

Expectations of qualified deaf interpreters (DIs): How do hearing interpreters feel about DIs' contribution to the market?

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ABSTRACT

Qualified deaf interpreters (DIs) are starting to enter the sign language interpreting market in Norway. This poses a challenge for both the interpreter profession and interpreting agencies, which have thus far provided work for hearing interpreters offering interpreting services *for* deaf individuals, not *by* them. This explorative study shows that more information is needed regarding the way in which DIs influence the interpreting market. At the same time, hearing interpreters see opportunities for their own professional development when collaborating with DIs, specifically for the improvement of their own linguistic and cultural competences.

Keywords: sign language interpreting, profession, interpreter agencies, qualified hearing interpreters, qualified deaf interpreters

Pričakovanja kvalificiranih gluhih tolmačev: kakšno je mnenje slišičih tolmačev o prispevku gluhih tolmačev na trgu?

IZVLEČEK

Kvalificirani gluhi tolmači na Norveškem začenjajo vstopati na tolmaški trg. To predstavlja izziv tako za poklic tolmača kot za tolmaške agencije, ki so doslej zagotavljale delo le slišičim tolmačem za gluhe posameznike, ne pa tudi delo gluhim tolmačem. V tej pilotni študiji se pokaže, da so potrebne dodatne informacije o tem, kako gluhi tolmači vplivajo na tolmaški trg. Hkrati slišiči tolmači pri sodelovanju z gluhihimi tolmači vidijo priložnosti za lastno poklicno napredovanje, zlasti pri izboljševanju lastnih jezikovnih in kulturnih kompetenc.

Ključne besede: tolmačenje za gluhe, poklic, tolmaške agencije, kvalificirani slišiči tolmači, kvalificirani gluhi tolmači

1. Introduction

Sign language interpreting professionals (referred to in this paper as sign language interpreters, SLIs) ensure that deaf individuals in Norway can exercise their right to request and receive interpreting services.

Education and training at a certain level are an essential part of every definition of a profession (see for example Abbott 1988). However, the manner and level of education for SLIs differ in different countries. In Sweden, for example, there are two different paths to becoming an SLI, either by attending university and acquiring a bachelor's degree or through vocational training (De Wit 2020). However, in Norway there is only one way to become a qualified SLI. Since 2002, a candidate needs to acquire a bachelor's degree from one of the three educational institutions offering SLI programmes (Haualand 2018). Initially these programmes all catered for hearing students and were designed to meet the demands now administrated by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). NAV is the sole provider of sign language interpreting services, which are divided into 14 agencies across the country. According to NAV's criteria, the SLIs should possess adequate auditory faculty to be able to work for them as qualified interpreters. Hence, the career of a qualified interpreter has not been made available for deaf individuals, regardless of the fact that they have always interpreted within the deaf community (Sander 1993), and that NAV would sometimes use their services as language brokers or relay interpreters.

However, since 2016 due to changes in the educational legislation all Norwegian SLI programmes have also been open for deaf students (Skaten, Urdal and Tiselius 2020). Still, the entrance of qualified deaf interpreters (DIs) on the market was challenged by those who control access to the market – NAV, the related work organization (Haualand 2018), and the hearing interpreters working for NAV. Hearing interpreters hold a powerful position because they are qualified SLIs and thus constitute the interpreter profession. They also may become members of the professional organization, *Tolkene i Akademikerforbundet (TiA)*, which requires formal interpreter education as do NAV's hiring policies. Hence, both hearing interpreters and NAV could be regarded as gatekeepers to the market, now facing a paradigm shift.

The aim of this study was to explore how the gatekeepers are dealing with this new situation. The focus is specifically on the hearing interpreters', as well as the expectations of NAV agency staff (who may also be interpreters themselves) which might impact DIs' access to the market. The main research question of this study is therefore the following: What are the expectations of qualified hearing interpreters regarding the new qualified deaf interpreters entering the market?

The participants of this study were hearing interpreters rather than DIs. By addressing this particular group of interpreters, this study also intended to raise awareness among hearing interpreters by asking them to reflect upon the questions posed to them. This in turn might lead to further discussions on how hearing interpreters working for NAV and members of the interpreting profession think about opening the profession and the market to new members: qualified DIs.

