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Finally Free from the Interpreter's Gaze? Uncovering the Hidden Labor of Gaze Work for Deaf Consumers of Interpreter Services

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a shift towards remote video-mediated sign language interpreting. This has uncovered the hidden labor of gaze work that deaf consumers of interpreting services have been obliged to engage in. We specifically focus on one group of deaf consumers of interpreter services: deaf academics. We consider the role of interpreter education in the context of the backchanneling expectation, the invisibility of gaze work prior to the proliferation of remote video-mediated interpreting, during the COVID era, and then post-COVID. Throughout this chronology, we consider the expectations of interpreters and deaf academics for interaction and feedback between interpreter and academic. While gaze work historically forms part of the wider calculated consumer labor, this is something within the conference setting that deaf consumers are now more resistant to engage in. This is partly because of sensory overload and the need to manage multimodal resources. However, this is also about exercising choices. We highlight the need for sign language interpreters to be educated in more nuanced ways with respect to gaze behaviors. It is clear that deaf consumers want interpreters to provide solutions to ensure that interpreter-mediated access provides access without the problematic addition of consumer labor.

Keywords: gaze work, access, deaf academics, sign language interpreting

Introduction

The digital disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a shift towards remote video-mediated sign language interpreting. While remote interpreting has, in some ways, been liberating for deaf consumers[1] of interpreting services, and for interpreters themselves (De Meulder et al., 2021; De Meulder & Sijm, 2024), the invisible and unnoticed labor undertaken by deaf consumers when working with sign language interpreters, online and in person, has become more visible. Because the specifics of remote interpreting mean that deaf consumers and interpreters are not always in sight of each other, the issue of the "interpreter gaze" suddenly became obvious and noticed in ways it was not before.

This paper specifically addresses the experiences of one group of deaf consumers of interpreter services: deaf academics, who have specific service requirements and demands when it comes to working with sign language interpreters (De Meulder et al., 2018; Hauser et al., 2022; O'Brien et al., 2023; Smith & Ogden, 2018). We write from our experiences and observations as a European, white, deaf academic and interpreting service consumer (Maartje), and a European, white, hearing BSL/ASL/IS/English interpreter, academic, and occasional interpreting service consumer (Christopher). From these positionalities, we are also both involved in sign language interpreting training programs in Europe and the UK (as educators), and participate in conferences on sign language interpreter education. We use this writing practice to better understand the landscape of *the interpreter's gaze*, and how the shift to remote interpreting has uncovered the hidden labor of *gaze work* that deaf consumers have been obliged to engage in.

In general, sign language interpreters appreciate seeing the deaf person/people with/for whom they work, and are used to, require and/or trained to receive direct real-time feedback, often called "backchanneling" (see, for example, Mesch, 2016). This backchanneling is supposed to provide an external monitoring mechanism for sign language interpreters to confirm that their interpretation is understood and meets the needs of deaf audience member(s). Consequently, working with a sign language interpreter can sometimes mean engaging in prolonged eye contact for a deaf person/people—something that typically deaf people would say hearing people would feel very uncomfortable about.

The shift to remote video-mediated interpreting, however, has significantly changed this gaze dynamic. Online, attendees' cameras are sometimes or often turned off. In this case, when working from a signed into a spoken language, interpreters are working into the void without seeing the deaf customer(s). In this way, the interpreter is reduced to a disembodied voice, placing greater focus on the deaf contributor as a presenter. With their cameras often off, deaf academics felt freed from holding the interpreter's gaze and from the unspoken obligation to attend to this gaze. Even with cameras on, during an online meeting, it is hard to see exactly who is looking at whom, due to the nature of the technology. This waives the responsibility of the deaf consumer to look at the interpreter.

