

Theory to Practice—It's a Long Jump!

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- ✓ Degree should be awarded

Recommendations:

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-



**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED**

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Theory to Practice—It's a Long Jump!

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*and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASL	American Sign Language
DC-S	Demand control schema
IEP	Interpreter education program
K–12	Grades kindergarten through twelfth grade
TAP	Think Aloud Protocol

ABSTRACT

My aim with this project is to explore the development of a new interpreter in a K–12 educational setting. In my professional reflective journal, I collected data focused on new interpreters’ skill development, such as feedback, mentors, work samples, boundaries, supervision sessions, and lexical/grammatical items. Using the text analysis tool Voyant (2025), I scanned the data for lexical patterns as well as general themes in each quarter of the journal. My findings point to four overarching periods of transition that each have their own distinctive data and patterns. These four quarters are found in the results in Chapter 4. These distinct quarters show the natural progression of filling “the gap” between theory and real-world interpreting experiences. I hope to use my findings to offer a look into the process of transitioning from an interpreter education program to life as a working professional to better identify emerging professionals’ skill acquisition needs.

Keywords: Interpreter, sign language, vocabulary, analysis, personal perception/efficacy, skill development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to define the gap that is referenced heavily throughout this project as well as bring to light gaps in my own professional readiness. I have gathered data surrounding the skills that I feel I lack as a new interpreter and questioned what I need to improve professionally. I have gathered several sources to address the gaps I have as I move from my theoretical training to working in a K–12 setting.

Background

In my time at Western Oregon University, I noticed a variety of interpreter competencies practiced in both implicit and explicit ways. Through watching professors and instructors as well as participating in classes that teach how to become ethical interpreters, I learned in depth about the theories underlying effective and ethical interpreting. After completing my interpreter education program (IEP), I found myself considering what to do next. My logical next step was to move home, take the educational interpreters performance assessment (EIPA), and get hired in a K–12 setting. From experiences with my mentors and peers, I knew that earning successful scores on the EIPA may be a challenge. As it states within Washington state Senate bill S.B. 5142, “The Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment is difficult to pass, with only 40 percent passing the first time, and has a six-month wait time for evaluation results, which puts school districts in a compromising position” (S.B. 5142, p. 3). I felt that to best serve myself, I should deepen my skills through observation and study as I prepared to take both the written and performance assessments. I reached out to local interpreters I knew who worked in the K–12 setting and requested to observe and learn from them throughout the school year. As I shadowed my mentors, I discovered that the theory I was

equipped with by my coursework did not feel sufficient for the work I witnessed. I found myself writing comments, questions, unfamiliar vocabulary, norms of the settings, linguistic tools, resources, feedback, language play, and professional identity notes throughout the day. I could see clearly that the standards of an effective interpreter and my own skill level were at two different levels. In focusing on my induction into the profession, I have had to acknowledge the disparity between the theory I was equipped with and where I needed to be skill-wise to be considered effective. This disparity will be referred to as “the gap.” The gap that I noticed mostly focuses on my readiness to work within my profession. There is also a readiness to credential gap that covers whether or not a new professional is prepared to take the tests for credentials. I find that this project straddles both gaps as both are in play as I have completed this project. Godfrey (2011) describes these gaps:

The former (readiness-to-work gap) indicates that students graduate but are not ready to gain employment as an interpreter practitioner who is competent to provide services across a wide variety of settings (Patrie, 1995; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). The latter (readiness-to-credential gap) indicates that students graduate and may be employed to provide rudimentary interpreting services in limited settings but are not yet ready to obtain interpreting credentials set forth by the field at either the state or the national level. (Godfrey, 2011, p. 89)

Throughout these thirteen months, I used reflective journaling to track discrepancies between my experiences in an IEP and the context-rich demands of interpreting in a K–12 setting. I have continued to ask myself, in my journey to becoming a competent K–12 interpreter, what kind of data do I find helpful to compile for personal

reflection and skill improvement and practice as I attempt to fill the gaps I am experiencing? What kinds of data play the largest part? Inspired by multiple journaling projects completed by other students at Western Oregon University, I have chosen to approach that gap by keeping a professional journal in which I noted multiple types of observations, including personal thoughts, environmental connections, language play, demand control schema (DC-S) explorations, feedback, interpersonal dilemmas, peer support/supervision, and a variety of lexical focuses. I use this journal to keep myself on track to see where I need to go next as well as keep a record of where I have been. I have been exploring emerging patterns in each stage of development within this project. I have seen four general trends supported by my data that accompany development from an overwhelmed student to confident interpreter. These trends are later discussed in the results section. This trend analysis aims to better identify my patterns of improvement so that when I do encounter gaps in my skills, whether that be lacking soft skills, not understanding the demands of the setting, or making linguistic errors, I can see the steps I have taken to know how to approach them. After all, improvement is not linear.

Theoretical Framework

Two key concepts have made up my theoretical framework and added to my understanding of my development and performance in the field. The first is the cognitive load model. This is best explained by Sulaiman Al-Suhaim (2024):

Cognitive load [theory] stems from the idea that the brain, the body's natural processor, has a finite capacity for both the number of operations it can perform and the volume of information it can hold available for processing at one time. (p. 27)

Elaborating on this, Gile (2008) states, “Simultaneous interpreters are vulnerable to conditions where total processing capacity requirements are high, be it for a whole speech or for a given speech segment” (p. 2). This framework relates to why this project exists. When a new interpreter is first experiencing simultaneous interpretation, they often are at total processing capacity, and thus the production is lacking or incomplete when compared to a more proficient interpreter for whom simultaneous interpretation is found to be less of a cognitive load. When I first started collecting data, my understanding of what was happening was minimal, which then made processing language that much harder while I was attempting to interpret. As shown in later patterns, the cognitive load first taken on is decreased due to the lack of necessity of writing points in my journal.

