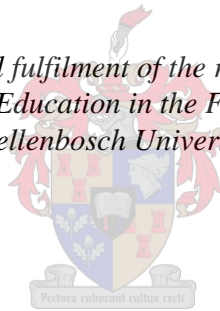# Exploring the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at a South African university

by
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of Master of Higher Education in the Faculty of Education at
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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof, that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or part submitted it for obtaining a qualification.

Date: April 2022

Supervisor

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters, focusing on how their formal learning in general and the acquisition of SASL, in particular, influenced how they navigate the acquisition of new literacies, especially as educational interpreters.

Differentiation was made between interpreters based on the fact that one is the child of Deaf adults (CODA), while the other is the child of hearing adults (COHA). This provided insight into how their lifelong learning (LLL) journeys from childhood to professional South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters have influenced how they now acquire new literacies and how they make meaning of newly acquired knowledge.

To form an understanding of their lifelong learning journey, the study looked at each participants relationship with SASL, their membership to the Deaf community and how it influenced their learning journeys to date. While the study explores their entire learning journey from a SASL-related point of view, the greater focus is on their current realities as full-time SASL educational interpreters at a South African university.

To adequately conceptualise and understand the experience and challenges that these participants had to face, and continue to face, within an educational context, a single theoretical framework is too one-dimensional. The theoretical framework thus uses a three-pronged approach, comprising three theories, namely Jarvis's learning theory, communities of practice and Dialogical self-theory to analyse and make sense of the data.

The research is positioned within the interpretivist research paradigm, using a narrative approach and qualitative style of data gathering. Two participants were identified using purposive sampling and each participant participated in an in-depth narrative interview.

The narrative interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to identify the prevailing themes and patterns that emerged from the stories that participants told of their lived experiences. The dominant themes such as workplace literacy, communities of practice and identity were highlighted and investigated in greater depth by using the theoretical framework, as explained above. The analysis and insights gained provided some insight into the complexities that form part of the life-worlds of the two participants. Their daily lives as they straddle the hearing and the Deaf communities in which they work and live are very challenging. Working for or serving members of any marginalised community comes with challenges, but when that community has such a strong culture and identity as the Deaf community, there are additional obstacles and cultural hindrances that must be acknowledged, addressed and respected. The different self-positions that the two participants take

on is a clear indication of how their lifelong learning journey influenced how they interact with members of the Deaf community and how they understand and mitigate the barriers that they face in their right and on behalf of their clients—the students.

Opsomming

Die studie is 'n verkenning van die lewenslange leerreise van twee Suid -Afrikaanse Gebaretaal (SAGT) tolke, met die doel om insig en begrip te bevorder. Daar word spesifiek gefokus op hoe hul formele opleiding in die algemeen en die aanleer van SAGT, in die besonder, 'n invloed gehad het op die manier waarop hulle die verwerwing van nuwe geletterdhede navigeer, veral binne die konteks van hul loopbane as opvoedkundige tolke.

Onderskeid tussen deelnemers is getref op grond van die feit dat die een tolk die kind van dowe ouers is, terwyl die ander tolk se ouers beide horend is. Hierdie navorsing bied insig en begrip oor hoe die lewenslange leerreis (LLL) van die individue, hoe hulle die verwerwing van nuwe kennis en vaardighede benader en hoe hulle sin maak en betekenis aan die nuut verworwe kennis koppel. Die studie het dus ondersoek ingestel na hul verhouding met SAGT sedert hulle daaraan blootgestel is, tot die hede waar hulle tans as professionele gebaretaaltolke werk binne 'n opvoedkundige milieu.

Om 'n begrip te vorm van die lewenslange leerreis, het die studie gekyk na elke deelnemer se verhouding met SAGT, hul lidmaatskap tot die Dowe gemeenskap en hoe dit hul leerreise tot dusver beïnvloed het. Terwyl die studie hul lewenslange leerreis vanuit 'n SAGT-verwante oogpunt ondersoek, val die groter fokus op hul huidige realiteite as voltydse SAGT-opvoedkundige tolke aan 'n Suid-Afrikaanse universiteit.

Om die ervarings en uitdagings waarmee deelnemers binne 'n opvoedkundige konteks te kampe het te konseptualiseer en te verstaan is 'n drieledige teoretiese raamwerk gebruik. Die raamwerk bestaan uit drie teorieë, naamlik Jarvis se leerteorie, praktykgebaseerde-gemeenskappe en Dialogiese Selfteorie om die data te ontleed en daarvan sin te maak.

Die studie is binne die interpretivistiese navorsingsparadigma gesposisioneer en bied 'n binnekringperspektief op die unieke ervarings van die twee deelnemers. 'n Doelgerigte steekproefmetode is gebruik om die deelnemers aan die studie te identifiseer en 'n narratiewe metodologie is toegepas om toegang tot hul geleefde ervarings en oorvertellings daarvan te kry. 'n Kwalitatiewe styl van data-insameling is gebruik en elke deelnemer het aan 'n diepgaande narratiewe onderhoud deelgeneem.

Die datakorpus bestaan uit die transkripsies wat van video-opnames van die MS Teams-onderhoude gemaak is. Die transkripsies is ontleed deur middel van tematiese analise om die oorheersende temas en patrone te identifiseer wat uit die verhale na vore gekom het waar deelnemers van hul geleefde ervarings vertel het. Die dominante temas soos werksplekgeletterdheid, praktykgebaseerde gemeenskappe en identiteite is uitgelig en in meer diepte ondersoek deur van die teoretiese

raamwerk gebruik te maak, soos hierbo verduidelik. Die ontleding bied insig in die kompleksiteite wat deel van die geleefde wêrelde van die twee deelnemers uitmaak.

Die feit dat hul daaglikse lewe en werksomgewing binne die horende en Dowe gemeenskappe skakel, het inherente uitdagings wat uniek is tot hul beroep en leefwêreld. Om binne 'n gemarginaliseerde gemeenskap te werk het ooglopende uitdagings. Wanneer die gemeenskap so 'n sterk kultuur en identiteit soos die Dowe gemeenskap het, is daar egter addisionele struikelblokke en kulturele hindernisse wat erken, aangespreek en gerespekteer moet word. Die verskillende self-posisies wat die twee deelnemers inneem, is 'n duidelike aanduiding van hoe hul lewenslange leerreis beïnvloed is deur hul interaksie met lede van die Dowe gemeenskap, asook hoe hulle die hindernisse wat hulle in eie reg, en namens hul kliënte – die studente—in die gesig staar, verstaan en mitigeer.

Acknowledgements

This too shall pass had become a bit of a mantra toward the end of what seemed to be a never-ending journey. Then just like that, it was over.

To my parents for printing and reading every iteration and version of every draft, thank you for your love, support and never-ending encouragement.

To Gillian, my study buddy, without you I would never have held out until the end. Thank you.

To my supervisor, Prof Peter Rule, thank you for your thorough and detailed feedback. Your calm and steady positivity in trying times served me well and for that, I am eternally grateful.

To the participants, Kate and John, who were prepared to share their very personal stories with me, I am grateful, honoured and hopefully a lot more sensitive to the hidden challenges of the Deaf community.

I end off with two quotes by Helen Keller:

'Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.'

'Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood.'

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Acronyms

CODA	Child of Deaf Adults
COHA	Child of Hearing Adults
COP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DEAFSA	Deaf Federation of South Africa
DBE	Department of Basic Education
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LTSM	Language and Teaching Support Materials
NID	National Institute for the Deaf
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAGT	Suid-Afrikaanse Gebaretaal
SASL	South African Sign Language
SU	Stellenbosch University
UCT	Cape Town University
UFS	Free State University
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Lifelong learning is an aspect of the modern educational milieu that cannot be ignored, and its importance should not be underestimated. The fact that it forms part of the 17 sustainable development goals that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has set for 2030, indicates the growing international recognition of the importance of lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2015: i). UNESCO has demonstrated this with the establishment of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) which is 'a non-profit institution where research, capacity-building, networking and publication on lifelong learning are done. The focus is on adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education' (UNESCO, 2015: i).

In 2015, UNESCO adopted 17 sustainable development goals in working towards 'ending poverty, protecting the planet , and ensuring that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity'(UNESCO, 2015: 3). The fourth of these goals is: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UNESCO, 2015: 3). To further emphasise its importance

> *All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society (UNGA, 2015: 7).*

Disability and the barriers experienced by disabled students are not the focus of this study but have had a profound impact on the lifelong learning journeys of the participants in this study who work with and serve members of the Deaf community. This study is not about the Deaf students who make use of the services provided by the South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters, or even about the service that is provided. The focus is on the learning journeys that two SASL interpreters undertook to reach this point in their careers at a South African university [1]and to look at how they continue their learning journeys. Looking at their endeavours to formally educate and train themselves to provide a service to students who fall within what society classifies as the disabled category, the participants had to overcome certain struggles and continue to face many obstacles in providing services to their Deaf students.

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[1] The university where the participants are employed was anonymised to protect the identities of the participants.

Through Jarvis's holistic learning theory, this study investigates the lifelong learning journeys of the participants by looking at the communities of practice that they belong to, to facilitate informal and non-formal learning. Through dialogical self-theory, the study endeavours to provide a better understanding of the various internal I-position of each of the interpreters that created their current realities and continue to shape their lifeworlds.

1.2   Background

This study investigated the lifelong journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at a South African university. The university introduced educational interpreting as part of its commitment to multilingualism under its language policy in 2011. It was launched as a pilot project at the Faculty of Engineering, where some lectures in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering were interpreted from Afrikaans to English, making use of simultaneous interpreting mode. In 2014, educational interpreting was rolled out to all faculties. In 2017, when the language of instruction at the University changed from Afrikaans to predominantly English, in line with the language policy (2017), interpreting services also changed, and the service is now offered from English to Afrikaans.

The Deaf have very strong feelings about being part of the Deaf community and culture, as well as being part of the hearing community (McIlroy, 2017: 83). They need to be Deaf (with a capital 'D') and have a Deaf identity and they prefer to use sign language when communicating within the Deaf community. The distinction between 'deaf' and 'Deaf' is an important one. When a lower case 'd' is used, it refers to an audiological condition only. When the word is capitalised, it refers to Deafness as a cultural condition. The distinction can be explained as such: When one refers to cultural groups, e.g. Africans or Australians, in writing, the uppercase is used; the same thus applies to the Deaf culture (Reagan, 2008: 1660). That means that a person can be deaf without being Deaf (e.g. an older person who lost his hearing over time). Similarly, a hearing person can be a member of the Deaf community; these would typically be hearing children of Deaf people, who are commonly referred to as Codas or Children of Deaf Adults (Reagan, 2008: 170).

'The ability to communicate is a basic human ability, including those in the Deaf community' (Umalusi, 2018: 9). Currently, 'SASL is not an official language of South Africa but it is recognised and protected by various legislative and governmental policies' (Umalusi, 2018: 9). The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has recently approved SASL as Home Language Curriculum and Assessment for the Deaf to be used in schools and the first SASL National Senior Certificate exams were introduced in 2018 (Umalusi, 2018: 21).

In 2018, the university in this study expanded its educational interpreting service with the introduction of South African Sign Language (SASL) as part of its linguistic offerings to make education more accessible. This means that sign language interpreters interpret lectures from spoken word into SASL to ensure that the Deaf students have access to the lectures. In turn, they voice the SASL communication to the lecturer when a Deaf student asks a question or participates in group discussions. Currently, this service is only available in the Faculty of Education as it is the only faculty with Deaf students and lecturers. The university employs two full-time SASL interpreters to provide for the needs of Deaf students and lecturers who teach in the faculty.

1.3   Motivation for the proposed research

This study investigated the LLL journey of these two interpreters, specifically focusing on how their formal learning in general and the acquisition of SASL specifically have influenced how they acquire new literacies in adulthood, with the focus being on the workplace literacies needed in their interpreting careers. There is a gap in our collective knowledge about this topic, particularly in the South African context. Workplace literacies are the skills set made up of various capacities, abilities and expertise that a professional person needs to perform their duties. Literacy in the workplace includes all the 'socially recognised ways of generating, communicating, negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts with context of participation and discourses, or, as members of discourses' (Lankshear and Knoble, 2006: 64).

The LLL journey of any individual is influenced by factors that are unique to each person. These include aspects such as cultures, family life, religion and many more. A lot of research has been done about the needs of hearing-impaired students in higher education (Bell, Carl & Swart, 2016) and their attitudes to education (Rule & Modipa, 2012). Dean and Pollard (2001, 2011, 2013) analysed the role of the sign language interpreter and how they handle their job demands, while Cokely (2005) looked at the training of interpreters. Most of the research, however, focuses on the needs of the Deaf student and was done from that perspective. Stuart (2008) and Williamson (2012) have looked at differences between interpreters who grew up with Deaf parents as opposed to interpreters with hearing parents and how they are perceived by the Deaf community. Although there have been some studies that focused on sign language interpreting in higher education, as can be seen by the above examples, little is known about the lifelong journey of the sign language interpreter.

The findings of this study could uncover interesting areas on how the acquisition of literacies are approached and can produce some insight into the further professional development of sign language interpreters, considering their lifelong learning journeys and the effect they have had on their attitudes to literacy and literacy acquisition.

Adult literacy is a collective term that refers to the skills and knowledge that adults acquire in formalised, non-formalised and informal education (Neimeyer, Taylor & Cox, 2012: 477). Learning, 'is a personal process that is shaped by the context of adult life and the society in which one lives' Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007:1). As learning is a personal process, I want to learn more about the contexts that shaped the LLL journey of these participants to date. I reflect on how these processes have affected how the participants view their LLL journey.

Literacy is considered to be the basis on which lifelong learning is built and can be seen as a continuation of the expansion of a person's competencies (Hanemann 2015 in Addey 2018: 328). Kristensson Uggla (2002:215) states the following: 'Human life, reconfigured according to the new life narrative of lifelong learning, is constituted as a process of constant learning. And every person is expected to refigure his/her life in accordance with this narrative identity.'

According to a UNESCO definition of lifelong learning as presented in a report by Edgar Faure 'lifelong learning was viewed as a life-span endeavour, whether in the formal, non-formal or informal mode, to enrich the quality of life of the learner as an individual and of the general community as a whole' (Tuijnmann & Bostrom, 2002: 95).

This definition is important as it makes mention of the formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning. Another definition that resonates with the purposes of this study is the one by Thomas (2003: 4) which states that LLL involves all learning activity that a person undertakes in his or her life, all of which is geared towards improving the knowledge, skills and competencies as they pertain to their personal, civic, social and professional lives. This is specifically important for the SASL interpreters because working in the Deaf community and earning the recognition and respect of people in the said community comes with specific requirements.

By listening to the narratives of the participants I hope to understand their LLL journey through the lenses of literacy, adult learning, and lifelong learning as key concepts.

1.4   Problem statement

Lifelong learning is a continuous process that starts at birth and continues until death. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the lifelong learning of SASL interpreters. To form an understanding of their lifelong learning journeys, the study looked at each participant's relationship with SASL, their membership to the Deaf community and how it influenced their learning journeys to date. While the study explores their entire learning journey from a SASL-related point of view, the greater focus is on their current realities as full-time SASL educational interpreters at a South African university.

1.5   The aim of this study

This study aimed to investigate the LLL journeys of the two SASL interpreters at a South African university, with a specific focus on how their respective backgrounds have influenced how they go about acquiring new literacies in their professional lives.

Differentiation was made between interpreters based on the fact that one is the child of Deaf adults (CODA), while the other grew up in a house where both parents could hear. This provided insight into how their LLL journeys from childhood to professional South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters have influenced how they now acquire new literacies and how they make meaning of newly acquired knowledge.

1.6   Research question

What do the stories of the CODA and COHA SASL interpreters at this university reveal about their lifelong learning journeys and the influence that this had on how they acquire new literacies?

The following sub-questions will help me to answer the main research question:

- How did participants become part of the Deaf community?

- What role, if any, did disjunctures play in the lifelong learning journeys of participants?

- Which factors influenced the acquisition of workplace literacies of the participants?

- How did the acquisition of SASL influence the professional practice of participants?

1.7   Theoretical framework

To adequately conceptualise and understand the experience and challenges that these participants had to face, and continue to face, within an educational context, a single theoretical framework is too one-dimensional. I used Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory, Hermans's (2001) identity theory, and Jarvis's theory on learning models to help me analyse and make sense of the data.

Communities of practice

As this study will explore the various educational relationships (formal, informal and non-formal) of these sign language interpreters throughout their lifelong learning journeys, it will be important to look at the different communities of practice that they are associated with. Wenger refers to communities of practice as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relations with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1999: 25). These communities of practice are 'the sociopolitical organization of practice, of its contents and of

the artefacts engaged in practice, [and are] a crucial resource for participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1999: 21).

Identity theory

The dialogical self-theory is based on the supposition that each individual has many selves, referred to as I-positions. These I-positions are influenced by the context and the different people that an individual interacts with (Hermans, 2001: 249; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a: 348). Dialogical self-theory can be applied as a framework for this research as the exploration of the multiple selves of the sign language interpreters throughout their lifelong journey provides interesting insights into the development of their literacies, how these literacies evolved and changed as they interacted with people in different contexts and communities of practice. The framework provided by this theory helps to elucidate how the shifting identities of people can be used to understand and interpret the data collected through narratives in a meaningful way.

Jarvis's holistic learning theory

As this study is situated in an educational context, it made sense to include a theoretical framework that is centred around learning. The opinion of Jarvis (2009: 25) that learning should be approached holistically, as it involved the entire person—body, mind and context—is in harmony with the underlying assumptions and aims of this study. Learning, according to Jarvis (2009: 25), is closely linked with humanness. Because learning and being human go hand in hand, it makes sense that one starts by approaching and understanding the person holistically, before attempting to understand learning. The lifelong learning journeys of the interpreters cannot be viewed without taking their individuality and their educational contexts into account.

Learning occurs when a person realises that there is a gap in his or her knowledge; Jarvis (2009: 25) calls these knowledge gaps 'disjunctures'. The realisation that there is a knowledge gap then leads to learning, but for learning to occur, a person needs to first decide whether they want to accept and close the gap. Should they decide to close that knowledge gap, the learning process starts in earnest; as this personal transformation begins, it can also lead to the transformation of the learner's social context.

1.8   Research design and methodology

Through this narrative study, I hoped to form an understanding of the lifelong learning journeys of the two participants through the telling of their life stories. Each participant was allowed to tell me about their childhood years, their journey with the South African Sign Language (SASL), how they acquired it

and how that has influenced their way of learning and how they continue to learn in their professional careers.

The research is positioned within the interpretivist research paradigm. The premise of an interpretivist philosophy is that the social world can be interpreted subjectively and that to do so, the researcher tries to understand the world through the eyes of the people who inhabit it (Žukauskas et al., 2018: 123).

The interpretivist paradigm allowed the use of a framework that fosters and promotes empirical and descriptive studies while making use of narratives as a data source to gain insight and an understanding of the chosen phenomenon.

A narrative approach or inquiry, according to Johnson and Christensen (2014: 569), is defined as: 'A study of experience when experience is understood as lived and told stories. In collaboration between the researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with the social milieus.'

In my research, the gathering of qualitative data, using a narrative approach, allowed me to listen to the stories of my participants. I listened to their stories and their interpretations of their realities and paid attention to the layers of meaning and understanding of the phenomena that were revealed in their storytelling. When listening to their stories, I tried to identify the approaches to learning that played a part in their respective processes.

This gave me insight into the relativistic social world that they inhabit. It is important to note that while the stories that the participants tell are individualised and owned by them, their experiences were inevitably shaped by their culture, their families, and other institutions in their lives. After I identified some of the disjunctures for each participant, I endeavoured to analyse and interpret their learning experiences from the perspectives of the theoretical frames of learning and identity, drawing on communities of practice theory (Lave & Wenger), dialogical self-theory (Hermans) and Jarvis's learning theory. In this way, I tried to shed some light on how they went about addressing their knowledge and competency gaps.

As a researcher, I know that the retold stories only exist because I asked the participants to tell me about their lived experiences. They are thus created within a specific context and within interpersonal space that is occupied by the researcher and the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014: 570). I re-tell their stories (narratives) about their individual life experiences as they pertain to the research questions, discuss the meaning of these experiences and the influence (by their admission) that they had on their LLL journey and careers.

Interpretivist research methods usually produce qualitative, subjective data. By making use of a narrative approach and narrative analysis, I gained insight into the meaning-making processes and behaviour of the participants. A narrative approach further facilitated the process by helping me to foster a closer relationship with the participants, placing the participants and their narrations at the heart of the process. This, according to Boeije (2010: 6), allows for the collection of in-depth data which gives the researcher access to the worldviews and processes of meaning-making that is inherent to the participants.

Methods of data collection

Data were collected using loosely structured individual interviews. I collected empirical data to create the context to answer the research question. All interviews were arranged following the Covid-19 security protocols and were done via MS Teams. These interviews aimed to gain insight into the 'insider perspective', and to capture the words, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and experiences of the participants (Taylor 2005: 39).

As I was interested in knowing in greater detail the viewpoints and experiences that shaped the lives of the participants and how they acquired literacies, my focus was on the depth of data. By using an inductive method of data gathering, I tried to understand each participant's perceptions and guided them to articulate these perceptions in such a way that they would be easily understood by the reader of the study. I did this without forcing my viewpoints onto the interviewee (Firmin, 2008: 907).

I used the information that I had gathered to weave a story of their shared lived experiences, shining a light on the role of LLL in their professional lives and the literacies they acquired specifically in their current working environment.

Data analysis

I made use of thematic data analysis to understand how participants try to make meaning from their lived experiences. In qualitative research, data analysis is seen as the process of meaning-making (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009: 202).

To provide insight into their stories during the retelling or re-storying phase, I defined the various elements in their stories (raw data), identified themes and looked for meaningful sequencing (Suter, 2002: 369). While I was analysing their stories or narratives, I did not lose sight of the fact that the way stories were told was strategic, functional, and purposeful as they form part of the participants' real lives.

The thematic analysis helped me to identify and distinguish between overt and latent ideas and patterns that were found within the data. I looked at the inherent content of the stories, in other words, focused on the 'what' of what is being said during interviews. I examined the intention and the language of the stories, looking at how and why events are recounted, not only the content of the stories. As each participant's story is particular to their context and experience, the narrative analysis allowed me to safeguard their unique voices, rather than trying to find universal themes when retelling their stories (McAlpine, 2016: 33). I attempted to formulate a cohesive story of the lives and experiences as the participants told it, and how it shaped and guided their LLL journey.

Quality assurance

To ensure the quality of the qualitative research some considerations had to be kept in mind. The fact that I, as the researcher, could be seen as an insider with an emic approach (Johnson, 2002: 242), contributed to the establishment of trust between the researcher and the participants. The research was done transparently and all insider biases were made clear to the participants and stated in the discussion of the data. Through self-reflection and positioning myself within the study and the topic, I guarded against intersubjective disjunctions that could adversely impact the research. To achieve this, this study was guided by the quality criteria, as set out by Tracy (2010: 837-384). This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3.

1.9   Ethical considerations

Ethics pertain to what is considered to be right and wrong behaviour and play an important role in quality research. A distinction can be made between procedural, situational, relational and exit ethics (Tracy, 2010: 847).

For procedural ethics, I applied and adhered to the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee's guidelines (ethical clearance reference number: REC: CUR-2020-16714). Regarding situational ethics, I ascribed to the *do no harm principle* regarding my participants, the institution, and the communities within which the research was conducted. In terms of relational ethics, I was cognisant of how my attitudes and conduct could impact the research. For exit ethics, I presented my findings in such a way that I ensured it will not result in negative outcomes for participants.

The principles of privacy, accuracy, ownership, and accessibility guided my research actions, based on Kivunja and Kuyini's (2017: 28) discussions about ethical conduct. I elaborate on the processes and principles relating to the ethics of my study in Chapter 3.

1.10 Preview of chapters

The following five chapters will look at the following:

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter situates the research problem within the context of the relevant research. It provided insight into existing research and theories that pertain to this research project and identified gaps that needed to be addressed. It helped to identify the theories that were important to understanding the research problem, which in turn informed the theoretical framework that best suited the conceptualisation and analysis of the data that was collected during the study (Boote & Beile, 2005; Oliver, 2012).

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter aims to provide a synopsis of the philosophical assumptions, strategies, research design and sampling techniques that underpin this research study. This is a qualitative research study using a narrative approach. The study is underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm. This framework supported and guided the data collection methods that I chose, and also how the data were analysed. It also contributed to ensuring that quality and ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process.

Chapter 4: Narratives

In this chapter, I present each participant's narrative as authentically as possible. My retelling of their stories is centred around key aspects such as their identity, background, exposure to Deaf culture, initial exposure to interpreting, types of learning, communities of practice and lifelong learning.

Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion

This chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of the themes and patterns which emerged from the data. To develop a better understanding of their lived experiences and their life-worlds, I made use of a narrative approach. The prevailing themes and patterns within these narratives were identified using thematic analysis as a process, using the theoretical framework that was discussed in Chapter 2 as an analytical lens.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The final chapter provides an overview and discussion of the findings that came to the fore during the study. I respond to the research questions concerning the study's findings, the relevant literature as

discussed in Chapter 2 as well as my theoretical framework. The implications, insights and recommendations that arose from the research are also discussed while highlighting some of the limitations of the study and looking at some possible areas for future research.

1.11 Conclusion

This study focuses on the lifelong learning journeys of two SASL interpreters who work at a South African university. The background and context within which the study was conducted were outlined in this chapter. The motivation, problem statement, research question and theoretical framework were provided, followed by an overview of the research design and methodology. Finally, ethical considerations were discussed, before a short outline of the following chapters was provided for context.

