FEATURE ARTICLE: The MEDISIGNS project – a journey in interpreting and healthcare settings

Marinella Salami: “For many doctors, working with an interpreter is not the communication ‘norm’ and sometimes they forget that information can be difficult to understand.”

> page 6

Lourdes Calle: “(...) establishing learning outcomes for SLI graduates ensures quality interpreting services throughout Europe (…)”

> page 9

Marcello Cardarelli: “In a court we are pivotal to the full understanding of all those involved; and that is a huge responsibility”

> page 10

Raili Loit: “.According to the participants’ feedback, the efsli 2012 Summer school fulfilled all expectations and even more.”

> page 12

Liivi Hollman: “[the efsli Summer school] was, in many respects, an eye opener.”

> page 13

Robert Adam: “Why do we have Deaf and hearing teams? How many should there be in a ‘team’?”

> page 14

Laure Wery, Thibaut Dalle and Véronique Savary: “For sign language interpreters, perhaps more than for spoken language interpreters, the interpretation of religious ceremonies - a highly specialised field - can be particularly tricky.”

> page 15
From left to right:
Liivi Hollman, vice-president and head of the publicity and promotion department (EVKTŰ, Estonia),
Marinella Salami, president & head of training department (ANIOS, Italy),
Paul Pryce-Jones, treasurer (ASLI, England, Wales & Northern Ireland)

Contact details
For more information, please visit the efsli website:  
www.efsli.org
or send an email to:  
secretary@efsli.org

Disclaimer
The efsli newsletter is produced on behalf of efsli by the Editor, in collaboration with the Board and external contributors. All rights reserved. This publication (or any part thereof) may not be reproduced, transmitted or stored in print or electronic format (including, but not limited, to any online service, any database, or any part of the internet), or in any other format in any media whatsoever, without the prior written permission of efsli. Efsli accepts no liability for the accuracy of the contents or any opinions expressed therein.

If you have any sign language interpreter news, what is happening with your national association, details of your Annual General Meeting or your Conference, knowledge of upcoming training events or other related events, then please share them with us. Send details to the Editor at newsletter@efsli.org

Content of Newsletter

Editorial: Stepping Away, Turning Forward  > page 3
President’s Report  > page 4
Editorial  > page 5
The MEDISIGNS project – a journey in interpreting and healthcare settings  > page 6
efsli Working Seminars: coming to an agreement on learning outcomes for sign language interpreters across Europe  > page 9
efsli Spring school, Thessaloniki 4th-6th may 2012  > page 10
A glance back at the efsli Summer school  > page 12
efsli Summer school 2012  > page 13
Report on the efsli Autumn workshop in London: Deaf and hearing interpreters working in a team  > page 14
Interpreting in LSF in religious settings  > page 15
Calendar of events  > page 17
Stepping Away, Turning Forward  
Tim Curry, Out-going Editor

The efsli newsletter has been a good source of discussion, information and sharing. As editor I met many new and old friends, as well as learned from the different cultures, languages and personalities. I enjoy writing and reading about the advancement of our profession throughout Europe. However, I am now stepping away from the responsibility as editor. I remain a member of efsli, a friend to many, a supporter of our profession and its stakeholders. I look forward to many years of service to our profession and to my friends. Thank you for your encouragement and support during my time as editor. I know the new editor will find a great group of professionals to aid him in his new responsibilities.

I look forward to seeing you all at the next event.
Spring is a special season of the year: a season of rebirth and renewal. So it isn’t coincidence that this issue of the efsli Newsletter focuses on training. In some ways, training is a kind of renewal. It refreshes knowledge, refines skills and strengthens competences.

Since 2007 efsli has dedicated much time as well as human and financial resources to training. In 2012 we organised three efsli schools (Thessaloniki, Tallinn and London), two courses by special request (Vienna and Paris) and an ad hoc course at the University of Nicosia in Cyprus in cooperation with the local Federation of the Deaf.

The European model curriculum for sign language interpreters in now a reality and almost at the finish line. More and more attention is being paid to training in specialised fields, such as healthcare settings, as the MEDISIGNS conference reported on last March.

These are just some of the reports and articles you will find in this issue but, before I let you get on with your reading, I would like to send two warm greetings: first, a fond farewell to Tim Curry, former editor of the efsli Newsletter. Tim devoted a lot of time and energy to our newsletter, bringing enthusiasm and new ideas. It was a real pleasure to work with you, Tim. Thank you!

And a warm welcome to Peter Llewellyn-Jones, who will be our new editor starting with this issue. Peter has been a friend and a supporter of efsli for a long time behind the scenes. Now it is time to get to know him better through the efsli Newsletter. Welcome on board, Peter!
As the new editor of the Newsletter, I suppose that I had better introduce myself. My name is Peter Llewellyn-Jones and, for more years than I care to remember, I have been a sign language interpreter and interpreter trainer in the UK. But that’s enough about me.

