Sign Language Interpreting in Academia

The Austrian Perspective

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Austrian Situation

- Population
  - 8,500,000 inhabitants : 10,000 Deaf

- Deaf Education
  - Special schools: Oralist approach
  - Little professional education: skilled crafts
  - Some bilingual classes
    success impeded by institutional framework
  - Integration in mainstream classes without SL
  - UN Convention has started slow changes

Austrian Situation II

- **Sign Language Interpreting**
  - Association founded in 1998
    - after WFD congress of Vienna in 1995
  - ~ 120 qualified Interpreters
  - Education
    - BA or MA study programme at Graz University
      (second language with a spoken first language)
    - GESDO – 3 Years full time training in Linz
    - AFL – 2 Years of weekend seminars and internships
      (for SL competent hearing students)
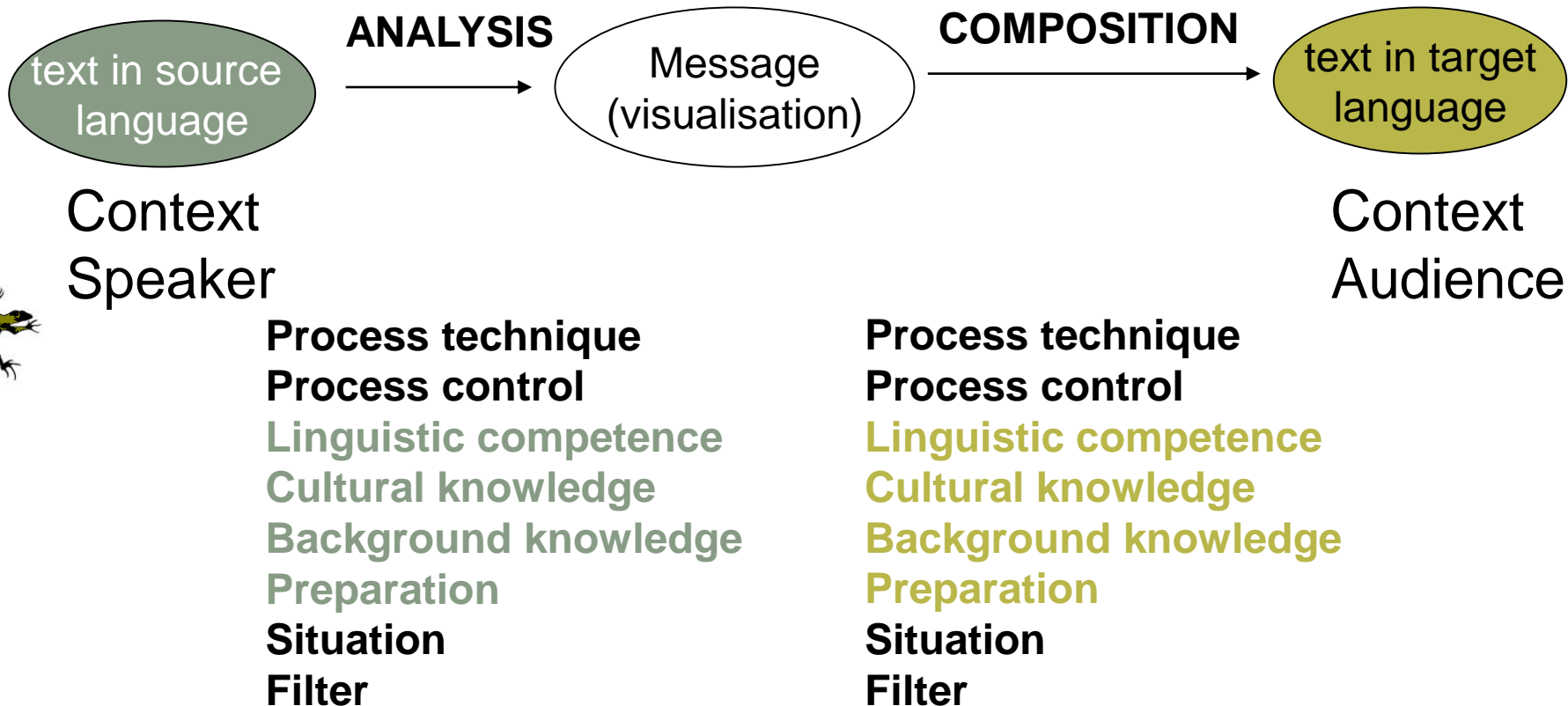   + qualifying examination