The second resource that significantly informed my work was Dean and Pollard’s (2013) demand control schema (DC-S) framework. As later discussed in my methodology section, there are four categories I created in which I decided to take notes in my professional journal. I wrote red colored notes for resources, green for places and situations, blue for specific vocabulary and jargon, and black as an all-encompassing place of curiosity, or miscellaneous. This directly correlates to the DC-S taxonomy, as green is environmental demands, blue is vocabulary demands, red is controls that I utilized, and black operated as intrapersonal demands. The entire filter through which my project was completed directly correlates to how Dean and Pollard set up their own way of processing demands of an interpreting situation. Dean and Pollard’s (2013) DC-S framework gave me the structure and lens for understanding what kind of notes I was collecting. Their schema fed into how I color-coded what I was processing in the moment. Along with the methodology of my data collection, this framework allowed me

to develop my professional identity alongside understanding the setting I was being introduced into.

Both frameworks structured my design and interpretation of my project. DC-S helped me categorize particular decisions that were made in a variety of instances, and the cognitive load theory helped me to understand the driving force of the curiosity and walls within my own understanding that I kept facing.

Definition of Terms

The Gap: The gap in skills that students experience after they graduate from an Interpreter Education Program (IEP) or Interpreter Training Program (ITP). Many students exhibit a gap in both their understanding of the process of interpreting and their efficacy in interpreting ethically and effectively for all parties involved.

Demand Control Schema: Dean and Pollard's (2013) framework that poses a way to understand and analyze individuals' experience in the communication setting. This is characterized by demands of the setting and controls utilized by the interpreter to mitigate in the setting.

DC-S Taxonomy: Dean and Pollard's (2013) demand control schema includes four categories of demands: environmental, paralinguistic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, several topics are discussed, including efficacy, skill development, supervision, feedback, evaluation, and assessment. Through efficacy and its clear standards, we learn that professional skill development plays a key role in how new interpreters evolve into expert interpreters. Supervision feedback evaluation and self-assessments are used to identify areas of growth, understand the demands of the setting, and keep track of controls. Finally, the existing literature that is related to understanding the gap is explored.

What Is Efficacy?

Before diving into surrounding research, I find it pertinent to understand the definition of efficacy and how efficacy impacted my work. The concept of efficacy was influential in understanding the data that I collected. When reflecting on the progress I was making and looking at the feedback from mentors, supervision, and language play, I came to the realization that a large chunk of interpreting is confidence in my skills, ability, and ethical reasoning. As time went on, my mindset shifted, and the concept of efficacy was the best explanation for this shift. O'Brien (2019) defines efficacy as one's ability to feel they can do the job

Efficacy Expectations: The conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior to produce certain outcomes. The interpreter's conviction in their ability to interpret the message to produce certain outcomes (student related understanding, message transfer, and the understood responsibilities of the interpreter role). (O'Brien, 2019, p. 19)

Efficacy plays an important role, allowing interpreters to feel that the work that they are doing is making a difference in their clients' lives.

What Sets Efficacy Standards and How Do We Gauge Them?

Entry-to-practice competencies (Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training Center, 2012), the Code of Professional Conduct (NAD-RID, 2005), Educational Interpreter Code of Ethics (National Association of Interpreters in Education, 2021) as well as reflective practice all contribute to how working K–12 interpreters gauge what efficacy means to them. These lay out ways for interpreters to evaluate their own work. There are a variety of legal and ethical standards, and one of the most prominent standards held in Washington state is a minimum requirement of a 4.0 score on the EIPA. After passing the performance exam, ethical frameworks such as the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) and cultural competencies are used as standards for working interpreters.

Professional Skill Development

There are a variety of ways in which interpreters participate in professional skill development. These include supervision, feedback, scores/evaluations, journaling, and reflective work samples. I have found that reflection and journaling often are ways to see successes and areas of improvement, and this is shown repeatedly within the concept of feedback and self-reflection. Sowa and McDermid (2018) state:

Both the expert interpreters and the novices agreed to the benefits of self-reflection, thus indicating recognition of the practice even in students of sign language interpretation. For example, four of the six interpreters in this study talked about how reflecting on their work helped them find new ways to translate

text: It allowed them to acknowledge their successes and gave them access to their own cognitive processes. It also helped them identify problematic areas. (p. 26)

One of the most informative structures in which I have based my understanding of this project is work. This work explores interpreters' relationships to the work they do as well as what it informs. This is a discourse-based approach that explains that meaning is co-constructed through context, participating members, and settings specific demands. This means the focus is on using a variety of setting-specific details to construct the best interpretation rather than only the linguistic aspects of the job only. Cokley's (2005) work helped me to understand student, teacher, and interpreter interactions that were happening in real time. This is why my data pay specific attention to the roles present as well as context-specific information.

