The Role of Sign Language Interpreters

in Kindergarten to Senior 4 Educational Settings

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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(c) February, 1997

0-612-23420-7

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BY

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

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Abstract

The trend toward mainstreaming, and the increased use of American Sign Language (ASL) as the language of instruction for deaf students, have resulted in an unprecedented demand for sign language interpreters in educational settings. The evolution of this position has led to controversy because of the lack of a clear role description. Individuals hired find themselves expected to perform a multitude of duties, many of which are viewed by their colleagues as being outside the interpreter's role expectation. The purpose of this study was to describe the current roles of individuals who are employed to interpret for deaf students in Kindergarten to Senior 4 settings in Manitoba schools. Using a survey format with the total population of interpreters (N=39), it was found that job titles and job descriptions were diverse from one school division to another. Many training and workplace factors were identified that either assisted or interfered with job performance. It was concluded that there is a need for the development of professional standards regarding interpreters in educational settings, and that interpreting in school settings must continue to be a research priority.

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Chapter I
Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A key issue in Deaf Education is the communication barrier that exists for deaf children due to their inability to hear, internalize and process auditory based languages. The failure of deaf children to naturally acquire English is well documented in the literature (Akamatsu, 1988; Kampfe & Turecheck, 1987; Vernon, 1987). When they depend on their inadequately developed English skills and limited auditory abilities, they miss tremendous amounts of social, linguistic and cognitive input, which greatly affects their achievement at school. Johnson, Liddell & Erting (1989) noted that as a result of delayed English language development, educational gaps increase in magnitude each year for all subject areas. This becomes especially apparent at the higher grade levels, as content and concepts become more abstract. Deaf students have been shown to graduate from high school with English literacy skills greatly inferior to those of their hearing peers. Researchers consistently report that the average reading achievement of deaf high school graduates is between the third and fifth grade levels (Finnegan, 1988; Gibbs, 1989; Gormley & Franzen, 1978; Johnson, Liddell & Erting, 1989; Kampfe & Turecheck, 1987; Rodda, Denmark & Grove, 1987; Strong, Woodward & Burdett, 1987; Wolkomir, 1992). The learning potential of these students is not being realized. Hence, as adults, they are characteristically underemployed or unemployed (Rhodda, Denmark & Grove, 1987).

It has long been suspected that the earlier you learn a language, the better you learn it. Numerous authors have expressed their belief in the existence of a critical period for language development which occurs during the first 5 or 6 years of life (Finnegan, 1988; Johnson, Liddell & Erting, 1989; Kampfe & Turecheck, 1987; Meier, 1991; Wheeler, 1994). Wolkomir (1992) stated that "children must learn a language - any language - in their first five years or so, before the brain's neural connections are locked in place, or risk permanent linguistic impairment" (p. 36). During this critical period, children pass through natural developmental stages of language acquisition which do not occur in isolation, but which parallel development in other areas; cognition and socialization. According to Roth and Spekman (1982), these processes comprise an organizational framework for the child's developing communicative competence. Because of the lack of consistent exposure to language input during the early years of life, the majority of deaf children arrive at school with minimal language abilities. Since learning potential is greatly affected by linguistic abilities, it can be logically concluded that English may not be viable as the primary language of deaf children for thinking and learning.

Currently, interest has turned to American Sign Language (ASL). As defined by Hurwitz (1986), ASL is:

> A language in which arbitrary, but rule-governed, combinations of hand shapes, positions, orientations, and movements are the meaningful units (morphemes), comparable to words and affixes in spoken language. Use of space and movement, along with facial expression and body language serve primary roles in the structure (syntax) and

meaning (semantics) of language. ASL is now generally recognized as

a separate language distinct from English, with its own grammar,

inflections and idioms. (p. 248)

It has been shown that ASL has been naturally acquired during the critical

period by the less than 10% of deaf children who are born to deaf parents.

Meier (1991) pointed out that the same sequence of milestones seem to

characterize the acquisition of both ASL and of spoken language. Children

who are exposed to ASL from birth not only develop linguistic competence,

but develop appropriate cognitive and social competencies as well (Brannon

& Livingston, 1986; Brenner, 1993; Kampfe & Turecheck, 1987; Klima &

Bellugi, 1979; Meadow, Greenburg, Erting & Carmichael, 1981; Weisel,

1988). "Deaf children of deaf parents arrive at school better informed and

with better linguistic skills in both English and ASL" (Johnson, Liddel &

Erting, 1989, p. 10). Gormley and Franzen (1978), Strong, Woodard &

Burdett (1987) and Wheeler (1994) stated that these children's proficiency in

English was due to their natural internalization of, and strong foundation in,

a primary language. General observations have been that deaf children of

deaf parents tend to outperform deaf children of hearing parents.

As a result of the perceived benefits of early exposure to ASL,

increasing numbers of deaf children born to hearing parents are employing

ASL as their primary mode of communication, and as their language for

thinking and learning. "ASL appears to be the most viable linguistic system

for deaf children to learn and use in order to think and learn through the

development of meaning-making and meaning-sharing capacities"

(Livingston, 1986, p. 24). It is hoped that this language, which is based on

visual rather than auditory abilities, will improve the educational achievement of deaf learners.

As more people have become aware of the potential of ASL for promoting higher education for deaf students, there has been a shift in many educational program settings toward the use of ASL as the primary language of instruction. Early childhood programs have been designed that provide exposure to ASL and therefore, offer children the opportunity to naturally acquire ASL earlier than has happened in the past. Schools for the Deaf have begun to implement bilingual, bicultural educational philosophies (Brannon & Livingston, 1986; Johnson, Liddell and Erting, 1989; Reagan, 1988; Strong, Woodward & Burdett, 1987), which involve the use of ASL as the language of instruction, and which encourage the development of English as a second language, with an emphasis on text literacy.

Awareness of the value of ASL has also begun to have an effect in regular classrooms. In recent years, the increased popularity of mainstreaming special needs students has resulted in the placement of more and more deaf students in regular classrooms. As noted by Hayes (1993), an article in the 1991 Directory Issue of the American Annals of the Deaf indicated that 77% of students who are deaf currently attend regular public schools and classes. In the 1996 "Implementation Review Report" prepared by Douglas E. Anderson Consultants Ltd., it was stated that school systems reported to Alberta Education that there were 374 deaf students registered in schools throughout Alberta. Many of these students have a hearing loss of such a degree that it precludes speech reception through audition alone, with or without the use of amplification devices. More often than in the past,

these students employ sign language as their primary mode of communication. Since English is the language of instruction in their classrooms, these students require the services of sign language interpreters, in order to effectively access lesson content in a visual manner. The documents of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (1992), Alberta (1994), and Ontario (1990) were developed in attempts to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to recommend national and provincial standards of performance. In these documents, a sign language interpreter is defined as an individual who facilitates communication by rendering sign language (ASL) to spoken language (English) and spoken language (English) to sign language (ASL) between deaf people and others, mediating both language and culture.

It is important to note the impact of Deaf culture on the mainstreaming trend. Deaf culture includes "the beliefs, values, outlooks, frustrations, patterns of behavior, language, expectations and achievements shared by members of the Deaf community, which is passed on from generation to generation. The "culturally Deaf Community" is comprised of those persons who have a hearing loss, share a common language, values and experiences and a common way of interacting with each other, with non-members of the Deaf community and with the hearing community" (AVLIC, 1992, p. 22).

Reagan (1988) supported claims that the deaf constitute a distinctive subculture entity in contemporary society. He discussed six cultural characteristics of the Deaf community. One of these was group identification or attitudinal deafness, which "refers to the view held by

members of the Deaf community that they are indeed a culturally distinct group and entails a positive affective commitment to cultural deafness" (p. 2). This commitment results in strong opposition to the educational placement of deaf students in the mainstream for cultural and social reasons. Hence, as mainstreaming became more popular, sign language interpreters who accepted positions in school settings were seen as supporting the placement of deaf students in isolation, and were therefore viewed in a negative light. In order to maintain acceptance by deaf people and within the Deaf community, knowledgeable and experienced individuals avoided any involvement in mainstream educational interpreting. Hence, the establishment of roles and responsibilities was left to poorly informed employers.

Before one can understand the complexity of the situation facing these employers, it is important to be aware of factors that make it so unique. The population of deaf students is relatively small, which results in a low incidence of need for sign language interpreters in schools, so this is not a demand that must be met on a regular basis. Therefore, employers have not become experienced and knowledgeable about the language needs of deaf children, and are unaware of the nature of the competence and training required to interpret. ASL, which has been accepted and recognized as a distinct language, separate from English or any other auditory based language, is unique in itself, because it is visually based. Normally hearing people must take formal ASL courses, and experience regular exposure to ASL in context over a number of years, in order to develop adequate levels of proficiency in conversational ASL. Many employers do not fully

understand the difference between individuals who have acquired ASL conversational skills, and those who have been formally prepared to accurately interpret between two different languages. Nor do they understand or appreciate that it requires a great deal of highly specialized and intensive training to prepare an interpreter. The curriculum of an interpreter training program is intended to develop knowledge of interpreting theory, to instill cultural awareness and to provide practicums on the skills for interpreting from ASL to English (sign to voice) and from English to ASL (voice to sign). The purpose of the program is to teach specific interpreting skills. Students learn to simultaneously analyze the source language, in order to determine both overt and covert meanings, to search for linguistically and culturally equivalent vocabulary in the target language, and to interpret the message in grammatically correct form. All of this occurs as the interpreter continues to listen to the incoming message, matching the affect and register of the speaker. It is important that employers learn to recognize the difference between individuals with conversational skills and those who are qualified to interpret. The communication barrier, which exists for deaf students, significantly influences both educational progress and socialization. Every student has the right to effective communication in all educational settings. The less those acting in the interpreter role are able to effectively facilitate communication between deaf students and others, the less able the deaf student will be to meet the fluctuating demands of various communication situations. Cultural influences must also be considered. "ASL has its roots in the deaf community and thus the signing behavior of the deaf has a strong

cultural component" (Stewart, 1987, p. 60). In order to successfully interpret for deaf students, personnel must be aware of the degree to which cultural aspects related to ASL play a role thereby providing cultural mediation and culturally appropriate interpretations.

The lack of understanding on the part of employers, regarding the complexity of the interpreting process and the cultural implications of ASL, has resulted in diverse, inappropriate and unclear role descriptions for the interpreter position. This lack of clarity has led to a number of related issues, which continue to be unresolved.

First, there is great diversity with respect to classification for this position. An accepted job title has not yet been developed for the position of classroom interpreter, so these individuals are classified under a wide range of job titles,which vary by school division and the specific local union to which they belong.

Second, employers, unaware of the depth of skill and specialization that is required, have not established any set of criteria which are suitable for the selection of appropriate candidates, during the recruitment and hiring process. In many cases, because of the wide diversity of expectations and perceptions, individuals with minimal sign language skills, and often with no interpreting skills, are hired to perform this demanding and uniquely skilled job. Of course, these individuals are unable to provide accurate and meaningful interpretations. A study by Hurwitz (1989) demonstrated that interpreting experience and professional certification have a great effect on interpreting performance.

Third, although educational interpreting occupies the single greatest portion of time in this field, as pointed out by Dahl and Wilcox (1990), interpreter training programs do not adequately prepare graduates for employment in educational settings. These programs are not long enough or intensive enough to develop sophisticated interpreting skills. Nor are they designed to provide training in areas specifically for the educational system, such as knowledge of classroom course content, effective tutoring strategies, and specialized technical sign vocabulary required for the curriculum taught in schools.

