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Abstract

How do sign language learners' language attitudes toward minority languages evolve over the course of learning a sign language? Students enrolled in the 4-year British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreting degree at Heriot-Watt University in the UK present an interesting case study since they (1) are speakers of a majority language studying a minority language and (2) seek employment opportunities where they will work with the minority-language community (in this case BSL users) as they interact with majority-language users (in this case English) as interpreters upon completing their degree. To investigate shifts in language attitudes, this study explores how a small sample of students perceive their roles within signing communities and their attitudes toward BSL at different program stages. Year-2 students were interviewed following a service-learning project within the deaf community and before and after two-semester unpaid work-based placements in deaf charities across the UK that take place during their third year of university. These placements provided opportunities for interaction in multilingual environments using both English and BSL within the British deaf community. Year-4 students reflected on their university and program experiences while actively involved in unpaid/supervised interpreting placements as part of their final year. The findings from this study can be used as an evidence base to inform curriculum changes that lead students to consider language minority issues earlier in the program as preparation for their language immersion experience on placement. The findings can also be useful for educators of other (spoken) minority languages in considering how to embed positive language attitudes in their curriculum.

Keywords: sign language, interpreting, language learning, language attitudes

1.0 Introduction

This paper details findings from a study of sign language interpreting (SLI) students' attitudes toward British Sign Language (BSL) as a minority language. Language attitudes are inextricably tied with language use. We hold beliefs and attitudes about the languages we use, how both we and others use language. As Cooper (1974) indicates, language attitudes may be toward a language or a feature of a language, or toward language use or language as a group marker. Attitudes about what language is (or is not), how and where languages are used, their value, and their origins are expressed as language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2000, p. 5).

From an applied linguistics perspective, language *ideology* is the expression of beliefs, views, thinking, or perceptions about the world including ourselves, other people, groups, and nations. *Attitude*, however, is a psychological concept: the way we react toward things or events in life, how we express or hinder ideology. Thus, the two concepts are related because attitude may be an expression of ideology. Garrett (2010, p. 13) discusses how attitudes can extend to our behavior and affect our experiences, specifically "how we position ourselves socially, and how we relate to other individuals and groups."

When applying this concept to sign language attitudes, Hill (2013a) states that attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating (judging) a person's signing with some degree of favor or disfavor. Language attitudes toward sign languages have shifted over the years, both within deaf communities and in wider society, primarily due to increased recognition of sign languages as legitimate minority languages (Napier & Leeson, 2016). Nevertheless, language attitudes toward sign languages have not been researched to the same extent as for spoken languages (cf. Krausneker, 2015; Kusters et al., 2020), and have tended to focus on deaf signers' attitudes toward variation in other deaf signers' signing styles (e.g., Hill, 2013b; Rowley & Cormier, 2021).

Rowley et al. (2018) examined deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users' attitudes to sign language and found marked differences in their attitudes toward BSL and SSE (Sign Supported English[1]), and they discuss implications of these attitudes on signing with deaf children, but not for hearing adult learners of BSL. As sign languages are minority languages that are often oppressed by the ambient spoken-language majority (Woll & Adam, 2012), attitudes to the majority and the minority languages in contact then become pertinent.

1.1 Learning a Sign Language as a Second Language

Learning a sign language as a second "foreign" language (L2) is becoming increasingly popular among hearing people (Rosen, 2008). Research available on learning sign language has explored the challenges of learning a language in a different modality (McKee & McKee 1992; Jacobs, 1996; Wilcox & Wilcox 1997); misconceptions of how easy it may be to learn a sign language (Kemp, 1998a); how hearing L2 learners struggle with phonological fluency and sign production inaccuracies, particularly in handshape, orientation, location and movement (Hilger et al., 2015; Rosen, 2004); how students need to master a new grammatical system and how to manage the pragmatics of interactions with deaf signers, as well as learning new vocabulary (Willoughby & Sell, 2019); and how student motivation impacts on the development of sign language fluency (Beal & Faniel, 2019). Most of the research has focused on sign language pedagogical methods or curricula (cf. McKee & Rosen, 2014; Rosen, 2010, 2019).

One documented critical component of teaching sign language is considering how to instill *cultural competence* in hearing students alongside linguistic skills. Traditionally, language and culture were taught separately as language learning was merely seen as developing vocabulary, grammar, and syntax (Clark & Lee, 2018). Conversely, today's educators view language and culture as integrated, the former used to shape and express the latter (Paige et al., 2000), with more of a focus on discourse-level communication.

1   Sign Supported English is a term used in the UK, which is effectively a form of contact signing: the code-blending, translanguaging strategy whereby signers incorporate English grammatical structures and sign order into the production of BSL (Adam, 2012)

Language educators suggest that a learner must first understand their own culture to better understand and relate to another (Clark & Lee, 2018; Jurasek, 1995). Hearing students studying sign languages are thus expected to learn about deaf people, their lived experiences, culture, and communities (McDermid, 2009b; Miner, 2021) in addition to reflecting on wider majority culture. Specifically, those studying to become interpreters will need a high level of bicultural competence to ensure successful communication when working between different languages and cultures. Educators then integrate theories and frameworks to support students in learning about intersectionality, culture, multilingualism, and language diversity into language and interpreting classes with the aim of preparing students to work effectively across cultures (Clark & Lee 2018; Peterson, 2009). Part of this teaching will be specifically aimed at enabling students to understand and appreciate deaf community ideologies. However, there is little research on how deaf culture should be integrated into the formal teaching of sign languages and interpreting curricula (Rosen, 2010), how "hearing" culture should be taught and to what extent, or how to embed an acculturation model into sign language learning (Kemp, 1998b).

One suggestion for learning sign language and particularly deaf culture is for students to immerse themselves in the deaf community and sign language environments as much as possible (Willoughby & Sell, 2019). This approach aims to expose students to deaf signers in their natural environments and can mitigate *language anxiety*. Language anxiety manifests differently in learners and is dependent upon ethnicity, experience, and personality (Young, 1991); it is compounded by classroom methods that do not reflect real-world language use (Turula, 2002).

1.2 Sign Language Learning in an Interpreter Education Program

Even less research has been conducted with respect to hearing students learning sign language with the goal of becoming professional interpreters (Beal, 2020). Most of the work focuses on teaching SLI strategies or the interpreting curricula (cf. McDermid, 2009a; Roy, 2000, 2005, 2006) or on general language competencies prior to program acceptance (Bontempo & Napier, 2009), as well as specific sign language competence (e.g., Garrett & Girardin, 2019).

