International Sign:
Its Use as an International Conference Lingua Franca*

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1. Introduction to sign language communication in international contexts

This paper introduces spoken language translators and interpreters to some of the linguistic and cultural phenomena underlying the effective use of International Sign (IS) as a lingua franca communicative code for international conferences by examining the linguistic choices of interpreters and presenters when delivering the message in IS. IS is a unique medium not only which is not the interpreter's or anyone else's native language, but which is a type of ad hoc pidgin rather than a codified, conventionalized, full-fledged language.

Before delving into the main issue, it is perhaps necessary to pause to

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dispel a commonly-held myth, namely, that all sign languages are mutually intelligible. In fact, this is not the case. Sign language acquisition is as dependent on the language practices of the speech community in which deaf people find themselves as is the acquisition of a spoken language by hearing people. The deaf community of Brazil and the deaf community of Korea, for example, have no history of prolonged, direct interaction, so it is natural that their sign languages would develop quite distinct lexical and structural features, while still obeying the principles of natural languages and what are emerging as universals of the signed modality. Furthermore, as Fischer (2008) has pointed out,

> sign language families do not coincide with spoken language families: ASL [American Sign Language] and BSL (British Sign Language) are mutually unintelligible; TSL (Taiwan Sign Language) and CSL (Chinese Sign Language) are historically unrelated...ASL is closer to the sign languages of France, Russia and Denmark; users of JSL [Japanese Sign Language], TSL, and Korean Sign Language can interact easily [due to shared lexicon developed through contact in the first half of the 20th century], even though Japanese and Mandarin are not related, and Japanese and Korean are related at best distantly (6).

When deaf people meet in international fora, unless they share knowledge of a lingua franca sign language, they must improvise as best they can with the linguistic resources at hand. What they do is draw on the resources of their national sign languages and their insights as proficient signers to create a linguistic code that will hopefully be understood by interlocutors from other countries, themselves proficient in at least one national sign language. Although it may sound far-fetched to users of only spoken languages, anyone who has witnessed international encounters of deaf individuals can testify to their almost immediate ability to communicate on a wide range of topics. As interpersonal familiarity with each other's language code develops, the interactants develop

an increasingly efficient system of communication such that within a few days at most, communication is transpiring at a rapid pace and with an increasing degree of accuracy. Such a phenomenon of cross-linguistic communication is unheard of between monolingual users of spoken languages under similar circumstances. The features which enable that phenomenon are the object of this study.

Opportunities for direct interpersonal communication between deaf people from various countries as well as the provision of IS interpretation in situations of inter-lingual communication in both face-to-face and online websites serving deaf academics, students, interpreters and deaf association leaders has become increasingly widespread in the last decade. (See *inter alia*, Supalla, Moody 2002, 2008, Villeneuve.) The challenge is to analyze how this method of communication can be used efficiently between fluent signers with no prior knowledge of each other's native national sign language and with no knowledge of any other lingua franca sign language.

IS signing has been called a pidgin, but in fact it does not share many features with the drastically reduced limited-function pidgins used by hearing people who do not speak each other's language (Moody 2002, 2008; Fischer 1991; Supalla & Webb, Webb & Supalla). Nor is it the pidgin style communication which deaf people use in trying to communicate with hearing people who do not know any sign language. Signers who have only a command of a contact-induced signed form of their local spoken language (i.e. Signed English or Signed Korean) and who are not fluent in a natural sign language cannot easily understand or communicate in IS. IS is a pidgin based solely on contact between signed languages and IS signers draw upon what they seem to instinctively understand to be widely distributed features of natural sign languages to create intelligible discourse. As Ted Supalla, one of the leading deaf researchers on IS has said, "...novices learning International Sign either to interpret or participate in international conversations will benefit from first mastering a particular national sign language. Indeed, the natural

evolutionary development of IS stems from interaction among skilled signers of varied natural sign languages" (18).

Like other pidgins, IS is created within a specific discursive and communicative context. Fluent signers with at least some exposure to international encounters where sign language is the medium of communication seem to be able to productively incorporate the features of whatever natural sign language(s) they know to create transparent, interpretable utterances through the use of such devices as spatial loci, complex inflectional morphology (e.g. subject and object agreement through directionality), incorporated negators, anaphoric reference through eye gaze and reference (body) shifting, features shared by all documented sign languages (Supalla & Webb). The conventionalized lexicon of IS is limited to approximately 1,000 signs (Moody 2002), the remaining lexicon used in interpretation being created on an ad hoc basis depending on audience, context and topic. However, when this lexicon-on-the-fly is based on phonological and semantic principles of signed languages, and when it is manipulated by a skillful IS interpreter following syntactic patterns familiar and meaningful in the visual mode of natural sign languages, proficient signers in the target audience can easily follow the presentation. Supalla provides a succinct and accurate description of the process when he discusses how IS signs come to be known and accepted by a particular audience or group of interactants: The system [of accepted signs]

> evolves from repeated contact in meetings, giving rise to a standard, shared vocabulary which can be used uniformly at each event. This meeting lingua franca was developed within a formal context, by a particular group, and has a particular set of goals... We have to keep in mind the needs of the person who has not yet become familiar with the conventionalized WFD Sign register...We must sift through our language vocabulary to select signs/words which we hope will be understood and accepted. In addition, we accept signs which facilitate communication from the other person. We develop understanding through this flexible

process...Often, in introducing a concept-sign word in international communication, it is necessary to expand on the one-sign concept with circumlocutions and rephrasing until communication is successful, and the word is accepted and understood. With repeated contact this process becomes smoother and quicker, with less frequent need for expansions and explanations...This continues as the group becomes larger and larger, and the conventional meeting sign language evolves. Thus we see that informal contact systems and formal meeting lingua francas co-exist (22).

Fischer (1991), Moody (2002) and Woll all hypothesize that there are numerous reasons for the relative transparency of signs from speakers from different language backgrounds: the rich possibilities of expressing ideas in a visual/gestural mode; the historical relationships of the sign languages involved (primarily American and European sign languages, many of which share origins with French Sign Language); the fact that most sign languages are relatively young, with a time depth of at most 250 years, and are therefore relatively close to their pantomimic roots; the fact that sign languages are continuously re-creolized by successive generations of deaf people, most often born to hearing parents, who later learn sign language from deaf peers at school rather than from parents at birth; and finally, the profound influence of the deaf experience in which communication with the majority hearing culture is fraught with frustration, resulting in a deaf cultural norm which places a premium on communication, especially any type of signed, visual communication, which in turn promotes an open-mindedness to "alternative communicative codes". Analyzing the skills necessary to use IS effectively, Supalla refers to the importance of this ability to engage in various communication codes when he notes that "[i]t is necessary to have acquired a first signed language in order to be a skillful IS signer. Individuals who have grown up with a natural signed language will excel at IS. However, interacting with deaf peers while growing up is not the only experience necessary for skillful negotiation of signed communication. The experience of encountering others who do not share your

language or level of communication is also necessary" (18).