Our interests lie in understanding how this shift to remote video-mediated interpreting has uncovered the hidden labor of *gaze work* that deaf consumers have been obliged to engage in. This in turn raises the following questions:

- Do interpreters underestimate the weight of their gaze, and trap deaf consumers into burdensome *gaze work* when interpreting?
- Who was visible to whom pre-COVID, who is visible to whom post-COVID, and how does that visibility mediate *gaze work*?
- How has focus and cooperation changed in light of the emerging visibility of *gaze work*?

In this article, we approach this as a revelatory case study (Clark et al., 2021) and attempt to answer these questions through personal reflection and qualitative content analysis (Clark et al., 2021), reflecting on the conversations we have had with colleagues about this topic, both in person and on social media.

1 We are aware of the tensions surrounding the use of the term "consumer."

We draw upon comments and questions made by audience members at the 2022 European forum of sign language interpreters (efsli) conference where an earlier version of our thoughts was presented to conference attendees, and (draw on the X (formerly known as Twitter) discussion that followed from this presentation.

This article is somewhat chronological. First, we consider the role of interpreter education and then consider the era before COVID-19 (i.e., principally face-to-face interpreter mediation); during the COVID-19 era (i.e., moving online); and then the post-COVID era (i.e., the consequences of the online experience). Throughout this chronology, we consider the expectations of interpreters and deaf academics for interaction and feedback between interpreter and academic. Going forward, we first consider the role of interpreter education in establishing the need for backchanneling.

The Backchanneling Expectation: The Role of Interpreter Education

We think that the backchanneling expectation genesis could be sign language interpreter education programs (IEPs), and the professional praxis ideologies in those programs. Interpreting students might be taught early on in their IEP that deaf people experience barriers to access to information. Therefore, the students get the impression that *they* need to provide all the information that they hear via an interpretation. This would mean that the deaf interpreter consumer would need to be looking at the interpreter to perceive this information. In Deaf Studies classes, interpreting students might be taught that sign languages are visual and therefore continuous eye contact is necessary. This misses the nuance of the multimodal nature of deaf peoples' interactions not only in everyday life (Hou & Kusters, 2020) but also in higher education contexts (Holmström & Schönström, 2018).

IEPs might also implicitly teach that the deaf person is always the most disadvantaged in the room. This could be due to a number of external factors such as general lower attainment in education (often due to the failures of the education system to meet the needs of the deaf student), but also to ideological factors inherent in IEPs, such as role-play exercises where the deaf person almost always plays the disadvantaged party or the party with less authority (e.g., the patient, the victim, the pupil, the party who needs access to information—the service receiver rather than the service provider). The emphasis might then be on ensuring that the interpreter is there to make sure the deaf consumer does not miss out on any information and is not being disadvantaged, without critically reflecting upon differing needs of different deaf consumers. We can see the consequences of this manifest in professional settings because of this classroom modeling.

For example, at the 2022 European forum of sign language interpreters (efsli) conference, one interpreter attendee came up during the Q&A to make a comment. During this, they asked if they should stop signing and "hold information" (i.e., pause their signing) when the deaf person was looking away, rather than let deaf consumers make decisions about what they watched. Similarly, during the same conference one interpreter attendee, after our talk, said they were so happy our paper gave them permission to "break their gaze," suggesting that they had been taught they could not (as noted above), but had never moved beyond this initial understanding of appropriate eye gaze behaviors within deaf communities.

Anecdotal evidence also points to interpreters wanting to make sure that deaf consumers "get all the info" because if they do not, there is a chance the deaf person will ask a question that the interpreter will need to interpret into a spoken language, something many interpreters do not like (Napier et al., 2005; Nicodemus & Emmorey, 2015). This also speaks to another kind of trap—although we will not be addressing it here—but clearly some interpreters exercise some control to save their professional face, rather than meet the needs of deaf interpreter consumers.

All these teaching points mentioned above in relation to gaze, watching, and information access have some kind of truth in them. But it is impossible to generalize across a spectrum of deaf experiences. For example, deaf academic interpreter consumers will in many cases be more highly educated than the interpreters they work with. This may also include being more literate in academic English.

