shown on the video. Positioned between the researchers and the informant, I ‘ping-ponged’ back and forth between watching the monitor so I would know the context of the questions and answers and watching the interviewees and informant. At one point, one of the ethnographers made a comment and as I began to interpret this comment to the informant, he moved to remove the external receiver to the Cochlear Implant that was fastened to his head, behind his left ear as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1

After the interview I reflected on Patrick’s action. My first thought was that this action of Patrick was culturally significant, and that it suggested a

confidence in the accuracy of my translation of his ASL. I also considered that it could be an act of defiance, a gesture of shutting out auditory information. I learned later that there was another, less profound explanation for his removing the implant. Patrick told me later that he removed it at this point in the interview because the battery had died. By asking Patrick afterwards I was able to uncover the meaning of this action. But this leaves the question of why I as the interpreter first saw great significance in a gesture that turned out to have no profound meaning. Looking back on my evolution in this project from interpreter to interpreter/researcher, I would say that I was eager to identify culturally significant actions, which I could explain to the research team using my bicultural understandings. In other words, I was at the early point in my involvement in this project already beginning to function like a researcher in an ethnographic study and not only as an interpreter.

Interpretation Processes

As this research project has developed, I have found that the complexity of the language and cultural issues we are dealing with has grown. One example is the first interviewing session I interpreted between the US researchers and two Japanese teachers in a deaf school in Tokyo. During this interview conducted by the two Deaf signing members of our team with two Deaf signing Japanese preschool teachers we had videotaped, I performed the role of the American Sign Language/English (ASL/English) interpreter, teaming with a Japanese interpreter who primarily interpreted from my spoken English to spoken Japanese (and the reverse) and another interpreter who interpreted from spoken Japanese to

Japanese Sign Language (JSL) and back⁶. At one point in the interview I awkwardly stepped out of my role to provide an ad hoc meta-analysis of the difficulty I was having interpreting a question asked by a Deaf US team member. I did this by momentarily stopping interpreting and having a side-bar with the other interpreters; I described to them the difficult concepts that I had just been asked by the US team members to interpret from ASL to spoken English, and I asked if there were similar concepts in Japanese Sign Language (JSL). This brief exchange seemed to serve to show all parties involved the complexity of the simple conversation that the small group was attempting.

In this interview my Japanese counterparts used a method of consecutive interpreting⁷, whereas I maintained a simultaneous process of interpreting. Further, the two JSL interpreters served different functions in this specific interview; primarily one interpreter interpreted between Japanese and English, and the other interpreted between JSL and Japanese. Consecutive interpreting is more commonly used when two spoken languages are being interpreted, as it is difficult to manage the languages simultaneously. Interpreter and Interpreter Educator, Debra Russell (2005), argues that consecutive interpreting is often not used in the US and Canada because of fears of inaccuracy. Further, she says, “despite the significant body of literature from spoken language interpreting

⁶ Sign Language is not universal; however there is Gestuno, or International Sign that is not formally recognized as a language, but more a pidgin form of gesture.

⁷ Consecutive Interpreting is a turn taking method of interpreting where chunks of information is retained, processed internally, and then interpreted into the target language after the interpreter has momentarily stopped receiving the source message.

which suggests that consecutive interpreting allows for a greater degree of accuracy, the predominant practice of ASL-English interpreters has been to provide simultaneous interpretation” (p. 161). Ideally consecutive interpretation is recommended for smaller group interactions and it is seen as a more accurate mode of interpreting as it theoretically allows for comprehension of one language and production of another language to happen sequentially as opposed to simultaneously. This method is a fundamental skill developed early within interpreter training in the US, but the practice is not widely used currently.

In this example I consider the implications of the different interpretation processes that were used in the interview. While the JSL/Japanese/English interpreters in the ethnographic study were primarily practicing consecutive interpreting, I continued interpreting using a simultaneous interpreting technique⁸. A result of these different practices of interpreting being employed was that throughout the interview process there were moments of misunderstanding and challenging decisions to be made by the interpreters.

