Source Attribution in ASL-English Interpreter Education: Testing a Method

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Abstract

In interactive signed/spoken language interpreting situations, participants in the conversation learn who is speaking if the interpreter identifies the “source” or initiator of each utterance. This interpreting technique is referred to as source attribution (SA). Although attributing interpreted utterances is a critical skill for interpreters, this is the first study to test a method for teaching SA techniques to signed language interpreting students. Using a mixed-method approach involving an experimental group and a control group, data was collected using a pretest/instruction/posttest method, along with journals, questionnaires, and interviews. The experimental group improved significantly more than the control group after the targeted instruction, suggesting that the proposed method of teaching SA provides beneficial instructional results for students’ SA skills. The results of this study may also inform the broader interpreting research field by demonstrating an effective method to conduct research on teaching methods for interpreting students.

Keywords: Interpreter education, interpreting, linguistics, American Sign Language, source attribution, interpreting technique

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1. Introduction

As Deaf interlocutors engage in conversations, they approach interactions with specific goals and discourse strategies. When signed/spoken language interpreters work in these situations with multiple interlocutors using different languages, they must inform the interlocutors which person is producing an utterance. This behavior is referred to as source attribution (SA) (Metzger, 1999). To indicate SA in American Sign Language (ASL), an interpreter may utilize a variety of linguistic forms (Metzger, 2005). Source attribution techniques have been documented in interpreting by previous research (Metzger 1999), however there is no evidence that they are widely known, taught, or used correctly (Dickinson, 2010). Individuals in the deaf community report being frequently confused as to who is speaking because interpreters are not knowledgeable and skilled in using SA techniques. This can be detrimental in venues such as a courtroom, where the person’s freedom may be at stake, or in the classroom where the student is inhibited in participating in the discussion (S. Collins, personal communication, October 4, 2015). As one deaf person told Dickinson about their experience in interpreted interactions,

“Hearing people all 'speak really fast and at the same time', always 'just pitching right in'. They don't put their hands up to take a turn or wait for other people to stop speaking . . . I spend much of my time working out 'what are they talking about, who said that, who said this’ (heavy sigh)” (J. Dickinson, personal communication, October 9, 2015).

Effective SA is essential to communication accessibility; thus, SA must be taught to interpreters in order for them to incorporate it properly. However, there is little available empirical research on tested interpreter education methodology, and none on previously tested SA instructional methods. This study will focus on a proposed six-step instructional method for teaching interpreting students SA techniques (Metzger, 2005).
2. Literature Review

2.1. Source Attribution

In conversational situations with multiple spoken language speakers, interpreters should identify which participant is speaking in order for deaf people to know the source: that is, who is initiating the utterance. However, interpreters may be unaware of how to properly use SA, or of SA’s importance (Metzger, 1999; Napier, 2004; Wadensjo, 1998). In Metzger’s (2005) study, the researcher analyzed interactions that occurred in two interpreted medical scenarios and reported how the interpreters were vitally involved in handling the conversations. During the interactions, interpreters used four different types of source attribution techniques to let deaf people know which of the non-signing interlocutors initiated the utterance: index-to-source (see Figure 1), body shift (see Figure 2), eye gaze (see Figure 3), or name/description (see Figures 4 and 5). The most frequent type of SA in Metzger’s study was index-to-source, which occurs when the interpreter points to the person who is speaking before rendering their utterance. The choice to use a pointing gesture allows the interpreter to indicate a change in speaker or the location of the speaker quickly without shifting focus from the main discourse of the interlocutors, as shown in Figure 1 (Metzger, 2005).

Figure 1: Index-to-source. The interpreter points to the person speaking.

Another way to indicate a change in speaker is through body shifting. This technique requires interpreters to move their upper body or head from one space to another (e.g. right to left or front to back) in order to change characters. To show a second interlocutor, they would then shift their body to another position and begin the next utterance, as shown in Figure 2. While body shifting can effectively demonstrate two speakers, it can become confusing if three or more interlocutors are involved in the conversation (Metzger 2005).