Furthermore, sign language user behaviors are often introduced to draw new students' attention to different ways of being, such as tapping someone to get attention, waving to get attention, or ensuring that gaze is maintained to be polite. There is then an expectation that after having one's attention drawn to these behaviors, a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding about attention strategies and eye gaze will develop in students. Clearly, this superficial understanding of complex gaze behaviors is prevalent. This lack of advanced understanding of the nuances of these behaviors is especially unhelpful when those students then come to work with deaf academics, who often have a very different educational background and different expectations of working with interpreters (Campbell et al., 2008; Crawley & O'Brien, 2020; Smith & Ogden, 2018).

In the next section, we will consider working practices and the expectation of *gaze work* before the COVID-19 era.

Where Have We Come From?: BCE (Before COVID Era); The Backchanneling Expectation

In the Before COVID Era (BCE), as well as in the present, interpreters have come to anticipate real-time backchanneling from deaf customers. They are trained to actively solicit this feedback (as noted above) as a means of fostering mutually beneficial collaboration (Napier, 2007; Napier et al., 2008). Real-time backchanneling takes various forms: nodding, confirming, reassuring, maintaining eye contact, prompting signs, and other actions, drawing from typical signing conversational interaction (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). It is something interpreters seek out and deaf consumers give, often unconsciously, because they too are "trained" or accustomed to do so. Deaf consumers do this to ensure their own access and establish rapport with interpreters when presenting and watching, so as to try to ensure that the flow of information is at a pace the interpreters and deaf consumers themselves can manage.

While the use of this multimodal engagement strategy can prove effective when working in community or public service settings, especially in smaller meetings where there is an interactive discourse frame to facilitate participation (Berge, 2018; Compton, 2020), we contend that this strategy becomes less pertinent or beneficial when working in non-interactive settings such as professional/academic conferences. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that if the pace becomes too fast, interpreters will have to adopt different strategies potentially including paraphrasing, summary interpreting, omissions, and so on. Vice versa, deaf interpreter consumers employ their own strategies (much less researched) to ensure they are able to follow the flow of the interpreter's output and the interpreter can follow them (De Meulder & Carmichael, 2020).

For example, Haug et al. (2017) found that deaf professionals use a variety of strategies to collaborate effectively with interpreters, both in situ and after a presentation, including adapting signing style (e.g., repeating), making regular eye contact, giving feedback, and engaging in vocabulary presentation. Napier et al. (2008), in their case study of a deaf professional working with two interpreters for a formal presentation in Auslan that was rendered into spoken English, identified particular cues used by all three participants to ensure that the interpretation was produced smoothly, and had the impact on the audience that the deaf presenter intended. These primarily included maintaining eye contact, pausing, and nodding or signaling to each other throughout the interpreting process. De Meulder et al. (2018), in their analysis of a PhD defense in International Sign, rendered into spoken English also mentioned "regular eye contact" as a strategy to collaborate with interpreters, and regular pauses so the interpreters could keep up and ensure an effective rendition was complete before further information was presented.

But in every way, these strategies represent additional labor for deaf consumers, who are seemingly expected to engage in this labor to receive services that non-deaf consumers are not required to engage in the majority of the time. This has been conceived as a deaf tax (see also #deaftax on X, formerly known as Twitter) or a minority tax (Campbell & Rodriguez, 2019).

This *gaze work* must additionally be seen in the context of the deaf consumer often experiencing sensory overload and having to engage in processing a high influx of information because of receiving interpreter mediation rather than direct access. This means the backchanneling labor comes in addition to attending to interpreters and managing relationships with them, processing information in situ and trying to make sense of what the interpreter is signing (which is easier with some interpreters than with others). This makes deaf interpreter consumers vulnerable to physical and mental fatigue from diligently watching interpreters (Chua et al., 2022; Holcomb, 2018). Additionally, in this context, the cutting off of eye contact is—by some interpreters—seen as "not listening" (although we will discuss this in greater depth below), and so *gaze work* is a required form of politeness. This requirement to maintain eye contact sometimes means that deaf consumers experience the interpreter's gaze as a trap: there is no way out.

