INTERPRETING FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES:  
THE CASE OF SPANISH

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ABSTRACT

The demand for sign language interpreting services in the foreign spoken language classroom is increasing, and this is true in both secondary and postsecondary settings. Interpreter coordinators often fill these types of requests with an interpreter who can speak or who has studied the language being taught - regardless of whether or not she has interpreted in this setting before. Yet, any sign language interpreter who has worked in this setting knows that there are many issues and difficulties with interpreting in foreign language classes - issues that make this type of interpreting different than sign language interpreting in most other settings. The ability to speak the language or having taken a class in that language does not qualify an interpreter to accept such an assignment; the interpreter also needs to consider the task and be prepared with strategies to make the task successful. This article addresses some of the general issues that would apply to sign language interpretation in most foreign language classes, which often apply to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well. It also suggests specific strategies for interpreting Spanish language courses. Unfortunately, the author is not aware of any research on this topic, and the information in this paper is not research-based. Rather, the suggestions presented are strategies that the author has developed over several years of interpreting Spanish courses for students who are deaf in university settings. The author believes that this presentation of some of the issues will benefit interpreters who accept such assignments and the teachers of foreign languages who have students who are deaf in their courses. This information also will be useful for interpreter coordinators who must decide which interpreter is most appropriate for such a situation.
INTRODUCTION

The task of sign language interpreting for deaf students in a foreign spoken language class is undeniably complex.\textsuperscript{3} The primary issue is that foreign language production by the teacher and students is an integral part of the language learning process for students, and a traditional interpretation of such spoken language into sign language would limit the benefits of this type of learning environment for deaf students.\textsuperscript{3} For instance, if a Spanish teacher would say the phrase "Perros y gatos son animales." ("Dogs and cats are animals."), one option for the sign language interpreter is to sign DOG AND CAT TRUE ANIMAL\textsuperscript{1}, which is one transliteration of the Spanish phrase. In this case, the deaf student would not, like the hearing students in the class, have the experience of trying to comprehend the Spanish words that were produced. Each ASL sign produced by the interpreter in this example has an accepted meaning, and the student would only need to know those ASL signs in order to understand the phrase spoken by the teacher. The foreign language would not be accessible to the student because the interpreter has already "interpreted" that language into a phrase with known ASL signs. In order for the foreign language to be accessible (i.e., "visible") to the student, I am suggesting that the interpreter try to limit the amount of signs produced and instead focus on fingerspelling. Using the example given above, the interpreter could fingerspell the entire phrase: P-E-R-R-O-S Y G-A-T-O-S S-O-N A-N-I-M-A-L-E-S, and determination of the meaning of that phrase would rely on the student's ability to recognize the spelling of the Spanish words and be able to associate those words with appropriate meanings. The fingerspelled letters themselves do not contain meaning the way signs do, so fingerspelling is one of the best tools that a sign language interpreter can use in this setting. This concept will be discussed in more detail later in this article.

Essentially, the author suggests that the interpreter focus on conveying the form, rather than the meaning, of what is said. Thus, rather than "interpret" in foreign language classrooms, interpreters should "transliterate" so that representations of the form (e.g., spellings of words, word order and writing conventions) of the foreign language are accessible to the student. For the transliteration, the interpreter must rely heavily on fingerspelling and mouthing and use signs only minimally and selectively.\textsuperscript{3} Deaf student(s) would then have the task of understanding meaning based on the form that is presented to them, which is similar to the way that hearing students function in foreign language classes.

This article will present specific examples of several techniques that the author has used in the foreign language classroom. Keep in mind that the information contained in this article is not based on academic research, but rather on several years of "trial and error" interpreting in Spanish classes. Many of the concepts discuss in this article can apply to the interpretation of other foreign languages and ESL classes as well. It is hoped that, in the future, we can carefully examine these and other strategies through academic research so that we can determine what is truly successful and what is not in these situations.