Fourth, school employers have not as yet recognized the need to provide on-going professional growth experiences for classroom interpreters. Their lack of understanding regarding the actual function and essential language skills of interpreters leads these employers to undervalue interpreters' expertise. Formal evaluations tend to focus on the general aspects of job performance, while the evaluation of interpreting, which is the primary responsibility, is not done. Therefore, interpreters in these positions are not provided with diagnostic feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses. This makes it very difficult for them to pursue skill advancement.

Schein, Rodda, Cumming & Mason (1991) reported that at the 1991 Association of Canadian Educators of the Hearing-Impaired biennial conference in Calgary, educational interpreting was identified as one of the top ten future research priorities. As pointed out by numerous researchers in the literature (Dahl and Wilcox, 1990; Gustason, 1985; Hayes, 1993; Salend and Longo, 1994; Schein, Mallory and Greaves 1991; Zawolkow and

DeFiore, 1986), there is a strong need to clarify the role and responsibilities of interpreters in school settings. The establishment of more specific role descriptions would assist in the development of appropriate job titles, qualifications, training program content, and ongoing professional development.

Educational Significance

In Manitoba, Resolution 35 (1988) recognized ASL as a language and later, Resolution 54 (1991) recognized ASL as an approved language of instruction. Numerous deaf students who use sign language are presently receiving their education in regular school settings, in both urban and rural areas. In most cases, due to the unique size of this population, those hired to interpret for them work in isolation, without the support of individuals familiar with the interpreting process and with the complexity of related language issues. As a result, mistaken perceptions are prevalent among both employers and school staff. Individuals hired to interpret for deaf students are often unsure of the expectations, ethics and responsibilities of their position, and often feel overburdened by additional duties. This can lead to frustration when interpreters come into conflict with other educational team members regarding specific duties in the daily routine (i.e. Who is responsible for what?). "In light of the uniqueness and newness of the use of interpreters in inclusive settings, their roles need to be clearly specified to avoid possible role confusion, to facilitate collaborative interactions and to promote the independence of students with hearing impairments" (Salend & Longo, 1994, p. 23).

It was possible to gather data regarding the current status of interpreter roles by means of a survey of individuals employed to interpret for deaf students in Manitoba schools. The results of this inquiry may assist in developing a well-defined statement regarding the role of interpreters in regular classrooms. It may then be possible to more clearly identify the responsibilities held and the kinds of activities that are undertaken by interpreters as they work to fulfill this role description. This may lead to the ability to define and establish a clear body of knowledge and the sets of skills that are required to perform these activities effectively. This, in turn, may provide the basis upon which to design professional development and training programs that adequately prepare individuals for employment as interpreters in school settings. Results should ultimately contribute to the evolving professionalism of classroom interpreters.

Research Questions

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate and describe the present role of individuals who interpret for deaf students in Kindergarten to Senior 4 schools in Manitoba.

1. What are their official job titles?

2. What are their written job descriptions?

3. What duties are reportedly performed by these individuals in the course of their work?

4a. What duties do they presently perform, but feel should not be their responsibility?

4b. What duties do they not presently perform, but feel should be their responsibility?

5a. What perceived training factors assist most with their job performance?

5b. What perceived workplace factors assist most with their job performance?

5c. What factors hinder their job performance?

Chapter II

Literature Review

The interpreting function, as a whole, is relatively new (Dahl & Wilcox, 1990; Rudser & Strong, 1986; Salend & Longo, 1994). The employment of individuals to interpret for deaf students in school settings extends back only 25 years (Stuckless, Avery & Hurtwitz, 1989), and the trend in this direction has only increased to a significant degree of popularity over the past decade and a half (Schein, Mallory & Greaves, 1991). Dahl and Wilcox (1990) noted that the increased demand for sign language interpreters has been particularly dramatic, and that this has had a tremendous impact on the interpreting function. Gustason (1985) found that an average of 37% of interpreter training program graduates obtain work in school settings and Schein and Yarwood (1990) found that 4 out of 10 interpreters work in classrooms.

Although interpreting in educational settings is the fastest growing category in the field of sign language interpretation (Frishberg, 1986; Hayes, 1993), and although "it is likely that today more interpreting takes place in the classroom than in any other environment" (Zawolkow & DeFiore, 1986, p. 26), this evolving profession experiences a great amount of uncertainty and controversy due to the lack of clear guidelines regarding its role and responsiblities. The interpreter role in this new setting is generally undefined, and is not really understood by school administrators, teachers, parents or deaf students, themselves. Role expectations are often at odds with professional guidelines for the interpreter role. There is a lack of research on the training, qualifications and function of interpreters in

public school settings. Researchers are just beginning to investigate the myriad of related issues that presently exist.

In response to the expressed urgency to clarify the role of interpreters in school settings, a National Task Force on Educational Interpreting was formed in the USA. The 1989 report by this task force was the result of two years of deliberations. In 1992, the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), in recognition of the need for clarification, published a resource document titled, "Interpreters in Educational Settings." Consequently, a few provinces have developed formal guidelines based on the recommendations made in the national document, but tailored to meet the needs of their specific educational system. However, formal efforts have not been made to mandate the implementation of these standards in all provinces across Canada. A review of these publications, and of related literature, will assist in describing current trends with respect to job title, job descriptions, and job perceptions. This will provide a basis for comparison with data collected in Manitoba.

Job Title

There is presently no standard job title in Canada (AVLIC, 1992) or in the USA (Stuckless, Avery & Huritz, 1989) for the position of classroom interpreter. Most research sources report the use of a plethora of titles, most of which do not accurately reflect the duties of individuals employed in this role. Because of the low population density of deaf students in school settings, employers are often faced with limited incidence of the use of sign language interpreters. As a result of this limited experience, and as a matter of convenience, interpreters are often locked into inappropriate existing

educational job classifications (AVLIC, 1992; Stuckless, Avery & Hurwitz, 1989). This results in the use of a wide variety of job titles, most of which imply the role of educational assistants, or teacher aides. In one of the few research studies of communication for deaf students in mainstream classrooms, Schein, Mallory and Greaves (1991) reported the use of 23 different titles throughout the province of Alberta. This inappropriate and inconsistent labelling causes difficulty as employers create job descriptions which pay less attention to the communicative act of interpreting and more to the process of being an aide/helper/assistant. Because of this misperception regarding job function, individuals who have completed conversational sign language courses, and who lack the necessary training and experience with the interpreting process, are hired to perform the job.

Most current documents, offering guidelines for the position, recommend the use of "Interpreter" as the title. This is intended to clearly differentiate between the role of classroom interpreters and educational assistants, raising awareness that interpreting is a distinct activity, requiring a unique set of skills. As stated in the Alberta document (1994):

Interpreters working in the educational setting are first and foremost interpreters. They may perform different tasks from community interpreters, but without interpreting skills --oral or sign-- they cannot function as a member of the educational team. Therefore, it is recommended that the job title 'Interpreter' be used for those interpreting in the educational setting. This does not diminish the role of interpreters in the educational setting and also does not differentiate from interpreters working in other settings. (p. 33)

The job title of "Interpreter" may lead to the development of more appropriate qualification criteria, clearer and job descriptions and ultimately the employment of competent individuals.

Role Description

It is apparent that job functions of interpreters vary greatly across working environments and educational levels. As reported by Schein, Mallory and Greaves (1991), a large percentage of individuals hired to interpret for deaf students in educational settings had no printed job descriptions. Those who had printed job descriptions indicated that they did not accurately represent their actual duties and responsibilities. Their research also indicated that job descriptions in Alberta were just as varied as job titles. They, as well as Frishberg (1986) and Schein et al (1991), noted that interpreters in educational settings tend to have multiple roles. In most situations, the position covers a multitude of duties. Some of the additional non-interpreting duties and responsibilities which have reportedly been assigned are: tutoring, acting as an educational team member, in-servicing staff and students, preparing, collaborating with teachers, record keeping, instructing sign language courses, providing guidance and counselling, reporting to their supervisor, pursuing professional development, monitoring notetaking programs, promoting public awareness, performing the general duties of educational assistants, performing routine classroom duties, providing speech therapy, providing auditory training, maintaining amplification equipment, and working with other students in the school. As noted by Elliott and Powers (1995), there is a need for interpreters in educational settings to have skills in addition to those required for

interpreting in general settings. However, it is questionable how individuals can effectively accomplish so many different duties while ensuring that their interpreting function, which is their primary responsibility, takes priority. "While the economic realities for school districts may require that one individual take on double duty, the interpreter needs to be clear about what constitutes appropriate behavior within each role" (Frishberg, 1986, p. 108). Researchers are quick to point out that interpreters should not engage in activities for which they are not trained, but it is presently unclear what role expectations are appropriate for educational settings, and what interpreters should be trained to do.

Job Perceptions

A great deal of concern and controversy surround the assignment of non-interpreting duties to this position. Some researchers attribute this to the professional Code of Ethics, which they feel "inhibits the effectiveness of the interpreter and is often in direct opposition to the duties that an interpreter must perform as a contributing member of an educational team" (Dahl & Wilcox, 1990, p. 276). In Canada, interpreters follow the AVLIC Code of Ethics (see Appendix A) which ensures confidentiality, integrity and impartiality. This Code of Ethics is taught in interpreter training programs across the country, and is intended to provide guidelines for individuals who are employed to facilitate communication between deaf people and others in any situation. However, as stated by Zawolkow & DeFiore (1986), it is not clearly applicable in educational settings. Frishberg (1986) noted that because of the social nature of the educational environment, issues of language, ethics and human relations arise that make

role clarity very problematic. It has been difficult to reach an agreement as to how the Code of Ethics should apply in school settings. To date, this ambiguity has lead to both internal and external conflict regarding the domain of the interpreter role. As stated by Dahl and Wilcox (1990):

> Professional and ethical behavior within the multiple roles of the educational interpreter is clearly an issue of concern and controversy. Educational interpreters often find themselves in precarious positions, expected by their employers to perform activities that their colleagues and professional organizations view as outside the interpreter's ethical province. (p. 276)

As a result, there is often a reluctance on the part of qualified interpreters to work in this setting, because they experience varying degrees of personal conflict when informed by employers that they will be responsible for performing various non-interpreting tasks. Hayes (1993) interviewed 35 working interpreters and found a general lack of job satisfaction. Subjects of this study reported that clear cut job descriptions did not exist, and that they were uncomfortable with a number of their expected responsibilities and working conditions. They were especially opposed to taking on what they considered to be teaching responsibilities, such as classroom management, formal instruction, grading, test administration, classroom supervision, and behavior management. They also expressed that they lacked appropriate professional status with their coworkers. In addition, they were dissatisfied with their supervision and evaluation, with the quality and availability of in-service training, and with the lack of communication with other school staff. In a survey of 57 interpreter training programs by

Gustason (1985), directors expressed the need for role clarity for educational interpreters. However, five years later, a survey of 50 interpreter training programs by Dahl and Wilcox (1990) indicated that graduates were still not prepared to meet the challenges of the profession. Of these programs, 69% reported that they offered no courses in educational interpreting and 89% requested and encouraged the development of specific role guidelines for interpreters in classrooms.

