



Delivery in American Sign Language interpreting: A case study of *The Circle USA*

Zeynep Melissa Seyfioğlu
Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University, Türkiye
zeynepseyfioğlu@mu.edu.tr

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Abstract: Signed language interpreting can be carried out in a sign-to-sign, spoken-to-sign, or sign-to-spoken language direction. In the case of Season 5 of Netflix's *The Circle*, the hearing interpreter Paris McTizic carries out a sign-to-spoken language interpretation. It is through Paris' voice that Raven Sutton, a d/Deaf contestant communicates via the voice-activated "Circle Chat" screen and becomes accessible to non-signing hearing viewers. Paris interprets for the "Circle Chat" screen, non-signing hearing viewers and contestants, making this season of *The Circle* a unique example of different receivers of interpretation. The Paris-Raven interaction on *The Circle* is a unique example as the interpreter is primarily part of the programme next to the contestant and not behind the scenes. This paper analyses the interpreter's output focusing on prosody. I explored Paris' output as well as interviews held with Paris and Raven. The first episode was analysed using the Praat programme to visualise the interpreter's output through pitch analysis and discuss the emotions, attitude, and prosody relation. The delivery of the interpreter was also scrutinised using Riccardi's (2002) descriptive sheet of interpreted text. The findings revealed that, by reframing the emotion and attitude of Raven's narrative, the interpreter becomes a "narrator" of Raven, a "self-narrator" of himself by reflecting his own emotions and opinions in some situations, and offers a "counter-narrative" to the general narrative of interpreting studies. The interpreter's use of voice promotes "access intimacy" between Raven and himself, which plays a significant role in their communication on screen.

Keywords: sign language interpreting, media accessibility, prosody

1. Introduction

Interpreting, which involves various linguistic, non-linguistic, and extralinguistic elements, is a highly complex, multi-layered, and multimodal activity. Sign language interpreting (SLI) is a process that involves either two signed languages or one sign and one spoken language. SLI is known as a highly multimodal activity since interpreters transfer meaning between a signed language and a spoken language or two signed languages (Napier & Leeson, 2015).

Signed languages rely on visual and gestural expressions to create meaning using space location, referents, and other visually descriptive elements (Nicodemus & Emmorey, 2015). Thus, signed languages bear limitless possibilities for the expression of emphasis and emotion, probably to a greater degree than spoken languages (Tweney & Hoeman, 1976). Therefore, it could be said that SLI requires attention in terms of multimodality as interpreters who work between signed and spoken languages must keep in mind the original

message while delivering their message in another modality (Cokely, 1982; Wilbur et al., 1983; Nicodemus & Emmorey, 2015; Wilbur, 2020, 2022).

To analyse SLI, a multimodal approach (Norris, 2004) that includes prosody is necessary since multimodality challenges the narrow view of language as belonging to the oral-auditory modality. It questions the boundaries between “language,” “gesture,” “linguistic” and “non-linguistic,” “verbal” and “non-verbal” (Kendon, 2014, p.3), and reveals a multiplicity of communication practices (Mohr & Bauer, 2022), which is a fundamental part of sign language interpreting.

Although sign language interpreters work in various settings, media interpreters can be seen in action, usually ‘boxed’ in a corner of the screen. In this respect, SLI in media settings could be regarded as a much more physically visible setting due to the necessity of seeing the visual and gestural nature of signed languages (Neves, 2007, p. 6; Leeson, 2009, p. 275).

With the proliferation of audiovisual platforms and video streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime, there has been an increase in new possibilities to grant accessibility via audiovisual translation modes such as audio description and subtitling for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing to reach a wider group of users (Baliarda et al., 2019; Şulha, 2019; Spangler, 2022). While there are numerous studies on TV interpreting and sign language interpreting that investigate interpretation (Nicodemus, 2009; McKee, 2014; Nicodemus & Emmorey, 2015), users of SLI and their reception (Bosch-Baliarda et al., 2020), and accessibility (Gökce, 2018; Oral, 2021), most studies examining SLI focus on voice-to-sign interpretation for d/Deaf persons. This could be explained by the fact that SLI is traditionally broadcast with an interpreter visible on screen (Baliarda et al., 2019) and that such a need for SLI service would occur in cases where spoken-to-sign language interpreting is required.

However, in Season 5 of *The Circle USA*, this is not the case. The hearing sign language interpreter, Paris McTizic, interprets the sign-to-voice messages of Raven Sutton, a d/Deaf¹ contestant who expresses herself in American Sign Language (ASL), and carries out a *reverse interpretation*² from ASL to English.

Due to the format of *The Circle*, contestants are kept isolated from one another and are not allowed to communicate in person. Instead, they create their own social media account profile and communicate through text messages, which they create and send via a voice-activated system with a screen. While the previous seasons of the programme consisted of hearing contestants, Raven’s presence in Season 5 makes her the first d/Deaf contestant of *The Circle*. So as Raven can write on the “Circle Chat” and create a profile, Paris provides a reverse interpretation and enables Raven to express herself throughout the programme.