In the context of how deaf consumers use video-mediated interpreting (VRS and VRI) in the United States, Brunson (2010) calls this work "calculated consumer labor," which we would argue also includes *gaze work*. Brunson writes about how deaf VRS/VRI consumers use strategies to ensure they get access and engage in extra work to accommodate differences in interpreters' skills. Brunson claims, "When consumers do not have a choice, service providers are able to require more labor from them" (2010, p. 3). This can mean being hypervigilant about fingerspelling clarity (i.e., ensuring a message is laboriously enunciated) or devising stories so that they can hang up without telling the interpreter that they are not performing successfully.

Similarly, deaf academics experience having to engage in calculated consumer labor when working with interpreters. Although deaf academics can sometimes exercise a choice by choosing which interpreters they work with (differing from the experience of VRS/VRI consumers), this is often not the case. Many conferences book interpreters without consulting the (predominant) users of the service; consequently, deaf academics often do not have a choice of who the interpreter(s) will be (Burke, 2017). Even if working with a designated interpreter (Hauser et al., 2022) deaf academics have booked themselves, there can be more responsibility for backchanneling to a known and chosen interpreter than to an interpreter booked by a third party (who you might often not know personally).

However, BCE interpreters and deaf consumers were not always co-located within sight of each other. For example, when working at large conferences where the deaf attendee(s) were unknown to the interpreters or conference organizers, or there were not any deaf attendees, interpreters would work "into the void." Often in those cases there might also be bright spotlights that make it impossible to see the audience, so that even if the deaf consumers were known to the interpreter(s), they would not be seen or gazed upon. Other cases where interpreters cannot see the audience include when working into camera (e.g., for television) (Stone, 2019).

When at conferences, anecdotal evidence points to deaf academics developing some strategies to share responsibility for the *gaze work*. For example, when at a conference where there are only two deaf attendees, if one is paying attention to the interpreter and backchanneling, the other can take a *gazebreak* and make notes. At larger conferences with a larger group of deaf attendees, there is more room to reduce *gaze work* by breaking gaze or only looking sporadically because responsibility is shared (there will always have been one person paying attention). If deaf participants are scattered throughout the audience, there is more opportunity to resist *gaze work* by being unseen.

The backchanneling expectation might differ per interpreter though. Deaf academics might specifically choose a designated interpreter that they know they do not have to engage in *gaze work* with. Or they might specifically choose an ad hoc interpreter because this makes it easier to look away. The mere ability to *engage* in backchanneling and prolonged eye contact in the first place is also dependent on who the deaf consumer is, and who the interpreter is. Some neurodiverse deaf people for example may find it hard to maintain prolonged eye contact and may need to look away to refocus, and this may be an issue for neurodiverse interpreters as well (Henner, 2022; Robinson, 2022).

Now let us consider what happened during the pandemic and its impact on *gaze work* as a default.

During the COVID Pandemic (DCP) and the Making Visible of Invisible Labor

And then, in March 2020, the pandemic happened. Almost overnight, the digital disruption accelerated a rapid shift to remote video-mediated sign language interpreting. Suddenly, almost all meetings were on Zoom and other platforms, and interpreters who had never worked remotely before (the majority of sign language interpreters, so it seemed), overnight had to work online (De Meulder et al., 2021).

This presented a huge shift not only for sign language interpreters but also for academic deaf consumers. Now interpreters had to be accessed via 2D screens instead of in situ 3D. Sometimes via an unreliable internet connection, such that when the connection froze, deaf consumers had to fill in the gaps where one or more signs were missing. And where deaf consumers adapted their signing to interpreters even more than when co-located. In addition came the limitations and affordances of specific platforms such as Zoom vs. Teams (see for example Kusters et al., 2020, for a discussion).