Supervision and Feedback

Other tools utilized in professional skill development include supervision and mentorship. Kenoyer (2020) explains that supervision is an opportunity for interpreters to share the mental and emotional load of that which they are experiencing in a way that also upholds the CPC and other rights of consumers. This practice is a confidential opportunity to go over the demands of the specific situation that the sharing interpreter is having a hard time with and allowing peers to offer insight, experience, and feedback in order to bolster the sharing interpreter's understanding. Dean and Pollard (2013) emphasize the integral nature of supervision and feedback by saying, "Talking about your work through the DC-S framework helps illuminate and identify these other practice values" (p. 141). Engaging with a mentor who understands the needs of the new

interpreter allows them to make even broader strokes into understanding the choices being made by those already practicing in the profession.

Within this practice, there is also the use of supervision. Dean and Pollard (2013) lay out how to approach tough interpreting scenarios with the support of peers. In my experience, supervision is one way to walk through what I was noticing with a fresh set of eyes to better understand myself and my own professional identity. The journal that I kept in a way was a form of supervision as I could write down demands in the moment and then come back to them later with fresh eyes, often a mentor to better explain what I was either missing or misinterpreting. Through my own practice, I have started to understand that sharing what I'm learning with those who know more than I do allows me to improve in a way that supports my own mental health. Even with sharing out to my peers, I find myself growing in confidence and developing my understanding of my setting and context.

Evaluations and Skills Assessments

A large portion of my professional log involves processing my own work and asking myself what could be done to improve, as if I were asking a third party. As stated above, Sowa and McDermid (2018) highlighted that self-reflection is helpful for identifying patterns, tracking cognitive processes, and recognizing successes. These self-reflections were conducted through a think aloud protocol (TAP) and various work samples. TAP is a way of looking at work that has just been completed and connecting it to a stream of consciousness that went into decisions made. According to Smith (2014), “The TAP protocol can still be useful if interpreters are asked to talk about their preparation for the task, their response to static stimuli (scenario) or their reflections upon

work that was just produced (thus fresh in their minds)” (p. 129). These tools help me better understand how I was feeling in the moment and hone my ability to later be able to share with my peers and develop a plan based upon what I saw with fresh eyes. TAPs and work samples allowed me to acknowledge what had been lacking in my own understanding as I entered this new space.

What Skills Are Missing From Undergrad Interpreting Education Programs?

There are a variety of skills that often get overlooked in IEPs or that new interpreters feel nervous about. Ayob (2010) states that there are a variety of interpreter educational skills for which many interpreters feel they were unprepared. These include speaking as a consumer, listening, and notetaking. Other scholars note that, in addition to the previously stated skills, cross-cultural competencies and the unfamiliarity of the setting can make new interpreters have a harder time navigating situations. In my experience, I have often found myself writing notes about cross-cultural communication and interacting professionally with a student. Godfrey (2010) expanded on this concept concluding that many two-year interpreting programs need to readjust their curriculum, faculty plays a large role in new interpreters developments, classroom instruction alone is insufficient when it comes to preparing students in comparison to the addition of practicum and service learning, and IEPs need to develop a structured system to track the outcomes of their training programs. Acknowledging these common shortcomings in my work looked like finding the unfamiliarity of the settings I was in and learning to be curious about them. This involved me being very honest with myself about my own current level of education and understanding.

Reflective Practice, Professional Identity, and Personal Identity

Reflective practice directly leads to the development of a professional identity as well as a personal identity. Interpretation is multifaceted and involves a larger scope of skills that are greatly impacted by professional and personal identity. Brown (2023) states how these skills align with identity: “Interpreting in America is not as simple as knowing English and ASL and then being able to work between those two standard forms of language” (p. 8). Interpreters are first and foremost humans, which is something multiple advisors in my life have emphasized. Brown’s (2023) study follows cultural competencies that may be lacking in an interpreter's education as they enter the world of interpreting. According to previous models of interpreting, there was a tendency among many interpreters to reduce interpreting to just going between two languages, but it is harmful to reduce the work of interpreting to just a linguistic experience. This lack of space for cultural understanding tends to skew the work being produced and serve as a barrier to being truly authentic, which is emphasized in Code for Professional Conduct (RID, 2005) tenet 2.3, which states “render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated,” as well as tenet 2.5, that interpreters should “refrain from providing counsel, advice, or personal opinions” (RID, 2005, p. 4).

Influence and Direction

The question of how to develop professional identity, confidence, and reflective practice as a new interpreter is not something I struggle with alone. There are a variety of papers completed and published within Western Oregon University IEP that have shaped both the design and direction of my own work. These works draw on many of the same tools that I use.

In *A New Interpreter: The Path to Educational Interpreting and Deepening Their Connection to Their Process*, Noda (2023) creates a journaling system to track interpreting errors, adjustments, and confidence shifts. This helped me to think of journaling as a reflective practice through which I could identify areas where I felt the weakest.

Related to this topic was *Rooted in Reflection: Developing My Professional Identity During My First Year as an Interpreter* by Williams (2020). This project is similar to Noda's (2023) study in that it deals with connecting to oneself in a very introspective way, but it also incorporates the element of journaling about personal feelings in relation to the professional setting. Williams (2020) explored the definition of professional identity as a first-year interpreter. Their work helped me to understand that uncertainty in what I was finding is part of the process and not indicative of failure.

My own questioning of self-efficacy stemmed from *Confidence—What Does It Have to Do with It? Everything!* by Woods (2019). This project is connected to the researcher's personal outlook on what confidence is and how it impacts novice interpreters. This work encouraged me to pay attention to how and when I could confidently start making decisions in my work.