Having read Marinella’s appreciation of the sterling work done by Tim, the outgoing editor, I’m beginning to realise that he’s going to be a hard act to follow.

The format of the Newsletter is now firmly established. The difference between the regular on-line efsli update and the quarterly Newsletter is that, whereas the former gives you up-to-date information on efsli’s activities, the latter gives you - the membership – the opportunity to feedback on efsli initiatives and contribute to the broader discussions that are exercising the minds of sign language interpreters across Europe.

Each edition of the Newsletter is only as interesting as the variety of the contributions and, as luck would have it, this – my first edition as editor – is fascinating. There are very positive reports on the 2012 efsli Spring, Summer and Autumn schools in Tallinn, Thessalonica and London and an excellent report on the three efsli workshops on the development of a Europe-wide curriculum and outcomes for sign language interpreter training programmes. A special conference at Trinity College in Dublin in March marked the conclusion of the particularly successful MEDISIGN project and, in these pages, you will find a detailed report on the papers presented.

2013 promises to be another very busy year for the efsli Board and for the membership. A quick glance at the efsli website will tell you that this year’s AGM and annual conference in September is in the beautiful city of Ljubljana and the theme for the conference is particularly topical as the latest technologies begin to shape all of our lives.

If you have any news from your region or country or any views that you would like to share with colleagues across Europe, the efsli Newsletter is your platform. Please send your contributions or, indeed, comments on the Newsletter, to newsletter@efsli.org. By working together we can make the efsli Newsletter indispensable reading for all efsli members.

I look forward to meeting you at one of this year’s events.
Interpreting in healthcare settings is one of those specialised fields where there has been occasional ad hoc training. Indeed, the need for more formalised (and potentially accredited) training for practising interpreters in healthcare contexts has been expressed by professionals and training institutions across Europe. The MEDISIGNS project, funded by the European Commission under the Life Long Learning Programme (Leonardo Da Vinci), started in 2010 with the aim of creating training materials and resources for sign language interpreters working in healthcare settings. After two years the project has now come to an end and the conference held on 1st and 2nd March 2013 at Trinity College Dublin showcased the results and shared the tools it has created as part of the project’s outcomes. It was also an opportunity for European interpreter trainers, healthcare professionals, Deaf community members and interpreters to learn more about it and see how they could contribute to future collaborations. Course materials have been published on the MEDISIGNS website (www.medisigns.eu) and an iPhone App will be ready soon (www.medisigns.mobi). If it sells well, an Android version will also be released.

Haaris Sheikh from Intersource Group Limited, an accredited consulting practice based in Ireland and promoter of the project, opened the conference by giving an overview of MEDISIGNS. As Sheikh pointed out, MEDISIGNS included experts, trainers and practitioners in Ireland, Cyprus, Poland, Sweden and the UK to create training materials for the purpose of:

1. training healthcare professionals in Deaf-awareness issues and improving communication when working with signed languages
2. providing sign language interpreters resources for their continuous (post-qualification) professional development (CPD) and when interpreting in medical interactions
3. providing Deaf communities with a deeper understanding of triadic interpreted relationships, so maximising their healthcare interaction experience.

It was an ambitious project targeted not at finding the perfect model but one that works well. The positive feedback and impact has stimulated project partners to submit another application for MEDISIGN 2. efsli supported the first round of the project and now is proud to be one of the partners of the second.

The presenters invited to the conference were all involved in the project with different roles, skills and expertise. The Irish experience was presented from the point of view of a provider, the ‘Public Service Healthcare’ (Caoimhe Gleece, Health Service Executive, Ireland), and from the perspective of Deaf people as patients and service users (Carmel Grehan, Trinity College Dublin). The Irish Public Service Healthcare has recently worked on changing the culture of the health and social care service by building sound foundations for inclusive health and social care practice and by increasing the capacity of patients and service users to engage through comments, complaints and feedback. Some steps have been taken to help people better understand what they can expect from the Public Service Healthcare (e.g. the National Healthcare Charter – You and your Health Service) and create conditions to facilitate access to services (e.g. the draft policy on access for the Deaf community). A sign of improvement is the translation of the HSE complaints process into Irish Sign Language (ISL) (www.hse.ie/ysys) with the support of MEDISIGNS and the Intersource Group. However, the current situation is far from being ideal. In the 21st century some ‘horror stories’, as Carmel Grehan defined them, still occur: such as the one about a Deaf woman in the post-op ward who didn’t sleep for three nights because she was cold. Lack of (or poor quality) communication resulted in neglecting her needs as a human being. As for ISL interpreters in Ireland, Grehan reported that there are 83 trained interpreters, but only approximately 60-65 of them are practicing on a regular basis. The limited number of interpreters inhibits choice (especially preoblematic given the sensistivity of such settings) and the lack of availability of interpreters with specialist training increases the risk of using incompetent and/or untrained interpreters. According to a study by Smeijers & Pfau (2009) members of the medical profession...
continue to use outdated and insulting terms such as ‘deaf and dumb’. Grehan also shared the results of empirical research based on a ‘two-focus group approach’ with Deaf community members and experienced Irish Sign Language interpreters. Gaps between the notion of “equal access” and practice were stressed. One of the most challenging points is the lack of knowledge about the Deaf community and Irish Sign Language in healthcare settings. In principle, if an interpreter is required, the Deaf person’s request should be honoured: it isn’t appropriate for hospitals to decide if interpreters are needed or not. Similarly, it would not be appropriate for doctors to assume that a D/deaf friend/partner or family member or child should interpret. It is also true that medical professionals and staff often ignore the fact that there are many ways to be D/deaf. As an example, some Deaf people use their voice to speak but prefer an interpretation from English to ISL to ensure that they understand the message. Hospitals should not assume that, because the Deaf person speaks, they can cope by lipreading or writing. The Deaf perspectives on mental health settings also highlighted other concerns such as:

