A study of video remote signed language interpreter-mediated interaction in Australia

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Gallaudet University VRI Symposium
June 2012

Background: Video remote interpreting

- Video remote interpreting (VRI) and Video Relay Services (VRS) have had a major impact in the USA (Dion, 2005; Lightfoot, 2006; Brunson, 2011)
- Recommendations in the UK to prevent negative impact on community (face-to-face) interpreting (McWhinney, 2009)
- VRI also impacts on the interpreting process itself (Napier et al, 2006, 2010)
- NCIEC conducted project to recommend steps to effective VRS interpreting (2008)
- Little research – USA on VRS (Taylor, 2005, 2009; Brunson, 2011) and UK on VRI (Wilson, 2010)

Background: Australia

- Trials conducted by the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE, Spencer, 2000) and by the Victorian Dept of Human Services (BSR Solutions, 2010) – recommended as effective measure for people in regional/remote areas
- VRI now used by Sign Language Communication & other agencies
- ACE trial of VRS
- No research on effectiveness of VRI for legal purposes

Project description

- Conducted by Department of Linguistics Macquarie University (MQ)
- Commissioned & funded by NSW Department of Justice & Attorney General (DJAG)
- Research data to feed into development of policy for DJAG
Goal of project
• Test the provision of sign language interpreting services for legal proceedings in key venues with audiovisual (AVL) video conference facilities
• Test a range of scenarios involving combinations of deaf people and Auslan interpreters
• Assess issues/challenges that arose
• Assess stakeholder perceptions of interpreted interactions experienced remotely

Study design
• Qualitative study
• ‘Quasi’-experimental design – 5 scenarios tested under similar conditions, but each scenario treated as a case study as it involved different scripts and/or participants,
• Ethnographic observation
• Retrospective interviews

Key venues
• Courtroom
• Remote witness room
• Deaf Society of NSW
• NSW Community Relations Commission
• Jail

Data collection
• 2 adapted mock-trial scripts based on real court cases
• Professional deaf actors/ Professional interpreters/ DJAG volunteers
• Deaf/hearing participants received script
• Interpreters received minimal briefing
• Filmed 5(6) scenarios combining 1, 2 & 3 locations – each dialogue averaged 15 minutes
• Follow-up interview with each participant
• Video recording of each participant, plus DJAG/CRC recordings
### Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>CRC</th>
<th>DSNSW</th>
<th>Court</th>
<th>Script no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>witness room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Court personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf person A</td>
<td>Interpreter A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Court personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf person B</td>
<td>Interpreter B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Court personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scenario 1: Three locations

1. **Remote**
   - Deaf person A
   - Interpreter A
   - Court personnel

2. **Remote**
   - Deaf person B
   - Interpreter B
   - Court personnel

3. **Remote**
   - Deaf person B
   - Interpreter C
   - Court personnel

### Scenario 2: Interpreter remote

- Remote location
- Interpreter
- Deaf client

### Scenario 3: Interpreter & deaf client remote

- Remote location
- Interpreter
- Deaf client