

# Sign language interpreter quality: the perspective of deaf sign language users in the Netherlands

MAYA DE WIT

Freelance sign language interpreter

IRMA SLUIS

Freelance sign language interpreter

## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the quality of sign language interpreters in the Netherlands from a deaf user perspective. Deaf sign language users select an interpreter according to situational factors, the interpreter's professional skills and norms. The choice for a specific interpreter is based on a set of individual quality criteria. Results of the study indicate that consumers firstly aim to select an interpreter who will render a faithful and understandable interpretation. Further results show that the criteria vary depending on the setting, such as employment, education, and community. Lastly, the study suggests that many deaf sign language users lack awareness regarding the professional requirements of the interpreter, and also many interpreters lack insight regarding the expectations of the deaf sign language user.*

## Introduction

The quality of interpreters, and in particular sign language interpreters, is frequently the subject of debate (Jong/Ouwehand 1996; Kahane 2001; Kalina 2002; Locker McKee 2008; Napier/Barker 2004; Pöchhacker 2002). The discussions revolve around what defines and who determines the quality of the interpreter.

In the social media and during formal and informal gatherings Dutch Sign Language users mention their dissatisfaction with the quality of the interpreters in the Netherlands (van der Garde/Muller 2011). The most frequent complaints

concern unprofessional attitudes and the inability to interpret from Dutch Sign Language to spoken Dutch, which is commonly referred to as sign-to-voice interpreting. In the Netherlands, deaf sign language users can typically choose the interpreter of their preference. No study has yet explored how sign language users make these choices and little research has been conducted on the views of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind sign language users on the quality of sign language interpreters in the Netherlands (Jong/Ouwehand 1996; Hermans *et al.* 2007; Sluis 2011; de Wit 2011).

The aim of this research is to obtain insights into why Dutch deaf sign language users choose specific interpreters and what qualities they look for in an interpreter. Mapping the perceptions of deaf sign language users is an important step into providing insight into the quality choices they make (Cokely/Winston 2008, 2009). These insights might then help the interpreter match the users' needs and wishes, ensuring the best possible quality interpreting service (Napier/Rohan 2007) and a smooth cooperation between the deaf client and the interpreter. In order to place this study in context, we first provide a brief overview of the profession of sign language interpreting and deaf sign language users in the Netherlands.

## 1. Sign language interpreting in the Netherlands

The Netherlands, a member of the European Union, is a relatively small country with nearly 17 million inhabitants. The country borders with Belgium and Germany and has two official languages: Dutch and Frisian, the latter spoken in Friesland, a northern province. Dutch Sign Language (NGT) is not officially recognized by the Dutch government. It is estimated that there are approximately 7,500 Dutch Sign Language users (Crasborn/Bloem 2009). There is one sign language interpreting program, the largest program in Europe according to the number of students enrolled (de Wit 2012). The program is a four-year bachelor program. The number of registered sign language interpreters has increased from 65 in 1997, to approximately 500 in 2013.

### 1.1 Training and professional development

The profession of sign language interpreters is still young and did not really start to develop in the Netherlands till after the eighties of the last century (De Wit 2008). Until then, children of deaf parents or other family members assisted people in communication without being really conscious that they took on a role as interpreters (Cokely 2005; Crasborn/Bloem 2009; Fant 1990).

The first initiative to establish an interpreter training program in the Netherlands was taken by the deaf community in 1983. This training was intended for relatives of deaf people who already were interpreting informally. The training made it possible for them to become professional interpreters. Because the deaf community established the first educational program, the first interpreters were also viewed as a product of this community (Cokely 2005). The deaf community could discuss the potential skills of the trainees and determine who had the com-

petences to become a professional interpreter. The establishment and improvement of the existing training program of sign language interpreters influenced the further development of the profession.

Interpreters enrolled in the first program had the opportunity to receive their diploma within six months. In 1985, the program was extended into a two-year program for hearing children of deaf parents who were already competent in sign language (Crasborn/Bloem 2009). In 1989, a three-year program was set up, into which also students without sign language competence were able to enroll.

In 1996, the national Dutch deaf organization (*Nederlandse Doven Organisatie*, NEDO), commissioned the research agency run by de Jong and Ouwehand to research the quality of Dutch Sign Language interpreters and interpreter service provision from a deaf perspective. One of the recommendations resulting from this study was to establish a four-year bachelor program for Dutch Sign Language interpreters as well as for Dutch Sign Language teachers. The first cohort of students started in 1997. Hearing students enrolled in the interpreter program and deaf students attended the teacher program. In the first two years of the program, hearing and deaf students had the same curriculum, but in the third and fourth year they specialized in their own disciplines. In 2013, a small number of deaf students attended the teacher program, and it is now possible for hearing students to enroll in this program as well. Hearing and deaf students no longer share the same curriculum due to the very few deaf students who enroll in the program.

As in most other European countries, the Dutch training program for sign language interpreters educates their students to become interpreters, regardless of the setting they will be working in (Calle 2012). There is a possibility within the program to take a minor to learn more on a specific setting, but this is no means sufficient to interpret adequately in those settings (de Wit/Salami/Hema 2012). After obtaining their interpreting degree, sign language interpreters can work in all settings from community to conference without any additional educational or qualifying requirements.

In many countries professional development of sign language interpreters changed the position of interpreting from being a product of the community to being a product for the community (Cokely 2005; Grbić 2009; Leeson/Lynch 2009; Nisula/Manunen 2009). Friends and family members no longer took on the role of the interpreter and deaf people became consumers, with less direct control over interpreters and their training.

A similar trend in the development of the profession can be seen in the Netherlands; the majority of students currently enrolled in the interpreter training program in Utrecht were not raised in the Dutch deaf community (Crasborn/Bloem 2009). This lack of influence by the deaf community on the education of interpreters might explain some of the above-mentioned dissatisfaction with the quality of current graduates, expressed by deaf organizations and individuals.

According to Cokely (2005), the effect of an increased distance between the interpreters and the deaf community should be taken into consideration by the educational institutions. The interpreter training program should be aware of this shift and enhance the program by involving the deaf community.

## 1.2 Interpreter association and registration

In the United States, the first professional association of sign language interpreters was established in 1964. In the Netherlands this did not occur till 1988, when the then former Dutch Association of Interpreters for the Deaf (NVTD) was established. With the emergence of a profession and the establishment of the national sign language interpreter association, the need arose to develop a professional profile for the sign language interpreter. It described the profile of the sign language interpreter from the interpreter's perspective and was finalized in 2002 by the newly established Dutch Sign Language Interpreter Association (NBTG).