2. The use of International Sign (IS) at international meetings

The use of a lingua franca variety of signed communication for international encounters between deaf people speaking distinct native sign languages is far from a recent phenomenon. As far back as 1834, deaf leaders and teachers from all over Europe were convening annually in Paris (Moody 2002) to commemorate the birthday of Abbe de l'Epee, who established a school for the deaf in the 1760s and is credited for initiating the use of a codified sign system for the first time in deaf education. From 1878-1896, congresses attended by both deaf and hearing educators were held in Europe and the U.S. to discuss matters affecting deaf education. Since 1951, the World Federation of the Deaf has hosted the World Congress of the Deaf every four years, drawing several thousand international deaf attendees, very few of whom know the native sign language of the other participants. Due to the financial, linguistic and logistic difficulties of providing interpreting services into all the languages present at such gatherings, and in an effort to provide accessibility to deaf people from any country, in 1979 the WFD mandated the use of International Sign, then known as Gestuno, as an official language at all its future quadrennial Congresses (WFD). For a discussion of the current status of IS at WFD events, see Supalla.

Other international events organized by and for deaf participants also sporadically engender the need for cross-linguistic communication between people knowing only one or a limited number of sign languages. A prime example of these occasional international events was the cultural, academic and artistic week-long festival known as Deaf Way II, held in Washington, D.C. in 2002, which attracted 9,000 sign language users, both hearing and deaf, from 100 countries. Since 1924, international deaf sporting events have been held

which attract participants now numbering in the thousands from all regions of the world. In 2007, the governing body of what is now referred to as the IOC-sanctioned Deaflympics voted to institute IS as the official language of all its assembly deliberations (For a detailed description of this historical background, see Moody 1987 and Moody 2002).

Scholarly events have also seen the use of IS expanding in recent years. Since the dawn of serious linguistic research into signed languages initiated in 1965 by Stokoe et al., deaf and hearing researchers have regularly organized international symposia and conferences which attract both local and international participants. It is becoming increasingly commonplace to offer IS interpreting for all academic presentations and/or for organizers to request that presenters address the audience directly in IS. Typically, in addition to traditional conference interpreting into/from the local spoken language, the local sign language and American or British Sign Language, IS is offered at international academic conferences relating to sign language linguistics or deaf studies as an optional communication mode, primarily for non-local deaf attendees, but also for hearing attendees not proficient in any of the other conference languages.

The ubiquitous availability of web cameras has also contributed to the expansion of IS versions of most academic conference program announcements being made available online (see AWSL, CILS, WASLI). At least one university (the University of Bristol in Britain) which offers undergraduate and post-graduate programs in Deaf Studies has put an IS version of their program description online, for the benefit of deaf signers not yet fluent in English or British Sign Language (see CDS). In all of these situations, whether of an educational, socio-political, sporting or academic nature, whether online, on the platform, or in one-on-one interaction, meaningful and precise communication between fluent signers with no prior knowledge of each other's native national sign language and with no knowledge of a lingua franca natural sign language takes place.

What is unique about the structure of sign languages or the community of users of sign languages that enables this relatively free flow of complex communication between people who share no common language? The final answer to that question lies beyond the scope of this paper, but it is currently under investigation by a number of sign language researchers. (See, *inter alia*, Woll, Fischer 1991, Webb & Supalla, Supalla & Webb, Allsop, Woll & Brauti, Rosenstock 2004, 2008).

The aspect of the IS phenomenon that is potentially of greatest interest to interpreters or translators of spoken languages is an analysis of the array of linguistic choices facing IS interpreters when attempting to effectively deliver a message in a target language which is a pidgin developed on an ad hoc basis within a unique discourse and communicative context. Previous analyses have shown that, due to the restricted lexicon of IS at their disposal and the possibly even more restricted lexicon of their target audience, whose members are often less proficient in IS than the experienced interpreters, IS presenters and interpreters often take considerable liberties in deviating from a ST-faithful TT delivered in IS. IS interpreters must often drastically edit and rephrase their propositions, guided by their sense of what abstract, visually-encoded images will be interpretable by their audience based on both linguistic and cultural considerations (Moody 1987, 2002, 2008; Coppock 1990a & 1990b; Bergmann; Woll; Monteillard; Locker-McKee & Napier; Villeneuve). Yet despite the ad hoc nature of the output in IS, the message is generally quite successfully delivered—albeit less economically than in an established full-fledged natural sign language—in a variety of contexts to target audiences from increasingly diverse linguistic and geographic origins.

3. Description of the current study

This study analyzes a corpus consisting of parallel texts (written versions

of English, French and/or German as well as one or more national sign languages, in addition to IS) available on websites serving members of the international deaf community who use sign language. The texts consist of information regarding upcoming academic conferences and university programs specialized in sign language or deaf studies. (See transcript excerpts and the relevant parallel texts in Appendix 1 and the webpages for CILS, CDS, WASLI, and ASLW.) The lexical choices and syntactic organization of the IS utterances are analyzed, followed by a review of the parallels between spoken language and IS interpretation.

The data analyzed here, while entirely monologic and delivered to a camera for an audience accessing the texts via the internet, all emanates from deaf presenters who have extensive interactional experience at international deaf events and are renowned for their ability to communicate effectively in IS. It is proposed that this data might contribute a new dimension to findings in previous analyses of IS based on live conference interpreting, since the IS TTs found here were designed by the interpreters for maximum comprehensibility by an online worldwide audience of signers from undetermined native sign language origins and having undetermined familiarity with IS.

If it is the case that relatively little of the utterances translated into IS consist of conventionalized lexical items, how do the IS presenters/interpreters know whether their manually coded message will be understood by the target audience? How do the recipients decode an IS manual message which does not make use of the standard lexicon from their native sign language? The answer lies at least partially in the context of sign language users, particularly deaf signers, who have communicated all their lives in a world where the majority of the population uses a spoken language. Deaf signers are thus primed by their life experiences to produce and receive deviant, non-conventional messages and after a relatively short period of exposure to IS (usually within a few hours, or even within a few minutes), they are able to understand and produce utterances comprehensible to their interlocutors. From a linguistic

perspective, however, this "priming through life experience" is not an entirely satisfactory answer. Linguists want to ascertain more precisely the features of IS which allow this almost "instantaneous communication" between deaf people who do not share a common language.