Raven’s addition to Season 5 of *The Circle USA* makes the programme a unique example of different users of interpretation, i.e., a voice-activated system that has a screen from which contestants communicate via written messages. Furthermore, Paris-Raven interaction on *The Circle* is also a one-of-a-kind example in that the interpreter is primarily part of the programme besides the contestant and not behind the scenes. Thanks to the interpreter’s voice,

¹ While the term ‘deaf’ with a lowercase ‘d’ is used to describe individuals who have gradually lost their hearing, and cannot hear very much, the term ‘Deaf’ with a capital refers to people who are culturally deaf, part of the community. In the case of Raven, ‘d/Deaf’ is used to include both deaf and Deaf identity.

² Reverse interpreting: Transmittal of the language of signs into an approximate oral representation in proper English syntax (Quigley, 1965, p. 6). Also known as sign-to-voice interpretation.

Raven can communicate her messages, which are written by the voice-activated system and become accessible to non-signing hearing viewers. In this paper, as a non-signing hearing individual, I will adopt a hearing-centric approach and analyse Paris' interpretation by focussing on the prosody of his output in terms of intonation, stress, and rhythm.

2. Literature review

This section includes a review of literature on media interpreting, signed language interpreting and prosody as well as Mona Baker's socio-narrative perspective.

2.1. Media interpreting

Media interpreting differs from other forms of interpreting since the boundaries between the different interpreting modes are sometimes blurred. An interpreter may work on a talk show, which may require interpreting for guests or the host, and in the case of d/Deaf TV audiences, everything spoken will usually be interpreted simultaneously into/from signed language (Pöchhacker, 2007).

Traditionally, SLI in media settings is usually seen to be carried out for news programmes (Güven, 2020). Although SLI has been offered by several channels (CBC in Canada and BBC in the UK) since as early as the 1970s, ASL interpreting has not been as popular as closed captioning in the USA (Carbin, 1996; NCDS, 2005; Ellcessor, 2015) despite the low literacy of d/Deaf individuals in English. However, there have been a few entertainment programmes that have incorporated ASL, such as *The Smurfs* (1983), *The L-word* (2004), and *Switched at Birth* (2011), as well as a couple of reality television series that have featured d/Deaf contestants (Neves, 2007; Ellcessor, 2015), like Season 5 of *The Circle USA*.

ASL-English interpreters have worked in various media settings, interpreting mainly the news, interviews, and, in some cases, children's programmes (Güven, 2020). Media interpreting is either live or pre-recorded (Neves, 2007). Sign language interpreters working in television studios are usually given a script of the programme that they will be interpreting (Güven, 2020). These interpreters are given a short time to prepare and are usually placed on the screen in a box in the left or right corner of the screen (Neves, 2007; Güven, 2020). Live TV interpreting can be rather challenging as it involves certain constraints for delivery (e.g., pleasant, lively voice, regular rhythm, good diction) (Bros-Brann, 2002) and interpreters may not be aware of the content of communications when interpreting in emergency situations, such as earthquakes, floods or updates about pandemics.

2.2. Delivery of speech

The main aspect of speech delivery addressed in this paper is prosody. Prosody is defined as the rhythm and intonation (the way a speaker's voice rises and falls) of language (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). Prosody consists of features such as pitch, loudness, duration, and pauses, as well as components such as tempo, intonation, stress, and rhythm (Crystal, 1981, p. 60). Prosody depends on the complex interplay between tonal, dynamic, and durational parameters such as intonation and pitch range, dynamic features such as rhythm, and durational features such as pauses or speech rate (Ahrens, 2005b).

Understanding prosody is important in interpreting studies, as interpreters may alternate between spoken languages or transfer a signed language to a spoken language to convey their message through orality. Consequently, understanding the properties of orality is required when discussing signed-to-

spoken language interpreting to not only analyse the features of the source text but also produce an adequate, accessible target text for non-signing hearing users of interpretation. Scholars have researched the prosodic features and components of spoken language interpreting such as intonation (Shlesinger, 1994), fluency (Pradas Macías, 2007), use of pauses (Viaggio, 1992), hesitations, speech rate, articulation, and voice quality (Iglesias Fernández, 2013; Calvo Rigual & Spinolo, 2016). The impact of orality in spoken language interpreting was underlined by Garzone (2002, p. 118):

[...] although in users' ideological system elements such as style, choice of register, prosody, fluency, etc. are not considered essential, these elements do in fact have a marked impact on the norms users apply when they evaluate real performances. This is because such formal factors not only make the interpretation more pleasant to follow but are also perceived as indicators of the interpreter's competence and reliability in offering an adequate rendering of the ST.

Accordingly, interpreting studies scholars have investigated prosodic features and components such as pauses, speech rate, and intonation (Gerver, 1969/2002; Shlesinger, 1994; Cecot, 2001; Ahrens, 2005a, 2005b; Lenglet, 2012; Martellini, 2013).