In 1997 the national registry of sign language interpreters was established in the Netherlands. Each interpreter in the Netherlands with an interpreting degree in Dutch Sign Language is required to register in order to receive payment from the Dutch government for interpreting services. One of the requirements of the registry is that the registered interpreter obtains a certain number of continuing education credits in order to maintain his or her registration. In the Netherlands, all persons with a hearing loss (hereafter deaf) are entitled to an annual number of free interpreting hours. This right to interpreting services might be affected by a future change of status in the recognition of Dutch Sign Language (NGT). NGT is currently not recognized as an official language by the Dutch government as mentioned above. Although several initiatives to achieve formal recognition have been undertaken, the Netherlands is still one of the few countries in the European Union in which the formal recognition of its indigenous sign language has not yet been realized (Wheatley/Pabsch 2012; de Wit 2012). As a result, the right to interpreting services is not implemented in any Dutch law, but is only provided through regulations, which can easily be altered by governmental authorities.

## 2. Quality

Studies conducted on sign language interpreting have mainly focused on the technical side of the interpreting process and the various interpreting settings (Turner/Harrington 2001; Pöchhacker/Shlesinger 2002; Janzen/Korpiniski 2005; Locker McKee/ Davis 2010).

When looking at the quality side of interpreting, studies until today have looked at different aspects: the quality of the interpretation (Kahane 2001; Kellett Bidoli 2002; Shlesinger *et al.* 1997), the quality of the interpreters (Jong/Ouwehand 1996; Pöchhacker 2002), focused on the quality of sign language interpreters (Cokely/Winston 2008, 2009; Napier 2003; Napier/Barker 2004; Napier/Rohan 2007), and also on the quality of spoken language interpreters (Edwards *et al.* 2005; Locker McKee 2008), and specifically the quality of conference interpreters (Bühler 1986; Diriker 2011; Gile 1990, 2001; Kalina 2002; Kurz 1993; Moser 1995, 1996; Pöchhacker 1994; Vuorikoski 1995; Weller/Yanez 1998).

In this study the quality of sign language interpreters in the Netherlands specifically is explored from the perspective of deaf sign language users. To unravel these user perspectives several studies on the quality of interpreters, whether for

conference or community interpreting, or for spoken or signed language interpreting, is compiled. Signed and spoken language interpreting have many common aspects and similarities (Kelleth Bidoli 2002) and the findings in both fields can be of value to discover the sign language users' quality criteria regarding sign language interpreters. The following compilation is the result of the international literature review on the topic of interpreter quality.

In order to map deaf sign language users' perceptions of quality it is important to define what quality means. A general definition of quality can be found in the Oxford dictionary: "The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something".

This general definition of quality could be used to discuss the quality of the interpreting service. The notion of interpreting quality, however, appears to be a more complex subject, on which interpreters and users have different views (Kahane 2001; Shlesinger *et al.* 1997). The discussions revolve around how to define interpreting quality and who determines the quality. According to Garzone (2002) it is impossible for the users or the interpreters to agree on one definition of quality. Shlesinger *et al.* (1997) stated that the definitions of quality result from the norms individual interpreters use and are, therefore, not commonly shared. These norms are defined and shaped by years of interpreting experience, self-analysis by the interpreter, and also through the feedback interpreters receive from consumers (Garzone 2002).

Interpreters who have recently graduated do not possess experience and mainly rely on the norms, which were taught during the interpreter training. The interpreting norms can only be developed through interpreting experiences (Dean/Pollard 2005; Garzone 2002; Shlesinger *et al.* 1997). Interpreters can then use these acquired norms in the interpreting process and continue to develop them further. Therefore, interpreting norms are not shared by all interpreters and vary by interpreter, due to varying types and number of experiences.

The social aspect in an interpreting setting is an essential element in the development of interpreting norms. The norms are developed through interaction with the participants in the situation and cannot be determined by one party alone. The users of interpreting services have a certain set of expectations (expectancy norms) and interpreters have their professional norms (Chesterman 1997). These two types of norms are interdependent and occur in actual interpreting settings. Garzone (2002), therefore, states that the notion of quality is in essence normative, and not factual, it is based on norms, which are negotiated by all parties involved in the interpreting setting.

Interpreters' norms can be categorized into preliminary norms and operational norms (Tourey 1995). Preliminary norms are those norms that are determined prior to the interpreting event, for example, concerning the cooperation between interpreters in a team setting (Hoza 2010; Sluis/de Wit 2006). Fine-tuned and shaped through experience, operational or executing norms are the basis on which interpreters take their decisions while interpreting. Operational norms are turned into interpreter strategies, which can be general strategies or textual or linguistic strategies. While aiming for quality, the interpreter goes through a process of normative professionalization:

Normative professionalization is a continuous process of learning, in which the own professional values and the professional conduct are reflected upon and being articulated, and made into a subject of dialog and shaped. (Smaling 2005: 83-89)

In reality the production of the interpretation, relies on a compromise between the producer, the interpreter, and the consumers, especially the sign language users. Quality is therefore not a factual value, but is contextually determined (Kopczynski 1994). The interpreter strives towards the ideal quality, the preliminary abstract norms, but the reality and circumstances within which the interpreter operates are often not ideal. For example, a rapid speaker or a speaker who reads a text may affect the quality of the interpretation. As a result, the interpreter is forced to apply strategies (Toury 1995), which are shaped through the operational norms. In addition, the situation encompasses situational variables, which may complicate interpreting quality (Kopczynski 1994). These variables should all be considered and the interpreter must find the best possible approach or strategy.

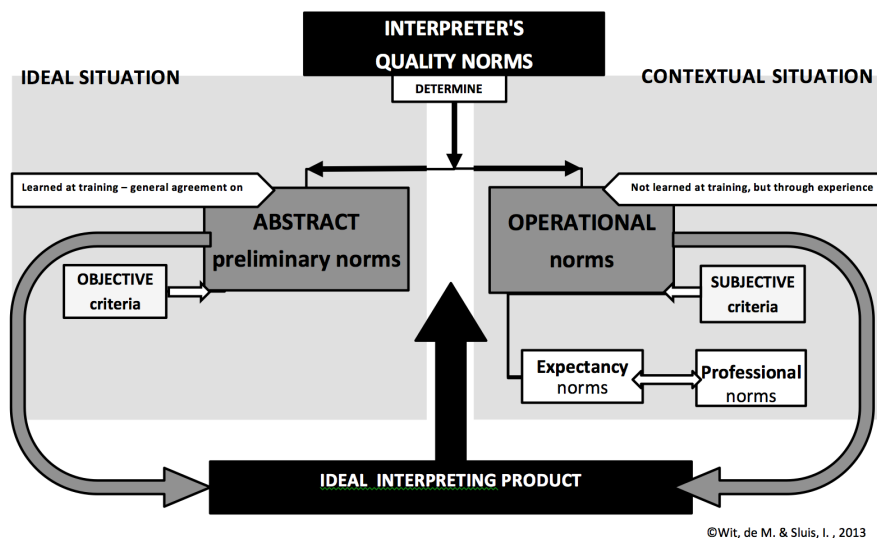
Considering the above, one can conclude that it is not possible to provide one definition of quality in regard to sign language interpreters.