This paper attempts to contribute at least a partial answer to that linguistic puzzle by analyzing a corpus of IS utterances. The IS texts were analyzed for their lexical properties (e.g. sign origins, iconic representations interpretable by fluent signers) and for their syntactic organizational devices (e.g. word order, spatial organization of referents, non-manual features). These particular IS texts were chosen not only for their accessibility, but also because it was hypothesized that these "neutral," monologic IS messages, constructed with only a general target audience in mind, might provide insight into a broader range of linguistic choices available to IS presenters than are customarily seen when the IS is dialogically constructed for and with a specific target audience in the room. All the online IS presentations selected for analysis have the additional advantage of being linked to written source texts in English, French and/or German, so that a set of parallel texts was readily available for comparison.

4. Findings and data discussion

One of the striking phenomena about these IS texts is the presenters' relatively limited use of signs officially sanctioned by the WFD, even when a sanctioned sign does exist for a concept. For example, in Line 1 of the WASLI "AIMS" transcript, the English term 'aims' was signed with a series of highly iconic manual configurations, not with the Gestuno sign for 'goal' (See the discussion of Fig. 1, below, and Text 1, the WASLI transcript, in Appendix 1). With the exception of terms referring to official organizations or institutions of deaf culture, IS presenters seem to prefer to create their own manual images even when a conventionalized WFD sign exists. (For a list of

WFD-sanctioned signs, see Korean National Assoc. of the Deaf and Supalla 2007). This disregard for most of the 1,500 WFD-sanctioned signs, previously promoted under the name of Gestuno, confirms a trend noted in previous studies of IS. (See *inter alia,* Moody 2002 and Monteillard.)

A second striking feature of the IS texts is the extensive use which is made of cross-linguistically interpretable indicators of syntactic relations such as non-manual markers and reference shift (i.e. positioning of the body to show relations between referents), compensating for the relatively limited number of lexical signs used. Nearly every manual sign is accompanied by a non-manual marker, ranging from mouthing of the corresponding spoken language term, the expression of affect, extensive reference shift, and indexical pointing to metaphorically situate the referents in the discourse.

A third striking feature of the IS texts is the sustained creativity of the interpreters in reconfiguring the message, drawing on their intimate knowledge of sign language structure to bring forth transparent and manual images so that the message content is maximally decodable by the target audience. Example (1), below, which presents the first line of the WASLI text, provides a good illustration of this. In the English source text, a colon appears in the written version (e.g. "WASLI aims to:") The colon in written English serves to alert the reader that a list is coming. In IS, the corresponding effect is obtained by the interpreter when he gives discourse organizational clues at the same point in his TT. Before proceeding with the content, he first announces that seven goals will be discussed, thus priming the viewers' cognitive framework, allowing them to anticipate and mentally organize the upcoming content. This corresponds roughly to the strategy used by an active reader who will visually scan a text in advance to glean clues about the content from the page layout.

To illustrate these various features and the options selected by the IS interpreters in the corpus, a combination of images and transcribed texts will be used in the rest of the paper. Thus proceeding through an analysis of several texts from the corpus, a depiction of options and choices actually used

by IS interpreters can be presented. A cautionary word is perhaps in order for readers not accustomed to reading sign language transcriptions. More complete transcriptions and a list of transcription conventions is provided in Appendix 1 and 2, but due to space considerations, not every TT utterance will be presented in its full transcription, particularly when lexical rather than syntactic issues are under discussion. The reader should be forewarned that a black-and-white transcription of sign language in English glosses represents even less of the vibrancy of the language for a non-signer than the written word represents the contours and nuances of the spoken language. As Fischer (2008:6) recently remarked,

[t]he impression that sign languages have no grammar may be engendered by the fact that transcription systems until quite recently have been woefully inadequate to represent the multilayered meaning contained in the sign. A gloss of a signed sentence makes it look impoverished, but the fault is in the gloss, not in the language.

Another reason for the impression that sign language[sic] have no grammar is that sign languages tend to depend more on inflections than on word order for the expression of grammatical relations; rich agreement is frequent, and when present permits greater freedom of constituent order.

Figures 1-5, below, illustrate how the resource of iconicity in the signed, manual mode can be exploited by IS interpreters to convey cognitive concepts. (See Rosenstock 2004 & 2008, and Taub, for a discussion of iconicity in ASL). Rosenstock (2008) has written that "the use of these [iconic constructions] reflects the underlying assumption that the movements and locations are iconic in all cultures and can be understood in a metaphorical construction to represent abstract concepts" (143). It must be remembered that IS interpreters, and particularly the IS interpreters in this corpus who appear on websites accessible by deaf people from anywhere in the world, tend to avoid

using conventionalized lexicon of a particular national sign language. A few exceptions to this tendency will be noted below.

(1) Lexical resource: Selecting a sign from among several options
    "WASLI aims to:" (WASLI)

Fig. 1, from the WASLI website, illustrates two points about IS interpreters' lexical choices. The first was discussed above, i.e., to convey the concept of "aims to," the interpreter opted not to use (or perhaps was not familiar with) the sign prescribed by the WFD as item 1148 ('AIM', 'BUT', '목표', '목적') in the trilingual (English, French, Korean) Gestuno manual (Korean

Fig. 1 ′AIMS′ (verb in ST; noun in TT)

National Association of the Deaf 2003:176). Instead, he selected what he judged to be a more readily transparent sign (and perhaps a more internationally recognized one, as it is virtually identical with the ASL sign), as seen in Fig. 1, above. The second point illustrated by this sign choice applies generally to all documented sign languages and in particular to the ad hoc lexical creativity of IS interpreters; that is the effective exploitation of cognitive concepts associated with the iconicity of spatial loci.

In Fig. 1, the positioning of the left index at an elevated location, oriented

in an upward pointing position, along with the movement of the right index finger arcing toward the stationary left index, combined with the signer's head movement and eye gaze following the arc of the right index finger, all convey the idea of an action-toward-an-end-point. Although the iconic relationship between the concept of "aim" and these multiple components of the sign is most probably readily apparent when explained, a non-signer unaccustomed to thinking iconically and unfamiliar with conventions of sign language classifiers (where index fingers and other complex manual configurations often represent a person, an action or a manner of movement) might not immediately guess that the meaning expressed is that of "goal" or "aim".