Sign Language Interpreting

- Professional life (as much as needed)

- Private life (limited budget: 2.400-2.600 €/y)

- School/High school (some interpretation)

- University level : GESTU (Vienna)
  - ~13 Deaf students
  - Information center for students using SL
  - Support for Deaf/HH students

Interpreting process: Simultaneous I

ANALYSIS → COMPOSITION

text in source language → **Message (visualisation)** → **text in target language**

Context Speaker

Context Audience

Process technique
Process control
Linguistic competence
Cultural knowledge
Background knowledge
Preparation
Situation
Filter

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Interpreting Process: Simultaneous II

- Listening/Watching

- Understanding

- Decoding of message from source language (eliminate the linguistic form!)

- Encoding into target language

- Producing

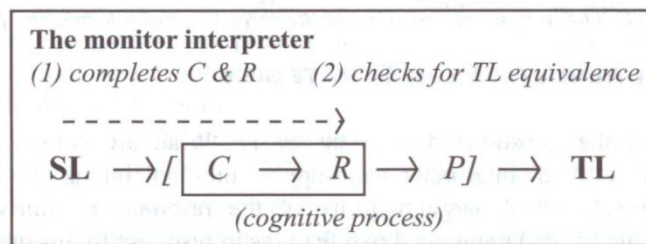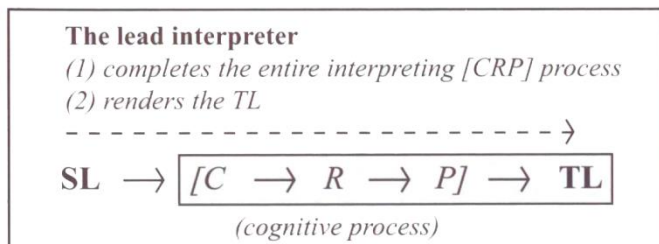- Self control

- Controlling if the customer has understood

Team Interpreting why?

- **Physical and psychic strain on interpreter**
  - Danger of RMI (Repetitive Movement Injury)
- **Human concentration span: 20 minutes**
  - > 30 min error frequency goes up (Vidal 1997)
- **Pictures or presentation on screen/wall** (behind the lead/producing interpreter)
- **Spelling of proper names/feeding numbers**
- **Monitoring and correcting**
- **Support and management of environment**

Definitions (Hoza 2010)
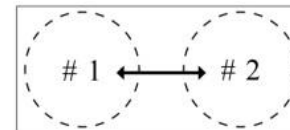
- Lead interpreter/Monitor interpreter

The lead interpreter
(1) completes the entire interpreting [CRP] process
(2) renders the TL
$$SL \rightarrow [C \rightarrow R \rightarrow P] \rightarrow TL$$
(cognitive process)

The monitor interpreter
(1) completes C & R   (2) checks for TL equivalence
$$SL \rightarrow [\, C \rightarrow R \,] \rightarrow P] \rightarrow TL$$
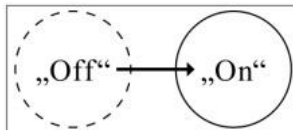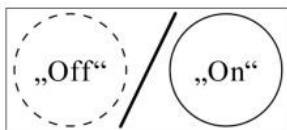*(cognitive process)*

'concentrating' (C) = understanding the message, 'representing' (R) = forming a mental picture and 'planning' (P) = formulating the message in the TL