## 2.1 Quality criteria

Assuming it is not possible to provide a single definition of the quality of sign language interpreters, there is still a need to determine quality criteria. These criteria are needed to measure the quality of the interpretation (Gile 1983; Kahane 2001; Kalina 2002). While determining quality criteria it is important to strive for objective criteria (Kalina 2002). These objective criteria are the abstract preliminary interpreting norms, the above mentioned criteria by Toury (1995). These are criteria the interpreters obtained during their training and on which there is a general professional agreement. These are also the criteria on which the interpreter has a direct influence.

The interpreter in an interpreting setting is involved in a complex communicative process with deaf and hearing interlocutors. During this process interpreters use preliminary as well as operational norms to produce an ideal interpreting product. This complex process is shown in figure 1, a model showing the different parts of the normative professionalization process interpreters go through. Interpreters use two sets of norms: the abstract preliminary norms (left side of the model) and the operational norms (right side of the model). The interpreter can use abstract preliminary norms depending on the required criteria in the situation. At the same time, interpreters can use operational norms, which are the norms interpreters have no influence over and which are shaped through social interaction with all interlocutors in the situation. These operational norms change through a variety of experiences and settings and can be further developed in each new setting. The process of normative professionalization is a continuous process in which the interpreter continuously strives for the ideal interpreting product, using the preliminary norms as a basis and adding and adapting the operational norms.

Figure 1: Interpreting process - Normative professionalization



©Wit, de M. & Sluis, I., 2013

Figure 1. Interpreting process – normative professionalization

Next to the objective criteria are the subjective criteria, the quality criteria that cannot be influenced by the interpreter. These subjective criteria, which are related to the context, cannot be used in determining the quality of the interpreter. The interpreter, for example, has no influence on a speaker with a heavy accent. This is a situational variable which could jeopardize interpreting quality, but which cannot be judged objectively. Hence, objective criteria, those which the interpreter can choose to change, are the only possible criteria to determine quality. It must be noted that using objective criteria, the preliminary norms, for measuring quality are also subject to debate (Shlesinger *et al.* 1997). After all, objective criteria can be influenced by subjective criteria (operational norms). The question then remains: What do you really measure when measuring quality?

One of the challenges determining interpretation quality is the inability of the user to determine if the interpretation is of good quality. The only person who is able to determine a successful interpretation is the interpreter (or a team interpreter (Hoza 2010) or a bilingual in the situation), because the interpreter has access to both languages. The user, and in this case the deaf sign language user, cannot hear the spoken source message and, therefore, cannot determine the quality of the interpretation (Shlesinger *et al.* 1997). As a result, the consumer then uses his or her assumptions on, for example, the educational level of the interpreter, additional diplomas and/or the role the interpreter takes on, to determine the interpreter's quality. The only aspect the deaf sign language user can judge is the understandability of the interpretation and, therefore, a user might use this as one of the quality criteria.



According to Dean/Pollard (2005), the role of the user, which Dean/Pollard refer to as the consumer, in the interpreting process has become more important. This role consists of an understanding of the interpreting process and the active user's role during the process. Harrington/Turner (2000) suggest that deaf sign language users are responsible for the quality of the interpreting services, and need to take on further responsibility to make this happen; not only during the interpreting process, but also before and after the assignment in order to enhance a fuller understanding between the interpreter and the deaf sign language users. This will result in an overall increase in the quality of the interpreting services.

### 3. The user perspective

In the Netherlands, five research studies have been conducted on the views of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind sign language users on the quality of sign language interpreters (de Jong/Ouwehand 1996; Verwey-Jonker 2003; Hermans *et al.* 2007; Sluis 2011; de Wit 2011). Although this research on the topic of user perspective in the Netherlands is not extensive, the earlier studies will be discussed in detail to understand the historical development of user perspectives.

The first study in the Netherlands related to this topic is from 1996 (de Jong/Ouwehand). In this study, the interpreter provision for deaf people as a whole and the quality of the interpreters in particular was reviewed. One of the recommendations of this study resulted in the establishment of a new Dutch Sign Language interpreter program.

A second study conducted on the perspective of the deaf sign language users was the quality of sign language interpreting of the daily news on TV (Verwey-Jonker 2003). This research focused on how the interpreters are assessed by the deaf viewer, as well as what expectations adult deaf viewers of news broadcasts have, and how they thought the quality of interpretation could be improved. The results of the study showed major differences in quality among individual interpreters. Respondents reported the following missing components when watching interpreters: knowledge of the deaf community and deaf culture, interpreting into Dutch Sign Language, and handling of more complex situations. They identified the following main competences interpreters would need to have and which relate to all interpreting settings: adjusting signing style to the topics in the setting, extensive use of facial expressions and lip movements, and learning new signs (training).

A third study in the Netherlands was conducted by Hermans *et al.* (2007). Their research studied the quality of newly graduated interpreters from the bachelor program in comparison with more experienced interpreters. Finally, in 2011, two studies related to the users' perspective of deaf persons in the Netherlands were carried out (Sluis 2011; de Wit 2011). Sluis looked at users' perspectives on interpreting sign language to spoken language (sign-to-voice interpreting), and de Wit explored the quality of life of sign language users in educational settings using sign language interpreters.



Hermans *et al.* (2007), De Jong/Ouwehand (1996) and Sluis (2011), indicate that interpreting into spoken language (sign-to-voice) is of inferior quality compared with interpreting into Dutch Sign Language. Hermans *et al.* (2007) showed no difference in the quality between recently graduated interpreters and more experienced interpreters. De Wit (2011) found, among other items, that deaf people are generally happy attending their educational program with the service of sign language interpreters.

Notwithstanding the lack of research, the Dutch deaf community is increasingly demanding better quality from current and future interpreters. The view of the deaf consumer is a valuable tool to improve the quality of interpretation and the cooperation between the consumer and the interpreter.

To identify the view of deaf consumers on the quality of sign language interpreters in the Netherlands, this research focused on the choices deaf persons make regarding quality when selecting an interpreter. More specifically, the research additionally attempted to identify the most relevant interpreter quality the deaf person looks for when requesting an interpreter for a specific setting.