Figure 2: Body shifting. The interpreter moves the body from one side to another to indicate the person speaking.

A third way interpreters indicate the source of an utterance is by using their gaze to indicate the person who is speaking. The photo in Figure 3 shows the interpreter looking directly at one of the interlocutors, who can then be distinguished from others. Looking may be all that is needed if there are only two non-deaf interlocutors speaking or if the potential speakers are sitting apart from one another.
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Figure 3: Eye gaze. The interpreter looks towards the person speaking.

The final type of SA is naming or describing the speaker, which is effective if the deaf participants know the names, titles, or physical features of the interlocutors. If the names are not familiar to all interlocutors, then the interpreter may indicate a specific personal identifier such as the hair color/style, clothing, or other visible aspect of the speaker (Metzger, 2005). Figure 4 shows the interpreter fingerspelling the name of one of the interlocutors (photo shows the letter “O”). Figure 5 shows the interpreter identifying the speaker by signing the color PINK to indicate an interlocutors’ shirt.

Figure 4: Naming. The interpreter fingerspells the name of the person speaking.

Figure 5: Description. The interpreter signs a description of the person speaking [PINK].

These ways of identifying the source of an utterance provide information about the location of the speaker, the identity of the speaker, or a change in speaker. Each of these strategies for identifying speakers can be used individually, or they can be combined to provide several layers of speaker identification for clarity (Metzger, Fleetwood, & Collins, 2004; Metzger, 2005). Examples of combining the utterances could be fingerspelling a name then pointing to the person speaking, or describing a person then body shifting to begin their utterance.
2.2. *Metzger’s Teaching Practice*

Metzger (2005) designed a sequence of six steps for teaching students how to make use of SA as they incorporate it into interpretations. She suggested that these steps could be incorporated during a typical post-secondary course or short-term training program.

The six instructional steps suggested by Metzger (2005; p. 114-115) are:

- Review source attribution.
- Observe source attribution.
- Have students practice attributing source.
- Ask students to analyze source attributions in their own interpretations.
- Have students redo as needed, with a focus on the features of SA.
- Try a variety of role-plays, including small-group interaction.

Metzger’s method begins with reviewing SA in order to first familiarize students with this concept and why it is important to include as part of interactional equivalence during interpretation. The exposure increases their factual knowledge of the techniques and how they are used in interpreting (Napier, 2005). Students next see SA modeled by watching videos and observing experienced interpreters using SA. During the observations, the instructor points out the strategies that constitute situationally appropriate SA, when the students need additional input or direction.

Students next incorporate SA into their own work in a structured manner, to increase their procedural knowledge through interacting with videotaped sources. The students record themselves interpreting, watch their own interpretations to see when and how they incorporated SA, and discuss if this use created interactional equivalence. After analyzing their videotaped work, and repeating it as needed, the students engage in live role-plays. While working through these steps, the students can also spiral back to repeat those that need reinforcement (Metzger, 2000).

3. **Research Questions**

This study focuses on the following research questions using a mixed-method approach to data collection.

Question #1: Does source attribution (SA) instruction based on Metzger’s (2005) six-step instructional method lead to an increase in the quantity and types of ASL source attributions used during an English to ASL interpretation in discourse settings that have more than one English speaker?

Question #2: What are the perceptions of interpreting students who learn via this method of instruction?

Question #3: What are instructors’ perspectives after teaching using this method as compared with their usual teaching methods?