- not being comfortable with an interpreter being privy to sensitive information
- often not being told that they could have an interpreter
- the interpreter’s skill or how connected they are to the Deaf community
- being uncomfortable with a Deaf counsellor

Some of the critical points tackled by Grehan could be solved by applying the findings of research to our training. This was the main topic presented by Jamina Napier (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh). What is available is a large body of healthcare communication research dating back to the 1960s and a growing body of work from spoken language interpreting. The sign language interpreting research, though, is still in its infancy. One of the biggest challenges in this setting, as reported by interpreters, is the lack of signs for medical terminology and concepts. The terminology can actually be an impediment to successful communication between practioners and patients. This much is true even when they share the same language. Napier described research into the medical lexicon carried out in Australia for the development of the interactive multimedia dictionary and database of Australian sign language (used to create a shared online vocabulary) which has a section for medical terms – the Auslan Medical SignBank. Data was collected through online surveys and focus groups of Deaf consumers and interpreters. Training can further develop the lexicon by exploring the existing signs and by reflecting on the strategies that are used if some medical signs are missing or are unknown to interpreters. However, other features are equally important: medical discourse, communicative interactions, and the process of the interpreter’s mediation. Medical interpreter training varies greatly: from short workshops to postgraduate degrees, so exercises, role-plays and analysis are options that need to be adapted to meet the variety of training needs.

Communication was also the focus of Lorraine Leeson (Trinity College Dublin) and Anna-Lena Nilsson’s (Stockholm University) presentation. Medical interactions are ‘routine-ized’ to a high degree. There are expected procedures and processes that medical staff enact, but these procedures are not routine for interpreters and Deaf patients. Given this assumption, what is known and/or expected by the medical staff does not necessarily match either the patient or the interpreter’s knowledge or expectations. Poor communication can lead to misdiagnosis, erroneous diagnosis and treatment, poor compliance and unsatisfactory follow up. Communication is essential in the medical profession and presumes different abilities, for example the ability to take an accurate medical history from a patient. All parties in the interpreted healthcare triad have to work to maximize what is/can be shared effectively to bridge gaps in experience/culture/language. This leads us to reflect on the triadic exchanges themselves, the construction of meaning and conceptualization – how to get into somebody’s mind/world, the role of the interpreter and his/her involvement in the process by making decisions at different levels.

Ilana Rozanes (Trinity College Dublin) further looked into the role of sign language interpreters in medical settings through ‘comfort zone’ theory. Throughout the decision-making process, which should go beyond the ‘what is right, what is wrong’ deontological schema, interpreters have to come to terms with their own goals and priorities. Goals are subject to change, depending on the assignment and on the development of the professional’s career. Interpreters tend to be protective of their goals and this is what ‘comfort zone’ theory is about. What is challenging is ‘instances’ of a different nature that, if interpreters...
don’t know how to cope with or minimize, may threaten these goals and put at risk the dynamic equilibrium of the comfort zone. However, threatening instances allow interpreters to be creative and to grow as professionals by developing a wider range of approaches and strategies. In other words, they keep the work challenging but also enriching.

For many doctors, working with an interpreter is not the communication ‘norm’ and sometimes they forget that information can be difficult to understand. The information given is of crucial importance as it enables patients to make decisions about their own lives. The concept of consent is essential here and is connected to a patient-centred approach and to the concept of ‘self-determination’. It may sound obvious, but fully-informed consent must be assured regardless of the language. Asim Sheikh, a barrister-at-law based in Ireland, presented a paper which clarified some of the basics issues:

- the concept of self-determination
- the importance of consent in healthcare
- what ‘capacity’ means in a healthcare setting
- key issues relating to confirming informed consent
- how the consent process could be improved for a Deaf patient

The concept of consent is not specific to Deaf people; it is central to humanity. Basically, we all want to have control of our lives.