Learning language and developing interpreting skills are distinct yet interconnected endeavors, with some programs aiming to simultaneously build both capabilities in students at the same time. Consequently, a sign language class integrated into an interpreting program may differ in its pedagogical choices compared to a stand-alone sign language class focused solely on community interaction. Further research is necessary to scrutinize the pedagogical decisions in these environments and evaluate their potential benefits.

An extensively documented and effective approach employed in sign language interpreter education to foster students' language and cultural development is service learning (Shaw, 2013). Service learning is a teaching methodology that necessitates community involvement, fostering a deeper understanding of course objectives and a sense of civic responsibility. Research indicates that students become more engaged learners when they can witness the practical application of their studies (Galura & Howard, 1994). In the realm of language learning, students benefit from firsthand experiences, engaging in authentic interactions with language users that expose them to language use and culture, thereby expediting the learning process beyond the confines of the classroom. Trust is essential in deaf people-interpreter relationships (Holcomb & Smith, 2018; Napier, 2011; Napier et al., 2017), yet the academization of the profession has contributed to feelings of mistrust.[2] Therefore, engaging in service-learning activities is one way to foster early relationships between students and deaf people, supporting learners to improve their sign language

2   The profession of sign language interpreters in the UK has developed similar to the profession of interpreting in other countries, that is, historically, interpreting services were provided by family and friends, social workers, and clergy (Scott Gibson, 1992; Stone & Woll, 2008). When the training of interpreters began (via formal and informal routes of education) the interpreters became increasingly detached from deaf people and this shift has created academic institutionalization, which is perceived to have an impact on the skills and abilities of those within the interpreting workforce (Cokely, 2005; Hall et al., 2021; Stone, 2008).

fluency, raise their awareness of deaf cultural and linguistic norms and support them in becoming allies of deaf people (Shaw, 2013, 2014).

It has also been suggested that *work placements* allow students to develop linguistic and cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. Ehiyazaryan and Barraclough (2009) argued that students require real-world environments to hone some skills and many SLI programs require some form of work placement, such as an internship within a deaf organization or by an organized practicum where students can shadow or work with professional interpreters.

While attitudes of professional sign language interpreters toward deaf communities or their professional work are known (e.g., De Wit & Sluis, 2012; Napier, 2011; Napier & Leeson, 2016), as well as how SLI students' attitudes toward deafblind people and their own professional identity can change over time (Urdal, 2019), little information is available about SLI students' attitudes toward *sign language*. Wessling and Ehrlich (2021) surveyed 118 American Sign Language/English interpreting students about how they perceived and experienced sign language in their learning experiences, but their study focused specifically on how students may have experienced sign language shaming (the act of correcting language to assert power) while learning. In Sheridan's (2021) investigation of the experiences of hearing (interpreting) students learning Irish Sign Language, she argues that the way we think about language and identity is influenced by our learning experiences and the context in which we learn. This emphasizes the importance for us to improve our understanding of students' language attitudes—particularly students engaged in language studies that are focusing on minority languages. This involves exploring their attitudes toward the minority language itself, the culture of its speakers, and even their own language attitudes and awareness of their respective languages and cultures.

As such, we were interested in how interpreting students' language attitudes toward BSL evolve over time. BSL is a minority language used by deaf people in the UK surrounded by the majority language of English. Every day, deaf BSL signers interact in multilingual environments where BSL meets a majority spoken and written language. In this study, we were interested in how hearing, English speakers who are learning/improving their BSL and enrolled on the BSL/English Interpreting undergraduate degree at Heriot-Watt University perceive their position within the British deaf community and the changing attitudes they display over time toward BSL use in a range of multilingual contexts. It is worth noting that we acknowledge the diverse cultural, linguistic, and identity backgrounds of students. However, this study specifically centers on students whose primary language is the majority language (English), examining how their experiences within the program may or may not influence their language attitudes.

2. Heriot-Watt University Interpreting Program

The BSL/English interpreting degree at Heriot-Watt University (HWU) is a 4-year program that trains students to gain the requisite proficiency needed to register as professional sign language interpreters. Students can enter the program without any prior knowledge of BSL. While there are wider industry questions about the effectiveness of programs in bridging the gap between education and professional readiness (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004, 2005), our program has undergone continuous enhancements over the past decade. These improvements aim to ensure appropriate gatekeeping so that those only those graduates who fulfill program learning outcomes and can evidence and demonstrate compliance with national occupational standards[3] are entitled to enter the field, either as fully registered interpreters or as trainee interpreters. For those graduates who meet learning outcomes and not professional competencies, while they can earn a degree they are not referred on for professional registration.

3   In the UK, National Occupational Standards are statements of the skills, knowledge, and understanding needed for effective performance in a particular occupation or industry. They are developed by industry experts and set out the standards of performance that individuals must achieve when carrying out functions in the workplace. Registration bodies in the UK require the professionals who register with them to have evidenced how they have met those standards. HWU curriculum has been mapped to ensure each of those standards is taught, evidenced, and formally assessed.

Over the 4 years there are five work-placement opportunities. The program is modeled on best practices in foreign language/interpreting teaching where students spend time abroad immersed in the spoken language they are studying. Since no equivalent "country" for BSL exists, students complete two work placements in the third year. In these placements, students work full-time in different deaf organizations for two semesters to immerse themselves in a signing environment and may also lodge with a deaf family. To prepare students for a third-year placement, the program also includes a Service-Learning Project (SLP) across Year-2, requiring students to undertake a project in partnership with a local deaf organization. One of the main objectives for Year-2 and Year-3 placements is to foster language and cultural development opportunities. There are also two interpreting work placements across Year 4, however these placements are outside the scope of this research study. Up until now, little has been known about the effect of these placement experiences in shaping students' attitudes (as members of a majority-speech community) toward deaf people as members of a linguistic and cultural minority group, and in learning a minority language. Although it is difficult to directly compare the efficacy of work placements with in-country full immersion experiences, this is as close to full immersion that is possible for BSL interpreting students.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative, social constructivist, participatory approach to data collection and analysis. We recognize that our positionality as interpreter-researchers has an impact on the methodology, our interpretation of results, and the power we have in conducting research with interpreting students (Tiselius, 2019; Wurm & Napier, 2017). Thus, we declare that Morgan was the primary data collector and led on the preliminary analysis of this data; she is a former graduate of the HWU BSL/English Interpreting program and at the time of conducting this study had been practicing as a sign language interpreter for 2 years. Webb and Napier, who conceived the idea for the study,[4] contributed to the research design, analysis, and interpretation of the data, are both hearing, have been practicing as sign language interpreters for over 19 and 35 years, respectively. Webb has been involved in formally educating sign language interpreters for over 16 years and Napier for over 25 years. Adam, who reviewed the data analysis and coding, is deaf and has been practicing as an interpreter and translator for more than 30 years and has provided training to deaf and hearing interpreters worldwide for approximately 15 years. All four coauthors were involved in the writing process. Ethics approval was received through the HWU School of Social Sciences Human Research Ethics committee.