Internationally, only a few studies have looked into the deaf perspective on interpreter quality (Winston/Cokely 2009). Napier/Rohan (2007), for instance, conducted a survey in Australia on what makes an interpreter a good interpreter and several parties were asked for their perspectives. The outcome includes an overview of what deaf people expect of interpreters and what they actually comprehend from the output of the interpreters. The overall conclusion of this study indicates that the deaf respondents were overall satisfied with the work of interpreters. Understanding the context of the interpreted situation and a professional attitude came up as the most important qualities users expect from interpreters.

As indicated above, to date in the Netherlands, little research has explored the perspective of the deaf sign language user. These different studies carried out in the Netherlands cannot provide a single answer to the definition of interpreter quality and they show that in general, expectations of deaf sign language users are not met by the interpreting services provided.

The fact that interpreting quality does not always correspond to the expectations of consumers can be attributed to various causes (Bühler 1986; Kurz 1993). The deaf consumer might have expectations, which cannot be met due to different skill level or expertise of the interpreter, or because of situational factors which cannot be changed. It seems that deaf consumers generally have a lack of knowledge and understanding of the interpreting process. This can result in expectations which are unrealistic. If deaf consumers do not share their expectations with interpreters prior to an assignment, the interpreter is then unaware of what is expected, but is also unable to inform the deaf consumer whether these expectations can be met or not.

In addition to the deaf consumer's lack of knowledge of the interpreting process, the interpreter is not sufficiently aware of the needs, expectations, and perspective of the deaf consumer (Dean/Pollard 2005).

Shaping of expectations about interpretation quality by the deaf consumer starts prior to the assignment, namely when the consumer requests an interpreter. During the process of searching for an interpreter, the deaf person makes cer-

tain choices, which are based on previous experiences. To find an interpreter the deaf person can contact an interpreter directly, or can assign the referral agency to find an interpreter based on the date, time, place, duration, communication style and other specified needs. The deaf person who requests an interpreter for the first time in all likelihood uses different criteria than consumers who have been working with an interpreter more frequently (Napier/Rohan 2007).

Working with an interpreter in different situations helps the deaf consumer fine-tune his or her criteria for future settings. A deaf person, in principle, always wishes for quality service in accordance with their expectations and, therefore, opts for an interpreter who can deliver quality accordingly. However, the quality factors users of interpreting services - deaf or hearing - look for differ (Bühler 1986; Garzone 2002; Gile 1983; Jong/Ouwehand 1996; Kahane 2001; Kalina 2002; Kurz 1993; Napier/Rohan 2007; Pöchhacker 2002; Shlesinger *et al.* 1997; Stuard 2008; Toury 1995) and can be split up into professional and situational factors.

The international literature shows that interpreting quality is a complex subject, on which interpreters themselves as well as sign language users are not in agreement about the meaning or the definition. The complexity is caused by several factors, involving various actors - interpreters, consumers, speakers, agencies - which all have a different perspective on quality (Garzone 2002). This variance is even present within the same user group, where quality expectations vary by setting, but are also related to personal preferences and criteria.

Deaf persons make choices when selecting an interpreter. They have certain expectations, which appear not always to be met by the interpreting services provided. When determining interpreting quality, it is important to take the sign language user perspective into account. The deaf sign language user can judge the understandability of the interpretation as a whole. Based on the level of understandability, the deaf sign language user will use certain quality criteria to select an interpreter who can meet these expectations. These quality criteria can be split into professional and situational factors. The situational factors are determined by the interpreting setting. The professional factors are those factors, which an interpreter as a professional does or does not possess.

This study focuses on the quality criteria deaf sign language users employ regarding the professional factors. To select an interpreter, deaf persons consider the situation and the professional skills of an interpreter. To know how these choices are made and how these are related to the setting or the professional skills of the interpreter, the perspective of the deaf sign language users is needed.

#### 4. Research question and methods

When researching interpreter quality it is important to consider the user perspective (Napier/Rohan 2007). The main research question of this paper is therefore: How do deaf sign language users determine their choice of sign language interpreters? To provide an answer to this question and to map the user perspectives of the quality of sign language interpreters in the Netherlands, deaf sign language users were approached and asked about their experiences and considerations when selecting an interpreter.

Following previous research on interpreting quality (Bühler 1986; Cokely/Winston 2008; 2009; Diriker 2011; Gile 1990; Kurz 1993; Moser 1995, 1996; Pöchhacker 1994; Vuorikoski 1995; Weller/Yanez 1998), the users' perspectives were collected through two surveys. The first survey was an online survey and the second one was conducted on paper in four real live, not staged, interpreting settings.

#### 4.1 Online survey

The first online survey was designed in written Dutch and Dutch Sign Language and was available online for three weeks. Potential participants were not invited individually or directly to the survey, but through online social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. In addition, the users' organizations, such as the national deaf association, promoted the survey through their membership channels.

The survey consisted of four parts: information on the background of the respondents, criteria used to determine the quality of interpreters, interpreter use, and three open-ended questions about quality, selection of an interpreter and interpreter training. The multiple choice questions on the background of the respondents were related to gender, age, method of communication, native language, hearing loss, education, and current status of work. The second part of the survey offered twelve propositions about interpreters as professionals. The respondents could rank the propositions from 1 (not important) to 4 (important). The statements all related to the quality criteria identified in the literature. Part three of the survey was a series of multiple choice questions, with a blank field where respondents could fill out their own answer. The questions covered their experiences using interpreters and the choices they make in specific situations. The fourth and final section focused on three key questions on the perspective of interpreter users with regard to quality of interpretations, criteria used when choosing an interpreter and the ability to give feedback to the interpreter training program.

#### 4.2 Results of the online survey

This article will discuss a selection of the findings, focusing on the main selection criteria of the deaf sign language users and their perspective on interpreter quality. Due to the general call to participate in the survey, no response rate can be provided. It is estimated that there are approximately 7,500 pre-lingual sign language users in the Netherlands (Crasborn/Bloem 2009), but the Dutch government is unable to provide data on the exact number of deaf persons that use government-funded interpreting services.

A total of 190 deaf sign language users, ranging from 18 to 65 years in age, responded to the online survey. Half of the respondents have used sign language interpreting services for more than 15 years. Nearly sixty percent use Dutch Sign Language as their preferred mode of communication and thirty-one percent use sign-supported-Dutch.

The results of the online survey provided different answers regarding quality in the open-ended question and in the multiple choice question. The respondents

were asked what they considered the most important quality in an interpreter (open-ended question) and which were the three most important qualities in an interpreter in a specific setting (employment, education and community). In the Netherlands, deaf people have the right to government-funded interpreting hours in three different settings: employment, education, and community. The online survey aimed to discover if users search for different interpreter qualities for each of these three settings.