The primacy of relationships – interpreters deal with human beings - and the recognition of interpreting as a practice profession (technical skills are only one component of effectiveness) were the key issues addressed by the last presenter at this two-day conference, Robyn Dean (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh). Dean and Pollard’s demand-control schema is widely known and does not need to be explained here; it is a very useful tool used to teach and develop decision-making skills with interpreters. Whatever decision-making schema we choose to follow, the basic principle to keep in mind is that a decision-making model is ‘dialogical’, i.e. between the interpreter and the situation, and is based on values. Interpreters are responsible for the values they hold and adhere to. Dean’s presentation was both theoretical and practical. She illustrated, step by step, a problem-based learning process that she has successfully used with her own students. Among others, observation and supervision are activities that have proved to be essential in developing the students’ skills of making a decision and reflecting on it.

The MEDISIGNS project, first edition, is now over. What have we learnt so far? Here are some pointers and open questions for future developments and discussion:

- Giving access does not automatically provide quality and equality. There are other factors to be considered e.g. cultural issues.
- How will the research inform training? What about interpreters who have already been trained? How do we actually improve training by using this research?
- Access to healthcare information is limited in many different countries. Having the recognition of sign language in any policies is very important. Evidence should be collected for better and more effective lobbying for change.
- There is a need for more research. One of the areas is whether and how Deaf and hearing interpreters can co-work/team-interpret effectively in healthcare settings
- There are minorities within the minority to be considered – cochlear implanted people, and deafened people, for example.
- The need for Deaf awareness training.

As efsi, we are grateful to the MEDISIGNS project team for the excellent results achieved. We are looking forward to cooperating with any future developments.
How did this process begin? Initially, a survey was sent to more than 50 European training programmes. Its goal was to collect all the information available in order to have an overview of SLI education to date. A report was prepared with the data gathered and sent to the participants in the I efsli working seminar (Utrecht, Netherlands, November 2011), hosted by the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. The focus of this seminar was on best practices in SLI teaching.

Then, with the findings of the Utrecht workshops, the report on SLI training programmes and other sources consulted, efsli presented a first learning outcomes draft proposal organised into knowledge domains. This working document was used for the discussion at the II efsli working seminar in Hamburg, Germany (March 2012). Although very rich discussions took place at these workshops, it was agreed that there was insufficient time for a complete revision of the proposal. Therefore, it was decided to open an online platform with which to continue the discussions. This platform was launched in October 2012. Organised by forums, the participants debated the learning outcomes sets updated during the Hamburg workshops.

In 2011 the efsli AGM agreed to establish a Committee of Experts (hereafter eCE). In November 2012, the revision of the learning outcome sets was the first task entrusted to the eCE, chaired by Prof. Lorraine Leeson (Trinity College Dublin). The result of this revision, entitled *Learning Outcomes for Graduates of a Three Year Interpreting Programme* -draft, was presented at the III efsli working seminar.

The III efsli working seminar was hosted by the Centre for Deaf Studies (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland) with trainers and interpreters from 16 countries attending. efsli president, Marinella Salami, opened the seminar with an invitation to Trinity College Dublin Provost Dr Patrick Prendergast to deliver a welcome speech. Prof. Lorraine Leeson, director of the Centre for Deaf Studies also welcomed the participants. In his keynote speech *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its relevance to sign language interpreter training programmes*, Prof. David Little explained what the CEFR is and how the CEFR can be used to define learning outcomes. In addition, he explored the varieties of learning discourse suitable to promote the achievement of those learning outcomes and the ways the CEFR can be used to design a coherent system of assessment. Finally, he introduced the European Language Portfolio and the role it might take in SLI training programmes. After Prof. Little’s presentation, efsli project coordinator, Lourdes Calle, presented an overview of the efsli working seminars, entitled *Learning outcomes for sign language interpreters: overview of the process and next steps*. In this presentation a step-by-step summary of the last year and a half provided participants with a clearer idea of the aims of the III efsli working seminar, and the actions to be taken in the coming months.
After the keynote presentations, a round table on assessment best practices was held. Sarah Bown (University of Wolverhampton, UK), Jemina Napier (Heriot-Watt University, Scotland) and Beppie van den Bogaerde (HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, Netherlands) gave presentations on assessing placements, adapting the SLPI (ASL) to the CEFR levels for Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT) and portfolio assessment, respectively.

After the plenary sessions participants attended different workshops to discuss the learning outcomes proposal presented by the eCE and to share assessment tools as well as achievement evaluation instruments. The workshops covered the following topics: assessment via written examination, interpreting tests, language tests, language portfolios, interpreting portfolios and assessment on the job. The outcomes of the workshops were presented by the chairs on the second day. Based on the feedback gathered regarding the learning outcomes proposal, efsli will work with the eCE plan to make final revisions and present the definitive version to the European Union institutions concerned by October 2013. The efsli board, efsli project coordinator and the eCE will also work on a set of assessment guidelines to accompany the learning outcomes proposal.