The last study that played a substantial role in influencing my process was *Personal and Professional Ethics: The Impact on Decision-Making in Elementary Education* by Kenoyer (2020). This study was the most relevant to my project in that it dealt with the K–12 setting specifically. The focus of the study was each interpreter's own code of ethics. The emphasis on gut-check decision-making helped me to internalize

what kinds of gut-check things I needed to pay attention to. Kenoyer provided an ethical understanding that I came back to frequently.

In my own experience, I have noticed a gap between what I had learned in my IEP and the complex realities of interpreting in an educational setting. I chose to study how keeping a professional journal and engaging in mentorship add to developing self-efficacy and professional identity to prepare for the working interpreter's experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will describe the mechanics of my project, how I decided I would be the population, how the collection of data took place within my project, and how I choose to utilize Voyant to better understand the raw data.

Design of the Investigation

My primary motivation for doing this project was my own understanding of onboarding as a newly working interpreter. I wanted a better way to understand the context of the profession I was entering into, and so I developed a system that borrowed categorization from Dean and Pollard's DC-S Taxonomy to help me process what was impacting my cognitive load—sometimes referred to as a channel.

Over the span of thirteen months, data were collected in a professional log using red, blue, green, and black colors to categorize and then analyzed to show the trends. The end date of data collection came when my mentor pointed me to a paying job. This presents a limitation of sorts as I had to pick an appropriate level of what would constitute enough data collection and decide the final moment when I would gather data. I decided that my endpoint for gathering data would be either when I passed the EIPA or when I was hired by a school district. I chose when I was hired by a school district, since it showed my ability to do the job on my own, which aligned with the project's purpose of documenting my transition from student to a working interpreter. However, one could argue that no one has ever fully reached ethical and efficacious practice, as this is a practice profession and interpreters should constantly be striving to improve themselves. Along with being hired, I completed taking the EIPA and was waiting for my scores. This data was intended to identify vocabulary that I needed help with and demands of the

environment as blue; resources, specific practices, and controls in red; locations of setting/environment in green; and comments, feedback, and other miscellaneous/intrapersonal or interpersonal items in black. The goal was to identify trends in my professional development through the necessity of these notes over time in my onboarding experience.

Data for this project came from a personal interpreting journal in which I took extensive notes and journals each day I observed, doing my best to fill the gap. The journal entries focus on my experience. Originally, I created these journal entries by asking myself a set of questions at varied points in the school day, including “What was today like for you? Overall feeling of today’s work? What was the most challenging and what was the easiest? What felt like a win?”

By the end of day one, I had found these questions to not be broad enough to cover all of the content I felt the need to write down. As described in Williams’ (2020) project that deals with developing professional identity as a new interpreter, I found it beneficial to just start writing down everything simply because I would forget when I sat down to go over it at the end of the day. I knew that with how overwhelming the setting was and the amount of new information being thrown at me, I would need to write down where my own understanding stopped. This included feedback, mentors’ comments, work samples, boundaries, supervisions, lexical/grammatical items with which I was unfamiliar, and any other feelings or questions I had that popped up. In accordance with Seal (2004), professional reflection has been known to aid learning practices as well as cultivate ethics among interpreters. The data probed into that day’s baseline, feelings on

concurrent activities, and ideas for improvement. I saw keeping this journal as an opportunity to note the emotions I felt that day to help give some depth to my reflections.

Population and/or Sample

As this project is an action research project, this work is meant to revolve around me and the practices I am noticing within my own realm of capability. As a result, I was the main population and creator of the samples, so I did not feel the need to report to the IRB. While I was journaling, I did not have conscious rules for what data to collect except that I used no place indicators, no mentors' names, and no students' names so as not to potentially put any party at risk.

Data Analysis Procedures

As I wrote journal entries, I color-coded specific kinds of notes to help make the raw data more visually representative of different categories of data. Red signified things I wanted to focus on, resources, and networking-related notes. These are classified as controls to specific setting demands I kept bumping into for which I felt unprepared. Blue signified strictly linguistic related content. These were classified as demands, as they pulled my direct attention away from the interpretation to what I did not understand. Green was for subheading, headings, and clear distinctions of what environment I would be in for that day. Lastly, black was for concerns, comments, and anything else I needed to write down. I discuss trends in the data in Chapter 4, which includes several charts of trends in the data over time showing what exactly fits into these classifications with examples.

The color-coding scheme also corresponded to the DC-S taxonomy (environmental, paralinguistic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) in a loose sense. For

example, green notes reflected the environmental aspects of what I felt I needed to write down. This included places, situations, and settings. Blue notes focused on vocabulary. Red notes focused on resources or self, given aspects of my experience. Lastly, black notes included data that I was not sure what to do with, which usually included intrapersonal data as well as my own processing of my feedback or any other comments that I felt compelled to write. You can see in Appendix A in the data sample that I have feelings about how I was progressing based upon feedback from my mentor. I have pride in the fact that I was able to pick the appropriate classifier to use in a linguistic experience where I was unfamiliar. This taxonomy is a theme that continually reoccurs in the data set that was created from this journal.

After completion of data collection, I used Voyant (2025) to identify patterns across four quarters of my collection timeframe. I then compared the frequencies and shifts in vernacular, in addition to the raw data, to identify larger patterns that I have had in my development. In selecting an endpoint for my data collection, I decided on two different milestones: passing the EIPA or being hired by a school district. Both are important indicators of readiness to work, as they show I am credentialed and have a standard high enough to be paid for the work I have been doing. I was not sure which one would happen first.