When responding to the general open-ended question the deaf sign language users mentioned trust (Janzen/Korpiniski 2005) and attitude (Campbell *et al.* 2008; Wither-Merithew/Johnson 2005) as the two most important quality aspects in an interpreter. Trust, meaning the interpreter can be trusted not to share any information about the situation with others and that the interpreter will interpret everything as faithfully as possible. With regard to attitude, the interpreter is expected to present herself as a professional, discussing preferred seating arrangements and communication styles (Leeson 2005; Malcolm 2005; Stuard 2008) with the participants.

For all three specific settings the respondents ranked two of the qualities as most important: “I can understand the interpreter” and “The interpreter understands me”. The third quality sought in an interpreter varied according to the situation. In employment situations the third quality was: “The interpreter knows the jargon and the nature of my work.” In educational settings, deaf people seek an interpreter who matches the setting well. The respondents mentioned that mismatches occur when there is a big age difference between the interpreter and the student or when the interpreter is not representative as the other professionals in the educational setting. In community settings, understandability is ranked second and third, and trust is mentioned as a first quality criterion.

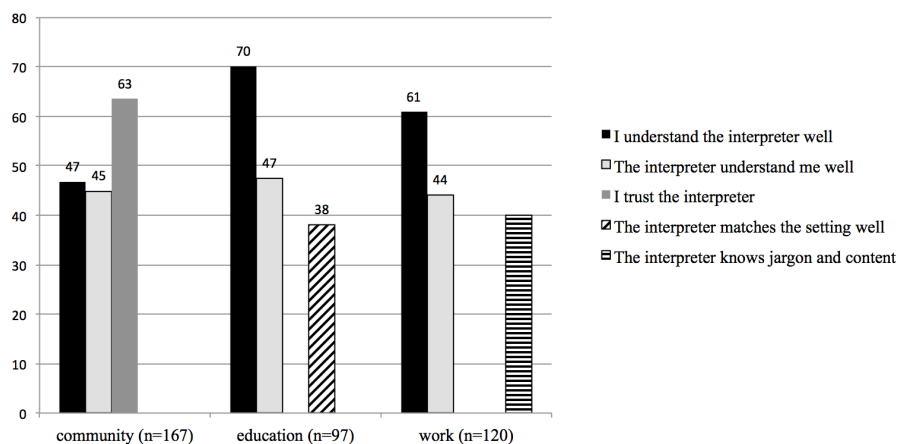


Figure 2. The three most important criteria per setting when selecting an interpreter

### 4.3 Surveys in real live settings

Garzone (2002) found that users of interpreting services can have ideal expectations in advance, prior to the interpreting setting, but can adapt these expectations when in real live situation settings. In order to verify the responses of the first online survey, a second survey was developed and designed following the analysis of the first online survey. It was carried out in four live interpreting situations which were all in conference style with many deaf and hearing participants. Altogether, in all four settings, a total of 70 sign language users participated in the on site survey. The four events were not staged or planned for research purposes, but were selected by the researchers based on the conference style, interpreting services offered and the presence of deaf and hearing participants. The participants were asked at the event if they wanted to participate in the survey following the event. In each setting one of the researchers was present to clarify any questions the deaf respondents might have on the survey.

The survey was divided into several sections: background, quality, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of the interpreter. The first four questions related to the background of the respondents: gender, age, method of communication, and native language. With these demographic characteristics, a comparison could be made between the different users of interpreters, and what qualities they seek for in an interpreter. The second part of the survey related to the quality of the interpreter(s) in the specific setting. Respondents could indicate which of the possible qualities they found most important for each specific setting. The third part consisted of multiple choice questions concerning the relationship between the user and the interpreter. The fourth part covered the interpersonal skills of the interpreter. In addition, two open-ended questions were asked about the attitude of and cooperation between interpreters, who worked in teams, as well as multiple choice questions to explore other interpersonal skills of the interpreter. The survey ended with a statement about interpreting skills to which respondents could indicate their (dis)agreement and a blank field to add comment(s).

### 4.4 Results of surveys in real live settings

The selected interpreting settings were in a conference or seminar style. Table 1 presents an overview of the four different settings.

SETTING	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF DEAF PARTICIPANTS	INTERPRETERS	# OF SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED	# OF SURVEYS RETURNED
A	609	7	2 NGT	5	3
B	24	19	2 NGT 1 Speech-to-text	19	19
C	45	39	2 NGT 2 Speech-to-text	39	35
D	70	13	2 NGT	13	13

Table 1. Overview of four live interpreted settings

All four situations were similar in style and setting, but were influenced by different variables. In situations A, B and D the main language used was Dutch, while in situation C this was Dutch Sign Language (NGT).

#### Situation A

This was an annual two-day conference for people employed in education and healthcare settings. The two working interpreters were hired by the organization and interpreted on stage during the plenary presentations.

The three female respondents were between 18-65 years old. They stated to have NGT as their preferred communication method, and their main goal to attend the conference was to gather information.

#### Situation B

The participants in this setting meet a couple of times a year. Presentations are held by the participants on a topic, which they personally choose. The three interpreters interpreted this recurring event regularly.

The majority of the participants were deaf (see table 1), and female (68.4%). The organization however, was carried out by two hearing persons, who were also workshop leaders. The average age of the respondents was over 65 years old. The preferred communication method was NGT, and their main goal to attend these meetings was to meet other deaf people, which is in contrast with situation A.

#### Situation C

This setting concerned an annual meeting with mainly deaf participants, a deaf chair and a hearing minutes taker. Two very experienced interpreters interpreted primarily from NGT to spoken Dutch.

In total 36 persons filled out the survey, of which 60 percent were male. The age varied between 18 to over 65 years old. The majority (80 %) of them stated to have NGT as their preferred communication method. The goals to attend this

meeting varied: networking, to gather information, to meet other deaf people, and obligatory.

#### Situation D

This was a mini symposium consisting of three presentations, of which two in spoken Dutch, and one in NGT by a deaf presenter. The two NGT interpreters stood in front of the room, while the sign-supported-Dutch interpreter and the speech-to-text writer sat.

There was a total number of 70 participants, of which 13 deaf, 8 male and 5 female. Almost half of the deaf participants were between 41 and 65 years old, the others younger. All deaf participants stated to have NGT as their preferred communication method. Half of the deaf respondents mentioned that their main goal to participate was because it was obligatory for their employer.

The variables between the four situations, showed a strong difference in situation B, which was more informal than the other three. The respondents in that situation expected different qualities in interpreters than in situations A, C and D. For example in situation B, they mentioned to expect as an important quality: "The interpreter is reliable and adheres to the duty of confidentiality". In addition, the respondents expected the interpreter to be more flexible in that situation than in the other three. The participants of the informal meeting were older (60% over 65 years of age), which could indicate that other qualities were sought.

