

# **INTERPRETING WITH IMMIGRANT** **DEAF PEOPLE**

**- A Qualitative Case Study of an Interpreted Event**

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# HUMANISTINEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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<b>Tiivistelmä</b>  <p>Tämän työn tavoitteena on tutkia niitä tapoja, joilla viittomakielen tulkit modifioivat käännösstrategiaansa tulkatessaan maahanmuuttajataustaisille kuuroille. Työ pyrkii toisaalta löytämään parhaita tapoja toimia maahanmuuttajataustaisen kuuron tulkkina, ja toisaalta demystifioimaan ulkomaalaistaustaisille kuuroille tulkkamista.</p> <p>Työn keskiössä on case-tutkimus jossa kirjoittaja on seurannut kahta erilaista maahanmuuttajataustaisen kuuron henkilön ja suomalaisen kuulevan henkilön tulkattua kohtaamista. Case 1 sijoittuu opiskelutulkkauksympäristöön ja case 2 asioimistulkkauksympäristöön. Kohtaamiset on taltioitu kenttämuistiinpanoin ja kirjoittaja vertaa huomioitaan omaan kokemukseensa tulkkina toimimisessa.</p> <p>Työ pyrkii löytämään ratkaisuja ja vastauksia siihen, miten viittomakielen tulkkauustyö maahanmuuttajataustaisen asiakkaan kanssa olisi sujuvampaa.</p>	
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## ABSTRACT

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<b>Abstract</b> <p>The aim of this thesis is to research the ways in which Sign Language interpreters modify their translational strategies when interpreting with immigrant deaf people. This thesis tries to find and highlight the best practices in interpreting with immigrant deaf people. Furthermore the thesis aims for the demystification associated with interpreting for deaf people from foreign countries.</p> <p>In the centre of this thesis lies a case-study, in which the author has observed two Sign Language interpreted events between an immigrant deaf person and a Finnish hearing person. Case 1 is situated in the field of educational interpreting and case two is situated in community interpreting. These events have been documented through field notes, and observations done are then compared to those of authors own in working as an interpreter.</p> <p>The thesis aims to find solutions and answers to how interpreting with immigrant deaf people could be made more manageable for Sign Language interpreters.</p>	
<b>Keywords:</b> Interpreting, Sign Language, Immigrants	

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction to the theme

In the past fourteen years that I have worked as a professional Sign Language Interpreter, some of the most interesting assignments have been the interpreted events involving deaf people who come from foreign countries. Even as a seasoned professional I go to these assignments humbly, as the element of surprise is always there: can I understand the deaf participant, can she/he get her/his business done, what is expected from me?

It can be argued that an interpreted situation is always full of expectations, prejudices, power play, etc. that are portrayed, shown or experienced by the stakeholders (deaf, hearing, interpreter). In the day to day work of a Sign Language interpreter the set up of a usual assignment is quite clear: all stakeholders know their places and roles. This clear view of an interpreted situation may be disturbed if one of the stakeholders isn't used to the rules and conventions of the situation. This may be caused by their background in a different deaf culture, where the status and action of an interpreter is different to those of Finnish Sign Language interpreters.

This study focuses on what happens in an interpreted encounter between an immigrant deaf person, a Finnish hearing person and a Finnish Sign Language interpreter. The study was done in field study, where I observed two interpreted events involving immigrant deaf people. The cases monitored were in two different hemispheres of Sign Language interpreting: in study interpreting and in community interpreting. In order to clarify and strengthen the findings in the field study, an interview was carried out with the participant Sign Language interpreters.

Term "Immigrant deaf people" is used in this study to describe the very heterogeneous focus group that consists of immigrant deaf people living in

Finland. No effort is made to divide or compare people in the focus group according to the reasons of their immigration.

There has been a strong deaf community in Finland for a long time. It could be argued that the long tradition of Deaf community shows itself in different realms, one of which is the status of the Finnish Association of the Deaf as one of the primary stakeholders in the development work done in the third world countries. Presidency of the World Federation of the Deaf has been held by Finnish Deaf for many years and also the headquarters of the WFD is located in Helsinki, the capitol of Finland. This is only one reason for the steady flow of deaf people immigrating into Finland. As a natural effect of this there are numerous encounters of immigrant deaf people with Finnish Sign Language interpreters.

## 1.2. Aim of the Study

This study is done in order to research and illuminate an interpreted event where the deaf participant's background is outside of Finland, and he/she is trying to get his/her business done using a Finnish Sign Language interpreter. The aim of this study is to find out what are the translational strategies used when interpreting with immigrant deaf people.

## 1.3. Outline of the Study

In the core of is study are two case studies done in real life interpreting events involving immigrant deaf people. As these events were not allowed to be recorded in any form, the method used was field notes. The findings from these field notes are then backed up by interviews with interpreters at these events. Deaf people in the cases were not randomly chosen, they have volunteered to take part. The interpreters can be said to have been chosen randomly, as they were assigned to these cases by the interpreter relay service.

## **2. Immigrant Deaf People in Finland**

### 2.1. Immigration

Every time a Finnish person goes abroad he becomes a foreigner. Vice versa the same is true about people from any other country coming into Finland; at the moment they cross the Finnish border, they are foreigners in Finland. When these foreigners decide to stay and live in Finland, they become Immigrants. The group of immigrants holds within several subgroups, divided by the reason people come to stay in Finland. (Räty 2002, 11-12)

Foreign people moving into a specific country for employment reasons are called migrants. When ever leaving the country of origin has not been out of person's free will, but of political etc reasons, they are called refugees. Some refugees become asylum seekers if there are reasons banning them from returning to their country of origin. When people originally from Finland or people having Finnish ancestry return there they are called returnees. (Räty 2002, 11-12)

### 2.2. Immigrant deaf people

When discussing over a term to use to describe the group of non-Finnish-native deaf people living in Finland it was not that easy to come by a suitable "heading". As this very heterogenic group of originally foreign deaf people consists of about 100 to 150 people living in Finland (an estimate by the Finnish Deaf Association) there is no clear-cut umbrella term to define them all. That is why in this thesis term "immigrant deaf people" is used to referring to all non-Finnish-native deaf people living in Finland regardless of the reason for their immigration. In a group of people so small it seemed futile to try and divide them into sub-groups.



In general, immigration of deaf people into foreign countries is a topic that has not been studied in detail. There are studies that discuss the topic, at least from some remote view, but any deep or detailed knowledge of deaf community subgroups is rather marginal. (Ladd 2003, 59)

### 2.3. Deaf people immigrating into Finland

Minorities inside the deaf community, and especially ethnic minorities, are not studied in great detail. There are no specific findings about them, only some skin-deep observations. Even though there is a common concept of a great commonality among the deaf, the views on foreigners of the majority culture do affect the deaf views. (Ladd 2003, 59)

As it is the case in most countries, all people moving into Finland undergo different kinds of handlings according to their country of origin and the reason for their immigration. These handlings are mandated and carried out by the Finnish Immigration Service. The statistics provided by the Immigration Service do not reveal the amount of deaf people immigrated to Finland, as the only division made by them is by the country of origin. There is no specific way of handling foreign deaf people, but all interpreter services are covered by the officials when concerning official business. (<http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/content.asp?path=8,2755>)

Finland has approved and signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but is yet to ratify it. Nevertheless there are national laws concerning interpreter services. These laws mandate that all resident deaf people in Finland have the right of using Sign Language interpreters free of charge and the minimum of 180 hours per year. This right applies also to foreign deaf people as soon as they have a residence in Finland. (<http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/suomi.nsf/NET/240510155837KP?OpenDocument>) In some cases the right of interpreter use has also been extended to deaf people visiting Finland, but these have been exceptions to the rule. Foreign deaf people living in Finland have the chance of using a Sign Language interpreter

provided free of charge for them either by the officials when concerning official business and/or by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland when concerning whatever issues.

