

EXPLORING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION: PATHWAYS THROUGH PROFESSIONALIZATION AND TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The global demand for Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) is on the rise, catalyzed by a heightened focus on inclusivity across sectors such as education, healthcare, and legal services. This study delves into the expanding career opportunities within sign language interpretation, emphasizing pathways toward professionalization and the role of continuous skill development. We explore the evolving responsibilities of SLIs and the critical skills necessary for success across various settings. A descriptive survey design was employed, using structured questionnaires to gather quantitative data about sign language interpreters from deaf students. The survey explored the SLI's experiences, sector-specific demands, and perceived barriers in the educational sector. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and highlight gaps in professional development and policy support. This paper highlights the growing need for formalized training programs and the establishment of standardized certification processes to ensure equitable service quality and access for the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. The study underscores the importance of on-the-job training, sector-specific continuous professional development, and policy reform as foundational elements for enhancing SLIs' proficiency and career readiness. Technological advancements, such as remote interpreting and accessibility tools, are also emphasized as transformative components in SLI practice, enabling interpreters to navigate new communication challenges and increase accessibility in virtual environments. The research reveals that targeted professional development programs, with a focus on sector-specific terminology, ethics, and technological literacy, are critical for effective interpretation. This paper concludes with recommendations for improving SLI career trajectories, emphasizing structured training, certification, and educational initiatives to establish SLIs as vital professionals in fostering inclusivity. By addressing challenges such as job commitment and the need for specialized skillsets, this paper provides actionable insights to support the advancement of SLI careers and to promote accessibility and inclusion for deaf individuals in a variety of public and professional domains.

Keywords: Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs), Professionalization, Career Development, Inclusivity, Certification, Training, Translation

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence among countries, cultures and economies worldwide, the demand for translation and interpretation services is rapidly expanding across industries such as business, healthcare, education, and international relations. Translation and interpretation services facilitate interchange. There lies the niche for professionals with language expertise. In all economies, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons need the services of Sign language interpreters (SLIs) to bridge the language gap to the hearing world. SLIs ensure their inclusivity and accessibility to education, public services, and professional opportunities.

Unlike spoken languages, sign language interpretation is emerging as a field, and it is rapidly expanding with unique opportunities. According to Napier and Leeson (2016), 'sign language' is mentioned in the constitution of 10 countries, in one or more laws in 19 countries, in some form of policy in another 19 countries, and 7 countries mention 'sign language' in guidelines. With the proliferation of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) practices

in the workplace, the professionalization of SLIs becomes increasingly important to meet the evolving demands of diverse sectors of the economy. This paper explores the career opportunities available to sign language interpreters, emphasizing the role of professionalization and the potential for career advancement through continuous training and technological adaptation. We will also examine the skills required for a successful career in sign language interpretation and highlight the growing need for training and support to help SLIs advance in their careers.

The Role of Sign Language Interpreters in the Professional World

Sign language interpretation is essential for ensuring that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals have access to services and information in a variety of contexts. Sign language interpreting services (SLIS), are essential for deaf people's access to education, political participation, employment, health care, as well as the justice system. In the Global North, institutionalized SLIS existed for almost half a century (Alzahrani, 2022). In those countries, SLIS has been provided with the legislative framework to exist as a "practice profession" (Haualand, 2018).

Globally, a lot of brainpowers has gone into researching sign language interpretation in educational settings. Early researchers focused on sign language interpreter training, interpreting skills and qualifications. A persistent problem they found was the lack of sufficient training, resulting in ineffective interpreting (Liu et al., 2024).

Research focus was later shifted to explore the perspectives of the diverse stakeholders in SLIS, such as DHH students, their parents, hearing peers and interpreters. (Prinzi, 2023; Marschark et al., 2005, 2006; Kurz & Langer, 2004; Langer, 2004; Napier and Barker, 2004). These efforts brought out significant truths, including the fact that DHH students expected the interpreters to accurately mediate language, facilitate interactions between them, and promote casual conversations (Berge & Ytterhus, 2015). Undoubtedly, educational SLIS greatly contributes to the reintegration of DHH students into mainstream experiences. The skills of interpreters, along with their positive relationships with DHH students, are crucial factors influencing the students' satisfaction with SLIS.