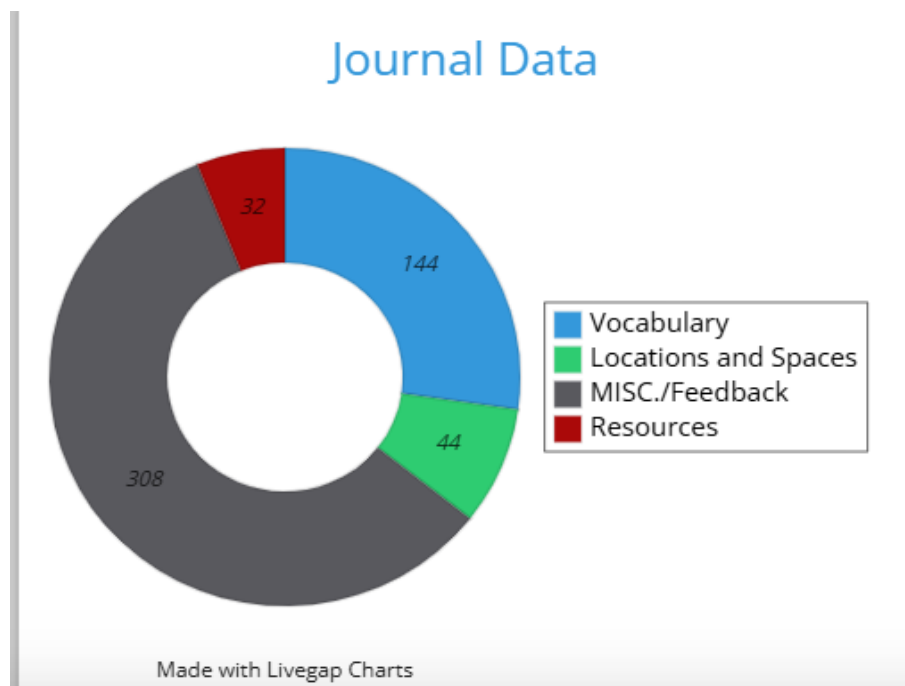
The purpose of collecting these data sets was to label patterns across four main domains. These include language growth, ethical understanding, classroom navigation, and self-efficacy. I wanted to know what skills became the most relevant in each quarter of analysis. These trends are presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter incorporates all the raw data collected into a showing of charts and graphs that best explore the nature of the data. The text analysis tool Voyant (2025) is leveraged to understand what was collected. The findings based on the data collected supports the relevant research in identifying patterns in how new interpreters' skills develop.

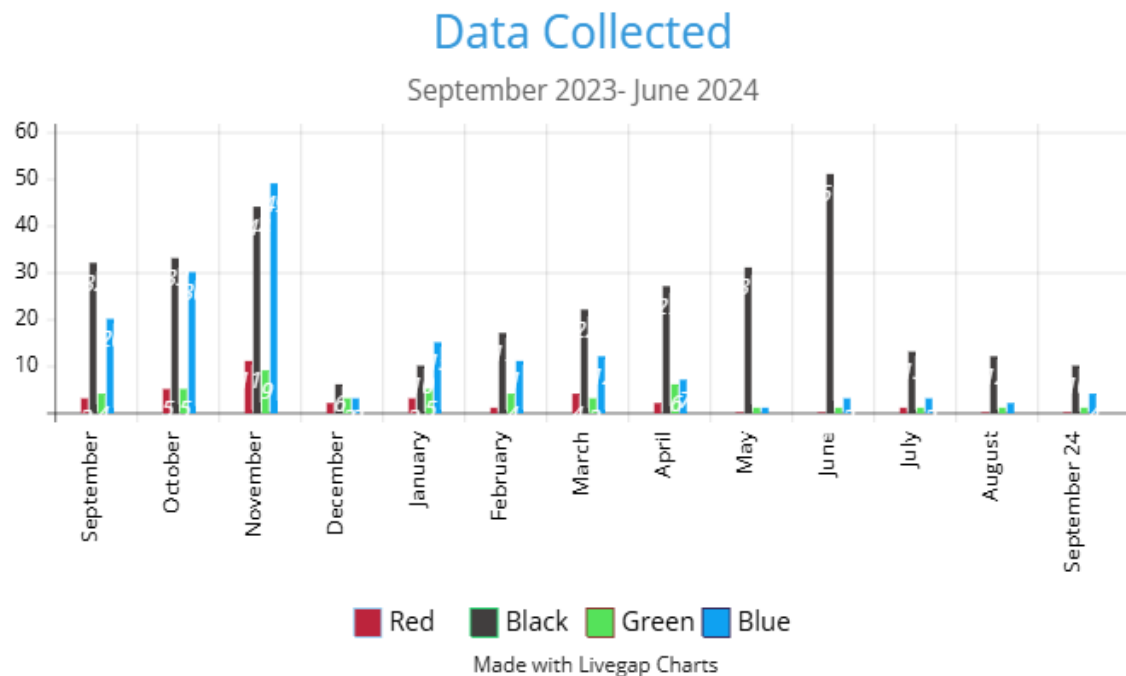
Figure 1

Culmination of Data Points Collected in My Professional Journal



Note. The green section is representative of the situation I was in, as well as environmental aspects of interpreting; the red section is representative of resources and homework are given as well as controls employed; the blue section was specific to vocabulary and intrapersonal demands; and the black section was indicative of all of the miscellaneous data I felt I needed to save, also known as intrapersonal data.