The authors of this article are both hearing interpreters and teach deaf and hearing interpreting students on the same undergraduate degree programme. As “seeing is inseparable from the perspective” (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009, 9), we acknowledge the fact that our privileged position as hearing members of the SLI community might have biased the questions asked. Furthermore, this might have influenced how we perceived, through our analysis, the expectations the hearing interpreters have of the DIs. Nevertheless, we believe that our proximity to the deaf community, as well as being members of the profession, might have also been beneficial for understanding the processes inherent to the interpreter profession (cf. Bourdieu 2000, 4).

When this article was written, there were no DIs employed at interpreter agencies in Norway, and few hearing interpreters have had experience collaborating with DIs.

2. Background

This section will elaborate on the term *deaf interpreters* and define more in detail who the gatekeepers of the market are.

2.1 Deaf interpreters

There are several researchers that have described what constitutes a DI (see for example Forestal 2011; Adam et al. 2014; Boudreault 2005; Tester 2018). According to Tester (2018, 4), “deaf interpreters are individuals who work as interpreters and are also deaf themselves”. The degree of professionalism is not evident in this definition, but Tester (2018, 4) argues that “they are an emerging sector of specialized professionals in the field of sign language interpreting”. Our observation shows that this is not yet the case in Norway.

Nevertheless, deaf bilinguals have, for many years, played a role as language brokers within the Norwegian deaf community, a tradition that is also well-documented in other countries (Bauman 2008; Stone 2005). Most of the Norwegian scholarly literature focuses on how deaf individuals have helped hearing interpreters interpreting for deaf immigrants (see for example Olsen 2019; Olsen, Skaten and Urdal, 2018). Interpreters with sign language as their L1 and the experience of being deaf share a sameness with the deaf individuals they are interpreting for. Boudreault (2005, 335) recognizes this as a foundation for efficient communication and for being able to establish a relationship of trust between themselves as professionals and the deaf primary participant. Stone (2005) further argues that DIs hold both a cultural and linguistic competence. This means that they can perceive nuances in the signed language more

easily, in the same way that hearing interpreters can perceive nuances in the spoken language (Adam et al. 2014). According to Stone (2005), DIs use their visual competence alongside their inherent understanding of the deaf culture to translate utterances, which makes comprehension easier for deaf individuals.

The Norwegian Association of the Deaf (NDF) asserts that there is a need for the skills that DIs can bring to the market (2015). In addition to this, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' report on the field of sign language interpreting (Agenda Kaupang 2016, 34) states that experience indicates that interpreters who are deaf themselves have better prerequisites for interpreting for deaf individuals, who may have poorly developed Norwegian Sign Language skills.

2.2 The gatekeepers

In this article, we define the work organization, that is the body covering the interpreting agencies (NAV) and the interpreter profession itself, as the two main gatekeepers of the sign-language interpreting market.

Hearing interpreters founded their own professional organization (today the TiA) in 1978. With this, the interpreters could make demands on behalf of the profession (cf. Abbott 1988). The codes of professional ethics for interpreters were then developed, which, as of today, are based on the core principles of fidelity and impartiality (cf. Skaaden 2019). The professional organization claims the area of jurisdiction for the interpreters by defining the tasks of the profession and identifying the individuals who can perform these tasks. The admission to TiA is regulated. To become a member, DIs and hearing interpreters need to be qualified. For SLIs that means that a member has to have a bachelor's degree in SLI in Norway.

Parson (1978) claims that professional practitioners work in collaboration in order to achieve their goals in line with the social mandate they fulfil. In this context, the interpreters' work revolves around offering interpreter services at high standards. Abbott (1988) emphasizes that professions will always change, and that external and internal forces will seek to open or close the jurisdiction of a profession. In this study, these transformative forces are identified as the new professionals, the DIs, who are seeking to enter and expand the profession.

The professional organization in Norway (TiA) together with the work organization (NAV) holds the key to the market. In Norway, NAV is the sole provider of interpreting services, and thus essentially has full control over such services in the country (Haualand 2018).