4. **Research method**

In order to begin testing this method for teaching SA, a mixed method study was designed to test two groups of students, using a quantitative pretest/instruction/posttest design, along with a qualitative component involving instructor journals, a post-questionnaire, and instructor interviews. Detailed methods are described in the following paragraphs.
4.1. Procedure

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher recruited two instructors at two different universities who were teaching a total of three undergraduate, junior level, interactional interpreting classes for ASL-English interpreters. One was designated the experimental group and the other the control group. The researcher met with the instructors for both the experimental and control groups to conduct training for the study. The instructor of the experimental group received instruction on the types of SA, the six-step teaching method, how to do journal entries, how to record mentions of SA, and how to handle the introduction of research into the classroom.

The instructor of the control group received the same training but without learning the six-step process for teaching SA. The instructor of the control group was asked to only include SA in the same way he would in a typical semester and to record all mentions of SA that occurred during class time. Both instructors were asked to make notations in electronic journal entries of instances of SA, amount of time spent teaching SA, and anything else pertaining to SA that occurred during the class.

Students were informed during the first class that a research study about teaching methods would take place during the semester. They were not told which parts of the class would involve research, but were reminded they were responsible to complete all parts of the class. During the first class, the students recorded their pretests in a computer lab. The students watched and listened to the testing videos in English (see Materials section) as they interpreted into ASL.

After the first class period, students in all classes attended the duration of their university-level interpreting courses. All three classes used departmentally approved, interactive interpreting curricula. In addition to the typical instructional topics, the students in the experimental group were taught SA using Metzger’s (2005) method. Both instructors kept track of what occurred during the class using their online journals. The data recorded in the journals were used to calculate mentions of SA instruction or discussion during classes by counting the number of mentions. The data also provided a starting point for the instructor exit interview questions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006; Postlethwaite, 2005, Tan & Saw Lan, 2011).

At the conclusion of the study, students recorded the same source video from the pretest as a posttest. The researcher designed the study to have a period of time (ten instructional weeks in this situation) between the initial recording and the final recording in order to reduce student performance based on familiarity with the source texts (Tomal, 2010). The researcher coded the test videos in ELAN (a software tool for annotating video) by watching each video and noting whenever an instance of SA occurred. These notations were verified by a deaf, native ASL-user who is a linguist and interpreter educator.

Students in the experimental class also completed a post-questionnaire regarding the SA instruction over the two weeks following the conclusion of the study. This questionnaire asked about their knowledge of SA and their opinions on how it was taught to them during this course. It was also used to guide the instructor exit interview. After collecting all test videos, questionnaires, and journals, the researcher recorded interviews with both instructors via online video software. The researcher transcribed these recorded interviews and coded them for themes as shown in the results section.

4.2. Participants

The student participants in this study were Interpreter Education (IE) majors enrolled in three junior level interpreting classes moving through undergraduate terms at two universities in different parts of the United States. Their classes focused on translation, consecutive interpreting (CI), and simultaneous interpreting (SI). The students were divided into a control group (N=14) and an experimental group (N=10). These numbers exclude one student from the control group and five from the experimental group because of technical issues with their recordings. The study was completed over a simultaneous ten-week period in all classes. See Table 1 for pertinent demographics.
Additionally, all students were hearing and two of the control students reported being children of deaf adults (CODAs). The groups were deemed by a group of researchers to be suitably comparable for the purposes of the study.

Both instructors were hearing and held Master’s degrees in the field of interpreting. They were both nationally certified interpreters, and had experience both interpreting and teaching interpreters.

The researcher was a nationally certified hearing interpreter conducting this research study as her dissertation project (Maddux, 2015). She had been involved with the deaf community for over 16 years, had interpreted for 11 years, and had taught ASL, English and interpreting for more than four years.

