



Information sharing and the interpreted interaction: Consumer orientation

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Abstract: Consumer Orientation (CO) is the act of sharing information with participants in an interpreted interaction, with the goal of improving their understanding of working with interpreters. A previous study conducted in the United States found that lack of CO may cause confusion and distraction on the part of hearing consumers, leaving them with a more negative impression of both the interaction and the Deaf interlocutor (Jones, 2017). In this follow-up study, a similar survey design was used to examine whether the presence of CO had an impact on the perceptions of participants, and if responses differed when CO was provided by the Deaf presenter versus the interpreter. Results bolster the previous findings and lend support to the idea that CO can make a positive difference in the experience and perception of hearing consumers. An analysis of open-ended responses also offers insights into which parts of the experience of working with interpreters might be most confusing or distracting for hearing interlocutors, leading to suggestions for what information might be included in an effective CO. Results warrant further discourse about CO as an ongoing, dynamic, responsive process, and recommendations for further research are outlined.

Keywords: Consumer orientation, American Sign Language, interpreter ethics

1. Introduction

Sign language interpreters in the United States have been wrestling with the ethics of their role for decades (Witter-Merithew, 1999). Because interpreters hold positions that give them access to Deaf people's personal information and private moments, their boundaries have been an important topic of discussion, research, education, and conflict (see Sheneman & Robinson, 2024; Suggs, 2012). Likewise, discussions about what it might look like for interpreters to approach their work using a lens of allyship have offered important perspectives for interpreters who are reflecting on their decision-making (Kurz & Hill, 2018; Hall, 2018; Holcomb, 2018). As the understanding of positionality in interpreted interactions has shifted and evolved, interpreters have sometimes taken the approach of invisibility, minimizing their involvement and presentation of self in the presence of consumers (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2013; Witter-Merithew et al., 2011). While the unique experience of working with interpreters is familiar to most Deaf consumers, it can be jarring to hearing consumers who are more accustomed to monolingual interactions. The intention of interpreters' non-involvement is to respect and empower Deaf people, but one of the unintended consequences is that hearing consumers might never receive information or education about the role of the interpreter, what to

expect, and how to behave during the interaction. This information sharing is called *Consumer Orientation* (CO; Jones, 2017). This study is focused on the experience and perceptions of the hearing interlocutor, and the term ‘consumer’ will refer to hearing consumers for the purposes of this paper. Deaf interlocutors may also benefit from some type of orientation to the interpreted interaction, an important topic for discussions and future research on this topic.

CO is a relatively new label for an old concept—communication that helps people understand who the interpreter is, what they are doing, and how to achieve effective, inclusive communication with fellow interlocutors. Jones (2017) found that a lack of CO might result in a more negative perception of the interaction and the Deaf interlocutor. The current study was designed to further explore the impact of CO. Survey participants were shown a video of a Deaf scholar presenting a summary of his research in American Sign Language (ASL) with audio of an interpreter’s voice rendering the presenter’s message in spoken English. Participants were randomly assigned to see the video either without CO, with CO provided by the Deaf person, or with CO provided by the interpreter. Responses were analyzed to gauge whether CO had an impact on participants’ ability to identify the Deaf person and the interpreter, their perception of each, and whether responses might differ depending on who conducted the CO.

Results from this survey suggest that CO does make a difference in participants’ ability to identify the parties in the video. CO, especially when conducted by the Deaf person, may also result in a more favorable perception of both the interpreter and the Deaf presenter. Furthermore, comments from participants shed light on which aspects of the interpreted interaction might be most confusing or distracting for hearing consumers, leading to suggestions for best practices on what information might be important to include as part of an effective CO. Lastly, several aspects of the results appear to support the idea that CO might best be conceived of as an ongoing process that is dynamic and responsive to cues from consumers.

2. Background

Sign language interpreters in the United States are expected to “uphold high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005). Since the inception of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1964 (Witter-Merithew, 1999), the interpreting and Deaf communities have both contributed to an evolution of the expectations of what this ethical conduct might look like. In an effort to uphold interpreter ethics and respect the autonomy of Deaf individuals, many interpreters have historically attempted to minimize their own participation in the interpreted interaction, avoiding conversation and sometimes even eye contact with the hearing consumer in the hopes of encouraging greater connection between them and the Deaf interlocutor (Dean & Pollard, 2005; Hsieh, 2010; Witter-Merithew et al., 2011). This behavior impacts consumers’ perceptions of the interaction in two ways: it breaks social norms, causing confusion (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014), and it can lead to missed opportunities for sharing information that could put the consumer at ease. Either of these outcomes can contribute to a more negative perception of the interaction and its participants (Jones, 2017).