3. Previous research

In Norway the collaboration between DIs and hearing interpreters is not well documented, which motivated an exploration of the qualified hearing interpreters' expectations for the newly qualified DIs.

In Europe, DIs and hearing interpreters were given equal status in 2017 when the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli) passed the resolution "The Inclusive Notion of Sign Language Interpreters/Translators" (European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters 2017). This resolution emphasizes that all sign language interpreters should be given access to education, equal status, and the same working conditions, and should be treated equally, regardless of their ability to hear. However, the historic discrimination against deaf individuals is well documented. Humphries applies the term "audism" to describe the hearing privilege, a "notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears" (1977, 12). Audism is characterized by three dimensions of oppression: the individual, the institutional (structural forms of oppression) and the metaphysical (being human is linked to being able to speak) (Bauman 2004). A contrast to audism is deaf praxis, in which the strengths of the deaf community's language, culture and identity is emphasized (Eckert 2010). From this perspective, the competences of deaf individuals are accentuated. As sign language interpreters, deaf individuals have a linguistic and cultural competence that is advantageous. However, several studies underline that education is required to become a qualified sign language interpreter (De Meulder and Heyerick 2013; Forestal 2011; Stone 2013; Heyerick 2021).

O'Connell and Lynch (2020) found that DIs see themselves as autonomous professionals based on their expert knowledge. However, they struggle with the perception of themselves as interpreters and experience a feeling of exclusion by hearing interpreters. Brück and Shaumberger's (2014) findings suggest that it is important for the development of the DI profession to raise the awareness of DIs' skills and services amongst hearing interpreters, as well as among deaf and hearing members of the public. A study commissioned by the Danish Association of the Deaf (Danske Døves Landsforbund 2015) showed that groups who otherwise rarely use interpreters (such as deaf immigrants, older individuals, deafblind individuals and deaf individuals with other disabilities) requested the services more often when they were able to use DIs. On the other hand, hearing interpreters who participated in the study stated that DIs did not contribute to a better understanding between the parties, while the DIs and the deaf primary participants had the opposite experience.

Stone and Isari's (2018) investigation of court interpreters showed that DIs experienced that some hearing interpreters would distance themselves from them, which

then created an impression of a kind of first- and second-class hierarchy of interpreters. The lack of support from hearing interpreters leads to mistrust within the interpreter team, and creates a distinction between an *us* (hearing interpreters) and *them* (DIs). However, according to Tester (2018), the majority of hearing court interpreters reported that they had good experiences when working with trained DIs. This study shows that hearing interpreters mainly choose to work with DIs when the deaf primary participant does not have sufficient sign language skills, is an immigrant, and/or has cognitive challenges.

DIs and ethics in relation to impartiality and trust have also been discussed in the literature. The code of ethics is important for qualified interpreters (Stone 2005), and questions have been raised regarding DIs interpreting for members of the same minority group that they are a part of (i.e. the deaf community). Some deaf individuals have expressed that they fear DIs will be indiscrete (Talks and Skjoldan 2018), even though as professional interpreters they must follow the code of ethics. Stone (2005) proposes that deaf individuals may prefer interpreters who are not members of the deaf community. Still, other studies show that they prefer interpreters they know (well) (Danske Døves Landsforbund 2015).

The reception of DIs was investigated in a study by Skaten, Urdal and Tiselius (2020). They explored DIs' experiences on a joint sign language interpreting programme with hearing students, and how they established themselves as qualified DIs in Finland. The DIs they interviewed described the transformation from not being recognized as interpreters to then becoming qualified interpreters accepted by both hearing interpreters and members of the deaf community.

4. Methodology

A social constructionist approach (Burr 2003) was adopted to investigate the expectations that the market's gatekeepers held towards DIs. The aim was to gain an insight into the historic and culturally specific knowledge that existed about the topic (cf. Burr 2003), and thus an explorative study was conducted. The choice of a social constructionist framework was informed by the authors' aim to address a particular population, namely members of the interpreter profession and the leaders and administrators of the interpreter agencies. The data collection was carried out through a structured online questionnaire that was distributed to this population (cf. Bryman 2012). Information about the project was sent out to all the 14 national SLI agencies and they in turn agreed to forward the information and the questionnaire to their employees and all other interpreters with whom they have contracts. The participants

were informed that answering the questionnaire would be anonymous, non-traceable and that they could withdraw their consent at any time.

