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Master's Thesis (MA)

Accreditation Reform
For
South African Sign Language Interpreters

An action research study

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Purpose: This study focused on accreditation systems specifically to inform an accreditation system for South African Sign Language interpreters. The study was based on action enquiry which was mainly informed by the UK accreditation system.

Methods: A questionnaire and triadic focus group discussion were used to source data to inform findings and recommendations.

Results: Over the course of data analysis, common concerns emerge regarding the current SATI testing system, although there are also responses which lean strongly on the advantages of the test. A major concern among interpreters is that the accreditation system proposed under the SALPC will lead to fragmentation and conflict instead of providing a sustainable solution for the already unpopular SATI accreditation tests for SASL interpreters. Mainly results speak to specific aspects of constructs which must be tested, the testing of ethics, the need for continuous professional development and lastly the alternative option of a portfolio of evidence is proposed.

Conclusion: On the basis of results obtained from Sign Language interpreters, both in the UK and SA, it is concluded that there is a need for accreditation reform for SASL interpreters under the current South African Translators Institute. A tier stratification model for accreditation is a progressive step where the categories of skill levels of interpreters are stratified from the minimum to maximum requirements in terms of interpreting competencies

Keywords Accreditation, Testing, Training, Professionalization, Portfolio of evidence, South African Sign Language Interpreter, South African Language Practitioners Council, South African Language Practitioners Council Act

Declaration of Originality

I, Natasha Parkins-Maliko, declare that the content of this dissertation is original and not plagiarized. In all instances content and information quoted and referenced are acknowledge appropriately.

Natasha Parkins-Maliko

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I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the time and effort of all respondents who participated in this study, without you this report would not have been possible.

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To the South African Deaf community, thank you for the gift of South African Sign Language.

To my interpreter colleagues in Mzansi, Africa and the world, thank you for your infectious passion and believe in what you and I continue to do.

Lastly I am grateful for the support from my family.

ACRONYMS

APA – American Psychological Association

ASL – American Sign Language

ASLIA – Australian Sign Language Interpreter Association

AUSLAN – Australian Sign Language

BSL – British Sign Language

CATHSETA – Culture Art Tourism Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority

CDI – Certified Deaf Interpreter

CEU – Continued Education Units

CLA – Communicative Language Ability

CLIP – R – Condition Legal Interpreting Permit Relay

CODA – Child/ren of Deaf Adults

CPD – Continued Professional Development

DAC – Department of Art and Culture

DI – Deaf Interpreter

EIPA - Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment

FET – Further Education and Training

IPAP – Industrial Action Policy Plan

ISL – Irish Sign Language

NAATI – National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters

NAD – National Deaf Association

NASASLI – National Association of South African Sign Language Interpreters

NCPRD – National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind people

NHRDS – National Human Resource Development Strategy

NIC – National Interpreter Certification

NOS – National Occupational Standards

NSDS – National Skills Development Strategy

NSF – National Skills Fund

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

OTC – Oral Transliteration Certificate

PANSALB – Pan South African Language Board

PoE – Portfolio of Evidence

RID – Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

RSLI – Registered Sign Language Interpreter

SA – South Africa

SAG – South African Government

SALPC – South African Language Practitioners Council

SALPCA – South African Language Practitioners Council Act

SASL – South African Sign Language

SATI – South African Translators Institute

SC: L – Specialist Certificate Legal

SL – Sign Language

UK – United Kingdom

UNCRPD - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

USA – United States of America

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 TITLE

An action research study of South African Sign Language interpreter accreditation.

1.2 KEYWORDS

Accreditation, Testing, Training, Professionalisation, Portfolio of evidence, South African Sign Language Interpreter, South African Language Practitioners Council, South African Language Practitioners Council Act.

1.3 INTRODUCTION

Given the incidence of the fake interpreter at the late President Nelson Mandela's funeral, credentialing of interpreters in South Africa (SA) has become increasingly in demand to ensure competency of interpreter service providers. Also during the global televised court case of Oscar Pistoruis, the spoken language court interpreters came under scrutiny for poor interpreting service.

The South African government promulgated the Use of Official Languages Act in 2012. The Act honoured the language rights of citizens through language policy and legislation, but the language profession was still not regulated. Shortcomings were: lack of regulated standards, service delivery and fees, practitioners' vulnerability to exploitation and the public not being protected in terms of received services. The South African Language Practitioner council bill emphasises the importance of control of the accreditation and registration of all South African language practitioners in order to instil public confidence in the services offered by language practitioners. The bill proposed that the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) be established as a juristic person and that its core functions would be to regulate the training of language practitioners, provide control over accreditation and registration, and provide for matters incidental thereto. The specific functions are set out in the SALPC Act guidelines.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In a pilot study eliciting key stakeholder's views on the accreditation system preceding this investigation it was established that the Deaf-and South African
Sign Language (SASL) interpreter communities in particular are not in agreement with the process of accreditation testing. This action study will engage with the single issue of a proposed accreditation system which can possible be considered by these two groups, the South African Deaf community and SASL interpreters, but also broader stakeholders such as the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), the SALPC and the general public, with specific reference to hearing clients who makes use of SASL interpreting services.

The research question is:

Which method/s can the South African Language Practitioners Council use to accredit SASL interpreters?

3. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this action research study is to bring about development in practice by analysing existing practice and identifying elements for change. The process is founded on the gathering of evidence on which to make informed rather than intuitive judgements and decisions.

The *academic aim* of this research is to make a contribution to the literature on SASL interpreting through specific investigation of the United Kingdom accreditation process of British Sign Language interpreters.

The *strategic aim* of this research is to make recommendations and inform the South African Language Practitioners Council of the various accreditation methodology options for South African Sign Language practitioners.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter will document writings about the professionalization of interpreting, measurement aspects of interpreting, performance standards, and consistent reliable measures of interpreting performance under Tseng, 1992; Mikkelson, 1996; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004; Sawyer, 2004; Angelelli, 2001, 2004 and Napier, 2004.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

Action inquiry is a generic term for any process that follows a cycle in which one improves practice by systematically oscillating between taking action in the field
 of practice, and inquiring into it. Action research is a practical approach to professional inquiry in any social situation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) describe action research as the:

- improvement of practice
- improvement of the understanding of practice, and
- improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.

Some of the different developments of action inquiry process include action research (Lewin, 1946), action learning (Revons,1971), reflective practice (Schon, 1983), action design (Argrys, 1985), experiential learning (Kolb 1984), deliberative practice (McCutcheon, 1988), praxis research (Whyte, 1964;1991), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Shrevasteva, 1987), action evaluation (Rothman 1999), soft systems methodology (Checkland 1998), and transformational learning (Marquardt, 1999). As a practical improvement process, action research is sometimes considered to be atheoretical, but whilst it is true that traditional disciplinary theory is not a major priority, it is important to draw on it for understanding situations, planning effective improvements, and explaining results, thus in this study triangulation of relevant theories will be referenced to ensure a solid theoretical foundation.

This process of action research cannot imply or pre-specify what knowledge will be gained or what practical outcomes will be achieved because the results of each cycle will determine what happens next. It was anticipated that the situational analysis of the accreditation system of UK sign language interpreters would inform the subsequent steps in the design. At the proposal stage it was envisaged the first step in the action research cycle, was to find out more about the current situation of UK sign language interpreter accreditation so as to inform the focus group discussions.UK and SA respondents were recruited through an online mailing list. An electronic questionnaire was administered to those respondents who agreed to partake in the study. The situation with reference to the previous and current UK testing systems was analysed to elicit UK sign language interpreter respondent's view about the accreditation system.

This specific study will utilise *technical action research* which is an important 'fix it' approach in which the action researcher takes an existing practice from somewhere else and makes recommendations to implement it in their own field of practice to effect an improvement.

6. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The flow of the chapters and its content will be informed by the action research cycle as seen below.

Chapter 1

This chapter provides the details of the research proposal. It aims to inform the reader about the purpose of this investigation, its rationale, procedures and the intended outcome.

A specific issue addressed in this chapter is the rationale of the study which seeks to provide guidance to the South African Language Practitioners Council to deliver on its mandate which among others is that of accreditation of language practitioners, inclusive of South African Sign Language interpreters.

Chapter 2

This chapter covers the thematic area of accreditation systems. Previous and current accreditation systems in the UK were investigated. In addition, other global systems were reviewed, such as USA (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, RID) and Australia (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, NAATI), to provide additional context to accreditation practices. It also documents the language policy environment in South Africa which has a direct impact on language practitioners. This chapter takes on the form of a literature review.

Chapter 3

This chapter details the methodology of the study. It provides the reader insight into the process of data collection and how the data was expected to address the research question. The sampling strategy is explained as well as the data collection methodologies and tools which were used. It provides a narrated account of the triangulation process employed to elicit responses from UK, British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and SASL interpreters as well as other key stakeholders in SA, through a focus group discussion and an online questionnaire.

Chapter 4

This chapter provides detailed data analysis with the presentation of raw data tables and the analysis thereof. It provides discussions of the results, explanations and implications.

Chapter 5

This chapter focuses on the possible recommendations for change in practice in SASL interpreter accreditation. It feeds off the previous chapters to provide insight into the South African Sign Language interpreter's accreditation options as informed by the analysis and findings.

Chapter 6

This chapter concludes by providing the researcher's proposed assessment tools for SASL interpreter accreditation.

7. ETHICS STATEMENT

This study has been conducted in accordance with ethical and professional guidelines. All respondent's rights and welfare was protected. Confidentiality of respondent's information and responses was and will be respected during and after the study.

8. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY AREA

This study explored and analysed various literature in relation to South African language policies, accreditation and assessment broadly. It has however limited its scope of investigation for data purposes solely on the accreditation process in the UK to provide guidance in the action research cycle, to inform the South Africa context.

The study only documented inputs from locally sampled SASL interpreters, the SA Deaf community, South African Translators Institute (SATI), PAN South African Language Board (PANSALB) and South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) representatives, under the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). The findings from this study had not elicited views from the broader respondent community but strived to document responses from the sampled respondents as a representative reflection of the views of the broader community.

9. DISSEMINATION OF THE RESERACH

On successful completion of this study, it will be disseminated to all the stakeholders in the study, namely the SALPC, DAC, the South African Deaf community, SASL interpreter community, SATI and PANSALB.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"*It is time to take our rights seriously. This means a much greater emphasis on marginalised languages as well as on the training of interpreters and translators, professionalism, and accreditation.*" M. Heap

In this chapter the researcher looks at a range of research perspectives on various accreditation systems for Sign Language interpreters internationally. Definitions of concepts such as *accreditation* and *assessment* are provided. Analysis of the process and components of accreditation and assessment of Sign Language interpreters are provided. The methodology of a portfolio of evidence (POE) versus the assessment approach for accreditation is explored to provide insight to a possible holistic approach to assessing competencies with the relevant constructs. The aim of this chapter is to draw on assessment guidance and best practices thereof.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In response to the ethical obligation of language practitioners to provide access to information to language minority groups, best practices around the globe points to, among others the assessment of interpreters. Among the plethora of challenges of South African Language practitioners, both interpreters and translators, is the assessment of their professional skill through a process of accreditation, of which the South African Translators Institute (SATI) is the accreditation organisation. Many countries have realised the need to formulate clear policies and laws which will guide them in their attempt to plan appropriately for quality and relevant credentialing of Sign Language interpreters. In the majority of cases, specifically in African countries, progress towards this ideal is hampered by a number of factors, ranging from inadequate language planning, inadequate implementation of language laws and a lack of a standardised best practice approach to the process of accreditation of Sign Language interpreters.

The point of the discussion in this chapter is three-fold: 1.To highlight the limitations of the current SATI accreditation system, 2. The need to develop a comprehensive approach to assessment of interpreter performance for accreditation and 3. To provide insight to various options

for accreditation, its processes and components as implemented in the United Kingdom. A review is made of the Australian- (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters NAATI) and American (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, RID) accreditation system to aid in making recommendations for an alternative accreditation process in South Africa.

The main implication is that a shift or overall of the current accreditation system may not necessarily lead to improvements in the accreditation of South African Sign Language interpreters under the South African Language Practitioners Council. There are many macro contributing aspects which will be highlighted here through referencing of key issues in interpreter assessment which can be tackled in future research but the main aim of this literature review is to highlight the assessment best practices in other countries such as previously mentioned UK, Australia and USA, to then draw data specifically from the UK.

It would be presumptuous to offer specific prescriptions for what is clearly a difficult set of challenges considering the language policy environment relating to SASL, in that it is not recognised as an official language in South Africa, but is merely mentioned in the constitution as a language which must be developed. The following sub headings will provide more insight to the South African language policies and the unique challenges it presents to the accreditation of SASL interpreters.

2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICIES

2.2.1 Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act 59 of 1995)

The guiding principle of this Act is to allow for the use and promotion of all indigenous languages and South African Sign Language/s. Section 10 of this act speaks specifically to the development of indigenous languages and South African Sign Language/s. It is interesting that the act mentions SASL in a plural form although Deaf Federation of South Africa issued a statement unequivocally pronouncing that there is one SASL but recognizing the regional dialects thereof.

Despite this act being passed, at the conclusion of this study, SASL is not recognised as an official language despite it stating that the Minister shall take practical and positive measures for the development of the indigenous languages and South African Sign Language/s, in particular to:

I.   identify priority areas for the development of these languages;
II.   support existing structures involved in the development of these languages;
III.   establish new structures and programmes for the development of these
IV.   languages; and
V.   support cross-border projects for the development of these languages in the Southern African region.

2.2.2 Deaf Federation of South Africa, (DeafSA) Policy on the Provision and Regulation of South African Sign Language Interpreters, 2009 (Amended2011)

The policy states that access to communication and information through the medium of SASL is a Deaf person's human right, which DeafSA advocate for by promoting and providing SASL interpreter services. According to this policy accreditation is administered through SATI. Accreditation is obtained on two levels, national and provincial. To date all accreditation testing administered by SATI has not distinguished these two levels of accreditation in terms of classification criteria as well as texts relevant to the specified levels in terms of constructs to be measures in the accreditation test. Furthermore, there is no distinct context to distinguish the two levels since conference and liaison interpreting occurs on both national and provincial level with various degree of difficulty.

According to this policy accredited interpreters are assessed annually through Continued Professional Development (CPD) points accumulated to a minimum of 30 Continued Education Units (CEU's). The issue of CPD under SATI is not followed through and is not mandatory for accredited interpreters. This a glaring disconnect between the DeafSA policy and SATI CPD policy or the lack thereof. The policy mentions the following criteria for CEU scoring:

- Two (2) profession related workshops of which one is compulsory
- Compulsory volunteer interpreting
- Mentoring programme participation (either as Mentor/Apprentice)
- Additional points can be accumulated by attending profession related congresses

TABLE 1: CEU POINT SYSTEM

NUMBER OF CEU's	CRITERIA
10	Workshops X 2
5 (1CEU per hour)	Volunteer Interpreting annually
5	Mentoring 24 hours annually
5	Apprenticeship 24 hours annually
3	Congress attendance
3	Congress presentation
5	Publishing article
36	**TOTAL**

The earning of CEU's as reflected in the table above is not clearly defined. It further does not state positive and negative consequences if an interpreter decides to adhere or not adhere to the guidance of obtaining CEU's. The practical implementation and tracking of the proposed CEU system is flawed with inadequate risk management. There are no monitoring and evaluation tools to support this system. Further there is a lack of standard forms and procedures which documents a standard operating procedure, for example in the case of volunteer interpreting. The issue of volunteer interpreting is not specified with reference to the number of hours required. It is regrettable that the accreditation aspect and CPD aspect of this policy is not being implemented, despite the good intentions it initially posed.

2.2.3 Use of official languages act 2012

The South African Languages Act stipulates that "every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must, among other things, establish language units to enhance the development of South Africa's official languages". However, language services in organisations are confronted with the question of how to deal with the requirements that is contained in this legislation. Questions that come to mind are: What will its impact be with regards to current and future in-house staff of language services? How is the act affecting agencies and individual freelancers?

This act mentions that a language policy adopted in terms of subsection (I) of the act must describe how a national department, national public entity or national public enterprise will effectively communicate with members of the public whose language of choice is not an official language or South African sign language.

To date there is no clear supply and demand analyses of the supply of SASL interpreting services in specific national public departments versus the demand for such a service.

