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Gebärdensprache

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# Power and Responsibility in Interpreting Situations:

The Views of Austrian Deaf customers

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# Austrian Situation

- Population
  - 8,000,000 inhabitants : 10,000 Deaf
- Deaf Education
  - Special schools: Oralist approach, but hope 😊
  - 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



## 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
  - Tutors, interpreters, notetakers
  - Technical support/technical vocabulary



## Power and Responsibility

- Perception of **power imbalances** between/amongst Deaf/hearing Interpreters
- Awareness of Deaf consumers in terms of **power/responsibility** of the interpreter and Deaf people themselves
- **Strategies of empowerment** used by Deaf people in interpreted interactions





- Participants
  - 21 Deaf consumers
  - 11 women, 10 men
  - Aged from 22 to 51 years
  - Capital: 7
  - 4 Federal countries: 14  
(<> Austrian population: Vienna: 25%)





# Study design II

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- Participants: education
  - Professional training: 9
  - Trade school: 3
  - High school: 8
  - University: 1



## ■ Methodology

- Interviews with open ended questions (ÖGS)
- Analysis of interviews in English (worksheet)
- Classification of answers
- Evaluation in a table,  
counting the occurrences of similar items





# Interviews: Analysis

- Length of interview  
by sex, age group and education
  - Min: 00:09:24 / Max: 00:52:44

## Length of Interviews



	professional training	trade school	high school	university	Total
f, 15-30		00:22:15	00:37:24	00:41:38	00:32:12
f, 30-60	00:31:25		00:31:56		00:31:36
m, 15-30	00:25:07	00:22:08	00:25:36		00:24:37
m, 30-60	00:18:48		00:44:56		00:27:30
<b>Total</b>	<b>00:25:06</b>	<b>00:22:13</b>	<b>00:34:58</b>	<b>00:41:38</b>	<b>00:29:14</b>



# Results I

Power imbalances in interpreting?  
Who has the power?

“I would say most power is with the hearing person,  
second is the SLI and the Deaf is last.”



## Power imbalances in interpreting? Who has the power?

- **18 yes/2 no/1 don't know**
- Hearing and interpreter: 6
- Interpreter: 3
- Deaf and hearing: 4
- Deaf: 1
- Depends: 4



## Disempowerment of Deaf? By whom/what?

“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.”



## Disempowerment of Deaf? By whom/what?

- **20 yes/1 no**
- SLI skills: 10
- Hearing: 9
- SLI lack: 4
- SLI process (lag time, loss, 3rd person): 4
- SLI behaviour: 4





# Results III

Do you have power?

How do you exercise it over the SLI?

"The first time, I used a SLI at the age of 15. I did not know who had the power, until I realized it was me.

I am the communication partner of the hearing, the SLI is interpreting."





Do you have power?

How do you exercise it over the SLI?

- **10 yes/2 no/3 don't know**
- Position of interpreter: 6
- Choice of interpreter: 4
- Arrangement of appointment: 4
- Sign without regard = trust: 4
- Give information: 4
- ...