Two more examples of the use of concepts related to spatial locus can be seen in example (2), below, from the MSc language admissions policy statement on the CDS website.

ST:

"The MSc in Deaf Studies is an <u>intensive</u> <u>academic</u> programme taught (simultaneously) in BSL and English."

TT: The word-for-word glossing of the ST in the IS version is as follows:
HERE   M-S-C   DEAF-STUDIES   <u>DEEP</u>   <u>HIGH</u>
<u>SMART</u>   TEACH BOTH BSL ENGLISH

This TT version in IS could be back-translated into English as follows:

"The MSc in Deaf Studies is a very <u>intensive</u> program taught at a <u>high</u> <u>academic</u> level, using both BSL and English."

The underlined words in the three parallel texts (ST, TT and back-translation) indicate the lexical items of interest for this discussion. The lexical correspondences employed by the IS interpreter in the TT are shown in the images in Fig. 2-6. To convey the concept of "intensive," the IS interpreter signed 'DEEP,' as in Fig. 2, below. To convey "academic" or "high academic

level," she first signed 'HIGH' as seen in Fig. 3, immediately followed by a series of signs, seen in Figs. 4-6, glossed as 'SMART' and signifying "intelligent" or "highly academic," to emphasize to potential applicants that the program is academically rigorous. (See the full transcript of this utterance in Appendix 1, Text 3, "CDS, Univ. of Bristol, MSc Language Admissions Policy".)

This process is similar to that noted by Rosenstock (2008) in her study of IS interpreters at Deaf Way II. She remarks that "[m]any lexical items in English are expanded into phrases in IS. In most cases, specific aspects of a word's semantic frame are represented in an iconic manner" (145) and she illustrates this process with the IS interpreter's rendering of the concept "loan" with the following sequence of signs: ASK WRITE LIST GIVE-THEM, ASK THEM THEY-GIVE-PAYMENT (145). Another type of expansion noted by Rosenstock (2008) is that of using descriptive phrases, as in the example from her data where the term 'developed countries' was rendered by the IS interpreter with the signs WORLD AREA MONEY RICH PERFECT (145-146). As Rosenstock points out, the "IS interpreter is constantly under pressure to assess the relevant aspects of a certain concept and then create a representation that is short (thus adhering to temporal constraints) and clear..." (146). The data for the present study also revealed several cases of both descriptive phrases and selected aspects of the semantic frame being used to express a concept from the ST. A few examples are illustrated in the following sections, the first of which was from the CDS corpus, discussed above:

(2) Lexical Resource: reinforce content message through paraphrase
   "The MSc in Deaf Studies is a very intensive program taught at a high academic level, using both BSL and English." (Figs. 2-6) (CDS)

Fig. 2 'DEEP'   Fig. 3 'HIGH'

Fig. 4. 'Smart'-a   Fig. 5. 'Smart'-b   Fig. 6. 'Smart'-c

In the following examples from the African Sign Language Workshop (ASLW) website, we have several interesting examples of the IS interpreter making use of spatial loci to convey lexical content and of the interpreter's use of a semantic expansion to convey the intended meaning. Despite not being able to provide an exact gloss for two of the signs with which I was initially unfamiliar, the overall meaning was nevertheless unambiguous. The English/IS parallel texts and an abbreviated transcript for the ASLW text "Workshop Themes" are provided in Appendix 1, Text 2.

(3) Use of space to represent a cognitive concept: "The workshop themes: Imported and local sign languages in Africa" (ASLW Theme, #1)

In this utterance, to express the ST meaning ("imported and local sign languages in Africa"), the IS interpreter signs the following:

TT: AFRICA   SIGN-LANGUAGE

                LOCAL PUSH [?]/PRESSURE [?]

                          (later corrected to 'POSS-3p')

                SIGN-LANGUAGE   ENTITY-OUTSIDE [upper left]

                ENTITY-MOVE-DOWN   INFLUENCE

As can be seen in the signed version of this TT at the ASLW website, after establishing that the topic is African sign languages, the IS interpreter creates the concept of 'LOCAL' by tracing a small, confined space in a circular motion with a pinched thumb and forefinger on his right hand, accompanied by a body shift toward the area defined by the circular motion and a simultaneous non-manual mouth movement of pursed lips, further reinforcing the semantic component of contained and small (see Fig. 7). This sign appears to be a conventionalized sign, possibly in the interpreter's national sign language, as it is relatively complex and does not resemble any sign in ASL or any of the several sign languages with which this researcher is familiar. The exact meaning of the sign in Fig. 8, tentatively glossed as 'PRESSURE' or 'PUSH' in my initial analysis of this passage, was also unknown to me, but I included it and explicitly mention both of these unfamiliar signs to emphasize the point that even if every sign cannot be glossed by a member of the target audience, a fluent signer can nevertheless make sense of a well-crafted IS utterance as a whole. The unidentified gesture pictured in Fig. 8 seems to indicate the idea of "push" or "pressure" directed at the place where "local sign languages" was established to the signer's right, which I initially thought referred to the negative influence, or pressure, on the local languages in the face of imported sign languages, a translation made plausible in the context by the fact that the next sign is a transition to "an outside entity" (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 7. ʹLOCALʹ

Fig. 8. Unfamiliar sign,
ʹPRESSUREʹ(?) / ʹPOSS-3pʹ

I subsequently verified the actual gloss for Fig. 8 with a Korean IS interpreter, Byun Kang Suk (p.c.), who stated categorically that it means 'possession'. In light of this clarification, the second line of the TT in example (3) above, should be glossed as "LOCAL", "THEIR".

As seen in Fig. 9, below, the interpreter uses the space off-center and above his left shoulder to position the sign for 'OUTSIDE-ENTITY'. The location is significant, as it is outside the neutral signing space located in front of the body, indicating that the group or entity referred to is to be conceptualized by the audience as remote and distinct from the entity/action established as "local." After setting up the concept of 'OUTSIDE ENTITY,' the speaker then signs 'INFLUENCE.' This is a directional verb requiring two arguments (subject and object) in most documented sign languages and the interpreter incorporates this widespread and well-known feature of natural sign languages into his TT. To show the direction of influence, the signer's hands move from the above-left-shoulder location of the 'OUTSIDE ENTITY' down toward the space to the speaker's right previously established as the location of 'LOCAL SIGN LANGUAGES'. The TT utterance could be back-interpreted into English as "issues relating to the influence of outside languages on the sign languages of Africa," corresponding to the ST "Imported and local sign languages in Africa."