In those early days of the pandemic, there was an online meeting on MS Teams at Maartje's workplace. There were some 20 participants (mixed deaf/hearing and signing/non-signing) and one interpreter, for a 15-minute meeting. When the meeting had just started, the interpreter demanded to see "a deaf person" on-screen so that they could rely on backchannel feedback of that visible deaf person. There was an awkward silence as no one immediately volunteered to engage with this request, and, with cameras off, people could not look at each other to assess who was willing to do this and who was not.

In the end, one deaf participant volunteered to have their camera on during the meeting, and (unconsciously) to have the interpreter's gaze on them and provide backchannel feedback. Apart from the meeting's chair and the interpreter, they were the only meeting participant with their camera on throughout the meeting. While the other deaf attendees were free to multitask, or even not attend the meeting at all (just "be there" online), this deaf person had to do the *gaze work* labor, which suddenly became highly noticed and very visible (at least to Maartje).

As the months progressed, experience with online meetings increased. Deaf people and interpreters were sometimes in sight of each other, but in most cases not co-located. In the case of larger conferences or meetings, cameras were often off. Typically, this happened without consultation with interpreters. In some cases, cameras were off at the start of the meeting already. In other cases, cameras were on at first, and then after the first five minutes or so, people started to switch them off, going incognito. As a deaf person it was always a considered decision, especially if you were the only deaf person in the meeting: Will I keep my camera on so the interpreter can see me, but additionally also accept their gaze on me? Or will I switch it off and be more like my hearing peers, engaging in multitasking and only look at the interpreter sporadically as this is unseen and therefore unmonitored? Switching the camera off was often felt as liberating.

Additionally liberating was that even with cameras on, and faces seen on-screen, it was harder to establish eye contact with the interpreters and for the interpreters to establish eye contact with deaf participants. Similarly, with the pinning of specific people it was difficult to identify who was watching whom. When working into a spoken language, interpreters often had their cameras off, centering the deaf person as the presenter and author of the contribution, reducing the interpreter to a disembodied voice ensuring access to the original (deaf) author.

Captioning Enhancing a Multimodal, Multilingual Space

A significant additional change in the dynamics of online meetings was (automated) captioning. This meant real-time alignment of information. It was an opportunity for deaf academics to switch their gaze from interpreter to captions (or to captions only in some cases). It also represented an opportunity to monitor accuracy of interpretations in both language directions in real-time. This draws our attention to multimodality and the shifting of attention of deaf conference attendees between being a watcher and receiver of presented information via slides, interpreter, captions; potentially reading comments in the chat; and breaking gaze to cogitate, reflect, and digest before re-engaging with watching.

Still it was noted that this created tension between deaf consumers and interpreters, with one deaf consumer saying:

> But I know if I drift off, the interpreter knows straight away, so I feel I have to watch. I don't know but I think lots of deaf people feel the same way, otherwise why is the interpreter there? What for? (Sommer Lindsay et al., in preparation).

This suggests that part of the reason that interpreters might hold their deaf consumers' gaze is to prove their worth and continue to be employed. And yet we know that sighted deaf people (and sign language interpreters) have better peripheral vision (Codina et al., 2011, 2017) than non-signing sighted hearing people. This suggests that managing reading the captions while still attending to a sign language interpretation *is* possible (although exhausting).

Similarly, within professional contexts deaf consumers may want a sign language interpretation and yet still have access to the captioned original for terminology, names, and other specific jargon that the interpreter may be unfamiliar with or omit as part of the interpreting process (Napier, 2004). This concurs with emerging evidence that having both sign language interpreting and captions aids the comprehension of 2D video information (Debevc et al., 2015).

Now, we move onto considering what the implications of the pandemic are for those consuming interpreting services.

Where Are We Now?: ACE (After COVID Era)

All the signs now point to remote sign language interpreting being here to stay, although the scales are again more balanced than DCP. Deaf people and interpreters are sometimes in sight of each other and co-located, or in sight of each other (pinned) and remote. But still we would contend that deaf people underestimate their (now visible) calculated consumer labor—their *gaze work*.