Because the American Deaf ethnographers were not used to the consecutive process, I needed to stop them often to allow for the JSL/English interpreters to finish interpreting. This action sometimes visibly disturbed the ethnographers. On the other hand, the interpreters stopping them in order to interpret what had been said up to that point did not visibly affect the Japanese Deaf informants. The Japanese Deaf teachers seemed to be accustomed to this

⁸ Simultaneous Interpreting is practiced by processing the source language and producing the target language simultaneously.

method of interpreting, which gave them a sense of patience. The American Deaf ethnographers were not used to the added time to interpret and therefore seemed to be flustered when the interpreters interrupted them. At that time one of the Japanese interpreters and I called a “time-out” and briefly stepped out of the interpreter role to clarify meaning and processing, as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2

At one juncture I made the decision to interrupt the flow of the interview by gesturing to the American Deaf ethnographers, Thomas and Patrick, to wait. This gesture became an indicator to pause or stop and that more action, in this case interpreting, was happening and that no one else at that moment could

proceed talking. In some cases gestures can serve as a referent to communicate concepts or actions (Kendon 2004). I deliberately used this gesture, as opposed to the ASL sign, which uses a different palm orientation because I anticipated that it was more likely to be understood by all parties in the interaction. This is an example of how in this research I sometimes need to step out of my role of interpreting midstream in an interview to provide feedback to the participants on differences in cultural communication styles. In this case my actions allowed for the JSL/Japanese/English interpreters to successfully use consecutive interpreting in order to better reflect the meanings of the speakers.

A closer look at the transcript⁹¹⁰ is important to identify the complexity of interpretation came later in this interview, in a discussion of differences and similarities between Japanese and US versions of Deaf Culture, which produced some confusion of languages, speakers, and roles (ASL noted with CAPS):

TH (signing in ASL, with my simultaneous interpreting into spoken English):

Well for instance deaf culture might be to get someone's attention by slapping the table or tapping on the shoulder. Um but Japanese culture, in

⁹ The structure of ASL is different than the structure of English; thus, we use these conventions to capture the linguistic events occurring in the interview. These conventions are not designed to “make the actual linguistic events appear impoverished...[but] in fact. Rich with nonmanual grammatical markers, inflections, located signing, and other features difficult to represent in a written textual format” (Johnson & Erting, 1989, p. 71).

¹⁰ Ideally a video accompaniment with the transcript would be more appropriate in order to fully show the interaction that occurred. Using transcription alone is an imperfect approach as crucial information is shared on the face and bodies of participants in interactions (Goodwin, 2002).

general, you would you would bow, you know there are specific rules in that culture that...so you can identify, you know a national identity by their customs. Are there ways to apply that national Japanese identity in the classroom that maybe we're unaware of? That that Japanese deaf identity?

JSL 1 (spoken Japanese-spoken English): Japanese Deaf? (to ASL-English interpreter, JH)

JH: (nods) mmmhum (to JSL 1)

JSL 1: (continues interpreting into spoken Japanese for JSL 2)

JSL 1: And that Japanese culture influence...and Deaf culture...how they what? (to ASLI)

JH: (interprets the question to T) JAPAN CULTURE AFFECT, DEAF CULTURE AFFECT THAT...WAIT

JSL 1: How they interact? Or what what was the...

JH: (continues interpreting into ASL) HOW BOTH APPEAR CLASSROOM? O-R (shakes head – negation). **(points to JSL 1&2) CLEAR MEAN (points to JSL1)**

TH: (nods) Mmmhum. Yes.