While the intricacies of the interpreted interaction are incredibly familiar to interpreter practitioners and many members of the Deaf community, they are an infrequent and often completely novel experience for many hearing

consumers. It has been well documented that many hearing consumers do not understand the interpreter's relationship with the Deaf person (see Hsieh, 2010; Kredens, 2017; Leeds, 2009, as cited in Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014). Additionally, Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2013) asserted that conversations innately include norms and expectations for the behavior of participants, which hearing consumers automatically expect the interpreter to follow. Behaving in ways that contradict these norms can be "alienating to the other participants in the interaction" (p. 59). That said, there are aspects of sign language interpreting that violate the conventions of a typical interaction (e.g., standing behind one of the interlocutors, making eye contact with only one of the parties, speaking in the first person when we are not actually speaking for ourselves), and it stands to reason that an explanation of what to expect and why could put the hearing consumer more at ease with this unique experience. So why is this not the norm?

Historically, an entire generation of ASL interpreters spent more than a decade being encouraged to conceive of themselves as a "conduit" or "machine" (Witter-Merithew, 1999). This model came about in response to the previous interpreting approach, which had framed the interpreter in more of a "helper" role and contributed to the further disempowerment of Deaf people. The "machine" model declared that the interpreter was strictly a channel for communication and was intended to create more space for Deaf people to exercise their autonomy. While the study and application of interpreter ethics have continued to evolve, many interpreters who internalized this model went on to teach and mentor younger colleagues, perpetuating the notion that interpreters should be "invisible," and strictly refrain from any engagement with the interlocutors outside of interpreting their utterances. In the meantime, the conception of the interpreter's role has shifted with the understanding that interpreters are not, in fact, invisible, and that strict adherence to an ethical code that violates social norms can cause discomfort at best, and harm at worst. A more nuanced view of interpreters' ethics and relationship with the community can be applied to the act of sharing information with consumers. Interpreter behavior that may be viewed as "taking over" and disempowering the Deaf consumer in one scenario may very well be seen as stepping up to take the burden off a beleaguered Deaf person in another.

Possibly related to this invisibility mindset that has pervaded the field of interpreting for so long, there has been very little research on sharing information with consumers to improve their understanding of working with interpreters. In their widely distributed book, *So You Want to Be an Interpreter*, Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) advised, "It may be necessary for the interpreter or the Deaf consumer to 'brief' parties about the 'dos and don'ts' of working with an interpreter" (p. 251). Likewise, in their research on interpreting in the workplace, Dickinson and Turner (2014) suggested that "to work effectively and successfully in any setting, sign language interpreters must continue to move away from the pervasive 'interpreter as conduit' norm and must consider working in a more transparent and open way, involving and informing all parties in the communicative interaction" (p. 171). Regarding working with interpreters in healthcare settings, Tebble (2003) suggests that the appointment flow include an opportunity for the interpreter to clarify their 'contract,' which "allows the interpreter to clarify, for the doctor, the patient and any others present, exactly what the ethical boundaries of the interpreter are" (p. 27). It was not until 2017, however, that this concept of education and information sharing had a name.

I was the first to coin the term *Consumer Orientation*, when my thesis research revealed that when there was no explanation of what to expect while watching a video of a Deaf presenter with the voice of an interpreter rendering

his message into English, 44% of hearing participants appeared to be confused about who the parties were and/or distracted by their experience of watching the video, negatively impacting their ability to focus on the information that was being conveyed. Furthermore, when participants were asked to rate the Deaf presenter in 10 soft skill categories, those who were distracted and confused gave lower-than-average ratings (Jones, 2017, pp. 58-59). When I returned to the existing research to see what had already been published about educating consumers, I found that not only were best practices not yet developed for ASL interpreters in the USA, but the concept did not even have a name. My thesis used the term *Orientation to the Interpreted Interaction*, and subsequent publications have popularized the term *Consumer Orientation*.

During the course of teaching, discussing, and thinking about the information that might benefit consumers, I developed the *FEI Model for Consumer Orientation* (Jones, 2019). This model suggests that no matter how much time one spends on CO, the information shared can generally fit into three categories: *Function* (How will the interpreter function in the context of this interaction?), *Expectations* (What can the consumer expect when working with an interpreter? How might this experience differ from a typical monolingual interaction?), and *Inclusion* (What can be done to ensure the interaction is inclusive and satisfactory for everyone?). This study aims to examine the effectiveness of CO and the Function Expectations Inclusion (FEI) Model.

3. Methodology

This study consisted of a survey that was distributed to adults in the United States via social media and email campaigns. The target audience was hearing individuals who might potentially rely on an interpreter working from ASL to English to understand the message from a Deaf presenter. Participants were therefore asked about their hearing status and their level of fluency in ASL. Using the survey tool's logic, participants who identified as Deaf and/or fluent in ASL were excluded from the survey. Responses were collected from participants who identified as hearing, hard of hearing, or otherwise described having some functional hearing, and who indicated that they knew either "No [ASL]," "A few signs and/or how to fingerspell," or "Some ASL but I am not fluent."