2.2.4 South African Language Practitioners Council Act SALPCA (Act No 8, 2014)

The South African Language Practitioners' Council Act regulates the language practitioner industry and has successfully established the South African Language Practitioners' Council, which acts as an advisory body to the Minister of Arts and Culture on issues affecting the language profession. The regulation of language practitioners aims to set the bar for the quality of interpreters and translators in South Africa for the first time, ensuring a good standard for the profession.

The South African Translators' Institute (SATI) supports the Department of Arts and Culture in its efforts to regulate the language practice profession, since SATI was previously the accreditation body for all language practitioners. It must be noted that SATI had no mandate or legal jurisdiction to regulate language practitioners it was merely a voluntary organisation which aimed at providing accreditation for all language practitioners.

The SALPCA regulates and prescribe the manner in which language practitioners will be registered and accredited by the Council. These regulations will initially apply only to registration of language practitioners such as translators, interpreters and /or editors with effect from the promulgation of the regulations and will be extended to other language practitioners at a date to be determined by the Council and approved by the Minister. At the time of this investigation the implementation dates were unknown. The accreditation of the language practitioners through a quality assurance system will be implemented at a date to be determined by the SALPC and approved by the Minister and said date will be at least one year following promulgation of these regulations, thus it is expected to take effect in 2016, post this study. When accreditation is introduced, it will initially apply only to language practice in the eleven official

languages of the Republic of South Africa and South African Sign Language. Accreditation will be extended to other languages at a date or dates to be determined by the Council and approved by the Minister.

A subcategory of paraprofessional is available for registration, but is exempt from accreditation as a level one language practitioner through the quality assurance system. An annual practising fee must be paid and continuing professional development (CPD) requirements must be fulfilled, until the council determines whether or not accreditation through the quality assurance system is to be made applicable to para-professionals. The council will consider a language practitioner legal if he is registered, accredited and in compliance with the quality assurance system and in possession of an accreditation certificate issued by the council.

For the sake of this study, chapter 4 of the act, which deals specifically with accreditation, is most relevant. It specifies the following: 1. Application for accreditation, 2. levels of accreditation, 3. accreditation certificates and 4.Continuing professional development. Section 21 of the Act and regulations 3 and 4 relates to admission to register and seek accreditation. The quality assurance system will be utilised by the council when reviewing the application for registration and accreditation to determine the level at which the language practitioner should be accredited within the category/ies and subcategory/ies as detailed below.

The council identifies the following categories, subcategories and levels of language practitioners (with reference to interpreters specifically):

I. The categories of language practitioners include, but are not limited to translators, interpreters, text editors, terminologists and lexicographers.
II. The subcategories of interpreters are paraprofessional interpreters, professional simultaneous interpreters and professional consecutive interpreters.
III. The levels identified within each category are level one for paraprofessional language practitioners, level two for professional language practitioners and level three for expert language practitioners. Level one paraprofessional language practitioners are those who have no formal qualifications and practise as language practitioners in informal situations within a community environment.
The category of para-professionals with reference to SASL interpreters will make up the bulk of interpreters in this category because the majority of SASL interpreters are grass roots, community interpreters who are

grouped in categories of Child/ren of Deaf Adults (CODA) who render interpreting services and others who are learning or who have acquired SASL on various proficiency levels and who are also rendering interpreting services in churches, hospitals, clinics, and similar activities. This group of interpreters do not hold an applicable formal academic degree, as required by the act.

At this stage of the study there is however no formal skills development plan and career pathing for SASL interpreters which is government supported. The level two refers to professional language practitioners working on a full -time or part- time basis, who are fully competent in the field of language practice concerned and are in possession of either a degree or postgraduate degree or recognised prior learning and experience in lieu of such degree.

The final level three refers to expert language practitioners who have been accredited at level two prior to applying for accreditation at level three and have the competencies to handle complex, technical and sophisticated language practice work.

The standard of an expert will be benchmarked according to international practice. This statement in relation to SASL interpreters could imply the need for evidence gathering from accreditation processes and systems as analysed in this study to ensure best practises. An expert interpreter must thus be in possession of either a degree or postgraduate degree or recognised prior learning and experience in lieu of such degree accompanied by a wealth of experience in the relevant field, which may include but is not limited to sworn translators with relevant legal knowledge and high -level conference interpreters. The act mentions a wealth of experience which is not clearly articulated in terms of the required number of years' experience or the number of hours required. It raises a red flag since this can be interpreted differently thus the act needs to provide clear direction in this regards.

The act is clear that no person may practise at any of the levels, unless he or she has been accredited at that level within the quality assurance system, except for paraprofessionals. It further specifies that registered and accredited language practitioners must at all times use their title in all services rendered, in any report produced or in any other documentation prepared by them in the course of their work.

On the issue of continuing professional development (CPD) all language practitioners registered with the council are required to participate in a system of continuing professional development which will be introduced and administered by the council in association with accredited institutions. Paraprofessionals are exempted from CPD. The council will determine a CPD system as well as the criteria for a portfolio in attaining CPD units. The act is clear in that failure to comply with the CPD system will result in the registration of the language practitioner being withdrawn. This aspect of a CPD system is welcomed since under SATI accreditation this was not a requirement. To remain skilled and relevant as a language practitioner it is imperative to enforce CPD units to ensure quality services are rendered.

2.3 EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF INTERPRETERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African skills levy resources, specifically the National Skills Fund (NSF), should strategically and programmatically support the production of priority skills in high-level occupationally directed programmes in the entire skills development pipeline, from universities and colleges to the workplace. The university sector must systemically engage in the identification of national development and economic needs, including engaging in other government processes such as the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) 2, the National Human Resource Development Strategy (NHRDS) and the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS).

In order to integrate and value the different types of formal, non-formal and informal learning systems for SASL interpreters there is a trend towards creating holistic and diversified education training systems inspired by the concept of lifelong learning by the SALPC. There is currently no institutional mechanism that provides credible information and analysis regarding the supply and demand for scare skills such as SASL interpreting. While there are a number of disparate information databases and research initiatives by the South African government, there is no standardised framework for determining skills supply, shortages and vacancies, and there is no integrated information system for skills supply and demand across government as stated in the Culture Art Tourism Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSETA) skills development plan. SASL interpreting falls under the Arts section of this SETA, but to date SASL interpreter training is not a listed as a priority skills training programme under this SETA.

Many of the professional areas of study combine course work at universities, universities of technology and Further Education and Training (FET) institutions with structured learning at work. This is achieved by means of professional placements, work-integrated learning, apprenticeships, learnerships, internships, skills programmes, and work experience placements. For the area of SASL training there is currently no university programme or project to create sustainable internship placements for SASL interpreters with interpreting agencies to address the critical need of improved access to interpreting services for the Deaf community. The challenge of employability of SASL interpreters are further compounded by employer's misconceptions of the requirement to employ a professional SASL interpreter as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Article which relates to accessibility.

Article 9: 2 (e) states: "To provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and *professional sign language interpreters*, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public." This implies that the onus rests upon the South African Government (SAG) to supply professional sign language interpreters in all public service departments, which also means where Deaf workers are in the employ of such a government department. There is room for discussion with relevant government departments regarding the current staff in the employ of government who are SASL interpreters but do not have training in SASL interpreting or a recognised qualification in this field as now required under the SALPCA.

2.4 ACCREDITATION

2.4.1 Defining Accreditation

Accreditation is defined as certification of competence in a specified subject or areas of expertise, and of the integrity of an agency, firm, group, or person, awarded by a duly recognized and respected accrediting organisation (Tseng, 1992: 14). The professionalisation of interpreting is covered under the writings of Tseng, 1992; Mikkelson, 1996 and Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004. Various countries use terms such as accreditation, certification and licensing to refer to a singular process. A certification process serves "to protect the interests of the public by assuring that practitioners hold an agreed-upon level of knowledge and skill, and by filtering out those with substandard levels of knowledge and skill" (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004: 28).

Accreditation is an assessment of interpreting skill of a particular kind. Assessment is the most central features of the rationality that underpin advanced industrial society itself according to Broadfoot (1996:68). Van Den Bos (2007) analyses rationality as the quality of being reasonable or of being acceptable to reason. This reasonableness must be impartial and not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations and or prejudice. When this kind of certification process is achieved, one which is rational, the institutional control is beneficial and perceived as liberating, rather than constraining. Assessment thus plays an important part in the process of controlling and dispersing values and norms.

Evaluating interpreter competence and establishing standards are the key determinants of the accreditation process. In order to develop an overarching understanding of the role of assessment in learning and instruction of sign language interpreters, Sawyer (2004: 31) argues that multiple areas must be considered such as the relationship between assessments for educational purposes versus the evaluation of quality in professional practice. In the same vein Hatim and Mason (1997) defines performance assessment as testing that requires students to demonstrate their achievement by performing tasks. Gronlund (1998:2) supports the view of performance assessments relating to tasks which imply that the tasks exist in the real world e.g. interpreting a speech which was performed by a real person in real time. Gile (2001) makes a distinction in assessments related to interpreter classroom performance and process-orientated assessments. This distinction refers to assessment where specific skills are required to carry out the tasks and an assessment where there is a focus on the end product of interpreting. Hatim and Mason (1997) provide a clear distinction between evaluating quality, which focus on aspects of product, and evaluating performance which focus on the process. Some key features which constitute performance are mentioned such as the accuracy, completeness and style.

Assessments are used in professional selection such as the case of interpreter accreditation. The purpose of accreditation is to provide the public with a dependable mechanism to identify practitioners of a certain profession, such as sign language interpreters in this case, who has met the standards.

2.4.2 International Accreditation Systems

2.4.2.1 United Kingdom

The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and DeafBlind people (NRCPD) regulates communication professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people in the United Kingdom. The NCPRD set standards of professional practice to ensure professionals who meet those standards are awarded accreditation status. NCPRD promote the importance of registration which adds value to inclusion of Deaf people in mainstream society. The NRCPD's role is quality assurance which is a process of verifying that the elements required to meet the agreed professional standards in BSL interpreting are covered. NRCPD is a regulatory body which investigate complaints received about NRCPD communication professionals.

National Occupational Standards (NOS) define the knowledge and understanding interpreters must have and the standards of performance they must achieve when carrying out a professional role. These are developed and reviewed independently and are used as minimum criteria for registering.

To become a Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) one must be highly skilled in a signed language like British Sign Language (BSL), Irish Sign Language (ISL) or American Sign Language (ASL) and a second language that can be another signed language or a spoken language. One of these languages must be native to the United Kingdom and Ireland. One must demonstrate knowledge about interpreting and professional conduct as defined in the National Occupational Standards in Interpreting (CILT 2006) and hold at least one of the following qualifications:

- UCLAN Postgraduate Diploma in British Sign Language (BSL)/English Interpreting and Translation

- Heriot-Watt University MA (Hons) BSL (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies)
- Heriot-Watt University MA (Hons) Languages (Interpreting and Translating) (Graduates studying BSL and the amalgamated fourth year course)
- Signature Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting

- Sign Language Interpreting Advanced Diploma in Interpreting and Translation: BSL-English
- IBSL Level 6 Diploma in British Sign Language Interpreting Studies
- Wolverhampton University BA (Hons) in Interpreting (BSL/English) (graduates who achieve a first class degree from September 2017 onwards)

Further to the candidate must provide proof of achieving level 6 or honours degree level in your second language, which can be the following:

- UCLAN Postgraduate Diploma in BSL/English Interpreting and Translation
- Heriot Watt Graduate Diploma course with grade C or above in Module C40BV1 British Sign Language
- Heriot-Watt University MA (Hons) BSL (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies)
- Heriot-Watt University MA (Hons) Languages (Interpreting and Translating) (Graduates studying BSL and the amalgamated fourth year course)
- Signature Level 6 NVQ Certificate in British Sign Language
- SLI Advanced Diploma in Interpreting and Translation: BSL-English
- IBSL Level 6 Certificate in British Sign Language Studies
- Another recognised Level 6 qualification in your second language

2.4.2.2 Australia

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is the national standards and accreditation body for translators and interpreters in Australia. NAATI credentialing provides quality assurance to the consumers of language practitioners. It also certifies the service provider as a credible language practitioner. NAATI Accreditation can be obtained in five ways:

I. Passing a NAATI accreditation test
II. Successful completion of a course of studies in translation and/or interpreting at an Australian institution as approved by NAATI
III. Providing evidence of a specialised tertiary qualification in translation and/or interpreting obtained from an educational institution overseas
IV. Providing evidence of a membership of a recognised international translating and/or interpreting professional association
V. Providing evidence of advanced standing in translating or interpreting.

NAATI accreditation in interpreting between Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and English is currently available at the following levels:

1) Paraprofessional Interpreter
2) Professional Interpreter
3) Conference Interpreter

Specifically for accreditation in AUSLAN, accreditation can be obtained by:

1) Passing a NAATI accreditation test;
2) Successful completion of a course of studies in interpreting at an Australian institution as approved by NAATI; and
3) Providing evidence of advanced standing in interpreting (Conference Interpreter Accreditation only)

To qualify on a paraprofessional level as an Auslan / English interpreter the candidate must possess accreditation from NAATI. To obtain accreditation the candidate must pass an examination with NAATI and successfully complete a TAFE or university course accredited by NAATI. The second level is to qualify as a professional interpreter by passing an examination with NAATI and to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Auslan/English Interpreting at Macquarie University. Continuous professional development (CPD) is encouraged to ensure accredited interpreters skill level remains on an acceptable level to render professional interpreting services.

CPD is obtained through developing of interpreting skills and knowledge by attending various interpreting related courses, workshops, conferences and relevant platforms.

Accreditation candidates must have the following skills:

• High competence in both Auslan and English;
• Be able to smoothly navigate the various registers of Auslan and English;
• Functional hearing

Paraprofessional Accreditation Test:

The use of dictionaries and other reference aides is not permitted in Paraprofessional Interpreter tests. The test takes 40 minutes, including 10 minutes unallocated time to allow for unforeseen delays.

Section 1: Social and Cultural Awareness - (5 marks)

Four questions are posed to the candidate based on the social and cultural awareness of interpreting. The questions in this section are designed to assess the extent to which the candidates understand how social and cultural factors

and / or socio-political issues affect situations where an interpreter would typically be used. The first two questions are asked in English and the next two questions are asked in Auslan.

Section 2: Ethics of the Profession - (5 marks)

Four questions are posed to the candidate based on the ASLIA Code of Ethics. The questions are designed to elicit the candidate's awareness of the ethics of the profession. The first two questions are in English and the next two questions are asked in Auslan.

Section 3: Dialogue Interpreting - (2 X 45 = 90 marks)

There are two dialogues of approximately 300 words each between an English speaker and an Auslan signer. The dialogues are divided into suitable segments, which do not exceed 35 words. Dialogue 1 is interpreted in consecutive mode and dialogue 2 is interpreted in simultaneous mode.

A minimum score to achieve the 70% pass mark are:

- 2.5/5 for Social/Cultural Awareness
- 2.5/5 for Ethics of the Profession
- 29/45 for each consecutive/simultaneous interpreting dialogue
- 63/90 for the two consecutive/simultaneous interpreting dialogues

Professional Interpreter Accreditation Test:

The use of dictionaries and other reference aides is not permitted in Professional Interpreter tests. The test takes 75 minutes. The dialogues include subject matter such as police interviews, court cross examinations, counselling, specialist medical terminology, and academic discussions. The monologues include topics i.e. judges' court summations, university presentations rather than conference papers. There are no specifications of the amount of finger spelling which can be used because it is determined by the text itself. To be eligible to sit for NAATI Auslan/English Professional Interpreter test, candidates must have:

- General education to degree or diploma level in any field; OR

- Current NAATI Accreditation as a Paraprofessional Interpreter in Auslan/English interpreting.

<u>Section 1: Community/Legal Interpreting</u>

- 1 Interpreting Dialogue (25 marks)
- Social/Cultural Awareness Questions (5 marks)
- Ethics Questions (5 marks)
- 1 Sight Translation (related to the dialogue) (20 marks)
- 1 Auslan to English Monologue (15 marks)

<u>Section 2: Professional/Academic Interpreting</u>

- 1Dialogue (25 marks)
- Social/Cultural Awareness Questions (5 marks)
- Ethics Questions (5 marks)
- 1English to Auslan Monologue (15 marks)

The minimum scores are reflected below to pass the test:

- 35/50 for both interpreting dialogues
- 21/30 for the monologues
- 14/20 for the Sight translation task
- 70/100 for the interpreting parts of the test overall.
- 5/10 for Social/Cultural Awareness
- 5/10 for Ethics of the Profession

NAATI Recognition as a <u>Deaf Interpreter (DI)</u> may be obtained for the specialised interpreting and translation that DIs performs. Recognition is granted on the basis of a direct application to NAATI with the required evidence and paperwork.