This was an educational action research project (Scott, 1999) to examine students' attitudes to BSL and sign language learning to respond to feedback from the deaf community (local factors), to ensure our teaching corresponds to the National Occupational Standards in BSL/English interpreting (systemic/external factors) and to our own observations of student behaviors (internal factors). Our goal is to adapt the curriculum by embedding pedagogical research evidence.

1.1 Participants and Process of Recruitment

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling and invited to participate in a two-stage interview process. Students entering their second year and about to begin service-learning projects were contacted by Morgan. Six students agreed to participate. To widen the pool of participants, three students from Year 4 agreed to participate during the second stage of interviews, providing a retrospective insight into various aspects of the degree program as they had completed an SLP and third-year placements. Students were

4   This project was funded by through the Flexible Funding Competition of the AHRC Multilingualism: Empowering Individual, Transforming Societies (MEITS) Open World Research Initiative (http://meits.org) in 2018. Initially the project was led by Jordan Fenlon with Stacey Webb and Jemina Napier. Dr Fenlon left academia in 2019 and Stacey Webb took over as Principal Investigator on the project. Robert Adam joined the project in 2020 when he commenced work at HWU.

each sent a letter with an explanation of the project, their right to withdraw at any time, and that their participation had no relationship to their grades. The only selection criteria were that respondents had to be enrolled as a student at HWU in the BSL/English Interpreting program.

Three of the original six students from Year 2 declined to participate in a second follow-up interview. Adhering to best practices for research consent, participants were granted the freedom to withdraw at any point without consequence and without the need to explain why. As such, interviewee numbers were small and results should not be taken as representative of all Year-2 and Year-4 students, but as a resource for further consideration.

There were nine participants—seven female, two male, primarily white UK with one Asian UK. Of the seven female participants, five were under 25 years, and two were aged 25–49 years. Of the two older female participants one had a degree (nonlinguistic), was bilingual in English and another spoken language. The other returned to higher education after a full-time career (nonlinguistic). There were two male participants: one under 25 and one aged 50–64 years. The younger male was bilingual in English and BSL. The older male had returned to higher education with a previous degree and full-time career (nonlinguistic).

1.1 Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in spoken English with nine students using pre-prepared prompt questions (see Appendix). All interviews were video recorded, online or in person and conducted by Morgan, in her position as a recent graduate from HWU. Offering interviews in spoken English with someone who students may consider a peer was a conscious decision as we intended to create a supportive environment by way of "identity matching" with the students. While "identity matching" may influence attitudes or biases, our primary goal was to create an environment where students felt comfortable to share their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives openly and honestly. Students were also provided an opportunity to review transcripts before analysis.

Of the nine students interviewed, three were interviewed twice and six students once (some Year-2 students did not consent to a second interview, and Year-4 students were only recruited for the second interview stage). For those interviewed twice, the first interview took place before their SLP commenced (or at least in the early stages). The second interview took place after the SLP was completed and prior to or early on in their third-year work placement. Students were asked to reflect on their earlier responses and to provide examples from their placement that either supported or contradicted previous answers (e.g., *Did you experience an interaction like that discussed earlier? What did you do?).*

The interviews with fourth-year students sought to ascertain how prepared they felt prior to starting their Year-3 community placement (i.e., how had their Year-2 courses prepared them), and how they felt on entering Year 4.

1.2 Analysis

To provide further assurance of anonymity to students, all interviews were transcribed by a sub-contracted transcription service and then anonymized, and information redacted by Morgan, so the teaching staff only ever saw the anonymized versions of transcripts. The goal was that researchers who are also teachers in the program would not be able to identify individual students' comments.

Using a process of thematic and content analysis, we conducted an iterative coding process based on a priori codes that were identified as key themes from our literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first round of coding was conducted by Morgan using overarching themes, and the second and third rounds of coding were led by Napier and Webb to identify sub-themes. Adam then reviewed all codes and confirmed the analysis. Analysis of the interview data was used to identify factors contributing to students' language attitudes and perceived positions within the British deaf community. Comparisons were drawn between

Year-2 and Year-4 students' attitudes and positions prior to, and upon completion of, the SLP and work placements, respectively.

3. Results

The next sections consider the students' attitudes toward learning a new (minority) language and using BSL, interacting with a minority-language community, and language anxieties.

4.1 Language Attitudes

Each participant offered a unique insight into the factors influencing their attitudes regarding their language fluency, their position in the deaf community, and their level of engagement with its members (before and after completing the SLP/placements).

4.1.1 Motivations for Learning a New Language

One aspect of language attitudes evident in the interview data was in relation to *motivation*. While students had different motivations for pursuing this degree program, which includes learning BSL and interpreting between BSL and English, all the students who participated in this study were all motivated to become proficient BSL users. Apart from one participant who had deaf family and friends, the students had no personal connections with deaf people other than tutors for introductory BSL classes. When asked about their motivations for joining the degree program responses were varied, ranging from their own hearing loss, desire to learn BSL (rather than to become an interpreter), prior connections to deaf people, and a general interest in language.

Participant A experienced a level of hearing loss for most of their life and had difficulty accessing communication at home, at work, and in social situations. They decided to change their career and complete introductory BSL; their aim was to develop a working knowledge of the language rather than become an interpreter.

As a child from a deaf family, *Participant F* had been providing communication support for their parents from childhood, and this influenced their decision to work toward becoming a qualified interpreter. Through established relationships, they gained extensive experience of communicating with other native BSL users and were exposed to sign variation. They wanted to learn BSL formally and chose to do so through HWU, aiming to match their English proficiency from school.