In Chapter 2, the literature review will situate the research problem within the context of the relevant research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1   Introduction

This literature review aims to situate the research problem within the context of the relevant research. It provided insights into existing research and theories that pertain to this research project and identified gaps that needed to be addressed. In this way, it helped to identify the theories that were important to understanding the research problem, which informed the theoretical framework that will be best suited to the conceptualisation and analysis of the data that was collected during the study (Boote & Beile, 2005; Oliver, 2012).

Creswell (1994: 37) opines that a literature review must satisfy three criteria, namely, 'to introduce the results of similar studies, to link the current study to the ongoing dialogue in the literature, and to provide a structure within which the results of a study can be compared with other studies.' Creswell (2002: 86) provides a five-step system to achieve this: identifying key terms to use in your literature search; sourcing the literature; reading the literature to extract relevant information; organising the literature you have deemed relevant; and then writing the review.

The purpose of this study was to understand the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters working at a South African university. These journeys include their lived experiences as well as the factors that influenced them. To this end, several adjacent areas of research were included in the literature review.

This chapter conceptualised theoretical themes arising from the research question. I start by giving an overview of three disability models to frame the discussion of education involving people with disabilities. The next section looks at educational interpreting, how SASL forms part of it and affects access to higher education in terms of Deafness and Deaf culture. This section will focus on the concepts of deafness and Deaf culture and Deaf identity, before looking at SASL. Thirdly, the concept of literacy is discussed in terms of different definitions and how it pertains to lifelong learning. In the fourth section, the factors influencing literacy acquisition are touched on; these include types of learning such as formal, non-formal and informal learning and approaches to learning such as life-wide, life-deep, and lifelong learning. The fifth section explores relevant learning and identity theories as they pertain to the topic at hand, and includes a discussion of communities of practice, Jarvis's holistic understanding of learning and Hermans's dialogical self-theory. Finally, a summary of the studied literature is provided. The literature study clearly shows the complexities that should be considered when looking at the lifelong learning journeys of different people and how their differing

contexts and perceptions around literacy and the acquisition of literacy, shapes their learning journeys throughout their lives.

2.2   Disability models

Education for deaf persons was dominated by two disability models, namely: the medical model and the social model which form the bedrock for the 'educational discourses of exclusionary "special" education and inclusive education respectively' (McIlroy, 2008: 12). He suggests a third model, which approaches the construction of deaf identity from a different theoretical perspective, which he terms 'the embodied ontology/dialogue model' (McIlroy, 2008: 12). By using the post-modern perspective on the construction of identity, the dialogue model supports an inclusive educational framework. The dialogue model redefines and broadens the deaf person's identity to extend beyond the binary of 'either deaf or not Deaf', and rather embraces a narrative interpretation that is sensitive to the crossovers and tensions of deaf persons living between deaf and hearing worlds (McIlroy, 2008: 12).

2.2.1   Medical model

The medical model understands disability as an illness or condition that is internal to the 'patient', and that requires intervention by medical experts to cure or treat. From the medical perspective, deafness is viewed for the most part as an invisible disability and audiological and communicative use of hearing aids are viewed as socially accepted markers of deafness, but the use of SASL is not viewed as an accepted disability marker. The rationale here is that the use of hearing aids shows that the deaf person is trying to fit into society, while the use of SASL shows the opposite and is viewed as a 'deviant counter-culture (Widdell, 1993: 464). Corker (1996: 59) suggests that the discourse of the medical model can cause or exacerbate feelings of identity confusion among deaf persons.

During the 1970s, the medical model was focused on assimilating deaf individuals into mainstream life through the used of hearing aids and oral education. During this time, Sign Language was not viewed as a proper language, but merely as gestures (Ladd, 2003: 142; Lane, 1999: 43; Oliva, 2007: 219). This approach required deaf individuals to adapt to the ideology of normality (Branson & Miller, 2002: 217) which left them feeling 'alone in the mainstream, and also not a member of the Deaf community' (Oliva, 2007: 219). This meant that they did not have a secure identity in either cultural domain.

The medical model, according to Corker (1995: 15), sees the world in terms of binary opposites, 'normal versus abnormal' and 'us versus them'. Marschark (2002: 60) points out that these negative stereotypes contribute to a distorted and underdeveloped identity in deaf learners. The concept of deaf identity was diminished by the fact that the medical model saw deafness as a symptom that could

be treated and rectified; quite simply, it was seen as a condition to be denied and overcome (Branson & Miller, 2002: 170). By labelling deaf learners as disabled people, there is a denial of deaf persons as competent individuals. The subtext is that if you do not assimilate into mainstream society, you will forever be marginalised (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 4).

From the 1980s onwards, the international education trend was to integrate deaf learners into the mainstream, thereby weakening their sense of group identity (Wrigley, 1998: 55), and according to Branson and Miller (2002: 277), this prevented the development of Deaf culture and community. This trend had two main outcomes. Firstly, mainstreaming more often than not left the deaf learners feeling isolated and alienated. Secondly, deaf learners saw the social structures and attitudes within the mainstream system as oppressive; 'they missed the valuable sanctuary for Deaf culture and Deaf community' (Wrigley, 1998: 52 in that was prevalent in schools dedicated to the education of the deaf learner (McIlroy 2008: 22).

2.2.2   The social model

The social model was cultivated during the late 1960s to 1970 in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is in essence a 'human-rights-based discourse that challenges the inequalities and discrimination of the medical discourse' (Bourk, 2002 in McIlroy 2008: 23). It located disability, not in the individual but the structures, attitudes and practices of society. 'This shift in the social perception of disability was influenced by Goffman's classic work *Stigma* (1963) that focused on stigma as a central concept in the systematic exclusion and oppression of people with disabilities' (McIlroy 2008: 23). This model gave people with disabilities a chance to talk about their needs and their personal experiences of discrimination (Zola, 1994: 14). A key element within the social model thus is the distinction that is drawn between 'impairment', a physical condition, and 'disability', the socially constructed reality that is (often) oppressively imposed on people with the condition. This created barriers, restrictions and stigma for people with impairments.

Educating the public about the discriminatory attitudes that people with disabilities have to contend with, particularly in education and employment, allowed people and movements drawing on the social model to join forces and demand legislative protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 2000: 88). Regarding the Deaf community, the social model can thus be seen as a political lens through which the struggle for linguistic rights is better understood (Jankowski, 1997: 7). Their endeavours to have Sign Language recognised as a 'visually mediated language of the Deaf community' formed a cornerstone in the struggles of the Deaf community. The Deaf community's fight for the acknowledgement of their distinct language, namely Sign Language, naturally created the basis for their distinct cultural identity (Ladd 2003: 403).

The social model does not see the Deaf culture as a homogeneous entity but rather recognises the complex dynamics and diversity that can be found within the deaf community of South Africa (Naicker, 2001 in McIlroy, 2008: 26). It seeks to position itself in opposition to oppression while advocating for the 'transformation of social attitudes and structures' that are inherent to the medical model (Finkelstein, 2001 in McIlroy, 2008: 26). As a result of their focus on the struggle for human rights, the social model of disability is still the dominant theoretical foundation of disability studies (German, 2000: 252). The social model, according to Shakespeare (2003: 29), is viewed as a modernist, functional paradigm; however, as contemporary disability studies move towards 'celebrating marginal discourse' (Corker, 2000: 231), it is being 'challenged from a post-modernist, post-structural perspective' (Corker, 2000: 224).

McIlroy (2008: 27) believes that with this in mind, one must question the significance of the social model as a sound and sustainable framework from which to provide inclusive educational protocols in contemporary South African society. McIlroy (2008: 27) also agrees with Shakespeare and Watson (2002: 19) who highlight the fact that, while the social model draws attention to the role that society plays in disabling people with physical disabilities, it neglects the importance of the lived experience of impairment. The simple fact remains that people with disabilities are constantly forced to face their own inabilities, such as the inability to hear for example.

2.2.3   Embodied ontology model/dialogue model

The post-modern approach recognises that there are numerouos ways of knowing and meaning influenced disability studies by drawing into question the line that traditionally separated 'able' and 'disabled'. The post-modernist perspective that there is not only one correct way to understand the world, or thought, or how to communicate, is very important for the education of deaf children. This perspective requires communities, such as the Deaf community, to explore their identity as a fluid concept including multiple identities that cohabitate in a multicultural post-modern landscape (McIlroy, 2008: 28).

The embodied ontological approach goes beyond the social model's advocacy of human rights and aims to create a more inclusivist society in which people with disabilities are redefined. The disability theorist, Shakespeare (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002: 24), explains: 'There is no qualitative difference between disabled and non-disabled people because we are all impaired in some form, some more than others.' Unlike the medical model, an embodied ontology does not see a person's impairment as the core component of disability but rather sees impairment(s) as the inherent nature of humanity. This approach does not deny the fact that there are varying degrees of impairment; being hearing impaired and being Deaf, for example, are not the same. The presence of varying degrees of

impairments is part of the human condition of being embodied. According to Shakespeare and Watson (2002:24), the limitations that individuals encounter in specific contexts can range from negligible to profound but the point remains that everyone has their limitations which will most likely increase as they age. This approach is thus an inclusive approach.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of reality and relates to the state of being in which a person exists. It deals with the question of what exists, what is real and what constitutes reality; what it means to be and to exist (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 27). The central position of the embodied ontology model as social theory is that, 'instead of having two separate and distinct ontological statuses of being, namely "able" or "disabled", there is an alternative that involves a holistic integration of embodying ourselves within our ability and disability' (May, 1983: 105). This sentiment is echoed by Breivik (2005: 2002) who approaches identity from a 'hybridity' point of view, which is based on diversity and heterogeneity to belong, instead of the narrow view which focuses solely, for example, on ethnicity and/or on difference as either deaf or Deaf.

Deaf persons and the Deaf community have historically been disenfranchised and marginalised by the hearing community. Mercer (1996: 103) explains that this resulted in Deaf persons passively accepting and internalising their inferior and marginalised status and, with that, a sense of inadequacy. This in turn means that the desire of Deaf persons to be normal and ordinary takes precedence over developing their identity based their impairment (medical model), or 'defining themselves in terms of a political movement (social model)' aimed at recognition of Deaf rights (Shakespeare, 1996: 101).

For Deaf persons, disability is an inherent part of their identity and being deaf is a fundamental component of their identity (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002: 22). Recognition of their disability, stands central to the fluid construction of their deaf identity, but as Foster (2001: 118) explains, they are not only defined in terms of their disability (medical model), or terms of their fight for emancipation (social model) (McIlroy, 2008: 30). Ladd (2003: 254) believes that it is only when deaf persons accept themselves as deaf persons, that they can claim proudly and unapologetically 'I am Deaf'.

The dialogue model recognises that deaf individuals have a cultural history, typically of growing up in a hearing family, which influences the identity into which they were born or socialised, as well as the type of school they attend. The different contexts within which a Deaf person needs to live, work and socialise come with different, context-specific needs, which often require them to be able to switch between using only voice, to a combination of voice and signs, to SASL, depending on the communication needs and culture of the persons they interact with. Foster (2001: 118) explains that this ability to move between identities to adapt to various social contexts brings about a sense of self-empowerment and frees Deaf persons from the cultural constraints of conforming only to either the

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Deaf or the hearing culture. It allows them the freedom of opting for the confident but tolerant Deaf identity (McIlroy 2008: 32).

McIlroy (2008: 33) believes that the dialogue model, as an interpretive model, gives us insight into how deaf people experience the world. It shines a light on the difficulties faced by minority groups, such as deaf persons, who fall through the gaps between the social and medical models, but it also helps us to understand how deaf persons make sense of the 'disconnections and displacements' (Breivik, 2005: 203) in their lives.

This model is appropriate for this study because it provided insight into how deaf people, as part of a minority group, experience the world. It showed and explained how Deaf people can move between different identities depending on the context, as it allows them the freedom to choose and be proud of the deaf identity inside and outside the community. This, in turn, provided a glimpse into the world in which the SASL interpreters work, where it is important to recognise and respect the Deaf culture and history.

2.3   Educational interpreting for Deaf learners

2.3.1   South African context

Educational interpreting addresses various needs, which include enabling a multilingual teaching-and-learning environment, in an attempt to prevent language from becoming a learning barrier for students and assisting with depoliticising the language-in-education in South Africa (Verhoef & Du Plessis, 2011: 13). In the context of Deaf learners, educational interpreting means that SASL interpreters enable Deaf students to attend what would traditionally have been deemed mainstream facilities that would have been inaccessible for these students. This is done by providing SASL interpretations of the spoken lectures and 'voicing' questions and contributions from the Deaf students to the class.

South Africa is seeing an increase in the number of students with hearing loss that are being accepted to higher education institutions as a result of the country's inclusive educational policies (Bell, Carl & Swart, 2016: 1). Statistics show that the students with hearing loss still have a low level of participation in higher education and that research suggests that this is a direct result of the inadequate support that is provided to help these students (Bell et al., 2016: 1). To facilitate improved academic outcomes for students with hearing impairment, Bell et al. (2016: 1) argue that the onus is on universities to make the necessary arrangements to encourage students to voluntarily disclose their hearing impairment so that more targeted teaching and learning support can be put in place.

2.3.2   Deaf culture and deafness

Deaf culture can also be defined as *Deafhood*, which is not the same as 'deafness'. *Deafhood* encompasses the entire battle that Deaf people face to take up their rightful place in the Deaf community as well as the hearing community (Ladd, 2003: 3). Deaf individuals who identify as culturally Deaf do not consider themselves to be disabled and they value the use of sign language (McCartin, 2003: 103). They view sign language as central to their culture and community, but it also forms the bridge to the hearing community.

Individuals who are culturally Deaf usually are proud of their Deafness and do not want to be part of a hearing culture (Tucker, 1998: 7; Sparrow, 2005: 137). They often endeavour to marry other culturally Deaf members and often wish to have Deaf children, who will belong to the same culture (Tucker, 1998: 7; Lane, 2005: 298).

Culturally Deaf individuals believe that Deaf children should learn sign language because they see it as the natural language of the Deaf. Sign language, according to McCartin (2003: 15), 'is a visual-gestural language that Deaf individuals use to communicate with other members of the Deaf culture' or community, such as interpreters and educators.

Deaf people form a cultural group because the community shares many different cultural aspects. Lane (2005: 292) explains that the Deaf culture has a 'collective name, a feeling of community, a unique language, values, norms, social structures, and a history'. There is a universal sign that Deaf people use to refer to themselves, putting the index and middle fingers on the ear.

By identifying as culturally Deaf and recognising that others are also culturally Deaf, a feeling of community is established; a community that the Deaf recognise and are loyal to (Lane, 2005: 292). Their language, Sign Language, is a group of symbols and rules that provides a complex communications system when put together in a meaningful way (Andersen & Taylor, 2006: 59). As with any culture, language is an essential component of the Deaf culture, thus the learning of sign language is essential to gain access or membership to the Deaf culture.

Values are the abstract standards within a community that define what is viewed as ideal and morally correct (Andersen & Taylor, 2006: 64). The culture-specific values that are central to the Deaf culture revolve around competence in sign language, active participation in the Deaf community and open and accessible communication (Lane, 2005: 292). Stories and literature are an essential part of their values (Lindeman, 1997: 97-98) as they have their stories that are passed from generation to generation as adults tell these stories to Deaf children. These stories normally tell of successes and highlight Deaf pride and identity. However, the value most Deaf people hold dear is their ability to

advocate for other Deaf people and to positively impact other members within the Deaf cultural community (Lindeman, 1997: 96-101).

Norms are the cultural expectations of how one should behave in different situations, thereby establishing order within a cultural group (Andersen & Taylor, 2006: 62). The Deaf community has specific norms that determine how hand gestures are used to communicate when using sign language, and cultural rules that pertain to speech and lip movement (Lindeman, 1997: 96-101). These cultural norms bring about social order within the Deaf culture, which is supported by social structures such as sports and social clubs as well as political, literary, and religious organisations catering specifically for the Deaf (Lane, 2005: 293).

The history of the Deaf culture consists of the knowledge about how to function in the hearing world, drama, poetry, and stories. Linderman (2005: 293) points out that it is through the sharing of this history through stories, poetry, and dramas that the norms and values of the Deaf culture are transferred from one generation to the next. Many of the norms and values are transferred from Deaf adults to Deaf children through socialisation and residential schools for the Deaf where children encounter Deaf peers and learn sign language (Smith, 1996: 17; Lane, 1995: 302). When Deaf children are born to hearing parents, who do not have knowledge or membership to the Deaf culture, the responsibility for cultural socialisation falls on the Deaf adults and role models of the school.

The concept of 'the lifeworld' is useful for understanding Deaf culture and the Deaf community. The lifeworld is a phenomenological concept created by Alfred Schulz, which he defines as the social world that is pre-structured for the individual and taken for granted by the individual because it is given to the individual (Janowitz, 1970: 16). The lifeworld of culturally Deaf people, therefore, consists of interpretations, perceptions, norms, social order, and values of the Deaf culture that are imparted by other Deaf culture members through Sign Language (Van der Westhuizen, 2020: 25).

2.3.3   Integration into the Deaf culture

Membership in the Deaf culture relies on four aspects. These aspects, according to Smith (1996: 42), include audiological deafness (hearing loss); fluent use of sign language; participation in and identification with the Deaf culture; and adherence to and lobbying for the values of the Deaf culture. These avenues provide a Deaf child with the opportunity to learn the norms, values, history, beliefs, and knowledge base of the Deaf culture. Once they have internalised these norms, values and beliefs, they can identify with and adhere to them, and then start to lobby for the recognition of the Deaf culture (Van der Westhuizen, 2020: 25).

2.3.4   Development of a Deaf identity

A Deaf identity is a prerequisite for membership in the Deaf culture, and this goes hand in hand with participation in cultural activities of the community. As Crouch (1997: 18) explains, it is through participation in these activities that individuals learn about sign language and the history of Deaf culture from the other Deaf adults. This is how an individual learns what it means to be a member of this community, the life he or she can live as a Deaf individual and how a foundation of self-esteem is laid for a Deaf person in a hearing society. Traditionally this is information that a Deaf person cannot access through the hearing society.

The social meaning that individuals with a Deaf identity assign to Deafness allows them access to the Deaf culture, but this meaning differs from the meaning the hearing people have of Deafness. Berger and Luckman's (1976) theoretical framework (the construction of social reality) underscores the fact that the meaning that is ascribed to an object by a specific social group may not be understood in the same way by individuals in a different social group. This is even more true in situations where there is a lack of knowledge about the social group through which the meaning was assigned.

Since hearing people do not always have sufficient knowledge about the Deaf community, they can often misunderstand the meanings that are assigned to certain objects within that community. Hearing people are not necessarily aware of the cultural meaning that the Deaf culture has ascribed to Deafness. According to Glickman (1993: 54), this is the reason why Deaf individuals believe that, while hearing people can become part of the Deaf community, they can never be integrated into the Deaf culture.

2.3.5   South African Sign Language (SASL) and access to higher education

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) defines language as 'a system of symbols and grammatical signs that is used and shared by members of a community, and that language changes over time and differs according to geographic location' (DBE 2017 in Umalusi, 2018: 21).

Communication is a basic human ability, and this is no different for the Deaf community. 'South African Sign Language (SASL) is one of the visual-spatial native languages used by the Deaf community in South Africa' (Umalusi, 2018: 21). Sign Language differs from spoken language in the sense that instead of sound, it uses the medium of space to communicate in conjunction with hands, face, head, and upper body movements to create meaning (Umalusi, 2018: 21).

South Africa does not have a university that exclusively caters for the needs of hearing-impaired or D/deaf students like Gallaudet in the USA, for example. Not even all universities in South Africa make provisions to accommodate D/deaf students on their campuses. Currently, it is only the universities

of Cape Town (UCT), Free State (UFS), Stellenbosch (SU), Witwatersrand (WITS) and the University of South Africa (UNISA) who can accommodate Deaf learners. These universities all support the provision of SASL interpreting in their way. Some provide the services through their Disability Units, some as part of the Language Support Centres. There is a growing move toward cooperation and collaboration between these universities to find out what best practices are and how they can learn from each other to better develop their SASL programmes and support for their Deaf students.

2.4   Literacies and lifelong learning

This section looked at the concept of literacy, and more specifically adult literacies, and how it pertains to lifelong learning. While this study examined the lifelong learning journey of the participants in the study, a stronger focus will fall on the adult part of their journey. Their childhood education will be investigated as their pedagogical experiences will have shaped how they feel about learning and teaching as adults. It is, however, during the adult learning phase where individuals, or learners then, get the opportunity to take ownership of the process and determine their educational objectives. Therefore, when looking at the lifelong journeys of these individuals, it will be through the lens of adult literacy.

Literacy is embedded in education and means different things to different people. Each person's definition will depend on their current reality, their educational objectives, and the system they use to process new information and make meaning of events around them.

Traditional definitions of literacy follow a bottom-up approach, or deficit model, where the focus is on what an individual does not know. The focus is on elements that are lacking—the less you know, the lower you are on the literacy ladder. The deficit model does not acknowledge the legitimacy of individuals' definitions, applications, and objectives of literacy (Tett, 2013: 275).

Research by Barton (2007) as well as Street and Lefstein (2008) has, according to Tett (2013: 276), made it evident that the plural use of literacies, as opposed to the singular literacy, is more accurate. Their approach, known as New Literacy Studies, aims to move away from the deficit discourse and rather situate literacies within the contexts where people live and work, in their various communities of practice. This pluralistic approach allows us to recognise that various literacies are used in different contexts.

2.4.1   Adult literacy

Silvia Montoya (2018) provided the following definition of literacy at the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning Conference for UNESCO 2017:

> *Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO, 2004; 2017).*

Literacy, therefore, is a tool that helps us to make sense of the world. As Mezirow (2000:3) explains, our desire to make sense of and categorise our experience is an inherent part of the human condition. To maintain order in our lives, we learn from new experiences and integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. Mezirow (2000: 3) quotes Milan Kundera (1980) who suggests that if there were too much incontestable meaning in the world, we would succumb under its weight.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning (LLL) is the process that an individual embarks on to improve and acquire knowledge and competencies throughout their life cycle. This type of learning can occur in various settings and contexts and can be formal, informal, or non-formal (Jarvis 2009: 302). It requires a deliberate process of perpetual learning that extends throughout an individual's life and is aimed at catering for the 'needs of the individual and the relevant community' (Abukari, 2004: 7). LLL includes all activities that individuals partake in throughout their life to expand their knowledge and skills in any given field. It encompasses learning that takes place at all stages of the life cycle (from the womb to the tomb). It is life-wide, thus inherent to all life situations from home, school, community to the workplace.

The idea of lifelong learning rests upon 'integrating learning and living vertically (life-deep), over an individual's whole life from birth to death, as well as horizontally (life-wide), that is to say involving all aspects of a person's life—family, community, study, work and leisure. It is horizontal also in the sense of taking place within all learning systems—formal, non-formal and informal' (Ouane, 2009: 302). Lifelong learning allows individuals to lead fulfilling lives, lead to self-awareness and the understanding of their environment, as well as the consequences of their actions. LLL helps them to be responsible for themselves and others, and to have the capacity to perform with ease and self-confidence the roles and functions demanded in various contexts, to be able to live as a family member, a friend, a worker, an employee, an entrepreneur, a member of society, a citizen of a nation and ideally a world citizen (Ouane, 2009: 302).

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), continuing professional development (CPD) as a form of lifelong learning has four central characteristics. Firstly, it approaches learning from a systemic point of view, where learning is seen as part of a connected system that includes all forms of learning, namely formal, informal, and non-formal. Secondly, the

needs of the learner form the basis of all learning strategies, as lifelong learning makes provision for a diversity of learner needs, based on the supply and demand principle. Thirdly, there is a strong emphasis placed on recognising what it is that motivates individuals to learn, and therefore attention is given to self-paced and self-directed learning. Lastly, the lifelong learning approach to learning acknowledges that an individual's priorities and motivators may change throughout a lifetime, and that must be kept in mind (OECD, 2001: 3).

Lichtenberg and Goodyear (2012) made a distinction between formal, informal, and incidental learning. Neimeyer, Taylor and Cox (2012: 477) explains that formal learning takes place in a structured process, where the desired outcomes and ways in which it will be measured are communicated upfront. This process is normally monitored and overseen by facilitators who are responsible for the assessment of learning and provide feedback but also includes self-assessment as part of the learning experience. Formal learning is thus deliberate, focused and always results in the receiving of formal accreditation of some kind, such as a degree or a diploma.

Informal learning, according to Neimeyer et al. (2012: 477) is less structured. Learning is intentional and objectives are formalised and communicated ahead of time. There is no built-in assessment or supervision of the process. It is a self-directed process, driven by the student who has identified specific skills or material of applications that he or she needs to acquire or master. Other forms of informal learning include networking, coaching and mentorship. Schugurensky (2000: 4) divides informal learning into three categories, namely self-directed, incidental and socialisation. With specific reference to the socialisation aspect, (also called tacit learning), Schugurensky explains that it is the internalisation of values, attitudes, behaviours and skills that form part of daily life. He also points out that this form of learning is unintentional, and the learner is unaware that they have learned something.

Incidental learning is a by-product gained from another type of professional activity, often inadvertently. The purpose of the activity is not learning per se, therefore individuals who gain knowledge through this mode, often do not see themselves as students (Neimeyer et al., 2012: 477). Learning about a company's culture by working in a company is an example of incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001: 26).

There is a third type of learning, namely non-formal learning (Marsick & Watkins 2001: 25). As with formal and informal learning, the non-formal learner is recognised as the student but it does not happen within an accredited institution or organisation. It shares some characteristics with formal learning because it is structure and organised but has no credit-bearing value (Neimeyer et al., 2012: 478).