- Team work culture

independent   monitoring   interdependent/ collaborating

„Off" / „On"   „Off" → „On"   # 1 ↔ # 2

Interpreting in Academia: Lecturers

- **Speakers**   (Napier et al 2006)
  - Mainly untrained in rhetorics
  - Many non-native lecturers in academia
  - Text is read, not spoken freely => high speed
- **Specialized, formal source texts (monologic)**
  - e.g. Molecular biology, French literature
  - Written text: sentences longer, more complex, less redundant than spoken text
  - Technical vocabulary
  - Proper names that are unknown

Interpreting in Academia:
Deaf students

- Lack of background knowledge (education!)
  - Processes
  - General knowledge

- Low language skills
  - in written language
  - in signed language

Interpreting in Academia:
Framework

- **Little space in lecture rooms**
  - Positioning, eye contact
- **Volume of speakers too low**
  - Background noises
  - Poor technical equipment
- **No/little preparation material**
- **No visual input** (lecture without presentation)
- **Lack of technical vocabulary in SL**
  - Fingerspelling of unknown words

DolmetschService **Plus**
Gebärdensprache

GESTU:
Deaf students in academia

- Permanently established
(pilot project started in 2010)

- Funded by Ministry of Science and Social Ministry

- ~13 Deaf students/5 hard of hearing students

- Located in Vienna

- 4 Vienna Universities involved

GES TU WIEN   gehörlos erfolgreich studieren

GESTU:
Service for students (D, HH)

- Information center
- Provision of
  - Tutors
  - Interpreters (max 5 lectures)
  - Notetakers
  - Speech-to-text reporters (for HH)
- Technical support
  - Respeaking
  - Live Streaming
  - Recording of lectures (interpreters)

GESTU:
Technical vocabulary

- Development of technical signs
  - Workgroup with deaf student, interpreters, linguist, [deaf professional]
  - Online database with SL videos and explanations of input
    - classified by area (multiple tags possible)
      - Biology
      - Comparative Literature
      - Economics
      - Information Technology

GESTU
Gains of the project I

- Duration of studies is shortened
  (2 have already finished)