Participant E had originally planned to learn BSL as part of a joint language degree but dropped the spoken language at the end of Year 1 (preferring the BSL classes and tutors). It is unclear whether they were motivated to become an interpreter but described having sign language proficiency as a unique selling point.

There was one other adult returner seeking a career change among the Year-2 participants; they had followed tutor advice to meet and engage with deaf people from first year and had already developed a social network. Of the two remaining Year-2 participants, neither had engaged with the deaf community in first year due to language anxiety, but one had started volunteering at home in their local community prior to starting second year and held a general interest in sign language with no real clear reason.

The Year-4 participants had previous language-learning experience. Two participants were motivated by seeking a career change and the third had changed their degree choice based on a chance encounter with a deaf customer while at work. Like the adult returner, one Year-4 participant had assiduously extended their deaf social network by regularly attending events, contributing to their interest to pursue a career in interpreting.

4.2 Attitudes Toward Language Learning

Another key aspect that emerged in the discussion of language attitudes was perceptions of *language aptitude* and *language competency*.⁵

As noted earlier, motivation and language background can determine the extent to which a student will acquire BSL competency (Beal & Faniel, 2019). The students' prior language-learning experiences have clearly shaped their attitudes toward both learning and using BSL in an academic context.

The participants in this study covered a wide spectrum of previous language learning: all participants except one had learned a spoken language; two had never studied BSL prior to starting the degree (others had completed introductory lessons); one participant was bilingual in BSL and English, and another bilingual in English and another spoken language. They shared some of their attitudes during the initial stages of learning BSL in a university classroom environment:

Participant	
A (Year 2)	That enforced my viewpoint that there was more to this, there was more to learn than just a bunch of words and just throwing them together. I don't have a lingustic background, so I was struggling with some of the concepts... It was just totally different to what I was used to, so it was a lot of adjustment.
B (Year 2)	I had met a deaf person before [my teacher] and experienced communicating with no BSL and them not being able to communicate with me in English and being in that classroom setting, I had before. I think that was really helpful.
C (Year 2)	Well, in the very beginning, I guess, there is definitely some element of frustration because you're coming at it from this prescriptive idea...
D (Year 2)	I'm still very confused about grammar, and how I'm supposed to put things together... I can be flexible, but on this I'm just tell me what signs to put in what order... that means that I've got to think, what do I want to emphasise? That's a lot to think about.
E (Year 2)	I didn't know any BSL... First day I'll come in and we'll do the alphabet, numbers, friends and family. [The lecturer] was like, 'We're going to talk about phonology,' and I was like, 'What?'. We didn't go aver any linguistics or anything, and I was like, 'I've no clue what's going on right now'.
F (Year 2)	In school... they were... teaching us English... but I wasn't getting taught sign language in the same way, so I would try and keep sign language at the same level... asking my dad, what's the sign for this and why does that look like this... I've obviously done sign language throughout my life but I've never looked at it in an academic way...
G (Year 4)	I kept thinking in my head, I wished they'd give me vocabulary, and what's the sign for this, and I wanted to know the exact order of things and I just couldn't get my head around it for probably until maybe about halfway through second year... The visual nature of the language just blew my mind and the history that came with it and the culture and the other studies... I didn't expect it to be so demanding.
H (Year 4)	The first year was more what I expected. It was more easing me into it and getting the flow of the background information, which I loved
I (Year 4)	It was more 'I want to learn the language' was my expectation... This course is so different from my previous course... I was just like, 'Oh wow! This is just about learning BSL and just about interpreting or translation; it is so much more.

As evidenced by other research into L2 language acquisition (e.g., Willoughby & Sell, 2019) the HWU students struggled to relinquish some attitudes developed through spoken-language learning; it took them time during first and second year to adapt to the visual modality of sign language learning. While working with deaf tutors and basic BSL were familiar to most, BSL linguistics and grammar were not—this proved challenging for them in the first year of the degree. Two of the participants with dyslexia and autism stated a preference for signed over spoken-language learning and felt the different modality worked to their strengths as visual learners. The bilingual participant relished the opportunity to develop a deeper, more

academic understanding of their native language. To cope with these new challenges, the participants' personal attributes and language backgrounds influenced their choice of *learning strategies*, both on and off campus. In addition to the curriculum content, students demonstrated an awareness of the resources (in BSL and English) provided to them both in class and online to help them manage their language competency.⁵

HWU student engagement with on- and off-campus resources varied according to the individual's perceived language proficiency; these findings were consistent with those of Willoughby and Sell (2019). Most Year-2 students cited regular use of BSL SignBank,⁶ as a glossary and to extend their vocabulary. A repetitive approach to revision tasks was favored by several students (e.g., detailed analysis of BSL videos, committing signs to memory, extra reading). They all used a range of online resources to increase their receptive skills, several choosing this strategy in the earliest stages over interacting with BSL users. Some Year-2 participants were heavily reliant upon the interpreters in class and struggled with (or avoided altogether) discussing complicated topics or seeking clarification without them.

Developing relationships with fellow learners was a notable learning strategy. In class, Year-2 students who perceived themselves as less proficient relied on their peers when struggling. They sought in-class support (defaulting to English or SSE) and reported reaching out to students further along in the program to discuss concerns or queries about course content.

Language aptitude alone did not dictate a learner's level of engagement with learning strategies; the combination of an individual's age, motivation, and other personal attributes also appeared to account for this. Some adopted individual strategies: relaxation techniques (Participant A); support and guidance from family and close friends (Participant B, E); self-deprecating humor (Participant E). As the Year-2 and Year-4 cohorts were neither homogeneous nor numerous, it was difficult to identify patterns or to predict student engagement. Despite tutors reiterating the potential to develop language and cultural competencies, only four of the nine interviewees had proactively sought out opportunities to engage with BSL users in community settings from the initial stages of Year 1; others delayed engagement until they deemed their BSL proficiency appropriate. Those "early engagers" also appeared less inhibited about joining discussions or making errors in front of peers and tutors. All, apart from the native BSL user, explained they had experienced language anxiety in the classroom environment, and that it influenced their attitudes toward using BSL and their position within the deaf community. The next section will consider some of the contributing factors, and the ways in which language anxiety manifested itself in the students' behaviors and attitudes.