## 2.4. Immigrant Deaf people in Finland

### 2.4.1. Deaf people as Citizens of the World

In many occasions deaf people are described as citizens of the world. Young Finnish deaf are found to be Sign Language orientated and that local networks have been (to some extent at least) replaced by global networks. (Luukkainen 2008, 198-199) This means that deaf people have networks of friends around the world as they belong into the widened network of Sign Language users. It is not uncommon that the young deaf visiting a foreign country can find a place to stay at a friend of a friend of a friend, who's also a Sign Language using deaf. (Luukkainen 2008, 156-157)

If speaking about especially young deaf people, the idea of deaf people being citizens of the world may well be true. Altogether another issue then is, how this is displayed in situations concerning immigration to another country. Even if it is easy for the deaf people to find places to visit and people to meet, inclusion to a new community can be something totally different.

In a study about foreign deaf people living in Finland, some deaf participants felt they were still left somewhat outside of the Finnish deaf community, even when they had lived in Finland for several years. This segregation was not very clear, it was mostly a feeling by the foreign deaf that they were left (at least in some issues) into the outskirts at the local deaf club. What was considered crucial in being accepted was the ability to use Finnish Sign Language. (Kippo 2010, 41-42) Still, in the same study it was found that foreign deaf people in Finland did, at least to some point, integrate into the Finnish deaf community, which they found as a resource for them in coping with the Finnish society in general. (Kippo 2010, 66-67)

#### 2.4.2. Foreign deaf people in Finland

Deaf people immigrate into Finland for different reasons. As in immigration general, the reasons have varied through history. In early years main reason was employment. Since then the main reason has shifted into refugee-based immigration and back again to the employment-based in the recent years. (Kippo 2010, 12)

The Finnish Association of the Deaf has been a leading stakeholder in development work done in the handicap sector in the third world countries. This has created ways and possibilities for people from developing countries to come to Finland. Also, the headquarters of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is situated in Finland, which again creates possibilities, needs and reasons for immigration. Also an important factor for the deaf people to move to Finland is the level of services provided free for the deaf by the Finnish state and municipalities. These services include interpreter services, health, studying etc.

What needs to be also noted here is love and marriage as an important factor for immigration. This family-based immigration has always been there, and it seems to be the case that as deaf people are more connected to the global networks, the possibilities of cross-national marriages are greater. For this however there seems to be no support in literature. (Savulahti 2011, 10)

#### 2.4.3. Immigrant Deaf people as clients of Sign Language interpreters

Foreign deaf come from different backgrounds geographically and language wise. This means that the possibilities of getting an interpreter that could interpret from/to the person's native language are quite limited. Of some more used languages such as Somali and Russian there are interpreters of, when instead in some marginal languages as Swahili or Urdu, the interpreter resource is rather scarce. Needless to say, that there are no Sign Language interpreters in Finland that could cater to the even more marginal Sign Language groups.

In general non-native deaf people in Finland need to try and make do without interpreters of their native languages. This can be hard and (at least in some cases) segregate them from support they would otherwise get from people of the same ethnicity living in Finland. Attending for example religious events of person's native culture can be hindered by lack of an interpreter that would understand the language used there, or the religious culture. (Kippo 2010, 46)

Using Sign Language interpreters varies greatly among immigrant deaf people. As some of them have come into the realm of professional Sign Language interpreting upon arrival in Finland, it seems clear that their expectations towards interpreters vary. An important issue in the use of Sign Language interpreters for the foreign deaf is the need for experienced interpreters. (Kippo 2010, 62 and 67) In the study among foreign deaf people living in Finland, a strong wish was expressed towards the possibility to choose different interpreters for different occasions. This was based on deaf people's notion of some interpreters being good for one situation, and others being good for another situation. (Kippo 2010, 62)

When looked upon in the light of international studies, the immigrant deaf peoples wish for choosing an interpreter is valid. Deaf people do often wish for interpreters they know in forehand and place trust above bilingual competence. (Napier & Rohan 2007, 166) Further more the opportunity to choose interpreters improves comprehension by the deaf participants. (Napier & Rohan 2007, 193)

In the light of these arguments and the reported needs of immigrant deaf people the current way organizing interpreter services in Finland can be seen troublesome. Since September 2010 all of the Sign Language interpreter bookings have been handled by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA). In this new system the interpreter assignments are divided to companies providing Sign Language interpreter services. To accomplish this there is a list of companies according to their price and quality points in the Kela's provision of Sign Language interpreter services.(<http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/>) An effect of this system is, that the deaf client has no say

in which interpreter they get. This can be awkward for an immigrant deaf person, as there is no way of ensuring the use of the interpreter preferred by them.

#### 2.4.4. Expectations towards interpreters

Deaf people immigrate Finland from countries around the world and for different reasons. In many cases the expectations immigrant deaf people had of Sign Language interpreters clashed with the way Finnish Sign Language interpreters act. In some cases the emotionally detached behavior of interpreters was received as “coldness” or “bad attitude” by immigrant deaf people. Differences in opinion of what an interpreter should or could do were evident in for example in educational interpreting. At school a foreign deaf person could need the interpreter to clarify terms used or to translate the passages from school books. This however is not included into the conventions of Sign Language interpreting in Finland. (Kippo, 2010, 53-54)

#### 2.4.5. Support workers and Sing Language volunteers

Trying to provide services for all deaf people living in and coming into Finland, the Finnish Association of the Deaf has habilitation workers to be used in support of the deaf throughout Finland. Some of these concentrate to supporting employment with deaf people, but the majority of them are available for any support needs the Deaf have. (<http://www.kl-deaf.fi/Page/e2b67d21-928b-4b60-814d-af6fecf5471b.aspx>)

In the study about foreign deaf people in Finland, these habilitation workers were considered very important by immigrant deaf people. On many occasion the aid of a habilitation worker had been crucial in getting the right documents into the right place at the right time. Naturally an important factor was the ability to use Sign Language with the habilitation workers. (Kippo 2010, 58) In the Finnish context there is a clear division of tasks between habilitation workers

and Sign Language interpreters. As interpreters, by their training and Code of Ethics, must remain impartial and neutral, all issues concerning helping or aiding the deaf client fall into the hands of the habilitation workers. In other words in Finland the interpreters only interpret, any other action is left to other professionals, such as habilitation workers. (Savulahti 2011, 12)

In the same study immigrant deaf people reported the desire to use the help of Sign Language volunteers whenever possible. In their opinion the use of these volunteers made visiting different officials, doctors etc. easier as there was someone present they could ask from or share difficult issues with. Also in assignments with a Sign Language interpreter present the foreign deaf saw it advantageous to use a deaf supporter. This made it possible for them to discuss the issues at hand, or ask for clarification; the native deaf supporter would have better understanding of both: the issues at hand and the Sign Language used by the interpreter. Also the use of family members as support was quite common. (Kippo 2010, 62)

### **3. Interpreting with Immigrant Deaf People**

#### 3.1. Interpreting and expectations

Expectations people have towards interpreters and interpreting vary greatly. In the Sociolinguistic model of interpreting a key issue is that an interpreter must be (at least unconsciously) aware of the language, culture, etc. background of the person interpreted. (Cokely 1992, 17) In the usual case of signing to the national deaf, Sign Language interpreters rely on the information they have on the deaf in general. For interpreters trained in Finland the Sign Language Culture part of the cross cultural information (Cokely 1992, 124) is that of the Finnish deaf. When discussing about the situation with immigrant deaf people, they have their backgrounds in different Sign Language cultures as well as in different native cultures. In this light it seems clear that mistakes are bound to happen. Finnish interpreters, as any Sign Language interpreters for that matter, have no comprehensive view of all deaf people the world over.

In Sign Language interpreter mediated conversation turn exchange has a strong effect on how fluent the interaction is thought of by the primary participants. It effects how participants perceive each others and can even have an effect on the outcome of the conversation. (Sanheim 2003, 27) Interpreters trained and working in Finland with Finnish deaf people have learned the “rules and conventions” of turn exchange within Finnish Sign Language context, and this might cause miscommunication, if the immigrant deaf participant has different expectations concerning turn exchange.