In total, 144 people answered the questionnaire. It is difficult to estimate the exact percentage of the total population this number represents, given the fact that Norway does not have a body of registered SLI interpreters. Nevertheless, we believe that answers of 144 respondents provide a basis for identifying certain trends. All of the respondents have relevant experience in the field, ranging from half a year to 34 years.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions. The questions enquired about the participants' professional background ("What is your background/experience?") and their knowledge and experience with DIs ("What do you know about DIs?" and "Have you collaborated with DIs (with or without education)?"). Questions were also asked in order to gather answers regarding the participants' expectations and the limitations with regard to DIs entering the market, related to assignments ("If you had to administer assignments, can you mention which one you would assign to DIs") and to the market ("Can you name any limitations (economical, organizational or others) that would impact the DIs' access to work?" and "Do you see any possibilities for DIs to add something to the market and the profession? If yes, what might that be?"). Finally, the questionnaire allowed for the participants to add any other comments they might have on the subject. To ensure the validity of the study (cf. Bryman 2012), two pilot studies on a smaller sample of the target group were conducted. After having received constructive feedback, minor adjustments were made. The project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (825147).

A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) approach was applied to identify and report on themes within the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2019, 594) the themes are "creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves". After familiarizing themselves with the data, the authors coded interesting features such as hearing interpreters' expectations and conceptions related to the possibilities and limitations of DIs, and searched for themes. The themes revolved around how hearing interpreters describe DIs and how they describe themselves, the characteristics of an interpreter, the organization of interpreting services involving both hearing interpreters and DIs, and what it takes to include DIs in the existing profession and the market.

A researcher is never a neutral observer (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009), and in this process, our privileged positions (cf. Bauman 2004) as hearing interpreters might have resulted in a bias when identifying the themes, and might have influenced our understanding of the participants' answers and our definition of 'Deaf Interpreter'.

Furthermore, we understand that as interpreter educators, our roles may have also influenced the participants' readiness to take part in the study, as well as their answers in one way or another. With this in mind, we have attempted to reduce this bias by reviewing the themes several times and, in the end, named them as follows: "*We – the qualified interpreters*", "*They – the clients, from the deaf community*", "*Insiders of the profession*", "*The paradox in the service provision*" and "*The gate to the market*".

Three dimensions of audism (Bauman 2004) offer a framework for the analyses. Both the institutional and individual dimensions of oppression proved fruitful for understanding the limitations that DIs encounter in the market. The three dimensions allowed us also to identify and discuss the discriminatory practices that construct barriers. However, neither of these dimensions of audism provide a useful tool for identifying the possibilities in the same way. Hence, rather than adopting the whole framework for audism, we have applied selected notions of it.

By asking questions that might encourage the participants to reflect on their own practices and professional development, the study also borrows certain traits from action research (cf. Carr and Kemmis 2003). The focus was on initiating a process of opening the interpreting profession and the market for DIs.

All citations from the participants' responses have been translated from Norwegian into English by the authors, and the italicization has been inserted by the authors to emphasize the use of certain terms by the participants.

5. Results and discussion

The results of the study on hearing interpreters' expectations of DIs show that there is a need for more information on how qualified DIs will impact the profession of SLIs. Although some of the participants have worked with DIs without formal or informal interpreter training, the possibility of working with DIs on equal ground is still new to them all. Some resistance to accepting DIs as equal professionals can be identified, which may be an expression of hearing interpreters' privileged professional position. However, the most prominent finding is that DIs are welcomed to the market and the profession because they are regarded as having valuable sign language proficiency and cultural capital to offer.

5.1 We – the qualified interpreters

Qualified DIs are still new to the market in Norway, and from the participants' responses a view of *us* and *them* can be extracted; "*we*" the qualified interpreters and "*them*" the deaf relay interpreters. As one participant stated:

Now that we are becoming a global society, I think relay interpreters might contribute a lot to the market and to the interpreter colleagues (...) I think there will be an increasing need for relay interpreters in the future and *they* have so much to contribute.