A recent article in the Winnipeg Free Press (Hathaway, 1996) makes reference to the effect of a national shortage of interpreters, which reportedly has had an effect on Manitoba schools. It has been difficult to attract and maintain qualified personnel in these positions. Hathaway quotes Kenna Arnush, a teacher at the Manitoba School for the Deaf, who is also the parent of a deaf child: "There are unqualified interpreters in the school system because they can't find anyone who is qualified" (p. A4). However, there is a possibility that, in addition to a shortage, there is a reluctance on the part of appropriate candidates to accept these positions. Many potential employees are deterred by the strong negative stigma from Deaf community members regarding mainstream educational interpreting, and by the poor working conditions that presently exist (Frishberg, 1986). In order to meet the growing need for interpreters in educational settings, it is important that efforts be made to make this an attractive career.

In Manitoba, we are fortunate to have one of the most highly recognized interpreter training programs. However, a very limited amount of time in the ASL/English Interpretation Program at Red River Community College is spent providing the skills and experiences that are necessary for

employment in educational settings (see Appendix B). In order to make the appropriate changes to the system, thereby ensuring that interpreter training program graduates are prepared for the full spectrum of duties that will be expected, it is critical that role descriptions are clear.

Efforts have recently begun in the province of Manitoba to address the issue of interpreting in school settings. In February 1994, the Manitoba Association of Visual Language Interpreters (MAVLI) Education Committee began to pursue the establishment of professional standards. This committee, comprised of 18 members representing various stakeholder groups, are developing a document titled, "American Sign Language/English Interpreters in Educational Settings: Standards and Guidelines." This document, presently in draft form, is the result of regular sharing and intense discussions among informed individuals. It represents an expert view regarding various aspects of the role, and offers recommendations for implementation.

This survey of individuals presently performing the job on a daily basis provided a description of the present status of this role; the practitioner view. The results of this survey could provide valuable information and data that may assist in the validation and approval of the final draft of the MAVLI Education Committee document, and may provide direction for implementation procedures. In addition, new priorities for future action were identified.

Chapter III

Method

Subjects

The population for this study was all individuals employed in the regular Manitoba public school system who were providing sign language interpretation for deaf students in Kindergarten to Senior 4 during the 1995-96 school year. Members of this population were identified through telephone contact with Special Education Coordinators for Winnipeg area schools, and with Provincial Consultants for the Deaf who provide support services to rural schools. It is most likely that 100% of the intended population (N=40) was identified through these contacts. The increased potential for representative results was the benefit of including the total population.

Instrument

A survey, developed on the basis of the research questions, was the instrument for this study. Since the survey requested answers to questions regarding the current status of the interpreter's role, for which there is no provincial description, it was not possible to employ a structured item format. Therefore, members of the population were requested to respond to some closed-form items regarding demographics, and the remainder of the survey consisted of unstructured items, allowing respondents to answer in greater depth.

Design

The aim of this research study was to describe the current status of the role of individuals interpreting for deaf students, so a descriptive design was

selected. Although the total population was relatively small, efforts to interview or observe members of this population individually would have been difficult due to the wide geographic location of these people who worked in 18 different school divisions. Too many variables could have interfered with such designs, because of the time frame between the collection of the first and last pieces of data. In addition, interviews or observations, involving only a small sample of the population, might not have proven representative of the total population. Therefore, it was decided that a survey of the total population would be the best descriptive design for the purpose of this project. In short, a survey design was more efficient, less time consuming, less expensive, and provided the most representative results.

Procedure

Following the Christmas break of the 1995-96 school year, telephone contact was made with the 11 Special Education Coordinators for the Winnipeg area school divisions and with the 7 provincial Consultants for the Deaf who provide support services to rural school divisions in Manitoba. All of these contacts were cooperative, providing the names and school addresses of individuals who were interpreting for deaf students in the school divisions that they represented. The result was a mailing list of 40 individuals.

Prior to surveying the total population, the survey was piloted with two groups of individuals working in related fields. The first group was the staff of community interpreters who were employed at the Independent Interpreter Referral Service. None of these interpreters were members of the

target population and their involvement offered the perspective of professional colleagues. They did not suggest any changes to the survey. The survey was also piloted with a small group of four Teachers of the Deaf at an informal meeting. Their input offered the educational perspective, which was relevant to the work environment of the target population members. Minor changes to the survey were suggested which involved rewording questions to improve clarity and grammar. The only instance which involved addition of content was for the demographic question regarding work experience. Rather than report experience only in educational settings, it was suggested that experience in other settings be included. These pilot procedures offered two perspectives for revision purposes, and the survey was revised accordingly.

On Thursday, June 6, 1996, a cover letter (see Appendix C) and survey form (see Appendix D) were mailed directly to each member of the research population at the school address provided through the telephone contacts mentioned previously. Subjects were requested to complete the survey and return it by Friday, June 21, 1996 in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. All subjects were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Because of difficulties purchasing the appropriate laser postcards for printing, the reminder postcards (see Appendix E), due to be mailed on Thursday, June 13, 1996, were not mailed until Tuesday, June 18, 1996. During the last week of June, in an effort to encourage the return of as many survey forms as possible, and to explain any confusion regarding the return deadline date, a reminder telephone call was made to each subject at their school of employment. In some cases, direct contact

was made with subjects, and in others messages were left with the school secretary. Subjects were asked to complete and return the survey form by the end of the school year. Some subjects indicated that they would complete and return the survey during the first week of summer holidays. Subjects were able to request a copy of survey results by completing a request form (see Appendix F) and returning it in a separate envelope provided.

Chapter IV

Results

Response Rates

Mail returns through June 28, 1996 amounted to 40% (18 of 40 mailed). However, during the next week, 6 more surveys were received, increasing the overall response rate to 60% by July 5, 1996. Although one respondent was employed under the job title "Educational Interpreter Tutor," this individual reported not having ASL skills, except what had been learned from books and from the Consultant for the Deaf. Because this individual was not interpreting for a deaf student, which was the criteria for the target population of this study, responses from that person were not included in the results. Therefore, the response rate became 59% (23 of 39) which was rewarding. The number of subjects requesting a copy of the results of this study was 18.

Respondent Characteristics

Age and Gender. Table 1 displays the personal characteristics of age and gender. The largest portion of respondents (39.1%) reported being between 25 and 29 years of age. These were followed by those between 45 and 49 years (17.4%), then those between 35 and 39 years (13.0%). The remainder were distributed evenly between 20 and 24 years, between 30 and 34 years, and over 50 years (8.7% each). One respondent did not provide information regarding age or gender.

Of the 23 subjects who responded to this study, and provided information regarding gender, 21 (91.3%) were female and 1 (4.3%) was male.

Table 1

Personal Characteristics

Age	Number of Responses	Percentage Response	Gender	
			Male	Female
No Response	1	4.3 %	0.5	0.5
Less than 20 Yrs	--	--	--	--
20-24 Years	2	8.7 %	--	2
25-29 Years	9	39.1 %	--	9
30-34 Years	2	8.7 %	--	2
35-39 Years	3	13.0 %	--	3
40-44 Years	--	--	--	--
45-49 Years	4	17.4 %	1	3
Over 50 Yrs	2	8.7 %	--	2
n	23	100 %	1	21

Education. Table 2 illustrates the best description of formal education by age group. Some respondents checked two of the survey options, hence the creation of three response choices that were not originally given. The greatest number of respondents (39.1%) reported a university/college degree. This was followed by those who had completed Grade 12 (17.4%) and then technical institute (13.0%). Three respondents (13.0%) reported having both some university and a university/college degree, while 8.7% had some university. Of the remainder, 4.3% reported having some university and technical institute, with the same percentage having less than Grade 12.

Conversational ASL. One subject did not respond to this question, but all of the others indicated that they had taken formal ASL courses. Programs and curriculums for such courses have changed over the years, so some respondents had taken courses in a variety of programs. Presently, the Vista Curriculum, which encourages exposure to and use of ASL in the context of meaningful situations, is standard for ASL courses in the province, and 56.5% of respondents had not taken any of these courses. For the remaining respondents, the highest level reportedly completed was, in order of course level: Vista 101 (4.3%), Vista 103 (4.3%), Vista 201 (8.7%), Vista 202 (4.3%), and Vista 203 (21.7%), which is presently the highest level available in Manitoba (see Table 3). Prior to Vista courses, ASL levels 1-8, which focused on ASL vocabulary and grammatical structure, were available, and 34.8% of respondents did not indicate taking any of these courses. The remaining respondents reported completing, in order of ASL course level: level 4 (8.7%), level 5 (4.3%), level 6 (26.1%),

Table 2

Formal Education by Age Group

| Description | Age Group | | | | | | | | Number of Responses | Percentage Response |
	No Response	20-24 Yrs	25-29 Yrs	30-34 Yrs	35-39 Yrs	40-44 Yrs	45-49 Yrs	> 50 Yrs		
Less than Grade 12								1	1	4.3 %
Completed Grade 12					2		2		4	17.4 %
Technical Institute			1		1		1		3	13.0 %
Some University		1					1		2	8.7 %
Some University & Technical Institute				1					1	4.3 %
Some University & University/College Degree		1	2						3	13.0 %
University/College Degree	1		6	1				1	9	39.1 %
Post Graduate Degree									--	--
n									23	100 %

Table 3

Highest Level of "Vista Signing Naturally" ASL Course

Description	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
No Response	13	56.5 %
Vista 101	1	4.3 %
Vista 102	--	--
Vista 103	1	4.3 %
Vista 201	2	8.7 %
Vista 202	1	4.3 %
Vista 203	5	21.7 %
n	23	100 %

level 7 (13.0%) and level 8 (8.7%) (see Table 4). Initially, Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced ASL courses were available, and 1 (4.3%) respondent reported completing Intermediate ASL. When asked to list other ASL programs taken, 13 responses were received. The percent of responses were ASL immersions (69.2%), workshops (23.1%), and Signed Exact English courses (7.7%) (see Table 5).

Interpreter training. The number of respondents who reported not completing an interpreter training program was 9 (39.1%), while 14 respondents (60.9%) reported completing an interpreter training program (see Table 6). Of those who completed a program, 14.3% completed a program less than a year in length, and 85.7% completed a 2 year program, which is the typical length of such programs at present. It would be interesting to investigate the effects of different program lengths on the quality of training.

Interpreting experience. Respondents were asked to indicate their years of experience interpreting in a school setting and in other settings, and the results are displayed in Table 7. In a school setting, the largest portion of respondents (39.1%) reported having 2 to 3 years experience, followed by 4 to 7 years experience (30.4%), then 8 to 11 years (13.0%). Of the remainder, 8.7% had less than one year and 4.3% had 12 to 15 years experience. Interestingly, one respondent did not indicate having had any experience in a school setting. This person reported having 4 to 7 years experience in other settings. Of all those responding to this survey, 21.7% reported having only 1 year or less interpreting experience in other settings. An equal number (8.7%) reported having 2 to 3 years, and 4 to 7 years.

Table 4

Other ASL Courses

Description	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
No Response	8	34.8 %
Intermediate ASL	1	4.3 %
ASL 4	2	8.7 %
ASL 5	1	4.3 %
ASL 6	6	26.1 %
ASL 7	3	13.0 %
ASL 8	2	8.7 %
n	23	100 %

Table 5

Related Training

Description	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
ASL Immersion	9	69.2%
ASL Workshops	3	23%
Signed Exact English	1	7.7%
Total Responses	13	** 99.9%

Note. Multiple answers were provided by respondents.