Continuing on the same issue there are a lot of ways in which an interpreter could and will influence the conversation by controlling the turn exchange. For example by handling overlapping talk, an interpreter can influence what gets interpreted first and ultimately even have an effect on the outcome of the conversation. (Sanheim 2003, 51) The control over turn exchange can be seen as a translational strategy, if it is used consciously by the interpreter in order to buy time for processing of translative material.

### 3.2. Interpreters invisibility and neutrality

When speaking about the translational strategies of Sign Language interpreters the most common goal of an interpreter is to keep herself detached and neutral in all interpreting situations.

In our time it is somehow given that in translational work the aim is for the translator and his work to remain invisible. Yet it seems that the feeling of translator's invisibility is the result of skill in the translation process and in domestication of texts. (Venuti 1995, 1-17) This idea also holds in the field of Sign Language interpreting as interpreters aim for being invisible, while at the same time conveying the message between the primary participants.

When discussing over interpreters neutrality, the interpreter is often seen or thought of as a neutral conduit of languages. This applies to laypeople and professionals in the field as well. Still in the real world of Sign Language interpreting there are numerous occasions where interpreters are partial, consciously or unconsciously. (Metzger 1999, 1-3) In many occasions interpreters aim towards neutrality, but end up being on the side of either of the primary participants. What makes this interesting in the field of interpreting with immigrant deaf people are the mixed expectations they might have towards interpreters.

In the light of more recent studies it seems that the field of Sign Language interpreting is moving away from the model of neutral conduit of languages and into a thinking of an interpreter having her place in the discussion between the primary participants. Instead of being an invisible bridge of language information interpreters are seen as members of the communicative team in meaning making. (Turner 2004, 180-181) If the Finnish profession of Sign Language interpreting is on it's way towards the ideology of an interpreter having her stance in the communicative triad, will this create problems if immigrant deaf people assume the interpreter to be invisible? Or are immigrant deaf people already there in welcoming interpreters to join the interactional triad.



### 3.3. Interpreters using International Sign

In interpreting general is important that an interpreter should have adequate skills in both the source language and the target language. (Cokely 1992, 165) When interpreting with immigrant deaf people it usually is the case that the interpreter has no skills in the native language of the deaf person. In cases like these the deaf person and the interpreter need to look for common source language to interpret from. In some cases the use of International Sign could solve this problem. However as many of the Sign Language interpreters in Finland have very poor skills in it, as well as many of the immigrant deaf people, the most common answer seems to be some sort of Sign pidgin created in the heat of the moment. What could be argued here is the need of more International Sign in Finnish Sign Language interpreter training.

Of course taking interpreting into the field of international signing is not that easy. It must be remembered that international interpreting situations do have their own specific demands and they do require the interpreter to try and develop her flexibility in order to handle them. (De Wit 2010, 240)

Another issue when interpreting with immigrant deaf people is that of preparation. In international contexts the access to information, materials and themes of the assignment is of crucial importance. (De Wit 2010, 240) As this is also the case in assignments of interpreting with immigrant deaf, the interpreters should have clear view of the assignment in order to prepare for it. And of course any material concerning the assignment should be made available in forehand; this not usually being the case in the Finnish Sign Language interpreting field.

Of course with experience and by meeting with and interpreting to the foreign deaf, the Finnish Sign Language interpreters are able to widen their scope of understanding foreign Sign Languages and alien deaf cultures. What needs to be remembered is that experience of interpreting or just chatting with immigrant deaf people can influence and improve the interpreter's abilities in making her

Sign Language more “international”, so to better cater for immigrant deaf people.

#### 3.4. Finger-spelling as a method

An important method in Sign Language interpreting is finger-spelling. This means that in situations where an interpreter is missing a sign for the word at hand, she can give the spoken language word letter-by-letter over to the deaf receiver using the hand-alphabet, thus also avoiding having to explain the term in Sign Language. Finnish deaf people have had their schooling in Finnish schools (of course) and have skills in Finnish Language. This then enables Finnish interpreters to use finger-spelling whenever they lack the corresponding term in Sign Language.

This however is not the case with the foreign deaf. Their awareness of the Finnish language can be marginal or non-existent, and here the interpreters are faced with a problem. In some cases this can be solved in finger-spelling through a third language, for example English, but in some cases this creates a clear block for the communication between an interpreter and the client. There is some debate over the use of finger-spelling all together. Some critical voices have deemed it unnatural for the traditional use of Sign Language. However the new generation of Finnish deaf people is very much using finger-spelling, even in some cases for words that do exist in FinSL. This has not been studied in detail, but it seems that the young deaf are more prone to lend words from other languages, Finnish, English, etc. (Savulahti 2011, 15)

## **4. Methods and Study**

### **4.1. Case Study and Field Notes**

When discussing about the best way suitable to try and answer the study questions set in the beginning of this study, it seemed difficult to try and use some form of quantitative survey approach. In simple terms even the limited number of immigrant deaf people living in Finland made it impossible to use a questionnaire, let alone form results from such a narrow sample population. Also language use could have been an issue; the use of forms in Finnish language would have been impossible, as most immigrant deaf people do not have a good command over it.

This was resolved by using a qualitative approach in form of case study. In this way it was possible to look into a real interpreted event and showcase it as an example. Also the use of case study meant that all findings would be based in real life.

In order to shed light on the encounter between an immigrant deaf person, a hearing Finnish person and a Finnish Sign Language interpreter, I decided to focus on single interpreter assignments. The possibility of videotaping the event was discussed with the deaf participants on both cases. Already from the preliminary talks it seemed that the deaf participants were not very keen on having their business and signing recorded. Closer to the case events it became clear that there were no possibilities to film the encounters, so other means of recording had to be found. There were also thoughts of taping the audio of the assignment but this was also considered inappropriate by the deaf participants.

An important thing to note here is the specific request from all deaf participants to hide their personality as much as possible. This is why there is a rather small amount of information concerning them. Only some details are displayed,

mainly ones giving some deeper information about their immigrational background.

As deaf people in Finland, and also immigrant deaf people in Finland, are quite accustomed to Sign Language interpreters having interpreter students with them to observe the interpreting situations, it seemed more reasonable for them to let me come along as an observant; without a camera. In order for me to record my notifications and in order for me to come back to reflect upon them I decided to make field notes at the interpreted encounter. This allowed me to participate to the events as an observer and take field notes.

#### 4.1.1. Case study

At the beginning stages of this study, some thought was put into choosing the form in which to best illustrate the event and findings from it. In order to avoid ethical issues connected to covertly observing a situation, I decided to do the observation in overt form. I therefore informed the deaf party and the interpreter that I attended the event in order to make notes of the interpreting. On behalf of the deaf participants it was important to make note of that the event was not recorded and that their persons or the matters at hand were not under any scrutiny.

Making the set up of the interpreted event in this way went nicely along my plan of using the practitioner-researcher approach. In the lay out of my thesis it was important for me to use this approach as I do see myself more as an active interpreter than a researcher. Also this approach gave me the possibility of reflecting my findings from this one event against my own experiences from the field.

In the Finnish relay system of Sign Language interpreters the deaf client has very slim chance of choosing an interpreter. As described earlier the deaf client gets their interpreter from the relay system that pairs interpreters and clients up

by the needs of the client and the skills of the interpreter. In other words, the deaf client gets an interpreter assigned to them by a system that tries and takes into account what are the clients needs concerning Sign Language interpreting. In brief this means that the client has to wait until the beginning of the event until he/she gets to know who they have as an interpreter.

Given these circumstances I had to agree about the event to be observed with the client and then cross my fingers for getting an interpreter willing to participate this study.

#### 4.1.2. Use of field notes

In the field of Anthropology fieldwork is one of the most essential ways of gathering information. This means that the researcher goes into the field to live amongst the research subjects to gather up information and then reflects upon that information with the knowledge he has. This applies to structures and happenings within a community, tribe, event, etc. from which it is impossible to gather information from outside. (Peacock, 2001, 110)

When doing Ethnographical (Anthropological) studies using fieldwork it is essential to find ways of saving things happened there and also the revelations of the researcher. This why there is a strong emphasis in using field notes as a way of recording and reflecting. Field notes are in way a written form of observations that the researcher has done on the field. (Lappalainen 2007, 112-115)

This study is in no way aiming for the field of anthropology or ethnography, but as a way of recording the events, happenings, misunderstandings, etc. that happen during one Sign Language interpreted assignment, the use of field notes seemed to be suitable. The use of field notes also allowed me to record my own thinking and revelations during the assignment; this wouldn't have been possible if using only camera or audio recording.