Another participant articulated a rather inconsistent view on the need for relay interpreters:

If there is need for a relay interpreter, it should not be questioned as to whether *they* are to be put on such assignments or not. If a hearing interpreter feels that he or she has the experience it takes to interpret for immigrants on his/her own, and they have the time it takes, it could be up to the [hearing] interpreter to decide.

As there was only one trained DI in Norway at the time this study was conducted, most of the participants' experiences stemmed from working with DIs who did not have an interpreter educational background. This might explain the division made between *us* and *them*.

In the quote above, the participant argues that the hearing interpreters should decide the need for a DI. In the end, however, the power to decide the need for assigning a DI lies with the interpreter agencies. Still, this quote could be understood as evidence of the privilege the hearing interpreters have (cf. Humphries 1977). On the other hand, the participants ascribe DIs the ability to take "the responsibility to explain", which can be understood as linguistic expansion, when needed. This corroborates with the findings of Olsen, Skaten and Urdal (2018), that DIs are ascribed room for conducting their task in a manner hearing interpreters do not consider appropriate for themselves as qualified interpreters. If by this they mean something beyond linguistic expansion, it would challenge the scope of the interpreters' responsibility (cf. Skaaden 2019) as well as the definition of the professions' "special skills" (Abbott 1988, 7).

The results suggest that the perception of hearing interpreters on DIs' status might change with the introduction of educated DIs entering the market. Given their new status, one participant contemplated that: "Maybe [then] there will be no *us/them*". It might be assumed that the term *relay interpreter* will no longer be relevant once deaf and hearing interpreters are able to work on equal terms as qualified. However, the participants did point out several challenges to this change, with professional ethics being one of them. Even though research shows that qualified deaf interpreters would adhere to the same ethics as their hearing colleagues, their professional conduct might be different (cf. Skaten, Urdal, and Tiselius 2020, 22). This ambiguity is reflected in

the participants narratives regarding their expectation of DIs. Hearing interpreters might expect the reflection of deaf praxis (cf. Eckert 2010) in DIs' performance, including DIs taking more responsibility for the deaf primary participants in the mediated communication (cf. Skaten, Urdal, and Tiselius 2020). The concept of sameness (Boudreault 2005) combined with the DIs' linguistic competence provides the DI with a different kind of power, as acknowledged by the study participants. However, the DIs' focusing on the deaf party in the mediation might be seen as colliding with the code of ethics, in particular its principle of impartiality (Skaaden 2019; Tolken i Akademikerforbundet 2020).

On the other hand, it could be argued that "best practice" can be achieved in a team with a DI and a hearing interpreter (Mathers 2009, 6), where the DI is focusing on the deaf party to make the interpretation more "accurate, and both linguistically and culturally more accessible to all parties involved" (Tester 2018, 17). By employing this combined approach, society's responsibility for ensuring deaf individuals' rights could be fulfilled.

5.2 They – the clients, from the deaf community

Deaf people have an individual right to access interpreting services, and are therefore in Norway identified as clients of this welfare service. The concept of "client" therefore appears frequently in discourses surrounding both the interpreter and welfare services.

The division between interpreters and their clients constitutes another, clear distinction between *us* and *them* in the participants' narratives. The participants often referred to the client in the singular, as in this quote: "I would also put a DI on an assignment of which deaf immigrants were the client, for example a person who had recently arrived in Norway." Another participant argued that it could be challenging to use DIs as "the deaf [interpreter] is likely to meet the client in his/her spare time". These responses indicate that rather than there being two parties – the deaf and the hearing participants in the interaction – the interpreters regard the deaf party as the sole client.