GETTING STARTED: ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

If the interpreter does not possess prior knowledge of the foreign language being taught, it is next to impossible to interpret a course in that language. Therefore, in the case of a Spanish course, we suggest that the interpreter study the Spanish language before attempting to interpret it. This will allow her to understand the basic progression of the course as well as the vocabulary and grammar of the language. In the absence of formal study, an interpreter with previous exposure to Spanish might have enough skill to interpret an elementary level class. In my experience, interpreters with no previous exposure to a foreign language often have difficulties parsing the teacher's foreign language production, which makes it next to impossible to produce an adequate transliteration for the deaf student.

First of all, the interpreter needs to investigate the student's goal(s) for the course.\textsuperscript{6} Does he or she want to learn how to speak, speechread (lipread), or only read and write the language? Responses to these questions are often based on the amount of residual hearing that a student possesses or the speech training that he or she has received. For example, a student who utilizes hearing aids to understand speech and who has had a significant amount of speech training over the years might want to learn to speak Spanish, but a student who is profoundly deaf and has had no speech training may only want to learn to read and write Spanish. Additionally, it is important to
determine the goals of the class and the teacher; it may be the case that the goal(s) of the student cannot be met in that specific course. In order to immediately address these issues, it is suggested that the interpreter have a discussion with the deaf student regarding these questions at the beginning of the course and that the discussion take place with the instructor present. Perhaps the instructor is willing to make certain modifications in order to accommodate the student in the class. This discussion should also include the question of how the student will participate: using his or her own voice, or having the interpreter sign to voice interpret for him or her.

Cued Speech could also be used for representing a foreign language if the student and interpreter know the system or are willing to learn it, because most (if not all) natural language sounds can be represented visually by using this method. Cued Speech is a system that is comprised of different handshapes and positions that represent phonemes in spoken language, and it serves as a supplement to speechreading. In theory, Cued Speech could be a successful tool to teach a deaf student a foreign spoken language because there would be no use of signs, which might interfere with the learning process. As mentioned above, this option can be explored by interpreters and students who have the willingness and time to learn Cued Speech. However, this article focuses primarily on the use of fingerspelling, mouthing, and signs for conveying linguistic information in the classroom.

There are several ways that the interpreter can prepare for the course. We suggest that the interpreter begin by obtaining and reading or skimming the textbook that will be used. By following the syllabus and reading ahead, the interpreter can anticipate which aspects of the language and which vocabulary items will be dealt with in class. Also, bringing the book to class can be helpful in a number of ways. If the teacher asks a question from the book, the interpreter can inform the deaf student where to read instead of laboriously fingerspelling the question. The textbook is also useful when the students or the teacher are reading an extended passage aloud. At times it is difficult to understand some hearing students when they read or speak Spanish because they are in the process of learning the pronunciation of the language, so having the book turned to the right page will help the interpreter decipher these students’ attempts at pronunciation.

It is helpful for the interpreter to do the homework, especially if the interpreter has not used the language in several years. If the interpreter does not wish to purchase the textbook and cannot get a copy from the teacher or library, one option is to order a desk copy (free copy for educators) by writing to the publisher. If that is not successful, copying the pages needed for class would enable the interpreter to prepare for upcoming lessons.

Some spoken languages have rich inflectional and agreement systems which differ significantly from spoken English. It is recommended that an interpreter study the agreement system of the language that is being interpreted because a great deal of class time will likely be devoted to learning it. For example, simple Spanish verbs can be conjugated according to seven tenses within two manners and singular and plural first, second, and third-person pronouns. Verb tables taken from the appendix of a Spanish textbook that map out the conjugations of verbs could be a good study guide before interpreting a Spanish course. In the case of Spanish nouns, there is also a noun phrase agreement system that differs from that of English. Specifically, the modifying adjective and article of a noun phrase in Spanish must exhibit number and gender agreement with the noun. An example of such a noun phrase is the plural definite los libros verdes ("the green books"). Examples of some incorrect forms include the following: *el libros verdes, *la libros verde, *las libros verde, and *los libros verde.* As can be seen, the Spanish system of number and gender agreement between a noun and its article differs from the English system in which noun phrases do not exhibit gender agreement with the use of the definite article. In general, it is important to be familiar with the inflectional and agreement systems of the foreign language and represent these elements clearly in the transliteration.