## 4.2. Two different Cases

In an attempt to try and find suitable cases to be monitored and studied, I made no decisions about the topics, etc. The point was only to find interpreter assignments for monitoring that would entail an immigrant deaf person or persons communicating with a Finnish participant or participants via Sign Language interpreter.

Reading on, there will be more detailed information how these two cases were found to be monitored. The fact that there turned out to be two cases from the two different realms of Sign Language interpreting, was just a lucky coincidence. Case one falls into the category of educational interpreting. This is not very surprising as most vocational education deaf people attend in Finland is organized by the use of interpreters for them. Case two is a common case of community interpreting, where the deaf participant is taking care of her business using an interpreter.

In fact it could even be argued that the two cases at hand were chosen randomly, as there was no decision made to choose these particular cases; they were chosen as they fulfilled the criteria set and as they happened on the time allocated for the monitoring.

## 4.3. Case 1: Educational Interpreting

Case one took place in educational settings, in Helsinki, Southern Finland. The school has several different vocational training programs.

### 4.3.1. Set up

In order to monitor and note down a true interpreted event, I looked around assignments order to find a suitable one. This searching was done in the interpreter booking system provided by the interpreter relay service. As the

assignments and their orders are under tight secrecy, I was only able to look for assignments either without an interpreter or the ones that had already been booked to Sign Language interpreters working in the same interpreter company as myself, Sign Line.

Once the possible event was booked I contacted the interpreters in charge and discussed with them the possibility of monitoring the event. As one of the interpreters in this case worked as a designated study interpreter for the deaf participants, I asked her to discuss the possibility of monitoring with them. At the scene of the monitored interpreted event I then discussed the monitoring and my study with the deaf participants and asked for their permission to monitor and note down the interpreted event.

Both deaf participants made it clear that it was ok for me to monitor the event and note down my findings. Ever how both clients denied any possibility for recording the event in any form, such as video, etc. Both participants gave their permission to use the event as a part of this study.

Even though there were no efforts made for randomly selecting the deaf persons, it could be argued that they were not especially picked for this study. In search for assignments considering interpreting with immigrant deaf people, this case was found possible in both accessibility and time-frame. Also what needs to be remembered, is that the purpose of this study was to document an interpreted event in field-notes with the researcher being present in full view.

I monitored two sessions in the same class and the same subject. The classroom was however changed during recess, which then led into me finding another place to monitor in the new room. In both rooms I tried to find a place from where to monitor in a way where I could see both the clients and the interpreters.

#### 4.3.2. Stakeholders

In case one there were two deaf participants. They had both been living in Finland for several years and had attended the immigrant training at the Deaf Folk High School. At the school where this case took place they had been studying Finnish culture, language, society and Finnish Sign Language. Both clients were quite fluent in Finnish Sign Language and knew most of the Finnish words used and finger-spelled at the class.

Deaf participant 1 was a young lady, originally from India. She had moved to Finland for family reasons and was living in the Capitol-region. Deaf participant 2 was a young man, who had moved into Finland four years ago for family reasons. He was originally from Estonia.

For both deaf participants this was their first year at this school and at the time of the monitored event they had been studying there for about seven months and had both several years to study until reaching their diplomas.

For the choosing of the interpreters working in the monitored assignment I did not have very much say in. As in this case the focus was in interpreting with the immigrant deaf person, the primary care was to secure an interpreted event to be monitored.

In the Finnish relay system of Sign Language interpreters the deaf client has very slim chance of choosing an interpreter. As described earlier the deaf client gets their interpreter from the relay system that pairs interpreters and clients up by the needs of the client and the skills of the interpreter. In other words, the client gets an interpreter assigned to them by a system that tries and takes into account what are the client's needs concerning Sign Language interpreting. In brief this means that the client has to wait until the beginning of the event until he/she gets to know who they have as an interpreter.



Hearing parties in this case were the teacher and two hearing students, all native Finns. As the hearing parties were not interviewed for this study, there is no detailed information about them.

#### 4.3.3. Educational interpreting

In Case 1 there were two classes monitored, each lasted for 45 minutes. The overall theme was chemistry and the subject for this class was solvents used in painting and cleaning up after painting. Both lessons consisted of the teacher speaking and writing on the board. There was very little discussion. Teacher went through all usual solvents and the chemical reasons why they were used in painting.

The teacher wrote all difficult words on the white-board and the speed of teaching was rather slow, in order to make sure all students get it. A lot of chemical formulas were explained and drawn on the board. As there was teaching and practice work going on in the work-spaces around the class-room, the interpreters had hard time hearing when there were machines used. Because of these hearing problems the interpreters had to ask the teacher to say again. What is interesting, the teacher then explained the term again for the whole class.

All specific words were finger-spelled very slowly and accurately. What was noted, participant one used on some occasions English mouth patterns with Finnish signs ("chemistry", not "kemia"). In their finger-spelling the deaf participants were very precise, and took note that interpreters said exactly what they meant. Also noted was that the interpreters were spelling very precise, taking their time as the teachers (slow) speed allowed this.

There were some disagreements over ways of signing different concepts, but there were no findings of the deaf participants clearly using foreign signs, or not

understanding Finnish ones. Some jokes by the teacher were lost in translation, but mainly everything said was also signed.

In anticipation of an interpreted event with an immigrant deaf person, one of the key factors will be the knowledge the deaf person has on Finnish culture. There are numerous concepts and words that the interpreter will not be able to get across through finger-spelling, only because of them being so alien to the deaf person's original culture and background.

In the observed event number one it turned out to be the case that as the situation and terms used in it were rather familiar for the deaf clients, they already knew the Finnish words and concepts used in their education. So in this case there was no clear notification of trouble created by the mismatch of cultures.

Opposite to my assumptions the interpreters did not use finger-spelling in English as an optional way of making interpreting clearer for the client. Neither was there any evidence of interpreters using English mouthing as part of their interpreter strategy.

#### 4.4. Case 2: Community Interpreting

Case number two was an interpreted event that took place in a mobile phone and broad band internet dealership in Helsinki, Southern Finland.

##### 4.4.1. Set up

In the beginning stages of this study I contacted few deaf immigrants that I knew from previous assignments. These contacts were done at the Finnish Deaf Association by meeting these deaf people in person. Of the two contacted deaf persons only one was willing to participate in this study. So I made an

agreement with her that she would inform me about suitable assignments. Close to the end of the time allocated to the monitoring, the deaf client announced about a suitable assignment. Some days were spent in waiting for the interpreter to be booked, as the assignment would have been cancelled had a suitable interpreter not been found. After having confirmation about an interpreter, the deaf participant agreed with me to meet at the shop where the assignment was to happen.

In the preliminary talks about the observation the deaf client denied any possibility of recording the event. She was even reluctant to give permission for using the event as part of my study, but after reassuring her of making the case non-identifiable, she did give me permission for observing the event and using it as a part of my study. Also, for the wish of the deaf participant an extra amount of precaution is used here in order to hide her identity.

#### 4.4.2. Stakeholders

The deaf participant in case 2 was a young lady, who had been living in Finland for six years and had had some training in Finnish Sign Language as well as the Finnish Language. She came originally from Russia and had moved into Finland for family reasons. She had rather good command of Finnish Sign Language, there were only few signs that she didn't know. Of Russian or other foreign signs I did not see her use any.

In the event number two the interpreter was assigned to the case by the interpreter relay-service at Kela, the Finnish government body providing Sign Language interpreter services. The interpreter was also a young lady, working for a private interpreter company in Helsinki. She had graduated from interpreter school in 2011 and had over 10 months of experience from the field as an interpreter. The interpreter had met the deaf participant at a previous assignment and worked as her interpreter.