 It is an acknowledgement that at the time of the award the candidate had recent and regular experience as a translator and/or interpreter, but no level of proficiency is specified as part of this credential. Recognition is only granted in languages of low community demand for which NAATI does not offer accreditation testing. Should the demand for these services increase to a sufficient level, NAATI will consider establishing testing and accredit practitioners. Recognition requires evidence such as:

1. <u>Proficiency in Auslan</u>

- Evidence that the applicant has completed the majority of their primary and secondary education (up to year 12) where Auslan, or English and Auslan, were the languages of instruction. The evidence must show the number of years completed (not just that education to a particular year, Year 12 for example, has been completed).
- A letter from one of the Deaf organisations confirming the applicant's membership in the local Deaf community and fluency in Auslan
- Completion of a Diploma in Auslan Teaching
- Current NAATI Auslan-English accreditation at the Paraprofessional level or above

2. <u>Completion of a short training course</u>

For Recognition to be granted candidates must complete a NAATI endorsed Deaf Interpreting course or workshop program. Training can be evidenced by completion of Deaf Interpreting training. The minimum standard for acceptable introductory interpreter training courses is 15 hours of face-to-face training including DI-specific theory and practice, Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA) Code of Ethics and practical components. NAATI works on an ongoing basis with ASLIA to ensure there is an accessible pathway to recognition through acceptable training.

2.4.2.3 United States of America (USA)

Registry of Interpreters (RID) for the Deaf strives to advocate for best practices in interpreting, professional development for practitioners and for the highest standards in the provision of interpreting services for diverse users of languages that are signed or spoken.

RID is a national membership organisation which plays a leading role in advocating for excellence in the delivery of interpretation and transliteration services. In collaboration with the Deaf community, RID supports encourages the growth of the interpreting profession through the establishment of a national standard for qualified sign language interpreters and transliterators, ongoing professional development and adherence to a code of professional conduct.

Linked specifically to accreditation the goals of RID is to implement certification industry best practices and standards for RID credential programs, 2.To develop rigorous standards and deliver relevant, reliable and valid examinations for all credentials and 3. Strengthen the Ethical Practices System efficiency and consistency in its enforcement of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Each RID credential has unique requirements that must be completed before it can be awarded. Some certifications involve passing a series of exams and others involve submitting documentation of training and experience. In all cases, if the candidate is determined to meet or exceed RID's national standard, they are awarded certification. RID offers six different certifications. In additional, RID also recognizes credentials assessed and awarded by the National Association for the Deaf (NAD). Individuals who hold NAD credentials are considered Certified Members of RID.

The six RID certifications are:

1. National Interpreter Certification (NIC)

   Candidates earn NIC Certification if they demonstrate professional knowledge and skills that meet or exceed the minimum professional standards necessary to perform in a broad range of interpretation and transliteration assignments. The NIC certification process begins with a multiple-choice NIC Knowledge Exam. Candidates who have passed the knowledge exam within 5 years and meet RID's educational requirement may then take the NIC Interview and Performance Exam. The NIC Interview and Performance Examination is a vignette-based assessment using video to deliver and record the assessment.

2. Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)

   Holders of this certification are deaf or hard of hearing and have demonstrated knowledge and understanding of interpreting, deafness, the Deaf community, and Deaf culture. They have specialised training and/or experience in the use of gesture, mime, props, drawings and other tools to enhance communication. They possess native or near-native fluency in American Sign Language and are recommended for a broad range of assignments where an interpreter who is deaf or hard-of-hearing would be beneficial. The CDI certification process begins with a multiple-choice CDI Knowledge Exam.

   Candidates are eligible for the CDI Knowledge Exam if they meet the 40 hour training requirement. Candidates who have passed the knowledge

exam within 5 years and meet RID's educational requirement may then take the CDI Performance Exam. The CDI Performance Exam is a videotape assessment.

3. Oral Transliteration Certificate (OTC)

Holders of this certification have demonstrated, using silent oral techniques and natural gestures, the ability to transliterate a spoken message from a person who hears to a person who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. They have demonstrated the ability to understand and repeat the message and intent of the speech and mouth movements of the person who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. The OTC certification process begins with a multiple-choice OTC Knowledge Exam. Candidates are eligible for the OTC Knowledge Exam if they meet the experience and training requirements. Candidates who have passed the knowledge exam within 5 years and meet RID's educational requirement may take the OTC Performance Exam. The OTC Performance Exam is a videotaped assessment.

4. Specialist Certificate Legal (SC: L)

Holders of this specialist certification have demonstrated specialised knowledge of legal settings and greater familiarity with language used in the legal system. These individuals are recommended for a broad range of assignments in the legal setting. The SC:L certification process begins with a multiple-choice SC:L Knowledge Exam. Candidates are eligible for the SC:L Knowledge Exam if they are a current RID Certified member and meet the experience and training requirements. Candidates who have passed the knowledge exam within 5 years and meet RID's educational requirement may then take the SC:L Performance Exam. The SC:L Performance Exam is a videotaped assessment.

5. Condition Legal Interpreting Permit Relay (CLIP-R)

Holders of this conditional permit have completed an RID-recognised training program designed for interpreters and transliterators who work in legal settings, and who are also deaf or hard-of-hearing. Holders of this conditional permit are recommended for a broad range of assignments in the legal setting. Candidates are eligible for CLIP-R Certification if they are a current RID CDI or RSC Certified member, meet the experience requirements, have the proper letters of recommendation, and meet RID's educational requirement

6. Educational Certificate: K-12 (Ed K:12)

Holders of this certification have demonstrated the ability to interpret or transliterate classroom content and discourse between students who are deaf and hard of hearing and students, teachers and school staff who are hearing.   They have demonstrated EIPA Level 4 skills using spoken English and at least one of the following visual languages, constructs, or symbol systems at either an elementary or secondary level:
•American Sign Language (ASL)
•Manually Coded English (MCE)
•Contact Signing (aka: Pidgin Signed English (PSE) or English-like Signing)
•Cued American English (CAE) (aka: Cued Speech)

The examinations for this certification are developed and maintained by the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), and is administered by Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. Candidates are eligible for Ed:K-12 Certification if they are a current RID Certified or Associate member, meet the EIPA Written and Performance requirements, and meet RID's educational requirement.

At the time of this study the RID credentialing was not taking place because as from 08 August 2015 a moratorium was placed on the RID accreditation examination pending the results of a risk analysis.

2. 5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The South African Translators' Institute (SATI) is a professional association for language practice professionals in South Africa. The accreditation of all language practitioners are conducted by SATI. For SASL practitioners a criterion referenced test is used to measure knowledge, skill in the specific domain of interpreting from SASL to English and vice versa. In a criterion referenced test the ability or performance is usually measured against an existing criterion level of performance.

Certifying agencies do not create a formal institutionalised group with the interpreters they certify. This is true in the case of SATI, where the language practitioners work independently and SATI acts as a monitoring

body by dispersing norms in the form of interpreting guidelines deontology.

According to Katz & Gartner (1988: 432) there are four fundamental characteristics of an organisation namely: 1. Intentionality, 2. Boundaries, 3. Resources and 4.Exchange. In the context of a certifying body, such as SATI, intentionality refers to the concept of gatekeeping which according to Broadfoot (1996) refers to comparing the aspirants, attributes / competencies with predetermined criteria. In this regard SATI has a set of criteria which accreditation candidates must have and a requirement to pass the assessment test with 80% to obtain accreditation status. The criteria however are not clearly defined and will be discussed under the rubric which is used by assessors. Boundaries relates to the certifying organisation determining delimitation criteria which is part of the issues to be discussed under the decision to pass or fail accreditation candidates. Resources refer to the number and quality of interpreters taking the certification examination, examination criteria, number and qualification of the assessors. In this regard the number of examinations of the SATI accreditation for SASL interpreters is scheduled annually in major cities, such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom, where there are requests for such examinations and where there is a concentration of SASL interpreters. Regarding the content of the examination the SATI council decides on which content to use. The issue of outdated material will be discussed in this chapter as well as the reliability aspect of the material used. Exchange refers to the ability of the organisation to get acquainted with the profile and needs of users, service providers and interpreters to ensure exchange through testing procedures and certification. It has been established through the analysis of the data collection that SATI does not act upon instructions or guidance from either the Deaf community or SASL interpreters. This is a similar situation which Dennis Cokely refers to in an interview with StreetLeverage, discussing the Emerging Trends in Interpreting and Implications for Interpreter Education at the RID national conference (New Orleans, August 2015). In this interview Cokely mentions that there was no research which went into the first iteration of the certification tests and the Deaf community was not consulted on their specific requirements and needs.

There are however continuous engagement by SATI, to ensure consultation with both stakeholders: the Deaf community and SASL interpreters, through the National Association of South African Sign Language Interpreters (NASASLI) to ensure issues are flagged.

A factor that cannot be ignored here is the multilingual profile of South African citizens and social domains of language use at regional, national and cross-border levels. The social multilingual reality demands proficiency in an official language.

The sparsely documented profiles of South African Sign Language interpreters whose first language is an official South African language, but who cannot be accredited in this language combination proves a distinct challenge for SATI and SASL interpreters. Deaf people require liaison interpreting where community interpreters provide access in settings where vernacular languages are being used, the situation is abysmal due to a lack of accredited SASL interpreters. Valuing multilingualism could mean its use as a criterion for professional qualification and accreditation. The doubt persists about the possibility of indigenous official African languages to be used in domains of in which they are currently under-represented such as conference interpreting. The situation that SATI finds itself in is the aspect of investment of time and resources to develop accreditation testing in vernacular languages. A possible reason for this status quo is the lingering impact of Apartheid which did not embrace linguistic diversity, as such, and only English and Afrikaans were developed in all aspects of language planning and more resources were dedicated to elevate the language status.

As seen on the SATI database there are nine accredited SASL interpreters at the time of this study, with the majority of the interpreters accredited having an English Afrikaans language combination.

TABLE 2: SATI ACCREDITED SASL INTERPRETERS

Name	Location	Status	Language Combination	CODA
Philemon Akach	Bloemfontein	Retired	Kiswahili English	Not a CODA
Trudie Theunissen	Cape Town	Active	English Afrikaans	CODA
Asanda Katshwa	East London	Active	Xhosa English	CODA
Natasha	Johannesburg	Active	English	Not a

Parkins-Maliko			Afrikaans	CODA
Thelma Kotzé	Johannesburg	Active	English Afrikaans	CODA
Ananda van der Walt	Potchefstroom	Active	English Afrikaans	Not a CODA
Nicoline du Toit	Witbank	Active	English Afrikaans	CODA
Petri du Toit	Johannesburg	Active	English Afrikaans	CODA
Martie Miranda	Bloemfontein	Active	English Afrikaans	CODA

The profile of most of the accredited interpreters is that of Children of Deaf Adults (CODA). As informed by the data analysis from the questionnaire and the focus group discussions, accreditation testing is believed to be a method of gatekeeping the accreditation status of SASL interpreters. The dialogue on the issue of gatekeeping is focused on advancing the accreditation of specifically white English and Afrikaans interpreters. Accreditation in the SASL interpreter community is linked to a superior status, which according to feedback from the Deaf and interpreter respondents has underlying tones of racism, exclusion and oppression of specifically black SASL interpreters.

This raises a critical question around the fair ethical administration and scoring of the test, to administer the test for its intended use which is to ensure professional standards in SASL interpreting is maintained despite an interpreters' race or background in SASL, L1 or L2 signers/speakers.

The accreditation process, under SATI, has given rise to a wide array of non-empirical dialogues, chief among them being that the process is flawed because of the lack of transparency of assessors, the rubric and constructs which are assessed. In accreditation testing dispelling of is intended to remove as much uncertainty as possible to ensure that the test scores mean exactly what they are supposed to mean, in order to take actions without fear of making serious mistakes. This will avoid situations where accreditation candidates are failed or passed without a valid reliable instrument or transparent process. A key question which

needs attention here is: "How is interpreter competence defined?" The plausibility of the empirical foundation of the SATI assessment rubric and the aspect of assessor competence to conduct fair assessments are sensitive yet valid issues which this study seeks to highlight.

In accreditation processes a chain of reasoning and evidence must be produced from what a test score implies, the actions which will be taken based on that inference linked to the skills, abilities or knowledge that a candidate may have. The issue of validity comes to the fore. Validity presupposes the view that if a test is taken the intention is to measure something, this 'something' requires validity which is to establish if the test does indeed measure what it is intended to measure.

An accreditation examination can consist of a combination of knowledge- and performance tests. Then there must be a decision on the constructs they want to test which in this regard implies that criteria must be agreed upon for scoring and standards of passing the examination. It is also imperative that an accreditation organisation must decide upon a specific assessment method, which in the case of SATI it is a simultaneous interpreting test with a SASL- English language combination. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), norm referenced testing cannot serve the purpose of the accreditation organisation because it is based on comparing performance of people in a specified group. In the case of SATI it can be deducted that despite the accreditation having features of a criterion referenced test the operationalisation of the test leans strongly on the features of a norm referenced test. This is deducted because the assessors cannot use a blind rating approach since SASL is visual and thus the assessors have to see the accreditation candidates output. Contributing to this is the fact that assessors are not clearly guided by a rubric to define the scoring marks, which leans heavily on subjectivity. Scoring of the assessment consequently succumbs to the halo effect and comparison effects which negatively affect the reliability and validity of the accreditation test.

A criterion referenced test and cut score which has been proved to be more suited to grading of an interpreters' performance with the aim of obtaining accreditation status is definitely more credible for the accreditation of interpreters. APA defines a criterion as "an indicator of the accepted value of outcome, such as grade point average, productivity rate, absenteeism rate, rejects rate, etc. It is a standard against which a predictive measure is evaluated. This type of test, a criterion-referenced

examination, allows assessors to score interpretations in relation to a functional performance level. Brown and Hudson (2002: 76) in this regard mentions that performance format can come close to eliciting actual, authentic communication and future performance in real life situations more validly.

2.5.2.1 Validity of SATI Accreditation Test

Validity evidence is the strength of the predicative relationship between the test score and that performance on the criterion, according to Cronbach and Meehl (1955). Kutz (2004: 252-253) argues that a description of the assessment criteria is needed to determine errors in measurement and to gather evidence of validity or the absence thereof. Messick (1989) developed the unified theory of validity which distinguishes between evidential validity and consequential validity. Messick then defines validity as "an integrated evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment".

Validity is classified in three broad types of evidence, namely *content*, *criterion* and *construct* validity. In the instance of the SATI accreditation test, it adds value to look into the predictive validity of the test to understand the challenges it presents. The test weighs heavily and is biased towards predictive validity, in that the test scores are meant to predict a future criterion, namely SASL interpreting success. In this regard there are functional, political and economic contexts which must be taken in consideration which determines the validity of the SATI test (Cronbach: 1988, 1989).

Cronbach states that: "a test must provide information to decision makers", which clearly according to the analysis thus far of the SATI test, falls short in this aspect. Major stakeholders such as the Deaf community and SASL interpreting community are not consulted or informed on a broader strategic and operational level as to what the SATI test aims to do in its striving to provide accredited, professional SASL interpreters.

In terms of content validity, validity relies heavily on expert judgement of the skills and knowledge measured by the tasks (Crocker: 1997:23). In this regard it states that a well-designed test, as the SATI test claims to

be, will effectively measure the competencies it claims to test. This means the content validity and gestalt content validity, express the relevance of the procedure in terms of the profession of social interpreting. The SATI test broadly assesses language skills (vocabulary, grammar, idiom and purity), content (faithfulness to the message, accuracy, and clarity), interpreting technique (fluency of delivery, hesitation, backtracking, lag time, irritating habits and eye contact) and professional conduct (preparation, knowledge of topic, behaviour and dress code. The test thus weighs heavily on performance based elements. The challenge with identifying construct validity is defining what the constructs are.

The constructs must be defined in a way that it can be measured, thus implying that the constructs must be operationalised, so it can be linked to something observable.