While lifelong learning is part and parcel of a process that involves the deliberate actions of formal and non-formal education systems, as well as informal learning, Henschke (2013: unnumbered) points out one cannot ignore or underestimate the value of learning that is acquired by simply living. This type of learning includes an intentional and unintentional element and leads to learners gaining a better understanding of the world at large and the people in it. Henschke (2013: unnumbered) further explains that this type of learning is driven by the six pillars of learning, namely learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to change, and learning for sustainable development.

According to Mezirow (2000: 3-4), it is crucial that adult learning accentuates the importance of contextual understanding, critical reflection on assumptions and to validate meaning, as the validation of what we believe largely depends on the context within which these beliefs are embedded. He furthers posits that we make meaning through different dimensions of awareness and understanding, and thus are more likely to understand our experiences when we know under which conditions a new idea is true or justified.

Meaning-making and change are part of learning and are always influenced by the context within which learning takes place. Gadamer (1989 in McCormick 2014: A52) refers to Husserl's concept of 'lifeworld', stating that all human experience and meaning-making are based on an individual's 'lifeworld', which encompasses theoretical and scientific knowledge. Gadamer further opines that all learning boils down to the push and pull of ideas and concepts between the intersecting regions of meaning. He believes that the learning process is driven by hermeneutics, the process of trying to make meaning of the world in a different context. This 'hermeneutic conversation' is a process of analysis that helps us to understand that there are different views to consider, necessitating the learning of 'new' information and sometimes the unlearning of the old (McCormick 2014: A-54).

Literacy is considered to be the basis on which lifelong learning is built and is a continuation of the expansion of a person's competencies (Hanemann 2015 in Addey 2018: 328). The concept of lifelong learning thus refers to life-encompassing learning and includes learning that affects and includes everyone (Kristensson Uggla, 2002: 215). 'Human life, reconfigured according to the new life narrative of lifelong learning, is constituted as a process of constant learning. And every person is expected to refigure his/her life in accordance with this narrative identity' (Kristensson Uggla, 2002: 215).

Lifelong learning is usually discussed in terms of adult learning; however, the paradigm has shifted from merely learning or training to do something, and the focus is now on continuously training, retraining, and upskilling, which has become crucial for professional survival. Edwards, Ranson and Strian (2002: 525) highlight that while lifelong learning is concerned with the gaining of skills and

qualifications to adapt to the changing world around us, one should not lose focus of the fact that reflexivity forms an integral part of the process.

Lifelong learning as a process that builds on earlier educational experiences has become an undeniable part of professional people's lives. When looking at lifelong learning and therefore, adult learning, from an andragogical perspective, it becomes clear that greater success is achieved when learning styles are allowed to change and adapt as the learner and their needs change (Kail & Cavanaugh in Henschke 2013).

2.4.2   Workplace literacy

Workplace literacies are the skills set made up of various capacities, abilities, and expertise that a professional person needs to perform their duties. Literacy in the workplace includes all the '… socially recognised ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts with context of participation and discourses, or, as members of discourses' (Lankshear and Knoble, 2006: 64).

Contemporary views about literacy focus more on the essence of literacy than the isolated skills of reading and writing only. The modern approach to literacy recognises that the actual skills of reading and writing are inextricably linked with the knowledge, activities, objectives, social relationships, and cultural meanings within the workplace. This approach revolves around the assumption that literacy competence should not be viewed in terms of fixed levels but rather as associative concepts, shaped by the social and communicative practices of the different domains of the life world of individuals (Hamilton, 2000: 1).

Work literacy should be seen as part of social practice. To understand work literacy, you cannot only look at the actual work environment of learners; you also have to consider the larger social, cultural and historical milieu (Hull, 1995: 7). Workplace learning cannot be confined to the workplace itself. It is inherently a subjective process that affects individual workers and groups of workers. The learning process involves self-reflection about their knowledge, skills, and emotional commitment in the workplace, as well as expanding on existing knowledge and skills through new experiences. This process of self-reflection is influenced by each individual's life story, by their broader cultural community as well as the available institutional resources.

Workplace learning

The word literacy, according to Jackson (2004: 1) means different things to different people but in its most basic sense, it still refers to functional elements of reading and writing. Scholars, according to (Jackson 2004: 1), however, agree that the definition should be elaborated to provide for the

expanding range of media and knowledge domains that have become an intrinsic part of functioning and participating in contemporary working life. This approach, known as 'new literacies', involves 'an understanding of literacy which places it in its wider context of institutional purposes and power relationships' (Street, 1993 in Hamilton, 2000: 1). This highlights the myriad of specialised knowledge (e.g. media literacy, environmental literacy and SASL literacy) that shape identity and membership in social groups, including the workplace.

Effective literacy acquisition is only possible in situations where new skills are acquired in such a way that they are inextricably linked to understanding and action. Jackson (2004: 2) likens the workplace to a tapestry, where multiple literacies symbolise the multiple threads that create the woven whole. It takes all the different threads to make up the whole tapestry. A single piece of thread has little significance, it is only as part of the tapestry that it adds value. Similarly, a workplace needs various threads or literacies to function optimally, but viewed in isolation, removed from the workplace such literacies can lose their meaning and significance.

2.4.3 The workplace as a learning arena

Research by seminal authors like Billet (2004); Boud and Garrick (1999); Garrick (1998); and Rainbird, Fuller and Munro (2004) all draw attention to the fact that workplace learning as a concept is continuous. The distinction drawn between work and non-work learning is a recent development.

Traditionally work was merely seen as a necessity to maintain life, with learning being part of everyday working life. Simply by participating in established practice, which later became known as a specific working procedure, learning happened organically. This learning encompassed technical, social, and cultural education.

More recently, the focus has shifted to the workplace as a learning arena. Role players within the working life arena (managers and workers) are increasingly becoming aware of the significance of competencies and skills that are required and acquired in the workplace while realising that formal education and training does not always provide enough knowledge as skills to satisfy the everchanging landscape of the workplace arena (Salling Olesen, 2009: 115). Scope is the main distinguishing factor between skills and competencies. Competencies comprise a broader spectrum than skills. While competencies can include a set of skills with abilities and knowledge, skills will usually be specific to a task (The Peak Performance Center, 2021).

Workplace learning thus involves learning that takes place at the workplace, learning that is aimed at work, and learning that is informed and shaped by work. Salling Olesen (2009: 115) depicts these different levels and perspectives in the table below.

Table 2.1 Relations of learning to work (Salling Olesen, 2009: 115).

Work process: technology and knowledge; crafts; professions; business branches	Learning in a specific location—a workplace with a specific organisation	Each worker is an individual with a specific life history experience.
Work as a societally organised relation: division of labour and socio-economic structure	Learning for or from work in general, taking place in families, schools, etc.	Workforce as a population with a subjective and cultural potential (class, gender) for engaging in work in specific forms

Any workplace situation involves learning or learning potential, which relates to the factors indicated in the left-hand column. The workers' actual learning processes correlate to the individual and collective experience indicated in the right-hand column—each situation resulting in a specific grouping of factors involves all the dimensions (Salling Olesen, 2009: 116).

Working from home and working flexitime have become a part of the working reality, and therefore traditional workplaces now have to make room for hybrid and online workspaces as well. The advent of these new workplace amalgamations and permutation is different from the stereotypes that preceded it and allow for more agency, discretion, and improvement of the skills of individuals and groups (Salling Olesen, 2009: 116-117).

Traditionally workplace learning was defined in terms of its aim, namely, to learn or adapt to specific requirements of a work process by acquiring new skills and/or knowledge. This definition, however, neglected the subjective and creative elements of learning (Salling Olesen, 2009: 121). Modern learning discourse makes provision for more abstract elements to be included, such as individual and general process qualities which include creativity and innovation. When referring to the workplace, modern learning includes a broader range of terms such as organisations, tools, knowledge, and practices. This contemporary interest in workplace learning has given rise to new theoretical approaches to learning that focus on the interaction between the learner and the work environment. It highlights the significance of the social context within which learning takes place, emphasising the fact that learners are not only individuals but also form part of an organised social environment.

Workplace learning as subjective social practice

All work situations contain elements of subjective engagement, cognitive construction, and social interaction. Workplace learning, like all learning, is a subjective process that is characterised by intention, agency and by engaging with something outside oneself. Subjectivity refers to how individuals relate to the world as it is; therefore an individual's interpretation of reality. This interpretation reflects an individual's interaction with, and presence in, the world they inhabit.

'Human subjectivity is a product of socialisation, in which a specific version of cultural and social experience—our work society—is embodied in the individual, becoming a complex of conscious and unconscious preconditions for subjective agency and experience' (Salling Olesen, 2009: 123 and 126).

2.5 Toward a theoretical framework

This section explores the relevant learning and identity theories as they pertain to the lifelong learning journeys of two interpreters involved in this study. It includes a discussion of communities of practice, transformative and experiential learning as well disjunctures and identity theory.

Theories, according to Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006: vii), are generalised or abstracted sets of assumptions and assertions. Theories, in the humanities, are logical interpretations used to explain phenomena, whereas in the natural sciences theories are testable and are used to predict findings or outcomes (Hofstee, 2006: 92). Theory will be used as the lens through which I will codify and explore the experiences of my participants. I will reach conclusions based on the process of combining evidence, theory and analysis into a tapestry that tells their stories.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the study of the lifelong learning journey of these two interpreters is a complex and multidimensional topic. Literacies and LLL as constructs are the angles from which I looked at how adults learn. In addition to this, one must recognise that the context and culture within which the learning takes place is important; in this case, these are hearing individuals, working within a mainstream educational environment, but catering to the needs of Deaf learners, who have their distinct needs and challenges. The fact that the SASL interpreters work in an environment that is predominantly geared towards hearing students means that to best serve their clients, these interpreters' learning journeys include the acquisition of knowledge that allows them to advocate for their clients should it be necessary.

To make sense of how these two interpreters acquired (and continue to acquire) their knowledge and skill, I will look at the topic from three intersecting angles, namely Jarvis's holistic learning theory, dialogical self-theory and communities of practice theory.

2.5.1 Jarvis's holistic learning theory

As this study entails the exploration of the lifelong learning journeys of the two SASL interpreters working at a South African university, it makes sense to use a learning theory that can provide a theoretical framework for this lifelong learning context. Jarvis's holistic approach to learning is well matched to the intent and focus of this specific study.

Learning, according to Jarvis (2009: 25), is a process through which experiences are transformed into skills while attitudes are transformed into knowledge. He explains that when studying the concept of learning, it is important to understand that learning is part of human existence, and when exploring the learning process, one should view the person (learner) holistically. Jarvis (2009: 25) further contends that learning involves and affects people in their entirety, body, and mind, as they engage and experience their lifeworlds throughout their lifetime. Jarvis interprets humans as physical beings and sees the mind and/or self as the essence of the human being (Jarvis, 2005). According to Jarvis (2005: 30), the learning process allows the essence of the human to emerge but this process will not happen naturally. He explains that human beings need to have experiences and learn for their essence to emerge and evolve (Jarvis, 2009: 30). Jarvis states that learning always starts with a disjuncture or feeling of being disconnected and that these disjunctures are brought about by a specific question, or just by a general sense of 'unknowing' (Jarvis, 2009: 22).

Drawing on Kolb's (1984) learning model, Jarvis developed his model of learning, expanding on the existing models by including the social and interactive aspects of learning. In his 1987 book, *Adult learning in the social context,* Jarvis published his model depicting the learning cycle (Jarvis, 2009: 24).
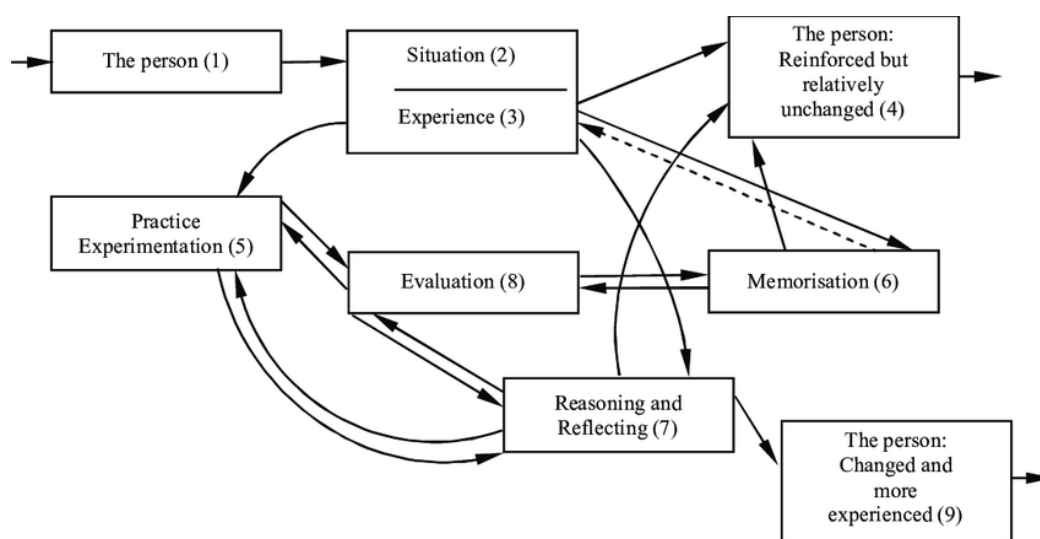
Figure 2.1 Jarvis's 1987 model of learning

Central to Jarvis's learning model is the fact 'that learning is a social process and that the mind and body are inextricable parts of this process' (Jarvis, 2009: 25). He believes that we experience the world through our bodies, which leads to learning. We use cognitive processes to make sense and give meaning to our experiences as we feel, taste, touch, smell and see the world around us. Jarvis, however, points out that this process of engaging our senses to learn does not happen in isolation but

instead forms part of a socially constructed system, and therefore the meaning that individuals ascribe to experience will almost always be reflective of the society that they were born into (Jarvis, 2009: 25). As adults, we tend to categorise and order events and experiences without giving much thought to it, but as Jarvis explains, because the world around us is ever-changing, it is through this process of categorisation that we can maintain order and make sense of our lifeworld (Jarvis, 2009: 25).

Children experience disjunctures more often than adults, as their frame of reference is smaller, and many experiences are still new and without meaning. Adults do, however, still come across unfamiliar sensations, which lead to a feeling of disjuncture or not-knowing, which in turn creates the learning opportunity. As Jarvis (2009: 26) explains, the adult assigns meaning to the unfamiliar sensation, which then is incorporated into the culture of the adult's lifeworld. This continuous process that happens throughout a person's lifespan is depicted in the diagram below.
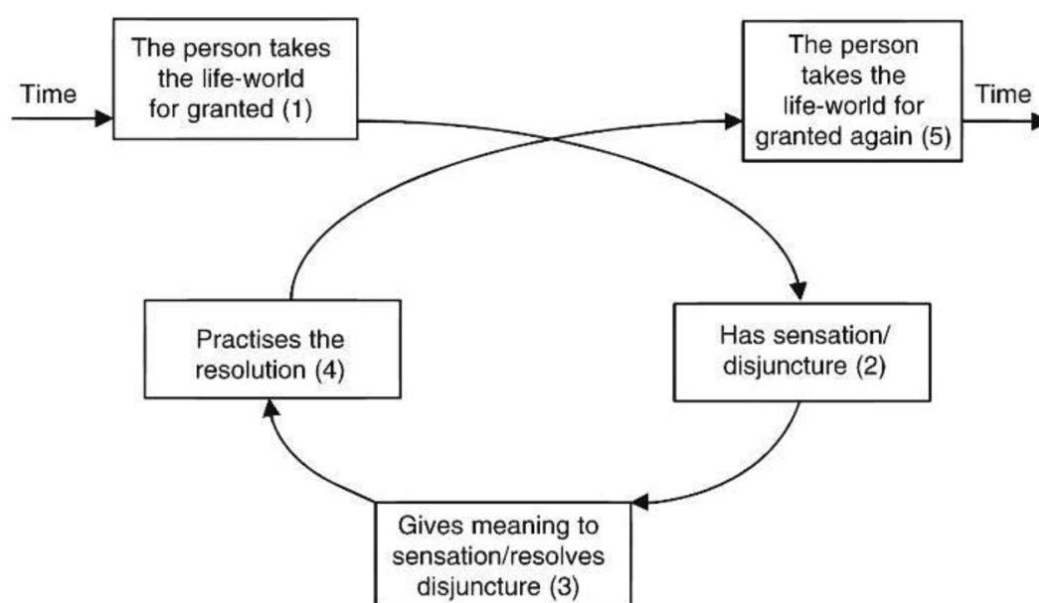
Figure 2.2 The transformation of sensation: learning from primary experiences

The figure shows the perpetual cycle of learning. At first, a person is content with the status quo of his lifeworld until a disjuncture occurs which needs to be resolved. This is resolved by attaching a socially acceptable meaning to the event or sensation that caused the disjuncture. Jarvis (2009: 26) emphasises that while we usually strive for conformity and validation from society to agree with the meaning we attach to the sensation, we can also learn to disagree with society, which in itself is part of learning and helps to develop our sense of individuality.

Once an agreeable solution to the disjuncture has been found, it is put into practice, repeated, and becomes part of that individual's memory bank. After this, the person usually returns to a state where

the (new) status quo is now taken for granted. Jarvis (2005: 27) does, however, point out that the process of learning changes us, and others in our world. This transformation in turn changes our social world, which means this acceptance of the status quo becomes a bit of a contentious issue since our experiences are never the same.

These sensations that lead to disjunctures occur throughout a person entire life but over time they become less noticeable to the learner. This means that future disjunctures are usually linked to meaning rather than sensation. Sensations tend to fade into the background as cultural meaning becomes more important when we try to make sense of words we do not know and ascribe new meanings to them. Jarvis (2009: 28-29) explains that, as the secondary process involving understanding and meaning-making becomes the focus, the primary event that causes the disjunctures becomes less important in the overall learning experience.

While Jarvis thought that a person could potentially be transformed through learning, he also acknowledged that sometimes people did not learn ('non-learning') from their experiences and just carried on unchanged. This non-learning is usually caused by one of three responses to a learning experience, namely presumption, non-consideration or rejection. **Presumption**, as explained by Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (2004: 61), is a common response to an everyday experience. It relies on the belief that the world will not change and thus there is the expectation of effectiveness if successful actions are repeated. The individuals thus rely on a presupposition without even considering the need to do things differently. **Non-consideration** is also a response to a common occurrence, but the effect of such occurrence varies from person to person, depending on their circumstances. People can choose not to respond to a learning experience for a plethora of reasons. They might therefore be aware of the potential learning experience but might not want to, or be able to, respond to it. While individuals might recognise, but not respond to, the learning experience, through incidental learning, they still learn more about themselves as a consequence of the process (Jarvis et al., 2004: 61). **Rejection** entails that people recognise a learning experience but reject the possibility that they could learn from it. They thus reject learning opportunities on principle. Rejection might, however, serve to confirm their established beliefs. During this process, one can learn a lot about oneself, which is a form of incidental self-learning (Jarvis et al., 2004: 61-62).

The diagram below shows how the whole person (mind, body, and soul) experiences the disjuncture in the lifeworld, the experience that causes the person to react in various ways (box 3-5). It is a dynamic interaction between the different responses, as none of these responses happens in isolation, because at each learning event (response), the opportunity for feedback and possible redirection exists. It is at this point that Jarvis suggests we learn from the experience itself, rather than the social context in which it occurs, or from the sensation and the meaning that is assigned to it (Jarvis, 2009:

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28-29). Learning changes people, which in turn changes the social situation in which they interact, which ultimately changes their lifeworld.
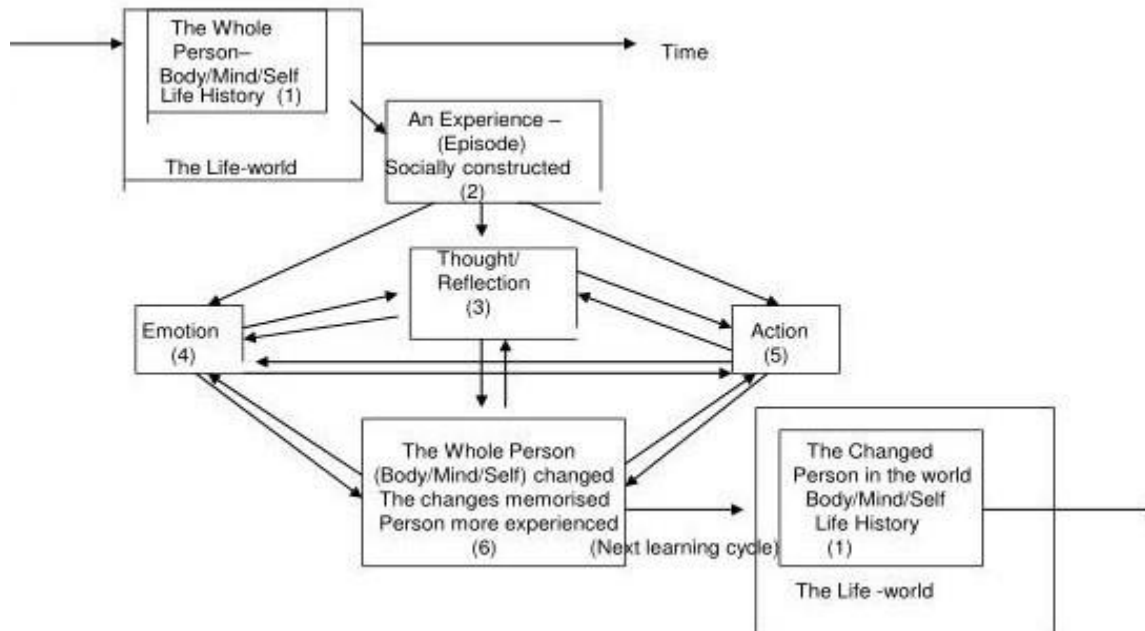
Figure 2.3 The transformation of the person through learning

The learning process

As learning occurs within a specific social context, the process of learning allows the person to internalise it and make it part of the culture of their lifeworld.

> *The culture is internalised and carried by individuals so that when people meet, the commonality of their cultures enables meaningful meetings to occur. In social interaction there is always an exchange of sub-cultural differences and individuals adjust in response to those differences—in other words learning takes place (Jarvis, 2012: 5).*

This learning often happens unnoticed because it is incidental in nature. This incidental quality is also present when it comes to sensations or the experience of sensation in adults. This is because their focus is on the cognitive part of the process as the disjunctures associated with most experiences have already been addressed and therefore taken for granted. Contrarily, children are more aware of sensations as they still need to come to terms with these primary learning experiences. This primary learning is usually non-reflective, but Jarvis (2012: 7) explains that once learning progresses to the cognitive realm, the disjunctures revolve around meaning or 'not knowing the meaning of the event

or of some aspect of the experience' (Jarvis, 2012: 7). While this type of disjuncture is commonplace in the classroom, it also occurs as an inherent part of our daily lives as we interact with one another and with our world. During the secondary phase, experiences are decoded through thought, action and/or emotions. The result of this decoding is that the disjuncture is either resolved or cannot be resolved. It is important to note that even if the disjuncture is not resolved, the process still changes the person, so even if it does not seem like it, learning did take place. It is crucial to remember that the human learning process is a result of the 'complex interaction between the individual and the context within which the learning experience is situated' (Jarvis, 2012: 10).

> *There is no difference in the human process in different forms of learning, so that we do not have formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning but we do have formal interaction, and so on. It is the nature of the interaction that provides for different learning experiences and it is these that affect emotion, motive to learn and so on (Jarvis, 2012: 10).*

2.5.2 Identity theory: dialogical self-theory

Dialogical self-theory is based on the supposition that each individual has many selves, referred to as I-positions. These I-positions are influenced by the context and the different people that an individual interacts with (Hermans, 2001: 249; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a: 348). Dialogical self-theory can be applied as a framework for this research as the multiple selves of the SASL interpreters throughout their lifelong journey provides interesting insights into the development of their literacies, how they evolved and changed as they interacted with people in different contexts and communities of practice. The framework provided by this theory illuminates how the shifting identities of people can be used to understand and interpret the data collected through narratives in a meaningful way.

Dialogical self-theory is the conceptualisation of the self in terms of a collection of multiple relatively independent I-positions. These I-positions can move between spatial positions, relative to changes in situation and time. As the *I* oscillates between different, sometimes even contradictory positions, it can creatively bestow each position with its voice to allow for dialogical relations between the different positions. These voices operate like actors in a story and are involved in all processes of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Each I-voice has its story to tell about unique experiences from its position. These combined voices from the various characters exchange information about their corresponding *Me's,* which leads to the creation of a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans, 2001: 248).

Dialogical self-theory suggests that there is a constant dialogue between an individual's various I-positions and others ('the other' is considered to be another 'I'), which leads to the creation of multiple

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selves. Through dialogue, an individual is constantly negotiating and re-negotiating their various roles, selves, and positions. These multiple selves are internal, for example, I- as-spouse, I-as-professional, I-as-friend, etc. but also have an external dimension, for example, my spouse, my colleagues, and my friends. There is an ongoing tension and constant change and adaption in position due to the internal interaction and dialogue between the external and internal selves (Bertau & Gonçalves, 2007; Hermans, 2001, 2003, 2013; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a).

While the different I-positions normally are the result of the different social roles an individual plays in life, emotions can also create temporary I-positions. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010a: 260) explain that emotions and the self are interconnected and influence each other, thus emotions can have an influence on the self, but the self can also have an influence on emotions. Different I-positions can evoke different emotions and vice versa.

People in the environment can become an external I-position if they hold relevance for one or more of an individual's internal positions. For example, to a Deaf student who is struggling to keep up with the workload in a mainstream university, a SASL interpreter becomes an external I-position, because they see the SASL interpreter as a partner in their learning journey: 'my SASL interpreter'. Internal positions come into being due to their relevance and interaction with one or more external positions. For example, the SASL interpreter feels like part of the student's academic support network, because they interpret the spoken classes for the student, making the input accessible for them. These positions can come into conflict with one another, for example, if the I-position of I-as-professional-interpreter conflicts with the I-as-ally-of-Deaf-individual. You need to provide a professional service but you also want to provide additional support when you see the Deaf person struggling outside the Deaf community (Bertau & Gonçalves, 2007; Hermans, 2001, 2003, 2013; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a). The importance or dominance of certain I-positions depends on how sensitive the specific identity is to external contextual influences and the internal struggle for dominance of some I-positions over others (Batory, 2010: 47).