** Due to rounding.

Table 6

Professional Training

Description	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
No Training	9	39.1 %
ITP Less than 1 Year	2	8.7 %
ITP 1 Year	--	--
ITP 2 Years	12	52.2 %
ITP Longer than 2 Years	--	--
$\underline{n}$	23	100 %

Table 7

Interpreting Experience

Years of Experience	School Setting		Other Settings	
	Number of Responses	Percentage Response	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
No Response	1	4.3 %	12	52.2 %
Less than 1 Year	2	8.7 %	5	21.7 %
2 - 3 Years	9	39.1 %	2	8.7 %
4 - 7 Years	7	30.4 %	2	8.7 %
8 - 11 Years	3	13.0 %	--	--
12 - 15 Years	1	4.3 %	1	4.3 %
More than 15 Years	--	--	1	4.3 %
n	23	100 %	23	100 %

Again, an equal number (4.3%) had 12 to 15 years, and more than 15 years experience.

Interpreting level and number of students. As indicated in Table 8, educational levels were separated into elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 5), middle school (Grade 6-8), and senior high (Senior 1-4), and the educational level and number of students serviced are displayed. At the elementary level, 10 (43.5%) respondents indicated that they interpreted at the following levels: Kindergarten (13.0%), Grade 1 (4.3%), Grade 2 (8.7%), Grade 3 (4.3%), Grade 4 (8.7%), and Grade 5 (4.3%). Only one respondent (4.3%) reported interpreting at the middle school level for Grade 6. At the high school level, 12 (52.2%) respondents reported interpreting at the following levels: Senior 1 (4.3%), Senior 2 (8.7%), Senior 4 (13.0%), and from Senior 1-Senior 4 inclusive (26.1%).

Of the total population (N=39), 20 (51.3%) subjects worked in isolation, being the only interpreter at their school, and 19 (48.7%) worked at the same school as at least one other interpreter. Of the 23 respondents to this study, 14 (60.9%) reported interpreting for 1 deaf student, 3 (13.0%) for 2 deaf students, 1 (4.3%) for 4 deaf students and 5 (21.7%) for more than 5 deaf students.

Survey Findings

Job titles. Official job titles varied, and as indicated in Table 9, a total of 11 different titles were reported by respondents. It is possible that there would have been even more different job titles reported by the subjects not responding to this study. The title "Interpreter/Tutor" was the most prevalent among respondents (30.4%), followed by

Table 8

<u>Workload</u>

Educational Level		Number of Students Serviced						n
		1	2	3	4	5	>5	
Elementary	K	2	1	—	—	—	—	3
	Gr. 1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Gr. 2	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
	Gr. 3	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Gr. 4	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
	Gr. 5	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
		9	1	—	—	—	—	10
Middle School	Gr. 6	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Gr. 7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Gr. 8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Senior High	Sr. 1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Sr. 2	—	2	—	—	—	—	2
	Sr. 3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Sr. 4	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
	Sr. 1-4		—	—	1	—	5	6
		4	3	—	1	—	5	12
	n	14		—	1	—	5	23

Table 9

Job Titles Assigned to Staff Working in the Interpreter Role

Official Job Title	Number of Responses	Percentage Responses	Description Exists Yes	Description Exists No	Duties Match Description Yes	Duties Match Description No
Teaching Assistant/Interpreter/Tutor	1	4.3 %		1		1
Educational Assistant (Interpreter)	1	4.3 %	1			1
Interpreter/Tutor	7	30.4 %	5	2	4	1
Interpreter	1	4.3 %	1	1		1
ASL Interpreter/Tutor	1	4.3 %	1			
Visual Language Interpreter	1	4.3 %		1		1
Teacher Assistant (Special Needs)	2	8.7 %	2		1	
Teaching Assistant	1	4.3 %	1	1	1	
Teachers' Assistant	1	4.3 %	1		1	
Teacher Assistant III	2	8.7 %	1	1	1	1
Educational Assistant C1	5	21.7 %	5	1	1	4
n	23	100 %	16	7	7	9

"Educational Assistant C-1" (21.7%), then "Teacher Assistant III" (8.7%) and "Teacher Assistant, Special Needs" (8.7%). The remainder of the titles, reported by only one respondent (4.3%) each, were "Teaching Assistant-Interpreter Tutor," "Visual Language Interpreter," "Interpreter," "Teacher's Assistant," "Educational Assistant (Interpreter)," "American Sign Language Interpreter/Tutor," and "Teaching Assistant."

Written job descriptions. The majority of respondents (69.6%) reported that a written job description existed for their position, but only 52.2% provided a copy of the job description as requested. Of the 69.6% who had written job descriptions, 56.3% indicated that the duties they actually performed did not match those of the written job description. The number of respondents who reported that no written job description existed for their position was 30.4%. This results in a total of 69.6% of respondents who either had no written job description, or who had written job descriptions that did not match the actual duties they performed (see Table 9).

Job differences. When asked to explain any differences between actual duties performed and those listed on written job descriptions, four respondents (17.4%), who did not have written job descriptions, provided a written explanation of what they did in their role, rather than stating differences. However, some of those who had written job descriptions did indicate how their actual duties differed. Four respondents (17.4%) reported that their written job descriptions did not include actual interpreting duties, but rather focussed more on a teacher assistant role. Two respondents (8.7%) indicated that they performed numerous duties outside their role

description, but emphasized the need for flexibility when special circumstances arose in early educational settings. One respondent (4.3%) commented on how the written job description did not address guidelines regarding the interpreter-student relationship. Role expectations were not clear with respect to a friendship that had formed with the deaf student, and this respondent felt some degree of conflict as a result of the intense relationship. Two subjects (8.7%) clarified that they did not perform duties as listed on their written job description. Specifically, these were performing personal care and taking initiative to schedule tutor sessions with students.

Job perceptions. Respondents were asked to list duties from written job descriptions and/or actual duties that they presently perform, but felt should not be their responsibility (see Table 10). No response was offered to this question by 47.8% of those completing a survey. The number of responses provided by the remainder was 26. The percent of responses were, in order of incidence: tutoring (23%), monitoring classrooms in absence of teachers (19.2%), photocopying (19.2%), documenting academic progress and behavioral observations (11.5%), recess duty (7.7%), filing (7.7%), working with additional students (3.8%), providing speech therapy (3.8%), and disciplining students (3.8%). Eight respondents (26.1%) indicated that they felt the clause, "and other duties as assigned" was too ambiguous. It led to the feeling that they wore too many hats, and that they were often expected to perform additional duties at times that interfered with their ability to fulfill their interpreting role.

Table 10

Job Perceptions

Description of duties presently performed that respondents feel should not be their responsibility	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
No Response	2	
Tutoring	6	23.1%
Monitoring classrooms	5	19.2%
Photocopying	5	19.2%
Documentation	3	11.5%
Recess duty	2	7.7%
Filing	2	7.7%
Working with other students	1	3.8%
Providing speech therapy	1	3.8%
Disciplining students	1	3.8%
Total Responses	26	** 99.8%

Notes. Multiple responses were provided by respondents.

** Due to rounding.

Next, respondents were asked to list any duties that they were not presently performing in the course of their work, but felt should be their responsibility (see Table 11). No response was provided to this question by 65.2% of those responding to this study. Although some of the remaining respondents provided multiple answers to this question, resulting in a total of 14 responses, each item was listed by only one of them, with the exception of tutoring and providing consultative input to team decisions, which were listed by two respondents, for 14.3% of responses each. Duties receiving 7.1% of the responses each were pre-teaching, attending team meetings, networking with outside resources, arranging ASL classes, inservicing staff, inservicing students, providing public relations information on the interpreter role, paraphrasing lesson input and materials, consulting with teachers, providing feedback and input on lesson presentation, and having opportunities to employ their expertise.

Job performance. Table 12 displays reported training experiences which assisted interpreters most in the performance of their duties. No response was offered by 17.4% of respondents. The 40 items listed by the remainder of respondents, in order of incidence of percent of response, were workshops (22.5%), interpreter training programs (15%), ASL classes (10%), work experience (7.5%), involvement in Deaf community activities (7.5%), and Bachelor of Education Degree training (7.5%). Experience listed with 5% of responses each were prior experience with children, prior experience with deaf adults, ASL immersions, and personal life experience. Training experiences listed with 2.5% of responses each were

Table 11

Job Perceptions

Description of duties not presently performed that respondents feel should be their responsibility	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
No Response	15	
Tutoring	2	13.3%
Consultative input to team decisions	2	13.3%
Pre-teaching	1	6.7%
Attend team meetings	1	6.7%
Network with resources	1	6.7%
Arrange ASL classes	1	6.7%
Provide in-service for school staff	1	6.7%
Provide in-service for school students	1	6.7%
Public relations on the Interpreter role	1	6.7%
Paraphrasing lesson input and materials	1	6.7%
Consulting with teachers	1	6.7%
Providing feedback and input on lesson presentation	1	6.7%
Employing expertise	1	6.7%
Total Responses	15	** 100.3%

Note. Multiple responses were provided by respondents.

** Due to rounding.

Table 12

Training Experiences that Assist Job Performance

Description	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
No Response	4	
Workshops	9	22.5%
Interpreter Training Programs	6	15%
ASL Classes	4	10%
Work Experience	3	7.5%
Involvement in Deaf Community	3	7.5%
Bachelor of Education Training	3	7.5%
Experience with Children	2	5%
Experience with Deaf Adults	2	5%
ASL Immersion	2	5%
Personal Life Experience	2	5%
Professional Feedback	1	2.5%
Conventions and Seminars	1	2.5%
Observation of other Interpreters	1	2.5%
Total Responses	40	** 97.5%

Note. Multiple answers were provided by respondents.

** Due to rounding.

college education, professional feedback, conventions and seminars, and observation of other interpreters.

Table 13 presents both workplace factors that assist and those that hinder interpreter job performance. When asked to list workplace factors which assisted most in the performance of their job duties, two subjects did not provide responses. The remaining respondents provided multiple answers, resulting in a total of 75 responses. The percent of responses for items listed were; receiving and previewing materials in advance of instruction (21.3%); regular collaboration with teachers, and flexible, organized teachers who accomodated the needs of deaf students and interpreters were both 9.3%; 6.7% of responses listed knowledge of the agenda, understanding coworkers, and team members who were knowledgeable about the interpreting role; textbooks and preparation time were 4% each; public relations opportunities for school staff, supportive administrators, attending team meetings, pre and post-teaching, support services from Consultants for the Deaf, and tutor time were 2.7% each; the use of visual supports by teachers during lessons, consultation with interpreting colleagues, coworker knowledge of the Code of Ethics, flashcards, resource materials, teachers with prior experience teaching deaf students, cooperative students, sign language books, FM systems, prior contact with speakers, and access to closed-caption videotapes and devices were all 1.3% of the responses each.