4.2.1 Attitudes Toward Use of a Specific Language

When analyzing the data with regard to student attitudes toward language use in academic settings, it was evident that some students experience *language anxiety*. Research has shown language anxiety to be specific to language-learning situations, such as classroom or community settings, and is a significant factor in shaping students' language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). While students were all very motivated to become proficient BSL users, they all experienced language anxiety from the earliest stages of their degree. This is interesting to note, particularly as some of them had knowledge of other spoken languages, and others had already begun learning or were proficient in BSL. Results from the interviews showed that the students' perceived language competency determined their willingness to expose their vulnerabilities and make mistakes in the presence of others including both their peers and deaf people in the community.

Contemporary research into language anxiety shows the findings of Horwitz et al. (1986) are still pertinent today (Horwitz, 2001; Samad et al., 2023) As there are expectations that educators will produce graduates equipped to provide optimal interpreting services (Webb, 2017), it is worth further examining possible links between these expectations and students' language anxiety, language acquisition and their engagement with the deaf community. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified attitudes, behaviors, and situations

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5   ⁵ BSL social events (pub quizzes, theater, talks, tours), GoReact for interpreting practice and online resources like BSL SignBank, BSL Zone, BBC iPlayer, and YouTube.
6   ⁶ See https://bslsignbank.ucl.ac.uk.

likely to produce or heighten language anxiety; a selection of these have been chosen to demonstrate this, when expressed by three or more interviewees.

Students exhibited avoidance behavior or chose less complex communication strategies. Participant A confessed to finding "a lot of excuses not to do practice in BSL," preferring to focus on work that felt familiar or "safe." Participant D had attended Akva[7] once but, having been "spooked" by a breakdown in communication, chose not to return until the second half of Year-2. Participant E was frustrated they could not get the support they needed from their tutor unless the interpreter was present; without the interpreter, Participant A felt communication was stilted and "one-sided," preventing them from developing any kind of relationship. Participant B also felt frustrated when they could not express their ideas fully in class, becoming shy and withdrawn. Lack of fluency can impact a student's self-esteem in a classroom environment, where their performance monitored (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Language learners are competitive. All participants confirmed that they evaluated and rated their BSL skills against their peers and other BSL users. Even Participant F, a native signer, wanted to "prove" to a deaf peer they "didn't have a small BSL skill set" and felt members of the community would have higher expectations of them showing a higher level of BSL proficiency. For most, these judgments that lead to ranking themselves against classmates generated negative emotions (pressure, defeat, disappointment, discomfort). On the contrary, Participants C and D used it as affirmation, acknowledging a kind of unspoken hierarchy and placing their BSL skills around the middle of their peers. Participant G (Year 4) took additional BSL tuition out of class, feeling they were "falling behind" proficient peers. Participant I (Year 4) recognized comparisons were unhealthy and had impacted their confidence but confessed it was an ongoing challenge. Participant E (Year 2) provided an interesting contrast; they had no prior BSL, acknowledged their limitations, and could draw from positive experiences of spoken-language learning to set realistic expectations of their progress.

The long-term consequences of these judgments and how hierarchies in the classroom are formed remain uncertain, but it is noteworthy that horizontal violence, a prevalent phenomenon in the field, may be an outcome and further research is required.

Producing language in front of peers that is less structured and more discursive can heighten anxiety levels (Horwitz et al., 1986). Participant B said they would be more willing to use BSL with a native user in a small group than in front of the entire class, if they understood what was being discussed. Participant D described generating a narrative while standing in front of the entire class as "daunting" and others lacking in productive skills found it challenging. More confident students acknowledged they were more likely to "take the risk and explore it a bit" in smaller groups; Participant F could express their personal views in BSL fluently when discussing topics as an entire class, unlike most of his peers. Young (1991) advocates small group work, that is used by the HWU tutors, for alleviating performance and language anxiety.

Students are concerned about making errors in front of their peers, tutors, and deaf community members and receiving negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Language attitudes linked to accuracy mean students are reluctant to play with the language. Students were aware their tutors were respected members of the deaf community and expressed concerns about establishing and maintaining a good impression of themselves and HWU. Participant H (Year 4) recalled their class members were initially reluctant to participate in a translation exercise as they could be overheard; they described fishbowl roleplays as stressful because "they can see you and if you do it wrong, they all know." Participant B recalled an external BSL user's visit to class: "they will have been briefed that we're learning, but . . . I feel a bigger pressure to deliver BSL, I'm far more reluctant in asking for clarification so I do panic more—I don't want to stick my hand up or answer questions about anything because I just want to focus on making sure I really understand everything and that I can keep up with it." In class, Participant D felt they clarified excessively, needed signers to slow down, second-guessed themselves and assumed they were wrong when

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7   Akva was a bar-restaurant in Edinburgh where HWU staff arranged for fourth-year students to volunteer to interpret a regular weekly quiz once a month. All years and local deaf community members attended, creating an immersive experience in BSL.

communication broke down—leading them to worry their lack of fluency out in the community would "inconvenience people." Several students admitted to feigning comprehension, especially after repeatedly seeking clarification (the more proficient students were less inclined); they had an ardent desire to be accepted by the deaf community and pressured themselves to understand and be understood (Young, 1991).

4.2.2 Attitudes Toward Learning a Minority Language

In addition to learning BSL, participants complete modules about deaf culture with the aim of understanding the link between the two (Clark & Lee, 2018). HWU students motivated to become interpreters must be able to navigate between deaf and hearing cultures with confidence and sensitivity.

The curriculum provides students with a theoretical foundation on identities, intersectionality, cultures, and, notably, deaf culture. However, meaningful connections within the deaf community are essential for gaining insights into the lived experiences of its members, experiences that go beyond what is conveyed in their classes.