EMERGING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SLIS

Interpreting Inclusion: Sign Language Services in Higher Education

Unlike spoken language interpreters, many SLIs work in primary and secondary schools. The emergence and expansion of inclusivity in education parallels an increase in deaf learners receiving their primary education overwhelmingly in spoken language classrooms (De Mulder & Haualand, 2019). The inclusive education philosophy has contributed to an increased focus on access to society in general and the expansion of SLIS (Murray et al., 2018). The role of sign language interpreters in universities is critical for ensuring that deaf students can fully engage with the academic content, participate in discussions, and access the same educational opportunities as their hearing peers. The provision of qualified sign language interpreters is not only a matter of equity but also a legal obligation under various disability rights frameworks. University education often involves complex communication, including lectures, seminars, group discussions, and presentations. For deaf students, these settings can be challenging if there are no accommodation in place to facilitate effective communication. As Marschark et al., (2015) note, Deaf students in university settings face additional cognitive demands due to the need to process information visually and simultaneously manage interpreting services. Without the presence of qualified sign language interpreters, deaf students may miss critical information, struggle to keep up with fast-paced lectures, and be unable to participate in classroom discussions. Sign language interpreters bridge this communication gap by providing real-time translation of spoken content into sign language, ensuring that deaf students can access the same information as their hearing counterparts.

The presence of sign language interpreters can significantly impact the academic success and engagement of deaf students in university settings. According to Wolters et al., (2011), "Interpreters play a vital role in the academic achievement of deaf students, providing them with the tools they need to access information, engage in critical thinking, and participate in classroom discussions" (p. 124). Without interpreters, deaf students may struggle to comprehend lectures, complete assignments, and keep pace with the demands of university coursework.

Interpreting Care: Sign Language Interpretation in Healthcare Settings

Although SLIs have historically found employment primarily in educational environments, this trend is rapidly changing. One growing field for SLIs is healthcare. In medical contexts, clear and accurate communication is

critical to patient safety, informed consent, and the quality of care provided. Without interpreters, deaf individuals may face barriers to accessing healthcare, leading to misdiagnosis, improper treatment, and an overall lack of equity in healthcare services. Sign language interpreters are crucial for ensuring that deaf patients can communicate effectively with healthcare providers. According to Kritzinger et al., (2014), “communication barriers between healthcare providers and deaf patients are a significant concern, often leading to misdiagnosis or inappropriate treatment” (p. 103). Deaf individuals rely on sign language as their primary mode of communication, and without qualified interpreters, their ability to fully understand their medical conditions, treatment options, and instructions is compromised. A study by McKee et al., (2013) further emphasizes that “when healthcare providers rely on lip reading or written notes instead of sign language interpreters, critical information can be lost or misunderstood” (p. 163). This can lead to dangerous health outcomes, such as medication errors or delayed treatments.

Healthcare providers must recognize that the communication needs of deaf patients are unique, and the use of qualified sign language interpreters ensures that these needs are met. Additionally, the ability to provide informed consent is a fundamental patient right, and for deaf individuals, sign language interpreters play a key role in ensuring that this right is upheld. Informed consent involves not only the patient’s understanding of their diagnosis and treatment options but also the potential risks and benefits of medical interventions.

Without clear communication through an interpreter, deaf patients may not be able to fully comprehend these aspects of their care. As noted by McKee et al. (2015), “informed consent is impossible to obtain without the full understanding of the patient, which requires clear communication in their preferred language” (p. 74). In cases where deaf patients are not provided with sign language interpreters, healthcare providers risk violating ethical standards by proceeding with treatments that the patient may not fully understand. This lack of understanding can undermine the patient’s autonomy and lead to mistrust in the healthcare system. Miscommunication in healthcare settings can have severe consequences, particularly in emergency situations. For example, a study by Kuenburg, Fellingner, and Fellingner (2016) found that “without interpreters, deaf patients are more likely to experience adverse events, such as receiving incorrect medications or being misinformed about their treatment” (p. 135). These adverse events highlight the importance of providing qualified interpreters to ensure that deaf patients receive safe and effective medical care.