One of the aspects frequently mentioned in social media or informal situations, is the consumer's need to debrief (Mindess 1999) with the interpreter following the situation. The results of the survey, however, showed that among all criteria, this was considered to be of very low importance.

The use of proper Dutch Sign Language, – the standardized form of Dutch Sign Language students learn at the sign language interpreting program (Crasborn/de Wit 2005) – was another criterion that received a low score. This implies that the deaf person is not looking for an interpreter who signs a standardized form of Dutch Sign Language, but prefers an interpreter who signs clearly and understandably although not in the formalized form. An understandable interpretation obtained the highest score in situations A and D. In the other two situations, B and C, the most important quality was the interpreter providing a full and faithful interpretation.



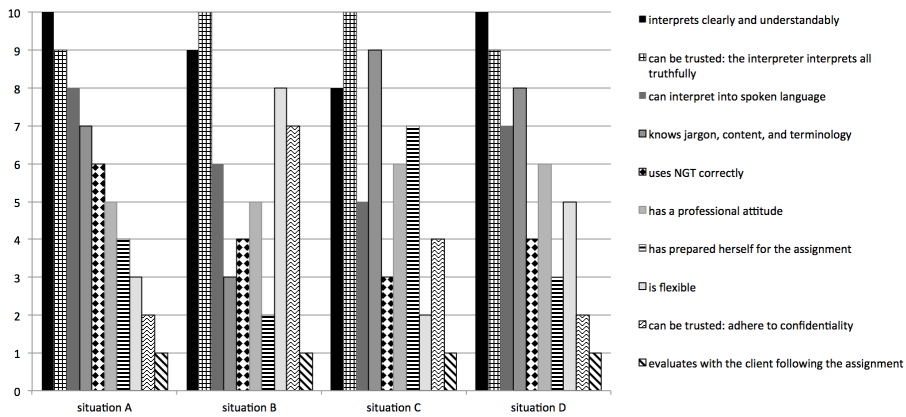


Figure 3. Analysis of four live situations: ranking of quality criteria per situation

Overall, the results of the live situations indicate that the deaf sign language user does not randomly chose an interpreter, but does use quality criteria, as illustrated in figure 3, when selecting an interpreter. When comparing the responses from the online survey (theoretical), and the four surveys based on live observations, there are many similarities, but also some slight differences. The need for a faithful as well as an understandable interpretation scores very high in both theoretical and live observations. Large differences between the two appear in the ranking of confidentiality of the interpreter: high in theoretical and low in live observations. This can be explained by the large conference style settings where confidentiality is of less importance to the consumer than for example at a visit to the doctor. Another difference is between the use of correct Dutch Sign Language which scores high in theoretical and low in live observations. The opposite is true for the familiarity of the interpreter with the context of the setting and terminology which scores low in theoretical and high in live observations. Overall the responses are similar in theory and practice with a few exceptions, which could be explained, for instance, by the type of setting.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

This study aims to answer the question: Which criteria do Dutch Sign Language users employ to select an interpreter? An international literature review was conducted and the findings were used to design surveys in order to study the perspectives of sign language users in the Netherlands on interpreter quality. The data collected provide an overview of the selection criteria sign language users adopt when selecting an interpreter.

The data indicate that sign language users base their choice of a specific interpreter on situational and professional factors. The situational factors are determined by the situation itself and the professional factors by the professional skills of the interpreter. The main focus of this study is the professional factors

and the professional skills of the interpreter: the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, linguistic competencies, and the interpreting skills.

One of the questions in the survey concerned the respondents' opinion of the most important quality in a sign language interpreter. The respondents do not show uniformity in their replies. The diversity of the replies might be explained by the form of the questions, open or closed, in which the preset answers might have steered the respondents in a certain direction and the open questions called for spontaneous responses (Diriker 2011). A second explanation could be the different type of settings and the variety in backgrounds of the respondents (Mosser 1996). A third possibility might be that users of interpreting services tend to expect specific qualities in theory which differ from their real life experiences (Garzone 2002).

The averages of the overall responses are reported below in order of importance. Although interpreting settings and the responses are not directly comparable, they can give a general impression of the priorities of the criteria.

The interpreter:

1. interprets faithfully (100% is interpreted);
2. interprets clearly and understandably / fluently/ clear signing;
3. has a professional attitude;
4. can interpret into spoken language (voicing);
5. uses Dutch Sign Language / linguistic variety / non manual markers correctly;
6. ensures there is no miscommunication;
7. continues their professional development;
8. keeps confidentiality;
9. evaluates with the consumer following the assignment;
10. is flexible;
11. prepares him/herself for the assignment;
12. is familiar with the setting related terminology and context;
13. is involved with the deaf community.

## 5.1 Limitations of the study

Currently (June 2013) there are 4,816 deaf persons and 161 deafblind persons registered at the national referral agency with a sign language interpreter provision in the Netherlands. The number registered at the agency does not reflect the actual number of sign language users in the Netherlands. For example, only 50 % of the participants in this study go through the referral agency to request an interpreter. The other 50 % percent contacts the interpreter directly. This sign language provision is the allocation of a set of free interpreting hours per year in community settings, which are not related to employment or education. It is estimated that there are 7,500 pre-lingual deaf persons in the Netherlands (Crasborn/Bloem 2009). Considering this total number of deaf sign language users and the total number of respondents (260) to this study, it provides an indication of the deaf persons' perspective, but one cannot generalize the findings of this study.

The group of sign language users is not a homogeneous group. To avoid exclusion of certain replies, the two surveys were compiled of closed and open questions, which enabled spontaneous and creative input from the respondents. The first survey was entirely theoretical in nature and the second survey was conducted in actual interpreting settings. The first survey was replied to by respondents from their computer away from a real situation and collected theoretical views on their ideal quality criteria and expectations. The second survey was answered at four real interpreting situations. The responses to both surveys showed similarities, but also made clear that questions about hypothetical situations elicit responses different to those elicited by questions in actual interpreter settings (Garzone 2002).

An additional limitation of an online survey is that certain user groups, which have no or little computer access, are not able to participate. The limitation of the survey in live situations was that certain variables could not be controlled. This was partly forestalled by choosing four similar situations which were close in nature, but these were still influenced by variables such as the age of the participants and the formal or informal style of the setting.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Until today a limited number of studies have been carried out in the Netherlands on the user perspective of deaf persons in relation to interpreter quality. This study is a small step towards further insight into the quality criteria deaf sign language users employ while selecting an interpreter. Further research is needed, for example, to explore the quality criteria in specific settings, such as in higher education. In addition, more information is required on the preferences of deaf persons for specific interpreting skills (Campbell *et al.* 2008; Hauser/Hausser 2008), such as interpreting of Dutch Sign Language into and from English. When conducting further research, it is important to aim to include as many respondents as possible, therefore, not only using the internet for surveys, but also individual interviews.