Intonation, which can be defined as the patterns of pitch used in speech, appears to be one of the most important features for communication of attitude in all social situations (Tarone, 1973, p. 29). Therefore, intonation deserves attention since it not only functions as a communicator of attitude but also reflects the differences in attitude between participants (Tarone, 1973), which has great importance for the interpreting process (Bülow-Møller, 2003).

Out of the numerous classifications suggested for the analysis of prosody, I will use Riccardi's (2002). According to Riccardi, prosody may be classified as encompassing words, clauses, and sentence accent as well as intonation. Riccardi mentions the descriptive sheet for interpreted text (IT) that was created following the International Seminar entitled "Teaching Return and Relay Interpreting", held in Saarbrücken in March 2000. At the seminar, interpreter trainers from European countries and representatives of the language services of the European Commission and European Parliament selected certain features of speech while preparing this descriptive sheet of IT. This sheet, which can be used for all interpreting modalities (consecutive, simultaneous, relay, etc.), was divided into four macro-areas: delivery, language, content, and interpretation. Since the focus of this paper is SLI, I will use the macro-area for delivery. The features of "delivery" in the descriptive sheet are classified as follows (Riccardi, 2002, p.23):

Macro-area: Delivery

This area encompasses categories that point to phonation, articulation and prosodic features.

1. Pronunciation and phonation —this category also includes mispronunciations such as phoneme exchange.

Description: standard, altered, heavily altered.

2. Output—this category points towards production speed and rhythm.

Description: standard, fast, slow.

3. Prosody—this category encompasses word, clause, and sentence accent as well as intonation.

Description: standard, monotonous/singsong, erroneous.

4. Non-fluencies— this category includes several elements distributed in two groups:

- a. filled pauses (ehms, ah, etc.) coughs, glottal clicks, audible breathing.
- b. false starts, repetitions.

Description: few, frequent, many.

5. Pauses — long, silent pauses that are not correlated to source-text pauses.

Description: few, frequent, many.

2.3. Prosody of signed languages and sign language interpreting

Prosody has been analysed for sign languages as well. The prosodic features of sign languages have been classified as head and body movements, eyebrow movement raise/lower, eye gaze, eye blink, mouth movement, shoulder movements up/down, body(torso) side-to-side or forward/back, sign articulation, number of hands, shifting of hands, speed of signing, sign formation, pacing, and pausing (Akach & Morgan, 1999; Wilbur, 2000; Winston, 2000; Nicodemus & Smith, 2006; Nicodemus, 2009).

Studies on prosody point to its role in communication and conveying emotions and attitudes (Reilly et al., 1992; Dachkovsky & Sandler, 2009). Therefore, interpreters need to be aware of prosodic features while interpreting, since features such as intonation may vary depending on the gender or race of a person (Obasi, 2012; Lucas et al., 2013).

While most of the abovementioned studies on prosody and sign languages focus on the prosody of a deaf person, this paper will adopt a different approach. Drawing on the work of Nicodemus and Smith (2006), this paper will examine prosody as produced by interpreters in their spoken renditions, rather than in the signers' signed communications.

2.4. The socio-narrative perspective

To understand the role of the sign language interpreter on *The Circle USA*, I adopted Baker's socio-narrative perspective (2006a) to scrutinise the interpreter's delivery. According to this perspective, narratives are defined as public and personal 'stories' that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour (Baker, 2006a, p. 19). By adopting Somers and Gibson's (1994) typology, Baker groups narratives into four categories: ontological (personal), public, conceptual and meta-narratives (Baker, 2006a, p. 28). While ontological narratives are personal stories, public narratives focus on shared stories that are elaborated by circulation amongst families, religious or educational institutions, the media, and the nation (Baker, 2006a, p. 33). Conceptual narratives are involved with "stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate themselves and others about their subject of inquiry" (Baker, 2007, p. 39), whereas meta-narratives are "shared stories with extensive temporal and spatial reach" (Baker, 2013, p. 10). In this case study, I only focus on the terms 'ontological' and 'conceptual narratives'.

Baker argues that narratives are framed through:

selective appropriation of textual material which is realised in patterns of omission and addition designed to suppress, accentuate, or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text or utterance, or aspects of the larger narrative(s) in which it is embedded (Baker, 2006a, p. 114).

According to Baker (2006a, p. 111),

processes of (re)framing can draw on practically any linguistic or non-linguistic resource, from paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography to visual resources such as colour and image, to numerous

linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code-switching, use of euphemisms, and many more.

Baker essentially uses the concepts “narrative” and “framing” to discuss translations, source and target texts; however, for this case study, I apply this “socio-narrative narrative perspective” to interpreting studies and interpretations because I believe it provides an explicative description of the role and position of the interpreter. Therefore, I regard the d/Deaf contestant’s signing as a source text and the interpreter’s sign-to-voice interpretation as a target text or translation.

3. Case study and methodology

3.1. *The Circle USA, Raven Sutton and Paris McTizic*

Contestant Raven Sutton from *The Circle USA* and her interpreter Paris McTizic are the subjects of this case study.