The role of being a client and a member of the deaf community versus the role of being a colleague might also pose an issue, as some hearing interpreters consider DIs' proximity to the deaf community as a threat to the profession. One participant argued: "We are not allowed to interpret for people we have a close relationship to. How will this be if there are to be too many DIs?" This can be understood as indicating that hearing interpreters regard DIs not only as colleagues, but also as clients from the deaf

community. It questions DIs' ability to be able to draw a boundary between the role of professional and that of a private member of the deaf community, as well as hearing interpreters' concern about DIs' proximity to the deaf community that might challenge their impartiality. One participant said: "In general we need to focus on privacy and impartiality here as much as we do when it comes to hearing interpreters who are also integrated into the deaf society via friendship or family." Being a part of the deaf community seems to then serve as the critical attribution to this issue regardless of whether the interpreter is deaf or hearing. It is interesting that this is problematized here, as most of the spoken language's interpreters are also members of their respective minority. According to Skaaden (2019), if interpreters mix the role of a friend and that of an interpreter they breach the interpreters' professional ethics, namely the principle of impartiality. However, nothing in the professional code of ethics (Tolkene i Akademikerforbundet 2020) indicates that the interpreters' social and cultural background could exclude them from any particular assignment.

Despite that, one participant still stated that DIs should not be given assignments "in which they have too tight a bond to the client". Of course, this could be said for hearing interpreters as well, but this quote expresses a concern that a DIs' identification with the deaf community might challenge their identity as an interpreter. Another participant feared that the DIs "cannot be completely impartial due to the small deaf community etc. Things can easily become too personal". The notion that qualified DIs are fully capable of making their own ethical considerations does not seem to have been acknowledged in these quotes. This could be explained as audism, or understood as a lack of knowledge about the work of qualified DIs (cf. Brück and Schaumberger 2014). Either way, the argument of gatekeepers that the affinity of DIs to the small deaf community might be problematic for their professionalism does not help when it comes to opening the market for DIs.

Another participant contributed a new perspective, that of the need to consider the reaction of the deaf party to a deaf interpreter. They explained that "...it is crucial that we consider what kind of relationship the DI has to the client. Not just when he/she is impartial, but also considering how the client may feel." The consideration of the deaf client, expressed in this quote, might suggest a lack of trust in a DI's professionalism. On the other hand, it might also indicate the need for information on DIs and their role as interpreters.

Deaf individuals' reactions to having a deaf interpreter was also discussed in the literature, although without a clear conclusion (cf. Stone 2005). On an institutional level, it is known that interpreter training emphasizes impartiality and the importance of maintaining boundaries between one's private and the professional roles, for both

deaf and hearing students. Furthermore, Skaten, Urdal and Tiselius (2020) find that qualified DIs do not experience these multiple roles as problematic. However, it took some time before the deaf community became familiar with the notion of deaf people themselves being qualified interpreters.

5.3 Insiders of the profession

Professions are often faced with changes that can lead to a redefinition of the boundaries as to who is considered an insider and who is not (Abbott 1988). A strong trend within the data showed that education is regarded necessary for DIs to become a qualified interpreter, as De Meulder and Heyerick (2013), Forestal (2011), Heyerick (2021), Stone (2013) and Tester (2018) also highlight. One of the participants in this study points out that being an interpreter requires:

(...) knowledge about the interpreting process and techniques that are important for both being able to interpret and collaborate with other interpreters. Ethics and impartiality, knowledge, and reflection on the role of the interpreter are also important aspects of interpreting, I think. This includes knowledge and skills that are developed in collaboration with others and requires education.

Formal education is, as noted earlier, required to become a member of the interpreter organization as well as working for NAV. The participants seem to be concerned with the majority society's stance towards the interpreting professions. As one participant put it, 'As for every other professional it is important [for DIs] to gain knowledge with education in order to become professional and to be taken seriously.'

When it comes to specific assignments where the insiders would recommend the use of DIs' services, several of the participants indicated interpreter-mediated interactions involving deaf immigrants. As one of them said, "I imagine that a DI may create a common understanding to a greater extent than, for example, me as a hearing interpreter". A prerequisite for this might be a relationship of trust based on the social and cultural capital of the DI as well as the sameness they share with their client (cf. Boudreault 2005). Another participant reported having noticed "a different kind of trust between this person [a deaf immigrant], in an extremely difficult and vulnerable situation, and [the DI] than I think I, as a hearing interpreter, would have established." The findings show that DIs are considered competent when it comes to interpreting between two signed languages (including international signs) and for deaf individuals with cognitive challenges. These are also types of assignments for DIs to take on

that were described in the literature (Bauman 2008; Boudreault 2005; Danske Døves Landsforbund 2015; Stone 2005).