The findings of this study show that it is not possible to give a single clear definition of interpreter quality. The study does indicate that deaf people themselves must take further initiatives to improve current interpreting quality and services, which should cover the heterogeneous user group. The ratification of the United Nations Conventions of Rights for People with a Disability (UNCRPD) by the Dutch government would be a step in the right direction to ensure access to society through high quality professional interpreting services at all levels. At the same time, deaf people must be aware that an interpreter does not possess all possible skills for every situation imaginable. Therefore, deaf people must make a more informed selection when choosing their interpreters. The interpreter on the other hand must obtain further insight into their own process of normative professionalization, in which they develop professional norms through practical experience. This process can be stimulated and enhanced through the use of a peer or deaf mentor.

Among other things, the results of the study show that deaf people need more information on what a professional interpreter does, and the different options and limitations that occur when working with a sign language interpreter. Educating deaf sign language users should bridge this knowledge gap. At the same time interpreters must be more aware of their own skills and abilities, as well as their limitations. In addition, interpreters who are second language learners of Dutch Sign Language must continue to develop and learn linguistic varieties, and to improve their skills in interpreting from Dutch Sign Language to Dutch.

To realize these recommendations, cooperation between the deaf community and interpreters is a prerequisite (Stratiy 2005). Deaf sign language users and interpreters must be aware of each other's expectations in order to increase interpreter quality and consumer satisfaction. In this cooperation, interpreters and deaf people collaborate to reach a compromise in creating the ideal product, an understandable interpretation (Kellett Bidoli 2002; Hermans *et al.* 2007). This cooperation is the key to increasing interpreter awareness as well as that of deaf people. If deaf sign language users learn what interpreters need in order to interpret appropriately and if interpreters know what deaf people expect, this will lead to an overall increase in the quality of interpretation.

### Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned in 2013 by the Dutch Association of Sign Language Interpreters and would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of deaf sign language users and sign language interpreters in the Netherlands.

### References

- Bühler H. (1986) "Linguistic (semantic) and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for the evaluation of conference interpretation and interpreters", *Multilingua* 5, 231-235.
- Calle L. (2012) *Sign Language Interpreter Training Programmes. efsli report 2011*, updated 2012. Self-published by European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters.
- Campbell L. / Rohan M. / Woodcock K. (2008) "Academic and educational interpreting from the other side of the classroom, working with Deaf academics", in P. Hauser / K. Finch / A. Hauser (eds), *Deaf Professionals and Designated Interpreters*, Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 3-21.
- Chesterman A. (1997) *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Cokely D. (2005) "Shifting positionality: a critical examination of the turning point in the relationship of interpreters and the deaf community", in M. Marschark / R. Peterson / E. Winston *Sign Language Interpreting and*

*Interpreter Education: Directions for Research and Practice*, Oxford University Press Inc., 3-28.

- Cokely D. / Winston E. (2008) *Phase I Deaf Consumer Needs Assessment Final Report*. Report submitted on behalf of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, <<http://www.interpretereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/FinalPhaseIDCReport.pdf>>.
- Cokely D. / Winston E. (2009) *Phase II Deaf Consumer Needs Assessment Final Report*. Report submitted on behalf of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, <<http://www.interpretereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/FinalPhaseIIDCReport.pdf>>.
- Crasborn O. / Bloem T. (2009) "Linguistic variation as a challenge for sign language interpreters and sign language interpreter education in the Netherlands" in J. Napier (ed.) *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 77-95.
- Crasborn O. / de Wit M. (2005) "Ethical implications of language standardisation for sign language interpreters", in J. Mole (ed.) *International Perspectives on Interpreting: Selected Proceedings from The Supporting Deaf People Online Conferences, 2001-05*, Brassington, Direct Learn Services, 141-150.
- Dean R. / Pollard R. (2005) "Effectiveness in interpreting work: a practice profession perspective", in M. Marschark / R. Peterson / E. Winston (eds) *Sign Language Interpreting and Interpreter Education*, Cary, NC USA, Oxford University Press, 259-282.
- Diriker E. (2011) "User expectation surveys: questioning findings and drawing lessons for interpreter training" *İ. Ü. Çeviribilim Dergisi*, (in English, *IU Journal of Translation Studies*), 1(3), <<http://www.journals.istanbul.edu.tr/iuceviri/article/view/1023011090/1023010348>>.
- Edwards R. / Temple B. / Alexander C. (2005) "Users' experiences of interpreters: the critical role of trust", *Interpreting* 7/1, 77-95.
- Garde A. van der / Muller S. (2011) "Column", *Interpres vakblad over tolken gebarentaal* (in English, *Interpres Journal for Sign Language Interpreters*) 2011/2, 13.
- Garzone G. (2002) "Quality and norms in interpretation", in G. Garzone / M. Viezzi (eds) *Interpreting in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 107-119.
- Gile D. (1983) "Aspects méthodologiques de l'évaluation de la qualité du travail en interprétation du simultanée", *META* 28/3, 236-243.
- Gile D. (1990) "L'évaluation de la qualité de l'interprétation par les délégués: une étude de cas", *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, 3, 66-71.
- Gile D. (2001) "Quality assessment in conference interpreting: methodological issues", in Á. Fernández Sánchez / D. Gile (eds), *La evaluación de la calidad en interpretación: Investigación*, Granada, Editorial Comares, 109-123.
- Grbić N. (2009) "Sign language interpreter training in Austria: an integrated approach", in J. Napier (ed.), *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 3-14.
- Harrington F. J. / Turner G. H. (2000) *Interpreting: Studies and Reflections on Sign Language Interpreting*, Coleford, England, Douglas McLean.