4.3. Materials

Three source text videos were used during the study. The three videos were combined into one continuous video for the pretest and posttest. The first and third videos were intended to mask the use of the middle video as the data collection video. See Table 2 for a description of the three videos (Chu, 2012; College of St. Catherine, 2011; Obama & Obama, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Used for Analysis?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two English-speaking interlocutors discussing Health Apps, 7 minutes 43</td>
<td>Warm up interpreters and mask target video.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction of participants and instructions, introductory clip of content, 1-minute pause for preparation.</td>
<td>Given to instructors to use as baseline and in instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 The discrepancy between male and female students in this study is consistent with the larger population of interpreters in the US (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013).
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>seconds long.</th>
<th>source text</th>
<th>Target text for data collection</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Three English-speaking interlocutors on a TV talk show. 12 minutes 55 seconds long.</td>
<td>Introduction of participants and instructions, introductory clip of content, 1-minute pause for preparation, source text</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two deaf participants at a doctor’s appointment. 8 minutes 5 seconds long.</td>
<td>Introduction of participants and instructions, source text</td>
<td>Mask target video. Given to instructors to use as baseline and in instruction.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first video was a warm up video where only two English-speaking interlocutors spoke about a familiar topic. It was used to allow the students to get into the frame of mind to interpret from English to ASL and to mask the target video. The middle video, which was used to analyze students’ SA, was a taped interview between Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, and Michelle Obama. The third masking video was an interactive video between deaf and hearing interlocutors. Figure 6 shows the general set-up of the interlocutors on the screen for the target video.

Figure 6: Set-up of three interlocutors on screen.

Both pretests and posttests were recorded using recording software (QuickTime) on Mac desktop computers in video labs at the universities. Following the data collection, a video annotation program, ELAN, was used to track SA for test videos (Lausberg & Sloetjes, 2009). ELAN allowed the videos to be analyzed for various components as it allows both the video and tiers detailing aspects of interpreting (ex. Index-to-source, naming, etc.) as shown in Figure 7.
Electronic journals were provided for the instructors to record mentions of SA in their classes. They were instructed to record when SA was mentioned with one count per five minutes of class. They also used the journal to describe what occurred during each mention of SA. Other materials provided were video clips of an expert interpreter using all four types of SA, a written post-questionnaire for the experimental group (see Results and Discussion section for questionnaire details), and information on how to use SA taken from Metzger (2005). Google Hangouts and QuickTime were used for exit interviews.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of this study indicated that the steps used in the study to teach SA did provide some benefit to the students in the experimental group. The research questions are shown below, then details of both the quantitative and qualitative data are shown and discussed in the following sections.

5.1. Research Question #1:

Does source attribution (SA) instruction based on Metzger’s (2005) six-step instructional method lead to an increase in the quantity and types of ASL source attributions used during an English to ASL interpretation in discourse settings that have more than one English speaker?

Quantitative results showed that the instructional method led to an increase in both the quantity and type of SA. Although the control group had higher initial SA levels, the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater gains in SA after the intervention (See Table 4). These results indicate that the six-step method of SA instruction did lead to greater gains in SA usage compared to unstructured mentions of SA with normal instruction.

5.1.1 Types of SA

On the original source video/pretest, there were 134 distinct times when the speaker changed among the three interlocutors, however, none of the students included SA for every possible speaker change in the source text (Min = 9; Max = 72).

The most commonly used type of SA was body shifting on both the pretest and the posttest for both groups, with indexing being low on both tests for the groups. One experimental student used naming twice on the pretest, another student named the participants and set them up in space prior to beginning to shift on the posttest, and another student included one name. Eight of the control group students named interlocutors on the pretest, while
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six did on the posttest, with one additional student setting up the interlocutors with names prior to the test beginning.