Table 13

Workplace Factors that Affect Job Performance

Workplace Factors That Assist Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Workplace Factors That Hinder Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
No Response	2		No Response	2	
Receiving and previewing materials in advance	16	21.3%	No opportunity to preview materials	2	3%
			Not receiving lesson materials in advance	4	6.1%
Knowledge of teaching agenda	5	6.7%	Spontaneous instruction by teachers	6	9.1%
			No warning regarding school events	6	9.1%
			Lack of accommodation at school events	2	3%
Preparation time	3	4%	Lack of preparation time	4	6.1%
Prior contact with guest speakers	1	1.3%			
Tutor time	2	2.7%	Shortage of time	3	4.5%
Pre/Post teaching	2	2.7%			
Supportive administrators	2	2.7%	Lack of knowledge of the interpreter role by administrators	4	6.1%
			Constant conflict with administrators	1	1.5%

Table 13

Workplace Factors that Affect Job Performance (continued)

Workplace Factors That Assist Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Workplace Factors That Hinder Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Organized teachers who are sensitive to the needs of deaf students	7	9.3%	Witnessing and working with poor teachers	2	3%
Regular collaboration with teachers	7	9.3%	Poor communication regarding expectations	1	1.5%
Understanding coworkers	5	6.7%	Lack of respect from coworkers	2	3%
Educational team members knowledge about the interpreting role	5	6.7%	Being asked to photocopy during interpreting time	3	4.5%
Coworker knowledge of Code of Ethics	1	1.3%	Being expected to discipline students	1	1.5%
Attending team meetings	2	2.7%	Lack of cooperation in team	1	1.5%
Teachers who have experience teaching deaf students	1	1.3%			
Public relations opportunities	2	2.7%			
Visual supports used by teachers during lesson	1	1.3%	Rapid pace of lessons	1	1.5%

Table 13

Workplace Factors that Affect Job Performance (continued)

Workplace Factors That Assist Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Workplace Factors That Hinder Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Professional support services	2	2.7%	Lack of professional support services	1	1.5%
Consultation with interpreting colleagues	1	1.3%	Isolation from interpreting colleagues	1	1.5%
Cooperative students	1	1.3%			
Resource materials	1	1.3%	Shortage of resource materials	2	3%
Textbooks	3	4%			
Flash cards	1	1.3%			
Sign language books	1	1.3%			
FM systems	1	1.3%			
Closed caption video tapes	1	1.3%	Lack of closed caption video tapes	2	3%
Closed caption devices	1	1.3%	Lack of closed caption devices	1	1.5%
			Lack of funds to provide extracurricular interpreting	1	1.5%
			Inadequate training for the job	3	4.5%

Table 13

Workplace Factors that Affect Job Performance (continued)

Workplace Factors That Assist Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Workplace Factors That Hinder Job Performance	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
			Lack of professional development opportunities	3	4.5%
			Lack of time for professional development	3	4.5%
			Assigned responsibility for other students	3	4.5%
			Feeling responsible for students' academic performance	1	1.5%
			Developing intense relationships with deaf students	1	1.5%
			Lack of student parent advocacy	1	1.5%
Total Responses	75	** 99.8%	Total Responses	66	** 99.5%

Note. Multiple answers were provided by respondents.

** Due to rounding.

When asked to list factors that most interfered with their ability to perform their duties, two subjects did not respond. The remaining subjects provided a total of 66 responses; spontaneous instruction by teachers, lack of warning regarding school events, and lack of preparation and preview time were 9.1% of responses each; not receiving lesson materials from teachers in advance, and the lack of knowledge of the interpreting role on the part of administrators were 6.1% of responses each; a shortage of time, lack of professional development time, lack of professional development opportunities, being asked to photocopy when interpreting is required, and assignment of responsibility for additional students were all 4.5% each; inadequate training to perform tutoring and other expectations, lack of accomodation at school assemblies, lack of professional respect from coworkers, and witnessing or working with poor teachers were 3% of responses each; lack of team cooperation, lack of funds to provide extra-curricular interpreting, lack of closed-caption videotapes, lack of access to closed-caption decoders, lack of support from a Teacher of the Deaf, shortage of resource materials, lack of resources in rural school divisions, poor communication regarding expectations, constant conflict with administrators, feelings of responsibility for student academic performance, rapid paces of lessons, lack of student and parent advocacy, isolation from interpreting colleagues, divisions hiring inadequately qualified interpreters who misrepresent the profession, being expected to discipline students, and the development of intense relationships with the deaf student, which lead to discomfort, were all 1.5% of responses each.

Additional comments. The following comments were volunteered by respondents in space provided on the survey. What follows has been edited to remove identifying material.

- "I feel that the role of interpreters in the educational setting must be decided at the provincial (MAVLI) and national (AVLIC) level. Without support from the interpreting associations, interpreters will have little power to convince individual educators, principals, etc. of their role and they will have no clout with the school boards or Minister of Education."

- "Although there are no formal standards outlining the role of the interpreter in educational settings, confusion and frustration can be avoided by discussing one's role with the educational team members. Also, those working as an interpreter/tutor should alert teachers when 'extra duties' are interfering with their ability to perform their priority tasks."

- "After the teacher has explained what to do, my student still doesn't understand. The teacher leaves. I have to explain it to my student-then it is understood."

- "The teachers at our school are informed, through the resource supports, on what is to be expected of them and the signing teacher assistant when a deaf or hard-of-hearing student enters their classroom. The teachers' expectations of us are to interpret English to ASL. If the deaf or hard-of-hearing child is doing independent work, and interpreting is not happening, at that time photocopying, etc. is acceptable."

- "The school system is very slow, and in my opinion, resistant to change. If the goal is to advocate for the rights of deaf individuals, and at the same time, interpreter recognition (both as a profession and monetarily),

then interpreters cannot do it alone. Parents, students, interpreters and members of the Deaf community will all need to work together. Right now it seems people are wary of change. I am hoping that ten years from now I can look back and say, "yes-it was worth the struggle and frustration". We'll see."

- "I always felt that it is the right of the deaf child, in the School for the Deaf or in mainstream settings, to learn and use ASL (taught by qualified instructors only) and to be exposed to the history of ASL. It seems to be the goal of educators, family and consultants to try and use a daily time slot to teach Deaf Studies to the student with whom I work. I find this very positive. I hope that the success of this program will allow it to continue."

- "One of the most frustrating things about my job is witnessing poor teaching. It's difficult being privy to situations that you know are damaging the students' education, yet professionally are unable to do anything or say anything, to administration for example. The real downside to this is that the responsibility almost always comes back to me, and the fact that the deaf student doesn't understand. The question I constantly ask myself is "where do I draw the line?" Is tutor time review, or is it teaching? (I'm not a qualified teacher)."

- "I am fortunate that I work in a school where I am not expected to perform duties outside my role (i.e. photocopying) and I have time to pre-plan. I work with a very supportive resource staff and regular staff."

- "The key to a good experience is a supportive, knowledgeable administration, who is willing to learn, and who sets the tone for teachers

and other staff members. Being included in team meetings and Parent/Teacher meetings is important. Being called 'Interpreters" and not Instructional Assistants, Teacher Assistants or Educational Assistants promotes awareness and assists with the role. Substitutes, who are trained, assist with consistency for all concerned in the absence of the regular interpreter."

- "Interpreters in educational settings are not always considered 'professionals' because of the label 'Teacher Assistant' (TA) that is affixed to us. Divisions should not umbrella interpreters under the TA label. We should be considered a separate profession, as are speech/language pathologists, audiologists, etc.. Our pay scale should also be reviewed in educational settings."

- "In my experience, parents have gone through great amounts of grief deciding on which education system they prefer to use. It would be helpful if outsiders would accept their decision and help by trying to make it work, rather than continuing to attempt to change the decision. Parents tend to avoid these people who could otherwise be of great support and assistance."

- "I feel very uncomfortable having the term interpreter used to describe my duties. Although interpreting is what I do, I feel very inadequate in many situations. I am basically the best in a bad situation; parents have elected to keep their child in a rural school where availability and finances do not stretch to hire a qualified interpreter."

Summary. The additional comments offered tended to focus on the importance of knowledgeable and supportive administration and coworkers.

Positive partnerships based on effective communication set the tone for job performance.

An additional focus was the need for advocacy for the recognition of the interpreter role as separate and distinct from that of teacher assistants through the use of the title, "Interpreter." Such advocacy is reportedly required from stakeholder groups and resource support staff, but especially from provincial and national professional organizations.

Finally, respondents indicated a willingness to perform duties in addition to interpreting, as long as they did not interfere with interpreting responsibilities.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

<u>Response Rate</u>

Since population sampling procedures were not employed for this study, results are based on the survey returns of 59% of the total population. This is a good return rate, so generalizations made based on the results obtained from the respondent population should be quite valid.

<u>Respondent Characteristics</u>

<u>Age and Gender</u>. One subject questioned why information regarding age should be provided, and therefore, did not respond. Table 1 displays that of the remaining 22 respondents, 72.7% reported being under 40 years of age, and just less than half of them were under the age of 30. Overall, subjects reported falling within the younger age ranges and were, therefore, in their early working years. This may be related to the newness of the interpreting field. It has only been recently that the popularity of ASL and mainstreaming has led to the need for interpreting personnel in educational settings. It may be that younger people are more aware of this novel career, and have a better opportunity to take this direction.

The subject who did not provide information regarding age, also did not identify gender. However, as indicated in Table 1, 95.5% of the remaining 22 respondents were female. Interestingly, only 4 of the 39 members of the total population were male. It is obvious that this career choice is made predominantly by females, which may be related to the low salaries that are characteristic of the interpreting field, especially in educational settings. In view of the female:male ratios in both the total

population (35:4) and the respondent population (22:1), the gender variable did not play a major role in this study. However, since the majority of respondents were female, gender bias may have influenced responses. It may be interesting to investigate the reasons behind the obvious female domination in this field, to see if similar domination exists in other settings and provinces. It may also be interesting to investigate the reasons why males have chosen to enter the field, and to identify specific factors that peaked their interest. It is obvious that this is not a career choice currently being made by men as there were no male respondents below the age of 45.

Education. Table 2 indicates that the reported levels of formal education appear to correspond to age. All respondents below the age of 35 had completed some post-secondary education, with the majority of them having received a university or college degree. The majority of those over the age of 35 had completed a high school diploma or less. The increased education level reported by younger respondents indicated a positive trend. This may be related to an increased awareness of the extensive training required to adequately perform the duties of a sign language interpreter, on the part of interpreters themselves, and on the part of school division employers who hire them.

Conversational ASL. Results of this study emphasize the respondents' awareness of the need for formal instruction in ASL. All, with the exception of two, reported having completed some formal ASL courses, and in addition, just less than half of them had attended related workshops or immersions. These professional development activities alone will not prepare one for the full scope of the interpreting role, however, signing skills

and fluency affect overall job performance (Hurwitz, 1989). Although most employers do not encourage interpreting-specific upgrading, most respondents displayed a concerted effort to acquire and maintain ASL skills and related knowledge.

Interpreter training. Results of a similar survey, done for the Alberta Implementation Review (1996) concluded that only 25% of respondents had completed interpreter training programs, while the majority (75%) had not. There is a general perception that a very limited number of individuals working as interpreters in educational settings have completed formal training programs. Therefore, the fact that 60.9% of respondents to this survey reported having completed an interpreter training program was pleasantly surprising. It would be useful to do a follow-up survey to monitor trends in this regard.

Interpreting experience. Once again, the newness of the interpreting field was reflected in the limited number of years experience reported by respondents (see Table 7). As mentioned, one respondent did not indicate years of experience in an educational setting, but 81.8% of the others had less than 7 years experience. Only 18.2% of them had more than 8 years experience, and no one had more than 15 years experience. This is most likely because the need for sign language interpreters did not exist prior to the mainstreaming movement. Most deaf students were educated in special schools, and those attending public schools were not employing ASL as their language of instruction.