Signing spaces have become "emboxed" (Hochgesang, 2020): pointing or using eye gaze is harder online—when someone signs "here" or "you" there is no point of reference; turn-taking has changed; video boxes getting moved around when someone turns their camera on or off interrupts the flow of conversations. We see changes in language use with sign names being used vocatively. Captioning means access to meetings and conferences through different modes and different languages. *Gaze work* gains additional meanings *and* additional labor.

As noted above, due to IEP ideologies, interpreters might underestimate the weight of their gaze. It would be interesting to further explore how well interpreters understand the use of gaze and the complex nature of gaze behaviors used by signing deaf people. Gaze can be used linguistically to maintain an established discourse referent, it can be used gesturally to direct gaze to things being referred to in a shared visual environment, it can be used to maintain and hold the floor, it can be used to yield the floor and indicate who the next chosen contributor will be (Vranjes & Bot, 2021). Held gaze can also change a statement into a question. Why then do interpreters insist on exercising their gaze upon deaf consumers? Is it about being watched or being seen?

Community vs. Conference Sign Language Interpreting?

While the instances BCE of not being able to gaze upon the deaf consumer(s) were limited, the areas in which gaze cannot be exercised are now increasing. As the dust settles, perhaps we will see a divergence of those who cannot work without gazing and being seen, and those who can work into the void. This might be akin to the split we see in spoken language interpreting of community vs. conference interpreting. It could be that we have an emerging "booth interpreter" paradigm that is newer for sign language interpreting (Turner et al., 2021).

Even so, IEPs continue to stress that interpreters should ensure that they have been understood by deaf consumers (in the main although more recently there is greater discussion of the interpreter being there for both deaf and hearing consumers). But this needs to be tempered with a better understanding of deaf consumers' strategies for attending to information within the environment. As Beacom (2022), a deaf consumer, notes:

> I'm very adept at figuring out patterns and then predicting what's the filler and what's the actually important parts with both speech reading and receiving interpreted info. I often look away during the filler. That doesn't mean I miss any meaning at all.

Perhaps it is a case of the need for explicit instruction on engaging with deaf consumers to ensure that any strategy adopted is tailored to the needs of that consumer. Or that a service is provided and the assumption is that if you are booked again by the deaf consumer, you are, at least in part, engaging in strategies that are effective for that consumer.

Where Can We Go From Here?

One of the issues appears to be that education on a single gaze behavior (maintaining eye contact) does not enable a more sophisticated approach to interpreting service delivery. This would then suggest the need for a curriculum that exposes students to a continuum of attention strategies, and places greater emphasis on the heterogeneity of deaf people and their service use.

This could be said for many "signing community" behaviors such as the use of sophisticated facial expressions, tapping for attention getting, as well as gaze and eye contact. Our question would be whether this is explicitly taught in any sense. And if not, then how do interpreting students "learn" these behaviors appropriately? Interpreters traditionally start in the community and so the interaction is very personal. "Backchannels" are highly observable and often tailored for the one person in front of you. It may be that students need explicit instruction in interpreting for a larger audience (even if most of the audience is not relying on the interpretation) so that the sign language interpretation is in the style of conference sign language presentations.

What's in a Look?

It would be worth further exploring why interpreters seek out a watchful gaze from the deaf consumers. Is the gaze expectation that some interpreters have a need to get confirmation of their performance? Or is it about being confident and performing?

Indeed, a deaf person not watching the interpreter can mean many things and interpreters need to be aware of this. Maybe the deaf person is:

- just bored or zoning out (like hearing people do as well),
- checking their socials,
- taking notes,
- already familiar with the topic and getting enough information from watching the PowerPoint and the interpreter only sporadically,
- having a life interruption (gets a message from their kids' school),
- unable to make any sense of what the interpreter is signing (this often makes it worse because interpreters will automatically assume they are not doing good work and start overdoing it).