None of the experimental students used more than one type of SA for any of the speaker changes on both the pretest and posttest, while six of the control group students used multiples from two to 28 times on the pretest and six students used multiples from one to 38 times on the posttest to indicate the speakers (see Table 4 for types of SA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Instances of SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (# of students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming/Describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming/Describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming/Describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming/Describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.2 Baseline comparisons of use of SA

The independent t-tests checked the control and experimental groups’ starting SA counts. Results show that the control group performed significantly better than the experimental group on the pretest, t(22) = -2.23, p = .04, indicating that they were at a higher starting level regarding SA performance (see Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Pretest Group Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental Group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.3 Pretest/posttests comparison

Each group was also compared with itself, using dependent t-tests to see if there were differences within groups for the pretest and posttest (Control = t(13) = 4.049, p = .001; Experimental = t(9) = 3.667, p = .005) (see Tables 6...
and 7). The control group used a wider variety of types of SA on both tests. However, the experimental group improved significantly more in overall use of SA between pre and post instruction.

| Table 6: Dependent Means t-Test for Experimental Group Pretest and Posttest |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------|-----------------|
| **Mean** | **N** | **Std. Deviation** | **Std. Error Mean** |
| Pretest | 32.80 | 10 | 12.874 | 4.071 |
| Posttest | 45.40 | 10 | 6.310 | 1.996 |

| Table 7: Dependent Means t-Test for Control Group Pretest and Posttest |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|-----------------|
| **Mean** | **N** | **Std. Deviation** | **Std. Error Mean** |
| Pretest | 44.57 | 14 | 12.660 | 3.236 |
| Posttest | 51.57 | 14 | 12.107 | 3.383 |

5.1.4 Change scores

The experimental group (32.23% difference) improved significantly more than the control group (14.56% difference) on the average number of SA instances between the pretest and the posttest ($t(22) = 1.96, p = .06$) (See Table 8).

| Table 8: Independent Means t-Test for Experimental/Control Pretest and Posttest |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------|-----------------|
| **Class** | **Mean** | **N** | **Std. Deviation** | **Std. Error Mean** |
| Experimental | 12.600 | 10.865 | 3.436 | 4.828 |
| Control | 7.000 | 6.469 | 1.729 | 3.265 |

Although it seemed the experimental group initially had a lower level of knowledge and fewer instances of SA than the control group, their change score showed they improved significantly more than the control group after the targeted instruction.

5.2. Research Question #2:

What are the perceptions of interpreting students who learn via this method of instruction?

5.2.1 Post-questionnaires

At the conclusion of the study, all members of the experimental group completed a post-questionnaire asking about their feelings and opinions regarding the SA instructional method as shown below through selected questions and answers.

Question 1: What does the term source attribution mean to you?

The majority ($n = 8$) of students indicated that they could not identify the term SA, but a few did try to guess at what it could mean using a variety of interpreting-related terms. One guessed, “Not 100% sure…My best guess is, making sure the original message in an L1 is interpreted into an L2 in a way that the source can be identified (who said what).” Two other students said source attribution was giving credit to the person speaking or the original work.

Question 2: How did you include source attribution in your interpretation before this class?

Only one student indicated previously using SA in their work saying, “With DB [deaf-Blind] interpreting, it is by stating the name before the comment. With general interpreting I use pointing mostly.”
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**Question 3:** Did you have specific source attribution learning experience before this class?

Only one student indicated having learned about SA before this class.

**Question 4:** If you have been taught about this topic before, describe the instruction. If your answer is no, then skip this question.

One student said, “Yes. Just briefly discussing the different ways of source attribution.”

**Question 6:** How will you learned about source attribution impact your interpreting?

This question again yielded few answers. However, one student did indicate it helps with the fluency of interpreting, and student N said it would help in, “Knowing how to stick to the source and give credit.”

Although the data obtained from the post questionnaire seems to indicate that the students did not learn the term “source attribution” well, these results are mediated by information from the instructor as detailed in the next section.

5.3. **Research Question #3:**

What are instructors’ perspectives after teaching using this method and teaching via their usual methods?”

While taking the post-questionnaire, students initially seemed unsure of the definition of “source attribution”. However, the instructor immediately addressed the topic, and students indicated that they did know how to do SA, and were able to name the types of SA. They had forgotten the technical vocabulary for SA during the semester, but knew about the methods. This lack of term awareness may be because they did not internalized the name due to the limited time spent on the topic in class (as further detailed in the discussion on research question #3 on the interview with the experimental instructor).