In Figure 1 is the culmination of every data point that was collected in the duration of my professional log. As you can see, the majority of the data collected involves that which is classified as a miscellaneous and feedback. These data included feedback on work samples from a mentor, interpersonal comments, language play scenarios, intrapersonal comments, supervision participation, questions for mentors, and general curiosity. The DC-S taxonomy is what influenced this categorization of data. Each one of these color delegations connects to an aspect of the taxonomy. Within the miscellaneous section, this category includes a wide variety of intrapersonal comments, notation of the setting, questions about the setting, questions for mentors, notes on supervision, and challenges that involve language play. You can see this best presented in Appendix A, where I have a sample of my professional log color-coded and laid out. I can conclude that green and red are both smaller, as they are less dense in terms of linguistics and discourse. As stated in the methodology section, green are labels of places and situations that I was either interpreting or in an interpreting space and red or resources and homework given to myself. I do believe that as time went on the homework that I gave to myself became an immediate language play when time allowed. My mentors used the time between interpretation to prepare, and I found this time to be useful in completing my TAPs and any challenges I had set up for myself. This is evident when I would write one concept versus another and then practice with my hands up while a student was not looking at me or was working individually, or when I would write a quick note about how I was feeling.

Figure 2*Data Points Collected in My Journal Over the Span of 13 Months*

Note. Red is resources/controls, Black is miscellaneous, Green is Environment, and Blue is Vocabulary.

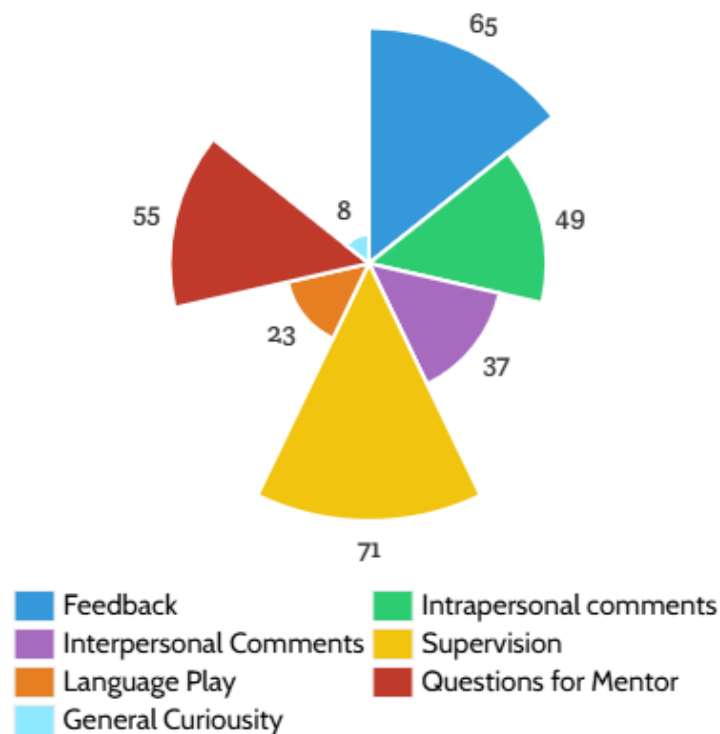
Figure 2 depicts every kind of piece of information collected over the span of 13 months. Red corresponds to resources and homework given to myself, black corresponds with a myriad of subjects that can be boiled down to intrapersonal/interpersonal demands, green is the setting, and blue corresponds to vocabulary I felt pertinent to either gloss or define. There are some interesting trends that will be discussed later, but you can see that as time went on there was a general decline of how many pieces of vocabulary or specific linguistic jargon were collected. On the flip side, over the span of seven months you can see an upward tick of comments or feedback. As for green and red, I have touched already on why the red category would look the way it does, but I am uncertain why

green would decline as it has, with a gradual decline over the span of 13 months. The conclusion that I can draw is that my time became more focused in one specific area rather than shifting between large, disjointed chunks of understanding. This ties into my understanding of cognitive load; as time went on, the novelty and stress that was so prevalent in the beginning gradually began to decline as my own understanding of the work I was producing increased.

Figure 3

Miscellaneous Data Breakdown

Miscellaneous Breakdown



As shown in Figures 1 and 2, most of the data collected fall into the category of miscellaneous or feedback. When trying to identify direct patterns within my data

collection, I found a large chunk in this unidentified area. Figure 3 breaks down the specifics of what miscellaneous means in this collection of data. Looking at Figure 3, you can see that there are four kinds of notes that make up most of the data collected. These are feedback, intrapersonal comments, questions for mentor, and supervision. These coincide with my research focus. I started taking notes to better understand self-efficacy, improve linguistic understanding, navigate the classroom, and improve ethical reasoning. The four largest areas within my miscellaneous section point to those four reasonings as subconscious delineations.

These four largest parts also coincide with the DC-S framework, which is prevalent in the work I have done. They all fall under the category of intrapersonal demands or controls. Each of these shows that throughout this process I have been introspective about the work being done and understand that guidance and standards are found outside of myself and my own understanding.

Figure 4

Voyant Quarter One Results (September, October, November, December)



The figure above is from a way of understanding the work I have done. Within the next four figures, four different periods of time throughout this project will be portrayed in word clouds taken from a Voyant analysis of raw data collected. Figure 4 is a word cloud of frequently used words within the first quarter of my data collection. As you can see in the words presented, there is a strong presence of vocabulary glossing as parts of the body are referenced quite frequently, as well as a fair number of comments that surround the general idea of how to be in an educational space, be effective, and maintain efficacy standards that have been set before me. Each of the larger words shown within the word cloud connects to a large portion of understanding my work that I had not yet understood. This shows that the cognitive load was relatively higher in the beginning as I had all kinds of data and questions about what was being presented in each of the aforementioned categories.