There is a lack of professionals or public servants who are proficient in signed language, and few signing deaf professionals work in first-line services or primary health care (De Mulder & Hualand, 2019). “There are very few countries where deaf sign language users can currently become qualified nurses or doctors (e.g. the U.S., Canada, the Netherlands and Austria) (Napier & Leeson, 2016, p. 159)” Research has shown that deaf people experience poorer mental and physical health than the general population (Alexander et al., 2012; Fellingner et al., 2012; SignHealth 2014). Access to health services and health information for deaf clients/patients is problematic and lack of interpreters and standardized methods to call (and pay) for SLIS remains a major accessibility barrier (Kuenburg et al., 2016; Løkken 2014). Health professionals are generally unaware of communication barriers deaf people have to face when accessing health services and are even ignorant about their own lack of knowledge and insights into how to serve deaf and hard of hearing clients (Van den Bogaerde & De Lange, 2014). This same situation occurs in spoken language settings, e.g., health service professionals in the United States not being aware of Latinos’ cultural practices (Showstack et al., 2019). The lack of highly skilled interpreters and methods is one major obstacle to accessing health services for deaf patients. Interpreting in the medical field can be challenging. Sometimes, experienced interpreters enable doctors and patients to build rapport with their patients by sometimes *not* interpreting so the doctor and patient can communicate (Kyle et al., 2013). In healthcare settings, interpreters play a critical role in ensuring that deaf patients understand diagnoses, treatment options, and medical procedures, ultimately improving health outcomes. Their services are helpful for reducing miscommunication and fostering better patient-doctor relationships.

Interpreting Justice - Ensuring Equal Access through Sign Language in the Legal System

Much like interpreting in the healthcare setting, a lot of research work has been done on interpreting in legal settings. This is because interpreting in legal and healthcare settings stands out from other contexts of community interpreting in several ways. Foremost of this is that the stakes of working in these contexts are so astronomically high that interpreting mistakes can become a matter of life and death, literally. Or it can result in a miscarriage of

justice. Not to be overlooked, there is the need for interpreters working in these settings to be equipped with specialized legal or medical knowledge and terminology. Legal interpreting is often used as an umbrella term to refer to “interpreting in all settings and at all stages of the criminal law procedures” (Hertog, 2015, p. 21). These might include prison interpreting, court interpreting, lawyer-client meetings, police interpreting, interpreting in immigration, customs, asylum hearings and even military settings. There is a large body of literature on how SLIs impact court proceedings (Inghilleri, 2013; Martin & Herráez, 2013; Ng & Crezee, 2020); Liu & Hale 2017; Teng et.al., 2018). These research studies demonstrate that Sign language interpreting to ensure deaf people’s access to justice and participation in the judicial process is critical. Research shows that hearing jurors are not better in comprehension than the deaf jurors when assisted by a sign language interpreter (Napier et al., 2013; Napier & McEwin, 2015). There is increasing global need for refugee and asylum-seeking interpreting because the SLI in this context helps to elicit information from claimants, and also allies with the adjudicator, thus becoming a part of the investigating team

Following this rich vein of literature, it is sufficient to conclude that the presence of qualified sign language interpreters in legal settings is critical for ensuring that deaf and hard- of-hearing individuals can fully participate in judicial processes. Without interpreters, these individuals may be disadvantaged due to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and limited ability to engage with complex legal proceedings. Providing sign language interpreters is more than just a legal requirement, it is a matter of fairness and human rights. Without proper interpretation, deaf individuals may not fully understand legal proceedings, leading to outcomes such as incorrect pleas, missed opportunities to defend themselves, or even wrongful convictions. The right to a fair trial is compromised when deaf individuals are not provided with qualified interpreters. Deaf individuals would be at a disadvantage, undermining their ability to participate fully in legal proceedings and exercise their rights under the law. The use of family members or untrained interpreters is fraught with risks, as these individuals often lack the necessary legal knowledge and neutrality to accurately convey complex legal terminology. These individuals may inadvertently miscommunicate critical information, which can have significant legal ramifications for deaf individuals. There is therefore dire need for sign language interpretation in legal settings.