Test performance provides a score from which we can draw inferences about the constructs the test is designed to measure. Messick (1994: 17) popularise a construct-centred approach which states: "*A construct centred test will ask what knowledge, skills or other attributes should be assessed, presumably because they are tied to explicit or implicit objectives off instruction or otherwise valued by society. Next, what behaviours or performances should reveal those constructs, and what tasks or situations should elicit those behaviours? Thus the nature of the construct guides the selection of relevant tasks as well as the rational development of a construct based scoring criteria and rubric.*"

The grades on the SATI accreditation test are assumed to represent the knowledge, ability and skills of the accreditation candidate. The rubric used has loopholes because it does not adequately justify the inferences made from test scores, because of the very clear reason that the rubric does not have clear direction of any scores, it simply indicates a pass or fail grade with a vague scoring between 1 and 10 which is not quantified or described, refer to addendum 1). This is a major loophole in the test due to subjectivity, in that the assessors of the test do not follow a valid assessor guide on what the scoring implies. Bachman and Palmer (1996) use the term "usefulness" as a superordinate in place of construct validity, to include reliability, construct validity, authenticity, inter-activeness and practicality. In this regard it is important to endow a score with a special meaning which aids in decision making related to the proficiency of the candidates' ability to interpret.Setting the scores according to the proficiency levels must be done with caution and sensitivity about the interpretation thereof. This issue is discussed under the subheading of assessors.

The validity is also linked to the generalisability of the score meaning, which implies that the extent to which the test scores are meaningful beyond the testing context which directly links to the reliability and consistency. There is an underlying assumption in the SATI test that the items are testing the same construct and adequately discriminates between stronger and weaker candidates, which are not adequately proven.

Certification of translation skills on the basis of test administration is done by educational and professional organisations but the validity and reliability of that test remain underexplored (Waddington: 2004: 22). When looking at the content validity of the SATI accreditation tests its content should be a representative sample of the SASL domain that is to be tested. The current video text being used to conduct the assessment for SASL to voice interpreting is an outdated recording from 2004. The challenge with using test content which is older than 5 years is that language evolves. Context in validity is referred to as one part of construct irrelevant variance (Taylor and Nolen, 1996). This implies that the accreditation candidate's ability on the construct causes the test score to be high or low. When the scores vary because of a contextual factor, e.g. outdated texts, the variability in the scores is construct irrelevant. The SASL which is used in the current test can be classified as "old" signs. This could be one of the contributing factors for failure.

Pragmatic validity cannot be ignored when looking at the SATI accreditation test, because in the assessment of interpreting skill there is no absolute answer to validity questions. The aim of the accreditation test should be to collect evidence to support the test use and interpretation that stakeholders accept. As informed by the study in the findings and analysis chapter the Deaf community and interpreters in particular do not support the SATI accreditation test due to various reasons mentioned, chief among them being the lack of pragmatic validity. The usefulness of the accreditation and the validity thereof can be meaningful if it produces accredited interpreters who have undergone a valid test, which is an aim under the SALPC.

2.6 ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR ACCREDITATION

According to Arango-Keith & Koby (2003: 12) there is no standard assessment rubric which defines and unpacks interpreting competence on a global level. Few researchers have focused on the measurement aspects of interpreting, performance standards, and consistent reliable

measures of interpreting performance. Angelelli (2001, 2004), developed the first reliable instrument to study the role of interpreters related to the setting, through psychometrics based on normative standards in Canada, Mexico and the United states of America (USA) through ethnographic studies. Sawyer (2004) informed the measurement of translation and interpreting competencies in a graduate level program in USA, through case studies. Clifford (2005) developed a certification test in discourse theory, advocating for empirical testing based on clear psychometric instruments.

Assessment plays an important part in the process of controlling and dispersing norms and because of this reason it is imperative to have an understanding of the need to have accreditation test which are conducted in a fair and transparent manner. A major factor in both the quality of the assessment procedure and the legitimisation of the monitoring authority is the role and qualification of the assessors. Weir (2005: 16-17) lays claim on the paramount importance of expertise in assessment criteria and the interpretation thereof as a fundamental source of validation. To be considered valid, an assessment tool must test skills that are actually required to perform the task, and not test irrelevant skills (Napier 2004).

According to Roat (2006: 9), a reliable assessment instrument is one that "gives the same result for people of similar skill levels regardless of who administers the test, who rates the test, when the test is given or what version of the test is applied" therefore individuals who can interpret well should be able to pass an accreditation test normative for interpreters. Cronbach (1988) investigated the issue of rationality during testing procedures and theorizes that judgements made should be impartial, uninfluenced by personal feelings, interpretation prejudice. Reliability is achieved through the proper training of test administrators and assessors and adequate piloting of the assessment instrument. Valid and reliable procedures for measuring of interpreting starts by posing essential questions about the procedures (Cohen 1994: 6), thus questions in this research study seeks to investigate the procedures of the UK accreditation systems to inform recommendations for a South African Sign Language accreditation system.

Critics mention that assessment tests are unjustifiably difficult, that they test constructs not relevant to the work of interpreters, or that they are unfairly administered by incumbents hoping to exclude competitors

(Gonzalez, Vasquez, & Mikkelson, 1991). This situation implies that the performance based test can be redesigned to measure specific indicators related to performance with a combination of content, theoretical knowledge, performance and ethics.

 A holistic test will assess constructs such as linguistic features, writing conventions in the target language (for written assessments), understanding of grammatical and mechanical control, control of cohesiveness of the text, control of the functional and socio-cultural aspects of the language, sufficient relevant real world and technical knowledge (Angelelli 2004: 39).

2.6.1 ACCREDITATION TEST

Traditionally the SATI accreditation tests are formative rather than summative. The concern here is the degree to which the simulated environment tasks are truly representative of actual interpreting tasks in the field. Assessment tasks are expected to provide greater realism and task complexity according to (Gronlund 1998: 14-15). Gipps (1994) argues a valid perspective that if an "assessment does not measure what it is designed to measure then its use is misleading". Brookheart (2003:7) argues that assessment and learning are integrated. What is required is clarity regarding standards and criterion referenced competencies and assessment criteria. Models and frameworks de-scribe the "what" of language testing, the constructs to which inferences can be made and the domains to which predictions can be made. The specific tasks describe the "how" of language testing, the methods by which evidence can be elicited to this prove language competency.

The dilemma with the accreditation testing in SA can be solved by the understanding the following levels of test development namely:

- Theoretical models
- Assessment Frameworks
- Test specifications

Models of communicative competence and performance competence form an important basis for how tests scores on an accreditation test are interpreted. Once important disclaimer in this regard is that the test score can never predict all future performances in all conditions, and this is the exact reason why the accreditation test must specify the criteria or profile of candidates who can take the tests and how test scores may be gener-alized. McNamara (1996: 48) states that all models of language ability have three dimensions, namely knowledge, performance and actual lan-guage use. McNamara states that models can articulate the theoretical

rationale for inferences made from tests scores in relation to the ability of an individual. It is thus advisable to draft an accreditation model for SASL interpreters which will allow the assessor to trace the meaning of the score back to a model of communicative competence.

In this regard it is useful to look at Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence (1980). This model is made up two components which are:

1. Communicative competence consisting of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic knowledge and strategic competence and,

2. Actual communication consisting of actual language performance, which for this study would mean the actual interpreting performance.

This combination in an accreditation test can accommodate both tasks that measure knowledge and actual interpreting performance. An interesting addition to the 1980 model is the discourse competence which means the ability to produce a unified spoken or written (for this study purposes sign) text in different genres, using cohesion in form and meaning. This is a critical component of an accreditation test because accreditation candidates must absolutely be able to navigate between spoken and signed languages.

2.6.1.1 Administration of the Accreditation Test

The delivery of an accreditation test requires an infrastructure and procedures that are consistently followed; this is referred to as standardization. Inconsistencies or abnormalities in the test administration can threaten validity. In this regard quality assurance procedures must be put in place to protect the value of a test and its credibility.

2.6.1.1 (a) Sourcing of Accreditation Texts

Accreditation testing requires a variety of texts with equal difficulty levels to satisfy the accreditation testing procedures. In the SATI accreditation test it is generally known that the assessors are previous accredited SASL interpreters who were subject to the same testing conditions and accreditation test. The timeline of the very first group of SASL accredited interpreters was in 1997, thus the text recorded was relevant to this group of candidates.

There is thus a need for more than one form of the tests, especially because tests are administered at different times in various provinces. The obvious reason to have more than one form of the test is linked to security of the tests. The texts in the library of accreditation texts must be generated according to specified difficulty level, length, delivery speed, topic, etc.

2.6.1.1 (b) Quality Assurance

An important aspect of the created texts for accreditation testing is the absolute critical quality assurance thereof. According Mc Namara (1996: 87); "The process of quality assurance of a test lies within content review, key check, bias review and editorial review". A comprehensive approach must be adopted to achieve quality in every aspect of the accreditation system right until the feedback to candidates when reports are generated and the outcome communicated to the candidate.

2.6.1.1 (c) Fairness, ethics and standards in accreditation testing

An ethical approach to accreditation testing is to achieve fairness in the concept of professionalism as argued by Davies (1997, 2004). Collective understanding among the community of practice helps determine the fairness of the accreditation test. Four conditions need to be satisfied to believe in something, that it is true namely: tenacity, authority, priori reasoning and a method (Peirce 1987 154-155). The question now in relation to the SATI accreditation test is: is the satisfaction of these conditions met?

In this instance the South African Deaf community has a critical and pivotal role to play in the contribution to the accreditation test developed by SATI. The mark of an ethical practice or an ethical accreditation test in this instance is continuous regulated and dated platforms of open debate regarding issues which directly affect the Deaf community, accreditation candidates (practising SASL interpreters) and other key stakeholders. SATI in this regard should consider creating platforms and opportunities for the consumers of the SASL interpreting service to provide feedback and contrary views regarding the accreditation of SASL interpreters. In doing so progress can be made towards establishing a trust relationship between the institution, accreditation candidates and the Deaf community. If this can be achieved the value and authority of the test, its producers and products thereof will not be questioned negatively.

2.6.1.1 (d) Scoring of the Assessment Test

The earliest attempts to investigate language test scores with meaning that could be related to the ability to perform in a "real world" domain were made in the USA military (Fulcher, 2007) Language educators used tests that could not adequately predict the ability of military staff to perform in the field which fueled the assumption that this was hampering their war effort. Kaulfers (1944: 137) mentioned that: "…The nature of individual test items should be such as to provide specific, recognizable evidence of the examinee's readiness to perform in a life-situation, where lack of ability to understand and speak extemporaneously might be a serious handicap to safety and comfort or to the execution of military responsibility

Scoring of an accreditation test is concerned with aspects of how much or how good the interpreting ability is. How the scoring is done is the link between the evidence that is elicited from the assessment tasks, the construct and the domain. A test score interpretation involves an interpretive argument where the tests score is the premise and the decision involved providing conclusions. Thus to validate a test score interpretation is to support the plausibility of the corresponding interpretive decision with appropriate evidence.

There is not much variety in the measurement scales for interpreter testing. Grading therefore could be seen as haphazard and intuitive which has a negative impact on the reliability. The purpose of some assessment tests may be to provide detailed, explicit feedback to candidates; this may be referred to as a diagnostic test. In the SATI accreditation evidence are summarized in a score which is used as a basis of inferences and prediction on future interpreting performance. This approach places the onus of score interpretation on the institute to make a formal recommendation as to whether the accreditation candidate is on a proficient interpreting skill level to be regarded as a professional practitioner.

2.6.1.1 (e) Accreditation Assessors

A major factor in the quality of an assessment procedure and the legitimisation of the monitoring authority is the qualification of its assessors (Weiler 1981:16-17). Two terms which is imperative in testing is subjectivity and objectivity. When a test is administered objectively the correctness of the candidate's response is determined entirely by the predetermined criteria so there is no interference or judgement from the assessors according to Bachman (1990: 7).

On the other hand, a subjective test required the assessor to make a judgment based on subjective interpretation of the scoring criteria. As a corrective action Back (1990:38) proposes the following:

- Discussion and Understanding of test method facets
- Development of test specifications
- Use of empirical data in test development and validation
- Training of assessors

In the SATI accreditation test the argument that the scoring adequately summarises the evidence of the interpreters' abilities depends on the acceptance of a collective understanding of the meaning of the descriptors. For this condition to be satisfied there must be a group of people whose ability to place interpreting samples into categories has evolved over time and into which new emerging interpreters can be socialised. Weigle (2002: 114) suggest that in a community of practice, it is precisely the agreement between trained practitioners that is the validity in the test". This argument is supported by Lowe (1986:392) who argues that the essence of proficiency is not in the verbal descriptions of it but in its years of tradition of practice.

In the case of setting up a group of assessors in an accreditation test the Angoff approach (Angoff 1984) and the Zieky and Livingston's contrasting group approach can add value to the process by taking the following steps namely:

Step 1: Form a group of assessors who are experts in the content area, in this case SASL interpreting

Step 2: Assessors to review the interpreting tests and estimate the scoring levels at which they can find common agreement of interpreting proficiency.

Step 3: Present the assessors with items in the accreditation test sequence whereby they need to estimate the minimum and maximum probability of competency. They need to clearly define and reach consensus on "good", "borderline" and "inadequate" performance on the test.

Step 4: Establish agreement on the tests scoring and its specific cut offs for accreditation status, which can put a candidate in either a master or non-master category.

The training of all assessors who administer and rate the test is imperative. The use of assessment grids is motivated by the evaluator's wish to take the different dimensions of interpreting into account, but it falls short in adequately reducing the subjectivity of an evaluation, because the interpreting dimensions evaluated is subjective itself. If a score changes depending on the assessor, the question arises as to whether the assessor's

personal view impacted on the score, rather than the true ability of the candidate, which is a major challenge in the SATI accreditation test.

The inter-rater reliability between the assessors is thus weak. In technical terms this incidence can be summarised as construct-irrelevant variance because of the variability of the assessors (Lado 1961:33). The scoring becomes susceptible to order-, contrast- and halo effects.

Other issues which can be considered here are those of inter- and intra-rater reliability. One way of reducing or eliminating assessor variability is the use of detailed rating scales and training of the assessors to use the scales according to established norms and practices, Both of these aspects, detailed rating scales and training of assessors are absent in the SATI test which perpetuates an accreditation system which is administered unfairly (Refer to addendum 2: SATI rubric.)

A norm referenced method of assessment is used here because it is developed with the aim of freeing interpreting from construct- irrelevant variables which comes forth in both analytic and holistic scoring. This norm referenced method presupposes a dichotomous approach of the interpreting units. There is no weighing of mistakes against other alternatives. It is agreed between the assessors which interpreting products are acceptable and which are not. This norm referenced approach aims at delivering a stable and independent measurement.

In the context of Australia there is recognition of the regional variation in Australian Sign Language (Auslan). The Auslan examiner panel sets test materials nationally and examiners are aware of and take into account the regional variations that exist when marking. Based on this awareness of the assessment skills of assessors, we are reminded that the purpose of accreditation is to ensure a credible process of consistent application of an assessment rubric and consistency in evaluation, the crux of this being the specific application of sound judgement regarding the evaluation of the technical skill of interpreting.

Different stakeholders have different perspectives on what makes a competent interpreter. In a similar study conducted by Napier (2011) with focus groups of Hearing, Deaf and Interpreter respondents requesting them what they think makes a good interpreter the responses were: hearing values interpersonal skills, Deaf values good aptitude and interpreter's value professionalism and linguistic skills. Professional judgement stems from professional practice as an interpreter which is a pre-requisite to join an assessor panel (Bachman 1990, Gipps 1994 & Messick 1994). The issue of professional judgement is relative because the meaning and application is not consistent across all individuals. Messick unconditionally pulls this factor as a risk because it cannot be relied on exclusively to ensure equity and fairness in testing. Because of this we need to distinguish between three ap-

proaches to interpreter assessment methods namely: 1 Holistic, 2. Analytic (criterion- referenced approaches) and 3. Calibration of Dichotomous Items Method (CDI –method), which is a norm based approach.

2.6.2 Assessment Constructs

According to Angelleli (2005: 22) a construct consists of a clearly spelled out definition of exactly what a test developer understands to be involved in a specific ability. Kutz (2004) mentions areas of assessment such as behaviour (overall impression), information content, language use and a summary statement of in reference to the interpreting assignment. In addition, Riccardi (2001) defines four macro criteria for evaluation of quality which are: equivalence, precision, appropriateness and functionality.