The Circle, or *The Circle USA*, is an American reality competition programme, aired on Netflix in January 2020. The players move into separate apartments in the same building. The contestants stay in isolation and can only communicate by using *The Circle* application, which enables the contestants to create a profile like social media and send photographs and text via the chat. *The Circle* application is a voice-activated system: there are no buttons and contestants cannot type messages. Since the contestants do not have any face-to-face interactions with one another, they can portray themselves as whomever they want. Contestants can either be themselves or join *The Circle* as a completely different personality, which is called a “catfish”. Every couple of days, contestants must rate the other contestants from first to last place. The average of the ratings is taken, and while the first two highest-rated players become “Influencers,” the two lowest-rated players are at risk of being blocked, i.e., eliminated. The influencers earn the power to decide who will be eliminated out of the two contestants. Blocked players must pack and leave the apartment but, before leaving, they are given the opportunity to meet another player in person. Following the day of elimination, the contestant who has been blocked records a video message for the remaining players who do not get to meet the blocked contestant in person, and they reveal whether they played the game as themselves or as a catfish. As the weeks go by, the players who remain in the game, earn the chance of going to the finale, in which the winner of *The Circle* will be chosen by the contestants from that series.

Raven Sutton is a contestant in the fifth season of *The Circle*. She identifies herself as a Black 26-year-old from Maryland who was born Deaf. Raven comes from a third-generation Deaf family. In the first episode, Raven expresses that ASL is her first language and that she can use her voice but feels more comfortable using sign language (Netflix, Season 5, Episode 1, 06:42-07:58).

Raven invites her friend Paris McTizic, who is an interpreter, on the show. Paris does not play the game; he solely takes on the interpretation. Paris belongs to three minorities as a Black and Hispanic, queer interpreter. He is a nationally certified ASL interpreter in Washington D.C. who is especially passionate about “the Black and Brown communities” (Page, 2023). The interpreter Paris has been interpreting professionally since 2015 and obtained national interpreting certification in 2018. He holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Sign Language Interpretation and Translation from Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Most of the interpreting he carries out on *The Circle* is ASL to English interpreting, for the screen; however, when eliminated contestants come to meet Raven in person, Paris starts interpreting the interaction sign-to-

voice on behalf of Raven and voice-to-sign for the non-signing hearing contestant who was eliminated from *The Circle*.

Shambourger (2015) demonstrated how interpreters incorporate cultural nuances while transferring meaning between sign language and African-American English for interactions between African American/Black signed language users. In *The Circle*, Paris and Raven's Black identity and their use of African-American/Black signed language influenced how they communicated and how Paris interpreted Raven. Moreover, due to the differences in intonation patterns between African-American English and Mainstream American English (Foreman, 1999), Raven's choice of interpreter validates her need to have both her identity and (her use of) ASL interpreted.

3.2. Methodology

This exploratory and descriptive case study (Hale & Napier, 2013) investigates sign-to-voice interpreting on *The Circle* (Netflix, 2022-2023) by exploring the use of prosody. Using mixed research methods, this paper aimed to investigate the interpreter's use of prosody in sign-to-spoken language interpreting and to investigate whether the interpreter's prosody may have influenced the signer's desired self-representation on screen.

Data was collected from "Single and Ready To Mingle", both from the first episode and the last "Finale" episode from Season 5 of *The Circle*, and from interviews with Paris and Raven talking about *The Circle*. The first episode of the season was selected as it has a short introductory part for each contestant as well as the first "Circle Chat" interaction, game, and blocking. Out of all the scenes from Episode 1, the scenes that feature Paris interpreting voice-to-sign for Raven, and Raven meeting some of the 'blocked' contestants were excluded to narrow the focus on spoken renditions of Paris rather than the signed communication. Eleven scenes of the first episode included Raven and Paris and contained spoken-to-sign language interpreting. These scenes were grouped into categories such as introduction, games, "Circle Chat" interactions, and blocking, and their timecodes were noted. Using simple random sampling (Hale & Napier, 2013), two scenes were selected from each category to be analysed using Riccardi's Descriptive Interpreted Text (IT) and the speech analysis software program Praat³, developed in 1992 at the University of Amsterdam (Boersma & Weenink, 2023). The pitch contours of the selected scenes were extracted using Praat and these scenes were then transcribed. The last scene of the "Finale" was described and not acoustically analysed nor transcribed because, unlike other episodes where contestants are apart, all contestants meet each other in person at the reunion. SLI is provided for the reunion, and other interpreters are invited; however, Paris takes part in the interaction around the table, sitting beside other contestants. After *The Circle* was aired, Raven and Paris were invited to a few interviews, which were shared on YouTube⁴. These interviews were also explored to gather information on Raven and Paris' opinions regarding his presence on *The Circle* as an interpreter and to triangulate the statements in the interviews with the prosodic analyses. Due to Paris' role in enabling communication, the reunion was also discussed in line with Darwish's (2006) term 'rhetorical simultaneous interpreting' (RSI).