By pointing to assignments where the expertise of DIs is preferred, the participants of the study acknowledge the difference between hearing interpreters and DIs. At the same time, however, DIs are excluded when the participants highlight the ability to hear as a requirement for being able to interpret. One participant explained this as follows: “When an interpreter is deaf, this interpreter has a disability which means it is not possible for them to interpret from a spoken language to a signed language. A hearing interpreter is needed.” This may indicate that the participant does not fully see how DIs can contribute.

Responses that emphasized the ability to hear as an important attribute of an interpreter might be an articulation of hearing privilege and the oppression of deaf individuals. However, this can also be a representation of the hearing interpreters’ feeling that they need to legitimize their position in the profession. As DIs with formal training enter the profession, hearing interpreters might feel inferior to them and see their own position in the market as under threat. They thus defend their position by saying that the ability to hear is a requirement to fulfil the role (cf. Langholtz 2004). As hearing interpreters also recognize the capital and competence of DIs in areas where they themselves lack expertise, this leads to an ambivalence. According to Freidson (2001), this kind of ambivalence is characterized by a tension between their social mandate (offering interpreting services of good quality) and the professional practitioners’ own interests (keeping their position). This might then serve as an opportunity for an internal process of change. DIs “seeking new ground” (Abbott 1988, 90) will challenge the existing status quo.

Some of the participants argued in favour of welcoming DIs as colleagues. One of them stated that: “I believe we are thinking too narrowly about what DIs can and cannot do, so it is risky to say anything about this before we have tried it out.” This indicates a willingness to learn what DIs can add to the profession. Another participant described their thoughts on the way forward as follows:

A positivity and acceptance of something new must be developed. This will require a change and adaptation of the workplace. Some methods probably need to be changed, but overall, this could be a good way of showing that hiring DIs is not a problem.

In addition to promoting the viability of deaf individuals becoming interpreters on equal terms, and recognizing them as valuable members of the professional group,

this participant also pointed out that incorporating DIs in the profession requires the change of the attitudes and practices of hearing practitioners. As presented above, there are several hearing interpreters willing to do this. According to Langholtz (2004), an increasing recognition of DIs in the market will naturally lead to such a change. The participants further stated that the quality of the interpreting services could improve if the profession actively tried to accommodate DIs. Corroborating Tester's findings (2018), one participant specifically mentioned interpreting in legal settings: "[...] I believe that a team of hearing interpreters and DIs could enhance the quality of the service and better ensure deaf peoples' legal rights."

5.4 The paradox in the service provision

The participants in this study articulated that the conditions set out by the work organization (interpreting agencies) create both opportunities and limitations for DIs. The national interpreting agencies regulate who is admitted into the market and thereby exercise a form of economic and employment control. An exclusion of DIs can thus be seen as institutional audism (cf. Bauman 2004) and be regarded as an instrument of power that creates social differences between those who are allowed access and participation to those resources (in this context, paid work as an interpreter) and those who are not. In this way, the work organization also influences the development of the profession.

How qualified DIs in Norway will be met by the interpreting agencies remains to be seen, but the participants in this study had certain assumptions. In one of the commentaries one of the participants asked whether "the legislation [is] prepared for this [DIs]?" It is difficult to understand exactly which legislation this participant was specifically referring to as the interpreters' attributes are not actually mentioned in the current legislation. On the other hand, interpreting agencies state that the interpreters must interpret to/from a spoken language (NAV 2020), which can be understood as meaning that the interpreter must be hearing. However, this is not explicitly referred to in the legislation that regulates the interpreting services.

Some participants argued for limiting the use of DIs due to an anticipated increase in costs for NAV with regard to hiring a team of a DI and a hearing interpreter. A common assumption is that a DI would be booked in addition to the primary interpreter(s), and hence make the interpreting service more expensive. This was explained as follows: "Having a DI together with a hearing interpreter has an economic significance. Most assignments are performed well by hearing interpreters." Moreover, another participant stated: "Regarding assignments of a certain duration, you may

need four interpreters instead of two... it will probably be difficult to defend the use of taxpayers' money for that."