The hearing participant was a young man working as a sales clerk at the internet dealership, where case 2 took place. The hearing participant was not interviewed so there is no more specific information about him.

#### 4.4.3. Community interpreting

The shop was familiar to the deaf participant she had been there once before. This time she wanted to change the speed of her broad band internet connection in order to get a cheaper connection. Also she wanted to check possibilities for getting a wireless modem for her home.

In the discussions with the sales clerk, the deaf participant said she wanted to know what needs to be done with the connection if she moves into a new apartment. The clerk answered that normally the deals were made by the month, so that in case of moving there would be billing until the end of the month that the moving happened. Even so, the clerk said that he could change the deal so that the deaf client would have to pay only until the specific day of moving. Getting this special service seemed to be hard for the deaf participant to understand. Also it seemed hard for the interpreter to get across to the client that this was a special service depending on the clerk's good will.

The clerk was eager to serve the deaf client and had answers to all of her questions. Also the clerk seemed to be in no hurry and took the deaf participants matters seriously.

As an answer to the deaf participants wishes the clerk explained that they could make a new deal over the internet connection and change the modem into one that has wlan-connection built into it. A new deal was done over the new modem and it was agreed that the client could now take the new modem with her, but she needed to return the old modem to the shop. The deaf participant contemplated whether she should order an interpreter for the returning of the old modem, but was advised by the clerk that there would be no need for an interpreter if she only dropped the old modem off at the store.

After the assignment at the store ended early in comparison to the original interpreter booking, the deaf participant made a phone call via interpreter to a taxi-company. The call was made in a street of a shopping mall.

#### 4.5. Interviews with the Interpreters

Interpreters from both cases were interviewed after the assignments. These interviews were done in order to check for the background information and more importantly in order to ask for reasons and clarifications for things noticed in the monitoring phase of the cases.

All interpreters were trained interpreters working full time in Sign Language interpreting. All were from Southern Finland and worked for private interpreter companies. Also all three interpreters were women.

Some of the questions were thought of beforehand, especially those concerning the interpreters working history and their previous contact to immigrant deaf people. Rest of the questions were motivated by things seen in the cases, these questions aimed for deepening the understanding got from monitoring, or to check for things noticed in the cases. Questions for interpreters can be read in appendices 3 and 4, and their answers are analyzed in chapter 5.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Findings from Cases one and two

In this chapter findings from Cases one and two are presented in order to answer the questions set in the beginning of this thesis.

### 5.2. Modifications in interpreting

All three interpreters reported having previously interpreted with immigrant deaf people. Interpreters said that assignments with immigrant deaf are relayed to them in the same way as any other assignments, and that in the interpreter-request there is no specific indication of the deaf client's immigrational background. Of course, interpreters can guess about that when seeing the client's name, but as long as there is no clear request of special interpreter skills by the deaf client, assignments with immigrant deaf people are relayed to interpreters as any other assignments.

When asked about the special features in interpreting with the immigrant deaf, interpreters reported that in case they know that the deaf client is of immigrant background, they do use more time in preparing for the assignment. By this they meant checking up on difficult terms, reading around and in the subject, etc. Same things as they would normally do in preparation for an assignment, but with more care and time use.

In Case two and in Case one particular it was noticed that interpreters used rather big facial expressions and finger-spelled slowly. These seemed to be clear modifications in interpreter's output, but when asked about it, the interpreters said these were not intentional modifications. Interpreters claimed that they did not have a specific translational strategy, nor could they modify it according to the deaf participant. In the interpreters point of view they were only adapting to the situation and to the way deaf participants were signing and

giving feedback. Although one interpreter reported of having a higher sense of duty in getting the message across, when interpreting with immigrant deaf.

An example of a modification of translational strategies could also be seen in Case 2. The clerk explained: “just take out all cords and connect them to the new modem according to the advise given in instructions manual.” The interpreter tried to translate this into Finnish Sign Language but did not seem to get the message across to the deaf participant. So the interpreter changed her translational strategy and acted out the “pulling off cords /connecting them into another box /looking at the manual” –procedure. This made the deaf participant understand what was needed, and the interpretation went on.

#### 5.2.1. Highened awareness

In Cases one and two it was noticed that interpreters were modifying their translational strategies and their output. This was shown in slowness of the finger-spell, in exaggerated mouth-patterns, in the way interpreters used their facial expressions; especially to give clues of important concepts, and in small adds interpreters did in order to get the message across.

An example of an add as a translational strategy comes from case 2 where the deaf participant was using term “Wi-Fi” for the cordless connection from her laptop. The term used by the hearing participant was “wlan”. As there started be a mismatch of words the interpreter added “same as wi-fi” into an utterance with “wlan” from the hearing participant. This was done in order to clarify the term used.

When interviewed, the interpreters reported of a feeling of “being on their toes” when interpreting with immigrant deaf people. In a way this could be described as the interpreters having a highened sense of awareness when interpreting with immigrant deaf people. By this I mean that as interpreters sense the special features in the situation and in the deaf participants conduct, they are

extra sensitive to modify their output in order to cater for the needs of the immigrant deaf person they are interpreting with and to.

Also noticeable was the constant feedback interpreters looked for and got from the deaf participants. This also indicates that there is a stronger sense of co-operation when interpreting with immigrant deaf people.

### 5.3. Getting the message across

As described in the early stages of this thesis the aim was to find out what are the translational strategies Sign Language interpreters use when interpreting with immigrant deaf people. As no clear cut answer to this question could be found, there were some very interesting findings.

#### 5.3.1. Iconicity

In the field notes it seemed clear that there were iconic features used in these cases. Interpreters used more expressions in their output in comparison to what I would have expected in a usual interpreter assignment. What also was noted was the way interpreters “hinted” with their expressions whenever there was a key concept or an important term coming into the interpreter output.

Nodding was used by both, the deaf participants and the interpreters. In the Cases interpreters looked for these nods in order to make sure that the deaf clients were onboard in what was signed. Of course the nodding and other feedback belongs into the interpreting with native deaf people as well, but now with these immigrant deaf participants it seemed to be highlighted. When asked in the interviews, the interpreters said that they were checking constantly for feedback in order to try and modify their output to better suit the deaf participants needs.

Also some other use of iconic features by the deaf participants was noticed. For example: when trying to explain that she wanted to change the speed of her



broad band internet connection from fast to slower, the deaf participant in Case 2 used an advertisement board as a support for her signing. The connections were labeled “S”, “M”, “L” and “XL” to describe the connection width and the speed of the connection. The deaf participant wanted to change her connection from “XL” to “L” in order to have a cheaper connection. In support of her signing she pointed to the connection letters on the board and signed that she wanted her connection to be moved up from “XL” to “L”.

### 5.3.2. Code mixing

In both cases there were examples of code mixing. Contradictory to the presumptions, there were no clear incidents noted that the interpreters would have used English language mouth patterns with Finnish Sign Language Signs in order to make FinSLe signs more understandable.

On the other hand in Case 1, participant 1 used mostly English mouth patterns with FinSLe signs. For example: when signing “chemistry” participant 1 used the English word “chemistry” in her mouthing instead of the Finnish mouth pattern “kemia”.

Also in Case 2 there were few incidents where the deaf participant used English mouth pattern with Finnish signs, and two occasions where she used presumably Russian mouth pattern.

In case 2 there was a new sign created during the assignment. The deaf participant was not satisfied with the Finnish Sign Language sign for modem, used by the interpreter. After a short discussion during interpreting, a new ad hoc sign for modem was created. This new sign consisted of hands describing the outlines of a modem with the Finnish word “modeemi” (modem) in the mouth pattern.

## 5.4. Team Work

What was found interesting was the fact that in both Cases there was a strong sense of making the communication happen together. In my own experience in the Finnish tradition of Sign Language interpreting there is some collaboration amongst the primary participants and the interpreters, but in these Cases of interpreting with immigrant deaf there seemed to be a sort of shared responsibility of the success of the communication.