After answering some demographic questions, participants were shown one of three versions of the stimulus video. While a frozen text such as a video is not necessarily a good representation of a dynamic live interaction, the use of videos has become more ubiquitous as technology has evolved. Information is shared via videos on social media, for example, and workplace trainings often consist of self-paced pre-recorded content. Therefore, this stimulus does replicate one of the ways that hearing consumers may encounter interpreters in the world. The video version each participant viewed was randomly selected by the survey tool. One group watched a 5-minute video that showed a Deaf male presenter on the screen, presenting in ASL about his research on behavior change, with audio of a female interpreter rendering the message into English. The second group saw the same video, preceded by a brief consumer orientation (CO) provided by the Deaf presenter, also interpreted into English by the same interpreter, where the Deaf presenter was visible on screen, whereas the interpreter was there as audio only. The third group saw the same presentation video but preceded by a consumer orientation provided by the interpreter, who was visible on screen for that part only. The goal was for both instances of

consumer orientation to be as similar as possible and to include elements from the FEI model (Jones, 2019). What follows below are the scripts that were followed (names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the presenter and interpreter):

Deaf presenter Consumer Orientation script:

Hi, my name is John, and I'll be sharing a little bit of my research on behavior change.

I'm Deaf, and I use American Sign Language, so this video also includes a sign language interpreter, Anne.

During this 5-minute video, you will see me signing on screen and you will hear Anne's voice interpreting what I'm saying into English.

All you have to do is keep your volume at a comfortable level and watch this short video. Enjoy!

Interpreter Consumer Orientation script:

Hi, my name is Anne, and I am a sign language interpreter. The presenter today is John, who will be sharing a little bit of his research on behavior change.

John is Deaf and uses American Sign Language, so during this 5-minute video, you will see him signing on screen, and you will also hear my voice interpreting what he's saying into English.

All you have to do is keep your volume at a comfortable level and watch this short video. Enjoy!

After watching the video, participants were asked to identify the 'presenter' and the 'interpreter.' These multiple-choice questions offered the following options:

- The person using sign language on screen
- The person whose voice I heard
- Both the person signing and the person whose voice I heard
- Neither the person signing nor the person whose voice I heard

Participants then answered the open-ended question, 'Overall, what was your impression of the presenter?' and gave the presenter ratings from 1-5 in 9 different soft-skill categories, which were chosen because of their alignment with the previous study and because they have been linked to workplace success (see Asefer & Abidin, 2021; Kauling, 2020; Rios et al, 2020; Singh & Lin, 2023): Professionalism, Friendliness, Knowledge, Confidence, Intelligence, Communications skills, Trustworthiness, Competence, and Likability.

Lastly, participants answered the same questions about the interpreter, responding to one open-ended question ("Overall, what was your impression of the interpreter?") and giving ratings in the same 9 categories.

The survey collected responses over a period of several months, after which the responses were compiled and analyzed. Using participants' responses to the identification questions and their open-ended responses, I evaluated whether the ratings in each response were truly about the interpreter and the Deaf presenter, flipped, or unclear. In the results, overall ratings include all responses, but ratings for the presenter and the interpreter only include responses that were determined to truly be about the party in question. Quantitative and qualitative results were compiled using a combination of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and quantitative analysis.

4. Results

There were 266 participants who completed all parts of the survey and were included in the data analysis for this study. Among the respondents, 79% were female, 15% male, and 6% nonbinary. Within the sample, 88% identified as hearing, 7% as hard of hearing, and 5% self-described various degrees of partial hearing loss. When asked about their familiarity with ASL, 43% indicated that they knew no ASL, 44% knew a few signs and/or some fingerspelling, while the remaining 13% stated that they knew some ASL. Fifty-five percent indicated they were not at all familiar with working with interpreters, 36% were somewhat familiar, and 8% were very familiar.

Identification of the parties

Participants in this study were asked to identify both the “interpreter” and the “presenter.” Overall, only 68% of participants were able to identify both parties accurately, even though the survey was titled “Deaf Presenter Survey.” Consumer Orientation did make a difference: participants who received no CO were able to identify both parties correctly only 61.33% of the time. Participants who received CO were able to correctly identify both parties more than 70% of the time (See Figure 1 below). In other words, there was a difference of +10.1% when CO was provided by the Deaf presenter, and +9.64% when CO was presented by the interpreter.

While the sample size was too small to show any statistical significance, this pattern also holds true when only looking at those who correctly identified the presenter. When compared to the no CO group, CO provided by the Deaf presenter was associated with an 8.45% increase in ability to identify the presenter correctly, while CO from interpreter was associated with an 8.04% increase. For those who correctly identified the interpreter, CO provided by the Deaf presenter was associated with a 10.1% increase when compared to the no CO group, while CO provided by the interpreter was associated with a 9.64% increase.