Those wishing to become effective interpreters must show an understanding of their position within the deaf community, learning to align their ideologies and become allies. In the initial stages of their degree, all participants (except Participant F, who has deaf family) were unknown to the community and had to develop new authentic relationships based on trust (Napier, 2011; Napier et al., 2017). Attitudes ranges from Participant D who (like most Year-2 students) saw themselves as "a complete outsider" waiting for an introduction, to Participants C/F (Year 2G/H; Year 4) who set out to establish networks from the start of first year. It has been shown that language anxiety prevented some participants from doing this in their own time, and so the SLP (Year 2) and work placements (Year 3) could be seen as a "safe" way to facilitate this—deaf community members who agreed to participate would acknowledge these students as learners and make allowances or adjustments accordingly. Despite assurances from tutors, some students' attitudes (based on limited knowledge) indicated they were unsure whether BSL members would keep this in mind (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Learners develop fluency naturally, negotiate meaning, and become accustomed to deaf cultural and linguistic norms in authentic settings. Native BSL users also teach cultural norms (some unwritten or implied) that are constantly evolving, and such changes are reflected in the language (Paige et al., 2000). From their family and friends, Participant F also gained early access to vocabulary and grammar, regional variation, negotiating meaning, establishing new relationships, and positive deaf role models. Students who had reached out to the community in their first year were cognizant of the benefits. Participant B attended a nearby deaf club and was later recognized at Akva; they described volunteering back in their home community as less pressured and had soon established authentic connections. The student gained direct experience of BSL users adapting their signing to match theirs (and were keen to minimize the use of a more English-informed form of signing or mouthing to make themselves understood). They felt more confident about using their BSL in classroom and community settings. Participant C had established friendships and met as a pair or in groups, was regularly invited to social events; like Participant F, they followed a BSL user's lead and used SSE to accommodate to a hearing friend in the group. Unlike some students, Participant E felt comfortable enough with their deaf lecturers to regularly interrupt and seek clarification. All participants demonstrated a theoretical understanding of the deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority.

Despite the successful interactions outlined above, students also reported how language anxiety led them to use SSE or speak English in the classroom, to compensate for a lack of fluency or to save time when discussing complex ideas. Several acknowledged that speaking English in class may be perceived as rude or disrespectful; however, they also did not appear to be aware, at that early stage of their learning journey, how this decision showed their alignment with the culturally oppressive (hearing) majority. Participant E was unaware of how frequently they spoke and signed in class, as they "didn't consciously think about it." Unlike spaces connected to placements or identified "deaf events" students did not view the classroom as a

deaf space and would "have a quick conversation, get all the gossip from the weekend over, then we'll start signing about whatever the topic is in class." Their understanding of deaf space in an academic setting was limited. Unfortunately, this participant was unavailable to reflect on this cultural attitude after completing their SLP, as it would have been interesting to see whether there were any shifts. Participant F's ideologies were clearly aligned with the deaf community: as a child they worked to attain the same level of fluency in both English and BSL; they believed new English terminology must have BSL equivalents; and they adjusted their BSL to match the user out in the community but used simplified BSL (rather than SSE) with peers who struggled in class. Participants B, C, and F demonstrated bicultural sensitivities, understanding rather than condemning hearing people's ignorance of BSL's lower social status; Participant D was more impassioned about explaining oppressive behaviors such as expecting a deaf person to lipread or speak. Participants C, D, and H avoided signing in English order and speaking English simultaneously to prevent "bad habits"; they were frustrated when peers used English in class, thought it showed lack of respect for deaf spaces; with profoundly deaf BSL users they realized English mouthing did not relay meaning and were acutely aware of their lack of fluency.

Regional variation triggered language anxiety. Participants respected regional variation and understood its origins and links to deaf identity; however, most agreed that language acquisition would be easier and language anxiety lower if their exposure to variations were limited in the initial stages of the degree. Participant F acknowledged variation was "a massive overload" and shared an interesting attitude from the early stages of their language learning. On first encountering variation, Participant F did not recognize it as BSL lexicon, assuming instead they lacked proficiency: "I was conversing with family, and they would all have one type of English variation. So, I'd see that English variation and think, 'There's BSL.' And then I would see other variations and think, 'Is that BSL or is that Scottish sign language, and is it then separated by country?' It definitely complicates things . . . I didn't respect or understand other variations." Participant B already showed the beginnings of ideological alignment and an understanding of the interdependency of language and culture: "unfair to expect that, as a hearing person who's grown up with loads of different dialects and variations . . . for the deaf community to have one . . . it links back to the history and society . . . it would be a shame if it wasn't there." Participant C found some variations more appealing, felt creativity would be constrained and was not the way language worked. Feeling slightly overwhelmed by her peers' regional variations, Participant E expressed a desire to learn (and use) only the variations linked to the university and to her placements in Year 3.

4.2.3 Attitudes Toward Language Groups, Communities, and Minorities

This last section considers any changes in participants' language attitudes and their position in the deaf community after completing an SLP or placement. Only Participants B, C, and D (Year 2) were available to provide commentary on the SLP, and Participants G, H, and I offered a retrospective look back over both.

Prior to starting the SLP, Year-2 students were asked to share any expectations and apprehensions. Some were apprehensive about their language competency and whether deaf colleagues would accommodate their level. They all hoped it would increase their BSL proficiency and offer a clearer idea of what stage they had reached. They looked forward to interacting with colleagues and anticipated learning more about deaf culture: hearing attitudes; equality and access; topical issues; lived experiences and deaf perspectives.

Participant F hoped they could develop further interpreting and translation skills, and sign variation. They hoped working on a project would develop new skills and require them to use more academic BSL. They were unclear whether they could link the project to their studies and whether they would receive academic credit for innovative ideas. A Year-4 student also hoped to better understand their place within the community as a future interpreter and not be seen to be using the community to progress their career.

The impact of the SLP and placement on biological and experiential variables, and areas of language attitude, were considered in turn.

In terms of motivation, all the students felt they were ready to continue their Year-2 learning after completing the SLP. They also all started the first half of Year 4 feeling prepared and enthusiastic after their third-year placement. However, they reported experiencing a dip in their proficiency, which led one to disengage and another to contemplate withdrawing from the program. All credited successfully completing the degree to the support of their tutors.

With regard to language aptitude, Participants B and C noted a slight improvement in fluency (grammatical structure, rather than vocabulary) and ability to spot regional variation after completion of their SLP. Interactions with their group leader and other BSL users were limited and so all had few opportunities to practice BSL. Participant C felt they had improved their SSE skills but did not see it as useful; their goal was to attain more fluency in BSL. Participant D made a concerted effort to show respect by matching a signer's language preferences (and approached SSE with an open mind). All felt they had reached their anticipated level and did not worry that it would hinder them during their placement in Year 3. But Participants B and C felt that lack of vocabulary prevented them from discussing topics in depth; Participant C found this frustrating as they could not convey their project management experience in a BSL environment. All felt more relaxed about making errors in an informal setting where their signing was more fluid. Furthermore, they were all very aware of their lack of fluency at the start of Year 3 beginning their placement. Participant H described their signing as overly careful, to avoid making linguistic and cultural errors. All agreed their language competency had increased due to signing every day in a range of contexts: Participant G no longer felt "overwhelmed" by language variation and signing styles; Participant I felt more adept at communicating complex ideas; Participant H's daily exposure to grassroots signers had a marked impact on their BSL structures. Participants G and H felt two semesters in one organization allowed sufficient time to learn their roles and develop relationships first, before focusing on language development. However, all agreed their proficiency was not high enough to interpret effectively in Year-4 tutorials. As they could not compare their language proficiency with qualified interpreters on a scale such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Clark & Lee, 2018), Participants G and I found it difficult to mark their progress. All three felt qualifying as trainee interpreters allowed them to time and support needed to develop their interpreting and language skills.