EVALUATING PROFESSIONALISM

Sign Language Interpreters Signing Skills

To effectively perform their roles, sign language interpreters must develop a wide range of skills that go beyond basic fluency in sign language. Effective SLIs use facial expressions and body movements appropriately. Clarity and speed of signing are also important indices to be taken into consideration. Translation and interpreting rely on good mastery of the relevant working languages, on extra linguistic knowledge, and on the ability to understand messages expressed verbally and to reformulate them, overcoming obstacles by making appropriate decisions. A large part of these difficulties and of the strategies implemented to solve them are common to translation and interpreting into American Sign Language. This is so because SLIs should view interpreting not as a language-to-language transcoding process, but as a comprehension operation followed by a reformulation operation governed by communication-oriented aims, with specific interpreting strategies designed to achieve them. Comparatively, the translation process leaves the translator with much more time than the interpreting process to find solutions to problems generally hours or days, as opposed to seconds or milliseconds in interpreting. According to Gile (2005), the necessity for mastery of the passive language(s) is also underscored by the fact that interpreters need to understand speeches, which they perceive essentially through the speaker’s voice, instantaneously, with practically no possibility of consulting documents or human sources.

In view of the above, the effective interpretation into sign language requires a broad knowledge of sign language vocabulary. It is the backbone of sign language interpreting.

Without knowledge of sign language vocabulary, effective interpreting would be impossible. But mere knowledge of signs is not the only factor that makes one a great interpreter. The body movement of an SLI is essential during interpreting. This is because in ASL pronouns are directed toward their physically present referent as mental space mapping instruction. The resulting mapping connects an element of semantic space with an element of real space. More specifically, it connects the conceptual entity profiled in the pronoun’s semantic pole with the entity in real space the pronoun is directed toward. Singular pronouns are directed toward single entities while plural pronouns are directed toward groups of entities (Liddell, 2003).

Another skill required of every SLI is facial expressions. This is a very fundamental skill of sign language interpreters. Facial expressions and head movements are used in sign language at all levels of linguistic structure. At the phonological level some signs have an obligatory facial component in their citation form (Woll, 2001). Facial actions mark relative clauses, content questions and conditionals, amongst others, although there is some controversy whether these markings should be regarded as syntactic or prosodic. Signers also use the face to gesture (Dachkovsky & Sandler, 2009; Wilbur, 2009). Generally facial expression is regarded as a fundamental skill to be added to the skillset of every SLI. In summary, the skillset of an SLI includes extensive knowledge of sign language vocabulary, clarity of signing, use of facial expression, speed of signing as well as body movements and role shifting. No one can interpret accurately without these skills.

Sign Language Interpreters Job Commitment

When it comes to sign language interpreters' interest for their profession, there has been some literature on interpreters' self-direction, benevolence, and universalism, as well as power. The value type of self-direction is measured in items relating to "Creativity, freedom, independent, curious, choosing own goals" (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003). According to Bardi and Schwartz, when interpreters were asked to describe their reasons for pursuing a career in ASL/English interpreting, many referenced enjoyment and fulfillment derived from the variety of work, consumers, and challenges. There were also several responses that described the desire for flexibility in their schedules and work. While creativity was rarely mentioned in responses to this prompt, there were many responses that addressed an enjoyment of the interpreting process. While interpreting is not often described as creative process there is some research that suggests it is Horváth (2010) for example, found that "most of the interpreters who participated in the survey consider their job creative and anything but reproductive". Factors that influence an interpreters' job commitment and interest include academic paths, enjoyment of challenges, and a general interest in language, culture, and the interpreting process. Dean and Pollard (2013) discussed some possible values that seem to justify the conduit model of sign language interpreter. The conduit or 'machine' model is one where the interpreting process is viewed as mechanical, taking meaning from the source language and transferring it into the target language, such that any work beyond that role is outside the scope of an interpreter's practice. Dean and Pollard suggested: It is hard to know for sure but it seems reasonable that values such as consumer 'autonomy', and/or 'self-determinacy' might underlie the conduit role. These terms convey a respect for the ideal that all people have their own autonomous power and should be allowed to act, exercise their free will, and be able to make decisions for themselves. (Dean & Pollard, 2013) These same values may also be linked to self-direction, as it applies not only to the interpreter as an individual but how it may affect the perception of the consumers' values. An interpreter may also perceive the value in their work based on an ideal that it provides consumers opportunities to exercise their own independence and autonomy. Over time an interpreter may prioritize the values of creativity, freedom and independence (associated with self-direction) more highly.