Interpreters in Case 1 reported that the strong support from the deaf participants made interpreting easier for them, as they got feedback and missing signs from the deaf participants. Also interpreter in Case 2 said that she felt supported by the deaf participant, even though the deaf participant did not like interpreter asking for the hearing participant to say again.

For example: in Case 1 participants were discussing with the teacher about next days trip to another school for having their pictures taken. As the interpreters were struggling to get the participant one's signing translated, participant two helped interpreters by explaining what participant 1 meant.

### 5.4.1. Primary Participant collaboration

Collaboration between all participants was evident in Case 1. The teacher used multiple ways of trying to make sure all students got what he was teaching. When speaking about solvents all bottles were laid on the table. All chemical formulas were written on the white board as they were explained. This allowed for interpreters to point to the board and take structures into their signing.

The teacher was speaking very slowly, apparently in order to make sure the interpreters had time to translate. When interpreters ask for a word to be repeated, the teacher repeated it to the whole class; with explanations. At some point the teacher used the term "ootraus" (graining) as an example of lessons to come. As the interpreters asked for the teacher to repeat the word, he explained

to the whole class that it meant painting a surface to look like a specific wooden surface, for example making chairs made out of pine-wood look like they were made out of oak.

#### 5.4.2. Flexibility

In addition to the collaboration between primary participants, a note worthy thing was the flexibility that was seen in both primary participants and the interpreters. The interpreters were willing to adjust their output and translational strategies in order to make sure the deaf participant got the message. As well, the deaf participants were modifying their signing and ways of giving feedback according to the interpreters.

A good example of this was when the teacher illustrated the chemical formula of water H<sub>2</sub>O by drawing it on board with the two H's (hydrogen) down and one O (oxygen) up. By this was highlighted the dipole nature of water molecules. The interpreters took this model into their signing by signing the formula with letter H down and letter O up.

In interviews with the interpreters they said that most of the things I named as modifications of translational strategies, or modifications in the interpreted event were just them reacting to the clients. It seems hard to determine which comes first but what can be said is, that in field notes there was evidence of all participants being flexible, in benefit of the communicative mission.

#### 5.5. Bridging the language gap

Contradictory to the presumptions the interpreters did not use finger-spelling in English as a way of modifying their translation to be more accessible to the deaf participants. When asked, the interpreters said that there could have been terms or concepts that the deaf participant would have benefitted had they been finger-spelled in English. The reason for not using this possibility was simply a

question of language skills, the interpreters said that with their command over English it was impossible to come by the relevant English term; especially in the heat of an interpreting assignment. According to the interpreters another reason for not using English finger-spelling was the fact that it was not used by the deaf participants either.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Modifications to translational strategies

An important thing to make notice of here is the fact that all deaf participants had been living in Finland for several years. During their stay they had all had education in Finnish Sign Language, and in Finnish language, culture, etc. As a part of the process for getting a permanent permit to stay and live in Finland they had all been attending education at the Deaf Folk High school in Helsinki.

This education provided by the Finnish Deaf Association through the Deaf Folk High school, and paid by the Ministry of domestic affairs can solve some issues immigrant deaf people face. At least in issues concerning Sign Language interpreting the assumed obstacle of problems created by Finnish terminology or culture being too foreign was avoided. By this is meant situations where the deaf participant is not familiar with the sign used or it's Finnish language counterpart, thus barring Sign Language interpreters from using finger-spelling as a way of bridging the language-culture –gap.

Even though interpreters said that they had no translational strategies, they still have those. Even the very basic interpreting models include the use of translational strategies. For even the thought of “I translate to Sign Language everything I hear and vice versa” is in it's way a translational strategy. Furthermore when asked in detail the interpreters admitted to that in these cases they modified their way of interpreting to better cater to the communicational needs of the situation. In other words the interpreters did modify their translational strategies in order to be able to interpret with immigrant deaf people.

When asked about differences in preparation for an assignment when interpreting with immigrant deaf people, the interpreters admitted they used more time in preparation. Even though there was no clear indication about the deaf participant's immigrational background in the interpreter request,

interpreters seemed to be in most cases aware of that. This was not intriguing any further but as the population of deaf people in Finland is quite small, interpreters do tend to know, who is immigrant. Also with the uniqueness of Finnish language and Finnish names, any foreign name stands out clearly, thus giving hint of the deaf person's origin.

## 6.2. Collaboration

If looking only into the evidence from Cases monitored here it became evident that in interpreting with immigrant deaf, participant collaboration had a great role to play. This does not mean that there would not be collaboration in interpreting with domestic deaf people. However in these cases the primary participants took strongly part in assuring the communication, negotiated meaning, gave active feedback, created ad hoc signs with the interpreters.

Interestingly this points strongly back to chapter 3 where interpreter's stance in the interactional triad (Turner 2004, 182) was discussed. If looking only into evidence from Cases 1 and 2, it seems that in cases on interpreting with the foreign deaf, the interpreters are more welcome into collaboration with the primary participants.

Furthermore if speaking about the interpreters invisibility (Metzger 1999, 1), an interpreter holding very strongly into the idea of invisibility could not have done a great job in interpreting these assignments. The deaf participants needed and got involvement from the interpreters.

## 6.3. Flexibility

Even though there are studies (Napier & Rohan) that indicate that deaf participants would benefit from choosing interpreters, immigrant deaf people in Finland as well as native deaf people in Finland have no possibilities in choosing their interpreters, as discussed earlier in this thesis.

What this means is that in most cases immigrant deaf people get an interpreter chosen for them by the interpreter relay service. This also means that in the majority of assignments of interpreting with immigrant deaf people, the deaf person meets the specific Sign Language interpreter for the first time.

What this means is that a great deal of flexibility is demanded from both, the deaf participants and the interpreters. Of course, adapting to the situation at an assignment is part of an interpreter's professionalism, but given the widened scope of possibilities of adapting to when interpreting with immigrant deaf people, interpreters do need to be flexible. In interviews with the interpreters flexibility was also raised as a valuable asset when interpreting with immigrant deaf people.

## **7. Conclusion**

### 7.1. In conclusion

Interpreting with immigrant deaf people can be demanding for the interpreters. Mainly all Sign Language interpreters working in Finland have been educated to act as Sign Language interpreters for the Finnish deaf using Finnish Sign Language. In this light it can be assumed that the transition to interpreting with an immigrant deaf person can be a demanding one. By some interpreting theories the norm seems to be that the client is fluent in either the source language or the target language. With this point given, it is not hard to imagine that there can be difficulties when the deaf participant comes from another country and language with inadequate skills in the languages the interpreter has command of. The lack of a common source or target language makes these interpreting events demanding on both parties.

Still, there is a growing demand of Sign Language interpreter services needed for deaf people from foreign countries. No matter how hard or demanding the situation, interpreters go into these assignments and seem to cope with them. Part of this has to do with the co-operation between the primary participants and the interpreter, when all parties of the communication triad come together trying to manage the situation.

### 7.2. Limitations of this study

This thesis has opened a window into interpreting with immigrant deaf people by observations done in two different cases. Even though there are some interesting results and findings, something more would be needed to fully understand the complex issues concerning interpreting with immigrant deaf people.



Recording of the monitored cases was done in field notes by the author. This was a conscious decision as the likelihood of filming an interpreted event seemed a long shot. Being able to use video recording, or any other form of recording, would have improved noting the events down and made it possible to go over them again. However this was strictly not allowed by the deaf participants. The deaf participants were not willing to have their signing recorded, no explanation was given as for why.

In the beginning stages the possibility of using a mock up assignment was also considered. This would have allowed for arranging an assignment between an immigrant deaf person, a fake specialist of some sort and a real interpreter. This would have allowed recording and more detailed analysis on the modifications in translational strategies. Still in this thesis a strong emphasis was on monitoring a real event.

Maybe the biggest limitation was not interviewing the deaf participants after the monitored event. This would have allowed going deeper into the modifications done on the primary participant's side. What also could have been thought about was interviewing the hearing participants.