When discussing learning strategies, during their SLP all participants stated that they learned to use contextual clues to help them make sense of a narrative (whereas fingerspelling and repetition often did not aid comprehension). They had also sought help from a tutor to develop BSL communication strategies for communicating with local community members.

Participant D demonstrated a self-awareness regarding their BSL development; they would have welcomed more feedback from tutors as their language progress had stalled. However, they felt the SLP was an excellent opportunity to observe interpreting theory in practice, and to develop networking skills with peers and resilience when dealing with new challenges. They spent many hours watching online BSL resources, which they perceived as an effective way to improve their receptive skills.

Participant C drew from previous work experience: they were frustrated by their peers' apparent unwillingness to produce meaningful outcomes, seeing it more as another academic task to be completed. In relation to the third-year placement, Participant G developed an extensive network of friends in the community (including tutors, graduates, and interpreters) so felt able to call on them for support and guidance once qualified as a professional interpreter. They consistently applied new theory to practice (e.g., interpersonal demands while interpreting).

With respect to language anxiety, all students stated that during their SLP they were reluctant to clarify lack of understanding with BSL users at the time of the interaction, unwilling to show their lack of fluency and comprehension (and out of loyalty, Participant C refrained from seeking clarification from their peers in front of deaf colleagues); this left them feeling disheartened. Participant B was also reluctant to make language or cultural errors in a formal setting with large numbers of community members, worried about the lasting impact it could have on their future career. Managing interpreted situations was a challenge for Participant C and they recognized asking to have their needs met was a source of anxiety. Participant B felt their confidence remained unchanged, lacking resilience to manage the unexpected and displayed avoidance behaviors when feeling demotivated.

However, during their placement they were forced to step out of their comfort zones; the sense of achievement gained in Year 3 gave them resilience to tackle challenges in Year 4. All felt less "terrified" by the end of their placements and saw their confidence rise in line with their language proficiency; Participant H said that "it was the best thing that could have happened for me" and that they could not avoid interactions because "you just have to lift your hands and go. You can't sit there and wait for them to give you. time" Yet they had retained certain language attitudes. Participant I noted they continued to compare their competency level with others while on placement and Participant G remarked: "We're our own worst enemies . . . very self- critical and when constantly presented with things way above our level . . . you don't feel that you've done a good job, because you're aiming for perfection."

When it came to deaf culture and society, Participant B felt that during their SLP they could not communicate with their group leader at a social event but later took the initiative to establish and maintain rapport; they understood the importance of good social skills and the link between authentic community engagement and language acquisition. Participants B and D challenged themselves to increase their attendance at deaf events and Participant D actively distanced themselves from peers who used SSE/English. They knew of one student who had stopped attending deaf club because of "issues with their signing." Participants encountered the following deaf cultural issues and interpreter observations: hearing privilege and cultural assumptions; interpreters managing a lack of deaf awareness among hearing colleagues; and horizontal violence among interpreters. Participants C and D made frequent connections between deaf theory and real life and used it to support them when interacting with deaf people. Participant C would have welcomed tutors facilitating weekly class discussions about interpreter observations or deaf cultural learning. The placement gave Participants G and H the chance to develop friendships with deaf people outside their normal social groups and a sense of belonging to the community. Their colleagues were supportive: "They know you're learning, and they just encourage you to give everything a go," and they felt this attitude would continue once they had registered as interpreters. Through observing the full spectrum of BSL, they made the link between deaf identity, culture, and language, and the importance of accepting and accommodating language variation (including the use of English or SSE).

Participant H described this as a significant shift in mindset and something that may not have been as impactful if learned in class. As expected, all found the theory they had learned helped their understanding of deaf issues as they arose (e.g., hearing oppression) and helped them manage their discomfort. Participant I was surprised at the lack of deaf awareness among their hearing colleagues in deaf organizations; they also acknowledged their deaf education as a privilege. Aware of their lack of community membership at the start, they all tended to reserve judgment and were cautious about expressing opinions and challenges attitudes until relationships had become established.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The interviews with the HWU students have provided useful evidence-based insights not only for considering curriculum change, but also for pedagogical activities to support language learning, motivation, and attitudes. This initial evidence base is important to help inform the development of interpreter training curricula (Webb et al., in press), as research informs sign language interpreter education, which then informs practice (Napier, 2005, 2011).

We recognize the limitations of the study in that it is a small sample of students, but nevertheless the interviews provide rich insight into the attitudes of some SLI students toward sign language and sign language learning and usage.

This project has been revealing in terms of perceptions of minority languages and multilingualism. Although not a foreign language, BSL is a minority language and (deaf) members of this sign language community are multilingual to varying degrees (e.g., some deaf people might choose only to sign, some might speak and sign, some might not be able to speak clearly but demonstrate proficiency in written English) (Napier et al., 2019). The use of spoken English in environments involving a deaf person can

be highly politicized due to the history of (oral) deaf education and the suppression of sign language use in schools. Since sign language learners are new to the deaf community, and by virtue of being spoken-language users, they must understand how to negotiate a range of multilingual situations involving a minority language that they are still learning to use and a spoken language (e.g., occasionally they might encounter situations where one deaf person chooses to speak while another chooses only to sign) while acknowledging that they might be perceived as outsiders to the sign language community. In addition, since lexical variation is well documented in sign language communities, sign language learners will encounter new variants when positioned somewhere outside of Scotland. They will then be exposed to attitudes regarding the continued use of specific variants and the kind of identities they index (e.g., variants that might lead to someone being perceived as "English-like" in their signing or regional variants that index someone as being from a specific part of the UK). The attitudes they display and the decisions they make in such contexts have an impact on how they are perceived generally and how effectively they can integrate themselves within deaf communities.

As far as we are aware, there has been no research regarding the attitudes displayed by SLI students toward sign language and their learning of sign language, and knowledge gleaned from this project will influence the design and content of the curriculum at HWU. This evidence may also be useful for interpreter educators to consider in reviewing their curricula with other minority languages.