The form that a transliteration will take depends upon the level of instruction of a particular course. Lower-level courses can be characterized by slower speaking speeds and much repetition, which allows for a great deal of fingerspelling. Higher-level language courses, on the other hand, tend to utilize faster speaking speeds and less repetition. More signs will need to be used in these higher-level courses. This issue of the use of fingerspelling versus the use of signs will be discussed in more detail later in this article. In addition to different levels of
instruction, a foreign language class can either be geared to second-language learners who have never spoken the language before or students who have had some previous exposure to the language. These two types of courses tend to differ in structure and types of cultural information discussed in class. The interpreter should be aware that differences exist between these types of courses, and he or she should take steps to question the instructor about the structure of the course that is being interpreted. This will help the interpreter to plan for specific events and activities.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERPRETING

There are several strategies that can be employed when transliterating a Spanish language course. The strategies discussed in this article pertain to the use of fingerspelling and the selective use of signs while continuously mouthing Spanish.

The Use of Mouthing

If the teacher is speaking in Spanish, we suggest that the interpreter pay particular attention to mouthing that Spanish. Perhaps this technique will help the deaf student develop Spanish speechreading skills, which may be one of the student's goals for the course. There may be times that the instructor switches to English for various reasons such as to emphasize what was just said in Spanish, to explain a point about Spanish grammar, or to make sure he or she is understood (e.g., when announcing an important event or task). The degree to which a teacher switches between English and Spanish often depends on the level of Spanish that is being taught. These switches are more prevalent in lower division Spanish courses than in upper division courses where monolingual Spanish production tends to be the norm. Switches to English can be communicated to the student by signing NOW ENGLISH or TALK ENGLISH, but keep in mind that it may not be possible to communicate every instance of spoken English that is made. Sometimes the switches occur rapidly and there may be several switches within a single stretch of discourse. It is suggested that, at least, the interpreter make an effort to communicate any emphatic switches made by the teacher such as when he or she clarifies or repeats what was just said. The switch to English may be a signal to all students that they really need to pay attention to the upcoming information. Also, students in lower division Spanish classes often ask questions in English (and sometimes answer them in that language, too), and informing the deaf student of this can be very useful because it informs him or her of areas in which other students in the class are struggling.

The Use of Fingerspelling

Fingerspelling is a very important tool for a sign language interpreter in a foreign language classroom, and we suggest that the interpreter utilize it as much as possible. In order to see the benefits of fingerspelling in foreign language courses, let us examine some aspects of fingerspelling. Fingerspelling is a method of representing letters of a written language visually, and those letters represent words when combined sequentially. Like the letters of the alphabet that they represent, the handshapes used for fingerspelling have no meaning. In this case, the handshapes are not morphemes by themselves. When a signer fingerspells, an interlocutor determines meaning by making an association between that specific ordering of those letters and the word(s) to which that combination of letters refers. Signs, on the other hand, are morphemes (at least one per sign), and a sign need not be combined with other signs in order for an interlocutor to make an association between that sign and a particular concept or entity.

If an interpreter were to fingerspell everything that he or she heard, a deaf student would have to understand how the letters combine to make words and the words to make phrases in order to create meaning from the fingerspelled words and phrases that the interpreter produced. In theory, fingerspelling every word that is spoken in a Spanish classroom would include little to no semantic information and might appear to be the optimal method for interpreting a Spanish course. However, an interpreter cannot control the pace of the Spanish being spoken in the classroom and fingerspelling continuously without using signs is very difficult; the pace would likely result in the interpreter dropping a significant amount of the source language production. Moreover, it would appear to be too much for most people's eyes to read fingerspelling in an unfamiliar language for an extended period of time. Despite all of this, it is still necessary to fingerspell as much as possible. With
this in mind, one of the major on-going tasks for the interpreter of foreign language courses is to determine how much fingerspelling is required to optimize the learning environment for the deaf student.