Or it can mean the interpreter is actually doing a very good job and the deaf person only needs to look sporadically to catch up.

Perhaps we also need to explicitly teach the importance of peripheral vision of sighted deaf people (e.g., Codina et al., 2017): they *can* see the interpreter even if not looking straight at them. If hearing interpreters can trust their deaf interpreting colleagues to use their peripheral vision when working together in a team (Stone & Russell, 2014), why not have the same expectation of deaf interpreter consumers? Noting that this happens and experiencing what that is like in a situated learning moment could alleviate that self-doubt and/or controlling behavior.

At the same time, interpreters (especially those working in academic settings with deaf academics) might need to be aware that going to conferences is not all about "the information"—it might even be the least important part. The equally or even more important part of conferencing is the networking (and interpreting for networking is a whole other issue—see, for example, De Meulder, 2017).

The importance of networking also speaks to the issue that deaf attendees need to break gaze to look around, look at the presenter, look at fellow attendees. As Cohen (2022) notes:

> one of the challenges with the gaze during a professional conference is that i get to meet so many people but only remember two faces because of the interpreters. sometime, i would break the gaze during the presentation to look at speaker and memorize their names and appearance.

Therefore without being able to take a *gazebreak*, deaf people may not be able to effectively network. In some ways this is mitigated during online conferences by the Zoom participant list, which allows present attendees to be seen to be online but also have the freedom to do other things meanwhile. This could include direct messaging/chatting with other academics they hope to (online) network with.

At the same time, not being gazed at allows deaf academics a kind of anonymity that is often welcomed and sometimes even wanted. If there is a conference on location where deaf academics are visibly present, with interpreters there is almost always the need to do "the deaf thing" for several hearing attendees (such as answering the comment "Oh, I thought sign language was universal!"). By being anonymous, this reduces not only the deaf tax of *gaze work* but also the deaf tax of engaging in non-academic general awareness raising. Perhaps one of the issues that IEPs might need to consider is giving interpreting students the experience of being on the receiving end of SLI services, and having the interpreter's gaze on them. If interpreting students experience interpreter-mediated access, perhaps they will be more mindful in their service delivery.

Conclusions

In this article we have highlighted how interpreters underestimate the burden of *gaze work,* and the evident need for interpreters to be educated in more nuanced ways with respect to gaze behaviors (among other things). This not only contributes to a better understanding of deaf consumer expectations for conference sign language interpreting, but also to ensure sign language IEPs curricula are suited to the needs of different deaf consumers in the 21st century.

We have considered the impact of COVID-19 on deaf consumers of interpreting services' awareness of the *gaze work* they have to engage in. While this forms part of wider calculated consumer labor historically, this is something within the conference setting that deaf consumers are now more resistant to engage in. This is partly because of sensory overload and the need to manage multimodal resources. But it is also about exercising choices of when to look at interpreting, or captioning, or when to just look out of the window, and so on.

We have considered that different deaf consumers may desire different approaches to interpreting provision. And that this might be an indication of a move towards a division between a community

interpreting model and a conference interpreting model for the sign language interpreting profession. The appears to be a greater need for interpreters to accept that one size does not fit all. As Christopher often says to their students:

> if you go to a tailor and ask for your trousers to be raised an inch, you expect that to happen. Even if the tailor thinks three inches is better, if you insist on an inch that's what you hope to be done. If you receive your trousers with a three inch adjustment you would not go back to the tailor.

Perhaps further research is needed into understanding deaf consumer expectations in 2024 onwards. What is clear, however, is that deaf consumers want interpreters to provide solutions to ensure that interpreter-mediated access is something that provides *access*, without the problematic addition of consumer labor. What might also be worth considering is when a "live" on-site job is best considered a camera job. And so, we might move to a model more akin to booth interpreting for deaf academics at academic and professional conferences.

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