5.1 Recommendations for Sign Language Interpreter Education Programs

As a result of the findings of this project, we make recommendations for sign language interpreter education programs, as follows.

- Prior to starting Year 1: recommend applicants have the following.
    - Basic/Introductory/BSL (e.g., alphabet, numbers)
    - Exposure to deaf people and deaf communities
    - Completed guided, structured self-reflection (awareness of their learning style, language anxieties, and be able to articulate those in Year 1)
- Address language anxiety in Year 1 (introduction, discussion, activities).
    - More in-depth understanding of its impact on learning BSL/interpreting
- Explain the theoretical reasoning behind course content and teaching approach (i.e., why a module has been chosen, its place within the wider context of interpreter training, and why BSL, English, or a combination of both is selected for course delivery)
- Identify and value other interpersonal skills, to counter effects of language anxiety (e.g., flexibility and resilience, and learners to undertake self-development), working with and sign posting to other departments (e.g., Student Services).
- Provide examples of what entry-level, ready-to-work interpreters look like to students to support students in setting realistic expectations around their own skill sets.
- Require students to map their BSL progression using the CEFR scale as part of their learning in the

program to compare self-reflection with teacher perceptions.

- Set out the differences between spoken and signed language learning strategies.

  o Borrow applicable best practices from spoken-language instruction

  o Educators to consider using a "standardized" BSL and British English as the baseline (e.g., Edinburgh regional dialect)

  o Introduce students to vocabulary lists, key terms, and glossaries, discourse and communicative strategies and interactions that incorporate regional variation, careful consideration around when and how much variation is taught.

- Embed teaching activities that improve how the learners give and receive feedback as well as incorporate activities such as cognitive rehearsal (Griffin, 2004) designed to equip with tools to address instances of horizontal violence both during their learning and upon entry to work.

- Embed a model of supervision throughout the program to give learners a safe space to discuss and mitigate learning anxieties.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the language attitudes toward minority languages, and specifically BSL, held by SLI students. The findings highlight the importance of early preparation and support for learners in addressing language anxiety, developing interpersonal skills, and understanding the unique strategies involved in learning signed languages. The recommendations provided can inform sign language interpreter education programs and serve as a model for other minority-language instruction. By creating safe learning spaces and prioritizing language awareness, empathy, and cultural competence, we can better equip sign language interpreters to serve as effective and respectful communicators within diverse communities.

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Appendix: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction (opening):

So, this study focuses on how you feel about BSL (specifically, learning and using it), as well as about communicating with members of the UK deaf community. That means things like:
- *your language ability*
- *overcoming communication barriers*
- *multilingual environments (BSL, SSE)*
- *your contact with the community*

If there are any scenarios you haven't personally encountered, we could explore how you might respond if you were to find yourself in that situation.

If I ask a question you'd prefer not to answer, that's perfectly OK.

1. COMMUNICATING IN BSL WITH THE COMMUNITY
HOW THEY INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY PRESENTLY

1. Do you feel you can communicate effectively with deaf people?
    If so, in what sense? *(strengths)*
    If not, why not? What are the challenges?

2. If communication with a deaf person fails, how might you respond? What might you do first?
(Only prompt if needed: fingerspell, mouth more, write things down, gesture more, ask for help)

3. Do you have connections with the deaf community?
    How have you made them? Have they been made available to you? Does the community seem accessible to you? Why or why not?

4. How do you engage with BSL outside of the classroom? Any specific examples? *(family, friends, volunteer, BSL Zone, BBC iPlayer, social media/which?)*

2. TYPES OF MULTILINGUAL ENVIRONMENTS

I'm interested in how you might respond (or maybe have responded) to three scenarios:

1. If you are signing with a deaf person and a hearing person speaks to you.
2. If you are signing with a deaf person and they start speaking and signing at the same time.
3. If you are talking with a classmate and a deaf person walks into the room.

3. AWARENESS OF VARIATION IN language attitudes

Language ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS

1. Are there factors you're aware of that may generate differences in the way people sign?

Gender

Age

LGBTQI

Family background (deaf/hearing/signing/non-signing)

Region

Ethnicity

Education

2. Have you seen these differences firsthand? What have you seen?

3. How do you feel about variation in sign language?

Is there a variation that you gravitate toward or feel that you should follow? Any you gravitate away from?

Is there an argument for everyone using the same signs all over the UK? (Why or why not?)

4. Do deaf and hearing people sign the same? Do you alter your signing when you are signing with deaf or

hearing people *(e.g., if watching Marion, signing to Jemina and Stacey vs. signing to Gary and Annelies)*?

5. Can you explain the following terms: 1. BSL, 2. Sign Supported English (SSE)?

6. I'd like to look more closely at English and BSL with you:

Is there a relationship between them? *(How does English mouthing and fingerspelling fit in?)*

Do you see strengths or limitations with each language?

Can they do the same thing?

Can one do more than the other?

Do they have equal status? How did that question make you feel *(apprehensive)*?

8. Today, more hearing people are learning sign language. What are the implications on the community

because of this?

4. YOUR DEGREE AND LEARNING BSL

INTERPRETING AND SIGN LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

LANGUAGE LEARNING:

This last part is a chance for us to explore your thoughts about the course.

1. In which ways do you believe you have acquired BSL and knowledge about deaf people and their com

munities? *(Besides class, are there other sources that you've encountered? Deaf People &*

Society: class discussions in ENG/BSL—did you contribute? Others' contributions useful?)

2. What classroom/homework activities have most supported your BSL skill development/understanding

of deaf people and their communities *(role play, presentations, group work, individual study/analysis*

regarding your BSL videos, visual resources, readings, incidental learning/personal stories from lecturers)?

3. What classroom/homework activities have least supported your BSL skill development and why *(type*

and volume of work, how to prioritize, safe spaces, impact of peers and staff)?

4. You will be conducting a service learning project this year at Deaf Action. Do you think this project will

impact your learning of BSL and deaf studies? If so, in what ways? If not, why not *(outsourced to Deaf*

Action, work with deaf-led committees to prepare for EdinFest 2020)?

5. Do you feel prepared for your second year? If so what has prepared you and if not, what do you feel you

needed more of last year *(feedback on continual and formal assessments, BSL and written, examples of*

best practice)?

Wrap-up if needed:

How was your first year? Any suggestions for changes/improvements *(course content, support, exposure to*

BSL)?