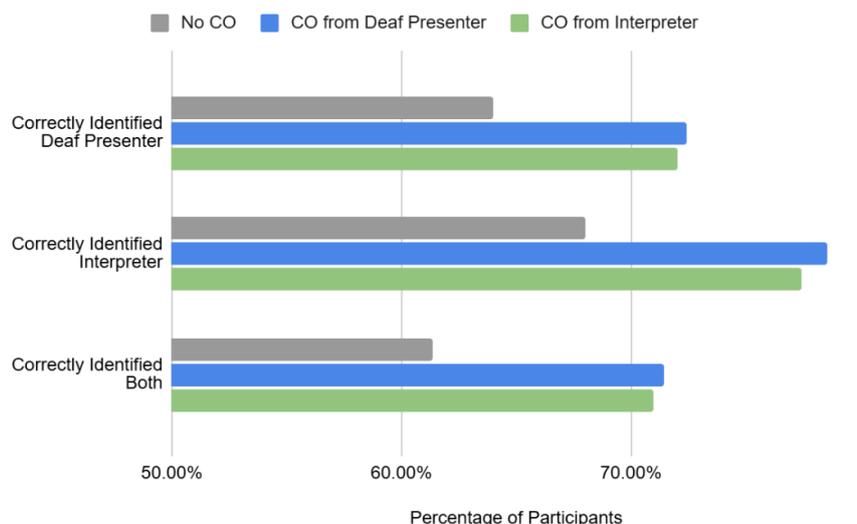


Figure 1: Percentage of participants who correctly identified the deaf presenter, the interpreter, and both parties

Impact of familiarity with ASL and interpreters

Familiarity with ASL and interpreters did make some difference in participants' ability to correctly identify the parties, although the percentages might still be lower than one might expect.

Table 1: Participants' Familiarity with ASL and Interpreters and Their Ability to Correctly Identify Both Parties

Familiarity with ASL	Correctly Identified Both Parties
No ASL	66.67%
Few signs	66.95%
Some ASL	79.41%
Familiarity with interpreters:	
Not at all	65.99%
Somewhat	71.13%
Very	72.73%

Participants who received CO but did not correctly identify the parties

A total of 59 participants (22% of participants) watched a video that included CO and were still not able to correctly identify the interpreter and the presenter. A deeper dive on this particular group shows that demographically they were almost an exact match for the entire participant group. Exactly 50% of them experienced CO provided by the Deaf presenter, and 50% experienced CO provided by the interpreter. The average ratings they gave in each category were within a couple of percentage points of the overall average.

Ratings results

When analyzing ratings results, overall, the Deaf presenter was scored higher than the interpreter in every category except professionalism. Most notably, he was rated 9% higher than the interpreter in the knowledgeable category, 5.4% higher in intelligence, and 5.6% higher in likability.

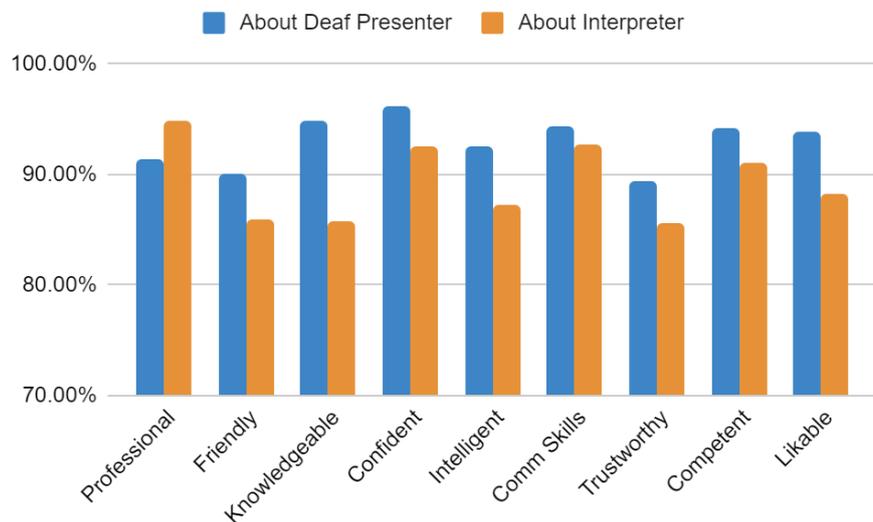


Figure 2: Overall ratings from all participants

Impact of consumer orientation on ratings

CO provided by the Deaf presenter was consistently associated with higher ratings. Average ratings (overall impression) were higher in all but one category, as perception of friendliness was the same; with an overall increase

of 2.45%. Most notably, scores were 4.2% higher for communication skills, 4.2% higher for competence, and 4.4% higher for likability. When compared to the group that received no CO, impression ratings of the Deaf presenter were higher in every category except professionalism, with the biggest difference was shown in perceived intelligence (+5%) and communication skills (+5%). CO provided by the presenter was also associated with an even bigger differential between his ratings and the ratings given to the interpreter: of particular note, he was rated 11.2% higher than the interpreter in the knowledgeable category, 7% higher in friendliness, and 8.2% higher in intelligence.