Dialogical self-theory also showcases interdependence between motivation and identity. Batory (2010: 47) explains that identity is moulded by motivational influences and that there are six motivational forces at play that influence identity construction. These identity motives are self-esteem, belonging, continuity, distinctiveness, efficacy and meaning.

> *Self-esteem is conceived as a motivation to preserve and strengthen a positive perception of one's self. Efficacy refers to the searching for feelings of competence and control. Continuity relates to the need to preserve subjective sense of continuity across time and situation (however this continuity does not exclude change).*

> *Distinctiveness refers to searching for a sense of differentiation from others, on the individual and social level. Belonging concerns the motivation to maintain and enhance feelings of closeness or acceptance by other people. Meaning is responsible for striving for the purpose in one's life (Batory, 2010, pp. 47-48).*

Culture forms part of the self and cannot be viewed in isolation. The dialogical self is made up by an everchanging interaction of individual and collective voices that are representative of the social groups, the shared world views, and other shared perspectives (Batory, 2010: 46). A dynamic narratively structured self comes into being as a result of the interaction between these multiple voices when they communicate, question, position, challenge, agree, disagree and reposition themselves through dialogue and stories (Hermans, 2001, 2003, 2013; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a). For example, a SASL interpreter's identity might be influenced by their membership of various collectives, e.g. the community of SASL interpreters, the Deaf student community, and the university community.

Hermans (2013: 86) further expands this theory through the notion of meta-positions. He explains that meta-positions allow the self to distinguish itself from the other position of the self and reflect on them, establishing a dialogue between them and thus learning about itself.

> *… an overarching view that allows one to consider different positions simultaneously, including their relevant linkages … they permit and facilitate the organization of the self beyond the spur of the moment and allow a more encompassing view on self and world. (Hermans, 2013: 86)*

Meta-positions enable the creation of an alliance between divergent I-positions, aiding the acceptance of an inherently complex and multifaceted self. In the case of the SASL interpreters, meta-positions might enable the interpreters to come to terms with the various roles they play. For the interpreters, as the child of deaf parents (Coda) and a COHA respectively, these divergent personalities and external positions will be very different but will have very real implications for the I-position.

2.5.3   Communities of practice

When exploring the various educational interactions (formal, informal, and non-formal) of these sign language interpreters throughout their lifelong learning journeys, it was important to look at the different communities of practice that they belong to.

Communities of practice (COP) is a concept that originated in the 1980s (Wenger, 2010b: 187) and was developed into a theory by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), who came from a background of social anthropology and teaching as well as organisational development. Lave and Wenger's theory

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was a departure from looking at learning from the classic cognitive position where an individual's mind internalised and alters structure to rather viewing learning as a participatory, social act (Hanks, 1991 in Lave & Wenger, 1991: 14).

Wenger defines a COP as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relations with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1999: 25); these COPs are 'the sociopolitical organization of practice, of its contents and of the artefacts engaged in practice, [and are] a crucial resource for participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1999: 21).

Participating in these communities entails discussion around a specific practice, in this case, educational interpreting for Deaf students at a South African university; discussion within the practice, for example, exchanging the information necessary to ensure the continued success and improvement of the practice. Lave and Wenger (1999: 30) explain that these types of discussions aim to engage, focus, and shift attention and support to the communal forms for memory and reflection. From these reflections, the implications for learning and teaching through Sign Language interpreting can be explored.

In the university setting, for example, the interpreters, lecturers and the students are active participants who together establish, endorse and experience all kinds of things, among which are the 'purposes, values, expectations, knowledge and ways of knowing, rules of discourse, roles and relationships, resources, artefacts and the physical arrangements and boundaries of the setting' (Hermann-Shores, 2017: 364).

2.5.3.1 Characteristics of COP theory

COPs are characterised by emergent structures and horizontal power relations. They usually come into being when members are part of a joint enterprise or at least share an understanding of a project, where there is a mutual engagement or a shared practice between community members and where there is a development of a shared repertoire, or mutually understandable terminologies and tools (Wenger, 2000: 229). Wenger-Trayner (2015: 4) explains that 'the collective knowledge of an organisation is contained in a constellation or collection of communities of practice, each community taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organisation needs'. COP participants are often diverse, the boundaries of the COPs are fluid, which can lead to the conceptualisation of the constellation of COP. Due to this diversity, COPs are not always harmonious, and indeed can and do experience some internal conflict. (Wenger, 1998: 96).

A COP is not a utopian community where everyone necessarily agrees on anything but as Wenger (2010b: 77) points out, the tensions and the conflict it brings usually offer moments of significant learning for members provided that there is mutual recognition of the contribution made by all

members. This internal conflict, as opposed to passive conformity, is usually indicative of a deeper commitment to the COP. This internal conflict means that members with opposing views must find a way to co-exist. The process of dealing with conflict often results in improvements and innovation in terms of their shared practices.

Positive relationships within a COP are just as important; too much conflict may result in a loss of trust and fellowship. Gobbi (2010: 150) sees COPs as a social contract that is based on values such as loyalty, kinship, duty and concern. This is in juxtaposition to professional societies that are rules-based. Gobbi argues that COPs provide friendship and support, while professional societies value the upholding of norms**.**

2.5.3.2 Key concepts in COP theory

During the analysis of my data and findings, I focused on the following key concepts of COPs to guide the process: legitimate peripheral participation and the regime of competence.

Legitimate peripheral participation

Legitimate peripheral participation is seen as one of the basic tenets of the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 67) and thus forms part of Wenger's (1998) COP theory as well. As newcomers gain access to a COP to learn, they usually participate at the periphery of the practice where there are fewer risks. The legitimacy of this position does, however, provide them with the opportunity to gravitate towards the centre and become a competent member at the core of the COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 109). A prerequisite for peripheral participation is engagement from the members which includes a sense of responsibility for the COP enterprise and the using and updating of the COP repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 100-101).

While 'learning by doing' is an essential element in situational learning, human interaction is essential in the way in which the constant negotiation of new meaning happens when people learn through purposeful, dilemma-driven activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 33; 64).

Once legitimate peripheral participation has been established, the possibility of full participation becomes available (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 36). The shift from peripheral to full participation within a COP is indicative of constant movement; the practice itself is in motion and never static (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 116).

The regime of competence

For a social grouping to be considered a COP, a regime of competence is assumed. This is made up of three interrelated dimensions, namely, a joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared

repertoire. The competence within a COP is determined by the strength and interaction of these dimensions (Wenger, 1998: 138; 152). These closely related learning dimensions are not static, and changes in one will often disrupt the other. For example, if a new member in the COP introduces a new interest, the dimension of mutual engagement is affected, which in turn can require some renegotiation of the joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998: 152-153). A COP is enhanced through ardent interaction between participants, a strong focus on a joint enterprise, and the development of a shared local repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 77-83).

- **The joint enterprise**

  The joint enterprise refers to the undertaking that the participants choose to pursue, the shared focus of the COP. It is established through a collaborative process that takes shape as a participant pursues this shared goal. For example, in the COP of SASL interpreters, the joint enterprise is about more than educational interpreting; it is about creating a working environment that allows for personal growth and learning as well (Wenger, 1998: 78). Mutual accountability, which is how participants make sense of and use concrete aspects such as rules and procedures, is an essential element of a joint enterprise. More abstract aspects such as sensitivity and perception are also to be considered if the joint enterprise is to succeed. Ultimately, mutual accountability is a negotiation between members of the joint enterprise to determine what the best way is to do things, driven by wanting to complete it successfully, rather than merely following rules (Wenger, 1998: 77-78).

- **Mutual engagement**

  Mutual engagement represents the second dimension of the regime of competence and expands on the recognition of the joint enterprises as it pertains to the job, the leadership, and resources. It refers to a practice that is based on relationships of trust and the continuous negotiation of meaning. Members have to trust each other on a personal level but also trust in each other's 'ability to contribute to the enterprise of the community' to ensure that they can address real problems as a group and 'speak truthfully' (Wenger, 2000: 230)

  Mutual engagement thus involves a process of perpetual refining of processes between experience and competence. Due to this two-way flow of information and experience, COPs not only create an atmosphere for learning but also a context in which new insights can be converted into knowledge (Wenger, 1998: 214).

- **The shared repertoire**

  Shared repertoire constitutes the third dimension of the regime of competence and involves the resources and ways in which meaning-making takes place within the joint enterprise. This includes a common language, shared routines and ways of doing things, as well as the stories, gestures and concepts that are developed within the COP. A COP's history is made up of a combination of membership participation and developments over its lifetime. These two elements exist separately from each other but interact with each other, for example, written records and practice. As Wenger (1998: 214) explains, a history of mutual engagement will result in the development of a shared repertoire, which is in a state of constant flux as the COP evolves and changes.

2.6 Conclusion

This study explores the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language interpreters at a South African university, including their lived experience and the factors that influenced it. In this chapter, I contextualised the study by providing a review of the available literature as it pertains to the topic from both a South African and an international perspective.

The frame for the discussion of education involving people with disabilities, the theoretical themes that were used include disability models within education, educational interpreting and how SASL forms part of and affects access to higher education in terms of Deafness and Deaf Culture. This was followed by a discussion of the concepts of deafness, Deaf culture and Deaf identity before looking at SASL. I then looked at the concepts of literacies and how they pertain to lifelong learning, the factors influencing literacy acquisition, types of learning and the approaches of learning.

To further contextualise these themes, I discussed the learning theories that I felt would help me to make sense of the lifelong learning journeys of the participants and assist me with the analysis of data and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. For that purpose, I looked at Wenger's theory of communities of practice, Jarvis holistic learning and Herman's dialogical self-theory.

From the review of the literature, it is clear that many factors and complexities must be considered when exploring the lifelong learning journeys of different people. It is important to take their perception about literacy and literacy acquisition into account when trying to determine what shaped their learning journeys to date.

This holistic, integrated theoretical framework which draws upon the themes as outlined above, will provide me with the lens through which I can understand and interpret the data I collect.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of a research methodology is to provide an explanation and rationale for how the research was done, which methods were used and why those specific methods were used (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi, 2013). The particular research methods that are used during the research are as important as the assumption that underpins the methods, as it ultimately affects the suitability of the research study. For me as a researcher, a clear and systematic methodology served to guide the research process to ensure that suitable research methods were used that support the aims and underlying assumptions of the study.

This chapter provides a synopsis of the philosophical assumptions, strategies, research design and sampling techniques that underpin this research study. This is a qualitative research study using a narrative approach. The study is underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm. This framework supported and guided the data collection methods that I chose, and also how the data were analysed. It also contributed to ensuring that quality and ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process.

3.2   Research paradigm

I chose to position my research within the interpretivist research paradigm. The premise of an interpretivist philosophy is that the social world can be interpreted subjectively and that to do so, the researcher tries to understand the world through the eyes of the people who inhabit it (Žukauskas et al., 2018: 123).

The interpretivist paradigm allowed me to use a framework that fostered and promoted empirical and descriptive studies while making use of narratives as a data source to gain insight and understanding of the chosen phenomenon.

Ontology considers the researcher's inherent view of reality and what it means to exist (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 27). Interpretivism approaches ontology from the relativist perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110), which holds that all reality is subjective, that it is different for everyone and that there are therefore multiple realities. The goal of interpretive research is to better understand social life. Interpretivism is premised on a nominalist ontology where social reality is considered, to a large extent, to be exactly what people perceive it to be. In other words, social reality is formed by people experiencing things and then assigning meaning to them. This by nature is an ongoing process that is

shaped by the communication and negotiation between people who share experiences and interact with each other (Neuman, 2014: 104).

My ontological assumption is that the linguistic realities of the participants were shaped by their lived realities. All knowledge is socially constructed, therefore by listening to their stories, I hoped to gain insight into how they interpret their realities (Geertz in Denzin 2008: 315). Language, in this case, SASL, forms an integral part of their LLL journey and the way that they were initially exposed to it, how they acquired it, and the purpose for which they use it. I assume that a mother tongue speaker of SASL would necessarily have a very different relationship to the language than that of a non-mother tongue speaker.

Epistemology looks at the concept of knowledge and the nature thereof. Epistemologically, the knowledge I tried to acquire is embedded in the lived experiences of the participants. I worked in a subjectivist epistemology, which means that knowledge is co-created by the researcher and the participants because we cannot detach ourselves from what we have come to know (Given, 2008: 117). I assumed that my participants' status as CODA or COHA has had a pronounced influence on their educational trajectories and LLL journeys to date.

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies values. It pertains to the assumptions that an individual holds about what is legitimate and worthwhile knowledge and what comprises the researcher's worldview, including their attitudes and values (Piantanica & Garman, 2010: 247). In my research, participants shared their stories and realities. As a researcher, the benefit was that I gained insight into their realities, attitudes and values, and lived experiences, shining a light on their LLL journey with SASL and how it has influenced their relationship with learning and learning theories. Through reflection, participants discovered inherent knowledge and truths about themselves, which gave them insight into their journeys with SASL and LLL. The academic community and the Deaf community might also find it useful, and it might open new avenues for research into the learning and teaching of SASL interpreters in an educational setting.

In my research, the gathering of qualitative data, using a narrative approach, allowed me to listen to the stories of my participants. I listened to their stories and their interpretations of their realities. I paid attention to the layers of meaning and understanding of the phenomena that were revealed in their storytelling and identified the approaches to learning that played a part in the respective processes. I also identified the disjunctures or disruptions that served as the catalysts for the learning experiences within their respective learning journeys.

This gave me insight into the relativistic social world that they inhabit. While the stories that the participants told were individualised and owned by them, their experiences were inevitably shaped

by their culture, their families, and other institutions in their lives. After I identified some of the disjunctures for each participant, I analysed and interpreted their learning experiences from the perspectives of the theoretical frames of learning and identity drawing on communities of practice theory (Lave & Wenger), dialogical self-theory (Hermans) and Jarvis's learning theory. This shed some light on how they went about addressing their knowledge and competency gaps.

As a researcher, I know that the retold stories only exist because I asked the participants to tell me about their lived experiences. They were thus created within a specific context and within interpersonal space that is occupied by the researcher and the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014: 570). I retold their stories (narratives) about their individual life experiences as it pertains to the research question, discussed the meaning of these experiences and the influence (by their admission) it had on their LLL journey and careers. Given the collaborative and dialogical nature of the research process, I, recognise that the narratives in this study are co-constructions.

3.3   Style

This study was approached from a qualitative style perspective. Research can be done in a qualitative or quantitative style, or some combination as in a 'mixed-methods' approach. Qualitative research focuses on words, meanings, and the interpretation thereof using analytical tools such as the thematic analysis of the data. Quantitative research, on the other hand, focuses on numbers and measurements that are analysed through statistical methods (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

3.3.1.1   Qualitative data and how to analyse it

Qualitative research allows us to gain insight into how people think, feel, experience, interpret and interact with themselves and others. Qualitative research is premised on the belief that people play an active role in the construction of their social reality using meaning-making and interpretation. The research methods used should strive to identify these processes (Boeije, 2010: 6). Qualitative research provides the researcher with complex and rich data, providing details about the lived experiences of the participants (Hatch, 2002: 9). According to Avramidis and Smith (1999: 30), disability research, when approached from a qualitative point of view, can provide more detailed insight into the distinctive experience of students with disabilities than would be gained through quantitative research. The same is true for my research as I was interested in learning more about the lived experience of the SASL interpreters who work with students with disabilities and how their life experiences have influenced how they fit in and work within the Deaf community.

A distinction must be drawn between the style and the paradigm used in the research, in other words, qualitative research and interpretive research should not be confused with one another or seen as the

same thing. A paradigm, in this case, the interpretivist paradigm, is the philosophy that guides the research. This philosophy comprises specific assumptions and beliefs about ontology, epistemology and axiology, as discussed under the previous heading. The research style, in this case, qualitative research, refers to a particular methodology and style of research that can be applied in various paradigms, not only the interpretivist paradigm. In particular, it refers to the kind of data used in the study and how it was analysed.

By approaching research from a qualitative style perspective within the interpretivist framework, I attempted to create an approach and philosophy that is coherent and compatible with the research that focused on gaining insight into the human experiences, perceptions and worldviews of participants as shaped by their lifelong learning journeys.

In qualitative research, the researcher is central to the process. The researcher's worldview forms part of who he or she is; it is, therefore, impossible for the researcher to be a completely objective, impartial participant. It is important that the researcher is aware of this, and acknowledges his/her subjectivity, worldview, assumptions, beliefs, and preconceptions to safeguard the integrity of the research. Brantlinger et al. (2005: 201) suggest that it is due to this central position that the researcher holds in the data collection process, that reflexivity forms such an integral part of the research process.

To this end, I include a summary of my positionality as a way of locating myself concerning the study. I am a qualified educational interpreter, based at Stellenbosch University. I am a white female with no physical or mental disabilities. I have colleagues who work as Sign Language interpreters and while I do know some Deaf people, I do not understand SASL. I have attended an introductory course for SASLI for non-Deaf people, but that was too basic to make a difference. The fact that I also do not socialise with Deaf people means that I do not get the chance to practise and expand my SASL vocabulary. The fact that I fulfil the role of insider and at other times outsider in this study, provides me with both emic and etic perspectives. An emic perspective 'aims to understand humans from an insider point-of-view, while an etic perspective takes an objective outsider's point-of-view' (Definition of EMIC, 2021; Definition of ETIC, 2021). I am an insider in the sense that we all share Afrikaans as a spoken language, and that like the participants, I am also an educational interpreter at a South African University. From the etic perspective, unlike my participants, I do not understand SASL, and I do not have any standing in the Deaf community and therefore cannot participate in the culture that is being studied.

3.4   Narrative approach

Making sense of our experiences by categorising them is an inherent part of being human, Mezirow (2000: 3) believes. In this way, we can integrate it with our existing knowledge and thus maintain order in our lives. As humans, we often make sense of the world through stories.

Researchers from various disciplines are 'turning to narrative as the organizing principle for human action' (Riessman, 1993: 1). Cronon (1992: 1368-1269) sees narratives as the fundamental way in which humans categorise their experience as individuals, as communities and as societies. He refers to this process of meaning-making as 'the storied reality of human experience'.

The narrative inquiry should be viewed as more of a methodology than a method, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 189), as they view it as a 'way of composing a life, of living'. They believe that instead of focusing on the telling or retelling of stories to gain insight into participants' lives, the focus should be on the relationship between the researcher and the participant. It is within these relationships where understanding is brokered and where the researcher and participants become co-researchers, and where co-composing of their stories becomes possible. This means that the relationship between the researchers and the participants which stands central in the process of storytelling is now recognised as an essential part of the narrative process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 63).

A narrative approach requires us to 'think narratively' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 21). To better explain this concept, Clandinin and Connelly (2006: 479) drew on Dewey's theory of experience and his ideas about situation, continuity and interaction to focus the attention on three terms that are central to the narrative approach. These terms are *temporarily* (focusing on the past, present and future), *sociality* (focusing on the interaction between the personal and social), and *place* (which focuses on the place(s) where stories of experiences are lived and recounted). These three terms emphasise the fact that 'stories are not just about experience but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living telling and retelling, and reliving of our stories' (Downey & Clandinin, 2010: 378).

The narratives of my participants formed part of the research process and constituted the main source of data. Throughout the process of listening, recording, and reading the narratives, I was cognisant of my narratives and interpretations that played a role in the way in which I gave meaning to what I was reading, hearing and sharing. Even during the chronicling phase, where I recorded their experience, a new narrative was created through my collaboration with the participants. As a researcher, I was aware of the great responsibility that resulted from this shared experience. It meant that I had to make sure that my construction of their narratives fairly captured their interpretations.

As the epistemological position of interpretivism holds that there are multiple truths, the narratives that I present cannot be viewed as a reflection in any objective sense as they are unavoidably and necessarily co-constructed. It is through the process of reflexivity that I am aware *that* these narratives are a co-construction, *how* they are con-constructed, and the implications thereof for the study and its findings.

3.5   Sampling

The university in question only employs two full-time, permanent SASL interpreters. The target group was thus selected using purposive sampling, as I am bound by this factor. The sample correlates directly with the research objectives of determining how each participant's worldview has been shaped by their upbringing and how that, in turn, influences their lifelong learning journey.

3.5.1   Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, also known as criterion sampling, requires the researcher to search for cases of individuals who meet a specific criterion or set of criteria (Palys, 2008: 697).

To ensure that the narratives of participants were suited to the purpose and context of this study, the participants had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study:

- They must work for the university as full-time, permanent employees.

- They must be employed as educational SASL interpreters.

- They must actively provide SASL interpreting services to the students and staff that form part of the SASL educational project.

I was able to identify two participants who met the criteria. The one is a female SASL interpreter; she is a CODA, has a tertiary qualification and has worked in the field of SASL interpreting for more than 10 years. The other participant is a COHA male. He was trained as a SASL interpreter and has worked in the profession for more than 10 years.

3.6   Data collection method

To answer the research question, I chose narrative interviews as a method of data collection, as they aligned with the assumptions and principles of the paradigm, approach and research style that underpins this research project. This created a platform that promoted storytelling, which provided insights into the private life-worlds of the participants.

An interview is 'a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to the research study' (DeMarrais, 2004: 55). According to Mishler (1995, 117-118),

while interviewing is a method that researchers use to get participants to tell their stories, the researcher does not only 'find' stories, but also 'makes' stories. Thus, the researcher produces a co-authored story, told by the researcher as constructed from the information that was gathered from participants during the interview.

A qualitative interview involves a communication event between an interviewer and participant. The interviewer has a basic framework of the topics to be covered, not a preset list of questions *per se*. However, the qualitative interviewer must be clear in his own mind about the questions to be asked, as it will allows for an smooth interview that proceeds naturally (Babbie, 2007: 306).

Flexibility, according to Babbie (2007: 306), is one of the key strengths of qualitative interviews. While interviewers will start with a clear idea of what to ask, the answers that you receive may shape and influence the subsequent questions. This means that an interviewer will ask a question, listen intently to the answer, and then interpret its meaning as it pertains to the specific inquiry. Once this is done, the researcher frames the next question to further unpack the earlier answer or to focus the participant's attention on a topic that is more relevant to the specific inquiry.

Interviews are traditionally divided into three main groups, structured, semi-structured and in-depth or unstructured. Structured interviews are usually more suited to quantitative research, while the remaining two groups are frequently used in qualitative research (Taylor 2005: 39). It is, however, important to note that the term 'unstructured' is one that not everybody agrees upon. Some, like Mason (2002 in Taylor, 2005: 39) argue that no research interview can be entirely unstructured, even if that structure takes on the form of a single question to prompt thought and discussion.

Most qualitative research interviews, however, will be semi/lightly structured (Leicester & Lovell, 1997 in Taylor, 2005: 39), loosely structured or in-depth in terms of design and objectives. In essence, a qualitative research interview is merely a conversation with a specific purpose in mind (Burgess, 1984: 102). Such interviews aim to gain insight into the 'insider perspective', and to capture the words, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and experiences of the participants (Taylor 2005: 39).

Structured interviews, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 269), work well when researchers know what the knowledge gap is that they need to fill, and therefore can frame questions in such a way that they can get to the necessary information. Unstructured interviews are better suited to a situation where researchers are unaware of where their knowledge gaps are, and therefore must rely on the respondents to tell them.

An unstructured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom than other forms of interviews. In these interviews, the researcher purpose governs the questions that will be asked, but according to Kerlinger (1970 in Cohen et al. 2018: 509) the content, sequence and wording of the

questions are determined entirely by the interviewer. Cohen et al. (2018: 509) note that unstructured interviews are more casual than other forms but that they do, however, still require careful planning.

As I was interested in exploring the viewpoints and experiences that shaped the lives of the participants in greater detail and how they acquired new literacies, my focus was on the depth of data. By using an inductive method of data gathering, I tried to understand each participant's perceptions and guided them to articulate these perceptions in such a way that they would be easily understood by the reader of the study. I did so without forcing my viewpoints onto the interviewee (Firmin, 2008: 907).

Individual interviews were utilised as the main methods of information and data-gathering regarding the formative years, family life, schooling, and post-school education of the participants. Interviews typically started with a relatively general question, for example, 'What is it like to work as a SASL interpreter at this university?' This question does not give any indication of how I as a researcher feel about the topic and allows the participant to determine the direction the interview will take. Follow-up questions were based on the answers given. Unstructured interviews also allowed me to make use of research waves, which meant I could start with unstructured interviews, but as the need arose, move towards more structured interviews in later stages of the data collection process (Firmin, 2008: 907).

I used the information that I gathered from participants to weave a story of their shared lived experiences, shining a light on the role of LLL in their professional lives and the literacies they acquired that are specific to their current working environment.

3.6.1   Narrative interview

In narrative research, the interview stands central to the process (Bell, 2003: 102). During the research process, the researcher weaves together the stories or narratives of each participant 'from the threads of interviews, observations and documents' (Riessman & Speedy, 2007: 429).

Narrative interviews are a form of qualitative interviewing. 'Qualitative interviewing design is flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and locked in stone' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 43). The theoretical basis of the narrative interview came about as a response to the critique of the question-response format that is prevalent in most interviews. In the traditional question-response format, the interview determines the structure of the interview in three ways, namely (a) by determining the theme and the topics, (b) by arranging the question sequence, and (c) by wording the questions in his or her words. The narrative interview format moves away from this question-answer format on the premise that the perspective of the participants is best revealed in stories where they

are allowed to tell their stories in their words, in a less structured set-up (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000: 61).