**Fingerspelling and the use of diacritical marks**

Interpreters must be aware that written Spanish employs the use of diacritical marks such as: accent marks over the vowels [a, é, i, ó, ú], the umlaut over one vowel [ü], and the tilde over one of its nasal consonants [ñ]. A decision needs to be made regarding how to represent these diacritical marks. One strategy for representing the accent mark diacritic is to move the hand that is articulating the vowel upward and rightward (for right-handed signers - leftward for left-handed signers) while signing that vowel. So, a name such as José ("Joe") could be fingerspelled in the following manner: J-O-S would be articulated in the same area of the signing space while É would have an upward and rightward movement while producing the E-handshape. Another strategy to represent accent marks is to articulate a sign for an accent mark after fingerspelling the vowel that it lies above within a word. The following sign can be used in such an instance: the index finger of the dominant hand traces the shape, upward and to the right for right-dominant signers, of the accent mark. For instance, if the word él ("he") is used by the instructor, the interpreter could fingerspell E-L to indicate that the accent mark lies above the "e" ("é" in this example represents the accent mark sign described above). This inclusion of the accent mark in a fingerspelled word is especially important in cases where the diacritic signals a semantic difference between an identical word without the accent mark. For example, él is the pronoun 'he', while el (without the accent mark) refers to a masculine article that appears before a noun. The interpreter must be aware of orthographic differences such as these so that he or she can represent them correctly. However, there are few words in written Spanish that are distinguished semantically by an accent mark, and there are many words that require an accent mark, usually based on stress patterns, as dictated by Spanish orthography. Realistically, the interpreter will not have the time to include an accent mark in each word that requires the use of one in the orthography. Because of this, the interpreter must work with the deaf student to ascertain the degree to which the interpreter should include accent marks in his or her fingerspelling. At the very least, it is recommended that the interpreter include those accent marks that semantically differentiate two words that are spelled the same. Also, including accent marks in an interpretation may aid the deaf student in his or her reading and writing tasks, as well as give the student some ideas about the stress patterns of the language.

In addition to accent marks, Spanish orthography utilizes the tilde and umlaut, and the interpreter must decide upon how to represent these diacritics. In the case of the tilde for the consonant ñ as in cariño ("affection"), a foreign sign language sign for this letter could be used. For instance, in Mexican Sign Language (LSM) the letter ñ is represented in the following manner: the dominant hand articulates the ASL N-handshape with the index and middle fingers extended and pointing downward at about a 45-degree angle while producing a left-to-right motion by rotating the forearm. The Spanish ü with an umlaut could be represented by articulating the placement of the two 'dots' over the "u." This can be accomplished by using the index and middle fingers to articulate an ASL V-handshape (with or without the fingers bent) with a movement that suggests the placement of two dots over the previously fingerspelled "u." If another foreign language with other diacritical marks is being interpreted, the interpreter must decide how he or she will represent such diacritics.

**Fingerspelling suggestions**

In this section, we discuss different types of words and phrases that we encourage interpreters to fingerspell when interpreting for Spanish classes. In general, we are suggesting that the interpreter fingerspell as much as possible in lower level courses or when a deaf student is beginning to learn Spanish, while more advanced courses would likely necessitate the use of signs more frequently.

The conjugation of verbs should be reinforced through fingerspelling. This is especially true if the teacher uses drills to work on verb conjugations. However, we believe that, in general, verbs should be fingerspelled because they are the items that vary the most in languages with rich verbal morphologies such as Spanish. Table 1 lists the present-tense indicative-manner conjugation paradigm for the verb amar ("to love").
Table 1

Present-tense indicative-manner paradigm for the Spanish verb amar ('to love')

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 sg (yo)</td>
<td>amar</td>
<td>'I love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pl (nosotros)</td>
<td>amamos</td>
<td>'we love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sg [familiar] (tú)</td>
<td>amas</td>
<td>'you love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sg [formal] (usted)</td>
<td>amas</td>
<td>'you (formal) love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pl [familiar] (vosotros)</td>
<td>amáis</td>
<td>'you (plural) love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pl [formal] (ustedes)</td>
<td>amáis</td>
<td>'you (plural) love'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 sg (él/ella)</td>
<td>ama</td>
<td>'he/she loves'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pl (ellos)</td>
<td>aman</td>
<td>'they love'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One method of performing a conjugation drill tends to be the following: the instructor shows (via a cue card) or says a Spanish verb in its infinitive form and then the students (or a student) will conjugate it aloud following an entire paradigm (such as present tense in the indicative manner as is represented in Table 1). Another strategy employed by a Spanish instructor will focus on a particular conjugation by showing or saying a Spanish pronoun, and the students will have to reply with the conjugated verb that matches that pronoun grammatically.