Having thus analyzed the syntactic properties of this utterance, i.e. the interpreter's use of token spaces to represent concepts and to indicate grammatical relations between entities, one further aspect of this utterance merits attention and discussion. The interpreter's selection of the lexical item 'INFLUENCE', and its incorporation into the phrase "AFRICA SIGN-LANGUAGE LOCAL-AREA-THEIR-OWN SIGN-LANGUAGE ENTITY-OUTSIDE ENTITY-MOVE-DOWN INFLUENCE," signifying "the influence of outside sign languages on local sign languages," rather than the selection of a more succinct, single sign for the ST term 'IMPORTED' could be seen from two perspectives, both interesting. To appreciate the lexical nuances, one must know that a critical issue in African sign language linguistics is the colonial legacy in deaf communities and the impact which the use of French, American, British and other (mostly European) sign languages is having on deaf schools in Africa, with the result that the survival of indigenous sign languages among the younger generation of deaf people is endangered. Therefore the IS interpreter's phrasing "influence of outside sign languages on local sign languages" could reflect a somewhat politicized personal agenda of the interpreter. However, an alternative and more plausible scenario is that the interpreter judged that the main target audience (i.e. deaf people from Africa or deaf people from other countries not yet familiar with sociolinguistic issues impacting African sign languages) would be more interested in the workshop's agenda if they saw that there was a political issue relating to a threat to indigenous sign languages, a topic sure to arouse interest among sign language users and activists.

A second option is that the interpreter's selection of the sign 'INFLUENCE' plus the descriptive phrase "of outside sign languages on local sign languages" had a more politically neutral motivation, e.g. it was a linguistic analysis and judgment call on the part of the interpreter, who sensed that the rather abstract, metaphorical meaning of the word 'IMPORTED,' if directly interpreted from the ST, would not be accurately processed by most of his target audience.

Regardless of his motivation, the result is that the IS version conveys considerably more interesting, specific and provocative information than the brief ST English phrase 'imported and local sign languages.' The English phrase, which could be understood as simply announcing that the workshop would present a factual overview of several languages, does not give any indication of what is actually a complex and dynamic relationship between the local and imported languages. Furthermore, it gives no indication that this is a critical issue currently under debate in African sign language linguistic circles. In this instance, the IS target audience is cued by the interpreter to a more comprehensive view of the topic to be discussed than is the English-speaking readership of the website.

Fig. 9. ´INFLUENCE´-start position   Fig.10. ´INFLUENCE´-end position

(4) Lexical Resource: Use of two well-established signs in alternation: 'ENGLISH-1' and 'ENGLISH-2' (ASLW Workshop languages)

Figures 11 and 12 depict two different signs for the word 'English', Fig. 11 being the one used in Britain and in many European countries, and Fig. 12 being the one used in ASL. The IS interpreter undoubtedly chose to sign both versions in succession in order to make his message accessible to the widest possible number of people in his unseen target audience who might visit the webpage of the ASLW. Similarly, alternation between two widely-known

versions of the sign for "AFRICA" was also observed during this interpreter's

Fig.11. ′ENGLISH-1′
(British/European version)

Fig. 12. ′ENGLISH-2′
(ASL version)

introduction to the ASLW website. He first used 'AFRICA-1,' signed with one hand as the geographical contours of the continent, considered a more modern, neutral and "politically correct" sign, but he followed that with the more traditional sign 'AFRICA-2,' which is the dominant hand in a fist position rotated to face the signer and moving in a counterclockwise circular motion in front of the face. Despite presenting both signs in the introduction, throughout his subsequent interpretation of the workshop information, he used only the 'AFRICA-2' sign. Only a retrospective interview could reveal his motivation for this lexical choice.

A good example of an IS interpreter radically editing the ST content to match the anticipated information needs of the target audience is found on this ASLW website, as shown in example (5), below. The English ST on the workshop website gave detailed information to its target audience, which was presumably either hearing or deaf scholars conducting research on African sign languages. The content of the ST is presented in formal "conference-speak" register and covers points such as the official conference language (English), the language requirements for abstracts and Power Point presentations (English) and information about which languages are accepted for presentation (any

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language). It also states that interpreting services will be provided between English and IS, but are not guaranteed for any other languages, and it encourages all presenters to present in IS to the extent possible. Acknowledging the unique communication requirements of an international audience composed of both deaf and hearing attendees, the webpage also informs participants that a brief preparatory workshop introducing International Sign will be given prior to the conference sessions. Participants will be taught necessary terms and linguistic terminology to ensure there will be effective communication.

In the IS version, presumably designed and posted for prospective deaf attendees who do not have a fluent command of English, the interpreter shifted the register to a decidedly more informal, friendly tone than that of the English text. He accomplished this through his selection of lexical items and by projecting a friendly, reassuring affect in his delivery. Rather than presenting the information as rules and expectations of presenters and prospective attendees, he addressed what he judged to be the primary concerns of the deaf target audience, e.g. how they would be able to communicate with other attendees at an international conference focussing on linguistic topics. An excerpt of the back-translation into English of the IS version is provided in example (5), below:

(5) Register adjustment for target audience: ASLW Workshop Languages
    Back-translation of the TT in IS:
    The workshop will be conducted in International Sign and
    English. If you are planning to come to the workshop and you
    don't know IS, don't worry. Once you get here, we will all get
    together, talking in IS. You will soon be using IS fluently.

(See Appendix 1, Text 2, ASLW Workshop Languages, appendix examples (8a) and (8b) to compare the entire ST and TT under discussion here.)

Turning now to an example of an IS interpreter incorporating syntactic features of natural sign languages into his TT, let us examine an utterance from the WASLI website. Because we will be discussing syntactic features, a detailed transcription is provided in example (6), below. Transcription conventions are provided in Appendix 2. Screenshot images of some of the interesting lexical and syntactic features of this example can be seen in Figures 13-16, below.

(6) Incorporating syntactic features of natural sign languages in IS:

    ST: "Support national associations" (WASLI)

    TT: (fully glossed and annotated IS, below)

nm	_____ebr;gaze-hds__t	rs:step_back, extend_tongue/"don't care"
Sign:	ENCOURAGE group SET-UP-ORGs	throw-away (2 hds)
SgnS:	ASL/IC ASL/(IS)	IC
TFr:	encourage groups to set up an org.	disregard-and-don't-care-about them
	(not IS 1258)	

nm	rs_____hn	index/gaze following hds	_____pursed lips___hn
Sign:	FINGER-SHAKE	all-of-them	SUPPORT ENCOURAGE develop
SgnS:	IS 1343	IC	(IC/FSL?) ASL/(IC?)
	IC/IS1377(?mod)		(not IS 1439) (not IS761)

TFr:	No, not that!	all of them	will be supported and encouraged

-->**Would WASLI encourage the groups to get started and then just disregard them? No way; of course not! Those fledgling organizations would be supported and encouraged to develop.**

TT   "[WASLI] will encourage groups to formally organize and will be there to support them throughout the process and will encourage them in their development."