JSL 1: Yeah. (continues interpreting into spoken Japanese)

JH: **O-K MAKE SURE UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING**

In this example the JSL interpreter “1” does not interpret into JSL, but rather she interpreted most of the spoken English into spoken Japanese. The JSL

interpreter “2” interpreted spoken Japanese and JSL. After the interpreted question from Thomas is stated in spoken English the JSL 1 interpreter repeated the phrase “Japanese Deaf” as a clarification. Once verified by me, not Thomas Horejes (TH), she continued interpreting. Soon again she stopped interpreting to ask another clarifying question, “How they what?” At that point I chose to interpret her question to Dr. Horejes to include him in the discourse process rather than to assume his response. Meanwhile the JSL 1 interpreter resumed interpreting into spoken Japanese. Because the interpreter began interpreting again I decided that she did not want her question answered, I stopped Thomas from answering to let her finish interpreting. The interpreter paused once again to ask, “how they interact, or what was the...?” Realizing the interpreter wanted an answer at this point; I interpreted the question, but added what I thought to be the intent of the question, “CLEAR MEAN” indicating that the JSL interpreters intended to “seek clarity”. Once Dr. Horejes verified by nodding that the question was correctly understood, she resumed interpreting. Meanwhile I signed an aside to Dr. Horejes “O-K MAKE SURE UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING”. This comment served to reassure Dr. Horejes that the JSL interpreter’s clarifications were appropriate, and perhaps not to be concerned that her seeking clarification should not be seen as lack of ability to interpret.

After the interview I discussed this incident with the team and explained about the Japanese interpreters’ preference for consecutive rather than simultaneous interpretation. Questions of accuracy and control arose in this discussion. Were the interpreters, both Japanese and American getting it right?

Were we, the interpreters, controlling the interaction? I felt the need to emphasize that consecutive interpretation, though generally not preferred by many deaf people in the US, is a legitimate technique and by no means an indication of the interpreter's lack of ability and/or a personal vested interest in the direction of conversation. My conclusion is that the different practices of interpreting used in the interview caused misunderstanding which may have impacted the interview overall.

There are several implications of the choices I made here: Had I not called for a "time-out" to clarify roles of the interpreters and the pace of signing by the US interviewers, more meaning might have been lost. On the other hand, such interruptions break up the flow of the conversation and can contribute to the participants' anxiety about understanding and being understood across gaps in languages. I felt the interruption was warranted here because of the danger I perceived of the Japanese Deaf informants developing a negative feeling about the American Deaf ethnographers, who they might have felt were rushing and not giving the Japanese informants adequate time to answer their question, which might suggest disrespect. I was also concerned that the JSL/Japanese/English interpreters may have felt rushed, which would lead them to focus more on speed than on accuracy and the clarity of meaning. Not allowing for clear interpreting and discourse could have impacted the quality of data collected and the resulting publications of the research. All of these implications need contemplation and review.

Cultural Bound Meanings and Language

In the final example I analyze a moment of cultural and linguistic clarification. This example is specific to an instance in the same interview discussed in the second example, however, these types of cultural mediations happen often within our team of researchers. When the occasion arises I share cultural norms with the research team as we may work more easily with one another with fewer misunderstandings. Simple examples of such clarification of cultural norms that happened include reminding the hearing members of the research team to make eye contact with the Deaf researchers and informants, as a way of indicating their interest and attention, which is expected in Deaf culture; or for the American members to refrain from using shoes on the tatami mats in Japan, which is expected in Japanese culture.

In the following transcript I stepped out of my role as the interpreter and into my team researcher role, and questioned the interview questioning:

PG: Um. There's another sign, um, for instance, uh, we sign this, CLUELESS.

Um, or this, OOPS.

TH: HOW (to PG, points to JH) INTERPRET THAT?

PG: HOW CAN INTERPRET THAT...BUT...MEAN...OOPS OR "VOICE OFF" (to Japanese Deaf teachers)

TH: (waves to Japanese Deaf teachers) "VOICE OFF"

JH: These [ASL signs] are very difficult to interpret into English. And so we're discussing the they're, they're... (directly from JH to JSL interpreters)

JSL 1: Typically Deaf...(to JH)

JH: ...very culturally bound signs that don't have a direct translation. So are there signs like that in Japanese Sign? (directly from JH to JSL interpreters)

The topic of the interview was focused on teaching practices, and Deaf cultural practices in the classroom; when Patrick asked the question in the beginning of the passage [see above] I relied on the JSL interpreters' knowledge of a signed mode of language by signing (CAPs used to indicate signs without spoken English) the concepts that I had difficulty interpreting. Though the ASL and JSL signed languages are different, I hoped the other interpreters would see that I was using the signs to show I was not actually interpreting at that moment. The difficulty arose when Patrick began to ask a question that I had not anticipated. The content of Patrick's question made sense to me, but his intent was not as clear. The question did not make sense in the overall interview up to that point.