A quick look back at the achievements of these working seminars is the best witness to what efsli, in collaboration with trainers and interpreters, is capable of doing. efsli is very proud of the success of this process and looks forward to presenting the final documents in the coming months. The presentation of this document is a major step for both sign language users and interpreters because establishing learning outcomes for SLI graduates ensures quality interpreting services throughout Europe and guarantees the right to accessibility for Deaf people when travelling, studying and working anywhere in Europe.

efsli Spring school, Thessaloniki 4th-6th May 2012
Marcello Cardarelli, Italian Sign Language Interpreter and President of ANIOS

In May 2012 efsli, in cooperation with SDENG, the Greek Association of Sign Language Interpreters, organised its spring school in Thessaloniki, Greece. The theme was interpreting in legal settings and the school was led by the well-respected American interpreter and trainer, Sharon Neumann Solow.

This was my first experience of an efsli school and I was particularly attracted by the reputation of the leader and the opportunity to share knowledge and thoughts on the topic with colleagues from other countries across Europe.

I must here make special mention of the Greek organisation and hospitality; the group was lovely and, in the evenings, we had the opportunity to explore Thessaloniki.

Sharon led the three-day school with her customary clarity and her capacity to make even a topic as difficult as ‘legal interpreting’ easy to understand. We analysed different stages of the process of interpreting in legal settings, from preparation to the interpreting decisions we have to make when we are in a court: not an easy task as few of the people we work with fully understand the role of the interpreter.

As the participants came from different countries, we were able to talk about our different experiences and how the role of the Sign Language Interpreter varies across the different legal systems.

In my experience in Italy, judges often assume that the sign language interpreter is some sort of assistant to the Deaf person, rather than an impartial interpreter, and have even said to the interpreter ‘don’t interpret that’. That could be because, originally, our legislation required a person “who is able to communicate” with the deaf person and didn’t...
stipulate a professional interpreter. As examples of how different is it across Europe, Danish colleagues reported that they have identity badges describing the wearer as an ‘interpreter’ and other participants talked about having to dress in the black robes of a court official.

It’s very important to explain our role in the court to the judge and to the deaf people too. In some legal systems it is possible to speak to the court before it starts, in others it would be very difficult and, in Italy, impossible!

In some countries it is difficult to get information in advance about the legal process being followed, the people involved, the charges faced or the communication preferences of the Deaf participant(s), so we arrive at the court having had very little opportunity to prepare. It is important, therefore, that we have a very good understanding of the legal system of our own countries, the technical terms, the legal process, our role and the leeway we have to make (ethical) decisions.

The right of ‘suspected or accused persons who do not speak or understand the language of the criminal proceedings [to be] provided with interpretation’ is enshrined in EU law (directive 2010/64/EU) and this right extends to the whole of the legal process, including meetings with lawyers, questioning in police stations and appearances before the courts. The same directive goes on to stipulate that ‘the right to interpretation includes appropriate assistance for persons with hearing or speech impediments’.

The directive also states that ‘Member States shall take concrete measures to ensure that the interpretation and translation provided meets the quality required...’ and this means that we, as interpreters, also have a great deal of responsibility.

As well as having to raise the awareness of our role in the legal process, we also have to deal with the psychological pressures of working in, often, very stressful and sensitive situations. For this reason alone it is very important that we have continuing training and support in our own countries and across Europe.

Accuracy, impartiality, confidentiality, ethics, our (and others’) awareness of our role, and being able to work with other professionals are all key to our work as legal interpreters.

In a court we are pivotal to the full understanding of all those involved; and that is a huge responsibility.
A glance back at the efsli Summer school 2012
Raili Loit, a participant of the summer school, board member of the Estonian Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Having had a very positive and enriching experience by hosting the efsli 2009 AGM and conference, the Estonian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (Eesti Viipekeele Tõlkide Ühing – EVKTÜ) didn’t need to think for too long before accepting the sudden offer the efsli board made last autumn - to host another efsli event; this time the efsli 2012 summer school. The school took place from the 29th of June to the 1st of July in Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia, and brought together 16 Sign Language interpreters from Greece, Finland and Estonia.

The theme of the summer school was Ethical Dilemmas and Role Conflicts in Sign Language Interpreting – a topic which is always raising questions and leading to many interesting discussions amongst interpreters, as well as the other parties involved in interpreting situations. The lecturer was Peter Llewellyn-Jones from the United Kingdom, whose interesting and humorous approach to the topic made us think about professional behaviour and ethics from an angle quite different from that taught on traditional interpreter training programmes.

We discussed how different approaches to ethics and role can affect the behaviour and decision making of the interpreter and we explored questions like: What is “morality”? What ethical/moral principles ought we to live by? What is the meaning of “good” and how can it be defined? What is the role of an interpreter and what are the attributes of a professional interpreter? How and why should an interpreter follow a Code of Ethics / Conduct and is a Code needed at all? What are ethical dilemmas? How does the behaviour of an interpreter affect the course of the interpreting situation and the parties involved? etc. Among other topics, the concept of ‘role-space’ was also introduced.

The three days of schooling were content-rich and inspiring, filled with great ideas and a room-full of laughter. It was a good chance to get to know colleagues from other countries and acknowledge that the same kinds of problems, questions and dilemmas unite us all.