ST: *** Support national associations**

Of particular interest here is the restructuring of a three-word ST utterance ("support national associations") into an expanded topic-comment structure

consisting of nine lexical manual signs and numerous non-manual agreement features in the TT, as seen in example (6), above. Among these non-manual agreement features are eye-gaze to indicate subject-verb agreement, shown in Fig. 13, below, where the interpreter's eye gaze leftward is focused on the location where he had established the existence of "groups" (e.g. national associations) in the immediately preceding utterance. Another important non-manual is the interpreter's animated facial expression and body tilt, by means of which he embodies the first person subject of the sentence. The lexical sign 'ENCOURAGE' must be combined with these two important non-manual markers to create an interpretable utterance (i.e. (ENCOURAGE-them') and to avoid expressing the simple citation form 'ENCOURAGE'.

Fig. 13. ´ENCOURAGE-them´

Figures 14 and 15, below, showing successive movements in a sequence which can be interpreted to mean "disregard," "ignore," "pay no attention" or "abandonment" are also interesting choices, being iconic movements which are potentially universally, or at least widely—interpretable, but which are not conventionalized in the IS lexicon. Note that through his facial expression and

tongue and lip positions, the interpreter maintains his affected first person role as the subject of the sentence.

Having thus established the concept of "establishing then abandoning" the organizations under discussion, a concept selected by this interpreter as the essential semantic content to convey, the interpreter then abruptly shifts to a third person narrator role in Fig. 16, below, (interpretable from the fact that he is directly facing the audience/camera in neutral space) to assert that 'No! No way will this [abandonment] happen!'

The interpreter's choice of the lexical string 'ESTABLISHI-GROUPS-ABANDON-NO WAY!' as a way to express the English word 'support' is an interesting one, as every natural sign language has a lexical sign conveying the concept of "help" or "support." Using a modified version of one of these familiar national signs for 'SUPPORT' would seem to have been a logical choice. But here the interpreter's extensive familiarity with his target audience and his linguistic sensitivity to the fact that the sign 'SUPPORT' can be understood in both literal and metaphoric ways seem to have led him to interpret the concept as a phrasal expansion in IS, ensuring broader intelligibility.

Fig. 14. ′DISREGARD, ABANDON′-a   Fig. 15. ′DISREGARD, ABANDON′-b

Further details regarding the linguistic features of the utterances could be given, but the above will no doubt suffice to illustrate the point that in IS the

lexical choices, while admittedly restricted, can be integrated through non-lexical, non-manual devices into complex syntactic structures familiar to all proficient signers in order to give texture and nuance to what appear to be rather bare propositions at first glance. The ability to deploy these rich and varied syntactic structures of natural sign languages is undoubtedly one of the important keys to the success of International Sign as a lingua franca medium of inter-lingual communication.

5. Conclusion and directions for future inquiry

The body of previously published literature on IS interpreting is relatively limited and none, to my knowledge, addresses sign language and spoken

Fig. 16. ′NO, NOT-AT-ALL, NO-WAY′

language interpreting from a comparative perspective. This paper is a modest attempt to bridge that gap, in the hopes of encouraging more interest among spoken language interpreters for the work being done by their counterparts in the sign language interpreting field, and vice versa, and out of the conviction that familiarity with tasks of linguistic analysis and with translation strategies in unfamiliar language pairs can enhance the linguistic sensitivity of interpreters working in any language combination.

After an overview of the development and characteristics of International Sign (IS) as an ad hoc pidgin-like medium of communication when deaf people from different countries meet, highlighting the relative efficiency of this means of communication, this paper surveyed both cultural and linguistic factors affecting interpretation into International Sign from source texts in written languages.

By analyzing utterances taken from an internet-based corpus of university homepage and academic conference websites providing International Sign interpretation of information posted in written English, French and/or German, this paper has attempted to show that the ST/TT linguistic equivalence and target audience design decisions made while mentally processing in simultaneous sign language interpreting situations are quite similar to those required of spoken language interpreters.

Because the stock of conventionalized, shared lexical resources available to an IS interpreter is drastically reduced, IS interpreters tend to compensate for this limitation through a variety of strategies, including (a) the creation of lexical counterparts which iconically represent the most relevant semantic contents of the target item, and (b) the incorporation of complex syntactic features widely distributed across all documented sign languages to enhance the interpretability of the ad hoc lexicon. To accomplish this, a good IS interpreter must possess knowledge of the interpreting process and a degree of bi- or even multi-lingual proficiency in several sign languages on a par with the linguistic and other skills required of any highly-qualified spoken language interpreter.

A more exhaustive analysis of the linguistic features and the sources of a larger corpus of monologic parallel texts available on the web remains to be done. This could usefully be supplemented with retrospective interviews with the presenters selected for these online texts in International Sign, to ascertain what linguistic and audience design factors affected their choices when interpreting from the written source texts into IS. Intelligibility studies of IS presentations on the web with both novice IS signers and experienced IS

signers are also warranted and should be relatively easy to conduct on an international scale, given that the online IS texts are accessible worldwide to anyone with internet access. It is anticipated that such a study of IS could contribute substantially to ongoing sign language linguistics research projects on the cognitive aspects of sign language structure, as expert IS interpreters intuitively draw on the features of signed languages which they judge to be maximally comprehensible to members of an unspecified international target audience of proficient signers.

Collecting, transcribing and analyzing different registers of IS in a variety of offline interactional contexts, including conference interpreting, by signers of a wider variety of sign language backgrounds, also needs to be done, both to serve as a corpus for analysts of postulated universals of sign language structure and to use in developing pedagogical materials for initial familiarization and training of prospective IS interpreters.

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APPENDIX 1.