As stated earlier there were no findings of clashes between cultures or Finnish language or culture concepts being too foreign to the deaf participants. One of the reasons for this was that the deaf participants had all lived in Finland for several years and had had education in Finnish Sign Language. This could have been overcome by choosing deaf people just recently immigrated to Finland. Then again finding immigrant deaf people willing to participate in a study seemed rather troublesome.

### 7.3. For the future

For future scholars it would be interesting to follow up on the observed deaf persons. Firstly with an interview to find out their perspectives on interpreting. Secondly there could be something to be found if this study would be done

again with the same deaf participants maybe 10 years from now. This would allow for thinking about the procedures of domestication. This would of course mean that there would have to be an interview now and then.

The amount of deaf people immigrating to Finland seems to be keeping on the same yearly level or rising. As there are forecasts of diminishing in the deaf population in Finland, the ratio between native and immigrant deaf people is likely to change. So already now and ever more in future, the sign Language interpreters will need to modify their translational strategies in order to interpret with immigrant deaf people. Sign Language interpreter training given in Finland is of high quality when looked upon in the global scale. Still there is room for modification. The current discussion about immigrant deaf as users of Sign Language interpreters will and has already shaped the training given in interpreter schools, but there is still room for arguing that a specific (mandatory) training of international sign would be good for all interpreters, and that there should be the option of including international sign to one's studies; at least in the vocational studies of interpreter training. Also teaching international sign to interpreter students could be a good way of developing their self-expression and increase their capabilities in Sign Language variation

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#### On-line resources:

The Social Insurance Institution of Finland:

<http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/> (15.4.2012)

Finnish Association of the Deaf:

<http://www.kl-deaf.fi/Page/e2b67d21-928b-4b60-814d-af6fecf5471b.aspx>  
(15.4.2012)

Finnish Immigration Service:

<http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/content.asp?path=8,2755> (15.4.2012)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Case 1, Summary of field notes**

#### General set up of the events

At the beginning stages of this study, some thought was put into choosing the form in which to best illustrate the event and findings from it. In order to avoid ethical issues connected to covertly observing a situation, I decided to do the observation in overt form. I therefore informed the deaf parties and the interpreters that I attended the event in order to make notes of the interpretation. On behalf of the deaf clients it was important to make note of that the events were not recorded and that their persons or the matters at hand were not under any scrutiny.

Making the set up of the interpreted events in this way went nicely along my plan of using the practitioner-researcher approach. In the lay out of my thesis it was important for me to use this approach as I do see myself more as an active interpreter than a researcher. Also this approach gave me the possibility of reflecting my findings from this one event against my own experiences from the field.

#### Choosing the deaf participants

As for to be able to monitor and note down a true interpreted event, I looked around assignments to be interpreted in order to find a suitable one. Once the possible event was booked I contacted the interpreters in charge and discussed the possibility of monitoring the event with them. As one of the interpreters in this case worked as a designated study interpreter for the clients in case, I asked her to discuss the possibility of monitoring with the clients. At the scene of the monitored interpreted event I then discussed the monitoring and my study with the deaf clients and asked for their permission to monitor and note down the interpreted event.

Both clients made it clear that it was ok for me to monitor the event and note down my findings. Ever how both clients denied any possibility for recording the event in any form, such as video, etc. Both clients gave me permission to use the event as a part of my study.

Even though there were no efforts made for randomly selecting the deaf persons, it could be argued that they were not especially picked for this study. In search for assignments done considering interpreting with immigrant deaf people, this case was found possible in both accessibility and time-frame. Also what needs to be remembered, is that the purpose of this study was to document an interpreted event in field-notes with the researcher being present in full view.

### Choosing the interpreters

For the choosing of the interpreters working in the monitored assignment I did not have very much say in. As in this case the focus was in interpreting with the immigrant deaf person, the primary care was to secure an interpreted event for me to monitor.

In the Finnish relay system of Sign Language interpreters the deaf client has very slim chance of choosing an interpreter. As described earlier the deaf client gets their interpreter from the relay system that pairs interpreters and clients up by the needs of the client and the skills of the interpreter. In other words, the client gets an interpreter assigned to them by a system that tries and takes into account what are the client's needs concerning Sign Language interpreting. In brief this means that the client has to wait until the beginning of the event until he/she gets to know who they have as an interpreter.

### Over all

The interpreted event 1 took place in educational settings, in Helsinki, Southern Finland. The two deaf clients attend a vocational school in order to reach the

diploma of a professional painter. For both clients this was their first year at this school and at the time of the monitored event they had been studying there for about seven months and had both several years to study.

Both clients had been living in Finland for several years and had attended the immigrant training at the Deaf Folk High School. At this school they had been studying Finnish culture, language, society and Finnish Sign Language. Both clients were quite fluent in Finnish Sign Language and knew most of the Finnish words used and finger-spelled at the class.

I monitored two sessions in the same class and the same subject. The classroom was however changed during recess, which then led into me finding another place to monitor in the new room. In both rooms I tried to find a place from where to monitor in a way where I could see both the clients and the interpreters.

### Taking notes

Recording of the interpreted event was done using paper and pen. Rather than trying to put every little thing down I concentrated in things I thought being of importance, such as words finger-spelled words and signs misunderstood, and concepts too hard to understand.

The aim of note-taking was to make good-quality field notes that would enable me to remember and analyze the event at the time of writing down results and findings. At the event however it was rather hard to get everything down.

### Field notes

Overall subject was chemistry and the subject for this class was solvents used in painting and cleaning up after painting.

Notes general:

- all difficult words written on the white-board by the teacher
- teacher takes it very slow and wants to make sure all get it
- there are a lot of chemical formulas that are explained and drawn on the board, for example the dipole formula of water H-O-H, is drawn with O (oxygen) up and the two H's (hydrogen) down to illustrate this
- on the second session it's mostly repeating things from first lesson. Client 2 is bored
- there is some machine working in the room next door, and this causes hearing problems for the interpreters

#### Notes for finger-spelling:

- all specific words finger-spelled, slowly
- client 1 uses English mouthing with Finnish signs ("chemistry", not "kemia")
- words spelled include: alcohol, thinner, ethanol, butanol, methylbenzene, etc.
- clients finger-spell very precisely, and want the interpreters to say exactly what they mean
- also interpreters are spelling very precise, taking their time as the teachers speed allows this (maybe also because clients are precise in spelling?)
- no clear misconceptions on basis of concepts too foreign
- because of hearing problems the interpreters have to ask the teacher to say again (several times)

#### Notes of interpreting:

- client 1 doesn't like the way interpreter 1 uses the sign /PAINT/. Interpreter is modifying the sign by making it directly into describing painting different walls. The client prefers making the sign in the "basic" form with two hands and locating painting on the walls only after that
- clients have their own sign for varnish, different than the one used commonly in Finnish sign Language



- interpreters are signing slow, (this needs to be checked in the interviews). Seems that interpreters are not using a speed typical of signing to Finnish young deaf people
- the speed of the teacher is also slow which means that interpreters need to wait from time to time
- clients not commenting on the teaching
- teacher makes a joke: "next we have this C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH, a chemical compound that some people might actually even drink!" (chemical formula for alcohol being the point here) the joke is lost in translation
- clients give feedback to interpreters by head-nods and facial expressions
- long discussion about a trip to a science-centre, interpreters having difficulty understanding a comment from client 1, client 2 clarifies
- discussing over next day's events as the students need to go to an other school to get their pictures taken. Here too interpreters were struggling to get the idea of client 1's signing. (seems that she's using Finnish signs but something is missing) (needs to be checked in interviews)
- some terms too difficult for interpreters, such as "ootraus" (graining) and "marmorointi" (marble-painting). Interpreters had to ask for clarification from the teacher, and at those cases the terms were then explained to all students.

### Difficult concepts

In anticipation of an interpreted event with an immigrant deaf person, one of the key factors will be the knowledge the deaf person has on Finnish culture. There are numerous concepts and words that the interpreter will not be able to get across through finger-spelling, only because of them being so alien to the deaf person's original culture and background.