Another possibility is that these values could correlate with longevity in this field, implying that interpreters who prioritize these values will have a greater chance of long-term success and satisfaction in the field. A longitudinal study would be needed to examine how the prioritization of these values affects an individual interpreter's ability to stay in the field and find satisfaction in his or her work. Bontempo et al., (2014) study on personality traits in signed language interpreters found that "if a sign language interpreting student, or an interpreter, has good general mental ability, and rates highly on self-esteem, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness, they are in a strong position to succeed in this profession" (p. 36). Self-direction values of freedom and independence are very similar to what Bontempo et al. (2014) referred to as the personality trait of "openness" in their study. As Dean and Pollard (2013) indicated, it takes more time and exposure to various work contexts before you develop a confident grasp of how professional values tend to be expressed in your most common practice decisions. (Dean & Pollard, 2013). This time and exposure to the variety of the demands a working professional interpreter confronts may be another possible reason for a stronger prioritization of self-direction. As an interpreter gains more exposure and experience to this variability, it may encourage the values of flexibility, independence and creativity. When it comes to benevolence, the profession of sign language interpreting was founded largely by family and friends of people who were Deaf who stepped into the role of sign language interpreter because they saw a need and knew they had the language skills to meet that need (Ball, 2013). Many interpreters prioritize the values that they provide a needed service and find value in supporting the communities in which they live.

Evaluating the career readiness of Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) requires a comprehensive approach, as their proficiency, commitment, and performance vary significantly depending on their training, experience, and working environment. The conducted at the University of Calabar explored the role of SLIs in improving the educational experience of students with hearing loss (SWHL) and used research instruments to assess their signing proficiency, and job commitment. This study provides a model for assessing career readiness by focusing on key performance indicators such as signing skills, job commitment, and other indicators which are essential for SLIs to thrive in professional contexts.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTATION

This study adopts a survey design, as defined by Ishangedighi (2012), where a non-experimental approach is used to study a group of people to derive findings from samples collected through questionnaires. The design allows the researchers to examine the views, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of the study subjects. The study area is the Department of Special and Vocational Education at the University of Calabar, and the target population comprises the seven (7) sign language interpreters at the university. A census procedure was employed as the sampling technique since the population was small and manageable.

The instrument for data collection was a structured rubric titled “Rubric for the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Sign Language Interpreters” (REESLI). This rubric, developed by the researchers under the guidance of their supervisor and other departmental experts, assesses the effectiveness of sign language interpreters based on their signing skills and job commitment. A modified 4-point Likert scale was used for analysis, assigning values of 1, 2, 3, and 4 for the categories of poor, fair, good, and very good, respectively.

To establish the validity of the instrument, it was reviewed by three experts: one on deaf education, one from the Department of Special Education, and one in measurement and evaluation. Their feedback on content coverage, relevance, and clarity was incorporated into the final version. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a trial study involving 20 students with hearing loss from Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, who were not part of the main study. Using the Cronbach alpha method, the reliability indices ranged from 0.75 to 0.90, confirming the instrument's suitability for data collection. The reliability test results are presented in Table 1.