- Hauser A. / Hauser P. (2008) "The Deaf professional, designated interpreter model", in P. Hauser / K. Finch / A. Hauser (eds), *Deaf Professionals and Designated Interpreters*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 3-21.
- Hermans D. / Dijk R. van / Christoffels I. (2007) *De effectiviteit van gebarentaaltolk- en in de communicatie tussen dove en horende mensen*, (in English, *The effectiveness of sign language interpreters in the communication between deaf and hearing people*), Utrecht, Pontem.
- Hoza J. (2010) *Team Interpreting as Collaboration and Interdependence*, Alexandria, RID Press.
- Janzen T. / Korpiniski D. (2005) "Ethics and professionalism in interpreting", in T. Janzen (ed.) *Topics in Signed Language Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 165-199.
- Jong A. de / Ouwehand T. (1996) *Toontje lager, onderzoek naar de kwaliteit van de dovertolkvoorziening, gezien vanuit de dove consument* (in English, *Down a notch, research on the quality of the provision of interpreters for the deaf, from a deaf perspective*), Utrecht, Nedo.
- Fant L. (1990) *Silver Threads*, Silver Spring, MD, RID publications.
- Kahane E. (2001) "Thoughts on the quality of interpretation", <<http://aiic.net/page/197/thoughts-on-the-quality-of-interpretation/lang/1>>.
- Kalina S. (2002) "Quality in interpreting and its prerequisites. A framework for a comprehensive view", in G. Garzone / M. Viezzi (eds), *Interpreting in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 121-130.
- Kellett Bidoli C. (2002) "Spoken-language and signed-language interpretation. Are they really so different?", in G. Garzone / M. Viezzi (eds) *Interpreting in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 171-179.
- Kopczynski A. (1994) "Quality in conference interpreting: some pragmatic problems", in S. Lambert / B. Moser-Mercer (eds), *Bridging the Gap, Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 87-100.
- Kurz I. (1993) "Conference interpretation: expectations of different user groups", in *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, 5, 13-21.
- Leeson L. (2005) "Vying with variation: Interpreting language contact, gender variation and generational difference", in T. Janzen (ed.) *Topics in Signed Language Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 251-191.
- Leeson L. / Lynch T. (2009) "Three leaps of faith and four giant steps: developing interpreter training in Ireland", in J. Napier (ed.), *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 35-56.
- Locker McKee R. (2008) "'Quality' in interpreting: a survey of practitioner perspectives." *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter (SLTI)*, 2/1, 1-14.
- Locker McKee R. / Davis J. (eds) (2010) *Signed Language Interpreting in Multilingual Contexts*, Studies in Interpretation Series, Volume 6, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press.
- Malcolm K. (2005) "Contact sign, transliteration and interpretation in Canada", in



- T. Janzen (ed.) *Topics in Signed Language Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 107-133.
- Mindess A. (1999) *Reading between the Signs. Intercultural Communication for Sign Language Interpreters*, Yarmouth, Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Moser P. (1995) "Survey on expectations of users of conference interpretation", AIIC, <<http://aiic.net/page/736/>>.
- Moser P. (1996) "Expectations of users of conference interpretation", *Interpreting* 1/2, 145-178.
- Napier J. (2003) "A sociolinguistic analysis of the occurrence and types of omissions produced by Australian Sign Language/ English interpreters", in M. Metzger/ S. Collins/ V. Dively/ R. Shaw (eds), *From Topic Boundaries to Omission: Research on Interpretation*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 160-240.
- Napier J. / Barker R. (2004) "Accessing university education: perceptions, preferences, and expectation for interpreting by deaf students", *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 9/2, 228-238.
- Napier J. / Rohan M. J. (2007) "An invitation to dance: deaf consumers' perceptions of signed language interpreters and interpreting", in M. Metzger / E. Fleetwood (eds) *Translation, Sociolinguistic, and Consumer Issues in Interpreting*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 159-203.
- Nisula M. / Manunen J. (2009) "Sign language interpreter training in Finland", in J. Napier (ed.), *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 15 - 34.
- Pöchhacker F. (1994) *Simultandolmetschen als komplexes Handeln*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Pöchhacker F. (2002) "Researching interpreting quality. Models and methods", in G. Garzone / M. Viezzi (eds), *Interpreting in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 95-106.
- Pöchhacker F. / Shlesinger M. (eds) (2002) *The Interpreting Studies Reader*, London/ New York, Routledge.
- Shlesinger M. / Déjean K. / Kurz I. / Mack G. / Cattaruzza L. / Nilsson A. / Pöchhacker F. (1997) "Quality in simultaneous interpreting", in Y. Gambier / D. Gile / C. Taylor (eds), *Conference Interpreting: Current Trends in Research*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 123-132.
- Sluis I. (2011) *An Effort to make a Cultural Bridge in Sign-To-Voice Interpreting*, unpublished MA thesis, Edinburgh, Herriot Watt University.
- Sluis I. / de Wit M. (2006) "Getting the most out of it. Developing the individual and the team", in *efsli 2006 conference proceedings*. Self-published by European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters.
- Smaling A. (2005) "Aspecten van normatieve professionaliteit in beroepssituaties", (in English, Aspects of normative professionalization in professional situations), *Tijdschrift voor humanistiek* (in English *Journal of Humanities*), Amsterdam, Uitgeverij SWP, 6/22, 83-89.
- Stratij A. (2005) "Best practices in interpreting: a deaf community perspective", in T. Janzen (ed.) *Topics in Signed Language Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 231-250.



- Stuard V. (2008) *Perceptions of Interpreter Qualification by Deaf Consumers and Hearing Interpreters*, PhD Dissertation, Pepperdine University.
- Toury G. (1995) *Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Turner G. H. / Harrington F. (2001) "Issues of power in interpreting research", in O. Maeve (ed.) *Intercultural Faultlines*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 253-265.
- Verwey-Jonker (2003) *Kwaliteit in beeld, kwaliteitsevaluatie van het tolken Gebarentaal bij het NOS-journaal*, (in English, *Quality in the picture, assessment of the quality of the daily tv-news sign language interpretation*) <[http://www.verwey-jonker.nl/doc/participatie/d4083210\\_\\_kwaliteit\\_\\_in\\_\\_beeld.pdf](http://www.verwey-jonker.nl/doc/participatie/d4083210__kwaliteit__in__beeld.pdf)>.
- Vuorikoski A. (1995) "Simultaneous interpretation as experienced by the audience", *Krawutschke*, 165-174.
- Weller G. / Yanez P. (1998) "The audience's views on simultaneous conference interpreters' performance in Mexico", in M. O'Keefe (ed.), *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*, Self-published by the American Translators Association, 69-85.
- Wheatley M. / Pabsch A. (2012) *Sign Language Legislation in the European Union, Edition II*, Brussels, Churchill's.
- Winston E. / Cokely D. (2009) "The national consortium of interpreter education centers in the United States of America", in J. Napier (ed.), *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 264-294.
- Wit M. de (2008) *Het beroep tolk gebarentaal*, (in English, *The sign language interpreter profession*) Enschede, Gildeprint Drukkerijen.
- Wit M. de (2011) *A Sign Language Interpreter in Inclusive Education: The View of Deaf Persons on their Quality of Life*, MA Thesis, Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University.
- Wit M. de (2012) *Sign Language Interpreting in Europe, 2012 edition*, Self-published. Printed by Create Space, Baarn, M. de Wit.
- Wit M. de / Salami M. / Hema Z. (2012) "Educating sign language interpreters in healthcare settings: a European perspective", in L. Swabey / K. Malcolm (eds), *In Our Hands*. Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 229-259.
- Witter-Merithew A. / Johnson L. (2005) *Towards Competent Practice: Conversations with Stakeholders*, RID conference 2005, The Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training Center, RID.