Results from the group that received CO provided by the interpreter were more mixed. Average scores (overall impression) were slightly elevated in 7 of the 9 categories, but the overall increase was less than 1%. While the average of the interpreter-specific scores was higher than when no CO was included, a breakdown shows that half of her scores were higher and half were lower when compared to the No CO group. The most notable change was in perceived communication skills (+5%). Scores for the Deaf presenter were higher in seven of the nine categories when compared to the No CO group, suggesting that CO provided by the interpreter might elevate perception of the Deaf person, but not as much as CO provided by the Deaf person themselves (see Figure 3).

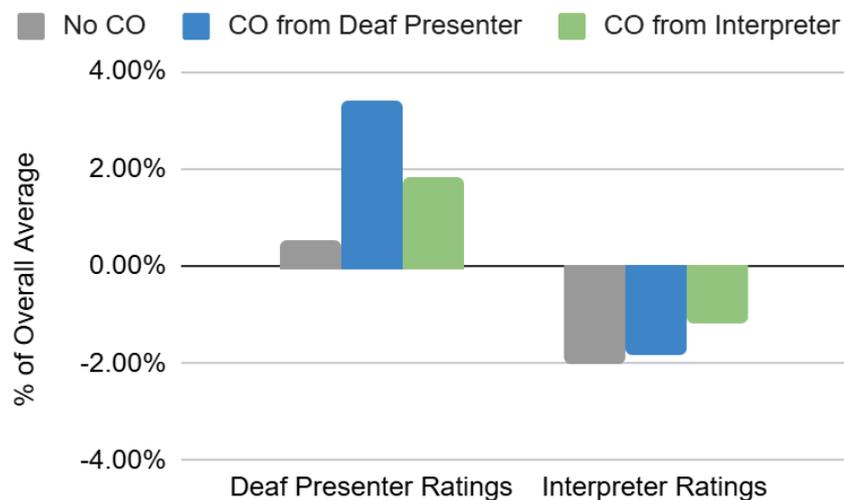


Figure 3: Ratings for the deaf presenter and the interpreter when participants experience no CO, CO from the deaf presenter, and CO from the interpreter (as compared to overall average)

Impact of confusion

In the previous study (Jones, 2017), confusion (as determined by the coding of open-ended responses) was associated with lower scores in all categories. In the current study, confusion was determined by participants' ability to correctly identify the interpreter and the presenter. The inability to correctly identify both parties was not associated with a change in scores, since the average score for the correct group was 90.91%, while the average score for the incorrect group was 90.51%.

Qualitative analysis

Participants responded to open-ended questions about their impressions of the presenter and the interpreter. Open coding revealed that the most common themes in these responses were:

- **Expressive** (n=17): These participants remarked on the facial expressions of the Deaf presenter, either directly or by comparison with the interpreter. These comments included wording like *He was expressive and engaging* and *used facial expressions that matched what he was saying*.
- **Pacing** (n=38): These participants mentioned the pacing of the interpretation as an aspect of clarity and intelligibility. These comments seemed to be more aligned with words per minute and consistency than prosody or synchronicity with the ASL. Examples include *Spoke clearly and at a great pace* and *Spoke at a good pace and was easy to understand and follow*.
- **Process** (n=48): These participants described their own process of watching the video, and many had a tone of frustration or distraction, such as *I tried to understand the presenter first and couldn't successfully match the interpretation to the presenter's signs* and *Didn't really have a big impression as I was more paying attention to the person speaking and the hand movements*. These comments were often associated with comments about synchronicity.
- **Tattoos** (n=9): These participants commented on the presenter's visible tattoos. Comments were both positive and negative, and included comments such as *Tattoos were mildly distracting* and *I definitely noticed the tattoos – very cool!*
- **Syncing** (n=37): These participants commented on the synchronicity of the signed message and the spoken English interpretation. This category includes comments about timing, but not about tone, prosody, or message fidelity. These participants were more likely to use words like *disconcerting*, *distracting*, and *mistrust*. Examples include: *I was annoyed that she seemed to have the script and was interpreting ahead of the signed language...My receptive skills aren't great but having the interpreter [sic] be ahead of the presenter messed me up* and *...it was disconcerting when I could tell the narration was not in light with the signs (either lagging or getting ahead)*.
- **Voice** (n=61): Comments about how the interpreter sounded (voice, tone, diction), including *Smooth, easy to listen to, interprets clearly, and pleasant voice*.

Participants who received no CO were more likely to comment on their own process of watching the video (+8.29% when compared to those who did receive CO), the pacing (+7.96%), the synchronicity of the two modes of communication (+4.76%), and the presenter's tattoos (+4.58%).

Qualitative responses and ratings

When analyzing these open-ended responses along with their corresponding ratings, below-average overall ratings were associated with those who commented on their process of watching the video (-4.36%), the syncing of the voice and the signs used (-2.91%), as well as the presenter's tattoos (-7.42%). Above-average scores were associated with those who commented on the presenter's expressiveness (+2.29%), and the pacing of the interpretation (+1.58%). Comments about the interpreter's voice were not associated with any noticeable change in ratings (+0.56%).