- Awareness raising with lecturers, Deaf and fellow students

- Access to preparation material via MOODLE

- Technical improvements

  - In-ear-monitoring for the SLIs

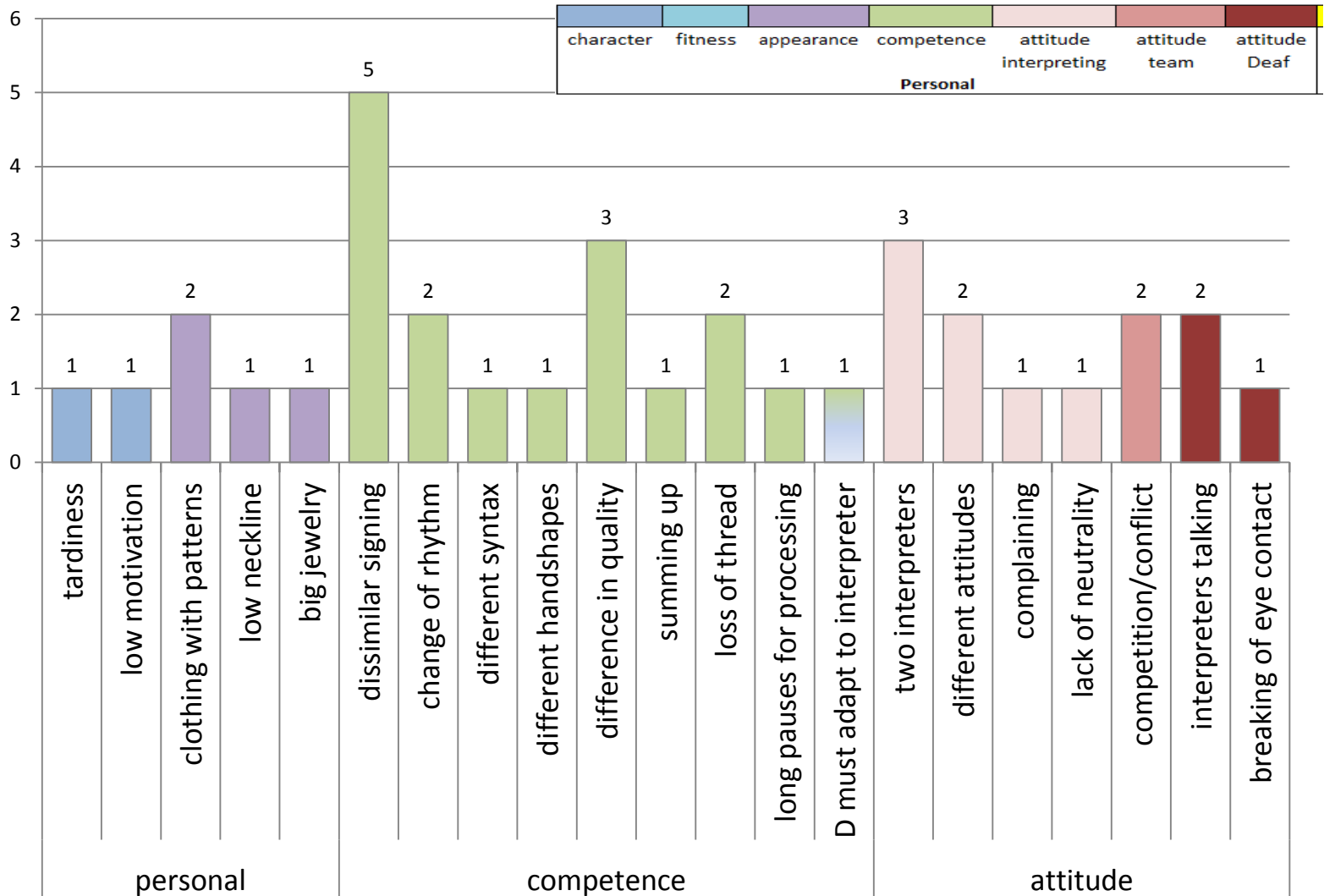 - Capturing of lectures and interpretation

  - Speech-to-text

DolmetschService **Plus**
Gebärdensprache

- Development and documentation of technical signs

- Interpreter teams for all lectures

- Preparation time paid

- Regular exchange of SLIs and Deaf students

- „Learning organisation"