Validation relies on expert judgement of the skills and knowledge measures by the tasks (Crocker 1997: 33), thus it is important to have a common understanding on the constructs to be assessed.

To allow the measurement of an interpreters' professional ability the specific skill and sub skills must be clearly defined. For this to take effect the concept of interpreting must be defined. This definition can assist in a comprehensive definition of the exact skills and knowledge an interpreter must master to be categorized as a professional interpreter. The minimum requirements of an interpreter are: 1. Comprehension of the and target language, 2. Interpreting techniques, 3. Understanding of textual meaning in context, 4. socio-cultural and socio-linguistic appropriateness, 5. situational adequacy, 6. style and cohesion, 5. grammar and mechanics, 6. Interpreting and topical knowledge.

When operationalising a construct it is being named using an abstract nominal group, e.g. competence in matching the register of the signer/speaker in a SL interpreter accreditation test. It must be decided what must be observed to make a decision of how 'good" the accreditation candidate register with the signer/speaker. This implies that the construct requires an association with observable variables. It then becomes useful to consider the fourteen micro criteria categories which are mentioned by Riccardi (2001) which is categorised in register, omissions, content deviations and successful solutions (strategies).

TABLE 3: CATEGORIES OF VALIDATION EVIDENCE (Sawyer 20015: 97)

	Definition	Features	Examples
Construct	Attribute or characteristic of individual, reflected in test performance	Unifies all types of validity evidence Refers to skills and abilities which must be tested	Ability to: Interpret with faithfulness Use appropriate language and expression Apply world knowledge and subject matter Demonstrate acceptable platform skills and resilience to stress
Content	Degree to which test content represents domain Reference to domain, criteria and standards	Is the content relevant and well-covered? Is the test content representative of the domain? Is it prototypical? Does the test cover skills necessary?	Consecutive Interpretation Liaison Interpretation Simultaneous Interpretation Simultaneous interpretation with text
Criterion	Relationship between test scores and external criterion being measured, e.g. Level of expertise	Predictive or concurrent? Does test scored predict future performance? Are score the same as on another test of the same skill?	Graduates are able to work in their market sector Graduates can pass similar tests again in the future, including those administered in industry

The ability to interpret efficiently must be classified against the efficacy levels and final interpreting product. The accreditation for SASL interpreters as per the SATI test must thus be criterion referenced. This implies that the construct which is being assessed can allow the candidate to proceed successfully to accreditation status, provided there is clear

guidance on the scales to determine cut off points for a pass or fail in a specific construct.

Another aspect to interpreter assessment is offered from the field of interactional sociolinguistics and conversational analysis, which holds that successful communication is defined by interlocutors who share the same interpretive frame, repertoire of contextual cues, and socio-cultural knowledge and expectation. In this regard cross-linguistic competence in use and transfer of contextualization is imperative when assessing interpreter performance. Clifford (2001, 2005a) suggests that interpreter assessment in this regard must be grounded in discourse theory, which implies that interpreter assessment must include deixis, modality and speech acts, for which he developed a certification test based on a discursive model of interpreting. In this regard Bachman's model of communicative language ability (CLA) is applicable in that it clearly distinguishes knowledge and skill (Bachmann, 1990: 85).

Test specifications serve as a focus of critical review by test developers and users. In a criterion-referenced test, specific skills and behaviours are listed and from these test specifications are written. This approach is best suited if there is a testing situation where the test candidate must prove his competency in the level he has achieved the objectives or criteria of the test. Equivalence, reliability and validity can be assured because, in addition to the mechanical blueprint-like function of specifications, it served as a formal record of critical dialogue. According to Ruch (1924: 95-96), detailed rules of procedure in the construction of an objective examination which would possess general utility can hardly be formulated.

An accreditation test must further develop criteria for the evaluation of language and interpreting performance at different proficiency levels which can be linked to the accreditation levels of paraprofessional, professional and expert categories as proposed by the SALPC. The Bachman and Palmer model can be used as a checklist to aid in the design of such a test (Bachman & Palmer 1996: 76-77). Specifics on the checklist of an ideal test are:

TABLE 4: SAMPLE OF A CHECKLIST OF AN ACCREDITATION TEST

Grammar	Vocabulary Syntax Phonology/graphology
Text	Cohesion Rhetoric organization
Function	Idealization Manipulative Heuristic Imaginative
Sociolinguistic	Dialect Register Naturalness Cultural references Figurative language
Metacognitive	Goal Setting Assessment Planning

Tests have outcomes and impacts on the immediate clients, both hearing and Deaf, thus it should be the test effects that input on the final design decisions regarding the particular items and tasks. The process requires consideration of the performance conditions, which subsequently informs a framework that provides test specifications. Questions which precede test development are (Cohen 1994: 11-48):

TABLE 5: SAMPLE OF PRE-TEST DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

What	Aspects of translation ability should be assessed?
Why	Are certain techniques, assessment methods / approaches being used instead of others?
How	Will the assessment instruments be developed, and how will it be validated?
When	And how often will the test be administered?
Where	Will the exam take place (physical environment)?
Who	Are the intended test candidates? What is the profile of the test candidates such as social background, cognitive skills and personal characteristics?
For Whom	Are the results of the test intended

According to Angelelli (2004: 46) the most critical step in the design of an assessment instrument is the definition of the construct. This requires the assessment test to have a consistent interpretation of the ability, knowledge and behaviours which are required to complement a specific set standard. Chan (2008: 48) in this regard states that: "there is a lack of standardisation in credentialing terms, but generally organizations are accredited and individuals are certified. In this regard Angelelli (2004: 14) suggest the use of a rubric which assesses interpreting ability and also keeping in mind the administration process of the test. The consistent use of a rubric can lend to a more systematic and holistic grading of interpreters.

2.6.3 Rubrics

 A rubric provides consistent scoring elements which are considered to be relevant to the specific domain which is being tested. A rubric thus satisfies a dual expectation in that it allows for a construct which is to be measured can actually be measured consistently and the assessors are able to score the test.

Rubrics allow for a more systematic and holistic way of grading thus it can be used to score a range of performance including that of interpreting. It clearly states the characteristics of interpreting competence, primary traits of the performance and most importantly it also states the delineating criteria to indicate various performance levels. Cohen (1994), states that rubrics are used in language testing and assessment to measure primary and multiple competencies in language production.

Three important factors must be considered for the development of an assessment rubric namely: 1. Selected competencies to be measured must be grounded in theory; 2. Competencies and its sub-components must be operationalised and 3. Assessment must be based on authentic performances. The process above requires the clarity of an interpreter's competencies both at the highest level, and equally important, at the lowest level of performance.

TABLE 6: ANALYTIC RUBRIC OF CONTEXTUALIZATION CUES SAMPLE

Superior	Demonstrates superior ability in understanding meaning of contextualisation cues, accompanying utterances of primary interlocutors, produces effective and natural renditions in the target language, demonstrated balance focusing on accuracy of information and interactional features, produces consistently dynamic renditions with

	appropriate intonation contour in the target language.
Advanced	Demonstrates advanced ability in understanding meaning of contextualisation cues accompanying utterances of primary interlocutors, is usually able to interpret cues into the target language with some difficulty at times due to the inability to consistently focus on accuracy of information and interactional features, renditions are dynamic and appropriate, with occasional monotone renditions.
Fair	Consistently demonstrates difficulty in understanding meaning of contextual cues, accompanying utterances of primary interlocutors, often unable to interpret in cues in target language, is unable to focus on accuracy, information and interactional features, renders monotone versions and backtracking is evident.
Poor	Demonstrates inability to understand meaning of contextualisation cues in the utterances of primary interlocutors is unable to interpret cues into target language because of inability to focus on accuracy of information and interactional factors, renders monotone products with excessive backtracking and stuttering.

Jacobson (2007) mentions that discourse management requires overlapping and interruptions in a natural communicative environment. This is a definitive competency to consider when assessing interpreters. The author holds the following expectations: Interpreters must be able to; 1. Provide a clear, concise pre-sessions to primary interlocutors on the interpreter's role in discourse (if possible) and 2. Consistently use the first person, and third person when seeking clarification.

The table below illustrates a sample of an analytic rubric which is important to reflect interactional competence, as stated by Jacobson (2007). Jacobson suggests the following rubric to assess discourse management:

TABLE 7: ANALYTIC RUBRIC OF DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT SAMPLE

Superior	Provides a clear, concise pre-session to primary interlocutors on the interpreter's role (if possible), uses the active voice, 1st person when interpreting and uses 3rd person when requesting clarification, encourages interaction, maintain eye contact
Advanced	Provides clear concise, pre-session to primary interlocutors on the interpreters role, consistently use 1st person when interpreting and 3rd person when clarification is needed., encourages interaction between interlocutors, both verbally and through, paralinguistic cues, demonstrate skill in allowing interlocutors to take turns without interrupting for clarifications, need to develop memory and note taking skills, need to build vocabulary, deals calmly and effectively with overlaps, with demonstrated need for practice.
Fair	Provides clear concise, pre-session to primary interlocutors on the interpreter's role, one/two principal points are omitted, uses the 1st person inconsistently when interpreting, makes excessive use of the 3rd person, provide awkward renditions, does not encourage interlocutors to interact, often interrupts for clarification, need to develop memory and note taking skills and build vocabulary, become nervous when challenged by overlaps, need further practice.
Poor	Does not always provide a clear, concise pre-session to primary interlocutors on the role of the interpreter, leave out principal points, is inconsistent in using 1st person and almost always uses the 3rd person, does not encourage interlocutors to interact, or to complete turns, interrupts frequently to request clarifications which leads to choppy discourse, have poor note taking and memory skills, does not deal effectively with overlaps which causes excessive omissions

2.5.3 (a) Rubric Performance Levels

The levels on a rubric imply the distinct levels of performance can be allocated and a decision can be made as to the actual skills level of the domain which is being assessed. Competencies inherent to effective interpreter performance are identified, defined and operationalised

(Bachmann & Palmer 1996), a rating scale is then used to score each competency separately (Mertler 2001).

The use of fewer levels in a rubric can negatively influence a test situation because it will not allow for a clear delineation of competences upon which decisions about certification are made.

The product of Fulcher's contribution was a scoring rubric which contains level descriptors. Rubrics draw on elements from the communicative competence model that for example for SASL interpreting ability can be constructed in way to rate the interpreting ability of an accreditation candidate. The next step in the design of the rubric is to draft definitions to flesh out what exactly the "ability" to deliver the construct means.

According to Bachmann & Palmer (1996: 41), categories in a scoring test can be described as:

- Level 1- Elementary proficiency
- Level 2 - Limited proficiency
- Level 3 - Minimum proficiency
- Level 4 - Full proficiency
- Level 5 - Native proficiency

The Common European Framework of Reference scales contain statements that have been put in sequence and divided into levels on the basis of perceived difficulty. For the purposes of interpreter testing, three types of scales are used namely: 1. Nominal, 2. Ordinal and 3. Interval

2.5.3 (b) Meaning – Orientated Assessment Criteria

Meaning orientated assessment criteria is grounded in meaning analysis (Halliday& Matthiessen, 2004). It is further supported by Skopos theory and functionalism in translation studies (Nord 1997). Systematic functional linguist sees language as a meaning-making resource which allows people to exchange interaction within a specific cultural and situational context. The focus here is on language use with the aim of construing meaning. This meaning –orientated allows us to think about the systematic nature of interpreting.

2.7 PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

Performance assessment is an established concept in the language test-ing field. The use of portfolio assessment is a means to gather a greater range and depth of sample performances which covers both process and product orientated assessments.

Carless (2009: 85) states: 'We require systems that can be justified theo-retically and practically, and the confidence to defend our practices against internal or external scrutiny' – in the context of portfolio's.

The use of portfolios for promoting and supporting continuing profession-al learning (CPL) as well as for learning for certification or accreditation is important (Trevitt & Stocks 2008; Klenowski, Johnston, 2004). However, a POE, seem to have more face validity with respect to communication skills, because the tasks corresponds more directly to "normal" language settings (Savignon, 1972). Instead of having an event, such as a once off accreditation test, a procedure, such as a POE, are all part of assess-ments. Klenowski et. al (2006: 276) suggest that a 'portfolio is not simply a collection of evidence but is a way of coming to understand and record learning".

Clarifying the exact form of a portfolio is problematic. Challis (1999: 374) observes, 'the very personal nature of portfolios makes it difficult to give a clear picture of what constitutes a 'typical portfolio'. Elton and Johnston (2002: 34-35) suggest that the exact form will vary with purpose, usage and context, but concur that a portfolio comprises a collection of items and is not necessarily a single coherent piece of work.

Gumperz (1982: 209) states "the knowledge of linguistic and related communicative conventions that speakers must have to create and sus-tain conversational cooperation, and thus involves both grammar and contextualization". This is an important aspect which a portfolio of evi-dence must be able to highlight. In this regard Schiffrin (1996) mentions contextual clues such as cross-linguistic variation, prosodic and paralin-guistic features, such as gestures, facial expressions and pauses, expec-tations about the thematic progression of the interaction, and by drawing on cultural presuppositions. Jacobson (2007) sourced data from student interpreters and suggested the following must haves for interpreter effec-tiveness, namely:

- Ability to understand the meaning in both language cues such as voice volume, intonation, prosody and other paralinguistic features
- Produce effective and natural renditions of such cues in the target language
- Demonstrate a balanced focus on accuracy of information and interactional features
- Produce consistently dynamic renderings with appropriate intonation contour in the target language.

Having multiple sources of evidence to inform a consequential decision regarding an accreditation candidate is a fundamental feature of making an ethical decision regarding the interpreting ability of the candidate.

If score meaning cannot be arrived at solely through the accreditation tests to accredit an interpreter an option of comparison to a portfolio of evidence (POE) is suggested (Kvale 2007: 55). The portfolio of evidence allows the candidate to demonstrate his competence in SL and English (accreditation languages) and interpreting skill, in meaningful communicative situations. In the case of accreditation for SASL interpreters an alternative, POE, is suggested because it is not clear to which extend competence-orientated tests, such as the SATI accreditation test is a valid indication of the accreditation candidates ability in handling the interpreting content. A problem which is encountered in defining and recreating simulated environments vs real world environments during testing is how to score the limited sample collected during the test and then how the test score carries meaning to be relevant to the interpreting domain, which is a major concern factor in the SATI test. Kvale (2007: 57) claims that 'assessment is a field of contradictions', arguing that the role played by assessment has been a minor one. He suggests that 'assessment for selection, discipline and knowledge control' has dominated over assessment for learning which can take the form of portfolios and peer assessment (Kvale 2007: 61).

Technical and logistical specifications for a PoE are imperative to ensure clarity or guidance around whether the PoE is assessing an outcome or a process. In this regard two key questions must be posed to guide us:

1. To what extent is the portfolio meant to take a snapshot of interpreting practice?
2. To what extent does the PoE tell a story of the interpreter's development over time?

The PoE is unlike many other 'products' of learning in that, ideally, it is a record of a process and not really an end product at all. Rather, it represents a particular point on a professional learning pathway which will continue after assessment which is ideal when considering a PoE as CPD for SL interpreters. With reference to the assessment of PoE it must be understood that a PoE is a flexible 'learning oriented assessment' tool. Carless, (2009) demands that it accommodate participants' expectations, at least to some extent thus assessors must be flexible in the interpretation of criteria, even as they seek reassurance that acceptable minimum standards have been achieved.

According Mullins and Kiley (2002) assessors of professional portfolios are disposed to do everything in their power to ensure success. Johnston (2004) reiterates the philosophical and theoretical milieu of portfolio assessment while Trevitt and Stocks propose a set of 'authenticity criteria' and 'typical expectations' of successful portfolios to guide the work of portfolio authors, program conveners and assessors. This implies that portfolio's, although flexible, must have certain specifications and guidelines as to what constitutes a PoE with clear requirements. This allows a fair and consistent assessment process. Trevitt and Stocks outline a range of 'typical expectations' associated with five 'authenticity criteria' that characterise successful portfolios, which are intended for use by participants and assessors.

With reference to considerations of replacing or replicating PoE with assessment processes Challis (2001: 439) states "Portfolios have a distinct advantage over other assessment methods, as long as they are judged within their own terms, and not by trying to make them replicate other assessment processes.'

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter various assessment methods were discussed within the frameworks of interactional sociolinguistics and conversational analysis.

The literature shed light on assessment practices to aid in the understanding of key components of an accreditation test for interpreters.