After sharing my difficulty with the JSL interpreters and once the other ethnographer, Thomas, recognized my difficulty I felt comfortable to share what I thought was the purpose of the question, or Patrick's intent; "Are there [culturally bound] signs like that in Japanese Sign?" This moment was brief, but important to identify as a moment that cultural and linguistic mediation was needed to support the interactions in the interview.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND THE NEED FOR REFLEXIVITY

Jentsch (1998) cautions researchers about the possible methodological problems that may arise when using interpreters in research. It is important to consider the role that the interpreter plays in the research approach and how that person impacts the data gathered. As an interpreter my worldview, knowledge, and experience shape the interpretations I produce and assume to be accurate. I would argue that further involvement of the interpreter as a member of the research team in the planning, conducting, and meaning-making stages of the research is imperative in order to piece together all perspectives and gain what Tobin et al call “multivocal perspectives” (Tobin & Davidson, 1991). Further, Temple (1997) argues that without the benefit of the interpreter’s perspective, the cross-cultural researcher is lacking necessary information and as a result is merely visiting the culture without the ability to fully “engage”.

This paper has introduced examples and analyses of the challenges of interpreting between ASL and English as well as between ASL and JSL. When, as in this research on Deaf Kindergartens in Japan, France, and the US, there needs to be interpretation across more than one language, the methodological challenges are dramatically increased. I have suggested in such a situation that much value is added when the interpreter is also considered to be a member of the research team, which allows him or her not only to literally interpret, but also to draw on his or her intercultural as well as bilingual knowledge to alert the team of instances of heightened misunderstanding and of cultural gaps and gaffes, and

join the team in the process of analyzing the meanings of the interviews. This analysis can begin with a debriefing of the quality of engagement and understanding of the informants with the researchers and continue into a deeper analysis of interview transcripts.

This project also brings with it the difficulty of maintaining different roles. I constantly reflect and find ways to balance my different roles in the research setting. My voice as a researcher on this team will only be heard if I keep the team informed of the process and share my ideas when possible. A possible solution to resolve or improve this difficulty of balancing the team in the research process is to bring in another interpreter. Ironically, this would not solve the problem, as it would lead to the need to include this other interpreter in reflexive discussions with the researchers.

Such inclusion of the interpreter as research team member is consistent with the core assumptions of the ethnographic method, beginning with the need for reflexivity on the part of the researcher(s). This reflexivity includes “identity assumptions” which, as Goffman (1963) explains, are often ingrained and overlooked (p. 127). To ignore the impact of the interpreter’s role on the research is to omit an important source of meaning making (and/or meaning-loss) in the ethnographic process. Social sciences use ethnographic methods to illuminate complexities of social life and to represent human lives holistically (Atkinson 1992).

While agreeing with Temple and Edwards (2002) that the interpreter needs to be made more visible in ethnographic research I take this claim further by

adding to it the call for interpreters to also play the roles of research team members and scholars. Greater rapport and collaboration between interpreter and researcher in an ethnographic project has the potential to enhance the meaningfulness of the findings.

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APPENDIX
TRANSCRIPTION KEY

- Standard, unaltered font = Spoken English (interpreted)
- ALL CAPS FONT = English gloss for ASL signs used
- CAPS LETTERED FONT WITH SPACING (i.e. O-R) = Fingerspelling of English words
- **BOLD FONT, ALL CAPS** = English gloss for ASL signs (i.e. directly from ASLI to T)