While narrative interviews differentiate between different perspectives, Farr (1982 in Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000: 61) highlights the importance of the fact that language, as the medium of communication, is never neutral as it is representative of a specific worldview. Interviewers must be cognisant of the fact that while there are differences in perspectives that occur between the participants, there might also be different perspectives present between the participants and the interviewer.

Chase (2005: 660) explains that the researchers should focus on seeing the participants as narrators telling their stories in their voice, instead of seeing them as interviewees who simply answer questions that are put to them. This can only be achieved if the researcher positions himself or herself as a listener to facilitate the storytelling that will allow participants to tell their truths.

The telling of stories is a skill that is to a large extent independent of education and language proficiency, and according to Schuetze (1977 in Bauer, 1996: 3), while language proficiencies may be unequally distributed in any population, the ability to tell stories is not unequally distributed. The rules that govern the process of story production and storytelling seem to be universal, and Schuetze (1977) calls these rules the 'inherent demands of narration'. These storytelling rules create a narration stream based on the inherent rules/structures once the participants start. As the interviewer takes on the role of attentive listener, this narration stream stands relatively independent of the interviewer (Schuetze 1977 in Bauer, 1996: 4).

While it is important for the interviewer not to impose his or her structure on the interview, this does not mean the interview and storytelling process is without any structure. Bauer (1996: 4) provides a summary of the three main characteristics of storytelling that he based on a paper by Schuetze (1997). The three key characteristics, namely detailed texture, relevance fixation and closing of the gestalt, are briefly explained below.

Detailed texture: The narrator provides detailed texture using descriptive information which allows the narrator to transition from one event to the next in such a way that it has credibility and makes sense to the listener. The less the listener knows, the more detail the narrator will provide.

Relevance fixation: The narrator will include features of the event or action that they deem relevant; this relevance is based on and influenced by the world view of the narrator. The themes presented account for what the narrator believes to be relevant and are based on his or her opinion of what is relevant.

Closing of the gestalt: An event that is mentioned during an interview must be narrated in its entirety. Stories all have a beginning, middle and end. Sometimes, the story ends in the present when the actual event has not yet terminated. But following the beginning, middle and end sequence brings closure to the narrator for the interview, whether the story has drawn to a close in real life or not.

3.6.1.1 Narrative interview techniques

Before an interview starts, the researcher or interviewer needs to prepare for the interview. This involves researching the area of interests and formulating a central topic that, according to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000: 5), will serve as the trigger that is designed to initiate the self-sustainable narration. Once this has been done, the researcher compiles a list of exmanent questions. Exmanent questions reflect the interests of the researcher and are formulated in his or her language. Once that is done, exmanent questions are translated into immanent questions. This involves that the researcher rephrases these questions, using the narrator's language, thus turning them into questions that reflect the issues of the narrator (Bauer, 1996: 7; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2005: 62-63).

After the preparations have been done during the pre-interview stage, the researcher can start interviewing the participants. A narrative interview consists of four main phases, namely initiation, main narration, questioning phase and small talk.

Phase 1 – Initiation

During this phase, the interviewer provides participants with the general context of the research, explains the sequence of the interview, and acquires permission from the participants to record the interview on tape or digitally. The recording of interviews is imperative as this frees the interviewer up to listen attentively, creates a more natural setting for interactions and provides the interviewer with a verbatim account to fall back on if he or she needs to check something later.

My interviews were conducted using MS Teams as Covid-19-protocols made face-to-face interaction problematic. This meant that I had a visual and audio record to fall back on during the data analysis phase and allowed me the freedom to be an attentive listener. In addition to recording the interview, I had a notebook in which I jotted down questions and points of reference, things to follow up on and any other general impression I wanted to remember.

The purpose of introducing the central topic is to provide the participant with a point of departure for the storytelling. According to Bauer (1996: 6), the central topic must be broad and should not refer to specific dates, names or times to ensure that the narration can flow without hindrance. He also points out that the topic should hold social, personal, and communal relevance for the participant, which will

allow them to relate to the topic. It is also valuable to note here that if the timeframe is too broad or vague, some people might find it difficult to maintain a constant narration (Elliott, 2005: 31).

For my interviews I asked participants to look at major life events that introduced them to the Deaf community and culture, exploring how they approach learning before and after such events.

Phase 2 – Main narration

During phase 2, the focus is on uninterrupted storytelling by the participant. During these narrations, the researcher should not interrupt the participant or ask additional questions. The researcher must listen attentively and provide non-verbal support and encouragement, taking notes, while at the same time developing immanent questions for phase 3 (Bauer, 1996: 7). When the story comes to an end, the researcher can ask the participant if there is anything he or she would like to add or revisit. If not, the interview moves to the next phase.

Phase 3 – Questioning

During phase 3, the interviewer has the opportunity to ask the immanent questions that developed from the exmanent question during the narration phase. The purpose of these follow-up questions is to clear up uncertainties and gaps that the researcher identified during the narration phase (Bauer, 1996: 7).

The primary purpose of this phase is to extract new and additional material to supplement the information that was gathered during the self-generation phase of narration. The immanent questions that were posed during this phase can only pertain to the events, must be phrased in the participant's language, which will elicit opinions or attitudes. Questions should rather focus on events, such as 'what happens before/after/then'. Furthermore, the researchers should not point out contradictions in the participant's story to not create an atmosphere of distrust (Bauer, 1996: 7-8).

Phase 4 – Small talk

During this phase, the atmosphere is more informal, natural and relaxed. During non-Covid times, the recording devices would now be turned off, but due to Covid-19 protocols and social distancing, it was not possible for this study. This casual conversation phase often provides more insight into the formal accounts that were given during the narration. The information gathered during this phase can be of great value in terms of providing a contextual interpretation of the participant's contributions. I made sure that I had a notebook at hand to write down things that stood out during this conversation, to ensure that I could make more detailed and accurate notes afterwards.

3.6.1.2   Length of narrative interviews and repeats of interviews

A narrative interview needs to be long enough to provide sufficient time for in-depth storytelling, but not so long that it starts to feel unmanageable and burdensome for the participant. Having a predetermined time frame helps the researcher to give structure to the interview and creates an expectation of how much detail the participant is expected to share or will have time to share. Elliot (2005, 32) suggests that if the required material cannot be covered adequately in two hours, it is wise to rather conduct a second or even a third interview at a later stage. Seidman (2006: 20-21) concurs and suggests that the interviews should be divided into three 90-minute sessions with three days or even a week in between. This way, the participants have time to reflect on what happened in the first session, without losing momentum before the next interview. I decided to ask the participants to set aside two slots of 60 minutes each. This way I could ensure that the interview remained focused without being too draining. It also allowed me to make notes and regroup my thoughts between the sessions.

This approach worked well for me. The two 60-minute individual sessions that I had scheduled with each participant adequately provided for our needs. The first session with each participant provided the bulk of the information about their learning journeys. I used the second session to clarify any questions or uncertainties that I had after the first session. This also provided them with the opportunity to expand and develop some of the thoughts they shared during the first session.

3.6.1.3   Strengths and shortcomings of the narrative interview

When making use of narrative interviews, the researcher should be aware of the uncontrollable expectations of participants, as well as the role and rule requirements of its procedures that often can be quite unrealistic (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000: 6).

Uncontrollable expectation in the interview

The problem here is the so-called claim of non-directivity that is associated with the narrative interview technique. During a narrative interview, the researcher takes on the role of someone with very little to no knowledge about the subject at hand, with no vested interests. This is somewhat disingenuous as the narrative interview technique also stipulates that the researcher needs to do some research about the relevant and related topics to be prepared for the interview. The researcher needs to perform a balancing act here. If one takes the stance of knowing nothing, one might come across as naïve and unprepared, which could be construed as dishonest and disrespectful. If the researcher seems overly familiar with the topic, the participants might make assumptions about what the researcher knows and therefore leave out crucial parts of the story that they feel the researcher knows already, which could then lead to the loss of valuable information. At the end of the day, the

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co-construction and mediation of a narrative are influenced by various important factors; they are shaped by the relationship between the researcher and participants based on the trust and certain assumptions and expectations of both parties.

Unrealistic rules

The rules concerning the initiation of the interview can also be seen as an additional limitation, as these rules are very difficult to standardise and to a large extent are dependent on the social skills of the interviewer. If an interviewer feels that he or she is lacking in terms of these social skills, it can cause feelings of stress and anxiety. Ineptitude in this regard can also lead to a lack of consistency across the different interviews (Bauer, 1996; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000: 7).

I conducted individual, in-depth narrative interviews with the individual participants to gain insight into, and an understanding of, their lived experiences. This is because each participant's story had its unique elements that in turn resulted in immanent issues representative of these unique characteristics. I could not play the role of the totally 'ignorant' researcher as the participants were aware of my background in educational interpreting. But as I had no experience or direct knowledge of Sign Language interpreting or the Deaf culture, there were areas with which I was not familiar. I, therefore, positioned myself as someone who did not know their unique stories. I argue that my experience and background in educational interpreting facilitated a rapport based to some extent on a mutual understanding of educational interpreting, even if they are SASL interpreters while I am a spoken word interpreter. Being the only interviewer in this study contributed to consistency in terms of social skills and interviewing techniques.

3.7   Data analysis

I made use of thematic data analysis, intending to understand how participants try to make meaning from their lived experiences. Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006:6) as 'a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail'. This sentiment is echoed by Merriam and Tisdell (2009: 202) who state that in qualitative research, 'data analysis is seen as the process of meaning-making'.

To provide insight into their stories during the retelling or re-storying phase, I defined the various elements in their stories (raw data), identified themes and looked for meaningful sequencing (Suter, 2002: 369). Ross (2008: 65) points out the following: 'Stories are not to be treated lightly as they both carry, and inspire, significant obligations and responsibilities: stories must be cared for as they are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences of the world. Indeed, "storytelling is about survival"'. Therefore, when analysing the stories or narratives of participants, I did not lose sight of

the fact that the way stories were told was strategic, functional, and purposeful as they form part of the participants' real life.

I approached thematic analysis using Braun and Clark's (2006: 87) six-phase framework of thematic analysis, as shown in the table below, to guide me through this process and ensure that I covered all the necessary steps.

Table 3.1 Braun and Clark's (2006: 87) six-phase framework of thematic analysis

	Phase	Description of the process
1.	Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas).
2.	Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.	Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work concerning the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5.	Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6.	Producing the report	The final opportunity of analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating to the analysis of the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3.7.1 Thematic analysis

The overt and underlying ideas and patterns in the data were identified using thematic analysis During the analysis I focused on the 'what' of what was being said during interviews, examining the intention behind the story, the language used and how it was recounted. The narrative analysis allowed me to safeguard the unique voices of the participants, rather than trying to find universal themes, when I re-told their stories (McAlpine, 2016: 33). I used the stories as told by the participants to formulate a cohesive story of their lives and experiences and how they shaped and guided their LLL journey.

3.7.1.1   Codes

To answer my research questions, I used codes to label different sections of data, which helped me to collate and sort the themes that emerged, which gave me insight into the phenomenon I was studying (De Lange, 2015: 73).

Codes form part of a labelling system where a different code or label is assigned to different sections of the data to sort the data and then categorise them according to the themes that have already been identified. The question one aims to answer, as well as the underlying assumptions of the research, to a large extent, determine the codes that are used. As a researcher, it was my task to draw, from the data, the aspects that were relevant and pertain to the research questions but also to pay attention to new or contradicting data that added or invalidated my developing or pre-existing theories (Gibbs, 2007: 54; Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 59)

Once I identified my codes, I created a coding framework that helped me to make sense of and interpret the data by organising it into meaningful and logical categories (Gibbs, 2007: 38-39; Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 59). The process of coding and the coding framework allowed me to make sense of the data to answer the research questions.

The code labels must be defined clearly, as Joffe and Yardley (2004: 60) explain '[a] code should have a label, an operationalisation of what the theme concern and an example of a chunk of text that should be coded as fitting into this category'. Coding can only start once labels have been assigned to the codes. The type of thematic approach that is employed will determine if coding will be approached in a deductive or inductive fashion. Deductive coding is done in a hierarchal fashion which means the researcher starts with a predetermined theoretical category that constitutes the main categories. From these categories, smaller, corresponding sub-categories will develop. When coding is done inductively, categories and themes develop as they arise from the raw data at the textual level. It normally starts as smaller subcategories that are developed into larger, broader categories. According to Joffe and Yardley (2004: 58), 'no theme can be entirely inductive, or data-driven since the researcher's knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes'.

During inductive coding, splicing and linking are two processes used to make sense of data. Splicing involves the merging of a set of codes under the main categories. To do this, the researcher must constantly be cognisant of the fact that not all codes can be incorporated into the final analysis. During this phase, the researcher must pay attention to which codes can be grouped to create more significant codes (Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 60-61). Linking of themes 'allow for higher-order abstraction and interpretation' (Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 62).

3.7.1.2 Coding to analysis

Once the data have been coded, the process of analysis can begin. The first step is to create a coding manual that contains detailed descriptions of all the codes that were developed. This manual is used as a reference point against which the testing of the reliability of the codes is done. The definition of identified codes allows the researcher to use the codes consistently; this means that if other researchers apply the same codes, they should get the same results. When a researcher can provide a sound explanation regarding his/her decisions on coding, it strengthens and validates the process. A coding frame that is 'transparent, coherent and understandable, as opposed to an idiosyncratic, opaque system of interpretation devised by a single researcher' can easily be applied by someone else and still produce the same results. (Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 63).

The coding process identifies the recurring themes in the data. While some themes occur more often than others, frequency is not necessarily synonymous with importance. Sometimes a rare theme may be very significant to the research at hand. The researcher must use his/her discretion to determine the importance and relevance of themes and compare the themes to relevant literature to create a meaningful story (Braun & Clark, 2006: 8). This is further explained by Joffe and Yardley, (2004: 64) who add that '[n]ew insights can often be provoked by attempting to understand what appear to be anomalies'. The researcher must therefore understand, decode, and identify links and make generalisations abstract from the texts.

3.7.1.3 Themes

Themes are patterns that arise from the data. These thematic patterns can be found in the latent and overt content of the data. The overt patterns are normally quite easy to identify, but the themes that are buried in the latent data necessitate some interpretation on the part of the researcher to uncover and bring to light (De Lange, 2015: 72). Themes can emerge as a result of inductive analysis of the raw data, or through deductive analysis, where themes are identified based on the application of pre-existing theories and concepts during the analysis of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006: 12; Joffe & Yardley, 2004: 57). Through this process, I was able to group, sort and collate the detailed data to make sense of it.

3.7.1.4 My process of thematic analysis

Critique of thematic analysis is that it can lead to a disjunct between how things are and how they are perceived. This critique assumes that there is a shared 'objective' reality ('how things are') rather than that reality is multiply constructed. Topics and themes are summarised, and group based on how they appear in reality and then grouped based on the researcher's interpretation of how it connects, rather

than the inter-relationship of themes in the minds of the participants and their realities (Marks & Yardley, 2004: 12).

As a researcher in the field of interpretivism, I did my best to remain vigilant in my efforts not to lose sight of the fact that this was the lived realities of my participants and to remain cognisant of the fact that it is their stories and that they should always be able to relate to my retelling thereof. As a narrative scholar, my aim, as defined by Riessman (2008: 53) should be '… to keep a story "intact" by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases'.

3.8   Towards a trustworthy study

To ensure the quality of my qualitative research, I had to ensure that it is transferable, credible, dependable, and confirmable. To achieve this, I will use the quality criteria, as set out by Tracy (2010: 837-384) in the following way.

I believe this to be a **worthy research topic** (Tracy 2010: 840) as the SASL interpreting project at this university was still in its pilot phase when I started the research. While qualifications and training programmes do exist to train SASL interpreters, there are no tailor-made courses that focus on the specific needs and challenges of being a SASL interpreter in an educational environment where the relationship between the interpreters and their users is a very close and personal one. I hope that this study will provide insight into the challenges a SASL interpreter has to contend with, and how their background as CODA or COHA prepared them to face these challenges or added to it.

To adhere to the requirement of **rich rigour** (Tracy 2010: 841), I conducted a deep analysis of the lives, contexts and lived experiences of the participants. I gathered the data necessary to enable me to interpret their realities and make deductions about how they make meaning of their experiences. Collected data and my interpretation thereof was transparent and available for perusal by the participants or my supervisor had they require it. I kept keep all data and ensured its safekeeping and would be able to provide an in-depth description of my analysis.

As an educational interpreter myself, I have a **sincere and keen interest** (Tracy 2010: 841) in the LLL journey of my SASL colleagues and the challenges that working at a tertiary institution brings.

Credibility (Tracy,2010: 842) was addressed through the transparency that was present in all processes of design and implementation. Dependability and confirmability will be ensured by the fact that I am aware of my biases and assumptions in the research. There were no hidden agendas, and I was genuinely interested in telling this story from their perspective.

Research must **resonate** with the audience (Tracy, 2010: 844). Research findings must thus be presented in a way that is meaningful and adds value to the audience. I rewrote the narratives of the

participants truthfully and authentically, but also in a way that is meaningful, interesting, and informative. How a story is told can, to a large extent, impact how well the research is received.

In my opinion, the study of the LLL journey of CODAs versus COHA had the potential to be very interesting and make a **significant contribution** (Tracy, 201: 845) to our understanding of how exposure to SASL influences the LLL journey of CODAs and COHAs. The fact that this university has two interpreters, one from each category, as part of this pilot project, provides an opportunity to learn more about these differences. The fact that it is linked to their lifelong learning journey, and that they interpret in the education faculty, is a bonus.

Meaningful coherence is achieved when research design, data collection and analysis align with the goals of the research study (Tracy 2010: 484). The best way to achieve this is through membership reflections. This way the researcher and participants get the opportunity to discuss the findings, ask questions and get confirmation from the participants on how their stories were interpreted and presented. For me this will be a very worthwhile and easy exercise, seeing that I only have two participants. I did this through phone calls and WhatsApp, as Covid-protocols were still in place.

3.9   Ethical considerations in narrative research

Ethics pertains to what is considered to be right and wrong behaviour and plays an important role in quality research. A distinction can be made between procedural, situational, relational and exit ethics (Tracy, 2010: 847). For procedural ethics, I applied and obtained ethical clearance from the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee (CUR-2020_16714). Regarding situational ethics, I ascribed to the *do no harm principle* regarding my participants, the institution, and the communities within which the research was conducted. When it came to relational ethics, I was cognisant of how my attitudes and conduct could impact the research. For exit ethics, I kept in mind that I would have to present my findings in such a way that I ensured it did not result in negative outcomes for participants.

The principles of privacy, accuracy, property, and accessibility guided my research actions, based on Kivunja and Kuyini's (2017: 28) discussions about ethical conduct.

Privacy

Participants shared personal information about themselves, their families, and their communities. I made it clear to participants that they only need to share what they are comfortable with sharing. I also took precautions regarding the protection of their information and how data and analysed data were safeguarded. Anonymity implies that the researcher takes steps to ensure that the identity of participants cannot be identified. According to Ogden (2008: 16), most ethical and professional codes

of conduct stipulate that a researcher should implement strategies that safeguard participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

During the membership reflection (Tracy 2010: 484) I reminded participants that they had the right to anonymity and protection of privacy. I made use of pseudonyms to anonymise the institution and to further protect the identity of my participants.

Accuracy

This has at issue who the responsible person is when it comes to matters such as authenticity, fidelity, and accuracy of information. The stories as told by participants are subjective interpretations of their lived experiences, it is, therefore, accurate and authentic according to their recollection. I could not question that. I could, however, ensure that I gave an accurate recount of their stories by keeping notes and recordings of interviews and data analysis. I ensured that captured data was catalogued so that I could easily refer to it should a question arise.

Hemming (2008:154) quotes Denzin (1989) when he explains that a researcher can approach a question from different angles to test for validity and accuracy and to identify themes that emerge; this process is most commonly referred to as triangulation or crystallisation. I critically engaged with the narratives of my participants, as told during the individual interviews. I used the process of crystallisation to develop an in-depth and complex understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Richardson (1994 in Hemming 2008: 156) points out that there are more than three sides to the world, therefore crystallisation makes more sense than triangulation. I tend to agree with her as my participants had very different truths to tell from the individualised journeys but there are parts of the journeys (employment at this university) that do overlap and highlighted some aspects that I needed to clarify and verify after the interview processes.

Property

As this study is undertaken as part of a master's degree in Philosophy in Lifelong Learning, the intellectual rights will belong to Stellenbosch University. However, until it is published, the ownership of the raw data remains that of the participants, and they have the right to withdraw anything that they have contributed. This study involves no compensation in exchange for data.

Accessibility

Participants had access to all data that they provided throughout the process. I was responsible for ensuring that it was kept safe and secure. Should the participants have requested access to the data that they provided, I would have been able to arrange that.

3.10 Conclusion

This study focused on the lived realities of SASL interpreters at a South African university and required a methodology that fostered and encouraged a narrative expression of those realities. I employed a narrative approach, which was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm and informed my decisions regarding the choice of data collection methods that complemented the aims and objectives of this specific study. The interviews were done following the narrative approach and therefore yielded rich narratives that were relative to the research at hand. The narrative approach, in combination with a qualitative orientation, enabled me to make use of thematic analysis as the primary tool of data analysis. I made use of trustworthiness as a guide in conducting the research and benchmark against which I evaluated its worth following the principles and assumptions as put forth throughout the chapter. The research was guided by ethical principles that upheld the anonymity, confidentiality, and autonomy of the participants.

Chapter 4: Narratives

4.1 Introduction

To gain a perspective and learn more about the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at a South African university I made use of a narrative approach. By making use of in-depth narrative interviews, I was able to collect data that provided me with some insight into the lives of these interpreters. Using purposive sampling, I was able to select two participants who met the criteria for this study. I thus selected one female SASL interpreter and one male SASL interpreter. Both are full-time employees at the same South African university, where they work as educational interpreters for Deaf students and lecturers.

In this chapter, I presented each participant's narrative as authentically as possible. My retelling of their stories centred around key aspects such as their identity, background, exposure to Deaf culture, initial exposure to interpreting, types of learning, communities of practice and lifelong learning.

The two narratives presented here were drawn from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with the participants. For my research to resonate with audiences, I was cognisant of the fact that these stories had to be presented in a way that is meaningful and adds value to the audience. My representation of these narratives, therefore, had to be truthful and authentic, while at the same time being meaningful, interesting and informative.

This meant that I had to be mindful of my experiences, assumptions and worldviews which could influence or impact the write-up of these narratives. Therefore, before sharing their narratives, I positioned myself concerning the study. I am also a qualified interpreter that works as an educational interpreter at a South African university. I, however, work exclusively with hearing staff and students and have negligible knowledge of SASL. I, therefore, have no first-hand experience of working within the Deaf community or with Deaf clients.

4.2 Characters

4.2.1 Katie's story

Kate is a 43-year-old woman who grew up in a suburb of Cape Town. She completed high school and her first tertiary qualification in Cape Town and is currently employed as a South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreter at a South African university where she facilitates lectures and other meetings for Deaf students and lecturers. This entails providing Sign Language interpreting between English and SASL as well as between Afrikaans and SASL.

Kate is what is known as a native or heritage signer, which means she is the child of Deaf parents (CODA). SASL is thus Kate's mother tongue. As both her parents are Deaf, Kate acquired sign language visually instead of as a spoken language at home, but she did attend a crèche where she received verbal input in Afrikaans as her second language.

> *It is my mother language, my culture, I did not really have a choice. I learnt it, as any child would learn a language, from my parents.*

SASL thus formed part of Kate's lifeworld from the start and can be seen as a natural progression rather than a conscious choice. She believes the fact that children are versatile, adaptable and flexible, which made it easier for her to switch between Sign Language at home and spoken Afrikaans at school. Kate also acknowledges that her mother's keen involvement in her education, and good relationship with Kate's teachers throughout her schooling, also contributed to her educational journey.

When asked if there was a specific moment, a disjuncture, that led to her choosing interpreting as a career path, she had the following to say:

> *There was a moment at church when I was 16, where the initial seed was probably planted. I went to church with my parents one Sunday, as we do. It was a church for the Deaf and I was asked to interpret for a German visitor who came to visit our church, but obviously did not understand our sign language. At that stage, our sign language was based on spoken Afrikaans, so I had to create a spoken English and signed version. This was before I had any training or any idea of what interpreting should look like beyond the church that I had grown up in.*

As a CODA or heritage signer, Kate did not need formal training in SASL. After school when she enrolled for a BA in Business Administration (1998), there was no access to formal training for SASL from a linguistic point of view. The linguistics department at her current employer has, however, started offering interpreting as an option. Kate was allowed to attend those lectures, and while she did not have the opportunity to obtain a diploma, she was privy to the classes which she found useful.

The D/deaf community, like any other community and culture, has an array of members. Some choose to identify with the capital or lower-case d part of the community. In addition, hearing loss ranges from complete to partial deafness, as well as hearing members who were born into the community. Kate as a CODA/heritage signer forms part of the community but operates in two cultures to some extent.

> *I think that I definitely, I have got two legs, one in the Deaf world and one in the hearing world, not completely a hearing person because I come from a different*

visual culture. So, I don't really get accepted completely in the hearing community. There are limits to the acceptance that I get in the Deaf community. It does give me some credibility if I go: 'But guys, my parents are deaf.' But also, WHO my parents are influences how a specific Deaf person or a client would accept me, because my parents also have a specific reputation or knowing within the broader Deaf community.

Kate's parents are well known in the Deaf community, locally and across the country. Her parents grew up in a time where the Deaf were not allowed to sign and had to fight to be allowed to use Sign Language as a mode of communication. Their participation in this struggle also contributed to the recognition they still receive within their intimate but also broader Deaf community.