As well as the training sessions, we also had a chance to take some time off for a guided walk through the beautiful Old City of Tallinn and spend an evening enjoying traditional Estonian food accompanied by a lot of joy and laughter.

>> continue on page 13
According to the participants’ feedback, the efsli 2012 summer school fulfilled all expectations and even more. A big thank you to our wonderful lecturer Peter for awakening our thoughts, to Marinella for all her support and trust, to our lovely hard-working volunteers Anne-Mai and Sandra and to all the participants for furthering the efsli spirit!

efsli Summer school 2012  
Liivi Hollman, efsli vice-president

Attending the Summer School in Tallinn was the first opportunity I’ve had to participate in an efsli course. As well as the atmosphere and the engaging, humorous teaching style of the trainer, the school was, in many respects, an eye opener.

Far too often we follow the dos and don’ts of professional ‘codes of ethics’ without thinking about the principles behind them. We have agreed and adopted a certain ‘role’ to protect ourselves, the interpreters, as well as our clients by making ourselves as invisible as possible. We tend to deny that we have any influence on the situations we interpret and we comfort ourselves by thinking we are ‘just interpreters’, although we well know that even our presence itself has an influence on the interaction. We also know that there have been situations when we have had to ‘step out of role’. So why do we need a role we have to keep stepping in and out of? It can’t simply be that it makes our lives more interesting, so perhaps we need to think again about the notion of role and how we define and describe it.

This efsli Summer School gave us a different perspective by looking more deeply into what the role of the interpreter really is. Making our every-day professional decisions we should be guided by the deeper ethical principles upon which all our codes and role definitions are actually based. The ‘codes’, though, are often too limiting to describe all the possible courses of action in the different situations we find ourselves in and it may happen that, by sticking to our well-defined ‘role’, we are actually conflicting with the ethical principles behind the codes.

The best professional decisions are taken, then, not by blindly following the regulations on the behaviour of the interpreter but on the basis of our professional knowledge and inner moral values. In that way perhaps our approach and behaviour, based on deeper and wider considerations, might engender the trust of our clients, colleagues and, also, ourselves.
The efsli autumn school was held in London from 23rd until 25th November 2012 at the Signamic premises in south London. The workshop leaders were Robert Adam, Lorna Allsop, Mark Schofield and Christopher Stone, all of whom are Deaf or hearing interpreters with many years of experience working in Deaf and hearing interpreter teams in a variety of different settings. They are also experienced interpreter trainers (at the university, college and community workshop levels, as well as providing professional development courses). We were also fortunate to have Gino Gouby, a staff interpreter from Gallaudet University, acting as an ASL-using Deaf client for some of the role-plays and we are grateful to him for making himself available during his holiday in the UK!

It was a large group of 30 people from countries all over Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden, The Netherlands and the UK. This ensured a wide range of Deaf and hearing interpreters with a different experiences and language sets. Some people were very new to working in Deaf/hearing interpreter teams, whilst others had many years of experience.

This workshop complemented an earlier efsli Spring school in Prague in 2010: “Working with Deaf Interpreters” (with Senan Dunne, Julia F Klintberg, Markus Aro and Robert Adam) where participants were introduced to the concept of working with a Deaf interpreter in the wider European context, which included a variety of role-play situations. In this workshop, Deaf and hearing pairs from different countries were able to try interpreting in different styles (consecutive and simultaneous) for a variety of settings (e.g. TV programmes and lectures) and discuss the various roles and responsibilities.

Some of the questions we dealt with in our workshop included: why do we have Deaf and hearing teams? How many should there be in a team? There are different possible combinations; one Deaf interpreter, two Deaf interpreters, one hearing interpreter, two hearing interpreters, etc. and these were explored as a group. Another question was: what are the different modes? Participants practised both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting because both are appropriate for different settings, and it is possible that the consecutive mode may be more natural for a Deaf/hearing interpreter team setting.

We also worked on different scenarios: group meetings with Deaf people, meetings with a single Deaf person, meetings with a hearing person, and a lecture delivered by someone using a different sign language. We also discussed the roles and responsibilities within the Deaf/hearing team and the roles and responsibilities within the broader team.

On the Friday night we also enjoyed a Deaf Comedy night at the Green Lanes Deaf club in north London. Deaf and hearing participants alike were able to experience Deaf British humour and meet local Deaf people.

The trainers found this a valuable experience and we received positive feedback on the workshop. We feel that for future workshops it should be ensured that there is at least one Deaf and one hearing interpreter for each sign language/spoken language pair, so that there is ample opportunity for appropriate role-plays and activities. We would like to thank Marinella Salami and her team for their work behind the scenes and all the participants for their interest, enthusiasm and shared knowledge.
For sign language interpreters, perhaps more than for spoken language interpreters, the interpretation of religious ceremonies - a highly specialised field - can be particularly tricky. The ambiguity, the different levels of meaning and the implicit nature of sacred texts require the interpreter to have a depth of knowledge of theological underpinnings and this why we wanted a training course focusing just on this very challenging domain.