Interpreting experience in other settings was even more limited, with only 11 of the 23 respondents having any experience, and seven of these had

less than 3 years experience. Only 4 respondents had more than 4 years experience, and only 1 respondent had more than 15 years experience. More than half did not respond to this question.

Interpreting level. Respondents reported working at educational levels ranging from Kindergarten to Senior 4, with approximately half working from Kindergarten to Grade 6, and the other half working from Grade 7 to Senior 4 (see Table 8). Some respondents working at the lower levels made specific reference to the need to be flexible with respect to role expectations and duties. They reported that they often performed a number of duties in addition to interpreting, duties related to the needs of younger children. They expressed that it was important that they be willing and prepared to deal with special circumstances as they arose. These statements seem to be in conflict with the stated desire to have a standard provincial role description. Possibly what is required are professional guidelines which can be adapted to match individual interpreting situations. It would be interesting to pursue these responses in future studies, by investigating role differences across educational levels.

Number of students. The majority of respondents (60.9%) reported working with only 1 student, while the remainder (39.1%) worked with 2 or more students. It was interesting to note that the majority of those working with one student (71.4%) were interpreting from Kindergarten to Grade 6 (see Table 8). This may imply that deaf students tend to be grouped together as they enter higher educational levels. Social isolation becomes more pronounced as students become older, for a number of different reasons. For example, lower level educational curriculums tend to

encourage the development of positive socialization skills and involve lesson structures that allow for social interaction on a daily basis. Students are tolerant of differences and are often interested in establishing relationships with deaf peers. As students become older and advance to higher educational levels, lessons are usually lecture format, therefore allowing very limited social interaction among students. Cognitive, social and lingusitic gaps become larger for deaf students, and their hearing peers fail to acquire the ability to communicate with them effectively. Generally, older students are less tolerant of difference, so the stigma attached to being deaf is more pronounced. Hence, hearing peers at these levels do not have the patience required to ensure the inclusion of deaf peers in their interactions and activities.

Once this social isolation begins to occur, efforts may be made to group deaf students together, thereby providing exposure to and support from deaf peers. Strong bonds develop in these instances due to the sharing of similar life experiences. Also, as students become older, it may be easier and more feasible for one interpreter to simultaneously meet the needs of more than one student, therefore maximizing resources. In addition, because deaf students in isolation tend to develop intense relationships with interpreters who work with them over a number of years, there may be a need to discourage inappropriate dependencies. Grouping deaf students and interpreters together at schools allows for variety for both students and interpreters.

Summary. The majority of individuals working as sign language interpreters were females, and the younger subjects had a higher level of

formal education than the older ones. The respondents who had completed an interpreter training program, mostly at Red River Community College, had not been working in the field for very long, which is most likely because the need for interpreters in school settings has only surfaced in recent years. Although the educational status of those not responding is unknown, there seemed to be an apparent positive trend towards the acquisition of more qualified personnel to fulfill this role, as younger subjects had completed higher levels of education.

Survey Findings

Job titles. Although a standard job title does not exist in Manitoba, with 11 different ones being reported, there was not the wide range that was reported by Schein et al (1991) in Alberta. The titles reported in this survey were very similar, consisting of either the interpreter concept, the teacher assistant concept, or an overlap of the two (see Table 9). On a positive note, 6 of the 11 reported titles included the term "Interpreter," which has been encouraged by both the national and provincial interpreting organizations, and by colleagues interpreting in other settings because it reflects the primary responsibility. All of the job titles, except 3, included a "Teacher Assistant" label, which reflects the perception of the role as helper, assistant or aide. Another label that was appended to 3 of the titles was "Tutor." These labels reflect the need for individuals hired to interpret for deaf students to also assist with semi-professional educational activities. This is because their language proficiency allows them to communicate directly with deaf students, and because they are in classrooms with students on a daily basis, so they are aware of specific daily needs.

The lack of consistency with respect to job titles is confusing, and contributes to a lack of clarity regarding job function and role expectations. The establishment of an accepted job title to be employed consistently by all school divisons would initiate awareness of the nature of this position, and would encourage standard job functions and role expectations. This title should encompass the primary interpreting role and the additional semi-professional support responsibilities.

Written job descriptions. The need to clarify role expectations was reinforced by the fact that so many respondents reported that there was no written job description for their position, or that the written job description that existed did not match the duties they performed (see Table 9). Often they are arbitrarily assigned role descriptions for teacher assistants. These role descriptions are often too general, and they fail to mention specific interpreting duties. As noted in the literature, the lack of understanding, and resulting misperceptions, lead to ambiguity and confusion on the part of individuals hired to fulfill the role, and on the part of other educational team members. Respondents to this survey supported this, indicating that accountability for various duties, especially those related to interpreting, was not clearly defined. In addition, these individuals in the interpreter position found themselves expected to perform many duties that they felt were beyond the scope of their interpreting role, and in direct conflict with the ethical instruction they received in their interpreter training program.

Consistency throughout Manitoba can only be achieved through the establishment of a standard job title, and a standard written role description that clearly defines the priority and nature of duties and responsibilities.

Interpreting should be listed as the primary responsibility and related duties should be specifically delineated. Expectations regarding non-interpreting duties should also be clearly identified and priorized. School division personnel and interpreting organizations need to address this issue through dialogue and compromise, so that existing conflict and controversy can be resolved.

Job perceptions. Most respondents offered descriptions of their role, as they perceived it to be. However, these perceptions differed from the role descriptions outlined by their employer. Written job descriptions often included duties that were not relevant, or did not include specific duties related to interpreting, so clarity of accountability was open to a wide variety of perceptions.

Many of the respondents outlined duties that they felt uncomfortable performing, and indicated that they felt a lack of direction with respect to many aspects of the position. Three main areas that led to feelings of discomfort were a lack of training, interference with the interpreting process, and ethical conflict (see Table 10). First, respondents felt that they were often asked to perform duties for which they were not adequately prepared, such as tutoring, making behavioral observations, maintaining various forms of documentation, and interpreting in classes that involved the use of highly technical, course specific sign vocabulary. Second, although they indicated that they did not mind performing non-interpreting duties, such as filing and photocopying, they reported that they were requested to perform such duties at times that interfered with their ability to fulfill their interpreting responsibilities, which they felt should be the priority. Third, perceptions of

ethical conflict were also expressed, as subjects reported that they did not feel that they should be responsible for some of their expected duties under any circumstances. For example, respondents were uncomfortable monitoring classrooms in the absence of the teacher, feeling that the role of disciplinarian was in direct conflict with their role as communication facilitator. Rather than supervising student behavior, they felt that they should be interpreting the social interactions that occured while the teacher was away. They also did not feel that they should be expected to perform speech therapy, instruct ASL classes or teach new concepts to students, because these were responsibilities that should be performed by professional personnel who had the appropriate training. Finally, they felt that the assignment of additional students, and regular recess duty, were beyond the scope of their interpreting role. On the whole, respondents felt that their role was too ambiguous.

Table 11 indicates that respondents felt that they were not given enough responsibility in some areas. They expressed that they did not feel that their expertise in the area of Deaf Education was respected or utilized by colleagues in their workplace. Many expressed the desire for more opportunities to educate coworkers on the role of interpreters. They felt it was very important that staff and students be inserviced on the needs of interpreters and deaf students in classrooms. Some expressed a desire to have more input on lesson presentation strategies, and student communication modes. Many agreed that they should be invited to attend and provide feedback at educational team meetings. They felt that they had observations, resources and knowledge to share, but that it was not valued.

Job performance. Table 12 displays that formal, informal and personal training experiences were perceived by respondents as assisting in the performance of their duties. Formal training opportunities, such as interpreter training programs, ASL courses, Bachelor of Education training, post-secondary education, and skills diagnosis were listed as positive contributing factors. The informal training experience listed as providing benefit to the most individuals was workshops. Workshops present the forum for increasing knowledge on current issues in the areas of Interpreting, Deaf Education and Deaf Culture. Although workshops can be designed to meet the needs of large groups at one time, such as providing knowledge of the education system and curriculum content, it is likely that professional development needs of subjects differ across the range of educational levels. Therefore, workshops could also be designed to meet the needs of specific groups and situations. Those working in elementary settings may benefit from information on early childhood development, while those working at the middle school and senior high levels may benefit from information on adolescent behavior.

Another highly valued informal training experience was participation in ASL immersions. These sessions, which only became available in Manitoba six years ago, offer the opportunity for a rich learning experience. A number of subjects indicated that they had attended these week long sessions designed to advance ASL skills, to provide social interaction among deaf and hearing individuals, and to enhance knowledge of various current issues. It is most likely that these immersions will continue to be one of the main training factors assisting sign language interpreters with

their job performance in educational settings. Other informal training opportunities that were seen as helpful were conventions, seminars, and the opportunities to observe, or team with, colleagues. Many subjects listed personal experiences which they perceived as beneficial training factors, such as work experiences, volunteer experiences with children and adults, and networking with and observing colleagues.

As many individuals with limited training are hired into sign language interpreting positions, it is critical that ongoing professional development and upgrading opportunities be pursued. The complexity of the interpreting process and related issues warrants extensive efforts, on the part of employers, to encourage growth of knowledge and skill advancement through training experiences.

It was interesting to note that for most of the factors listed as assisting with job performance, the lack of these factors was listed as hindering job performance (see Table 13). It was obvious that the workplace factors that respondents perceived to assist most in their job performance were those that allowed for preparation for interpreting duties. There was strong agreement that receiving and previewing materials in advance was the most critical factor. When teachers were not willing to provide materials in advance, less accurate interpretations resulted, therefore affecting the lesson input for deaf students. Respondents also indicated the need to be informed regarding lesson agendas and content, so they reported that good working relationships and close collaboration with classroom teachers were very important. They found it very frustrating when teachers engaged in spontaneous instruction, or when spontaneous school events, for which they

were not prepared, occured. It naturally follows that the provision of preparation time was a factor affecting job performance. Time to preview materials, consult with team members and make prior contact with guest speakers was seen as a necessity. Although this was seen as one of the most important factors, many school division employers did not provide such time. One last factor related to preparation was pre-tutoring and post-tutoring, which involved drilling students on course vocabulary in English and ASL, and reviewing difficult concepts that had already been taught in class. It was when tutoring extended beyond these expectations that subjects expressed extreme discomfort. Other workplace factors that assisted with job performance were dependent on strong, supportive educational teams. Respondents reported that working under supportive administrators set a positive tone from the outset. Administrators who were knowledgeable and understanding, with respect to the role of interpreters, were seen to model appropriate expectations for other staff members. Also, working in classrooms with organized, flexible, accomodating teachers made the job easier. Teachers with prior experience teaching deaf students were especially valued, because they tended to understand the need for various classroom accommodations, such as the use of visual supports, and the use of FM amplification systems. The provision of professional support personnel, such as Teachers of the Deaf, Speech/Language Pathologists, and Audiologists, was seen as particularly positive.

On the contrary, poorly informed and unsupportive educational team members were seen as hindering job performance. Respondents reported that it was very difficult and frustrating to work with administrators and

teachers who held unrealistic expectations, or did not extend the appropriate professional respect. Other factors regarding educational teams that were mentioned by a few respondents were working with cooperative students, and the presence of interpreting colleagues at the same school. Workplace factors related to resources were also mentioned as assisting with job performance. Respondents indicated that flashcards, sign language books, closed-caption decoders and videotapes, textbooks and other materials were helpful. Also, the provision of funds for extra-curricular interpreting activities was seen as a necessity to the full involvement of students in school life.