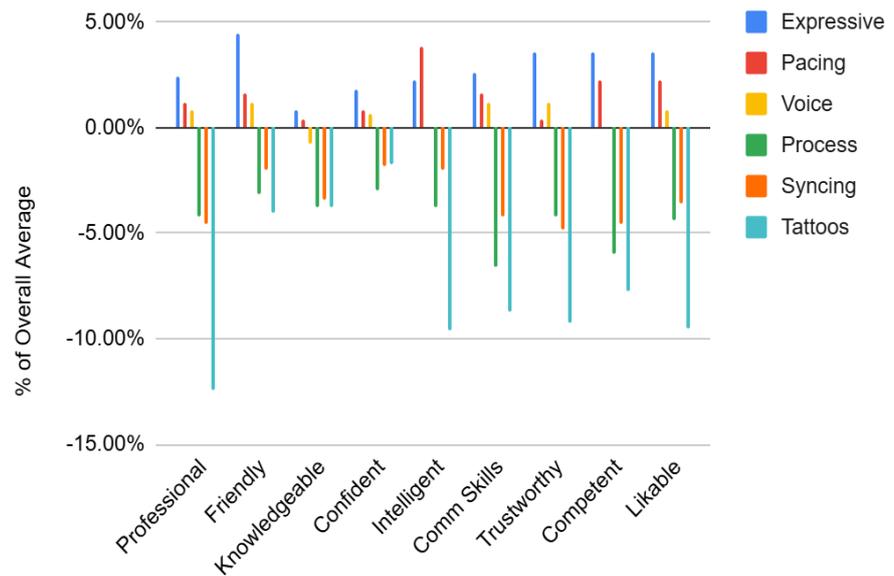


Figure 4: Overall scores: Qualitative categories compared to average

Qualitative responses and ratings: Comparing the deaf presenter and the interpreter

Diving deeper into these data, it is interesting to compare how qualitative comments impacted scores for the Deaf presenter versus the interpreter. As shown in Table 2, comments that were associated with above-average ratings are related to a bigger jump in ratings for the Deaf presenter than for the interpreter. The converse is also true: comments that were associated with below-average ratings are related to bigger dip in evaluations/scores for the interpreter than for the Deaf presenter. The presenter and the interpreter’s ratings were impacted almost equally when the comments were about tattoos. When one considers that the presenter was the one with the most visible tattoos, it is interesting that the interpreter’s ratings dropped just as much.

Table 2: Ratings for deaf presenter and interpreter from each qualitative response category, compared to overall average

Qualitative category	Deaf presenter ratings	Interpreter ratings
Expressive	+6.31%	+2.60%
Pacing	+2.76%	+0.58%
Process	-0.49%	-5.93%
Syncing	+0.64%	-5.93%
Tattoos	-6.96%	-6.62%

Ratings from participants who commented on tattoos

While not the focus of this study, it is worth pointing out that participants who commented on the presenter’s tattoos gave both the presenter and the interpreter the lowest scores. While on average the presenter was given higher ratings than the interpreter in every category except professionalism, participants in the group that commented on the presenter’s tattoos rated him lower than the interpreter in professionalism (by 20%), communication skills (by 2.8%), trustworthiness (by 2.8%), and competence (by 3%).

5. Discussion

Results from this study offer support for the importance of consumer orientation, insights into the perspectives and experiences of hearing consumers, and directions for future research.

Identification of the parties

The first area of analysis is participants' ability to correctly identify the presenter and the interpreter in a survey that was titled "Deaf Presenter Survey." While the presence of CO was associated with a ~10% increase in ability to correctly identify both parties correctly, there were still 58 people (22% of respondents) who watched either the Deaf presenter or the interpreter introduce themselves as such and were still unable to correctly identify them after watching the video.

One could argue that a more dynamic interaction—a scenario where the respondent can see both parties, more interaction is possible, and/or questions can be asked—might lead to different results. However, virtual interpreted interactions are becoming increasingly commonplace, and those interactions often include many of the features of the stimulus video used in this study. These data could mean that a one-time CO may not be enough to offer clarity for all consumers and that CO would be more effective as an ongoing process.

Like the previous study (Jones, 2017), familiarity with ASL and with interpreters did not guarantee a complete understanding on the part of the participants. Along the same lines, the individuals who received CO but were still unable to correctly identify the interpreter and the presenter showed no significant demographic differences from the overall sample. These results support the idea that we cannot assume who might need CO. Interpreters introducing themselves to consumers on the job might ask, "Have you ever worked with interpreters before?" The recommendation based on these two studies is that even consumers who respond in the affirmative could benefit from CO. Likewise, Deaf consumers are typically very experienced in working with interpreters, but may or may not have been exposed to the information shared in the FEI model. Focusing on Deaf consumers would be an interesting area for future research on CO.