Kate does not believe that the fact that she is employed as a full-time SASL interpreter has had any effect on her status within the Deaf community.

I am still a hearing child of Deaf parents who can sign and who help out now and again. Period. Absolutely no status attached to my current position. There's no 'revere' of interpreters from the Deaf community. That comes from hearing people. Deaf people see you as a necessity but they have no sense of awe or respect for what you do. Just that it's part of what you do. Humbling.

It does not give you any status at all. No. If anything, you are used and abused. But you definitely do not get any special accolades. Or, you know, well done. If people have anything to say in the Deaf community, they will only give you negative feedback. It is extremely rare to get any positive feedback. Because you are doing what you must. So, why must I go: yay when you are doing what you should be doing?

As a CODA or heritage signer, Kate is intimately acquainted with the Deaf culture, as it is also her culture. She agreed that she might have a greater understanding and appreciation of the slight nuances or expressions in SASL due to sharing the culture.

I think I understand the culture better—because I have lived it my whole life. It's the way that we communicate with each other, the slight nuances and expressions in Sign Language that have very specific meaning. But there's not always an English or Afrikaans word that you can give it, so it becomes more of a descriptive description. To understand how they communicate, not just the fact that it's a language, but also how they present it and how they say things to you, you need to understand that to see the appreciation what they don't expressly say directly to

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you, but it is there. And for you to notice it. And to understand that it's very important as well because it's so easy for people from the outside who learned Sign Language to go: Oh, but I've been interpreting, and nobody ever says thank you. Yeah, but you're looking for the wrong thing. They are appreciative, but it is not in the way that you as a hearing person is used to.

Kate believes that it might be harder to get your head around these nuances if you did not grow up within the Deaf culture. She has seen many interpreters leave the profession because they simply did not feel appreciated. According to Kate, growing up within the culture gives you a better understanding of the culture—to some a thicker skin—because it not only affects your professional life but your personal life as well. For example, when Kate turned 16, people at her church started saying that it was time to find her a Deaf man to marry, but that she was too fat, so she must lose weight so that they could find her someone.

That is the kind of interaction that you have. And it's not in a malicious way. That's just how they see the world, as you know, very direct, there's no beating around the bush. It is what it is and if you don't understand that, then you will be offended the whole time. When you are an interpreter, you need to understand that when they say, 'Oh, but you are fat'. That's not how you would voice it, because that's not what they mean. They would say 'Oh, but you're quite big or whatever'. And it's more a case of are you comfortable where you are? Is that seat comfortable for you? That is the context. A lot of interpreters missed that and then the hearing person go, you're but you're rude. But that's not what was meant. The interpreter literally did not interpret it right because they don't understand, and they don't comprehend within the context what it is that person meant. They just do a literal interpretation instead of an interpreted worked-through interpretation which shows understanding for the context on both sides and making sure that the message is carried across. But not as an insult, because it was not an insult.

As a CODA/heritage signer, Kate is often in a position where she can be seen as a bridge between the hearing and the Deaf. Kate is married to a hearing man but made it clear from the start that he will have to stand his ground within the Deaf community.

There are certain, like ground rules that I have put down from the start: I am not an interpreter at home. If you guys do not understand each other, you make a plan but you do not come calling me. Forcing him into that position has definitely made a difference to you know, the respect that my parents have for him as well. But my

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husband, he's adapted quite well. I mean, he's, he is a joker by nature. He has got
a beautiful sense of humour, which is one of the reasons I married him. He just
would slide right into it. He still, I mean he loves my parents, he wants them to come
over more than I do. So, he's created his version of Sign Language, which is
completely rude outside of our home. Like, we don't share that with any other Deaf
people. But for my mom and dad, they appreciate his attendance, they appreciate
that he, you know, contributes his own, you know, thoughts or whatever, to the
language and tries to communicate with him always.

Kate never consciously pursued a career as a sign language interpreter but started doing community interpreting as a result of a basic need within her direct community, her parents, her friends, her church. When Kate was in matric, her mom advised her against becoming an interpreter as it was a thankless job in which you could not earn a salary. At the time when she matriculated in 1996, the idea of paying a Sign Language interpreter was still a foreign concept.

Because shame, you know, the poor Deaf people, you need to help them. That's just
all it is. It is about helping them.

After doing the short course in Sign Language interpreting at the University of the Free State in 1998, she realised that there was a lot more that she could contribute. Her mother, however, was adamant that she needed to obtain a tertiary qualification in a different field. (Nothing was available in terms of Sign Language interpreting at the time in any case.) Kate proceeded to obtain an honours degree in Business Administration from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and later a master's degree in Philosophy: Intercultural Communication. She had hoped to do her MA in SASL Linguistics but the programme is no longer available.

To fulfil the practical component of her Business Administration degree, Kate completed a six-month contract working for Deaf South Africa (DEAFSA). During her studies and her time at DEAFSA, Kate continued doing community interpreting and some freelance work as an interpreter. Most of her holidays involved interpreting in one way or another.

I did a lot of community-level interpretation. But also, some fun stuff like Americans
came to tour South Africa. Now I'm in the bus, and I'm interpreting for them for the
next 21 days. I did not get paid, but they paid for my accommodation. Anyway, so
that was quite fun. But it was quite interesting to see how the culture even though
we don't share the same Sign Language, the cultures are still very similar. And we,
I had to adapt my signing because they had American Sign Language and I had

> *South African Sign Language. But we did find each other, because I spent 21 days*
> *solidly inside their company, it was bound to happen, and it was fun.*

During Kate's tenure at DEAFSA, the official interpreter with whom she worked resigned and Kate was called in by the director and offered a permanent position. This was a huge learning curve but luckily, she had known him outside of work, as he was a family friend.

> *So instead of calling him Oom Kobus, I now had to call him Kobus. Because you*
> *know, professional, and I was just bombarded by everything. So beyond just doing*
> *the admin, I just started interpreting, and it really took off from there.*

During her time at DEAFSA, Kate realised that interpreting had become more than just something she did in social settings and over holidays and started to move toward something more professional. After DEAFSA, she joined a software engineering company that created technology for the SA Defence Force. She started as the receptionist but moved to the legal department where she was put in charge of managing the evidence for large court cases. During her tenure there, she was exposed to deaf-blind interpreting as well and accompanied the Director of Deaf-Blind South Africa to the United Nations and other international destinations. While she did enjoy her time there, after five years of working full-time and using all her holidays to do community and freelance interpreting, she had had enough.

She took a leap of faith and resigned, intending to start freelancing full-time, after a bit of a break to surf and recharge. She had plans to collaborate on specific projects with other Deaf people but received a phone call two months into her surfing holiday. Before her resignation, she had gone for an interview for a position at Parliament but thought her application had been unsuccessful. They offered her a full-time position which she accepted and proceeded to work as a SASL interpreter for 11 years.

> *So, from legal and running, you know, assisting the company and doing whatever,*
> *I became finally a Sign Language interpreter and being paid for it, the full salary.*
> *That was 2006.*

After 11 years, her soul was again seeking new adventures and she resigned from Parliament. This time it was not to surf, but again with freelancing as her main goal. The universe, however, had other plans, and she had hardly handed in her resignation when she was contacted by her current employer. After some soul searching and initial resistance against another full-time position, in the end, she did join the university in question as an educational SASL interpreter.

When asked which support structures and communities of practice (COP) were in place when she joined, Kate was a bit ambivalent. She said it was more a case of learning as they went along. She admits that they made some mistakes along the way, but that they have had some great success. She believes that there is still much that needs to be done in terms of research, to see how other universities in South Africa and abroad approached Sign Language interpreting.

An obvious COP that developed is the one between colleagues and Deaf users, which in this case includes two students and three lecturers. While the relationships between the various parties differ, they all have the shared goal of improving the learning experience of the Deaf user. So, within the COP that includes all the SASL interpreters and users, there are various smaller COPs. One of these is the relationship between the SASL interpreters, the students and the university's Disability Unit (DU).

While the interpreters aim to provide Deaf students with access to learning using linguistic support, the Disability Unit offers a range of services to students with disabilities. These include advice on appropriate academic support solutions, access to tailored study materials, to access to financial support. The DU also endeavours to create an environment that enables and empowers students with disabilities to achieve their full potential through creating awareness and enabling effective integration into campus life and the student community.

> *At this university, we definitely do it a bit differently, because we are offering the interpreting service for Sign Language under the ambit of the Language Centre and not as part of the Disability Unit. And that makes a big difference in how we can give services to them.*

At most SA universities, the SASL interpreting forms part of the support services provided by the DU. In this case, the interpreters provide the services as members of the Language Centre's Interpreting Services that provide linguistic support in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa and SASL.

One of the big differences that Kate pointed out between Sign Language and spoken language interpreters is the emotional toll that it can take on you and how it can almost swallow you whole. SASL interpreters not only interpret the classes but also have to interpret meetings between students and lecturers, work through academic articles with students as well as interpreting assignments and exams. This is beside the students' extramural commitments which they are also required to interpret. These activities are in addition to the community interpreting that forms part and parcel of their chosen profession.

There are certain support structures that Kate feels are lacking at her current employer and should be addressed for the psychological and physiological well-being of the interpreters.

I think things like debriefing options or support should be available. We do need a lot more psychological or mental health support, because we are exposed to the students' wellness, and what the students experience. I do not know about the other interpreter, but I personally become so involved emotionally. Not because I want to take over or become involved in their daily lives. What is discussed during those sessions [extra mural session] and seeing how they live or experiencing their struggles, and being part of the discussions, impacts on you as an individual. But there is no space to let that go, I have to find and pay for my psychologist to go and debrief somewhere.

Kate does concede that no one anticipated the additional requirements that come from working so closely with the Deaf students and therefore having a stake in their mental and physical wellness.

The mental health component of a Deaf person is such a sensitive environment. People do not realise the impact of the isolation that you have when you come to the university when you have just come from a school with other Deaf kids that you could chat to. And now suddenly, there's this world that you live in where everybody's hearing, and you don't know how to handle it. Schools don't take care of the mental health and wellness of Deaf kids. So that, you know, became quite a big point here.

But also, outside of the university. I feel strongly that community service is part of what we do because the Deaf community already do not have opportunities to study as others do. Furthermore, the level of education in schools for Deaf are so low that fewer of them ever have the opportunity to qualify for any tertiary education. And if they do qualify for tertiary education, they never really get promoted, because they're Deaf. And when they're in a work environment, they don't have interpreters, so they don't know what's going on. So, they don't have the opportunity to improve. So, you're always, constantly working with a community that are already left behind linguistically, career-wise, financially, especially financially.

So, your interaction with the Deaf on a community level is with people who suffer literally suffer. They have health issues, and nobody wants to help them, or they have to go to a public hospital, and you have to sit with them for like six hours before the doctor can see them and then they still just dismiss you and that heartbreak and that sadness when you need to break the news: 'You've got cancer.'

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As with any job, Kate's job comes with some inherent and perceived obstacles which impact her ability to perform optimally. According to Kate if these issues are not addressed it creates the perfect environment for burnout.

> *There is not enough time to prepare—content that should be read and absorbed and worked through to establish understanding to reflect in my signing. Too little time to research terminology, to work with a wider Deaf community on language development. Not having permanent Deaf academics on staff—this has a huge impact on our ability to grow and ensure the best service.*

> *No further studies opportunities at this university for SASL interpreters. The field is not covered at this university—from learning SASL level 1 all the way to studying SASL interpreting as an honours or diploma in a postgrad programme.*

> *No leadership to guide us in SASL interpreting specifically, something I could have done, but I am too busy interpreting. Too much to do, but not enough time.*

> *We can do so much better. If there was another interpreter, freeing up my time to provide the guidance and training.*

At the university where Kate works, they form part of the Language Centre, while at other universities, the SASL interpreters who are most often appointed are part of the Disability Centre's staff.

> *They both have advantages. Deaf people are only disabled because the people around them with hearing have chosen not to learn their language. So, they become disabled because other people can't use their language. It's universal access. So, if that wasn't an issue, and everybody could sign, and the classes were offered in Sign Language, and everybody could follow it, they wouldn't be disabled.*

> *Deaf people, in my opinion, are in two worlds. They have to use the label of being disabled to access the services they require. But they also form part of a linguistic minority. So, both of them (the DU and the Language Centre) is equally important.*

> *And even if Sign Language becomes the 12th official language, there's no guarantee that now suddenly government will make money available to regulate SASL interpreters because you know, it's a cowboy world out there. It's the wild, wild West, everybody is a cowboy. And you can do whatever you want. And the Deaf people are the ones that suffer because they don't speak up. But here people go, 'Oh wow, you're such an amazing person'. And you go, 'Yes, I am', but the Deaf people are left behind.*

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Kate believes that there should be a greater focus on continuous professional development from the university's side. This will ensure that the interpreters keep up with terminology, changes in the Deaf community and the ways things are being done, especially since the advent of Covid-19. Kate said that she had to do her research because the university had no idea about the impact that the pandemic had on them and their students.

> *I have just had to do my research the whole time because the university just has no clue. They say they only offer MS Teams, but MS Teams is not accessible to Deaf people. Come on, you know, but they just would not budge. So, we have had to go look for funding to buy a one-year Zoom subscription, because the university doesn't condone it. And we've had to do it in secret because if they knew that we're using Zoom, they would probably shut us down. Because you know, red tape is far more important than actual access.*

> *Continuous professional development (CPD) should be facilitated by actual Deaf academics who can take the lead—the growth of SASL as a visual language should be in the hands of native signers, working together. They should be the people to look up to and who leads the CPD of SASL interpreters.*

Kate also expressed concern that there is no financial investment in their growth. The one positive thing about the Covid-19 pandemic is that it has opened up new channels for learning, which were not previously as easily accessible.

> *We are completely reliant on ourselves to go and look for opportunities to grow, often outside the university, because there ain't [sic] no money. I [now] follow online webinars after the whole Covid thing, and everything went online. It's amazing. Suddenly, I can access all these courses from America or from other countries that do offer it in English. I pay for myself because I don't even ask anymore. I mean, why would I ask? It's just going to be a no. So, I do not even go there. I found that on the internet, you get the free source code, and you can literally create your online dictionary for Sign Language that includes your parameters.*

Kate realises the importance and value of self-reflection as part of the learning process.

> *The importance of trust, relationship building, patience, connection and communication. To be humble. Realising the importance of rest, recovery and reflection. Honesty—towards yourself. The ability to accept criticism and to do*

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better—realising there's no need to 'defend' your mistakes. Accept them, embrace them and do better in cooperation with Deaf users of SASL interpreting services.

Kate believes that her background as CODA or heritage signer instilled a personal interest and motivation to continuously improve her interpreting skills. She does this by keeping up with the changes in the Deaf community and their education, ensuring that Deaf people are not left behind more than has been general practice in the world. On top of that, she is driven to uphold the proud family name and reputation that comes with it within her community.

She does not think that working as a SASL interpreter in a professional capacity changes the way she sees herself, as interpreting has always been part of her normal lifeworld.

To me, it is normal that I am part of the Deaf community. There's Deaf students— cool, you know, make it accessible. There are academic articles that I need to study, research that I don't have time for, as there seldom is time for preparation during the day—that happens at night. But, you know, that part I struggled with because I needed to make time to do that. But other than that, I think I slipped into the roles of being an interpreter for Deaf students quite easily.

Kate acknowledges that there were many lessons learnt along the way and probably will be many still. This learning often happens within communities of practice that naturally form as a need arises. According to Kate, a lot of incidental learning takes place through social interaction with Deaf individuals. This learning is not limited to language enrichment. By observing Deaf individuals' reactions to certain situations and challenges, she also learns a lot about the Deaf individual's worldview. Kate explains:

My father sees being Deaf as normal, you as a hearing person would be abnormal [to him]. Yet from my interaction with Deaf adults and Deaf kids, you can start to see why they don't speak up for themselves—how they've been silenced their whole lives. How having a Deaf child is everything a Deaf parent could dream of, because they will be able to bond and connect and hearing people won't take over too much because they are 'scared'. As a hearing child, we are influenced by the hearing world. As a child, a Deaf parent is often unable to protect their children from hearing how other adults speak lowly of Deaf people and how unfortunate it is that you have Deaf parents. The times we have to hear how people look down on us. When they ask us how we learned to speak and why Deaf people are allowed to get married and have children. A child is fragile and to deal with this burden is unfair, but the world is unfair.

But there is also the perspective and experiences of the sign language interpreter to take into account. As a CODA, she learnt from an early age to fight for her place, and as an interpreter, this message has further compounded the narrative that the message is more important than her feelings or opinions.

> *This is enough to mess anyone up emotionally and psychologically. There is no debriefing of SASL interpreters—we have to see and experience the worst this world has to offer Deaf people and not do anything about it in the moment. We carry the trauma of a mother who loses her child—and the doctor can't be bothered to explain what happened. We feel it when there's talk of suicide, and we are bound by some piece of paper not to talk out of the therapy session—we also worry. We see clients suffering health, marriage, mental health, and family who suppress and discard their feelings. We feel as a community, but there's learning from each other.*

According to Kate, there is no trust among SASL interpreters, it is a dog-eat-dog world, where everyone is vying for the next interpreting contract, for survival. On top of that, there is a lot of criticism from the Deaf community, no reverence, respect, or love. The important lesson that Sign Language interpreters should learn is who to seek their recognition form.

> *Many SASL interpreters would rather listen to the accolades of hearing people— seriously, what do they know? They can only comment on your ability to use the spoken language. Deaf people are the ones you need to listen to when there's feedback—and that's usually only when it's negative. Very seldom the Deaf people will celebrate the interpreters. As with any other job you do, it's a job. You're not in the office to receive a round of applause every day. You're an interpreter and it's your job. Forget about accolades. You're not special. You do your job and make sure you are good at it.*

To remain focused on the bigger picture, Kate believes that COPs and collaboration projects with other invested parties are very important. The university where she works has teamed up with a Language and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) project to create material specifically aimed at Deaf students. This project is further supported by the Western Cape Department of Education who have identified five Deaf schools and provided the funding to develop SASL material to teach SASL to those Deaf children. The encouraging part, according to Kate, is not only that funding had been made available but more importantly, it provides Deaf people with the opportunity to find solutions for problems experienced by Deaf people. This is a departure from the historic approach where hearing people decided for Deaf people what was best. There are so many resources and COPs that one can tap into

as a Sign Language interpreter. Different COPs bring about different types of learning and that can also be seen throughout Kate's story.

Kate initially acquired Sign Language through non-formal learning, as it was taught to her as a mother tongue by her Deaf parents, and through her interactions and activities as part of the Deaf community such as socialising and going to church. A lot of incidental learning also took place, for example, interpreting for a German guest at their church when she was a teenager, and later even when she acted as an interpreter for a group of American tourists.

After school, she did not initially have the opportunity to obtain a linguistic qualification as SASL but did do a short course at the University of the Free State. Throughout her life, informal learning has thus played an important role as well.

> *Informal learning has been a valuable contributing factor to truly understand the Deaf community, why we do the things we do and how we do them—a true understanding brings with it compassion and a focus to provide a service that is not focused on you as the interpreter but on the message. Too many SASL interpreters are doing this career because they seek attention, doing it for themselves and thus doing it badly—destroying the reputation of those who actually CAN do the job.*

Kate believes that formal training remains important as it teaches you about the theories and literature that underpin this profession. It provides you with a formal education basis, but informal learning teaches you the boundaries, the dos and the don'ts of the profession.

She explains that historically, the Deaf have been conditioned through education in schools that hearing people know best. The Deaf are used to accepting their lead from hearing people, without standing up for themselves.

> *There is a lot of grey area that we move around in, and each situation changes. But in education, specifically educational interpreting, your relationships are a lot closer. So, it's not a case of you arrive, you do your thing, you're neutral, and you leave. You can be neutral to a certain extent, and then you get to a point where you just cannot be neutral anymore. Your lines have moved so much that you don't even know where they are anymore. You must have a clear understanding of what our place is within the interpreting relationship because the power can so quickly shift to you as an interpreter. If you are not aware of that, you will start taking over things, it often happens unintentionally, but it happens. So, this power shift happens. And if you do not specifically put it back into balance, and inform them*

> *that they have that power, that they can control the interpreter, then they will not, and then that becomes very dangerous.*

So, while formal education prepares you and provides you with the knowledge and skills to do your job, Kate believes it is with informal learning that you start making it your own.

> *With informal learning, I would say it is almost more important, but the foundation is laid by the formal learning. But then you really make it yours when you start actually absorbing what's going on around you and adjusting and growing your emotional intelligence and knowing, being self-aware, but not to the extent that you want people to see you. It's about that person. It's not about you. But unfortunately, the long-term effects of that on an individual as a Sign Language interpreter is you feed yourself this thing that it's not about me, it's not about me, it's always about the other person that you really do get to a point where you lose yourself. And that has happened to me a few times, and then you just go boom, okay, I need to reset things. I need to just find myself again. And then, you have that power balance brought back again because now all the power has been given to the Deaf person, but you're still the other individual in that relationship. And there needs to be a balance. So, then you, you know, and knowing that and recognising when it happens and doing something about it, that's something that not everybody can do. You can tell people to do it, but they don't necessarily do it. So too many interpreters are doing this career because they are seeking attention and then doing it for themselves. And they're doing it badly. And it is destroying the reputation of the rest of us.*

Kate's lifelong learning journey with SASL started from birth, as it is her mother tongue. From her story it is clear that continuous learning is part of her life, partly due to necessity as the field of SASL interpreting is evolving and growing but also because the field of educational SASL interpreting is relatively new at the tertiary level in South Africa. Kate has an inquisitive, studious type of personality and is driven to learn more and stay on top of her profession, for herself, but also because she is passionate about the community that she serves and forms part of.

She agrees that her lifelong learning journey with SASL thus far has been life-wide as well as life-deep as it affects and permeates all aspects of her life—family, social interaction, religion, and work.

> *I think if you are part of any language group or cultural group, and when you are working with people, you need to keep up to date with the changes of psyche, the changes of the environment. For example, when I started working, people didn't*

get screen fatigue, today it is reality in our professional world. As communication changes, so methods change and things might be perceived differently, people react differently, and it changes behaviour and the way the language is used.

Being on-screen means sign language is a three-dimensional language. Now due to Covid-19, we often interpret on-screen, so I literally have to change the way I sign things to make sure my hands are seen in full. You must be able to adjust.

So lifelong learning in this industry, for Sign Language specifically, is very important for anybody who wants to stay in this career.

At the end of our interview, it was clear to me that Kate is very passionate about the Deaf community. This is natural as she was born into and grew up in the Deaf community and it is inextricably part of who she is. As a member of the Deaf community who can hear, Kate has a lot of insight into the finer nuances of the Deaf community. This is her reality and her lifeworld.

She is a strong advocate for the Deaf, fiercely loyal with a combination of protectiveness and defensiveness. This comes from years of having to explain her position in the community to outsiders and to answer questions about the Deaf community that might not sound condescending to the one asking the question but is often downright offensive.

She does not consider her career as anything special or out of the ordinary. She is a heritage signer and therefore can do the job. She endeavours to do it to the best of her ability, to stay at the forefront of developments in her field and to advocate for the Deaf in a proud, non-condescending way while never implying that they cannot or should not do it for themselves.

She is, however, acutely aware of the fact that the Deaf do not see themselves as disabled, but merely as Deaf people who use Sign Language to communicate. The world sees them as disabled and this leads to the Deaf being marginalised in many, if not all, spheres of life.

4.2.2   John's story

John is a 32-year-old male that grew up and completed his schooling on the West Rand of Gauteng before moving to Mpumalanga where he started his first job as an administrative assistant. He is a South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreter, currently employed as an educational interpreter at a South African university. He facilitates lectures and other meetings for Deaf students and lecturers by providing interpreting between English and SASL as well as between Afrikaans and SASL.

John's first exposure in a personal capacity to someone whose home language was SASL was when he started his first job as an office administrator at the age of 19. At that stage, he was able to use basic

greetings and salutations in most of the 11 official South African languages. The fact that he could not greet his Deaf colleague in her home language created a disjuncture for him.

> *I noticed that one of the staff members, in other words, one of my colleagues is a Deaf person. I've grown up with exposure to quite a lot of languages, especially the indigenous languages. So, I could greet most of my colleagues in their home languages, at least saying: 'How are you?' or 'Enjoy your day'. But I couldn't do the same for my Deaf colleague, which I felt was grossly unfair. So, I asked her to teach me the basics.*

John realised that he needed a more aggressive intervention if he was to make any real inroads into acquiring the language and he, therefore, started attending church services with his colleague's Deaf group. This was the first time he spent time with more than one Deaf individual at a time and provided him with an opportunity to interact with Deaf individuals in a casual and relaxed environment, free of pressure.

> *Obviously, we could not communicate with one another in the beginning, because I barely knew how to spell my name, let alone sign. So, she invited me to attend a congregation at church. And they had a Deaf group. That's where I had my first contact with part of the Deaf community. I started attending the congregation with the Deaf group and slowly but surely picked up more signs and through socialising with Deaf individuals started learning different signs for different things.*

Approximately five months into this journey, the then premier of Mpumalanga's assistant, who was a Deaf person, approached him to act as an interpreter between Afrikaans and SASL at the provincial legislature as none of the Sign Language interpreters at the time could assist him. Initially, John declined as he was still learning to sign but after months of hounding from the assistant, he finally agreed.

> *I eventually conceded and attempted to interpret for him in the legislature. And he was so satisfied with my interpreting that I ended up interpreting on a freelance basis for the provincial Parliament (Legislature) for four years.*

While John had no formal training, through experiential learning, or learning by doing, he was able to acquire and become adept in SASL to such an extent that he could earn a living from it.