If the verb conjugations involve an entire paradigm (such as Table 1) and not only a single conjugation, they can be interpreted by setting up a system to represent each subsequent conjugated verb in the paradigm. One possible way to do this would be to articulate the handshape for FIVE on the non-dominant hand (with the palm orientation toward the body, the thumb pointing upward, and the pinky pointing downward) as in the description of a list, and each finger, or element of the list, would represent a different conjugation of the verb. For example, the yo (1sg.) form of the verb would be fingerspelled close to the thumb, the tú (2sg. familiar) form would be fingerspelled close to the index finger, the él/ella (3sg.) form would be fingerspelled close to the middle finger and so on - employing imaginary fingers as list items for the sixth through eighth conjugations provided all the possible forms are included. The first few times that a teacher uses such a drill, each conjugated verb could be fingerspelled. As the drill speeds increase, the infinitive form of the verb could be fingerspelled at the beginning, and then the conjugated endings (underlined portions of the verb in Table 1) could be fingerspelled close to the appropriate fingers as before without re-fingerspelling each full verb. Keep in mind that each word should be mouthed with the simultaneous fingerspelling production. It is a good idea to pay special attention to the conjugation of verbs in a Spanish class because verbs can contain a great deal of information about subject and object in a phrase.

We suggest that the interpreter in a Spanish class make an effort to fingerspell the article that accompanies each noun because nouns phrases in Spanish differ somewhat from those in English; Spanish noun phrases have gender agreement between the article, the noun, and a modifying adjective, and this is not the case in English noun phrases. Additionally, nouns in Spanish require the presence of an article to a greater degree than nouns in English do. The interpreter must be aware of another issue related to nouns and their gendered articles. Namely, some Spanish nouns require articles that do not fit the normal or intuitive pattern of gender marking in Spanish. For instance, the words programa ('program'), problema ('problem'), and agua ('water') all require the masculine article el rather than the intuitive la. Lexical items such as these that do not conform to the regular patterns of Spanish have the potential of being learned incorrectly. The interpreter should be aware of such cases so that extra care can be given when including these items in her interpreting. In some languages, nouns are affixed with morphemes that specify subject and object relations within a phrase. If this is the case in the foreign language that is being transliterated, we suggest that the interpreter fingerspell these nouns in order to clearly represent this crucial part of the grammar of that language.

We also suggest that the interpreter fingerspell a complete sentence or phrase when there is sufficient time to do so. In higher level courses with faster speaking speeds, a particularly good opportunity for this is when the teacher says a sentence and the class must repeat it, or when a hearing student may be slowly responding to a question from the teacher. In the case of the class repeating what the teacher said, the actual sentence may be spoken twice (once by the teacher and once by the students), but the interpreter may only be able to fingerspell it once due to the rates of normal fingerspelling. Yet, we believe
that fingerspelling the sentence once clearly is better than attempting to fingerspell it twice at a rate that hinders a clear articulation. When students respond to questions from the teacher they tend to do so slowly and, at times, hesitantly in hopes of answering correctly. The speed of their speech usually allows for clear fingerspelling by the interpreter. Also, page numbers given by the teacher are often repeated several times, which would make them easier to fingerspell because there is sufficient time to do so.

The Use of Signs

Unfortunately, due to the speed at which spoken language is produced, it is very difficult, if not next to impossible, to clearly fingerspell everything that is uttered in the foreign language. Because of this, the interpreter will be faced with the question of what to do to keep up with the speaker—especially in higher level courses. In the case of discussions that take place in English in a foreign language class, as in a traditional interpretation we suggest that the interpreter use signs (from ASL, Signed English, or from one of the Signed English systems) for the interpretation. The use of signs for an entire phrase or stretch of discourse also will signal to the deaf student that English is being spoken. However, if only the foreign language is being spoken and the interpreter is struggling to fingerspell everything due to the speed of the speech, we believe that the selective use of signs is appropriate.