Figure 5

Voyant Quarter Two Results (January, February, March)

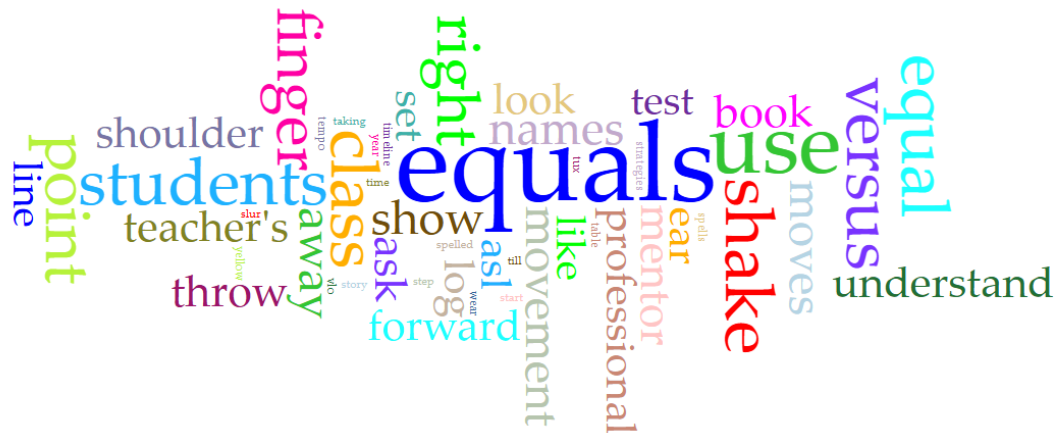


Figure 5 shows the results of the second quarter's data findings that are specific to an educational setting. A large chunk of data being collected still focused on vocabulary and linguistic structures. Additionally, from this shift it is clear that a large part of my wonderings also focused on connection to the students rather than only how to exist in this space. The general equalization of a lot of different words shows an improvement in how I am processing what is being thrown at me in these settings.

This word cloud of quarter three shows the transition from vocabulary to conceptual practice. The largest word is “show,” and the second largest word is “mentor,” adding to the general understanding that whatever I needed, I could always check with someone for clarification on what I was starting to understand. Along with this, you can start to see how I am shifting various priorities of understanding students in the setting to team members and my own professional identity, in which I have been developing continually throughout this process. This denotes a shift in demand from understanding the demands being presented to thinking about all the control options I could play with in this setting, as each linguistic choice is a control option.

section, I was preparing to take my EIPA performance exam and school had ended for the summer. The notes that I have are more linguistic and conceptually focused than the previous figures' trends would have suggested.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This section connects the trends in data laid out in Chapter 4 to the already existing literature and draws conclusions from said data. The trends in data lend themselves to conclusions about efficacy, language understanding and use, and the shifts in mindsets, as well as limitations of the work completed.

Figures 1 and 2 show multiple trends found from the data collected. The first trend is that, as shown in Figure 1, journal entries on miscellaneous data and vocabulary make up the majority of the data. This reflects my experience of having a relatively small second language (L2) vocabulary when onboarding to the field of interpreting, so I spent a large chunk of my time in the first two quarters expanding my vocabulary. I noticed that a lot of what I was initially missing was addressed through the on-the-job collection of signs and piecing together a more complete knowledge of the language. Scope of vocabulary is often referred to by my mentor, and it is common knowledge among working interpreters that the longer one is in the field, the more one's depth of vocabulary expands.

As supported in Figure 6, I found within my own data that I tended to rely heavily on the influence of mentors and coaches while collecting data to inform my development to become a competent interpreter. This practice was supported by Dean and Pollard's (2013) demand control schema and the usage of supervision as a way to break down the work being done. Participating in supervision aligns with the trend shown in my data that as time went on, my connections to my peers grew, allowing for a more in-depth analysis. Just as Dean and Pollard categorized their forms of data, I categorized my forms of data into four separate categories that are also broken up into specific instances.

Shown in Figure 2, there was a shift from focusing predominantly on vocabulary (blue) in the early months of the journal to focusing less on that topic over time. In contrast, the number of entries focused on conceptual ideas that needed explaining or expounding (black) increased over time. My work has shown that there is an increase in my interpreter's channel to better work on catching concepts rather than individual lexical items. This is supported by the cognitive load theory that Gile (2008) lays out perfectly. A lot of what I had been producing was error-filled and took up a large part of the channel that I had previously discussed. These trends show a downtick, which supports Gile's understanding that as time goes on, interpreters' cognitive load lessens. Now when I interpret, I have a larger capability to see the concept of what is there instead of focusing only on the lexical items being presented. This chasm in language abilities between peers often distills the work of K-12 interpreters to a singular question: "What is the point?" Now, as a working interpreter, I often prioritize this question to see what concepts need to be conveyed first, before linguistic matters are introduced.

Another trend conveyed in Figure 2 is that there was a gradual decrease in the number of journal entries over time. This could have been for a variety of reasons, such as my increased familiarity with the discourse creation process, my interpreted level of demands being lowered due to processing differently than when I started the project, or becoming more confident in my capabilities. I perceive that all of these reasons contributed to the shift in the data. As time passed, I found I did not need to write everything down in such a frenzied manner as I had at the start of the project. Cokely's (2005) work and Gile's (2008) framework deal with an interpreter's ever-changing relationship with the discourse, and this data demonstrates that my work is no different.