5.3.1 Journals

Each instructor kept electronic journals throughout the ten-week course to notate mentions of SA. Tables 9 and 10 describe what was noted in the journals on how SA was discussed in the class and give frequency counts on how often SA was mentioned in each class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Instructor of the Experimental Class Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of days of SA instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: Instructor of the Control Group Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of days of SA instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although this project was originally intended for insertion throughout the semester for the experimental class, the journal showed that SA was taught on two days during the experimental class. Even with the limited number of days spent on SA, the experimental instructor was able to complete all steps of the method and spend more time on SA than the control instructor.

5.4. Exit Interviews

The researcher transcribed each interview, organized them into themes, and had a Deaf researcher review them for accuracy. Collated themes are listed below in both bullet points and description with the frequency the instructor referred to the theme in parentheses.

5.4.1 Themes of the Instructor of the Experimental Group

A number of noteworthy themes emerged from the instructor of the experimental class exit interview, several of which serve to elaborate on previously mentioned occurrences during the study. The following bullet points are the described themes.

- Concerns about if the students were at the right stage of learning for this study (9)
- Disappointed about post-questionnaire results (3)
- Delay between instruction and post-questionnaire (3)
- Students knew SA in spite of post-questionnaire results (2)
- Need for spiraling teaching methods in the future/Plans to include SA in the future (3)
- Usefulness of the teaching method/Positivity about using it (8)
- Logistics of what occurred during the course (8)

The instructor of the experimental class expressed that she was concerned throughout the study that her students might not be at a level to incorporate SA in their interpretation. In spite of her concerns though, she did believe that her students were capable of incorporating SA into their work as shown by statements like, “I also thought, um, that it was possible. I guess. So I thought you know. I thought they could do it.”

The instructor stated several times that she was disappointed that the students did not indicate that they knew about SA on the post-questionnaire. However, she said that after the conclusion of the post-questionnaire, the students asked her what the term meant, and immediately knew what she was talking about when she began to explain. All students could name three types of SA, and a few could name all types. It was her opinion that that the students did learn about SA, but that they were not exposed to the term enough to keep it in memory as shown in her comment, “but then as soon as I told them the term they were, like ‘Oh yeah that’s what that is!’”

The instructor surmised that the reason the students did not know the term was either because it was not repeated enough or because there was a delay between the days of instruction and the completion of the post-questionnaire.

The results of the post-questionnaire led to questions focused on the instructors’ thoughts about what occurred during the class and how it would inform her future teaching. She emphasized that she originally thought it would be more effective to teach SA in a concentrated segment of time, but has since changed her mind to believe she should have spiraled the instruction throughout the course by repeating the steps multiple times:

“I think I would spread it out more consistently. Umm, because that makes me, the results of the post-survey made me think, hmm, I wonder if you know, like they just needed more repetition talking about it. So I think that, that’s just good for me as a teacher to know in general. All the topics I feel like I need to loop things more if that makes sense to, you know.”

Spiraling involves cycling through the curriculum in order to emphasize or review previously learned topics or techniques.
When asked about how it was to insert this into the curriculum of the class, she had the following comments:

“I think giving them specific examples of what SA can look like was really useful so that they are aware of all the tools available.” and “I actually [thought] that it was fine being incorporated into the curriculum, because, it, I mean it’s something that we do as interpreters so we talk about a lot of things,” and “there were lots of benefits for talking about it and giving them a chance to consider how they would interpret in class, and in real life, but you know where our practice in class or, umm, in situations with multiple speakers and all these kinds of things so I think it moves towards being more authentic practice instead of just, umm, monologic view of texts with just one person talking.”