John acknowledged that the fact that he was only introduced to SASL and the Deaf culture as an adult did pose certain challenges for working with or for the Deaf. Having had no Deaf family members or friends, except for the one Deaf colleague, he consciously had to seek opportunities to socialise with

Deaf people and learn more about their culture. Learning Sign Language is more involved than simply learning a new language, it involves a whole new system of communicating visually. John believes that what could almost be seen as the extraordinary steps he took to learn SASL and to learn more about the Deaf culture endeared him to the Deaf community. While the child of a Deaf adult (CODA) learns Sign Language as a mother-tongue and is therefore almost 'expected' to be able to sign, in his case, it was a choice.

> *For somebody like myself to, who have absolutely no Deaf family members, or even Deaf friends, for that matter, before started learning sign language, to go out of your way to learn a language, so that you can assist a community that you previously didn't know definitely, definitely endeared me to the Deaf community.*

In terms of being part of the Deaf community, John believes that he has been accepted into the community but that there are limitations to this membership. On the one hand, he is accepted as part of the Deaf community as a language practitioner in as far as his services are aimed at the Deaf community. On the other hand, he is still a hearing person, so there will always be a slight divide. According to John, how well and completely you are accepted is very much dependent upon each individual. The academic debate about whether you can consider yourself part of the Deaf community if you are a hearing person or not does come into this distinction.

> *No two people are the same. Some people in the Deaf community are more critical than others.*

John believes that it took at least a year after he started learning Sign Language before he was accepted into Deaf culture. This was largely because he opted to fully immerse himself in the Deaf culture by moving in with four Deaf people.

> *Staying with them being the only hearing person and I could barely sign. So that was where I literally became part of the Deaf community. Because I ate with Deaf people. I lived with Deaf people, I socialised with Deaf people. My whole daily existence revolved around the Deaf community and sign language.*

John is also of the opinion that his status as a full-time educational interpreter for Sign Language at a university elevated his status within the Deaf community to some extent. He explained that SASL is already in itself seen as a very niche service but to further specialise within the field of sign language for educational interpreting adds to that specialisation.

> *You know, it's, it's a very personal form of interpreting because you're literally dealing with somebody it's future. And I mean, education is vital. And education is*

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> *lacking for Deaf people in South Africa. So being part of that, being trusted to be*
> *part of that, definitely affected the status that I have as a Sign Language*
> *interpreter, especially as a person who came from outside the community.*

As mentioned previously, John is not a heritage signer or CODA, so he admits to still sometimes struggling with understanding the Deaf culture completely. He ascribes this to the fact that he does not live that lifestyle 24/7, which means you forget things. For example, he says as a hearing person, who also does sign language interpreting, you have to be especially mindful when you work with fellow interpreters, to ensure a successful partnership. He says he specifically notices this when he acts as a public speaker and has a Sign Language interpreter interpreting what he is saying.

After working as a SASL/Afrikaans interpreter in Parliament, John joined the National Institute for the Deaf (NID) in Worcester. At first, he was employed as a Sign Language interpreter but later was promoted to the position of Sign Language Coordinator. During his time in Worcester, John was exposed to various dialects of SASL. He also had to interpret in various settings, not predominantly the educational sector as he does presently.

> *I dealt with different dialects on a daily basis, and I had to interpret in different*
> *settings, among which was education, but it was not exclusively educational like*
> *now. When I was in Mpumalanga, people would visit from other provinces, or we*
> *would visit, for example, Gauteng or Free State and you would notice that there are*
> *provincial differences, slight differences. But the first time I noticed dialect*
> *differences within a province, was when I moved to the Western Cape, which was*
> *when I started working at the National Institute for the Deaf.*

He then moved back to Nelspruit but continued to do his work with the NID virtually by doing remote interpreting for six months, but quickly realised that the virtual mode of interpreting did not suit him as he missed the human interaction. It was during this time that he received the offer from his current employer, which he accepted.

John's informal and non-formal learning were greatly enhanced by some existing structures that were in place when he joined his current position. It was further enhanced by communities of practice (COP) that came into being as the SASL interpreters identified gaps in their working environment. COPs form an important part of any profession and can add a lot of value to an individual's professional and personal growth.

> *There definitely were some structures in place. A formal mentor was assigned to*
> *me when I started in my current position. We regularly met to discuss issues that*
> *arose, and I could ask for guidance if uncertain about anything. At the same time,*

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we also formed groups to discuss, for example, terminology, and these groups included both Deaf lecturers and Deaf students for whom we interpret. We also liaised with other tertiary institutions, both nationally and internationally, where Sign Language interpreting takes place to find out how to deal with certain challenges. For example, how to address the issue of external moderation of interpreting to ensure the quality of the service that is provided.

The Disability Unit at the university is also an internal COP with whom they liaise but this, according to John is more in terms of administrative and internal issues. John specifically recognised how accommodating the staff at the Disability Unit are toward both the interpreters and the Deaf students.

When asked about gaps in the system, John said that he feels that everybody involved in the project do whatever they can to make the project run smoothly but that he thinks more attention should be spent on preparation with the lecturers who form part of the project.

I think if there was more preparation with the lecturers before we actually started interpreting for them. Also, I do not want to say sensitisation but more awareness training about how to work with Deaf students and how to work with a Sign Language interpreter. Little things, for example, when we interpret, we interpret in the first person. In the beginning, the lecturers would get confused and think that we were answering on behalf of the student, when in fact we were just interpreting in the first person.

John said working as an educational interpreter required him to make a mind shift. He said that within the educational setting things constantly change, and in addition to that educational interpreting involves a lot more than interpreting during lectures.

We do a lot of extracurricular interpreting. We still do a lot of community interpreting, because that's how you keep up to date with the latest signs and the latest trends in the community and how you network. But I think the most important thing I've learned is to be adaptable. Something I still struggle with, but I am improving quite a bit in is receiving negative feedback. It is difficult, but it is not just about accepting the feedback, it is about examining it.

It is about self-reflection, and you know, making changes where needed. But yeah, I would definitely say being adaptable. But also, at the same time, the importance of, of saying no, that's one of the issues in my current position. That's one thing I learnt. Because I could never say no. And I learnt you have to learn how to say no, otherwise you will burn out.

The SASL interpreters have a full plate. In addition to the lectures, they interpret extramural activities which include interpreting meetings with lecturers, student meetings and other mental and physical wellness appointments such as doctors' visits. Furthermore, they also provide a transcription service for their students, as English is often the students' third language, which means they sometimes struggle to understand the work. At times they have to interpret assignments and exams to provide students with an alternative to having to physically write the exam, or simply have a session where they work through academic articles to make sure the students' have sufficient meaning-making opportunities. This is all in addition to the personal preparation that interpreters have to do before a class.

> *That's hours and hours of preparation as if you are going to give the lecture yourself.*

Community interpreting forms part of any sign language interpreter's reality. John explained that it is a prerequisite to maintain your standing or the respect of the Deaf community. However, he points out that South Africa, unlike many other countries, has no minimum requirement in terms of hours of community service to maintain your accreditation.

John is still in the process of obtaining his accreditation at the South African Translators Institute (SATI). He says this currently is the only body whose accreditations carries any real weight. John, however, explains that it is a rather complicated and costly process.

> *The setup is strange because you can only do one-way accreditation. One language combination and in other words, Afrikaans to English. That's it. You can't even do Afrikaans to English, English to Afrikaans. You have to pay for every single language, combination, and direction. That would mean for myself, who is a trilingual interpreter if I had to do accreditation to document all the languages and language combinations and directions I can interpret to, that would be six sessions, six accreditations that I would have to do.*

John believes that once the South African Language Practitioners' Council[2] becomes active, it might change the landscape that language interpreters work in and a new norm might be set for all interpreters to conform to.

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[2] 'The South African Language Practitioners' Council Act, 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) is an act of the Parliament of South Africa that established regulations for the training, regulation, accreditation, and control of language practitioners so as to set standards for the quality of translators and interpreters. It also established the South African Language Practitioners' Council. The act further set out the objects, powers, duties, and functions of the council and determined

John believes the fact that he is a non-heritage signer, in other words, a COHA, has a definite influence on how he addresses gaps within the workplace, which is different to that which a CODA would experience.

> *If I compare myself to my colleague, who is a CODA, our perspectives are quite different in the sense that I view my profession more from a work perspective, if that makes sense. Where my colleague views it more from a humanitarian perspective or advocacy perspective. If that makes sense? Whereas I tend to be looking at it more, I don't want to say corporate because that sounds cold, but from a work perspective. […] I don't pretend to be a Sign Language expert or a Deaf Studies expert. I'm not very outspoken when it comes to Deaf issues or Sign Language issues, that I do not have knowledge about, or rather that I do not have enough knowledge, so I'd rather not stick my neck out if I do not have all the facts. If that makes sense.*

When asked if he thinks his status as a full-time SASL interpreter has influenced the way he sees himself, John replied:

> *H'm, that's funny because I always joke with my partner and say that I've become Deaf myself in the sense, not that my hearing suffers in any way. In fact, I've got very good hearing, it's just you become visually inclined. So, your brain acclimatises to visual stimulus as your primary input instead of auditory input. You have to constantly train yourself when somebody is talking to you not to look at them. If it's a hearing person, don't look at them, look away, force yourself to listen, not to watch. I've noticed that at times people will be speaking to me in a not professional setting, a social setting and I can hear that they talking to me, my brain registers it as speech. I just can't make out what they're saying, because I didn't look at them. I do not see the other inputs that I normally would—be it facial expression, body language, gestures, you know, things like that. So that is definitely one way that it influenced me. Besides that, when you become visually orientated, you pick up things that other people do not. So, you definitely learn to see between the lines or to read between the lines, which is both a good and a bad thing.*

He also believes that it had an influence on him in a social context.

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how the council would be managed, governed, staffed, and financed' (South African Language Practitioners' Council Act, 2014).

I've learned that there's so much that we take for granted as people who can hear. The new popular phrase that everybody uses is **incidental learning** *or accidental learning, where you pick up something completely out of your framework of reference just by hearing it. And because most Deaf people will have a severe degree of deafness, they can't hear what's going on around them. So, it is definitely one way it has influenced me personally, I no longer take certain things for granted.*

As John provides a service to the Deaf community he works closely with deaf and Deaf people. This familiar relationship has given him a greater understanding and insight into the lives of the individuals he works with, their community and their culture.

As you know small d and capital D deaf people form part of the community. It is often a confusing issue because it's people who either became Deaf post lingually or who identify not with the deaf community but identify more with the hearing community, I'm talking about the small letter d now. My first exposure to that was quite a bit shocking because I didn't know. I just thought all the people, you know, were not necessarily born that way, but kind of like embraced the deafness. And I mean, obviously, it makes sense that some people would not. I don't mean to say that small d deaf people don't embrace the deafness, I mean, I can now understand it from both perspectives. Somebody who prefers to use Sign Language and somebody who would prefer to not use Sign Language as they prefer an entirely oral system but who still sees themselves very much part of the hearing community. And then on the other side, the Deaf, capital D. The Deaf community view themselves as a proud community in terms of their culture and their language. And so, I can understand both sides. But it took me quite a while to gain that perspective. You see both sides because having learned sign language from the capital d Deaf community, you kind of feel you know, you have to side with them. And you kind of favour signing as an option. It is difficult as a Sign Language interpreter or as a language practitioner in general because I have had to do lip speak interpreting for small letter d deaf people. And I realised through those experiences that they are also deaf, regardless of whether that capital D or smaller d. They have similar challenges in both parts of the community, so you just adapt how you deal with them, and you just treat everybody the same. But initially, I am being very honest, initially, you kind of were like, what is wrong with you? Why don't you learn Sign Language? Why don't you make life easier for yourself? But then you don't always know what the context is that people find themselves in. And

then to bring that to your question about the deaf students. I have also had to deal with both small letter and capital letter D students in an educational setting, and you just adapt to what their needs are, you know, as far as you are. So yeah, it does change the way you think about things. And it does change the way that you know, how you view the community as a whole and how you interact with community as a whole.

To gain acceptance from people within the Deaf/deaf community, John felt that he had to position himself in such a way that he sort of straddled his opposing positions. Initially, he would have described himself as pro-Sign Language as opposed to oralism, but after exposure to the broader Deaf/deaf community, he realised that it is not his place to decide how people choose to communicate.

I don't have that right; it is their human right to choose how they want to communicate. If I want to be a part of it, I need to adapt.

John explained that the two students who currently make use of the SASL interpreting services at the university where he works identify as Deaf. Both students are hard of hearing but have some degree of hearing left, so they also have some experience of growing up on both sides of the Deaf/deaf community spectrum. Historically this also caused a bit of a divide in the deaf/Deaf community, but it is not so much of an issue these days.

From John's story, it is clear that acquiring SASL as a third language as an adult has permeated and affected all aspects or spheres of his life and is continuing to do so. As he explained:

… you have to adapt or die. I mean, you have to be flexible, you have to know how to put on the different caps, to fulfil the different roles within the limits of professional and moral ethics and all of that.

John specifically recalled the impact of living and working in Worcester, where there is a very large Deaf community, had on his private life and how it also affected his partner.

Being a sign language interpreter, if you live in a community like that—live and work in a community like that—you are bound to socialise more with deaf individuals than with hearing individuals because you are able to communicate with them. So, my partner was roped into the socialising, having no skill in Sign Language whatsoever, but he learned, you know, eventually getting quite competent in being able to sign.

John sees continuous learning as a non-negotiable part of his chosen career path. According to him, language is alive and constantly changes. As language adapts to the needs of the situation, language practitioners should also adapt along with it and its trends. He illustrates this by referring to the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on his working reality and that of the Deaf community.

> *Covid-19 has definitely had an impact on how we approach educational and specifically community interpreting. With regards to community interpreting, it has definitely declined because you try and avoid contact with people. We still do community interpreting online, mostly, or at least I do online, mostly. But there are occasions where you do have to go out into the community, you know, where individuals do not have access to remote video interpreting services. So, it definitely has impacted on my life. Something new that we had to deal with [was to] explain to people why we don't wear a mask. Then they ask, but then why don't you just wear a visor? Because it fogs up and you can't see. And if you can't see my face, then you know, half of what I'm trying to communicate is. So, then you might just as well put a hand over a spoken language interpreter's mouth while they're trying to interpret it the same thing.*

In terms of formal learning, John is currently busy obtaining his formal qualification in Sign Language interpreting. His exposure to SASL and the acquisition thereof through informal and non-formal channels has taken his learning journey on an interesting, meandering path. He did, however, point out that there are many reasons for the fact that the formal learning phase came later. When he started working as a SASL interpreter, there were no qualification options available to him in South Africa. The only option would have been to obtain a qualification in American Sign Language or British Sign Language, for example. John felt at the time that it would be defeating the purpose. Later, when Deaf institutions and organisations started offering training in SASL, the courses on offer were so basic that it again would not have made sense to enrol for those as at that stage, he had already been interpreting for almost five years. Many of the initial courses that were developed were only available as full-time courses, and as John was already employed at the time, that also meant that he could not enrol for those. In addition to not wanting, or being able to afford to give up his salary, the demand for an Afrikaans-speaking SASL interpreter was so great in his direct environment. There was no one else in a 50-km radius and he felt that he would be leaving the Deaf community in the lurch if he left at that time.

It is only recently, after much consultation with people for many years, that John has been able to ascertain which level of training would be best suited to both his experience and skills level but would also allow him to improve and expand on his skills.

John made mention of another factor that initially made him somewhat reluctant to do formal Sign Language training. Many interpreters that he worked with, who had formal Sign Language training, or Sign Language interpreter training at university or elsewhere, were not as popular.

> *From my experience many of the Deaf community members if they had a choice, those interpreters would not be their first choice. Because you learn a very academic way of signing, a very cold, very impersonal way of signing. Whereas where when you learn from the Deaf community itself. The people who taught me in Mpumalanga were actually people from Durban. So, then if you would listen to the dialect of Sign Language which I learned—it was very, very rich and very inclusive. So that definitely counted in my favour because I could then adapt easily, or more easily between various different people's ways of signing and you know the structure. So that is definitely something that has had an impact on my journey with formal training.*

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I undertook to render the narratives of my participants truthfully and faithfully. The narratives were built around key aspects such as their identity, background, exposure to Deaf culture, initial exposure to interpreting, types of learning, communities of practice and lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning was a golden thread that was woven through the informal, formal and non-formal learning experiences of these participants, while the different identities that these participants take on in their various roles give meaning and substance to their lives.

In the next chapter, these aspects and themes are examined using the theoretical frameworks as identified in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to gain an insight and understanding of the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters who work as educational interpreters at a South African university.

To develop a better understanding of the LLL journeys as the participants, this study looked at their lived experiences and their life-worlds. This was done through a narrative approach, while a process of thematic analysis was used to identify the prevailing themes and patterns within the narratives of participants. By using the theoretical framework that was discussed in Chapter 2 as an analytical lens, this chapter thus is the analysis and discussion of the themes and patterns that emerged.

5.2   Jarvis's holistic learning theory

With the focus of this study centring around the lifelong learning journeys of two SASL interpreters who work at a South African university, it made sense to use Jarvis's holistic approach to learning as a lens to explore the themes and patterns within the data.

This process of learning, according to Jarvis (2005: 27), involves disjunctures that can change both the learner and others in their world. This transformation in turn changes their social world, which means the acceptance of the status quo becomes a bit of a contentious issue since their experiences are never the same. In this study, the heritage signer (CODA) Kate's acquisition of SASL cannot be viewed as a disjuncture as it was her mother tongue, inherent to her culture and the community in which she grew up. For John, the acquisition of SASL is a direct result of the disjuncture he experienced when he was unable to communicate with his Deaf colleague. In contrast, they both had an experience at church, which led to a disjuncture between them and the social situations they were faced with. Adapting to the disjuncture led to changes in their social worlds, which meant they had to change or accept the status quo.

Various degrees of belonging and their position within the Deaf community and culture played, and are likely to forever play, a central role in the learning experiences of these interpreters. Throughout their learning journeys up to this point, it is clear that their primary learning events are very different, and that to some extent can be attributed to the different ways in which they became part of the Deaf community and to what extent they view the Deaf culture as their own. Their views of their realities, their life-worlds and how they interpret their role and position in the Deaf community create the arena within which the lifelong journey plays out. In addition, there are societal barriers that also influence

how learning is facilitated in the Deaf community and the people who live in and/or provide services to this community.

It was clear from their stories that while the catalyst for learning was, and probably always will be, very different for the two participants, that motivation and intention are key elements that drive their learning experiences. Jarvis (2012: 16) states that 'human beings rarely act mindlessly and aimlessly' and goes on to explain that motivation can be divided into two main categories. Firstly, an individual is motivated by the desire for harmony within their environment and social group and therefore seeks to remove the disjuncture that causes the discomfort. Secondly, the intention to satisfy one's hopes, desires and aspirations can be a motivational factor (Jarvis, 2012: 16).

When a disjuncture causes discord between the individual and their lifeworld, this becomes the incentive or motivation for learning and change. The disjuncture is followed by the secondary learning process that involves understanding, where meaning-making becomes the focus (Jarvis, 2009: 28-29).

There are, however, instances when, while the potential to transform exists, some people sometimes end up not learning (non-learning) and carry on unchanged after the experience. Jarvis et al. (2004: 61) posit that non-learning is usually the result of either presumption, non-consideration, or rejection. This means that while a disjuncture occurs, it can result in non-learning.

5.2.1   Learning about disability, Deaf community, and the self as an educational interpreter

The participants have had very different and unique life journeys, as well as lifelong learning journeys up to the point where their life-worlds intersected for the first time. This influenced how they approach and manage their learning. The way they approach the acquisition of new workplace literacies in their current positions is intrinsically linked to how they view deafness, the Deaf community, and themselves with particular reference to their role as educational interpreters for Deaf students and lecturers.

Their academic trajectory is closely linked to their membership in the Deaf Community. The reason why, and how they acquired SASL, also influenced how they chose to address knowledge and skills gaps that they identify. For this reason, various types of learning and different forms of learning were employed in the acquisition of new workplace literacies.

The excerpts below illustrate how much both participants value learning, including formal, informal, and even non-formal learning. Both of them realise that their relationship with SASL, whether by choice and by the fact that they were born into it, has had an impact on their future choices, both

consciously and unconsciously. While it might seem that both participants have a career path that seemed to develop almost organically, it should not be mistaken for a *laissez-faire* approach.

Kate

As a heritage signer/CODA, Kate initially did not make a conscious decision to learn about Deaf culture as it was the culture she was born into. Hence, the acquisition of SASL as a mother tongue was a natural progression.

> *I learnt SASL as a child, as any child would learn a language from their parents. It is my mother tongue, my culture. Not a choice as such. I just I acquired Sign Language visually, instead of orally.*

Reflecting on her identity, Kate also admitted that while she does identify as part of the Deaf community, she does to some extent straddle two worlds.

> *I definitely think of myself as having two legs, one in the Deaf world and one in the hearing world, not completely a hearing person, because I come from a different visual culture. So, I do not really get accepted completely in the hearing community. And you know, there are limits to the acceptance that I get in the Deaf community, it does give me some credibility when they learn that my parents are Deaf.*

Kate also believes that it is not only the fact that her parents are Deaf that adds to her credibility but that their reputation within the broader Deaf community is also a contributing factor.

> *They are quite well known, not just in Cape Town, but also across the country. But then again, mostly under the white Afrikaans users of South Africa. Because that is also a different era that they grew up in, and it was when they were not allowed to sign when they really had fight to have Sign Language as a mode of communication. That also became part of the struggles that they had, and they were known in those circles back then.*

Learning about Deaf culture and appreciation: Kate does not believe that the fact that she is a heritage signer elevates her standing in a professional working environment.

> *… it does give me a greater understanding of the slight nuances of expression in SASL and a greater appreciation of and sharing in the culture. I think I understand the culture better (than a COHA) because I have lived it my whole life. It is the way that we communicate with each other, the slight nuances and expression in sign language that has very specific meaning. There is not always an English or*

> *Afrikaans equivalent that you can give, so it becomes more of a descriptive description. When you interpret … to understand how they communicate, not just the fact that it is a language but also how they present and how they say things to you. You need to understand that to see the appreciation that they don't expressly say directly to you.*

According to Kate, many interpreters leave the field of interpreting because they do not feel appreciated. She explained that the Deaf are appreciative but that you need to understand the culture and know what to look for as they express the appreciation in other ways than hearing people would. Kate explained that the Deaf are very direct and that the onus is on you to be able to distinguish between context and intent. If you are not able to do this, you will be offended all the time.

> *As an interpreter, you need to understand when they say: 'Oh, but you are fat', that is not how you would voice it, because that is not what they mean. It is more a case of them wanting to know if you are comfortable. The context is important. A lot of interpreters miss that, and the hearing person ends up thinking they are rude.*

John

The acquisition of SASL was a deliberate, conscious decision for John that he made at the age of 19 when he started working as an administrative assistant. He experienced a disjuncture when he was able to greet and exchange some basic salutations with all his colleagues, except for one, his Deaf colleague.

> *I grew up with exposure to quite a lot of languages, especially the indigenous languages. I could greet most of my other colleagues in their home languages, at least saying 'How are you and how are you enjoying your day?'. The basics, but I could not do the same for my Deaf colleague, which I felt was grossly unfair, so I asked her to teach me the basics. That is how it started.*

John soon realised that he would never be able to learn in this way and needed exposure to the greater Deaf community. He started attending church with his colleague where his interaction with the Deaf members of the congregation was his first real contact with the Deaf community.

> *I started attending the congregation with the Deaf group and slowly but surely picked up more signs and by means of socialisation with the Deaf individuals, you started learning, different signs for different things.*

As a COHA, John admitted that learning SASL was difficult.

> *… it would definitely have been easier if I had grown up with the language, if I had grown up with a Deaf family member, regardless of whether it be a parent or another relative. It is more challenging because you have to put yourself out there deliberately to learn. You have to seek opportunities to learn, be that through doing community interpreting, attending courses, through socialising, through trial and error, or being a trainee and then learning from your mistakes.*

About his sense of belonging within and acceptance by the Deaf community, John explained that it was not a straightforward yes/no situation.

> *There is always a slight divide. I do feel part of the Deaf community, and in some sense I do not. I am part of the Deaf community because I serve the Deaf community, my services are aimed towards the Deaf community. And they do accept me as a language practitioner working in the language. But at the same time, you are not completely part of the Deaf community because you are still a hearing person.*

John believes his decision to immerse himself in the culture by moving in with four Deaf people was what led to him becoming part of the Deaf culture.

> *Because I ate with Deaf people, lived with Deaf people, I socialised with Deaf people, my whole daily existence revolved around the Deaf community and SASL.*

In John's opinion, being employed as a professional educational interpreter at a South African university, interpreting for Deaf students and Deaf lecturers did strengthen his standing and credibility in the Deaf community.

> *Sign Language interpreting is already a very niche service. But now to specialise in a specific field of Sign Language interpreting such as education interpreting did to some extent provide me with more credibility. You know, it's a very personal form of interpreting because you're literally dealing with somebody's future.*

5.2.2   Formal, non-formal and informal learning

The lifelong learning journeys of no two people are the same. While lifelong learning is part and parcel of a process that involves the deliberate actions of formal, non-formal education as well as informal learning, Henschke (2013) points out that one cannot ignore or underestimate the value of learning that is acquired by simply living. There are many factors that influence this journey and sometimes

unexpected events lead the learner down a new path. Below are some excerpts to show how the various forms of learning played a role in the participants' learning journeys thus far.

Kate

Kate's lifelong learning journey with Sign Language started at birth, as she is the child of Deaf parents. Her acquisition of SASL was therefore using informal learning. Informal learning, according to Neimeyer et al. (2012: 477), has some structure, is intentional, and objectives are formalised and communicated ahead of time. There is no formal assessment built in, but informal assessment forms a natural and integral part of the process through feedback, corrections and encouragement. It is a self-directed process, driven by the student who has identified specific skills, material or applications that he or she needs to acquire or master. It bears mentioning that during her childhood her parents might have directed or co-directed the process by intentionally teaching the child in informal situations.