The reduction in journaling reflected that I had begun to internalize my decision making, which showed that I was operating from a practice-based schema rather than theory alone. In addition, being hired decreased my feeling of needing to write in my journal unless I encountered something new and novel that I wanted to remember as I carried forward. This speaks to the concept of efficacy and how observing and learning from interpreters, along with practicing skill development, supported my own self-efficacy to drastically improve. These data may also be impacted by the fact that school was not in session in July or August and that I had spent the majority of my time working towards taking the Educational Interpreters Performance exam in September of 2024.

Within the miscellaneous breakdown in Figure 3, over time the emphasis on feedback, supervision, intrapersonal comments, and questions for mentor show a gravitation towards greater understanding of efficacy, as well as a greater desire for self-reflective and group reflective practices, which are integral according to Dean and Pollard (2013).

Within the four quarters presented of my Voyant findings, the nature of my work shifted over time. During the first two quarters, a lot of my work was heavily demand-based, meaning that the demands of the setting took precedence over language play and professional identity development. By comparison, the last two quarters showed a greater emphasis on language play and understanding, ultimately serving as an example of what Smith (2014) defines as “it depends.” This shows the limitations of this project, as each setting has case-specific challenges that produce different demands and employ different controls.

Limitations

There are always limitations that come with completing an action research project, and this project is no exception. The largest limitation is that the data that have been presented are case specific. My approach to filling gaps reflects my intentions as a K–12 educational interpreter. This means I place an emphasis on understanding concepts and consumer learning in my interpreting, in contrast to traditional interpreting, which focuses on facilitating communication and cross-cultural understanding. Just as Sowa and McDermid (2018) found, I find that my data collected is relatively narrow and the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. With a broader scope, a more developed theory could be introduced rather than just specific trends. Learning is a long-term endeavor, and our standards should continue to improve as well. Efficacy is subjective and constantly evolving with modern research.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter explores the dimensions of this research as well as what could be done to deepen the findings. As this is an action research project, the data collected surround only one interpreter's experiences, whereas larger studies could show broader trends in data through multiple people's experiences.

Through this experience, I have learned that professional development is a wonderfully rich tapestry of exploration, curiosity, and constantly finding new ways to look at the world. I wondered what the path of development could look like within K–12 observations and personal practice, and this was one approach. I wanted to see what kinds of patterns would emerge in various stages of development as I made my transition from student to intern to working interpreter.

As I look ahead to what other kinds of data I could collect, I believe that I will be working closely with Dean and Pollard's (2013) demand control schema and Cokely's (2005) framework, as those aspects of interpreting have already shown up in my day-to-day experiences both in and out of school. As I show up authentically and do my current job, I often find myself reflecting on the intrapersonal aspects of the job. I question if what I am doing is enough to bring together these two worlds that I get to look into. I mentioned this previously in my discussion section, but I want to highlight this as one of the most salient findings of my project: that intrapersonal reflection and internal decision-making have shaped my growth more than vocabulary or technical skill, a theme that emerges across all phases of my project. My miscellaneous entries were the largest part of the data, and the questions asked within this category evolved from "What does that mean?" to "Am I following my professional values to the best of my ability?" That kind

of transformation defines what it means to fill the gap. I have learned from various mentors that vocabulary and comfort will come with time, but the internal challenges that come with interpreting and becoming what I need to be are often what affect me most. Demers (2005) states this affect by saying, “By successfully facilitating interactions the interpreter gains knowledge of interaction topics, increases her language proficiency, hones professional behavior and ethical judgment, and thereby builds the schemas she has of various situations” (p. 223). This means that as I do the thing, I will get better at the work I am doing.

One conclusion is that I have found that success is largely determined by my own confidence and the process of becoming. Determination and devotion to building a better version of myself motivate me and uplift me to become the best interpreter I can.

My aim in this project was to help other emerging professionals learn what they could expect to experience in a K–12 setting, centering mentorship and personal practice as I helped myself to face the gap. If I had had known what I could expect to experience, I could have made more informed decisions and prepared myself better for a whole spectrum of impacts. Now, I move forward not just with the skills and tools needed to interpret, but with the confidence that I *am* an interpreter—capable, reflective, and ready to continue learning.

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APPENDIX A

Sample questions to journal and ask others:

- What was today like for you?
- Overall feeling of today's work?
- What was the most challenging and what was the easiest?
- What felt like a win?

Color-Coding Scheme:

- Blue: Vocabulary
- Green: Setting, location, and headings
- Red: Resources, challenges, and homework
- Black: Intrapersonal details and feedback

Professional Log Sample Entry:

observation January

Silver= ear point S shake away

Gold= ear point yellow shake away

When signing numbers 10 and up only do one movement

How do you sign the year?

Orchestra

Moves forward to show pa/teacher's movement

Strategies=s slide to explode side record=middle finger circle table

Showing how the tempo just pops up hers saying why did you throw in the death jokes?

Silent and or crickets

Appropriate equal right right

Mentor had moves with notes and mimics teacher's head

I recognize the corral

I got the right CL to show violin- Yay!!!

Why choose to step back one piece plays?

Can wear Heather dark

Pattern equals?

Take it over heart versus Center

Music slur equals pinky line draw

English class

Take the crown

Cheat = Mock on elbow

Shakespeare= s shake throw

Nature (us as ourselves) versus nurture (how we are raised)

Dense equals Cha cheek

Why don't they interpret while reading?

Do you get a book when the students get a book?

When in doubt ask a consumer