## Results IV

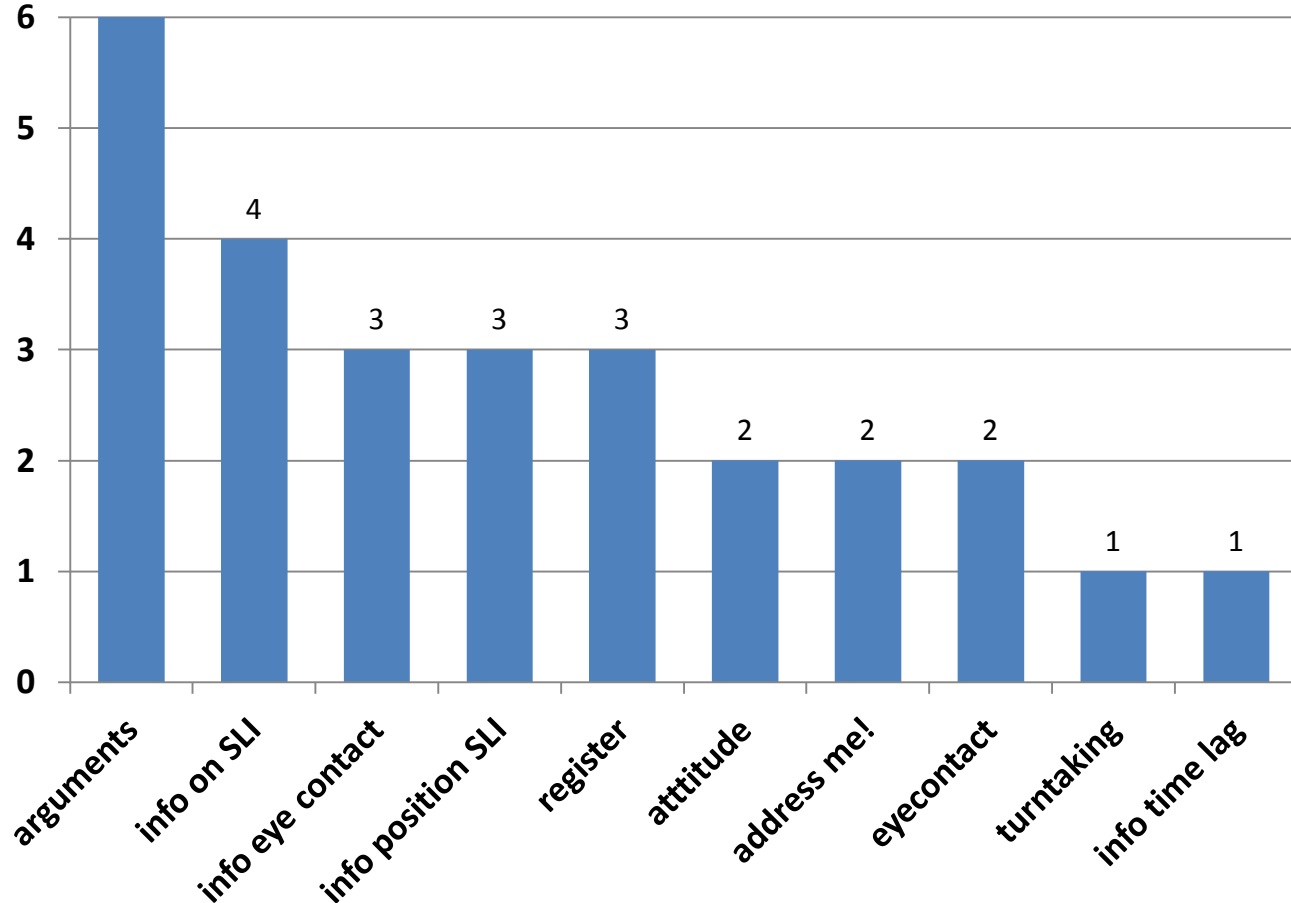
How do you exercise power over the hearing?

“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.”