There are several types of signs that could be used effectively in a foreign language class. First, as mentioned earlier in this article, frequently occurring words or phrases could be fingerspelled the first few times that they are used and then signed thereafter. The following are some examples of types of words or phrases that tend to be used frequently: greetings, names of countries and languages, titles of people, and times of the day/days of the week. Additionally, high frequency words in all languages tend to be prepositions, conjunctions, and articles. We believe that semantically equivalent signs can be used for these frequently used words and phrases after the deaf student has learned the foreign language equivalent. Sometimes the student will show that he or she has learned a word or phrase by nodding his or her head in understanding when it is fingerspelled. Yet, sometimes this does not happen, which means that the interpreter will need to maintain a dialogue with the student regarding what he or she has already learned so that signs can be used when those items are spoken. This means that the deaf student and the interpreter will have to discuss this—preferably during meetings outside of class time about the success of the interpretations.

Newly presented or seldom used nouns and other words, on the other hand, should be fingerspelled. We suggest that the interpreter clearly mouth the Spanish words that are spoken even while he or she is using signs for high frequency words and phrases. If one of the deaf student's goals is to improve his or her Spanish speechreading skills, then the interpreter will be providing him or her with an opportunity to do so. These strategies also will allow the interpreter to reduce the amount of fingerspelling that needs to be produced.

Additionally, when the interpreter uses signs, we suggest that they should follow the exact grammar or word order of the foreign language speaker. Thus, the interpreter should not produce signs in ASL word order or even Signed English word order, but rather the word order that is produced by the teacher or students in the foreign language. Without a doubt, the interpreter must maintain a constant dialogue with the deaf student to determine which parts of the interpretation are successful and which parts are unsuccessful. The interpreter should keep in mind and strive to produce an interpretation that works best for the student to learn the language, and not an interpretation that simply provides an understanding of what is happening in class.

Sign to Voice Interpretation

Sign to voice interpretation for a deaf student in a Spanish course differs from traditional sign to voice interpretation because the interpreter must voice the message (signed/mouthed/fingerspelled/written) exactly as it is produced. This means the following: if the student makes errors in his or her Spanish, the interpreter should voice interpret these errors and be aware of unconsciously using his or her own language skills to produce grammatically correct answers. It is especially important for the interpreter to voice the misspelling of a word or improper conjugation of a verb if that is what the student produces. This will allow the teacher to know where the student is doing well and where the student is making mistakes.
If students pair up to deliver spoken dialogues to the entire class, the interpreter could voice interpret for the deaf student, or the teacher instead simply might request that the student submit written dialogues. If there is an auditory comprehension part to the tests where the students listen to the teacher or an audiotape and answer questions about what they have heard, the teacher could write down the questions for the deaf student. As mentioned before, these or any accommodations should be discussed and decided upon with the instructor and the deaf student.

CONCLUSION

Interpreting for a foreign language course presents a number of interesting challenges for the interpreter, and there are many issues and concerns that must be addressed before even beginning to interpret. Unfortunately, there is no research in this area that looks at the success of various interpreting strategies, but this article presents suggestions that might help an interpreter presented with such the challenge of interpreting for a foreign language course. Rather than utilizing a traditional interpretation, the author suggests that the interpreter employ strategies that focus on the form of the message and find appropriate ways to represent that form. As a result, we suggest that fingerspelling and mouthing be used extensively, but there are certainly occasions when signs will need to be used as well. The interpreter must continuously decide what to produce based on factors such as the rate of speaking in the classroom and the level of language learning that the deaf student has achieved. This article briefly outlines some of the many issues that often arise when interpreting a Spanish course and provides suggestions for making transliterations successful. By working with the teacher and students, by preparing well for each class, and by planning carefully, the interpreter can employ methods that create a productive learning environment for any and all deaf students.
REFERENCES


END NOTES

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2 Throughout this article, the term 'deaf' will be used to refer to an individual who requires the use of a sign language interpreter in a classroom setting. No claim is being made regarding Deaf culture and a deaf individual's association with it.

3 In this context, 'traditional' is used to refer to an interpretation in which the source language is English or a foreign spoken language and the target language is a common variety of American Sign Language (ASL) or Signed English.

4 English glosses of ASL signs will be presented in capital letters, and fingerspelling will be indicated by a dash between letters.

5 'Mouthing' refers to the inaudible display of words on the mouth area that enables another person to lipread - albeit with varying degrees of success - the message.