Disruptions in team interpreting I
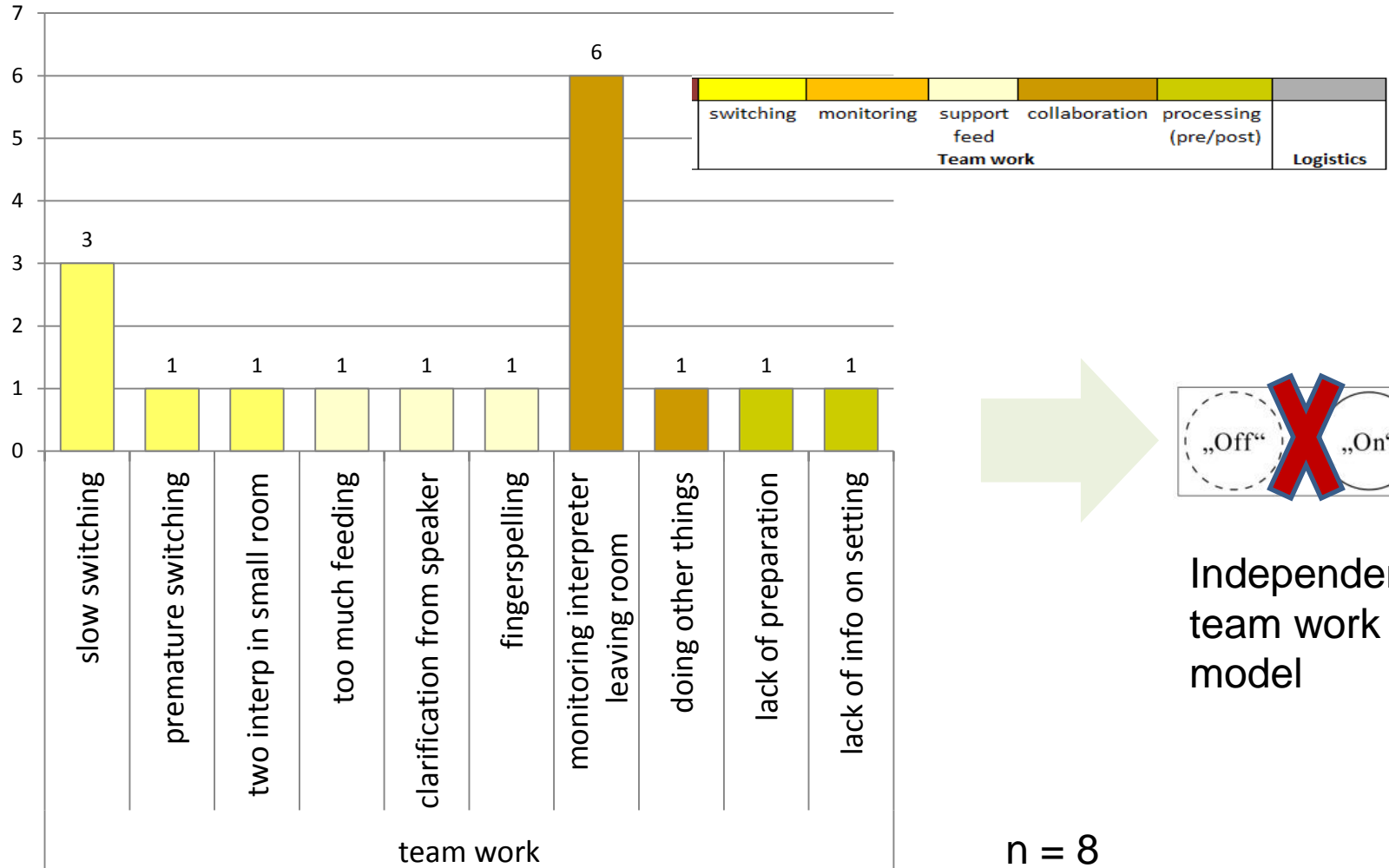

n = 8

Disruptions in team interpreting II

Independent team work model

n = 8
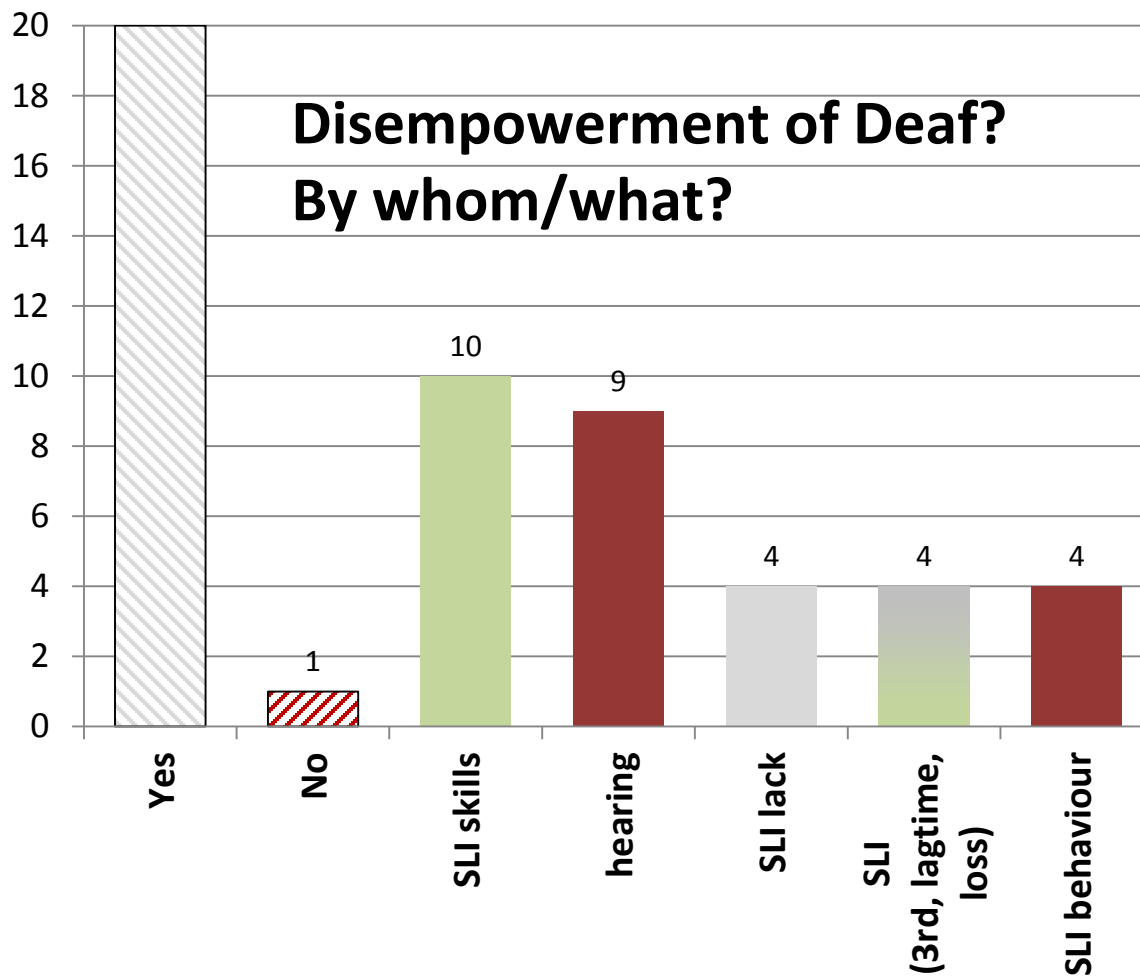
Study on Team interpreting Citations from interviews

"I am well into watching an interpreter and have got used to her style. After the switching, the second interpreter **signs all differently**, style wise or lexically. In the beginning it is very hard for me to understand and to understand the "new" interpreter. It takes some time to adapt to her way of signing. But then, there is another spell and it all starts again. For me, it would be better to have just one interpreter for the whole time. Or **two interpreters who are attuned to each other** and have the same style, use the same signs and syntax so that I can understand them better."

"I have seen monitoring interpreters correcting their producing colleagues. But it is not certain that the lead interpreter succeeds in taking the feed, sometimes **the feed comes too late** and cannot be built in any more. It cannot be used. I have seen that interpreters could not go back to where the information was missing. Not very often, but it happens."

Study on power and responsibility
Disempowerment?

Disempowerment of Deaf?
By whom/what?

n = 21

character	fitness	appearance	competence	attitude interpreting	attitude team	attitude Deaf	switching	monitoring	support feed	collaboration	processing (pre/post)	Logistics
			Personal							Team work		

"If I am the customer and have a self reliant attitude, I can exercise power **if my SLI is able to relay it**. Power comes from my role and my education, my knowledge, self esteem and self reliance."

"If the SLI has not got enough education or background knowledge of the topic/situation, I do not get the full information or it may be confused. In such a case I renounce to ask questions, because I know that she will use a lower register when voicing my message."

„If I have to give a speech, …. I talk about how I want to have my signs interpreted into German (word choice!), ask if the SLI wants the technical terms to be finger spelt or if she prefers to use a intermediate sign that we define beforehand. I inform her about my preferences as to register and word choice (instead of "change" pls. use "modify")"

Literature

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