Parallel Text Transcripts: English and International Sign

TEXT 1. "Introduction to WASLI, Aims"

ST (English):

(1) WASLI aims to:

(2) -advance the sign language interpreting profession worldwide

(3) -have national associations in all countries

(4) -support national associations

TT in IS:

Ex (1) "WASLI AIMS TO:"

nm:	_____mth/t	___mth	__tightlip	_____		hn	_____mth
Sign:	W-A-S-L-I-loc	HAVE	LIST	GOALS+point	LIST 7(5-hand lt hd+2 fingers rt hd)		HAVE-loc:WASLI
SgnS:	fs	IS 1298	IC+index	IC	IS(#IS;non-IS ordinals)		IS 1298+index
TFr:	WASLI	has	goals (not IS 1148)		7		has

--> WASLI has goals (assertion) and there are 7 of them (assertion).

TT: "WASLI has 7 goals"

ST: WASLI aims to:

Ex (2) "ADVANCE THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING PROFESSION
WORLDWIDE"

nm	_____t	_____eye_squint__	_____mth
Sign:	lt thmb-1	look-lt, look-center, look-rt	INTERPRETER
SgnS:	IS	IC	French/European SLs (not IS 794)
TR:	first	in-all-different-places/wherever	interpreter

nm	mth "professional"	mth "world"	bs:center/face_audience
Sign:	high-level	world + lthd base; rthd dot w/index all over base	encourage+ come-together/make-a-group
SgnS:	IC	IC	IC/ASL + IC

TFr: professional all-over-the-world   encourage; come-together; make-a-group
    --> First, wherever they may be in the world, encourage highly-skilled,
        professional interpreters to come together/to unite.

TT: **"First, encourage professional interpreters wherever they are in the world to**
    come together for a common cause."

ST: *** Advance the sign language interpreting profession worldwide**

Ex (3) "2. HAVE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ALL COUNTRIES"

nm: _segu..o*

Sign: indx-indx   lt hd fist/rt hd dot+++circling base   loc+0-0   + ASSOCIATION

SgnS: IC   IC (IS 70 not used)   IS 819 + IS 956

TFr: second   all-over-the-world   none-association

*Note mouthing of Spanish on segundo/second?/note hesitation; no simultaneous sign

nm   rs:_____   just-do-it/eyes_wide, lip_pout_____   _____hn

Sign: W-A-S-L-I   look/see ENCOURAGE   SET UP
                (rpt rthd on lthd) rthd dot (circling)

SgnS: fs   IC   IC/ASL   ASL(IC?) IC
                                        (not IS 1258

TFr: WASLI   check/   encourage to set up/   all-over-the-world
                verify   establish

    --> Second, WASLI will check to see where there is no association and then
        will try to set up associations in those places that are lacking one.

TT: "Second, WASLI will survey the situation all over the world and when they
    find that there is no professional association for interpreters in a country,
    they will work toward establishing one there."

ST: *** Have national associations in all countries**.

Ex (4) "SUPPORT NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS"

nm   _____ebr;gaze-hds__t   rs:step back, extend tongue/"don't care"

Sign: ENCOURAGE group   SET-UP-ORGs   throw-away (2 hds)

SgnS: ASL/IC   ASL/IC   IC

TFr: encourage groups   to set up an org.   disregard-and-don't-care-about
                    (not IS 1258)   them

nm	rs_____neg_hn	index/gaze foll.hds	_____pursed_lips	____hn
Sign:	FINGER-SHAKE	all-of-them	SUPPORT ENCOURAGE	develop
SgnS:	IS 1343	IC	(IC/FSL?) ASL/(IC?)	
	IC/IS1377(?mod)		(not IS1439) (not IS761)	

TFr: No, not that! All of them will be supported and encouraged
  -->Would WASLI encourage the groups to get started and then just disregard them? No way; of course not! Those fledgling organizations would be supported and encouraged to develop.

TT: **"[WASLI] will encourage groups to formally organize and will be there to support them throughout the process and will encourage them in their development."**

ST: ***Support national associations**

TEXT 2. "ASLW Workshop: Themes, Languages"

ST 1 (English):

The workshop will address the following themes:

1. *Imported and local sign languages in Africa

2. *Documentation and sign language corpora

3. *Signed language lexicography in Africa

4. *Signed language teaching in Africa

5. *Signed Language Planning and Standardization

TT: (only theme items 1, 3, and 5 were selected for analysis in this paper). A reduced transcription format consisting only of the English glosses for the signs is presented here.

Ex (5) "Workshop Themes: Imported and local sign languages in Africa"

TT: AFRICA   SIGN-LANGUAGE   LOCAL   POSS-3p
   SIGN-LANGUAGE   ENTITY-OUTSIDE [upper left]
   ENTITY-MOVE-DOWN   INFLUENCE

Ex (6) "Workshop Themes: Signed language lexicography in Africa"

TT: SIGN-LANGUAGE   BOOK   VIDEO-CAMERA++

SNAPSHOT-CAMERA++   CL:LAYOUT[6 positions]

Ex (7) "Workshop Themes: Signed language planning & standardization"

TT: GROUP (up-rt) INDEX-grp GOV'T   WHAT?

RULE   DECREE

TECHNOLOGY(structure?)   SIGN-LANGUAGE

SAME (2 L-hds) DECREE

Ex (8a) "Workshop Languages"

ST 2 (English): (from "ASLW Workshop: Themes, Languages")

The WOCAL-6 congress language is English. Papers can be presented in any other language, however, abstracts of all papers must be submitted in English. [sic]

During the symposium, presentations in English or International Sign will be interpreted in International Sign or English respectively. Interpretations in or from other languages can not be guaranteed. Presenters are encouraged to present in International Sign as much as possible.

A brief preparatory workshop on International Sign will be given prior to the workshop. Participants will be taught necessary terms and linguistic terminology to ensure there will be effective communication.

All presentations should be accompanied by Powerpoint slides.

Of course, people are free to bring interpreters for particular sign languages.

TT: Full sign-by-sign glosses and transcription not given here. (See commentary in the main text, section 4, example 5, regarding substantial modifications in TT made by IS interpreter. See 8b, below, for back-translation from IS of ST 2.)

Ex (8b) TT of "Workshop Languages", as back-translation from IS version:

The workshop will be conducted in International Sign and English. If you are planning to come to the workshop and you don't know IS, don't worry. Once you get here, we will all get together, talking in IS. You will soon be using IS fluently.

Plus, all the materials, technical terms and linguistic terminology will be explained in IS. In addition, all the presenters will be using IS during their presentations. All the papers and handouts, as well as the Power Point presentations, will be in English.

TEXT 3: Center for Deaf Studies (CDS), University of Bristol, UK: M S c Language Admissions Policy"

ST (English):

The MSc in Deaf Studies is an intensive academic programme taught (simultaneously) in BSL and English. Students selecting units from the Sign linguistics programme as part of their pathway should note these units are taught exclusively in BSL. This policy is intended to ensure that all students are able to access the content of the programme without difficulty.