Rhetorical simultaneous interpreting refers to the re-enactment of the speaker's utterances with verbal and non-verbal paralinguistic features. It concerns auditive information such as intonation, emphasis, volume, pitch,

³ <https://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73RZxNKq7f8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIgV3B0efCg>

speech patterns, interjections, fillers, false starts, tone of voice, vocalisations, and other rhetorical and illocutionary theatrics (Darwish, 2006). RSI is used to scrutinize non-verbal elements and focus on the prosody of Paris' interpretation. Paris's ASL to English interpretation enables communication between Raven and other contestants on *The Circle*. By providing "rhetorical communication" (McCrowskey, 1978) in a sign-to-spoken language direction, non-signing hearing viewers are able to relate to Raven. Thus, there is a need to analyse Paris' sign-to-voice interpretation from a rhetorical perspective to understand the significance of verbal and non-verbal paralinguistic features in interpreter-mediated environments which are broadcasted for d/Deaf, and hearing, non-signing viewers.

4. Findings and discussion

Certain parts of the season, such as the "Circle Chat" interactions, games and parties, rating, blocking, and final reunion, were selected for analysis as these scenes reflect the different emotions of contestants throughout *The Circle*. Scenes from Episode 1 that exemplify Paris' interpretation and vocal expression were analysed⁵ and the last episode, the "Finale", was also scrutinised.

Raven's introduction scene differs from the other contestants as Raven is accompanied by Paris, who sits beside her. Paris is included in *The Circle* from the beginning of the show. Raven signs while Paris interprets (Netflix, Episode 1, 6:48).

(1) Episode 1 [7:13-7:51]⁶

Paris: [...]American Sign Language IS my first language↓, and ↑yes, I can use my voice, but I feel more comfortable using sign language. People always look down on deaf people, but the truth of the matter is is ↑deaf people can do eveRYthing.(.) expect heAR.

↑ When people (.) ↑say deaf people caN'T DaNce, I say to them, 'WATch me'.

↑ I'm not entering The Circle BeCAuse I'm deAF. ↑I'm entering The Circle ↓ and I just ↑happen to be deAF. LISTen, I'm loud and I ↑call it like I see it.[...]

[07:55]: ↑ALERT! ↑THE QUEEn ↓has arrivED.

Paris' output has a varying production speed. For example, the first part of the phrase before "but" and the second part between the words "but" and "is" have a standard production speed, whereas for every word that is emphasised and the part where there is a fall or rise in intonation (↑ & ↓) Paris uses a slower speed of production. The falls and rises in intonation point to the rhythm of the interpreters as well as their intonation. In this sense, the interpreter's prosody is far from monotonous and could be described as singsongy. Non-fluencies in this part cannot be seen because this was pre-recorded and not live. It could have been edited, so non-fluency features will not be discussed in this section. Paris uses very few pauses, which were less than a second (.) in the introduction. Since the Praat software is highly sensitive to background noise which can

⁵ Due to the scope of this paper, only a few examples are presented here. However, the pitch analysis of the speech segments that are not presented in Section 4 can be found in the Appendix.

⁶ The transcriptions were annotated using Jefferson's (1974) symbols, as cited in Table 5.4 presented by Hale & Napier (2013).

result in inaccurate measurement of intonation, the introduction of *The Circle* was not analysed due to the presence of background music.

Throughout the programme, contestants communicate with one another by messaging through the “Circle Chat.” Raven is in the first group chat of the series, and Paris is sign-to-voice interpreting for Raven so she can send a message.

(2) Episode 1 [09:26-09:28]

Paris: ↑Anybody↓ else↑ feeling like they need to be pinched↑?



Figure 1: Pitch analysis of Example 2

In Example 2, Paris maintains a standard pronunciation and phonation. For the first part of the sentence, the interpreter maintains a fast speed and then slows down to a standard production speed at the end of the question. His prosody is singsongy, there are no non-fluencies or pauses.

While getting to know one another in the “Circle Chat”, Raven comments on Marvin’s profile to see his biography. Raven makes a general comment, which Paris interprets for the general viewer.

(3) Episode 1 [22:52-22:59]

Paris: He’s↑ single (1.06), that’s all I needed ↑ to KNOW↓(???) FOCUS↓, focus↓, focus↓, focus↓

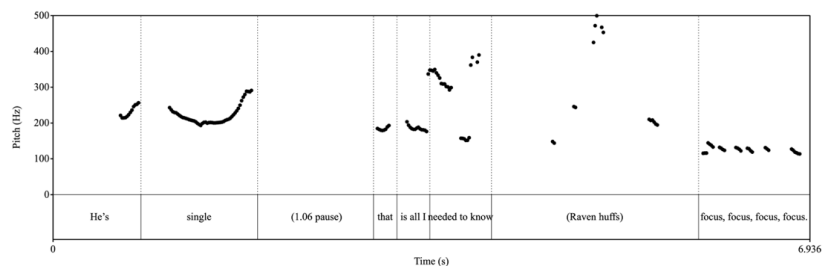


Figure 2: Pitch analysis of Example 3

In Example 3, Paris reflects Raven’s excitement through singsongy prosody with falling and rising pitch contours. While expressing “That is all I need to know,” Paris has a slightly altered pronunciation due to his fast delivery. There are two pauses, one because of Raven’s huff before her expression of “that is all I need to know” and one due to the time lag between Raven’s signing and Paris’ interpretation.

