Interpreting Proper Nouns Heard on the News into Israeli Sign Language
MA Thesis
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Abstract

This paper examines the manner in which Sign Language Interpreters translate proper names into Israeli sign language (ILS), when interpreting the televised news programs. Few studies have been conducted on the subject of Sign Language interpretation of televised news programs worldwide. In Israel the subject has not been studied at all. The study in question collected data from nine different news broadcasts of which 827 samples of proper nouns were collected. The proper nouns collected include names of people, names of places, institutions, organizations, nationalities etc. The research conducted was descriptive and presents the interpreting practices without criticizing or evaluating the quality of the product.

In Sign Languages, as in spoken languages, proper nouns name-signs indicate a particular person place, or institution. At birth, both deaf and hearing individuals are given a birth name which is recorded in the official institutions of the country of birth. In addition to that name, in the Deaf community it is common to bestow on every member a name-sign, which is presented to him/her by another community member. This name-sign is used for identification among members of the community or by hearing sign language speakers who come in contact with the community (Supalla, 1992). For practical reasons, hearing people which are not members of the community, such as prominent politicians in the public discourse, are given signs to allow rapid identification of the person being discussed.

In addition, most states and some cities in the world have commonly used signs that have become known and signed worldwide as a result of globalization and technological developments (Stephens, 2012).

As part of the current study, and based on the literature review, I have presented different translation strategies employed by translators and interpreters translating proper names. The strategies which were found acceptable in spoken language interpreting and sign language interpreting were recognized translation, literal translation, omission, transcription (or in sign language - spelling), conversion into generic nouns and adding comments. In addition to spelling names which is mentioned as one of the strategies in previous studies regarding interpreting proper names into sign language (Kellett Bidoli & Sala, 2011; Kellett Bidoli, 2010), further strategies that are unique to sign language interpreting were discovered during the study. Several phenomena in sign language which have been reviewed so far in the research as part of the linguistic and cultural aspects of the language and not in the interpreting point of view were found to act as interpreting strategies in the study. These strategies are:

 *Index – in sign language index is used to indicate an object which is not present in the discourse (2004 ,מאיר וסנדלר). To select someone or something not present in a situation of discourse, the signer creates a link between the person or the noun that is not in a situation and an arbitrary point in space. This is done by pointing at the point in space immediately after signing the noun. In the current study interpreters use the index as a strategy to mark nouns that appeared earlier in the broadcast.

 *name-sign invention - several methods used to invent name-signs discussed in different studies regarding the attribution of name-signs to members of the deaf community and outside of it (Mindess, 1990; Paales, 2011; Supalla, 1992). In the current study it was found that interpreters

invent name-signs based on physical appearance during the translation as an interpreting strategy.

 *name sign in the making – attributing name signs to people which have become central in the public discourse is necessary for practical reasons. Name signs are not agreed upon in an instant, and sometimes there are several name signs used to describe the same person until one name sign is accepted by the deaf community. In the current study it was found that interpreters used signs that have not yet become fixed in the language as a translation strategy.

All the corpus data was classified according to the following criteria - noun type, status or role of the person referred to, number of appearances of each noun and its localization, ie if the noun is Israeli or not. The classification by type of noun was based on previous studies on translating names into sign language (Kellett Bidoli & Sala, 2011). The other categories were added after the initial viewing and distinction of the influence of various parameters on the choices the interpreters made. The purpose of these classifications was to examine whether these factors affect the interpreter's choices and how they affect them. In addition, nouns that have a recognized translation were analyzed separately from those who do not. This separation was made due to the fact that in the case of nouns that do not have a recognized translation, choosing to translate them into one is not an optional strategy and therefore analyzing the data together might have created a bias in the results.

The study tested several hypotheses, the main of which was that interpreters employ similar strategies, i.e. there are norms in interpreting televised news programs into Sign Language. Among the many strategies mentioned above, I assumed that in cases where there is a recognized translation that is the strategy the interpreter would employ, i.e. transfer the name into the existing name sign in Israeli sign language. In cases where there is no recognized translation, I

assumed that the strategy of spelling the name partially would be most common. I assumed that in general, due to time constraint, the most common strategies found in the research would be recognized translation and partial spelling of the name.

The study's main conclusion was that there are certain norms in interpreting televised news programs into Israeli Sign Language. As was hypothesized, in cases in which a recognized translation exists, it was usually selected by the interpreters. However, in cases in which a recognized translation does not exist, it was found that the most common strategy employed was omission and not spelling as I assumed. It was also found that in cases where there was no recognized   translation, the most common strategy after omission was converting the proper noun into a generic noun and the next in order of frequency was adding a clarifying comment.

The study in question is limited in scope due to the fact that it is a research done for a Master's degree. More extensive examination of a larger sample might yield more statistically significant results from which conclusions regarding tendencies of interpreters translating proper names in the news can be further established.