While the instructor did incorporate all steps, she said that most of the interpretation work was translation focused. Based on what emerged from the exit interview, it seems that the instructor believed her students might not be fully ready to incorporate SA into their simultaneous interpreting work at this point but thought it was beneficial and possible for them to do. During the course, she taught about SA on two days, but students mentioned it at other times. She was disappointed that the students seemed to not know about SA on the post-questionnaire, but her further discussions with them revealed that they knew the topic instead of the term. She believes that this method of teaching is useful but needs to be cycled or spiraled throughout the semester.

5.4.2 Themes of the Instructor of the Control Group

Several themes regarding emerged from the instructor of the control group interview, as shown below.

- Students not ready (3)
- Need for SA instruction (3)
- Mentions of SA during course (4)
- Logistics of what occurred during the course (6)

The instructor of the control group did not believe his students were ready for this level of simultaneous interpreting (SI). He said, “Umm, I think that they’re still really struggling with the interpretation task, um, and then adding the layer of SA, um, I think that would be challenging for them to add to their cognitive load to think about it.” Despite this concern, he did say that there is a need for SA instruction towards the end of the course, as they would be doing more SI as they went along.

The instructor also described the limited references to SA during the course. SA was only mentioned once during the study when a student asked how to distinguish between speakers. When asked how he handled that interaction, he said:

“I told them that there were several ways to do it. Could name the person, you could indicate which person was speaking if you had established them in space, you could role shift for them, umm, I think those were the options I gave them.”

These mentions of SA in the classroom were brief, but the instructor believed there could have been more if there was more chance for lab time.

6. Suggestions for Future Research

Implications for interpreter education research include investigating differences arising from situations at community colleges verses universities and incorporating larger pools of well-matched students of varying skill levels with repeated testing over a longer period of time. Researchers may do action research and should test other popular instructional methods and how students learn from them in clearly defined, data-based quantitative and qualitative studies.
7. Limitations

Although care was taken to minimize variables and limitations to the study, some were unavoidable or unforeseeable. An unavoidable limitation for this study, or any study involving interpreting students, is the small class size. Due to the limited classes and small class size, the researcher chose to situate the control and experimental classes at different universities to gain larger sample sizes. The separate locations then became a limitation as well, as it was impossible to create fully matched groups at the beginning of the term, or to have the same curricula, labs, or instructors. Additionally, live deaf consumers would be preferable for an authentic interpreting scenario, and there were a number of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events such as delayed questionnaire conduction and deleted videos.

8. Conclusion

In sum, this study showed through data-based testing that the proposed SA instructional method seemed to provide benefits to students, as seen when the experimental students performed significantly better than the control students after instruction by including significantly more SA instances in their interpretations. Interviews with the experimental instructor indicate that the benefits could have potentially been greater if the teaching method was followed in a more focused manner with spiraling through the steps multiple times. These results suggest that this teaching method should be implemented in interpreting classrooms and workshops. Future research may focus on repetition of this research for SA and other interactional methods, as well as further data-driven research into interpreter education. As a whole, the interpreter education system must move beyond simply wanting students to master skills and content, to finding ways to foster effective interactive interpreting strategies in the next generation of interpreters (Winston, 2005).

Currently there is limited empirical research testing IE teaching methods, and this scarcity must be remedied through implementing research studies in the classroom in order to investigate more aspects of the process of instructing interpreters. This can only be accomplished by conducting more focused research on how IE teaching methods impact learning as we incorporate research that has come before in signed languages, spoken languages, applied linguistics and other related fields. As more empirical data becomes available on effective learning approaches and teaching methods, the interpreting community can hope that the school-to-work gap will be reduced until our Interpreter Education Programs regularly graduate qualified entry-level interpreters. Preparing interpreters effectively will only be possible if interpreting researchers, educators, and practitioners work together to be sure research and curriculum are distributed around the world (Napier, 2005.) When this happens, a greater number of qualified, prepared, and educated interpreters will be present to satisfy the access needs of the deaf community.

References

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHqgCd2dRA
Source attribution in interpreter education


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