ASL presenters and Hearing Interpreters: Equivalent Pace?
A Study of ASL Register
Brice Boiles

ABSTRACT
This research compares the rate of sign production of Deaf presenters with that of hearing interpreters working simultaneously from spoken English to ASL. On average, the Deaf presenters exhibited a lower sign production rate than the hearing interpreters. This may have impacts on message equivalency with regards to register.

INTRODUCTION
Question: Do Deaf presenters and hearing interpreters produce ASL at an equivalent rate?

- “If this were a naturally occurring piece of discourse, would it be an appropriate one?” (Roy, 1987)
- Interpreters’ task: To produce an equivalent rendition of the source text in the target language.
  - Equivalent Register
- Sign speed and prosody are functions of register
- This research analyzes the interpretations of hearing interpreters as freestanding discourse, comparing them with the ASL discourse of Deaf presenters functioning in the same register

METHOD
Three minutes of each sample are analyzed.
1. Transcribe three minutes of the video into written English gloss.
2. Count the total number of signs produced in the three-minute segment.
   - Only discrete signs are counted. Compound signs, repetition, etc. are counted as a single production
3. Divide the total number of signs produced by three to determine the average speed-per-minute

DISCUSSION
With only one exception, all of the Deaf presenters analyzed during this research produced fewer signs-per-minute than did the hearing interpreters.

- Possibly attributable to simultaneous interpretation process:
  - SI is inherently time-bound: It is necessarily affected by the rate of the spoken English source text.
  - Further research needed to compare SI and CI processes
- Possibly attributable to discourse structure
  - English and ASL discourse have different structure
  - SI interpreting utterance by utterance, not goal-by-goal (Gish, 1987)
- Limitations
  - Limited in scope
  - Outlier skewing research
  - If excluded the average rate for Deaf presenters would be 78 signs-per-minute
  - Sociolinguistic variation

CONCLUSION
- Hearing interpreters working simultaneously produce signs at a higher rate than Deaf presenters in similar settings
- Data suggest a possible causal link between the simultaneous interpreting process and the difference in the rate of production.
- Future Research
  - Comparing SI & CI
  - What effect does the rate of sign production have on comprehension

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: Cardiovascular System</th>
<th>Setting: Online audience</th>
<th>Rate: 57 signs-per-minute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Genetics</td>
<td>Setting: Platform</td>
<td>Rate: 96 signs-per-minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Deaf culture in Rochester, NY</td>
<td>Setting: Platform</td>
<td>Rate: 80 signs-per-minute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deaf Presenters: 79 signs, 77 signs, 86 signs, 80 signs
Hearing Interpreters: 77 signs, 78 signs, 108 signs, 119 signs
Average Signs-per-minute: Deaf Presenters 88 signs, Hearing Interpreters 96 signs