# Results IV

How do you exercise power over the hearing? <sup>6</sup>



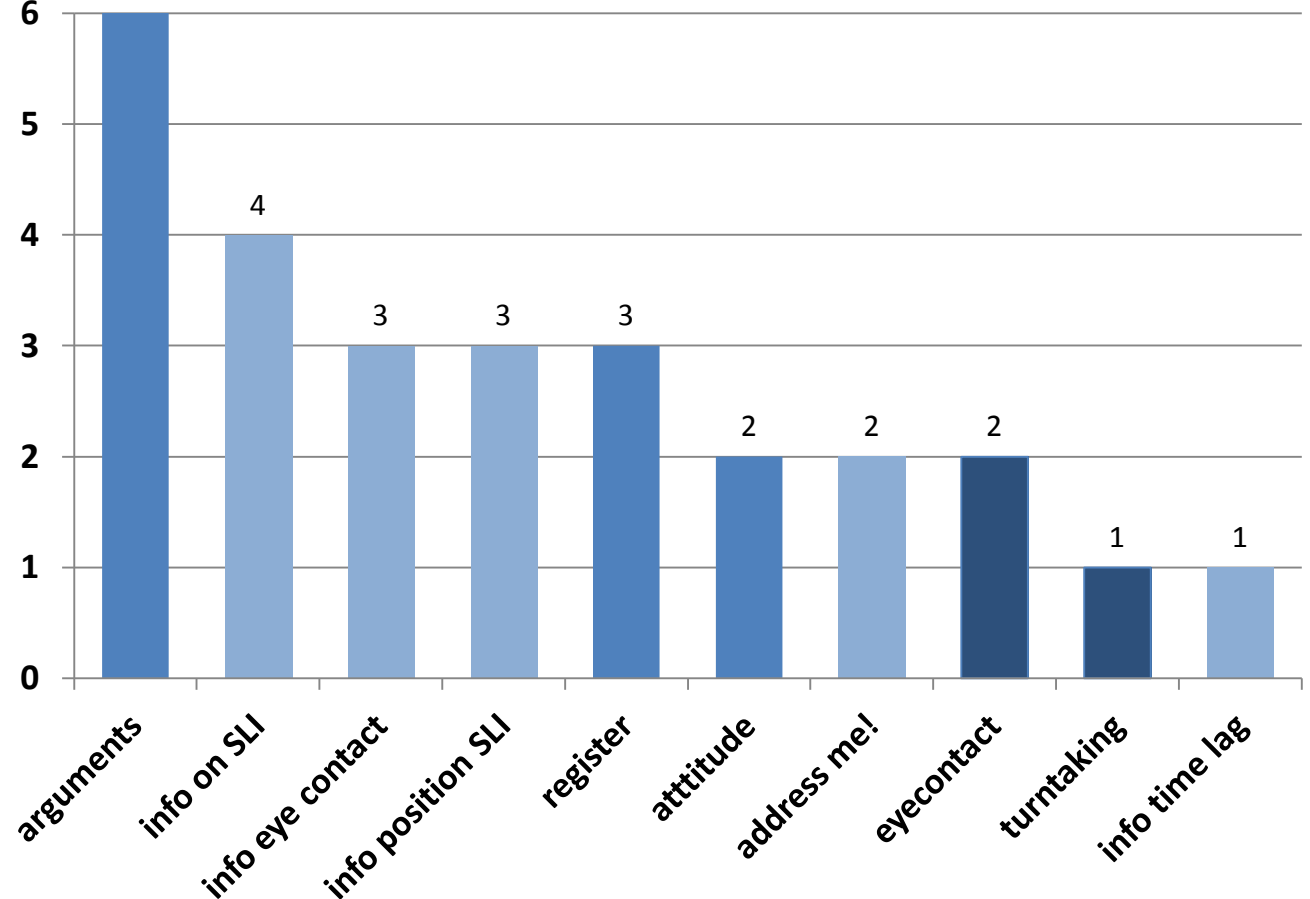


# Results IV

## How do you exercise power over the hearing? <sup>6</sup>



- Attitude
- Speech act
- Nonverbal interaction





# Results V

## How do you maximize your power?

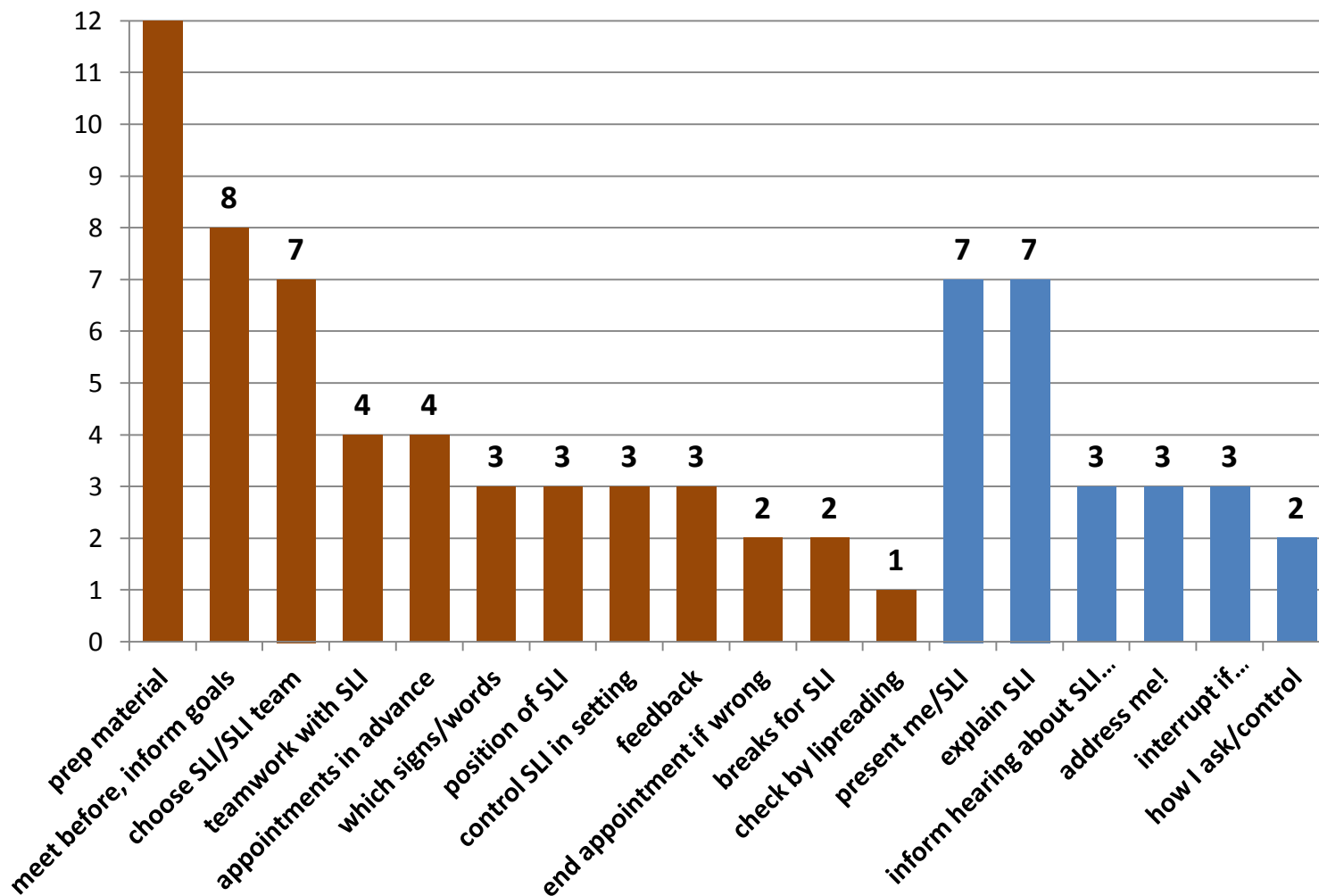
„ If I have to give a speech, .... I talk about how I want to have my signs interpreted into German (word choice!), ask if the SLI wants the technical terms to be finger spelt or if she prefers to use a intermediate sign that we define beforehand. I inform her about my preferences as to register and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





# Results V

## How do you maximize your power?



# Results VI

Does the SLI have power? Which one?

„The SLI exercises power by giving more preference to the hearing person than to my input and not giving me her voice (I cannot shout to make the speaker aware of my input).”





# Results VI

Does the SLI have power? Which one?

- **14 yes/2 no/5 don't know**
- Interpret faithfully: 5
- Take turns: 4
- Interpret emotion: 4
- Ask for clarification: 4
- Choice of register: 4
- Take assignment: 2 (!)
- ...



## Results VII

Do you have power over the SLI outside of the setting?

„I talk about interpreters to other Deaf people.