Ratings results

At the outset of this study, I hypothesized that the hearing interpreter would be rated higher in the various soft skill categories than the Deaf presenter. I also predicted that seeing the interpreter and watching her introduce herself would precipitate an even more favorable impression of her in the results. This assumption was partially based on the many experiences I have had as a working ASL-English interpreter, where well-meaning but uninformed consumers compliment interpreters for a job well done while ignoring the expertise and skill of the Deaf person in the room. Social media content that is focused on interpreters can also veer toward breathless adoration without any exploration of the technical complexities, cultural implications, and power dynamics at play.

Participants in this study responded differently than I had anticipated, and the Deaf presenter was rated higher in every soft skill category except professionalism. There could be several reasons for this. This study included a male presenter and a female interpreter, and the less favorable view of the interpreter could be evidence of gender bias. Future studies that include a matched-gender pairing might offer some insights as to whether gender played

a role in these results. There may also be the effect of survey bias, where participants' responses were skewed by the very act of asking them questions about their perceptions. And, again, a more dynamic in-person interaction might lead to different results. When considering how these elevated ratings for the Deaf presenter align with the compliments interpreters receive described above, one theory is that hearing audiences are actually responding to seeing American Sign Language being used. It would make sense that whoever they see signing is viewed in a favorable light. In this case the audience saw the Deaf presenter using ASL, but in the case of an assignment where an interpreter is signing in front of an audience, they see and focus on the interpreter.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that perceptions of both the Deaf presenter and the interpreter seemed to benefit from CO. The greatest jump in ratings occurred for the Deaf presenter when he provided the CO, which might mean that best practices should include opportunities for Deaf consumers to share information with hearing interlocutors as often as possible. At the same time, in these data, CO provided by the interpreter was associated with a more positive impression of both the interpreter and the presenter than the absence of CO. On a practical level, these results support the idea that anyone sharing information is better than no one. Greater awareness of the importance of CO, what information might be important to share, and how CO could be provided will allow interpreters, Deaf consumers, and allies to negotiate responsibilities and ensure that all interlocutors have an understanding of the interpreted interaction.

Qualitative analysis

Analysis of the qualitative results in this study offers some insights into what information consumers might need as part of the CO process. Comments about the presenter's tattoos, participants' process of watching and understanding the stimulus video, and the synchronicity of the spoken English and the ASL were all associated with lower ratings in the soft skill categories. These comments all occurred less frequently in the groups that received CO, which could be interpreted to mean that participants who received some information about what to expect were more at ease when watching the video.

Participants' comments about their own process of watching the video were particularly reminiscent of interactions I have interpreted where the process is so distracting that one or more parties can no longer attend to the message. I suspect many interpreters and frequent consumers of interpreting services have experience with an interlocutor who is clearly confused, and who needs their questions answered before they can fully participate in the interaction. It is unsurprising that participants who were distracted by the process of watching the video had less favorable impressions upon its conclusion, and this serves as a reminder that sharing information prior to an interaction might not be enough. Interpreters, Deaf consumers, and allies would do well to be aware of signs of confusion during the interaction, and offer clarifying information about the experience or opportunities for the an interlocutor to have their questions answered. One can also imagine that interpreters who try to use body language, eye gaze, and other indirect cues that are intended to elicit the desired behavior might be viewed as even more confusing to these already-puzzled consumers.

The syncing of the two languages in the stimulus video for this survey was the topic of some of the strongest language found in participants' comments. Phrasing like *messed me up*, *distracting*, *odd*, *disconcerting*, and *caused me to question* were common in these responses. Several participants suggested that

the interpreter “was not really interpreting,” was “reading from a script,” and was a “voice-over actor” or “also presenting” as opposed to interpreting. These comments are interesting because they challenge what interpreters might strive for in the interpreting product. The interpreter for this study and I agreed that a smooth interpretation without awkward pauses or significant lag would be a good fit for the interpreted section of the stimulus video. The resulting video has the interpreter’s voice starting 1.5 seconds after the Deaf presenter starts signing, and uttering the final “thank you” 3.5 seconds after the signing stops. In the middle section of the video, particularly when there are fingerspelled names (which take longer in ASL than they do to say in English) the interpreter is sometimes as much as 5 seconds ahead of the presenter. As we had agreed, the interpretation is evenly paced with no long silences, mistakes, repairs, or added filler words, which is not always possible with a live interpretation.

While the interpreter in this study had the benefit of preparation time with the material, this is not an altogether unusual scenario. In my experience, Deaf presenters will often prepare with their interpreters, sometimes to the extent of providing or co-developing a script to ensure the spoken English sounds confident and smooth. While this process falls well within the range of options interpreters may choose from in any given scenario, responses from participants in this study shed some light on how these decisions might affect the audience. It is possible that consumers’ expectations of interpreter behavior and interpreting product are much narrower than our own envisioning of our work, and CO could be used as a tool to broaden their view of what a reasonable interpretation might entail. Knowing that lack of synchronicity might lead to discomfort, mistrust, and a more negative perception on the part of hearing consumers, effective CO might include language that prepares consumers for this experience and explains why it occurs. Reading between the lines of comments on synchronicity in this study, it seems that some of the confusion might come from participants’ assumption that every word in English has an ASL sign equivalent and vice versa. The idea that this is not the case, that ASL is not signed English, and that some things take longer to express in one language or another might be a useful concept to include in CO.