The Circle players interact with one another through games. The contestants are asked about their dating history. Raven is one of the two contestants to confess to having cheated, while other contestants replied, “never cheated”. After expressing her disbelief in the honesty of their answer, Paris interprets Raven:

(4) Episode 1 [35:03-35:05]

Paris: I was honest with my answers and ↑ I'm OK with that↓.

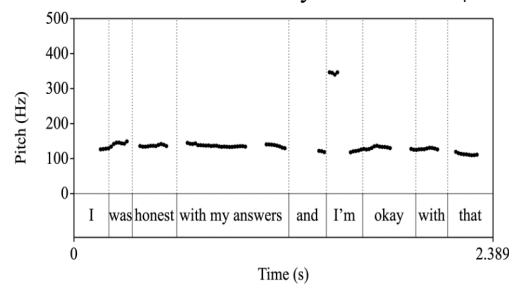


Figure 3: Pitch Analysis of Example 4

Paris maintains a standard pronunciation and speed of delivery. There are no pauses or non-fluencies in his speech. While expressing Raven's emotions, he has a level intonation pattern that creates monotonous prosody.

The rating and blocking of players within *The Circle* are crucial stages of the programme that determine the dynamics within *The Circle*. In the first episode of the series, like the other contestants, Raven feels nervous about being blocked from *The Circle*.

(5) Episode 1 [43:09-43:13]

Paris: My ↑HeART is↓ in my cooCHIE↑ RiGHt ↑NOW!

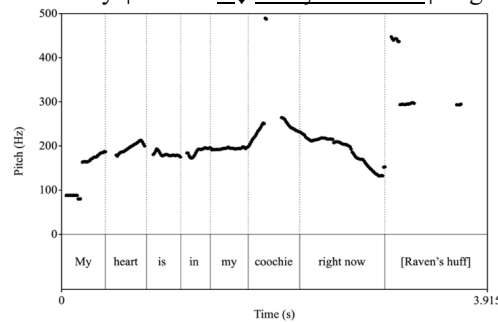


Figure 4: Pitch analysis of Example 5

(6) Episode 1 [44:37-44:39]

Paris: ↓Oh, ↑THaT ↓always ↑scares mE↓!

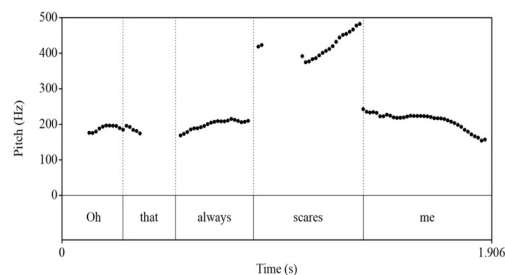


Figure 5: Pitch analysis of Example 6

These two examples exemplify Paris' general style of delivery. While expressing Raven's emotions, Paris uses not only words but also his voice. While Paris' pronunciation and phonation are standard, he reflects Raven in a singsongy as well as monotonous way to express the nervousness and fear she is experiencing. Non-fluencies and pauses are not noticeable in this case.

The "Finale" is different from the other episodes as Paris does not interpret for *The Circle* viewers but for the other contestants. Contestants meet face-to-face for the first time at the finale. Raven and Paris enter the room in which the reunion is held. Both Raven and Paris are shocked, surprised, and excited while

meeting the other contestants (Episode 13, 34:00). When Sam shouts “Who is that?”, Raven introduces Paris as “He was my voice for the game” [34:15], because at first, Sam thought they were competing as a team. Paris and all the contestants sit around the table while getting to know what happened, who were catfishing, and what strategies were played. Paris sits opposite Raven for a clear sightline of her signing. Two additional Black ASL interpreters, Kenton and DC, are invited to interpret voice-to-sign for Raven to enable communication across the table. Raven explains that these two interpreters will stand behind the contestants that are sitting around the table, so Raven knows who to look at while the interpreters are transferring the contestants’ spoken language into sign language. Kenton and DC stand in different corners of the room and interpret for the contestants sitting nearest to them. In this final scene, while Kenton and DC are enabling communication by interpreting the contestants’ speech to sign language, Paris continues to interpret sign-to-voice for hearing contestants and viewers of the programme. Like the first episode, Paris provides contestants and hearing viewers of *The Circle* with rhetorical simultaneous interpreting by using prosody and other rhetorical devices. Through his voice, Paris’ sign-to-spoken language interpretation becomes a means of rhetorical communication.