As the Deaf community is so small, bad news travels fast - it spreads like oil on water.”



Do you have power over the SLI outside of the setting?

- **14 yes/6 no/1 don't know**
- Talk about SLI amongst D: 6
- Future choice of interpreter: 5
- Critique: 3
- Private contact: 3
- ...



## Results VIII

Does the SLI have power over you outside of the setting?

“If there is no personal relationship, they have no power, but if so, their power is huge. I try to have personal relationships only with a few whom I trust and get along with. If there is personal relationship, their moral power is huge, there may be an influence of problems in interpreting spilling over to our private relationship and the other way round.”





# Results VIII

Does the SLI have power over you outside of the setting?

- **11 yes/9 no/1 don't know**
- Personal relationship: 6
- Influence on my opinion: 4
- Choice of assignment: 2
- Choice of time of assignment: 2
- **Talk amongst SLI: 1 (!)**
- ...



Do you have responsibilities?  
Which ones?

“I observe the reactions of the hearing person to see if s/he has understood and I ask for clarification, if I something is unclear to me.”



# Results IX

Do you have responsibilities? Don't know: 1  
Which ones?

Hearing	SLI	Deaf
Explanation of SLI: 6	Preparation: 10	Control of the situation: 4
...	Breaks: 4	Arrange appointment: 3
	Clear signing: 3	...
	Payment: 3	
	...	