AFILS, in partnership with efsli and its ‘Training on Demand’ programme, responded by bringing together eleven interpreters from all over France.

We were welcomed to the course by Marinella Salami, the President of efsli, who joined us via Skype and Guylaine Paris, the President of the AFILS, who welcomed the participants to Paris and wished us a very successful and thought-provoking course.

Our first tutor, Francis Jeggli (an interpreter with more than 25 years’ experience), began by looking at the spread of religions around the world as well as in France. During the ensuing discussion the immediate questions that arose were:

- Should interpreters have the same religious beliefs as the person that they are interpreting for?
- Do worshipers have the right to request an interpreter who shares their religious beliefs so that he or she can participate fully in the service?
- Should interpreters divulge their religious beliefs?
- Does an interpreter have a role in a confessional?
- Should an interpreter use the terms normally reserved for the celebrant and what are the implications for all concerned?
- Should an interpreter offer their services voluntarily or should there be payment?

After a restorative break for refreshments, we returned to the issue of fees for religious ceremonies, most of which take place on Sundays when a higher rate is usually charged. The outcome of this discussion was that there was no common practice amongst interpreters.

In the afternoon, Céline Hayat, a Deaf person from Rennes, gave us an introduction to Judaism. She summarised 3,500 years of history and explained the customs and celebrations of the Jewish religion. She also provided the attendees with a list of appropriate French signs and their etymology, an essential tool for future interpretations.

The second day started later than planned, as it is often the case in France! To begin, Francis Jeggli talked about the history of Catholicism in France and its impact on both hearing and Deaf people.

Some extracts of the DVD “The Gospel of Luke in French Sign Language” were watched, followed by a discussion on the interpretation and the signs in the DVD. A recurring question that came up was whether the emphasis should be on the literal translation of sacred words or on their meaning? Each sign gave us food for thought because there isn’t yet any formal agreement of the signs to be used. There is still much to be done.

Francis then talked about the various forms of Christianity and the differences between the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches.

To conclude, it was agreed that interpreters should have a wide range of signs available to them, for instance for the concept of “God”. Often the same idea or concept may require a different sign depending on the religion. For example, in French Sign Language, Christians sign Abraham as ‘the one whose hand was stopped by God’ whilst Jewish people sign it as ‘the one who wears a beard’.

>> continue on page 16
After the meal, we welcomed our guest Fatima El Asafar who came to talk about Islam. As with the day before when we looked at Judaism, we benefitted from being introduced to an extended vocabulary related to Muslim rituals and customs. The issue of the physical positioning of the interpreter was also discussed which could depend on whether the interpreter is male or female.

The only ‘bad’ news at the end of the day was that, once again, Francis gave us some homework! He asked us to think about how we would interpret the two best known prayers of the Catholic faith, the “Our Father” and the “Hail Mary”.

‘On the morning of the third day …’ some of us were not as awake as we might have been had we gone to bed a little earlier! We began the last day of the course by focusing on the need to work together with priests, teachers or fellow interpreters and how, particularly in religious ceremonies, we can do this most effectively. Then we dove into the translation of the two prayers, “Hail Mary” and “Our Father”.

Everyone shared their representation of the prayers in French before coming up with ideas for an appropriate LSF interpretation. During the afternoon, we based our work on a few ready-made versions and, finally, we managed to agree on what is, perhaps, the most appropriate translation of the two prayers. The work we put in will be invaluable when we interpret Catholic ceremonies in the future.

At the end of the day, Guylaine rejoined us to bring the training course to a close and, together, we watched a video clip about Jehovah’s Witnesses presented in LSF.

All of us have our own personal memories of the course but we were unanimous in saving our final words for ‘Father’ Francis and ‘Saint’ Guylaine. We also thanked ‘Sister’ Céline Juillet for organizing the whole event, including the much appreciated refreshments.

Conclusion:

During these three packed days, each participant had an opportunity to develop his or her knowledge of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Since the religion we tend to translate the most, though, is Catholicism, we would ask AFILS to organize another training course, this time focusing on the interpretation of catholic ceremonies and perhaps we could put what we learn into practice by actually interpreting a mass. Why not?

“Did you know that there is a Patron Saint of translators? Perhaps we should have a special meeting of AFILS on September 30th to celebrate the feast of Saint Jérôme!”

Testimonials given at the end of the course:

“A packed training course, rich on subject matter. Its content and the exchange of views helped me to conceptualize certain notions and to have a little more confidence in interpreting situations.”

“Thanks to AFILS for the organization of this training course and many thanks to the speakers for the quality of their presentations.”

“A particularly fulfilling training course giving us the freedom to exchange views without being judged. A rich and constructive encounter; I’m leaving with the grounding needed to deal with the religious interpretations that I had often feared.”

They said it!