Overall, the scenes from the different stages of the programmes exemplify Paris’ general style of delivery. To reflect Raven’s emotions, Paris utilizes of both words and prosody. While Paris’ pronunciation and phonation are standard, through his use of intonation and emphasis, he reflects Raven in not only a singsongy way, revealing her excitement, happiness, and positive moods, but also in a monotonous way to express her feelings including nervousness, fear, disappointment, and sadness. Non-fluencies and pauses are evident in some scenes, but most of these non-fluencies are due to the lag between Raven’s signing and Paris’ output or the deliberate use of non-fluencies to express Raven’s astonishment or surprise, as seen in the previous examples.

These findings are in line with research regarding prosody, which provides clues as to a speaker’s emotion or attitude towards an event, person, or object (Mitchell & Ross, 2013). Research on attitudinal and emotional prosody, which are usually grouped under the term “affective prosody” (Ross, 2000) has shown that acoustic properties such as pitch and spectral profile may reflect emotions and attitudes (Sauter et al., 2010) through changes in pitch, i.e., fundamental frequency (Bulut & Narayanan, 2008; Mitchell & Ross, 2013). For instance, speakers with a high level of confidence express themselves with short and infrequent pauses, increased loudness and speaking rate, and a fall in intonation contour at the end of the utterance, whereas speakers with a lower level of confidence (who may be hesitant) tend to be associated with pre-speech delays, rising intonation, and elevated pitch (Monetta et al., 2008, as cited in Mitchell & Ross, 2013, p. 473). The results of the pitch analysis for certain scenes have allowed the use of rhythm and especially prosody to become visible and reveal the interpreter’s style of delivery.

Several interviews have been held since *The Circle* aired. During an interview in which Paris is interpreting for Raven, Raven explains that she “wanted her interpreter to be someone who could represent her and be her voice” (Manny The Movie Guy, 2022, 00:52-1:33). Raven and Paris gave another interview in January 2023. Paris was asked how it felt to be in such a unique position in which Paris is both a viewer, reacting to the events in the programme, and part of *The Circle*. Paris answered (nerdtainment, 2023, 06:52-7:10) as follows:

Paris: So Raven and I have discussed this before. So we, Raven and I are very close and her reactions were naturally my reactions. Right?! So when we first saw Marvin on the screen, she melted but I melted externally. And I think we

have that relationship where she doesn't want me to be this robot, right, because interpreters are not robots. She wanted me to be myself and of course, as a professional, I knew how to do the dance between not inputting too much of myself while also maintaining that good balance, that good relationship with Raven. (7:12-7:58)

Raven (interpreted by Paris): If I could add a little bit to that, what people got to see with me and Paris, and our relationship on the show, it's not typically what you see out in the real world between Deaf people and interpreters. But I wanted to make it clear that interpreting for someone who is Deaf, it's much deeper than just, you know, facilitating communication. You've got to bring the emotion and so he brought my voice, right, so for Paris to be able to do his natural reactions or to have his natural reactions. I felt like that helped him become more of my voice because he was his authentic self. I mean, he was in the moment, he was experiencing everything that I was experiencing, so I think it helped. (8:00-8:57)

The interviews again demonstrate an unusual case, firstly because of the inclusion of the interpreter on the programme as an active participant, and secondly because this also makes the d/Deaf contestant more visible.

Raven's reasons for choosing Paris as her interpreter confirm my findings, since Raven explains that she believes interpreting for the Deaf is much more than merely enabling communication but extends to bringing across emotions. Raven's emphasis on wanting Paris to be a human and not a robot indicates her desire for *access intimacy* (Mingus, 2011). During *The Circle*, Raven and Paris build a level of "intimacy" as Paris relates to Raven and becomes her voice.

Paris' unique position and interpreting choices can be discussed with reference to Baker's (2005, 2006a) socio-narrative perspective. By becoming Raven's voice, Paris carries out a narrative interpretation, and (re)frames (Baker, 2006b) Raven's narrative through paraverbal devices such as tone of voice, pitch, and loudness. Throughout the interpretation process, Paris elaborates Raven's "ontological narrative" (Somer & Gibson, 1994, as cited in Baker, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) by using prosody to reflect her attitude and emotions. By joining the programme as himself and reflecting his own emotions, Paris also illustrates his own ontological narrative. Moreover, in this case, the narrator's choices, i.e., the interpreter's choices, are against the general interpreting studies narrative (conceptual narrative) by including emotions into the interpretation and not being a robot. By opposing the conduit role of an interpreter, Paris' choices as an interpreter offer a counter-narrative (Baker, 2006a) to interpreting studies and "practiseachers" (Gile, 2018). Moreover, in the field of interpreting studies, interpreters were often depicted as neutral, impartial, and invisible, as well as communication machines that are indifferent to their personal opinions and feelings, which should be put aside (Tahir, 1998; Doğan, 2003; Apostolou, 2010; Mason & Ren, 2014; Özkaya, 2015). Though the general narrative in interpreting studies has emphasized detachment from personal emotions and attitudes that may interfere with the interpretation (Wadensjö, 1998; Roy, 2000; Doğan, 2003; Angelelli, 2004; Tipton, 2008, 2009; Özkaya, 2015), in *The Circle USA* the interpreter explicitly uses features such as intonation and pitch to reflect the emotions and attitude of the signer and make meaning. With this reframing of emotion and attitude through Raven's narrative, Paris demonstrates that in some cases, depending on "the location in time and space" (Baker, 2006a, p.72), interpreters could act as "narrators" and reflect emotions through intonation.