This chapter set out to highlight the limitations of the current SATI accreditation system and to highlight the need to develop a comprehensive approach to assessment of interpreter performance for accreditation, this was achieved. Lastly accreditation systems in the UK, Australia and US were explored to gain insight into the type of accreditation available and what the testing entails.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methodology of this study, including the population, sample, data collection procedures, instruments as well as strategies used to ensure the ethical standards, reliability and validity of the study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the United Kingdom (UK) assessment process and components, for British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters to inform best practices in the accreditation process for South African Sign Language SASL interpreters. The delimitation and scope of the study to gather data was concentrated to UK and SA. The credibility of findings and conclusions extensively depend on the quality of the research design, data collection, data management, and data analysis, thus this chapter has three purposes namely to:

1. describe the research methodology of this study,
2. explain the sample selection, and
3. describe the procedure used in designing the questionnaire, interview guide and questions and collecting the data

For the specific purpose of this study which is based on action research the research was conducted in two phases. In phase one data were collected from BSL and SASL interpreters. This informed phase two of the study which used a mix of qualitative methods, inclusive of structured, individual interviews and focus group discussions with respondents on the topic of the SASL interpreter accreditation system.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An action research study was undertaken to allow for a disciplined process of inquiry into accreditation systems for Sign Language interpreters. In the pursuit of understanding the accreditation system and the current practice of SASL interpreters under a system to non-enforcement of accreditation status it was important to cut across the theory-practice divide and more so policy-practice divide to allow for the consideration of both aspects as part of a whole.

3.3 SAMPLE

Most sampling decisions in qualitative studies such as this action research are not based on procedures of random probability; therefore the results cannot legitimately be extrapolated to the larger South African interpreter community. In this study purposeful sampling was done which is described by Hale and Napier (2014:68). The criteria for the various sample groupings satisfied the theoretical requirements as well as the practical research considerations.

In quantitative studies sample size is of critical importance to make decisions about statistical tests and for calculating statistical power. In this study which is a qualitative study there is no tests or coefficients which informed the researcher that the sample is big enough. The sample was drawn taking in consideration the scope of the study, the accessibility to respondents, specifically those based in the UK, and the time limit data gathering phase.

In the selection of the U.K. respondents the criteria were minimal and straight forward:

- Must be a BSL interpreter

- Must have an email address to allow completion of the online questionnaire

In the selection of the South African respondents there was a need to diversify the respondent criteria as per the categories specified in the questionnaire. This was a practical decision to ensure key stakeholders are involved in the study and not only SASL interpreters. The categories of respondents in the SA questionnaire were:

o SASL interpreter student
o SASL interpreter
o SATI member
o Interpreting and Translation Lecturer
o Department of Arts and Culture official
o PANSALB official

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Through the pilot online testing of the questionnaire, two (2) UK and four (4) SA SL interpreters completed the questionnaire. The final questionnaire was administered in an electronic format and disseminated through a mailing list of UK and SA sign language interpreters. The term 'survey' is commonly applied to a research methodology designed to collect data from a specific population, or a sample from that population, and typically utilises a questionnaire or an interview as the survey instrument (Robson, 1993).

Robson (1993) indicates that mailed surveys are extremely efficient at providing information in a relatively brief time period at low cost to the researcher thus 116 respondents received notification and invitation to complete the electronic questionnaire. A copy of the UK and SA questionnaires are attached as Addendum 2 and Addendum 3. The survey period concluded on 3 October, 2015, resulting in a total of 116 responses. This report thus provides data and findings for the entire set of survey responses from 48 UK respondents and 68 SA respondents.

3.4.1 Data Collection Instruments

In designing the questionnaire specific attention was given to the guidelines of the design of a questionnaire by Leary (1995: 81-82) namely:

1. Use precise terminology in phrasing the questions.
2. Write the questions as simply as possible, avoiding difficult words, unnecessary jargon, and cumbersome phrases.
3. Avoid making unwarranted assumptions about the respondents.
4. Conditional information should precede the key idea of the question.
5. Do not use double-barrelled questions. (Questions that ask more than one question but provide the respondent with the opportunity for only one response).
6. Choose an appropriate response format.
7. Pre-test the questionnaire.

Both questionnaires administered to the UK and South African respondents had mirrored questions. Robson (1993) indicates that a high reliability of response is obtainable by providing all respondents with the exact same set of questions. Validity is inherently more

difficult to establish within a single statistical measure. If a questionnaire is perfectly valid, it must measure in such a way that inferences drawn from the questionnaire are entirely accurate. Suskie (1996) reports that reliability and validity are enhanced when the researcher takes certain precautionary steps: such as; requesting only responses to questions which are applicable to the study.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The researcher used a qualitative survey design. Two questionnaires were administered by the researcher to collect the data from a purposive sample of 116 subjects. The questionnaires had both closed and open-ended questions. The sample characteristics included mainly sign language interpreters who were willing to participate in the study. Consent was obtained from the respondents themselves. Anonymity, self-determination and confidentiality were ensured during administration of the online questionnaires and report writing.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the data analysis and findings from sign language interpreters based in SA and UK.

The purpose of this study was to bring about development in practice by analysing existing practice and identifying elements for change by making a contribution to the literature on SASL interpreting through specific investigation of the United Kingdom accreditation process of Sign Language interpreters as well as to make recommendations and inform the South African Language Practitioners Council on the accreditation options for South African Sign Language practitioners.

A total of 116 respondents, 68 from SA and 48 from the UK completed questionnaires over a period of 3 weeks in September and October 2015.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

For qualitative studies, the procedures to be followed for the analyses must be addressed for the purposes of the report. The results are organised based on broad categories of respondent information and related findings as captured through the survey process.

4.2.1 Questionnaire

This section of the report provides a detailed description of findings related to each of the questions posed in the questionnaire.

(a) Demographic Analysis

This section of the questionnaire covered the respondents' age, education level, and employment- and accreditation status. Though not central to the study, the personal data assisted to contextualise the findings and the formulation of appropriate recommendations.

The age groups of respondents are shown below:

Respondent Group	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54
United Kingdom	0	11	16	21
South African	8	34	18	8

UK respondents did not have any respondents younger than 25 years of age participated in the study. It is notable that most of the UK respondents are aged between 45 -54 years, whilst most of the SA respondents are aged between 25-34 years. This data informs us that most of the UK respondents could possibly more experienced interpreters.
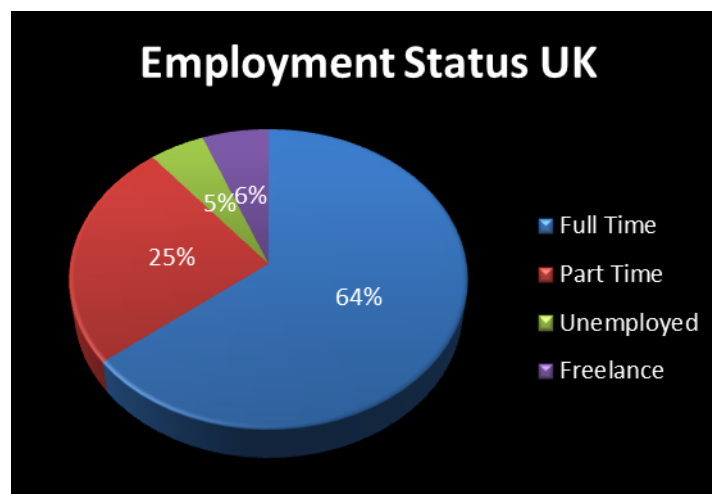
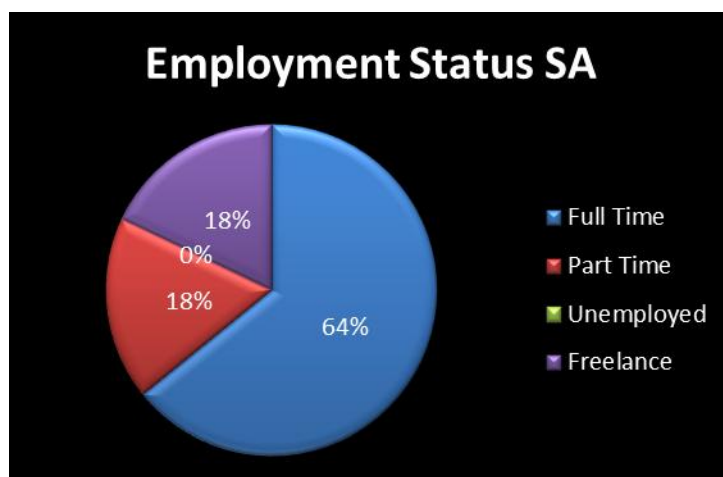The education levels of respondents are reflected below:
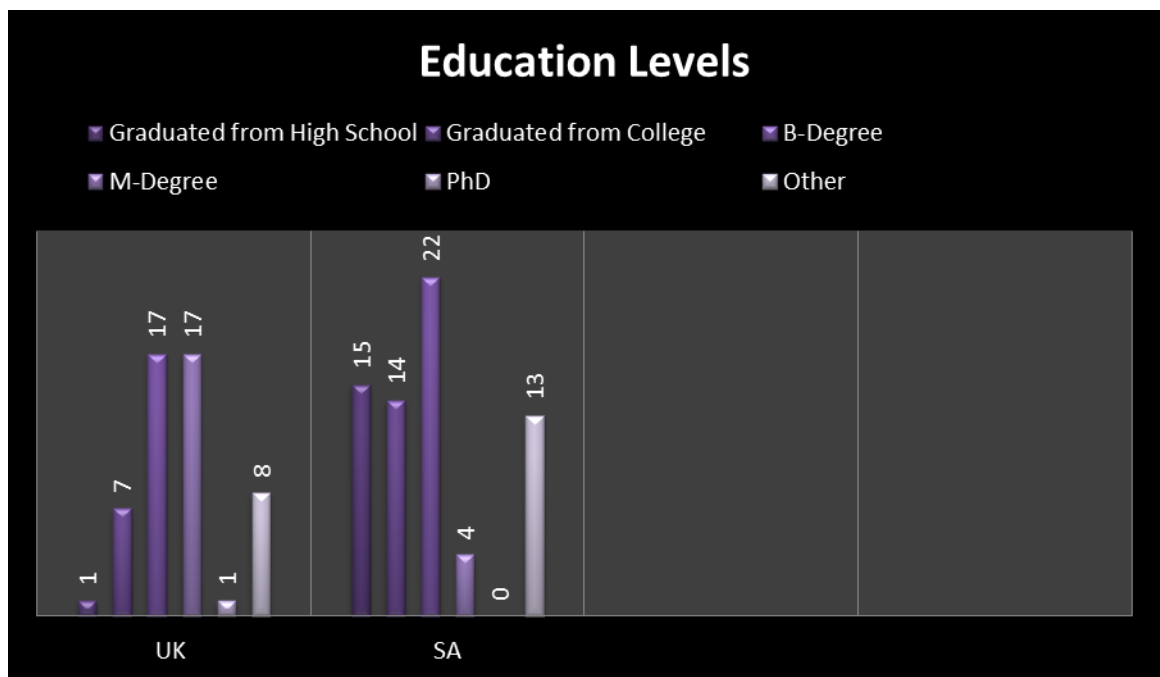
The data here reflects that only 1 PhD holder participated in the study which is the highest level of qualification. More respondents from SA holds a high school certificate as their highest level of qualification in comparison to the UK respondents where only one respondent indicated a high school certificate as his highest qualification. An equal number of UK respondents hold a B-degree and an M-degree, whilst South African respondents had more B-degrees than M-Degrees.

Most of the SA and UK respondents are employed full time. Freelance interpreters in SA are at 18% and in the UK it is at 6%. Most South African interpreters are freelancing due to the employment options being restricted and not readily available in the market. It is interesting to note the part time employment percentages with SA at 18% and the UK at a majority 25 % in this category. All respondents in SA have some level of employment but are not unemployed unlike in the UK where 5 % of respondents indicated unemployment, despite South Africa having one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. The question of who should be considered 'unemployed' is controversial.

In 1998, Statistics SA officially adopted a "strict" definition of unemployment that was in line with the International Labour Organisation definition "*used by more than eighty percent of both developed and less developed countries, and South Africa's major trading partners*". The strict definition of unemployment considers a person to be unemployed only if they have "taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview". They are sometimes referred to as the "searching unemployed". The expanded or broad definition of unemployment includes discouraged job-seekers: those who want to work but are not actively searching for a job as they have lost hope, wanted to work but there are no jobs in the area or were unable to find work that required their skills. They are sometimes referred to as the "non-searching unemployed". Statistics South Africa publishes quarterly labour force surveys, which collate data on the number of people in the labour market. The surveys examine the size of the working population (all persons aged 15 – 64 years) and the labour force (all persons that are employed or unemployed). They also include information on people who are categorised as "discouraged job seekers" and those that are economically inactive.

Employment Status UK
- Full Time 64%
- Part Time 25%
- Unemployed 5%
- Freelance 6%

Employment Status SA

Accreditation Status:

It was found that the majority of UK respondents are accredited. In SA most respondents fall within in the non-accredited category. This implies that more SL practitioners in SA are operating and providing interpreting services without accreditation. The skill level of this group of interpreters are not verified, which implies that the service standards are not monitored. This situation provides a clear reason and need for a statutory regulatory body such as the SALPC to ensure a regulated language practice environment in SA.

Accreditation Status
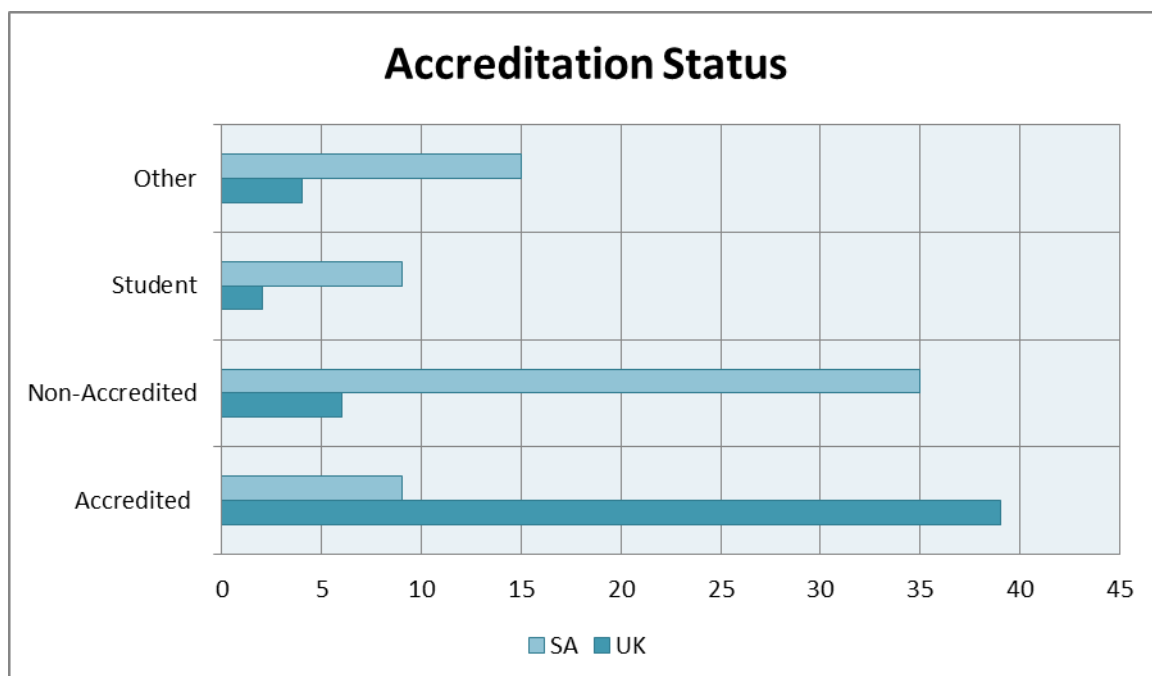
(b) <u>The Accreditation System</u>

In one of the first questions, related to the accreditation system, respondents were requested to indicate if they have an accreditation system for SL interpreters. 16 BSL interpreters all affirmed that indeed there is an accreditation system in the UK. This confirmed that interpreters were all aware that indeed there is a system available for accreditation unlike the one on one interviews with 10 SA Sign Language interpreters whereby only 4 knew for sure that there is a body, (SATI), responsible for accreditation.