“Too bad we can’t convert to several religions; each one having one weekly rest day. Then we could rest from Friday at sunrise until Monday morning!”

“But anyway, when Mary prays for the Catholics, does she pray like a Jew or like a Christian?”

“Twelve interpreters gathering together reflecting on the translation of a sacred text and they all agree, that’s a miracle!”

“Receiving communion while interpreting as a volunteer during Mass? It’s like interpreting at a gynecologist’s and asking for a smear… !”

---

16 efsli newsletter Spring edition 2013

Did you know that there is a Patron Saint of translators? Perhaps we should have a special meeting of AFILS on September 30th to celebrate the feast of Saint Jérôme!
Calendar of Events

April
April 19-21
efsli Spring school 2013: Interpreting for older deaf people
(in cooperation with Gelderhorst)
NBTG, the Netherlands
www.efsli.org

July
July 5-7
efsli Summer school 2013: Interpreting with service users
with minimal language skills: make you SL more visual
Copenhagen, Denmark
www.efsli.org

July 10-13
TISLR 11, University College London, UK
http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/events/TISLR11.html

September
September 13-15
efsli AGM and conference, Technology vs. interpreter:
support or replacement?
Ljubljana, Slovenia
www.efsli.org/2013

Advertising policy

Check out www.efsli.org for a full calendar
and websites.

All efsli related material will be advertised free of charge,
documentation should be forwarded to the newslettereditor. All other material for example: courses, businesses,
individual freelancers and their services, Trainers, Agencies,
Universities and/or training centres, equipment, etc.
depending on the membership category will be published
at the rates stated. Materials should be forwarded to the
newsletter editor at newsletter@efsli.org.

Please be informed that we welcome advertisements
with relevance to the members and other publicity
not completely in line with the aims and objectives of
efsli. However, the Board reserves the right to reject any
advertisements or announcements that are considered
inappropriate. The prices of the advertisement refer on ly
to one published advert in one edition of the newsletter.
Any further publication would have to follow the same
procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page size</th>
<th>non-members</th>
<th>members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full page</td>
<td>€100</td>
<td>€50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half page</td>
<td>€60</td>
<td>€30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deadline, formats, payments
Proof of payment and electronic documentation of the
advert (PDF, rtf, txt) should be forwarded to the newsletter
editor at the address above.

The Board reserves the right for all material that is received
later than the following deadlines to be published in the
next issue and/or on the website. Policy and rates for
advertising on the website will follow shortly.

The deadlines for contributions are:

15th February for Spring edition
15th May for Summer edition
15th October for Winter edition

To place an Advertisement please contact Liivi Hollman at
publicity@efsli.org
efsli 2013 AGM and conference will be hosted by the Slovenian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ZTSZJ) from 13th to 15th September in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The theme of the conference is TECHNOLOGY vs. INTERPRETER: support or replacement?

See you in Ljubljana!

More information about the conference and registration: www.efsli.org/2013
Keen to become a fully qualified teacher, teaching a range of subjects including BSL? Want to take your BSL to a higher level? Aiming to become a BSL/English Interpreter? Want to qualify as an English to BSL Translator? Interested in becoming an Assessor, Internal Verifier or External Verifier?

Signamic offers high quality training and assessment programmes designed to qualify you to a professional level in:

- British Sign Language (BSL); and English;
- Sign Language Interpreting and Translation;
- Teaching and Assessing in the Life Long Learning Sector;
- Mentoring and Coaching;
- Continuing Professional Development

Based in Canada Water, London, Signamic is an award winning training centre that has built a reputation for delivering excellence. Our Room Hire also offers quality facilities at affordable prices, close to central London.

For advice and information: enquiries@signamic.co.uk

‘I loved every bit of training that I received from Signamic, especially the Interpreter Training Development (my light bulb moment!)’ Viv Anderson - RSLI

‘I certainly would recommend Signamic as a training provider as they make the course enjoyable and very welcoming. Not to mention providing a lot of support’ Paul Cable - Pt 1 of the Translation programme.

www.signamic.co.uk

Tel: +44 207 231 6990
Professional Development and fun? YES!

Know Thyself project - 2
Continuing Education Seminars for Sign Language Interpreters.
In co-operation with Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences

Who?
Anna Witter-Merithew
and
Brenda Nicodemus

Where?
Sifnos, a beautiful Greek island.
In a traditional Cycladic house.

When?
22-26 July 2013

What?
Decision Making for Interpreters:
An Approach using Systems Thinking and Relational Autonomy

Anna and Brenda will discuss systems thinking and relational autonomy as crucial paradigms for guiding the decision-making of interpreters.

Participants will engage in discussions designed to develop awareness of how decision-making affects our view of ourselves and our professional autonomy as interpreters. During the seminar they will explore how one’s professional relationships with particular individuals and institutions must be constituted in such a way as to give one genuine opportunities for informed and transparent decision-making.

How?
For more information contact us at: florasavvalidou@yahoo.gr