In the observed event number one it turned out to be the case that as the situation and terms used in it were rather familiar for the deaf clients, they already knew the Finnish words and concepts used in their education. So in this case there was no clear notification of trouble created by the mismatch of cultures.

### Finger-spelling in English

Opposite to my assumptions the interpreters did not use finger-spelling in English as an optional way of making interpreting clearer for the client. Neither was there any evidence of interpreters using English mouthing as part of their interpreter strategy. These decisions on interpreter strategy need to be checked from interpreters at the interviews.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Case 2, Summary of field notes**

#### General set up of the event

At the beginning stages of this study, some thought was put into choosing the form in which to best illustrate the event and findings from it. In order to avoid ethical issues connected to covertly observing a situation, I decided to do the observation in overt form. I therefore informed the deaf parties and the interpreters that I attended the event in order to make notes of the interpretation. On behalf of the deaf clients it was important to make note of that the events were not recorded and that their persons or the matters at hand were not under any scrutiny.

Making the set up of the interpreted events in this way went nicely along my plan of using the practitioner-researcher approach. In the lay out of my thesis it was important for me to use this approach as I do see myself more as an active interpreter than a researcher. Also this approach gave me the possibility of reflecting my findings from this one event against my own experiences from the field.

#### Choosing the deaf participant

In the beginning stages of this study I contacted few deaf immigrants that I knew from previous assignments. These contacts were done personally at the Finnish Deaf Association by meeting the clients in person. Of the two contacted deaf persons only one was willing to participate in this study. So I made an agreement with her that she would inform me about suitable assignments. (This then turned out so that I had to keep asking her for interpreted events.)

In the preliminary talks about the observation the deaf client denied any possibility of recording the event. She was even reluctant to give permission for using the event as part of my study, but after reassuring her of making the case

non-identifiable, she did give me permission for observing the event and using it as a part of my study.

### Choosing the interpreter

In the event number two the interpreter was assigned to the case by the interpreter relay-service at Kela. Luckily the interpreter in this case was a colleague of mine from the same company, so there were more possibilities for discussions before and after the interpreted event.

### Over all

The interpreted event number 2 took place in a mobile phone and broad band internet dealership in Helsinki, Southern Finland.

The client has been living in Finland for six years and has some training in Finnish Sign Language as well as the Finnish Language. She comes originally from Russia and has moved into Finland for family reasons. She had rather good command in Finnish Sign Language, there were only few signs that she didn't know. Of Russian or other foreign signs I did not see her use any.

In the shop the client was served by a young male clerk that seemed to have a good attitude towards deaf people. This I gathered from his way of speaking directly to the deaf customer and his willingness to explain things beyond the normal sales pitch.

### Taking notes

Recording of the interpreted event was done using paper and pen. Rather than trying to put every little thing down I concentrated in things I thought being of importance, such as words finger-spelled words and signs misunderstood, and concepts too hard to understand.

The aim of note-taking was to make good-quality field notes that would enable me to remember and analyze the event at the time of writing down results and findings. At the event however it was rather hard to get everything down.

### Field notes

#### Notes general

- the shop is familiar to the client, she has been there once before
- client wants to change the speed of her broad band internet connection in order to get a cheaper connection
- client wants to also check possibilities for getting a wlan (wireless) modem
- also she wants to check what she needs to do with the connection if she needs to move (not planning to move yet, but just in case)
- clerk is eager to serve the client and has good attitude (looks straight to the deaf client)
- client wants to know if there's a possibility of getting a wlan-modem into the present connection
- the clerk explains that they can make a new deal over the connection and change the modem into one that has wlan-connection built into it
- a new deal is done and it is agreed that the client can now take the new modem with her, but she needs to return the old modem into the shop
- client contemplates whether she should order an interpreter for the returning of the old modem, but is advised by the clerk that there would be no need for an interpreter if she only drops the old modem off at the store
- after the modem-changing is ok, the client wants to discuss the terms of ending the connection deal. She says that there might be a possibility of her moving out of Finland
- the clerk explains that generally the connection-deals are always made by the month, so that the connection payments continue to the end of the month the connection is disconnected. However the clerk can make it so, that the deals ends the same day the client wants. This is puzzling the client.

- it is hard for the interpreter to get across, that this way of ending the deal is a special service depending on the clerks willingness
- after re-explaining, the client is satisfied with the answer, thanks the clerk and leaves with the new modem
- outside the shop, the client asks the interpreter if they can still make one phone call
- as there is plenty of time left the client call a taxi-company via interpreter in order to ask how late this company has airport-taxi service
- after she has the answer she thanks the interpreter and the assignment ends

#### Notes finger-spelling

- interpreter finger-spells the speeds of connections (10, 20, 100 Mb), but client uses letter-codes from advertisements (S, M, L, XL)
- client finger-spells very slowly and accurately to make sure the interpreter gets it
- when finger-spelling the clients mouthing varies between Finnish, Russian (I would assume?) and English
- also interpreter spells slowly and uses clear mouthing of words (would even say overly clear) (needs to be checked at interview)

#### Notes interpreting

- client uses a advertisement to explain that she wants to change her connection from "XL" to "L" –connection
- interpreters voice shows hesitation
- client uses the advertisement stand as a support for her signing. She points to it and signs "lift level" to illustrate she wants change her connection to a slower and cheaper variation
- interpreter uses a Finnish Sign Language sign for modem, client doesn't recognize this, she uses finger-spelling. Interpreter introduces a new sign: she signs the outlines of a flat box with "modem" in her mouthing. Client is satisfied with the new sign and this is used throughout the assignment

- client wants to be extra-certain of that she has understood everything correctly, this seems to puzzle the interpreter somewhat
- client re-checks things already said/agreed
- client uses term Wi-Fi meaning wireless connection to the net. The clerk uses term Wlan. (interpreter adds: "are the same") There is a short discussion over this but the client agrees to the use of "Wlan"
- the clerk tries to explain how to connect the new modem. Interpreter first tries to do translate it using signs and finger-spelling but changes tactics and acts out the "take up modem-pull of cords-put in new modem-put in new cords according to colors" procedures thus getting the client to understand roughly what needs to be done
- interpreter loses the translation two times and needs to ask for the clerk to repeat what he's said. Interpreters asking from the clerk seems to irritate the client

### Difficult concepts

In the observed event number two it turned out to be the case that as the situation and terms used in it were rather familiar for the deaf participant, she already knew most of the Finnish words and concepts used in the shop. So in this case there was no clear notification of trouble created by the mismatch of cultures.

### Finger-spelling in English

Opposite to my assumptions the interpreters did not use finger-spelling in English as an optional way of making interpreting clearer for the client. Neither was there any evidence of interpreters using English mouthing as part of their interpreter strategy.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Interview with the interpreters**

#### **Case 1**

##### Questions:

##### 1. Background

- How many years have You worked as an interpreter?
- Have You had previous assignments with immigrant deaf people?

##### 2. Preparation

- Is there any difference in interpreting with immigrant deaf?
- What kind of information did You get about the assignment?

##### 3. Interpreting

- Did You notice Your use of facial expression?
- How would You say You modified Your translational strategies?
- Did You have some trouble in interpreting?

##### 4. Finger-spelling

- I noticed that You finger-spelled rather slow, why?
- You did not use finger-spelling in English?

##### 5. Differences to interpreting with native Finnish deaf people

- In Your opinion, are there any?



## **Appendix 4**

### **Interview with the interpreters**

#### **Case 2**

##### Questions:

##### 1. Background

- How many years have You worked as an interpreter?
- Have You had previous assignments with immigrant deaf people?

##### 2. Preparation

- Is there any difference in interpreting with immigrant deaf?
- What kind of information did You get about the assignment?

##### 3. Interpreting

- Did You notice Your use of facial expression?
- How would You say You modified Your translational strategies?
- Did You have some trouble in interpreting?

##### 4. Finger-spelling

- I noticed that You finger-spelled rather slow, why?
- You did not use finger-spelling in English?

##### 5. Differences to interpreting with native Finnish deaf people

- In Your opinion, are there any?