Have Knowledge of an Accreditation System	SA	UK
	4	16

This evidence confirms the need for marketing of the accreditation process by the SALPC because it can be deducted that SL practitioners are not aware or knowledgeable and adequately informed regarding the SALPCA guidelines which requires all language practitioners to be accredited in the three levels: 1. Paraprofessional, 2. Professional and 3. Expert

Linking to this question a follow up question was posed to South African respondents regarding their familiarity about the SALPCA guidelines. Of the 27 respondents 11 respondents confirmed that they know the SALPCA guidelines and 16 respondents did not know it.

Further to this respondent's opinions were gauged as to the challenges they foresee in implementing the accreditation guidelines of the SALPC. Given these responses it was worthwhile to also have looked into the UK system and document the perceived gaps / challenges with the previous accreditation system and the current National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system.

- Lack of a credible structure is cited in SA. In the UK it is mentioned that there are many centres, with varying experience in delivering and assessing NVQ candidates. The SALPC according to the act will be the only accreditation body but will consult with accreditation institutions.

- Funding of the SALPC and lack of political will.

- The status of SASL, not recognised, this delay is compounded by the challenging request to standardise SASL which is believed to have 100 dialects as previously mentioned by the deputy minister of social development, the honourable H. Bogopane-Zulu.

- Lack of personnel responsible for monitoring the system under the SALPC. In this regard mention is made of the lack of monitoring conflict of interest of assessors who own interpreting service businesses who favour their staff and provide accreditation to them. In the UK, Signature oversee the NVQ system which is i-BSL diploma, which have a bank of EQA's who all receive the same training, thus the reliability and validity of this mode of assessment is relatively high as informed by the literature review. There is less probability for assessors to score the portfolios subjectively since they are all trained on how to assess the POE.

- Part of monitoring involves monitoring post receipt of accreditation status. With the NVQ system there is no mandatory demonstration of skills. Interpreters simply have to provide a list of activities to remain accredited. In the SALPCA guidelines it is mentioned that accredited language practitioners must participate annually in CPD and pay the annual practise fee to ensure their accreditation status and practise certificate remain valid.

- Government corruption related to procurement of SASL interpreting services.

- Lack of communication.

- Working in silos not partnering with other organisations, specifically lack of involvement of Deaf people in the process. Another opinion here addressed the other side of the coin where the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA) protects and advocate for Deaf people and not interpreters. The UK respondent's mention that both Deaf and hearing clients should be equally involved in the accreditation process. It is recorded that under the previous UK accreditation system there was a definite lack of input and assessment by Deaf individuals whom has not changed under the NVQ system.

- The majority of the South African public do not know the regulations.

- Re-inventing the current accreditation system, suggesting use of the current testing system. One of the issues in assessments is the consistent application of a marking system. UK mentions the variation in the way the POE is marked.

- Enforcing compliance to the guidelines is mentioned by South African respondents. The UK respondents feel that the NVQ is not stringent enough the entry levels are varied and no adequate standard application.

- The majority of SASL does not hold a Bachelor's degree as mentioned as a requirement in the SALPCA guidelines. There is thus a clear need to consider a corrective measure of providing opportunities for SASL interpreters to prepare to

  study towards such a qualification. In the UK survey it was found that a limit of 4 years is provided for trainees to become qualified, which is seen as unfair since some people need additional time to achieve their professional status. It is also mentioned that many University courses is discontinued because of the portfolio system, but only one centre in England still offers the examination tests.

- A lack of uniform training of SASL interpreting and the application thereof. The other side of this is the financial aspect of training where respondents mention the unaffordability of education to study towards a degree in language practice. The UK respondents mentions the need for consistency of training course providers, support for BSL students.

- Gatekeeping specifically where there is no support from experienced SASL interpreters to embrace and guide new interpreters

- Lack of demand for full time employment of SASL interpreters.

- Lack of qualified mentors to mentor grassroots interpreters are mentioned and a similar response is documents by UK respondents who mentioned that there is inadequate support for trainee interpreters to prepare them for accreditation, except the usual recommendation of practising BSL with and among the Deaf community. A suggestion is made in this regard to have mandatory mentoring and or supervisory sessions at a minimum for the first 2 years after being qualified.

- It is documented that the NVQ system lacks clarity. Submission of BSL interpreting clips are requested which upon failure it is not explained, this makes interpreters feel as if it is a tick box exercise with no valid feedback on passing requirements or reasons for failing to make the acceptable standard.

  Probing further in the legal aspect of an accreditation system UK interpreters were asked if there is a law which requires SL interpreters to be accredited to allow them to practice of which all respondents said no.

This is clearly in direct contrast to the South African situation which now requires all language practitioners, inclusive of SASL interpreters to be accredited.

The researcher documented the UK interpreter's feelings with regards to the accreditation system. There is confusion among TSLI's around the registration with the NCRPD, whether it is optional or mandatory. More experienced (older) interpreters and Deaf people feel the system produce insufficiently skilled interpreters, who are allowed to practice whilst training, which exposes them to situations which they are not ready for.

There is also mention of respect for the accreditation system and a sense of pride when accreditation status is achieved. On another level it causes frustration with requirements which are changed i.e. length and standard of training. Views shared on the system include being complicated, time-consuming and lacks standardisation and in some cases the standard is mentioned as poor. There is a political view attached to the system, with various interpreting associations established and two regulatory bodies, but some interpreters do not want to be assigned to neither of the two.
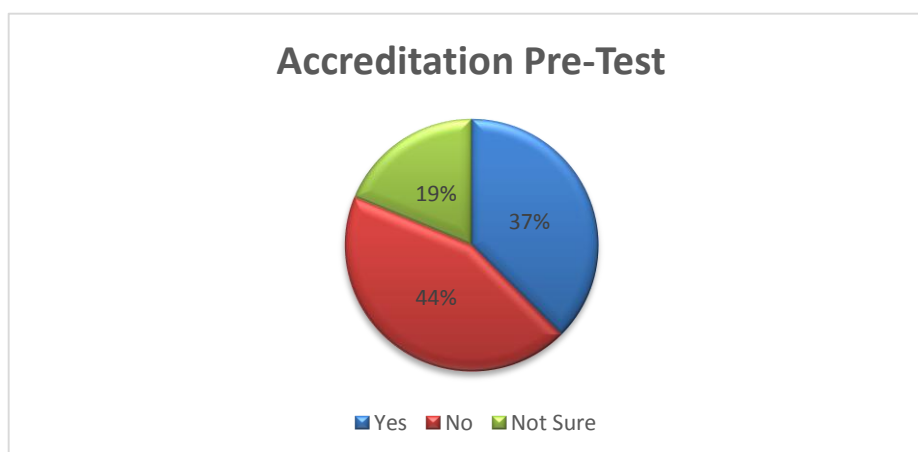
(c) Accreditation Testing

In this section the researcher explored various questions related to the testing system on UK and SA. The researcher wanted to document the practice of pre-test options in the UK for those interpreters who want to assess their skill level before registering to do the actual assessment.

Pre-testing of accreditation is an important aspect which is available to spoken language interpreters and translators under SATI.

South African respondents feel that there must definitely be a pre-test option available for accreditation candidates. A pre-test creates a safe environment for aspiring accreditation candidates because they have some knowledge of the process and the "feel" of an assessment and to self-assess on test readiness. Other views are that of a pre-test being a delay tactic in doing the actual accreditation test. An example is given in a real life situation where you do not have all the information or preparatory material before the assignment but you are expected to interpret impromptu, thus a pre-test does not exist in real life interpreting assignments.

The results were as follow:

Accreditation Pre-Test

A question was posed to establish the accreditation levels which in UK the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 6 and a postgraduate diploma in Interpreting studies makes up the accreditation requirement. The trainee interpreter achieves BSL level 1-6 which equals a language qualification. It is then followed by an interpreter qualification, which is either an academic qualification or a NVQ diploma which is within the government framework system. Once the interpreter satisfies the conditions mentioned about he can register in one of the following categories:

A follow up question was asked regarding the process and components of the accreditation test in the UK. Various courses both University and NVQ based are mapped against national standards for registration with the NCRPD. For the *University qualification* the candidate must have a degree and preferably a postgraduate degree in interpreting. For the *NVQ qualification* a portfolio of working evidences must be compiled which consist of a set of interpreting assignments. The NVQ diploma is BSL is a checklist with boxes to tick of core competencies which the interpreter must demonstrate by submitting interpreting videos.

The NVQ consist of language and processing skills, interviews related to ethical understanding and working in an interpreting team, real life interpreting evidences and CPD. The South African respondents were asked what an accreditation test should measure.

The following components were proposed:

- SASL Linguistics (Specific issues of placement and register to be evaluated)
- Interpreting Theory
- Interpreting Methods (Accurate delivery of Sign to Voice and vice versa in both directions in various dialects of SASL)
- Specialist Interpreting fields, such as DeafBlind interpreting
- Interpreting Strategies
- Code of Ethics / Professional conduct
- World knowledge
- Dress Code

If the interpreter does not achieve the NVQ standards he is permitted to redo the videos, resubmit it, until it passes the satisfactory standard. Thus elements of the NVQ can be repeated until the candidate achieves the standard. The NVQ is not based on a pass / fail system thus resubmission is encouraged.

Mentors and supervisors can be appointed to assist the candidate in achieving an acceptable standard of interpreting before resubmitting his evidences. Data from the South African respondents indicate confusion about the support provided to an accreditation candidate who fails the test.

Of the 28 responses 12 responded that there are mechanisms in place to support a failed accreditation candidate and 16 responded in the negative. Respondents mention that a candidate can apply for retesting and feedback regarding the failed mark. On the negative side the respondents mention a lack of support mechanism to ensure the candidate is motivated and encouraged to practise his skill and reconsider accreditation to increase the pool of accredited interpreters, instead candidates are left on their own to figure out how to re-enter accreditation without the support and guidance of a supervisor / mentor. Feedback to interpreters is done in writing with vague indications and reasons for failing the test namely lag time. Some accreditation candidates are not trained interpreters and they do not understand the term "lag time". There is thus a need for verbal debriefing to allow dialogue to clarify reasons for failing. Failed candidates do not have the know-how of how to pick up the pieces and move on. This damages the interpreter's confidence and his prospects of an interpreting career, with

many failed interpreting candidates eventually exiting the profession, despite their "competent" skills to interpret.

A question linked to the standardisation of the accreditation test in promoting fairness. The South African respondents agreed that there is a need for a standardised consistent application of an accreditation test for SASL interpreters. A recommendation is made to consult with academics in the field of SASL and interpreting and translation studies. The issue of accrediting in the official languages of South Africa is mentioned, because the test is currently offered only in English, Afrikaans and SASL. Afrikaans is the 3rd most common language in SA and is spoken by a mere 13.5% of the population. English is the *lingua franca* and spoken by 32.8% of the populations. The majority of SASL practitioners are black and their L1 is one of the following languages, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga, but the current accreditation test discriminates unfairly on the basis of language combination.

A breakdown of language speaker percentages is provided below:

isiNdebele	**2.1 %**
isiXhosa	16 %
isiZulu	22.7 %
Sepedi	9.1 %
Sesotho	7.6 %
Setswana	8 %
SiSwati	2.5 %
Tshivenda	2.4 %
Xitsonga	4.5 %

Accreditation in specialist fields e.g. educational interpreting is put forward to ensure fairness of testing since some interpreters only work in specific settings. The current test deals with assessment texts which are politically focused which unfairly discriminates against educational interpreters for example. The current SATI texts benefits interpreters who work in parliament, political settings, government conference settings and media settings.

Part of standardisation and promoting fairness touched on the need to train all assessors on a standard interpretation and application of a rubric to ensure consistent and fair marking processes.

The opinion on fairness was gauged by asking South African respondents if they think the current SATI accreditation test is applied

fairly. The response rate indicates that the majority of respondents view the test as being unfair.

Fairness Of SATI test

27% Yes
73% No
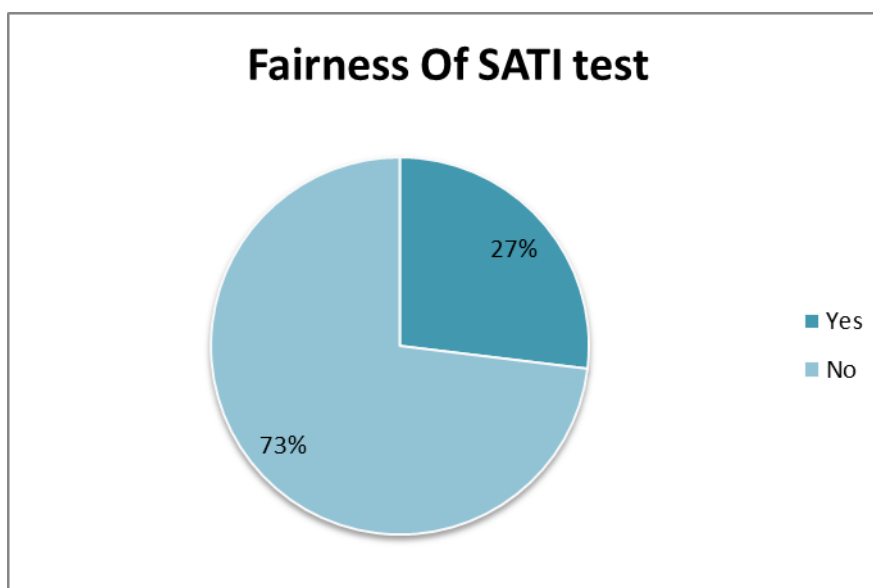
(d) Registry of Interpreters

A registry of interpreters refers to a central database of vetted and certified language practitioners (interpreters) who fulfilled the requirements of professionalism and qualifications. A question was posed to gauge respondent's view of the need to have a registry in SA. 28 responded to this question of which only 1 disagreed to the need for a South African registry of interpreters.

Important to note in this response is the mention of a consumer awareness drive where member so the public are aware of the registry and the reasons why to only make use of accredited professionals on the database. Further to this is the mention of a registry enforcing compliance to a code of ethics to prevent unethical practice.

This registry will provide recourse specifically for Deaf clients whom up to now have never had a way of officially lodging a complaint against an interpreter for poor service delivery. Once again a respondent mentioned that a registry will assist in eliminating incidences where ill-qualified interpreters are used for service provision. Specific mention is made of the Mandela fake interpreter incident and how a registry could have avoided this incidence. A registry will assist government supply-chain management to procure professional interpreters from a credible database. The database will also provide guidance on the accreditation level of the interpreter which will assist in procuring the correct skill for a specific event. Another aspect is mentioned as a misconception about SASL interpreting. Hearing people do a one-week course in SASL, to

learn the basics, and then promote themselves as interpreters because they believe SASL interpreting is a well-paid job.

(e) <u>Minimum Requirements for Sign Language Interpreters</u>

Respondents were requested to share their views on the minimum requirement to practise as a SL interpreter, making a selection from a degree, number of years' experience, accreditation status and a license, the results are shown in the graph below:
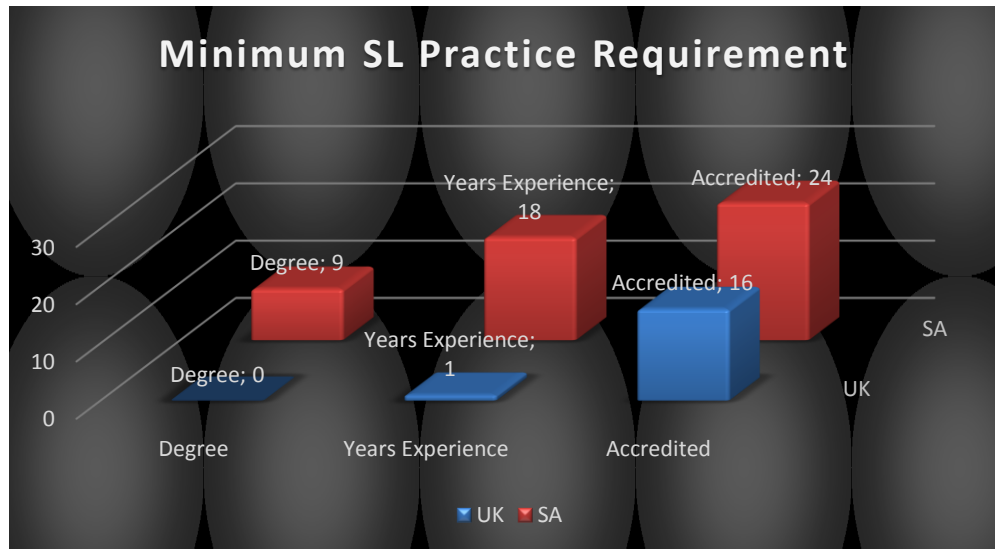
(f) <u>Gaps / challenges with the SATI accreditation system</u>

As elaborated in the literature review on the SATI accreditation system herewith the empirical data which sheds more light on the issues highlighted.