A lack of resources (professional, material and monetary) was a major factor hindering job performance. Many schools did not have the benefit of specialized support personnel, so a number of inappropriate duties became the responsibility of interpreters. Material resources have not yet been developed because of the newness of the demand. Also, the reluctance of school divisions to provide funding to pay interpreters to work beyond the school day greatly affects the motivation of deaf students to become involved in extra-curricular activities. This is morally difficult for interpreters who understand how the lack of interpreting results in isolation for students. One factor mentioned by a few respondents was the need for advocacy on the part of parents, students, interpreting organizations, and deaf individuals to promote viable learning environments for deaf children, and realistic working environments for interpreters.

The results of this survey highlight the need for increased knowledge on the part of all school divison personnel regarding the needs of

interpreters. Such awareness may result in clarification of the role, and hence the enhancement of factors that assist job performance.

Chapter VI

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was the newness of the interpreting field, especially in educational settings, and therefore the limited amount of literature and research that was available for review. It is hoped that this study will contribute to future research on related aspects and issues.

Unconscious personal bias may have affected the review of resulting data. The total population employed for this study was small (N=39), and despite the fact that survey forms were returned anonymously, familiarity with many individuals working as sign language interpreters throughout Manitoba allowed for recognition and identification based on circumstantial information. The fact that 7 (17.9%) of the subjects work under the supervision of the researcher may have influenced their decision to respond, and may have been reflected in their responses. Further, as a Teacher of the Deaf, I have made the effort to develop conversational ASL skills and to become familiar with the interpreting process. I strongly support the use of ASL as a language of instruction for deaf students who are competent with ASL. I have a vast amount of personal experience and background knowledge that may have influenced my perception of the survey results. I may have unknowingly employed some tacit knowledge or personal bias to make conclusions regarding data, and to make recommendations for future direction.

Most individuals responding to this survey were female, so the results can only be generalized to similar populations.

It is unclear how the numerous related issues in Deaf Education affected this study. Many philosophical controversies complicate the situation. As described by Peffley (1991), Deaf Education is "a hornets' nest of ambiguity, controversy and unresolved questions" (p. 388). One of the major problems that may have influenced this study is the lack of opportunities for students, in isolated educational settings, to internalize ASL as their primary language. Because they are not exposed to fluent ASL users in a language rich environment, they do not naturally acquire ASL themselves. This often leads to the employment of various English based sign systems, which are artificially developed visual codes representing English. For example, Manual English involves applying a one-sign per word approach, adding affixes, inventing signs, etc. Signed English is a manual system designed to be used with English speech where the signs, largely taken from ASL, are represented in English word order, but neither the spelling nor the sound of words is represented, and the visual message is conceptually inaccurate. Often, interpreter training programs do not provide training regarding these sign systems. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze the ability of individuals, employed to interpret, to match the actual sign system employed by students, although this was identified as a key issue in the implementation review in Alberta. More generally, the complexity of language, continuing controversies, and other related issues arising, must be respected when considering the results of this study.

It is difficult to determine if the time of year affected the return rate for this survey. It is possible that as the school year came to an end, subjects may have been anticipating the summer break, and may not have felt like

taking the time to answer the questions. On the other hand, they may have felt that it was a good time to offer input, in the hopes that changes to their individual situations may occur.

An important limitation is that the results of this study are based on the opinions and perceptions of respondents, rather than on actual observations. One cannot assume that the interpreters' perceptions of their roles were accurate reflections of their actual roles. It may be beneficial to follow up this study with actual observations of subjects in their workplace, for verification purposes.

Chapter VII
Recommendations

The wide range of job titles and diversity in role descriptions, which were reported by subjects, indicate a lack of consistency from one school divison to another throughout the province of Manitoba. Very little has been done to standardize interpreting practices in schools. Responses to survey questions supported statements in the literature, which indicated a lack of role clarity for sign language interpreters in educational settings (Dahl and Wilcox, 1990; Gustason, 1985; Hayes, 1993; Salend and Longo, 1994; Schein, Mallory and Greaves 1991; Zawolkow and DeFiore, 1986). This role has evolved only recently, and it seems that individual employers have created role descriptions based on their inaccurate perceptions and limited knowledge. In cases where written role descriptions existed, role expectations tended to focus on teacher aide type duties, and often made no reference to specific interpreting duties. These role expectations conflicted with the perceptions of respondents, who considered interpreting duties as the priority, and aide type duties as secondary. In order to ensure the provision of viable educational options for deaf children, a significant amount of research is still required in this area. However, general recommendations can be made based on the review of literature, and on the results of this study.

Recommendation 1: Early childhood educational programs designed to facilitate early acquisition of ASL should be made available.

In Manitoba, we are fortunate to have such programs at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities Pre-school, and at the Sign Talk Childrens'

Centre. However, these programs can only accomodate a limited number of children and therefore, cannot meet the language development needs of a significant portion of the population.

All deaf children should have the opportunity to be exposed to an ASL rich environment as early as possible to ensure the internalization of a primary language during the critical period for language development. As noted in the literature review, the better a primary language is internalized, the greater the potential for second language learning; in this case, English. Therefore, natural acquisition of ASL should offer deaf children the ability to benefit from ASL interpretation during school years, and the opportunity to better develop their English literacy skills.

Recommendation 2: Professional guidelines regarding job title and role descriptions for individuals interpreting for deaf students in educational settings should be established, so that standard post-secondary training and certification qualifications can be determined.

Both the literature and the results of this survey indicate that the role of sign language interpreters must be clarified, outlining specific expectations at various educational levels. The diversity that presently exists from one Manitoba school division to another must be eliminated through the establishment of a standard job title. Since respondents with the title "Interpreter/Tutor" reported that their job description matched duties performed almost unanimously, it is recommended that this title be employed consistently throughout the province to clearly differentiate this position from that of teacher assistants. This title implies that interpreting is the primary responsibility, but also indicates that other semi-professional

educational duties will be assigned. In addition, standard professional guidelines for written role descriptions must be developed that clearly define the priority and nature of duties and responsibilities. Specific interpreting duties should be listed as the primary responsibilities, and expectations regarding non-interpreting duties should be clearly identified and priorized. School division personnel, members of the Deaf community, parent organizations and interpreting organizations need to address these issues cooperatively, so that common, realistic expectations can be established.

In order to attract capable individuals to interpreting positions, the career must be made more attractive through the development of a clear definition of "qualified" interpreter, and by means of improved working conditions. In addition to formal education credentials, individuals should be adequately recognized for years of interpreting experience.

Recommendation 3: Interpreter Training Programs, specifically the ASL/English Interpretation Program at Red River Community College (see Appendix B) should expand to include training designed to develop the specific skills and knowledge required for employment in educational settings.

Despite efforts to promote the hiring of interpreter training program graduates, the study done regarding the success of implementation procedures for interpreting standards in Alberta raised a very critical question. Do interpreter training programs adequately prepare graduates to meet the role expectations of sign language interpreters in school settings, and more importantly, to meet the needs of the students with whom they are working? Most respondents to both the Alberta and Manitoba surveys

indicated that they performed duties beyond the scope of the traditional interpreting role. Therefore, there may be a conflict between the perceived needs of students in interpreter training programs, and the reality of role expectations within the education system. Since the literature indicates that an increasingly large percent of graduates from interpreter training programs are being employed in this setting, these training programs must evolve to include course content and experiences that will adequately prepare graduates for future employment. It is now necessary to lengthen and widen the scope of interpreter training programs in order to include course content in areas such as child development, learning theory, school systems, educational teams and tutoring strategies.

Recommendation 4: Inservicing on the role of interpreters should be provided to educational team members in schools.

Both the literature and the results of this survey emphasize the importance of knowledgeable and supportive educational teams, so inservices designed to develop skills, and to increase awareness of related issues and available resources, on the part of school staff, are critical. The conscious enhancement of factors reported to assist interpreters in the performance of their job duties (see Table 13) would result in the establishment of clearer expectations and hence, more successful partnerships.

Recommendation 5: A provincial support network should be designed and implemented for interpreters working in educational settings, and regular professional development opportunities should be made available.

Improved support for interpreters could begin through the provision of interpreter consultant positions. This would allow for the establishment of supervision, evaluation, and monitoring procedures involving experts in the field of interpreting, who are knowledgeable about the interpreting process and required skills. These consultants could also provide opportunities for interpreters to interact with each other, rather than functioning in islolation.

ASL, like any language, is constantly evolving. Therefore, it is important that relevant professional development opportunities be made available and accessible on a regular basis. This should result in consistent upgrading of interpreting personnel, which in turn should lead to more advanced job performance levels. It must be recognized that interpreting is a life-long learning and developmental experience. Opportunities for provincial networking by means of regular diagnostic evaluation and professional sharing among interpreters are rare, so concerted efforts must be made by employers to offer experiences that promote professional growth and professional affiliation. In addition to valuable workshops, ASL immersions and interpreter training program summer institutes should continue, as they offer unique opportunities for skill development and formal upgrading.

An added benefit of a support network would be the creation of a provincial substitute list that would allow for sharing available resources.

Recommendation 6: Supplementary resources specific to the educational setting should be developed.

There are numerous types of resources that could be developed to support the role of interpreters in educational settings. For example, the

creation of staff orientation packages that clearly outline the roles of individual team members, and clarify teacher accountability to interpreters and deaf students in their classrooms, would be very helpful. Respondents also expressed an urgent need for course specific materials such as sign vocabulary dictionaries, closed-caption videotapes, and information on Deaf culture.

Recommendation 7: Various stakeholder groups should cooperate to advocate for change in the field of interpreting, specifically in educational settings.

As mentioned by a few survey respondents in their additional comments, there is a need for strong advocacy on the part of stakeholders. Interpreters need support from colleagues, coworkers, parents, Deaf community members and students in their quest to develop policies that will provide direction to school division employers regarding professional standards for the field of interpreting in educational settings. Interpreters cannot facilitate such change on their own.

Recommendation 8: Interpreting should continue to be a research priority in the field of Deaf Education.

The review of the existing literature, which is very limited, and the results of this survey both indicate that there are many issues related to this research topic that require investigation, but that are beyond the scope of this study. For example, this study has focused on the perspective of interpreters regarding their role in educational settings. It is important that further research on additional perspectives be performed, such as those of teachers, of parents, of administrators, and especially of students. One main

problem that was identified in the implementation review in Alberta was that the suggested standards did not take the needs of students into account. The ability of interpreters to match the communication mode of students was seen as important, however the Alberta document had not addressed this issue. In Manitoba, it will be important to investigate whether or not the ASL/English Interpretation Program prepares interpreters to match the various communication modes that are employed by students in public school settings. The Deaf culture focus of interpreter training programs is another area that needs to be reviewed, as many isolated deaf students are not involved with a Deaf community, nor are they aware of the existence of Deaf culture. The role, if any, of Deaf culture in public school settings should be reviewed. Another focus of interpreter training programs is the Code of Ethics, however, numerous individuals have expressed concerns regarding the application of the Code of Ethics in educational settings. Future research and discussion about proper ethical expectations on the part of interpreters and employers must occur, in order to eliminate any existing conflict. It is possible that adjustments will need to be made in order for educational teams to work together cooperatively. Responses to survey questions seemed to vary according to the educational level at which respondents were interpreting. In the past, there has been some discussion about how the responsibility for various aspects of a student's education should shift as students progress to higher educational levels. Interpreters at lower educational levels may hold different responsibilities and perform different duties due to the communication proficiency and age of the students with whom they are working. Future research on the actual needs

of students at different educational levels, and the resulting expectations of interpreters should be done. Finally, a repeat of this research study in approximately five years would be interesting, to see how population characteristics and role perspectives change, if at all. It would be possible to design a survey with more structured items, through the employment of responses offered by subjects on this survey. It is recommended that such a follow-up investigate role differences related to rural and urban locations.