Participants’ comments about the Deaf presenter’s expressiveness and the pacing of the video were associated with more elevated ratings for the presenter than the interpreter, and comments about the process of watching the video and the syncing of the two languages were associated with a bigger drop for the interpreter than the presenter. One way to interpret this would be to say that participants attributed more of their negative experiences to the interpreter’s work, while attributing more of their positive experiences to the Deaf presenter. Based on these results alone, there is the possibility that gender bias, survey design, survey bias, and a favorability towards the use of ASL could all have played a part in these responses. It is difficult to extract specific recommendations from this aspect of the study, but future research involving the specifics of hearing people’s perceptions of the use of ASL might offer more insights.

6. Conclusion

The current study lends support to the idea that CO can make a difference in consumers’ experience of the interpreted interaction. Participants who received CO were more able to correctly identify the interpreter and the Deaf presenter, gave more favorable ratings to both parties in nine soft skill categories, and

made fewer comments about their process of watching the video, the lack of synchronicity between the two languages, the pacing of the information, and the presenter's tattoos.

While there are still many areas of sharing information to be studied, some recommendations for best practices can be drawn from responses to this survey. The first, most generalized, recommendation is that some CO is better than none. Practitioners are advised to keep an open mind about who might benefit from CO. In this study and in Jones (2017), understanding of the nature of ASL and prior experience with interpreters did not necessarily correspond to a clear understanding of roles or a more favorable perception of the presenter and the interpreter. This study is the first to examine perceptions of a group who received CO from a Deaf presenter compared with a group who received CO from a hearing interpreter, and results show that views of the Deaf presenter might benefit most from the audience receiving CO directly from him. Best practices could include maximizing opportunities for the Deaf person to share information themselves.

Jones (2019) has suggested the FEI model as a device for bringing to mind what might be included in an effective CO. Participants in this study seemed particularly perplexed by the timing of the interpretation, and emphasizing this aspect of the experience would fit nicely into the 'Expectations' part of the model. Phrases like "You might notice some pauses" or "Interpreters typically need a little bit of lag time because..." might help consumers understand what they are experiencing and feel more at ease with the process. Some consumers might also benefit from an explanation of why the interpreted interaction is unique. Those who are more familiar with bilingualism can take for granted simple facts like, "There is not a word for every sign or a sign for every word," or "Sometimes concepts take longer to explain in one language or the other." For some consumers, simply offering this basic information could make a world of difference in their experience of working with interpreters. Those who assume concepts like this are common sense or that interlocutors will figure it out might do well to examine their own beliefs and understanding of the role. Challenging ourselves to look for opportunities for open dialogue with everyone we work with could be an area for introspection, engagement, and growth.

Responses where participants expressed frustration and confusion about their process of watching the video are a good reminder that CO might be most effective as an ongoing process that is responsive to cues from consumers. It would make sense that interlocutors who are distracted by trying to figure out what is going on will be less attentive to the message and might have a more negative perception of the interaction and the individuals involved. Mindful interpreters, Deaf consumers, and allies may have opportunities to notice this confusion and offer information that can put distracted consumers more at ease. This process of CO could occur before, during, or after the interaction, and involve a fluid, responsive process that centers the experience of the naïve consumer might prove more effective than a rigid, scripted, or one-size-fits-all approach to imparting the information.

Like a lot of research, this study raises as many questions as it answers. In this new area of research, future studies might include an examination of the role of gender and the impact of language use. Participants in high-context situations where they share a goal with their fellow interlocutor might have different things to say about their perceptions of the interpreter and the Deaf person. In-person scenarios where they can see the interpreter may have an impact on results, as might the experience of interactive dialogue, as opposed to passively watching a presentation. Future researchers could add to our

knowledge of what effective CO might look like by comparing different approaches to CO: brief versus extensive, one-off versus ongoing, and scripted versus dialogic. Researchers and interpreters should continue exploring the benefits of CO provided by different parties, while being mindful that interpreters and their work are not centered or prioritized at the expense of Deaf people's autonomy, credibility, and expertise.

As a final point, the results and recommendations in this study offer talking points for engagement and dialogue within the Deaf and interpreting communities. Allyship on the part of interpreters can mean allowing the Deaf person to lead just as much as it can mean giving them a break from exhausting self-advocacy while the interpreter takes on the burdensome aspects of communication. Ongoing dialogue, negotiation, and flexibility are required for all consumers to have a well-informed and satisfactory experience with an interpreted interaction. The framework of CO offers some of the tools necessary to make this happen, but the real key is in ongoing dialogue and relationship-building.

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