1) Cost, time and availability of assessors who are multi-lingual, not bilingual with English and Afrikaans.

2) The appointment of Deaf assessors on equal footing with hearing assessors.

3) Lack of transparency on the portfolio of assessors, who they are and if they are qualified to be assessors. Lack of training of assessors on the marking system and rubric used to ensure fair and consistent application of the values which are loosely numerated form 1-10 where the outcome is a clear pass or fail. This system of marking does not complement the cut off mark for passing the test which is 80%.

4) The mandate of SATI is being questioned linked to its name, namely an organization for *translators*. It is believed that SATI must focus on its core members, translators, whom were originally targeted when the organisation was formed. It is also mentioned that SATI takes interest and promote translation and its subsequent activities more than it does for interpreting. This is evident in the SATI triennial prize giving where there are no awards made for excellence in interpreting.

5) The issue of a few accredited interpreters are mentioned in response to identifying the gaps in the SATI accreditation system. The literature review informs us that a credible accreditation organisation operates according to the needs of its clients.In this case it is also clear that SATI is failing on its mandate to deliver accredited professional interpreters for the general public who make use of SASL interpreting services, but more so Deaf community. At the time of this study the SATI public database reflects only 9 accredited interpreters. When looking at the supply demand side it is a gross violation of the right of access to information for Deaf people, because there are not enough professional interpreters to service the Deaf community. SATI started SASL interpreting accreditation in 2004, and to date could only deliver 9 accredited interpreters. The reasons for this is not clear cut and ranges from a lack of interest to get accreditation from SASL interpreters themselves, limited budget and staff component to administer the test, lack of government support, lack of mandatory legislation which enforces accreditation status, slow buy-in from the Deaf community and its structure, DeafSA, etc.

6) The simulation of a real world interpreting event is attempted in the SATI test. It is clear from those respondents who had done the test that this is a major fail. The test as detailed in the literature review is a dated text and the testing environment is not conducive for SASL interpreting which in real life does not happen in a booth (spoken language interpreting) or on paper (translation); it is a performance real time event.

7) The SATI fee structure for language practitioners is loosely defined. There is no clear and definite cost for interpreting in various settings which require various levels of experience, skill and accreditation status.

8) SATI does not have statutory powers to revoke an interpreter's license if they are found not adhering to the code of ethics. Further to this SATI has in its history not published any consequences related to disciplinary procedures for SASL interpreters. In addition, there are no clear steps to follow for a client who wants to lay a complaint with SATI. Complaints are made to the DeafSA but there is no documentation of a case which was ever escalated to SATI. SATI is seen as a dog without teeth which adds to the reluctance of SASL interpreters to go for accreditation.

9) Communicating the results of an accreditation test is not one of SATI's strengths. It takes an extensive period of time, 4-6 months, to communicate the outcome of the test with the candidate. This is partly due to the staffing challenge, where assessors volunteer their time to mark the test. Standard assessment practices inform us that results should be communicated one month from the date of testing.

10) Marketing of the test with graduate SASL students is not done. There is a market to encourage student to accredit to ensure they are aware of the professional requirements of SASL interpreting.

11) Administration is highlighted as a weak area, areas which are mentioned specifically are: membership, email query follow up, training- and testing materials.

(g) Accreditation Rubric

Respondents were asked if they have insight to the rubric used for accreditation assessment. The majority of SA responded in the negative.
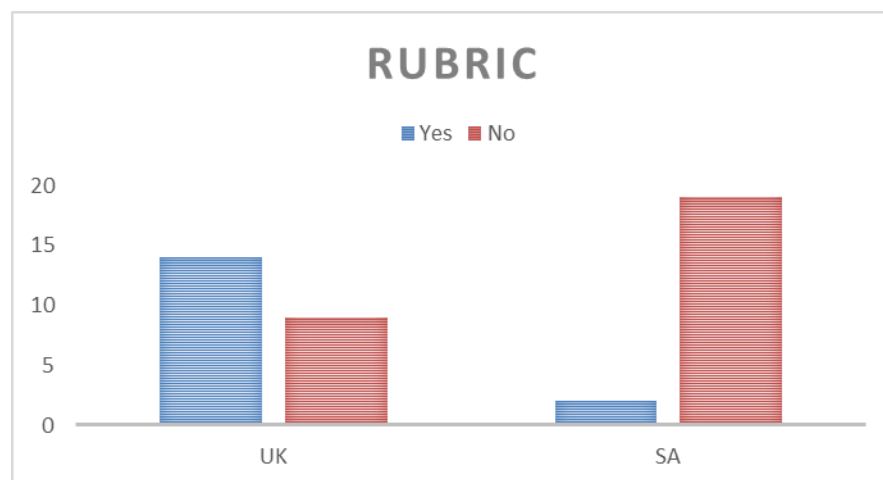
(h) Testing of Ethics

	YES	NO
SA	13	15
UK	8	8

It is important to distinguish between a *code of practice* and a *code of ethics.* UK interpreters noted that NCRPD membership criteria lack a code of ethics. Strong views are shared which states that all courses and tests must have an element which test the views and understanding about ethical practice. Key in testing ethics is the dialogue with mentors and colleagues where ethical decision making scenarios are discussed, but because ethics is a grey area and not a

tangible process with a mathematical formula it must be instilled in a person's value system of do no harm. In the same vein it is relevant to consider the deontological approach to ethics which is discussed by Dean & Pollard (2001). The assessor plays a definite role in the assessment of ethics. An experienced assessor would have a wealth of knowledge and exposure to ethical decision making situations and would thus be better positioned to assess the level of fair ethical decision making responses from the candidate.

Testing of ethics is a tricky situation because a test situation cannot predict 100% that the interpreter will make ethical decisions. It cannot be assessed once off, but can yield positive results through discussion and engagement. It is thus important to instil and create a sense of fairness and clear decision making to allow an intellectual process to guide the interpreter. A test could be representative of various ethical decision making scenarios where the consequences of the decisions made must be discussed an evaluated against the scenario to provide an understanding to the candidate of the positive versus the negative effects of various decisions being made in an interpreting situation and also thereafter.

4.2.2 Triadic Focus Group Interview

Focus group discussions were held with a group of SASL interpreters to further probe the questions around a possible alternative accreditation system for SASL interpreters. As a self-contained method, the focus groups provided a platform to examine the research question from the respondents' own perspective.
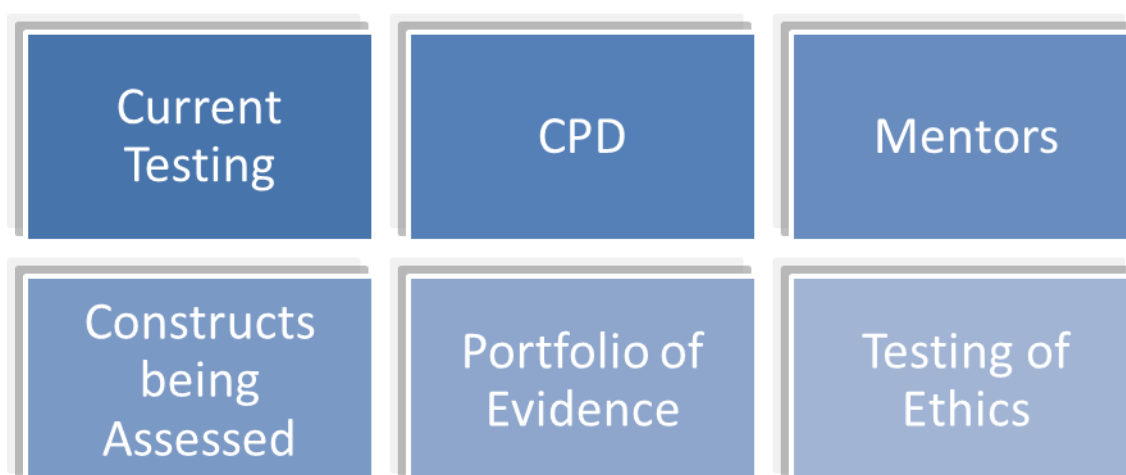
The researcher opted to conduct focus group discussion in particular with SASL interpreters to ensure information provided can be discussed more in depth with more probing questions, which could not be obtained easily through the questionnaire. The researcher wanted to:

- gain an accurate picture of the SASL interpreter's experience of reality;
- evaluate and analyse needs the needs of the SASL interpreters in relation to the current accreditation system
- test new ideas such as CPD and PoE
- clarify responses in the questionnaire to further inform the recommendations made by this study.

During the focus group discussions the researcher established constructive, ethical relationships which were imperative given the proximity of the researcher being a practicing, accredited SASL interpreter herself, a SATI member and the chairperson of the National Association of South African Sign Language Interpreters (NASASLI) which could possibly influenced the respondents' interactions and responses. Despite this weakness the researcher attempted to be as neutral as possible and unobtrusive during the discussions.

According to Morgan (1998: 33) the simplest test of whether focus groups are appropriate for a research project is to ask how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest. In selecting the respondents who participated in the focus group discussions the researcher purposely requested specific interpreters who are vocal and who can express themselves freely, who had no specific organisational association and who were able to engage as knowledgeable persons on the issues of accreditation.

The discussions were guided by the following themes:

Current Testing	CPD	Mentors
Constructs being Assessed	Portfolio of Evidence	Testing of Ethics

The group consisted of three SASL interpreters because the researcher wanted respondents to engage effectively and a bigger group would compromise this. The sense of belonging to a group can increase the participants' sense of cohesiveness (Johnson & Christensen, 2004:12) and help them to feel safe to share information this was particularly true for this focus group. Respondents share that a safe space was created for them to engage with the researcher and showed confidence that confidentiality would not be compromised.

The session which was scheduled for two hours lasted three hours and thirty minutes. The interview questions were structured as follow but the engagement occurred in a flexible way:

1. What is your take on the SATI accreditation test?
2. What are the constructs which an accreditation test must assess?
3. Is it at all possible to test ethics in a simulated testing environment?
4. CPD is important do you agree or disagree?
5. What is your take of a PoE as an alternative to the current testing system
6. Do you think mentors are needed in the PoE route for accreditation?

The responses to the questions as discussed above allowed the researcher to identify the points of convergence and divergence on the various themes covered in the discussions. One advantage of this focus group over individual interviews was the vibrant and candid discussions because comments from each participant sparked interest and dialogue. This brought valuable information to the front to support and confirm some of the responses in the questionnaire.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the data analysis and interpretation with reference to the literature review regarding accreditation testing of sign language interpreters.

Over the course of data analysis, common concerns emerge regarding the current SATI testing system, although there are also responses which lean strongly on the advantages of the test. A major concern among interpreters is that the accreditation system proposed under the SALPC will lead to fragmentation and conflict instead of providing a sustainable solution for the already unpopular SATI accreditation tests for SASL interpreters.

Although this study was small in scale and geographically specific, it provides considerable quantitative information regarding sign language interpreter accreditation that demonstrate viable options of either a formal accreditation test or a portfolio of evidence, to accredited SL interpreters in SA.

The next chapter, concludes the study, discusses its limitations and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the findings of the study. It also drafts conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As professionals in the field of language practice, there is a reaffirmation of the principles that should be applied consistently in the process of accreditation. There must be a definite commitment by all stakeholders such as the South African Deaf Community, government, interpreter community and educationist to empower interpreters with adequate career pathing towards professionalisation which implies a skilled interpreter with credible licensed recognized professionals.

5.2 CHALLENGES

The challenges of designing an appropriate accreditation system and implementing it effectively are very considerable. Success in the accreditation system under the SALPC is likely to accrue, however, only if the realities and complexities around a conducive language policy are understood and a firm position is made regarding the official status of SASL. In addition, the accreditation system under the SALPC could possibly be considered a credible body due to the political will in a country where government support is imperative to enhance the live and relevance of such a structure.

5.3 FINDINGS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has attained the following conclusions and generalizations:

- A standard rubric to be drafted (See proposed Rubric – Addendum4).
- Training and orientation of the consistent application of the rubric for all assessors.
- A practice pre-test for SASL accreditation.
- A portfolio of evidence which has clear requirements
- The use of analytic rubrics is proposed for assessing interactional competence.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made here should be viewed as part of a call for a paradigm shift in the approach to the application of the accreditation process in the aim of it being seen as a resource rather than a liability towards the professionalization of South African Sign Language Interpreters. The recommendations may be useful in a variety of interpreting contexts, but my primary focus was on the South African accreditation system for SASL interpreters. Without being prescriptive, the researcher believes the South African structures responsible for language practice in general and decisions on the accreditation process will find some of the recommendations brought forward in this study useful.

This research attempted to propose clear systematic ways of measuring SASL interpreting competence for the purposes of accreditation. The two proposals of an accreditation test and a portfolio of evidence to test for interpreting competence is made within the operational dynamics of the South African legislative machine, the SALPC, which is seen as the answer to a fair accreditation process for SASL practitioners. The ultimate operationalisation of the proposal made here lies within the implementation of the SALPCA guidelines. The proposal made is not expected to address the many complex issues surrounding the assessment procedures for SASL practitioners but it merely sheds light on an objective process which can be considered to allow for a fair assessment process.

Specific recommendations are:

1) Dedicated attention must be given to the standards of interpreting and for assessors.
2) There is a definite, critical need to legitimise the institutions for gatekeeping the professional domain of SASL practitioners, such as the SALPC as the certifying institution for all language practitioners.
3) The consistent and ethical use of a concrete, reliable evaluation procedure to accredit SASL practitioners in all three suggested categories of para-professional, professional and expert.
4) Recruitment of expert assessors with competencies to interpret evaluation rubrics / grids.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

The study has a number of limitations which must be mentioned to contextualise its findings.

The representative nature of this study is not justified because of the response rate on questionnaires emailed. A relatively small number of interpreter respondents were documented and their views cannot be translated to the broader community of interpreters without context. In a replication of this study on a larger scale, additional and adequate time will be given to respondents to allow for representative data to be sourced.

The reliability and validity of the proposed rubric and portfolio of evidence is not established. This is an important factor if these will be considered for implementation on a wide scale, for credentialing.

5.6 CONCLUSION

On the basis of results obtained from SL interpreters, both in the UK and SA, it is concluded that there is a need for accreditation reform for SASL interpreters under the current South African Translators Institute. A tier stratification model for accreditation is a progressive step where the categories of skill levels of interpreters are stratified from the minimum to maximum requirements in terms of interpreting competencies.

Chapter 6

OUTPUT OF THE STUDUY

PROPOSED ACCREDITATION TOOLS

For effective and efficient implementation of the proposed accreditation tools, the following should be place:

- A formal accreditation policy / law, such as the SALPCA
- A well- resourced accreditation body with reference to organisational systems and processes, administrative functions, personnel and finances
- A well-documented assessment process inclusive of assessor training, moderator and verification processes.

The proposed accreditation tools are:

1. Assessment Rubric (Refer to Addendum 4 – Proposed Rubric)

2. Portfolio of Evidence

The portfolio of Evidence route should be an alternative process to accreditation testing option. The following minimum requirements are proposed:

- Timeframe of 12 months to compile a PoE

- Video Recordings of 12 various interpreting assignments with a minimum duration of 60 minutes

- Signed form of all participants

- Evaluation forms from all participants for each of the 12 assignments

- Completed Self-Assessment forms for each of the 12 assignments

- Proof of pre- and post-consultation with a mentor/s on at least 6 assignments

- A write up on a topical issue in Sign Language Interpreting, national or regional published in a newsletter / newspaper/column

- Attendance of 3 professional development workshops in the field of interpreting, proof of attendance required through submission of attendance certificate or letter from conference organising committee

- Present 2 papers on SASL interpreting at national/ regional/ international conferences

Conclusion

The assessment tools recommended are not prescriptive, rather a basis for ongoing research and improvement to ensure reliable and valid testing of SASL interpreting skills. The proposed assessment tools are in response to the research question of the study: Which method/s can the South African Language Practitioners Council use to accredit SASL interpreters?

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