It is obvious that interpreting in educational settings is a newly evolving field and that in many cases, services have been established without the involvement of individuals who are knowledgeable in the areas of Deaf Education and Sign Language Interpreting. It is often difficult to facilitate change after the fact. However, in the interest of deaf children, it is important that cooperative efforts be made to establish professional standards for the role of interpreters in educational settings, so that adequate services are provided, and so that viable educational options are made available for deaf students throughout the province of Manitoba.

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Appendix A

<u>Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada Code of Ethics</u>

Preamble

The purpose of the following Code of Ethics is to provide guidelines for interpreters and, in doing so, to ensure quality of service for all people receiving the service. The concepts presented herein are essential for developing and maintaining professional standards. The following definitions have been included in order to clarify terminology referred to in this document:

* An interpreter is one who facilitates communication between persons who do not share the same language.

* A transliterator is one who facilitates communication between persons who share the same language but not the same language mode.

* Visual Language is a language or a language mode based on the use of sight. It includes ASL, La Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ), sign systems, speech reading and elements of gesture.

* Audible Language is a language or language mode based on the use of sound. It includes English, French and other spoken languages.

* Discretion is the use of judgment cultivated by professional training and experience.

As with any ethical code it is anticipated that time will modify the understanding of the role of interpreters. With this in mind, one should constantly strive toward professional advancement.

1. The Visual Language Interpreter will keep all assignment related information strictly confidential. It takes a minimum amount of information to identify the parties involved in an interpreted situation. An interpreter will not reveal identifying information about any interpreting assignment. In certain situations the interpreter functions as part of a professional team. In such cases the interpreter will use discretion when discussing team assignments. In cases where information from an interpreted situation is public knowledge, the interpreter will again use discretion in discussing the same. When an interpreter is functioning in any other capacity (i.e. lecturer, trainer, advocate) and wishes to share actual experiences of an interpreted situation, she/he will not reveal any identifying information.

2. The Visual Language Interpreter will render the message by faithfully conveying its content and spirit. The interpreter will transmit everything in the manner in which it is intended. This is especially difficult when the interpreter disagrees or feels uncomfortable with what is being expressed. If the interpreters own feelings interfere with rendering the message accurately, she/he will advise the persons involved and withdraw, when possible, from the situation.

3. The Visual Language interpreter will not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions related to the interpreted assignment. Just as an interpreter will not omit anything, she/he will not add to the situation, even when requested to do so by the person(s) involved. The interpreter is present in a given situation solely to facilitate communication.

4. The Visual Language Interpreter will use the preferred language of the person(s) for whom she/he is interpreting. It is important for the interpreter

and the person(s) receiving the service to spend some time adjusting to one another's way of communication prior to the interpreted assignment. While working from audible to visual language, the interpreter will communicate in the manner preferred by the person(s) receiving the service. While working from a visual language to an audible language the interpreter will use a compatible spoken interpretation of the visual language.

5. The Visual Language Interpreter will accept assignments using discretion with regard to the interpreting skills required, the setting, and the person(s) involved. The interpreter will only accept assignments for which she/he is qualified. The interpreter will generally refrain from interpreting in settings where the involvement of family members, personal friends, or close professional associates may affect the quality of service.

6. The Visual Language Interpreter will approach the matter of compensation in a fair and equitable manner. An interpreter will be knowledgeable about fees which are appropriate to the profession, and be informed about the current suggested fee schedules. When services are rendered and remuneration is not forthcoming, discretion will be used when attempts are made to secure payment. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for an interpreter to render service without charge. This will be done with discretion. When considering gratis services, the livelihood of other interpreters will not be jeopardized.

7. The Visual Language Interpreter will conduct herself/himself in all phases of interpreting situations in a manner befitting the profession.

8. The Visual Language Interpreter will strive to further individual knowledge and skill in order to maintain high professional standards.

Appendix B
Red River Community College
American Sign Language-English Interpretation Program Course Content

Term 1

S01-B102 Culture and Ethnology 1

S01-B114 English 1

S01-B134 American Sign Language 1

S01-B136 Introduction to the Interpreting Field

S01-B137 Building Translation Skills: English

S01-B152 Deaf History

Term 2

S01-B108 Deaf Culture

S01-B124 English 2

S01-B135 American Sign Language 2

S01-B138 Culture and Ethnology 2

S01-B139 Building Translation Skills: ASL

S01-B155 Introductory Linguistics for Interpreters

Term 3

S01-B113 Cross Cultural Interaction

S01-B118 Literature Review 1

S01-B140 Ethics 1

S01-B141 American Sign Language 3

S01-B142 Building Translation Skills: English/ASL

Term 3   (con't)

S01-B143   Interpretation Lab 1: Consecutive Interpretation

S01-B144   Practicum 1: Observation Practicum

Term 4

S01-B121   Interpretation Settings

S01-B145   American Sign Language 4

S01-B146   Ethics 2

S01-B147   Interpretation Lab 2: Consecutive English to ASL

S01-B148   Interpretation Lab 3: General Practice Lab

Term 5

S01-B123   American Sign Language 5

S01-B126   Interpretation Lab 5: General Practice Lab

S01-B127   Interpretation Lab 6: Mock Situations

S01-B130   Special Projects: Independent Study

S01-B149   Interpreter Lab 4: Consecutive Interpretation

S01-B150   Interpretation Lab 7: Simultaneous English to ASL

S01-B151   Practicum 2

Term 6

S01-B132   Practicum 3

S01-B133   Literature Review 2

Appendix C
Survey Cover Letter

June 4, 1996

Dear

I am a teacher of the Deaf in the process of completing the requirements for a Master's Degree in Education at the University of Manitoba. I am presently working on my thesis under the direction of my Advisor, Dr. Gerry Bravi. I have decided to investigate the role of interpreters employed in Kindergarten to Senior 4 educational settings in Manitoba schools.

In Manitoba, formal standards outlining the role of interpreters in educational settings have not yet been established. This lack of clarity often leads to confusion an frustration, and influences the effectiveness of educational teams.

My objective is to gather data describing the present status of the role of sign language interpreters in educational settings in school divisions throughout Manitoba. Using your responses, it will be possible to review job titles and to identify the responsibilities held by interpreters. Information about the knowledge and skills that are required for this position will provide direction for interpreter training programs, so they can better prepare individuals for employment as interpreters in school settings. The results will ultimately contribute significantly to the evolving

professionalism of interpreters in educational settings, and will hopefully provide direct benefit to you in your position.

I am requesting that you complete the attached survey form, place it in the envelop provided, and return it to me by June 21. It is expected that approximately 30 minutes of your time will be requiredd to respond to the questions. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Returning the survey implies consent to participation in this study.

A summary of the results of this survey will be made available to you, upon request, following the completion of data interpretation and analysis. If you are interested, return the request form in the separate envelope provided. Please contact me at 1-204-831-1153 or my Advisory Committee member, Dr. Paul Madak at 1-204-474-8712 if you have any questions, or require additional information, about this study. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this project.

Yours truly,

Kathy Melnyk

M.Ed. Student

University of Manitoba

Appendix D

<u>Survey</u>
SURVEY OF INDIVIDUALS INTERPRETING
IN KINDERGARTEN-SENIOR 4 EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

This questionnaire is intended to permit you to assist in the
clarification of role duties and responsibilities of interpreters
working in Kindergarten to Senior 4 educational settings. Your
contribution is valued. Please complete the questionnaire carefully,
answering all questions as completely as possible and return the
questionnaire in the envelope provided by June 17, 1996. All
responses are anonymous, so you need not identify yourself.

In order to make the analysis of your responses more meaningful, please answer the following questions:

1. What is your age range? (Check ✓ one)

   ☐ Less than 20 years   ☐ 35-39 years

   ☐ 20-24 years   ☐ 40-44 years

   ☐ 25-29 years   ☐ 45-49 years

   ☐ 30-34 years   ☐ over 50 years

2. What is your sex? (Check ✓ one)

   ☐ FEMALE   ☐ MALE

3. Select the best description of your formal education:

   ☐ Less Than Grade 12   ☐ Technical Institute

   ☐ Completed Grade 12   ☐ University/College Degree

   ☐ Some University   ☐ Post-Graduate Degree

4a. Indicate the highest level of conversational American Sign Language course you have completed:

Vista Signing Naturally

☐ 101

☐ 102

☐ 103

☐ 201

☐ 202

☐ 203

Specify other American Sign Language courses, immersions, etc:

_____

_____

_____

_____

4b. Have you completed an Interpreter Training Program? (Check ✓ one)

☐ NO   If NO, skip to Question 5.

☐ YES   If YES, indicate the length of the program:

☐ less than 1 year

☐ 1 year

☐ 2 years

☐ longer than 2 years

Please provide a list of the courses taken in the Interpreter Training Program.

_____

_____

_____

5. How many years of interpreting experience do you have?

   a) in a school setting   b) in other settings

   ☐ 1 year or less   ☐ 1 year or less

   ☐ 2-3 years   ☐ 2-3 years

   ☐ 4-7 years   ☐ 4-7 years

   ☐ 8-11 years   ☐ 8-11 years

   ☐ 12-15 years   ☐ 12-15 years

   ☐ more than 15 years   ☐ more than 15 years

6. Indicate the educational level(s) at which you are presently interpreting. For example __grade 3__

   _____

7. How many deaf students are you interpreting for at this time?

   ☐ 1 student

   ☐ 2 students

   ☐ 3 students

   ☐ 4 students

   ☐ 5 students

   ☐ more than 5 students

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your official job title?

   _____

2. Does a written job description exist for your position?

   ☐ NO   If NO, skip to Question 3.

   ☐ YES   If YES, attach a copy.
   (Please feel free to white out identifying information)

3. Do the duties you actually perform match those of the written job description?

   ☐ YES   If YES, skip to Question 4.

   ☐ NO ·   If NO. explain the differences.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4a. List those duties from your written job description and/or those listed in Question 3 that you presently perform, but feel should not be your responsibility.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4b. List any duties you are not presently performing in the course of your work, but feel should be your responsibility.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5a. Please list training experiences which assist you most in the performance of your duties.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Please list workplace factors which assist you most in the performance of your job duties. For example: previewing videotapes.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5c.   Please list factors that most interfere with your ability to perform your duties.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6.   Please feel free to make any other comments that you feel will be helpful with this survey.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Appendix E

Reminder Postcard

A survey of the role of interpreters in educational settings
was mailed to you on Thursday, June 6, 1996. This is just
a reminder that I encourage you to complete the survey
and return it to me by June 21, 1996. Your participation
will assist with role clarification. Please call me at
1-204-831-1153 if you did not receive the survey, and I
will ensure that you receive one.

Appendix F

Request for Results Form

I am requesting a copy of the results of the survey

on the role of sign language interpreters in

Kindergarten to Senior 4 educational settings.

Please send results to:

_____

_____

_____

_____