A trial study was carried out using twenty (20) respondents (students with hearing loss), drawn from the population that were not part of the main study. The 20 respondents were from the Special Education Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State. Cronbach alpha method of reliability was used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument which yielded reliability indices from 0.75 – 0.90. With these reliability indices achieved, the instrument was deemed fit to be used for data collection in the study. The result of the reliability test is presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of instrument (N = 20)

S/N	Variables	No of items	\bar{X}	SD	Reliability index
1	Sign Language Interpreters' signing skills	5	12.3	5.01	0.75
2	Sign Language Interpreters' job commitment	5	15.0	5.50	0.82

DATA COLLECTION

A rubric containing a series of relevant questions was used for data collection. The researchers distributed the rubric to the respondent population which are all the students with hearing loss in the University of Calabar and collected immediately after completion. The researchers used two trained research assistants. And with the help of the research assistants, they explained the concept of the questions to the students with hearing loss. The rubric distributed was duly collected, yielding a response rate of 95%. Items of the instrument were coded and entered accordingly, after the rubrics were duly collected. The five sub variables of the study were analyzed using a 4 modified Likert scale. Scores 4 and 3 represent a positive response while 2 and 1 represent a negative response.

DATA ANALYSIS

Sign Language interpreters' signing skills

The result of the analysis of the respondents with respect to research question three is shown in table 5. The response of all the SWHL in the study shows that most of them were not pleased. A cumulative of 75.86% believe the SLIs have poor knowledge of vocabulary, 72.41% claim that SLIs have poor facial expression when signing, 58.62% were not satisfied with the body movements of SLIs when signing, 68.97% claim that their signs are unclear, 54.39% claim that their speed of signing is not apt.

TABLE 2

Analysis of Sign Language Interpreters' signing skills

SN	ITEM	Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	How do you rate the interpreters' knowledge of sign language vocabulary?	14	24.14	30	51.72	9	15.52	5	8.62
2	How do you rate the interpreters' use of facial expression?	21	36.21	21	36.21	15	25.86	1	1.72
3	How do you rate the interpreters' body movements?	15	25.86	19	32.76	15	25.86	9	15.52
4	How do you rate the interpreters' clarity of signing?	9	15.52	31	53.45	13	22.41	5	8.62
5	How do you rate the interpreters' speed of signing	14	24.56	17	29.82	16	28.07	10	17.54

Sign Language Interpreters' Job Commitment

The result of the analysis of the respondents with respect to this research question is shown in table 6. The response of all the SWHL in the study shows that most of them were displeased. A cumulative of 70.69% were not satisfied with the way SLIs demonstrate that they are ever ready to sign for SWHL at any time, 58.62% claim that SLIs sometimes view sign language as a heavy stress, 62.07% claim that SLIs do not demonstrate punctuality to work

and to classes, 60.34% claim that SLIs do not follow their timetable religiously, they sometimes miss classes, 51.72% do not show obvious professional improvement overtime

TABLE 3
Analysis of Sign Language Interpreters' Job Commitment

SN	ITEM	Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Rate how interpreters show that they are always ready to sign for SWHL	15	25.86	26	44.83	12	20.69	5	8.62
2	Rate how interpreters demonstrate zeal not viewing sign language as a heavy stress	17	29.31	17	29.31	18	31.03	6	10.34
3	Rate how interpreters follow their timetable/not miss classes	11	18.97	25	43.10	13	22.41	9	15.52
4	Rate how interpreters demonstrate punctuality to work and report to class	12	20.69	23	39.66	17	29.31	6	10.34
5	Rate sign language interpreters' professional improvement overtime	10	17.24	20	34.48	18	31.03	10	17.24

DISCUSSION

Sign Language Interpreters' signing skills is significantly low

The results of question three (3) indicate that SWHL were generally not satisfied with the skill of the SLI. This is in harmony with the findings of Gile (2005), who noted that the necessity for mastery of the passive language(s) is also underscored by the fact that interpreters need to understand speeches, which they perceive essentially through the speaker's voice, instantaneously, with practically no possibility of consulting documents or human sources. This means that to be effective, an interpreter must have a good grasp of sign language vocabulary, use facial expressions and body movements appropriately. Clarity and speed of signing are also important indices to be taken into consideration. Gile (2005). He also opined that interpreting, as a profession, relies on good mastery of the relevant working languages, on extra linguistic knowledge ('knowledge of the world'), and on the ability to understand messages expressed verbally and to reformulate them, overcoming obstacles by making appropriate decisions. A large part of these difficulties and of the strategies implemented to solve them are common to translation and interpreting, especially into American Sign Language. This is so because interpreting is not merely a language-to- language 'transcoding' process. It is therefore clear that for an interpreter to be effective, an extensive knowledge of ASL vocabulary is required. Other predictors of effectiveness include clarity of signing,

use of facial expression, speed of signing as well as body movements and role shifting. From the foregoing, it is clear then that if the SWHL had seen these skills in their SLIs they probably would be satisfied with their performance with respect to the skills mentioned above.