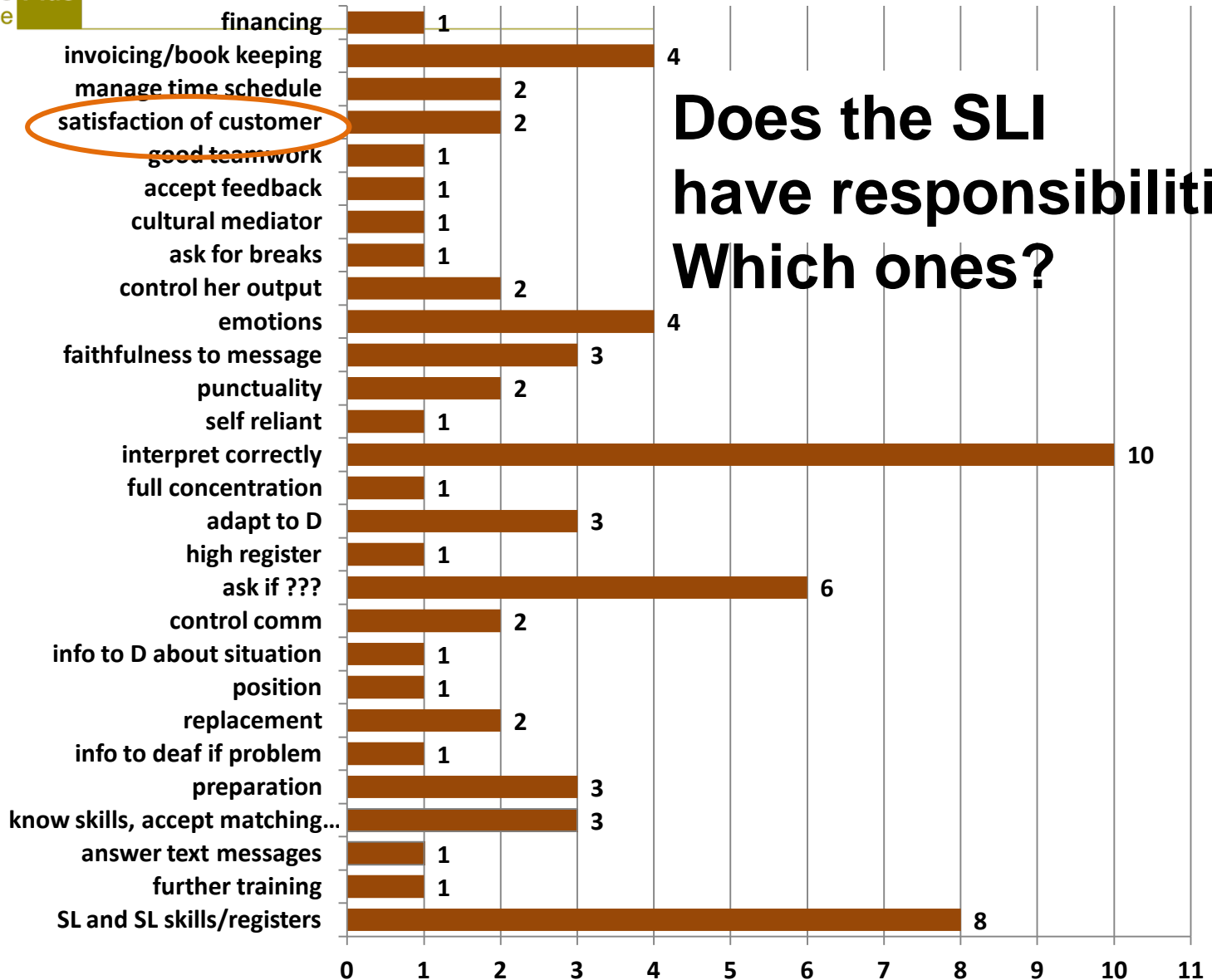


Does the SLI have responsibilities?  
Which ones?

„The interpreter's responsibility is also to support the deaf person and even out some of the power differential - her role is that of a cultural mediator.”



# Results X



**Does the SLI  
have responsibilities?  
Which ones?**





# Conclusion

- Exercise of power outside of the setting
  - Deaf > SLI
    - Talk about SLI amongst Deaf: 6
  - SLI > Deaf
    - Talk about Deaf amongst SLI: 1
- Blurred boundaries of concepts
  - Power
  - Trust
  - Responsibility





# My favorite quote 😊

“An interpreter has to take decisions all the time!”