The findings above must be read in light of the limitations of this case study. Firstly, as a non-signing and hearing individual, I adopted a hearing-centric approach which may have influenced my discussion regarding spoken language prosody and accessibility. Moreover, while using the term d/Deaf,

only Deaf individuals were considered due to my position as a hearing individual due to my relatively lesser degree of empathy compared with a d/Deaf individual. Nevertheless, despite my lack of familiarity with ASL, I chose *The Circle* as a focus since the access intimacy between Paris and Raven could also be sensed by a non-signing hearing viewer of the programme. Lastly, I did not carry out a complete analysis of all thirteen episodes, and this further limits the scope of this paper.

4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to analyse a sign language interpreter's output by focusing on their prosody while interpreting sign-to-spoken language on *The Circle*, a reality TV show released by Netflix. For this purpose, I focused on the first episode of Season 5, in which Paris McTizic is the interpreter of d/Deaf contestant Raven Sutton, and the interviews held after the programme. The episode's significant stages such as games and election were transcribed and a pitch analysis using Praat was carried out. Besides an acoustic analysis, I used Baker's socio-narrative perspective, Riccardi's Descriptive Sheet of Interpreted Speech and Mingus's term "access intimacy" while discussing the findings.

The transcription and analysis of scenes and interviews covered in this paper suggest that there is a link between the emotions and attitude of Raven reflected in Paris' voice with the singsongy prosody expressing emotions such as excitement and fear, and with level prosody revealing feelings of disappointment and disbelief, all of which are experienced by Raven and interpreted by Paris. The pitch analysis and transcriptions have demonstrated that Paris is an interpreter who uses prosodic features to express Raven's different emotions and attitudes and becomes her voice. It is through Paris' voice that Raven becomes accessible to the hearing, non-signing audience.

By using prosody as a means for reframing narratives, Paris illustrates Raven's personal narrative as well as his own self-narrative throughout *The Circle*. Paris' reflection of Raven's emotions and attitude elaborates a counter-narrative to the general narrative of interpreting studies that emphasises the emotional detachment of interpreters. Therefore, it could be suggested that while interpreting, Paris not only becomes the narrator of Raven's personal narrative but also a self-narrator for his identity as an interpreter, which consequently disseminates a counter-narrative to the interpreting studies' narrative on a multimedia product like *The Circle*. Lastly, by reflecting emotions and offering feelings of closeness and genuine understanding, the interaction between Raven and Paris also builds access intimacy and therefore exemplifies what a sign language interpreter can bring to the intimate process of communication using prosody.

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Appendix

The pitch contours of the remaining scenes of Episode 1 can be found below:

(7) [09:23-09:25]: What's up Y'ALL (0.38) how ↑y'all doING?

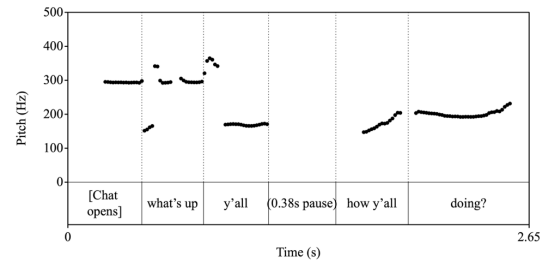


Figure 6: Pitch analysis of Example 7

(8) [31:38-31:40]: I'm ↑hoping it's↓ striptease.

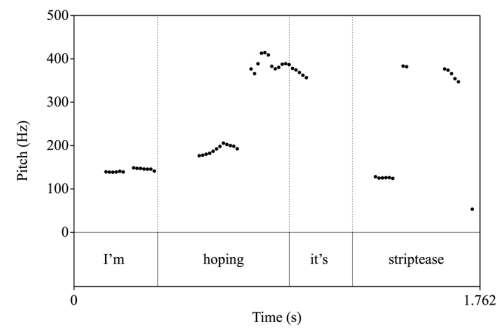


Figure 7: Pitch analysis of Example 8

(9) [32:28-32:32]: MArvin↓, you need to↓ striptease fOr me babe.

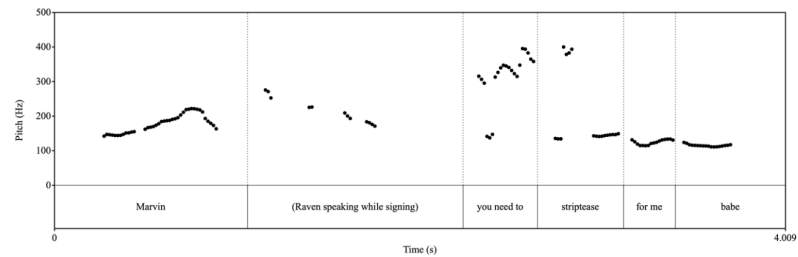


Figure 8: Pitch analysis of Example 9