Sign Language Interpreters' job commitment is significantly low

From this research question, the response of the respondents on the Sign Language Interpreters' job commitment is significantly low. Indicating that most of the respondents were not satisfied with the way SLIs perform their job. The findings of this study disagree with Bardi and Schwartz (2003). They claim that when interpreters were asked to describe their reasons for pursuing a career in ASL/English interpreting, many referenced enjoyment and fulfillment derived from the variety of work, consumers, and challenges. There were also several responses that described the desire for flexibility in their schedules and work. While creativity was rarely mentioned in responses to this prompt, there were many responses that addressed an enjoyment of the interpreting process. Also, in disagreement with the findings of this study is Horváth. According to Horváth (2010), factors that influence an interpreters' job commitment include academic paths, enjoyment of challenges, and a general interest in language, culture, and the interpreting process. Many interpreters prioritize the values that they provide a needed service and find value in supporting the communities in which they live. Therefore, if the SLIs in the University of Calabar do not have so much passion for their job, as this study found out, it becomes necessary to suggest strategies to boost their effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the SLIs in the University of Calabar are not sufficiently trained to take up their careers in the profession of interpreting and compete with their colleagues in the global scene. Therefore, all sign language interpreters in the University of Calabar should be given on-the-job training for improvement of their sign language skills and boost their interest in interpreting so as to foster an increased participation in the classroom activity and overall academic progress of SWHL.

The growing demand for sign language interpreters (SLIs) across multiple sectors, including education, healthcare, and legal services, has brought attention to the need for formalized pathways toward professionalization. The professionalization of SLIs must involve the development of standardized certification processes, continuous professional development, and increased recognition of the interpreter's role in fostering inclusivity. There is a growing recognition that continuous professional development (CPD) is essential for maintaining high standards in the profession. As technology and industry practices evolve, SLIs must keep pace with new developments, such as remote interpreting platforms and advancements in accessibility technology. Continuous training programs that focus on sector-specific terminology, ethics, and technological literacy are critical for ensuring that interpreters remain effective in their roles over time (Napier et al., 2020). These programs can also provide SLIs with opportunities to engage in peer mentoring and supervision, which can enhance their professional growth and help them navigate complex ethical dilemmas.

There is need for "regular in-service training" and suggested that universities adopt a "comprehensive policy framework" that mandates continuous professional development for SLIs. Continuous training is essential to ensure that interpreters remain proficient and up to date with the latest developments in both sign language and the sectors they serve. In healthcare settings, for example, interpreters must stay informed about new medical terminology, treatment protocols, and ethical standards to ensure they are providing accurate and effective interpretation. Similarly, legal interpreters must be trained to handle complex legal procedures and terminology, which can evolve over time. CPD programs that focus on these sector-specific needs are critical for ensuring that SLIs can continue to deliver high-quality services throughout their careers. Furthermore, training on emerging technologies, such as video relay services and remote interpreting platforms, is increasingly important as these tools become central to the profession (McKee et al., 2015).

Beyond technical training, professional development must also address the interpersonal and psychological aspects of interpreting. According to Bontempo and Napier (2014), "interpreters who demonstrate emotional stability, resilience, and openness are better equipped to manage the cognitive and emotional demands of the job" (p. 91). Therefore, CPD programs should incorporate training in stress management, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal skills to help interpreters navigate the complexities of their roles. These programs can also help SLIs

develop a deeper understanding of the deaf community and its cultural values, which is essential for providing culturally sensitive and inclusive services.

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