One participant claimed that "Most assignments function excellently, in my opinion, without a DI. There are often (too) many of us in the various arenas (...) [It would be] needless to add something extra if it already works. Not employment at any cost." If the intention of educating DIs is perceived as a way of giving deaf individuals work rather than to increase the quality of the interpreter services, it is difficult to acknowledge that DIs have a rightful place in the market. Nevertheless, the need for DIs is still expressed by the participants, as DIs can "cover assignments that are not covered today", as one participant put it. However, another participant stated that: "Information must be given about the opportunity to book one [a deaf interpreter]." The data therefore shows that while there are different perceptions about the position of DIs in the work organization, more knowledge is necessary on when DIs are needed and what the added value of DIs can be. Furthermore, the users of the services need more information on how to book a DI.

5.5 The gate to the market

The findings of this study suggest that a lack of knowledge about this new group of professionals is the main obstacle DIs currently face when it comes to entering the market, with one participant stating that "I don't know enough to have any opinion about this topic." It has also been documented that even deaf individuals require more knowledge about professional DIs (Brück and Schaumberger 2014).

Information is therefore required to break down the barriers currently hindering the use of DIs. Furthermore, research shows that both deaf and hearing interpreters must learn how to cooperate (Skaten, Urdal and Tiselius, 2020). This puts a great responsibility on interpreter education, as well as interpreters' organizations and the providers of interpreting services. These institutions should provide information and tools that could facilitate cooperation between deaf and hearing interpreters.

Despite some ambiguities, however, the findings of this study demonstrate that hearing interpreters have high expectations of the DIs, as this quote exemplifies: "Imagine working in a team with a DI? What a development that would mean for us hearing interpreters. It would have been a dream scenario. Discussing translation with a DI, that would have been a dream come true." This study has therefore documented a clear trend: hearing interpreters regard hiring DIs to be an opportunity for their own professional development, as well as for the agencies and services provided. This corroborates the deaf organizations' demands for more competence within the interpreting

services. They have long argued that hiring deaf individuals will add linguistic and cultural skills to the market (cf. Norges Døveforbund 2013), and the participants of this study also stressed this. Moreover, by doing this the profession would also be able to fulfil its social mandate to a greater extent.

6. Conclusion

Today, deaf individuals can train to become qualified interpreters at the same level as hearing individuals, and they can be admitted as members of the professional organization (TiA) in Norway. By investigating the opinions of hearing interpreters, administrators and leaders at the national interpreting agencies regarding qualified DIs, this study has focused on the expectations and assumptions that might impact DIs' access to the market.

The findings show that DIs' linguistic and cultural skills could benefit both hearing interpreters and interpreting agencies, and ensure the fulfilment of deaf individuals' legal rights. The participants placed a strong emphasis on how DIs can be more easily understood by deaf parties, and in that respect, could contribute to improving the quality of the interpreting services currently on offer. This could be understood as an expression of the confidence in DIs' expertise.

As discussed in the literature, changes to a profession occur in response to both external and internal factors (Abbott 1988). This study has shown that external factors such as access to interpreter education have influenced DIs' opportunities to become part of the profession. Simultaneously, there is an internal process at play in redefining the interpreters' special skills. Nevertheless, this study shows that the market's gatekeepers do not fully see the potential or need for qualified DIs. This could be interpreted as a result of institutional audism or seen as a reflection of a lack of knowledge about DIs and the advantages of collaboration between DIs and hearing interpreters. Traditionally, interpreting services have been provided *for* deaf individuals. As DIs are entering the market, a deconstruction of barriers currently in place within the work organizations as well as the profession will be required. Such barriers for qualified DIs' access to the market include discrimination against deaf individuals, and these barriers also negatively influence the agencies in fulfilling their social contract with regard to the deaf.

The main trend extracted from the data is that DIs can contribute to improving the competence level within the group of interpreters as a whole and improve the quality of the interpreting services for several groups of primary participants. Whether this potential is going to be utilized or not should be followed up by further research.

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