6 This assumes that a student has the freedom to decide for herself what she wants to learn to do. However, in some secondary settings, the student may not be allowed to establish his or her own goals, but rather would have to abide by goals or criteria that have been established by the school system. On the other hand, criteria for what are required to pass a class in a post-secondary setting are often more flexible. In those settings, the teacher can usually work with the student to accommodate his or her special needs and goals.

7 In fact, I suggest that the interpreter and the student who is deaf meet regularly (perhaps once a week or once every two weeks) outside of class time to discuss the success of the interpretations. This would allow the interpreter and student to maintain an ongoing dialogue about what is successful and what is not for that specific deaf student and course.

8 The indicative manner in Spanish has five tenses (present, imperfect, preterit, future, and conditional), and the subjunctive manner has two tenses (present and imperfect). In addition, Spanish verbs undergo a different conjugation in cases where an auxiliary verb is used in conjunction with a main verb. For example, "El había comido..." ("He had eaten...") uses the auxiliary or 'helping verb' *había* with a conjugated main verb (*comido*) that does not take on this form in any of the simple conjugations (without the use of an auxiliary). See a Spanish grammar book or table of verb conjugations for a complete explanation of all the verb conjugation possibilities.

9 As in standard linguistic examples, "**" before a phrase represents an ungrammatical utterance.

10 Because English and Spanish utilize very similar alphabets, the task of fingerspelling Spanish words using ASL fingerspelling is relatively trivial. However, if an interpreter is faced with the task of interpreting a foreign language that does not utilize the same alphabet as English, a decision must be made regarding the method for representing that spoken language. This would be true if an interpreter were to interpret any language with a non-Roman alphabet such as Russian or Hebrew, or a character-based system such as Chinese. In such a case an interpreter may choose to learn the fingerspelling system of a
particular country’s sign language. See Carmel (1982) for a listing of various fingerspelling systems. Another option might be to transliterate the sounds of the foreign language into ASL fingerspelling. Of course, this method may have limitations because of the inability to depict some foreign language sounds using the ASL fingerspelling system.

Yet, some fingerspelled words become lexicalized and take on the characteristics of signs (see Battison, 1978 for a discussion of loan signs in ASL) and these “fingerspelled loan signs” can be described as morphemes. In these loan signs, however, the signer does not necessarily articulate each letter of a word.

There may also be other strategies that interpreters and members of the deaf community use to represent written accent marks in fingerspelled words. The exact form that the accent mark takes in the transliteration seems less important than the basic need to include it as a way to represent this important diacritic used in the orthography.

There are at least 12 pairs of words in Spanish that are spelled the same and are homonyms but are semantically different. These words are differentiated orthographically by an accent mark over the vowel of one of the words in each pair. See the Appendix for a listing of several of these words.

The vosotros form (2 pl. [familiar]) is used primarily in peninsular Spanish (spoken in Spain) and in some countries of Latin America, and it is sometimes omitted from the curriculum of Spanish courses in the U.S.

Note, however, that the plural aguas takes the feminine plural article las, as opposed to the masculine plural los. There are few nouns in Spanish that operate in this manner, but knowing that this phenomenon occurs can be useful information for the interpreter.

QUALIFICATIONS OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Data from a recent survey of practicing legal interpreters in the criminal justice system is provided and discussed. The sample (46) was taken primarily from interpreters with advanced level certification throughout Texas. It identifies and documents that these interpreters have substantial levels of experience, education, and certification. However, there remains a severe shortage of qualified legal interpreters, deaf interpreters, and persons of color in the field of legal interpreting. This is coupled with an equally serious lack of educational opportunities for existing legal interpreters to update and maintain their skills, or to develop the competencies required to become a legal interpreter. The need for comprehensive programs preparing interpreters for work in legal settings exists in Texas and nationwide.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Currently, there are approximately 3,200 interpreters certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) across the nation. Of these, only 100 possess a legal specialist certificate (J. Patton, RID, 6/26/2000, personal communication). Clearly, this is not enough to fulfill current demands for services in the criminal justice system (Whalen, 1988; Alston, 1997; Miller, 2001). For example, in Alaska, there are three sign