Ex (9a) "MSc Language Admissions Policy"

TT (abbreviated transcript with sign glosses only):

HERE   M-S-C   DEAF-STUDIES   DEEP   HIGH   SMART   TEACH
BOTH   BSL   ENGLISH

YOU HAVE   PICK   CONCENTRATION-FIELD SIGN-LINGUISTICS
YOU-KNOW   LECTURES   TEACHING
EVERYWHERE-SIGNING DEEP BSL

YOU-KNOW-IT   POLICY-CLEAR-HAVE   WE-ANNOUNCE-IT
LEARN   M-S-c   PROGRESS   PROBLEM-NONE
SMOOTH-INTO-FUTURE

Ex (9b) TT "MSc Language Admissions Policy" as back-translation from IS version

The MSc in Deaf Studies here is a rigorous and challenging program, taught in both BSL and English. If you decide to focus on sign language linguistics, be aware that all the lectures will be taught in BSL and it is important to have a solid knowledge of BSL.

We have a firm policy about this and want to let you know about it right from the start so that you are able to take full advantage of the MSc program and to ensure that you have no problems throughout your academic career.

APPENDIX 2.
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS and ABBREVIATIONS

Note: *Lines 3, 4 and 6 are not customarily included in sign language transcriptions. They are added here when detailed transcriptions are provided to illustrate the analytical process of the interpreter in creating the TT.*

Line 1: nm or rs: non-manual markers (e.g. head nod; furrowed brow, eyebrow raise, eye gaze) and reference shifts (facing center to audience; shifting visual focus)

Line 2: Sign: Sign gloss in English.

Line 3: SgnS. Source of sign: Sources include the following in these texts:

fs=fingerspelled (usually international fingerspelling adapted from ASL/French SL)

IS=sign listed in WFD's Gestuno dictionary or other published IS lexical references. Number indicates sign's reference in the *Gestuno* dictionary.

IC=iconic gesture representing target concept, used by signers to set up & reference entities in space; this is a major lexical source of International Sign; assumed by IS signers/presenters/interpreters to be easily understood by fluent signers, usually not traceable to a specific sign language

ASL=sign borrowed from ASL [or from other documented sign language, as noted in transcript]

GG=generic gesture (from general hearing [Western?] culture, i.e. "shoulder shrug" for "I dunno")

Line 4: TFr: word-by-word English translation of the signed utterance, followed by a freer, more idiomatic English version, **in bold** (intermediary mental processing stage before spoken interpretation)

Line 5: TT: target text, i.e. a SL interpreter's proposed rendering into spoken
       English

Line 6: ST: source text (written English)

Abbreviations used in the transcripts or in the text:

___t	a line followed by an abbreviation indicates the scope of the non-manual
+	two signs/gestures signed as a compound
++	indicates repetition of a sign (repetition of +++ indicates large number of repetitions, e.g. "all over the world" in example (2) of Appendix 1.
HAVE	capitalized words are used as English gloss for conventionalized signs in detailed transcripts; in glossed-only transcripts, all manual signs written in capital letters, whether conventionalized or not
them	small letters used to gloss manual signs which are not conventionalized in IS/Gestuno or in any documented sign language; also used for referents of non-manual indexicals
ASL, BSL	American Sign Language, British Sign Language
ebr	eyebrow raise
fb	furrowed brow
fs	fingerspelling/fingerspelled term (e.g. W-F-D)
FSL	French Sign Language
gaze	eyegaze in the direction of a referent, e.g. example (4) of Appendix 1; non-manual on "encourage group", also referred to as "deictic locus" as it is often used to indicate pronominal reference
hn; hs	head nod=affirmation; head shake=negation
IS	1. International Sign (general term)
	2. WAD-approved signs listed in *Gestuno* (2003 [1975])
loc	use of index finger pointing (lt or rt; up or down) to indicate the actual location of a referent, or, more commonly, to "set up" or invoke a conceptual location of an entity referred to in the discourse
lt/lt hd	towards the left/signed on the left hand
rt/rt hd	towards the right/signed on the right hand
mth	mouth movement by signer (usually mouthing of corresponding English [Spanish, French] word in source text or in signer's

        language of written communication)

neg   negative indication through head-shaking or other non-manual

neu   signer directs gaze toward receiver or in neutral, non-significant
           direction

nm   non-manual markers, e.g. bs, hn in example (1) or eye squint in   example
           (2) of Appendix 1; includes silent mouthing, as in "professional" in example
           (2). A line (e.g. _____q; _____neg) is drawn to indicate the scope over
           which the non-manual marker continues.

___q/Rhq question or rhetorical question using a combination of non-manual signs and
           body positioning

rs   reference (role) shift

SL   sign language

____t   topicalization (by means of eye gaze, eye squint, head nod, etc.)

[Abstract]

International Sign:
Its Use as an International Conference Lingua Franca

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The provision of International Sign (IS) interpretation in situations of inter-lingual communication both at international conferences and on websites serving deaf academics, students, interpreters and deaf association leaders has become increasingly widespread in the last decade. This paper presents some of the linguistic and cultural phenomena underlying the effective use of IS as an international means of communication by examining the linguistic choices of IS interpreters when delivering their message in a unique pidgin variety developed solely between users of signed languages.

The corpus consists of parallel IS/English texts obtained from five websites serving the international community of sign language users (see CILS, CDS, ASLW, WASLI and WFD). The paper analyzes the lexical choices and syntactic organization of the IS utterances and points out parallels between spoken language and IS sign language interpreting. Major features of this corpus of web-based monologic IS interpreted texts are found to correspond to features of IS identified in previous studies of live (offline) IS interpreting (Woll, Fischer 1991, Webb & Supalla, Supalla & Webb, Moody 2002, Locker-McKee & Napier, Allsop, Woll & Brauti, Rosenstock 2004, Villeneuve), namely: borrowing lexical items from national sign languages, accessing widely-shared grammatical features of documented signed languages such as the use of space and movement to locate referents and to indicate syntactic relations, body shifts and eye gaze, rhetorical questions, and the use

of classifiers, circumlocution, metaphor and the deconstruction of abstract terms into basic meaning units to compensate for the lack of a conventionalized, standard lexicon. Future directions of research into IS, which include retrospective interviews with the online interpreters and follow-up intelligibility studies with target audience signers in a variety of countries, are suggested.

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