> *I learnt Sign Language as mother tongue as any child would learn a language from their parents. I just acquired it visually instead of orally.*

Growing up, the Deaf community and culture, was Kate's community and culture. Her family life, religious activities and social life were inextricably part of the Deaf community.

> *As a child I was bilingual, I used Sign Language at home, but because I attended a crèche, I would also get spoken word input that way. As you know, children are versatile, adaptable, and flexible, you kind of just adapt to your environment. My mother was very involved in my education right from the start and always had a good relationship with my teachers.*

For Kate, her first disjuncture in terms of using Sign Language to communicate was at the age of 16. According to Jarvis (2006:26), there are five main steps involved in a primary learning experience. When Kate tells the story of how she interpreted for a German visitor to their church you can identify these steps. Interpreting between hearing and Deaf people had been part of Kate's lifeworld (1), something she took for granted. When she had to interpret for the German visitor to her congregation, she had the sensation of not-knowing, a disjuncture (2) when she realised that because her signing was based on spoken Afrikaans, the German visitor would not understand. She thus resolved the disjuncture by giving meaning (3)to the sensation and finding a solution. In her case, it meant first creating a version of Sign Language based on spoken English and then signing that to her visitor, which was the implementation of her resolution (4). This realisation that interpreting could look and work

differently than what she was used to irrevocably changed Kate's worldview (5) and it became part of her new, lifeworld that could again be taken for granted.

When Kate finished school, her mother was adamant that she should pursue a formal qualification.

> *My mom said to me: 'You will not be an interpreter because it is a thankless job,*
> *and you cannot earn a salary.' At the time (1996) that was true, the thought of*
> *paying a Sign Language interpreter to work was just impossible. The narrative at*
> *the time was: 'Ag shame, you know, the poor Deaf people, you need to help them.*
> *That just all it is. It's about helping them.'*

Kate did a short course in South African Sign Language at the University of the Free State in 1998 where she realised that it is about so much more than merely helping the Deaf and that she could do so much more. However, her mother held firm that she had to obtain a formal qualification that was not linked to interpreting. At the time there was no course available that one could choose as a Sign Language interpreter.

Her formal academic journey started with a Business Administration honours degree, followed by a master's in Philosophy: Intercultural Communication at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). She wanted to continue her studies with a master's in SASL Linguistics, but the programme was discontinued. To obtain her qualification in business administration, Kate had to complete a six-month practical component. To fulfil this requirement, she worked for Deaf South Africa in Johannesburg.

By the time Kate started working, formal and informal learning had been part of her learning journey. Informal learning occurred because, throughout her studies, Kate continued to do community interpreting which allowed her to keep abreast of trends and new signs as they developed within the community using incidental and informal learning. Her short course at UFS, and both tertiary degrees gave her a strong academic grounding through structured formal educational channels.

She had only been in her intern position at DEAFSA for a month when her mentor resigned and the director at DEAFSA asked her to step up and take on more responsibility.

> *I was just bombarded by everything. So beyond just doing the admin, I just started*
> *interpreting, and it really took off from there.*

This sudden promotion at DEAFSA can be viewed as another disjuncture in Kate's lifelong learning journey. The fact that her mentor at DEAFSA left soon after Kate started meant that she was pushed into an active interpreting role much faster, and her learning curve was steep and accelerated. This position gave her broader exposure to interpreting in a professional capacity.

I think that the stint at DEAFSA is where things started to change a bit more from where I just used to do it [interpreting] on a social level when I'm available over my holidays, or sometimes I didn't go to class, instead opting to interpret. So, interpreting has always been there. I don't think there is a specific time when I chose it as my career, it just became more and more and more of what I did.

During her time at DEAFSA, Kate acquired a lot of new knowledge and skills through informal learning as she learnt about the organisational culture, her new responsibilities and the new audiences and settings where she had to interpret.

After her practical requirements were met and she obtained her degree, Kate started working for a software engineering company that created technology for the defence force. This naturally also required a lot of learning about the company culture and the new field she was working in. She started as a secretary but soon was placed in charge of the evidence and documentation in the legal department. This job exposed her to a lot of new challenges and opportunities during her five-year tenure.

I became more exposed to deaf-blind interpreting during that time as well. I was asked to interpret for the director of Deaf-Blind South Africa and travelled with him to the United Nations and different places.

Through self-reflection, Kate experienced another personal disjuncture. She realised that while she was gainfully employed, she continued to use her free time and vacation to pursue her passion for interpreting. There thus was a disconnect between the direction in which she envisioned her career progressing (business administration) and the role interpreting was playing in her professional life. The lifeworld that she had come to take for granted no longer satisfied her. To address this, she decided to make her passion her vocation and accepted a position as a parliamentary interpreter. This position presented new challenges and a lot of informal learning took place through working, networking and learning more about the parliamentary culture and the red tape that comes with working in a political environment.

When she joined the university, Kate's informal learning continued along the same vein. As part of her professional development, she was allowed to sit in on some of the Sign Language classes that were presented by the Linguistics Department.

I was given the opportunity to sit in on those lectures, I just didn't have access to a diploma or anything, but I was privy to the classes at the very least.

When Kate joined the university, the SASL interpreting project was a pilot project, which meant that the interpreters had to do a lot of learning on the job as they became aware of specific needs.

> *There were support structures in place, but not much. We learn as we go. We have made a few mistakes, but we have also had great successes. But there is still a lot to do, there is a lot still to understand. I have actually gone and done a lot of reading and research just to see how other universities do it in other countries and in South Africa.*

Community interpreting remains a very big part of any professional interpreter's workload and the university makes provision for that in the schedules of their SASL interpreters. Community interpreting provides informal learning opportunities for the interpreters that add to their vocabulary, aid their understanding of developing trends and ensure a strong connection to the Deaf community.

> *It is important to do that because it gives me the terminology, it gives me the connection with the Deaf community, it gives me that authenticity. When I go back to interpret in class, I have a broader background of what is really going on, on the ground.*

Kate feels her current employer is lacking in the arena of continuous professional development (CPD) of herself and her colleague.

> *I feel that there is no financial investment in our growth, and we are completely reliant on ourselves to go and look for opportunities to grow. And then it has to be outside the university because there ain't no money.*

A positive spin-off from Covid-19 was that it has made other avenues of learning more accessible.

> *I can now follow online webinars after the whole Covid thing, and everything went online. It is amazing! Suddenly I can access all these courses from America and from other countries that do offer it in English.*

These non-formal and informal learning opportunities have made things a lot easier for Kate. She understands the importance of learning and keeping up with developments within her field. These online courses, some credit-bearing, others not, allowed her to do some self-directed learning to fill the gaps that she has identified in her immediate environment.

> *CPD is important to keep up with new terminology and changes in the Deaf community, and the way things are going, especially after Covid. I have had to do my research the whole time because the university just does not have a clue. And they only offer MS Teams [as a learning platform], but MS Teams is not accessible*

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to Deaf people. C'mon, you know, but they just will not budge. So, we have had to go look for funding to buy a one-year Zoom subscription, because the university does not condone it. And we have had to do it in secret because if they know that we were using Zoom, they will probably shut us down because you know, red tape is far more important than actual success.

Kate sees the benefits of formal and informal learning as interconnected and equally important in her current position.

I think the formal training that you get definitely gives you a lot more guidance and clarity on the dos and the don'ts. Formal learning teaches you the theory that you need, but it is informal learning that teaches you about the boundaries. With informal learning, I would say, it is almost more important, but the foundation is laid by the formal learning. But then you really make it yours when you start actually absorbing what is going on around you and adjusting and growing your emotional intelligence and knowing, being self-aware. To me, informal learning has been a valuable contributing factor to truly understanding the Deaf community, why we do the things we do and how we do them—a true understanding brings with it compassion and a focus on providing a service that is not focused on you as the interpreter, but rather on the message.

The table below illustrates how Kate throws light on the characteristics of and relations between formal and informal learning—how she sees the interplay and relevance between the types of learning and what they contribute.

Table 5.1 Illustration of how Kate views the relations between formal and informal learning.

Formal learning	Informal learning
Guidance and clarity on do's and don'ts	Learning as you go along.
Provides a theoretical base	Teaches you about boundaries
Lays foundations on which informal learning can build	When you start to make it your own, absorbing what is going on around you.
	Adjusting and growing emotional intelligence and knowing
	Message-focused
	Becoming self-aware
	Contributing to understanding the Deaf community and the practices

	Understanding the why and how – brings understanding and compassion
	Message-focused, not interpreter focused

Informal learning is therefore a holistic activity that involves both intellect and affect ('emotional intelligence and knowing'; 'understanding and compassion'). Crucial to this process is the holistic development of one's sense of self ('becoming self-aware', 'make it your own') and one's relation to others ('contributing to understanding the Deaf community').

Jarvis (2009: 25) describes learning as a process through which experiences are transformed into skills, while attitudes are transformed into knowledge. He continues (2009: 30) to say that learning is a social process that involves the body and the mind as he believes that we experience through our bodies, which leads to learning. The mind, through cognitive processes, makes sense of the experiences as we see, feel, taste, hear and smell. It is interesting to note Kate's use of active verbs when referring to informal learning (absorbing, adjusting, grown, knowing), while also specifically referring to values such as compassion and service. It might be seen as indicative of the fact that she is making the learnings her own, accepting them as part of her new lifeworld as a result of experiencing them.

When viewing learning as a social process, one must point out that SASL interpreting, while professional and outcomes-driven, has an important social element to it. There is a greater sense of a social bond between the parties involved when compared to spoken interpreting, which can often be very impersonal. It is also true that for SASL interpreting more senses are engaged. In the above excerpt, Kate mentions self-awareness and John in his story also referred to how being a SASL interpreter has sharpened his other senses. They come to rely on more than their hearing to assimilate a message.

Kate sees lifelong learning as a necessity.

> *If you are part of any language group or cultural group, and when you are working with people, you need to keep up to date with the changes of psyche, and the changes of the environment. For example, when I started working, people did not have screen fatigue, today it is a real thing. Methods change and it is perceived differently, people react differently, it changes behaviour and that changes the way language is used.*

Kate had to adapt how she interprets since she started to provide online interpreting.

> *Sign Language is a three-dimensional language, but now that I interpret on-screen, I have literally had to change the way I sign things, just so that the full hand can be*

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seen sometimes. So, you must be able to adapt. Lifetime, lifelong learning in this industry for Sign Language, specifically, that I can speak to is very important for anybody who want to stay in this career.

John

John started working as an administrative assistant after matric and did not immediately enrol at a tertiary institution to work towards a degree or diploma using formal learning. That only happened later during his learning journey.

His learning journey with SASL started when he asked his colleague to teach him some of the basic signs so that he could at least greet her in her language. It was a self-directed process, driven by John who identified a specific skill that he wanted to acquire. This informal learning continued when he joined her congregation to broaden his exposure to the Deaf community.

> *I started attending the congregation with the Deaf group and slowly but surely picked up more signs, and by means of socialising with Deaf individuals started learning.*

The second big step that John took in his learning journey was to move in with four Deaf individuals and completely immerse himself in their culture, with SASL being the only way to communicate with each other. This process was again an intentional choice where the objective was clear ahead of time. While the learning process can be described as informal, it did have some structure and purpose. (Neimeyer et al., 2012: 477).

> *That was where I literally became part of the Deaf community because I ate with Deaf people, I lived with Deaf people, I socialised with Deaf people. My whole daily existence revolved around the Deaf community and Sign Language.*

When using Schugurensky's (2000: 4) typology of informal learning to analyse the above quote, it is clear that John's learning was self-directed as it was a conscious and intentional choice to learn. Elements of incidental learning formed part of it, because while living with Deaf individuals was an intentional choice, not everything learnt would necessarily have been a conscious choice. Social learning, also called tacit learning, is nonconscious learning. Through socialising with his housemates and their friends a lot of unintentional learning also took place. With specific reference to the socialisation aspect, Schugurensky (2000) explains that it is the internalisation of values, attitudes, behaviours and skills that form part of daily life but that with unintentional learning the learner is often unaware that they have learned something.

When he worked as a freelance interpreter at the Mpumalanga legislature and the National Institute for the Deaf (NID) in Worcester, John was exposed to many different dialects within SASL. This incidental learning was a by-product of learning about and working within the Deaf community.

> *I dealt with different dialects on a daily basis when I started working at the NID in Worcester. When I was in Mpumalanga, obviously, people would visit from other provinces like Gauteng or Free State for example and you would notice that there were provincial differences, but the first time I noticed provincial dialects was when I moved to the Western Cape.*

When John joined the university where he is currently working, a lot of informal learning took place. Structures were put in place with clear, formalised learning objectives that were communicated ahead of time. Mentoring and networking as part of informal learning (Neimeyer et al., 2012: 477) played, and still play, an important role in John's learning journey. This process also helped him to become familiar not only with the culture of the Deaf community but also the institution's culture (Marsick & Watkins, 2001: 26).

> *I received a formal mentor when I started with my current position. We regularly discussed issues that came up or if there was anything that I was uncertain about. We formed different discussion groups that included Deaf students and Deaf lecturers who we interpret for, and we liaised with other tertiary institutions where SASL was used, both locally and internationally, to discuss best practice and shared challenges.*

Due to how SASL became part of John's life, formal learning did not initially form part of his plan. As his knowledge grew and his skills improved, he found himself employed as a freelancer and from there, his career just took off. Initially, when he started working professionally there were no official qualifications available.

> *When I started interpreting as a Sign Language interpreter, there were no qualifications that I could do as an interpreter. This is in South Africa that I am talking about. I could have trained overseas in American Sign Language or British Sign Language, but that would have defeated the purpose. Later on, when the Deaf institutions or organisations who now offer training started offering training, the level of training that they offered was so basic that it would not have made sense to do that. That would have been like learning the alphabet again or learning to read again. At that stage, I had been working as interpreter for four or five years.*

John's informal learning, therefore, went beyond the formal offerings in SASL at the time. John has kept on trying to find a formal avenue of learning which would consider his knowledge and skills level and offer him the opportunity to expand on that.

> *I have been in consultation with people at the different institutions over the years to find out which level of training would be best suited to both my experience and my skill level, but also to address, you know, the skills that I need to improve. Especially the soft skills that is required for interpreting. So, it was not due to a lack of trying.*

Another problem that John encountered with formal learning is that many of the programmes that were at the right level were only offered as full-time courses.

> *I could not do the full-time courses, because the demand for where I was, in my context, my demand as Afrikaans-speaking Sign Language interpreter was just so great that I just could not afford to leave the community in the lurch because I was the only Afrikaans interpreter in a 50-kilometre radius.*

John also had some reservations about doing formal sign language training.

> *Initially, I was sceptical of doing formal Sign Language training. Many of the interpreters that I worked with, who had formal Sign Language training, or Sign Language interpreter training—be this at university or various other levels—were not as … I would not say popular, but from my experience many of the Deaf community members, if they had a choice, those interpreters would not be their first choice. This is because you learn a very academic way of signing, a very cold, impersonal way of signing, compared to when you learn from the Deaf community itself.*

Here John's informal route into interpreting gives him insight into the differences between formal and informal training in interpreting. He sees formally trained signing as 'academic', 'cold', 'impersonal' compared to learning informally from the Deaf community itself. This points to the crucial aspect of relationality in interpreting.

5.3   Communities of practice

This section explored the communities of practice that play a role in the lifelong learning journeys of the SASL interpreters. A community of practice (COP) is defined by Wenger as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relations with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1999: 25).

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Communities of practice form an integral part of the lifelong journey of these interpreters. These COPs are evident in social and professional lives. This study focused on the COPs that were formed with an eye on learning more about the Deaf community and culture, expanding of skills and knowledge to better serve the Deaf community and socialising with Deaf people. In this way, their participation in the COP helped them to build upon their existing workplace literacies. Participation in the various COPs involves discussion around a specific practice, for example, SASL interpreting at a university; and discussion within the practice, for example how to best support the student who makes use of the service. The purpose of these type of discussions are to engage, focus on the practice to shift the attention and support to a communal form of memory and reflection (Lave & Wenger, 1999: 30).

The SASL interpreters, Deaf students and Deaf lecturers are active participants involved in creating, approving and sharing experiences that are tied to the ethos and practices associated with the university that they form part of.

5.3.1 How Kate and John's realities influence their memberships to various COPS

During Kate's lifelong learning journey to date, she has been and still is, a member of many different COPs. These various communities of practice are aimed at sharing information, knowledge, and skills while working towards a common goal as a group. Much of the knowledge and skills that she gained through her membership to these COPs are directly linked to the acquisition of new workplace literacies, which makes her better equipped for her job. As a CODA, Kate is what is known in the industry as a heritage signer. Her membership to the Deaf community is thus not so much a community of practice as it is the culture she was born into. However, events and changes in her life have meant that as a member of the Deaf community she plays a central role in the COPs that she is part of, especially in the positions where she was formally employed as an interpreter. Her intimate knowledge and understanding of the Deaf culture mean that even when she joins a new COP related to Deafness she quickly progresses from the periphery to the centre where legitimate peripheral participation advances to full participation. This movement toward the centre, according to Lave and Wenger (1991: 116), is indicative of constant movement, highlighting the fact that the participation process is never static.

Throughout John's lifelong learning journey, especially as an adult, several COPs stand out in terms of learning and expanding his knowledge and skills base. As a non-heritage signer, John only acquired SASL as an adult, therefore COP memberships, as they pertain to Sign Language interpreting, will necessarily look different to that of a heritage interpreter. This is in addition to the fact that no two people can ever have the same learning journey.

5.3.1.1   Legitimate peripheral participation

Legitimate peripheral participation is a key element in Lave and Wenger's (1991: 67) theory of situated learning which is part of Wenger's 1998 COP theory as well. Situated learning through communities of practice, according to Lave and Wenger (1991: 29), 'is part of the natural processes of socio-culturally promoted learning'. As can be seen from Kate's acquisition of Sign Language as mother tongue, how children learn their first language, is an example of such situated learning.

> *I learnt sign language as mother tongue as any child would learn a language from*
> *their parents. I just acquired I visually instead of orally.*

At the age of sixteen, there was a specific moment, a disjuncture, where it is clear that she had moved from the periphery position toward the centre of her religious community in terms of interpreting. Kate attended a normal Sunday service at the Deaf congregation that she and her family belonged to and was asked to interpret for a German visitor. Up to that point, she had naturally acted as an interpreter for the Deaf community on a social level when needed, but this was the first time she remembers doing it in a more official capacity.

> *The German visitor obviously did not understand our sign language, which at that*
> *time was very total communication[3]. This means that it was based on the spoken*
> *Afrikaans, so I had to create a spoken English and a signed version. And that was*
> *before I had any training or any idea of what interpreting should look like beyond*
> *the church that I had grown up in.*

Newcomers that join a COP to learn usually start by participating on the periphery. The legitimacy of the periphery position allows them to gravitate towards the centre as they become more competent and accomplished members of the COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 109). An essential requirement of peripheral participation is engagement from the members, this includes a sense of responsibility for the COP enterprise while using and updating the COP repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 100-101).

The first COP, that John belonged to, that was connected to the Deaf community, was when his Deaf colleague invited him to join her at church. This Deaf congregation thus was a COP where he started using Sign Language in a social and religious context. The joint shared goal of this COP was exposing

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[3]'Total Communication (TC) is arguably one of the most misunderstood terms in the field of Deaf education. As it is currently defined, 'TC is a philosophical orientation to education that allows for the use of the full range of spoken and/or visual modalities in providing access to language'. One of the most common misinterpretations is that TC 'is a methodology that prescribes the simultaneous use of spoken and signed language and is therefore synonymous with Simultaneous Communication' (Mayer, 2016: 32).

John to a wide community of Deaf speakers. It was a collaborative process that involved John, his colleague, and the members of the Deaf group within the congregation. As John became more adept in the use of Sign Language while also becoming more familiar with the Deaf culture, it allowed him to slowly move inward from the outer edge of the periphery.

Peripheral position	*We could not communicate with one another in the beginning, because I barely know how to spell my name, let alone sign. She invited me to attend her congregation at church where they had a Deaf group. I started attending the congregation where the Deaf group and slowly but surely picked up more signs and by means of socialising with Deaf individuals started learning different signs for different things.*	Steady progress of learning with COP
Invitation provides legitimacy to participation		Beginning of movement from periphery

As his confidence and skill grew, it was noticed by other members of the congregation. He was approached by the assistant of the (then) premier of Mpumalanga, who is a Deaf person. He wanted John to act as his Sign Language interpreter between Afrikaans and SASL at the Mpumalanga legislature as none of the other SASL interpreters understood Afrikaans.

Invitation strengthens legitimacy	*I said no because I was still brand new. I mean, at that stage it was only four or five months that I had been learning sign language. He kept on insisting because he obviously saw that I could sign but being able to sign and being able to interpret are two very different things. I eventually conceded and attempted to interpret for him in Parliament. And he was so satisfied with my interpreting that I ended up interpreting on a freelance basis for a provincial Parliament for four years.*	Peripheral position again
		Move from periphery towards centre through participation, learning and experience.

This allowed John to move from the periphery of someone who could sign to someone who could interpret, which naturally gave him access to membership in other, new COPs. There was thus moving from one COP to another. The invitation from the premier's assistant legitimised his participation, which allow the move from the periphery to the centre. This created an intersection between two COPS.
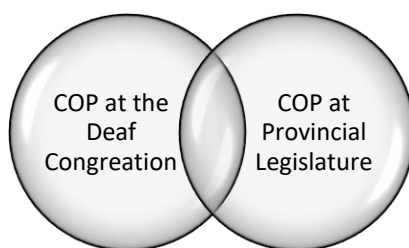
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Figure 5.1 Intersection of two communities of practice

5.3.1.2   Regime of competence

For a social group to qualify as a COP, a regime of competence is assumed. The competence of the COP is determined by strength and interaction between three interrelated dimensions, namely, joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 138; 152).

Joint enterprise

When members of a COP have a shared focus, it becomes a joint enterprise. Through mutual accountability, members of a COP make sense of the rules and procedures that form part of the joint enterprise. It also involves more abstract elements such as sensitivity and perception that must be considered if a joint enterprise is to succeed.

The joint enterprise here is interpreting at a particular South African university, while activities such as terminology development, collaboration in terms of learning material and the further development and promotion of SASL for academic purposes fall within this joint enterprise.

As a SASL interpreter at the university, Kate forms part of various COPs which all contribute to the development of the workplace literacies. There are a few COPs that can be seen as independent but also as part of a constellation of COPs. For example, the constellation of COPs would fall under the broader umbrella of the development of best practices. Within the constellation, there are several COPs with more specific objectives. An example of one of these is the COPs concerned with academic terminology development. Internally this COP has at its centre the interpreters, the Deaf students as well as the Deaf lecturers at the university.

> *It was uncharted territory. We learned as we went along, from mistakes and successes. Creating the best practice based on experience and action research. We looked at international practice, other tertiary institutions in South Africa and to other SASL interpreters in the academic field.*

As members of the Deaf community, arguably at different levels of intimacy with the culture, who all provide a service to the members of the Deaf community, this is a joint enterprise that affects all

members and therefore there is mutual accountability when it comes to the desire to succeed. At the periphery, there are sporadic collaborations with other South African universities, with the promotion of SASL as the common denominator. Further, towards the periphery, you find collaborations with other outside role players, in this case, the Western Cape Department of Education.

> *We are involved with the Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) in conjunction with the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED). The WCED has made funding available for each of the five Deaf schools that teach SASL to their kids. They create material from a Deaf-led perspective, where the Deaf find solutions that I as a hearing person, even though I come from the Deaf community, would not even have thought about. They find their solutions instead of hearing people deciding for Deaf people what is best. [Kate]*

For John, the Deaf members of the COP groups that he belonged to had to ensure that while they were teaching and expanding John's Sign Language skills, they also brought across the sensitivities and nuances of the Deaf culture. John, for his part, had to be open to learning more about the Deaf culture, realising that Sign Language cannot be separated from the nuances and cultural references.

> *At my first exposure to the Deaf community, I was not aware of the difference between people who identified as Deaf with a capital D as appose to those who identified as deaf with a lowercase d. […].*

> *Initially, I was sceptical of doing formal sign language training because many of the interpreters I worked with, who had formal Sign Language training or Sign Language interpreter training, be this at university or various other levels were not as popular. From my experience many Deaf community members, if they had a choice, those (formally trained interpreters) would not be their first choice. Because you learn a very academic way of signing, a very cold and impersonal way of signing, whereas when you learn from the Deaf community itself. […] The dialect of Sign Language which I learnt was very, very rich and very inclusive. It definitely counted in my favour because I could adapt more easily between various different people's way of signing and you know, the structure. So that is definitely something that has had an impact.*

John, when compared to his colleague who is a heritage signer, had so much more to learn than Sign Language per se. To learn more about the cultural nuances and practices he had to rely much more on the members of the COPs that he belonged to, to teach, guide and mentor him. His willingness to learn from these COPs is what allowed him to move from the periphery of various of the COPs to a

position of legitimate participation. John not only learnt to be adaptable but he also learnt to be sensitive to the various nuances and ideologies within the Deaf community.

Mutual engagement

This section examined the participants in mutual engagement, the purposes of mutual engagement, the forms that mutual engagement takes, and the shortcomings of mutual engagement indicated by the data.

Mutual engagement refers to the interaction and support among members of the COP, for example, interpreters, Deaf lecturers and Deaf students. Mutual engagement pertains to the job, the leadership, and the resources within a COP. It revolves around the relationship of trust and the continuous negotiation involved in the process of meaning-making. Members within COP have to trust each other on a personal level but they must also have faith in each other's ability to contribute to the enterprise so that problems or gaps can be addressed successfully, openly, and honestly. It requires the perpetual back and forth between experience and competence to create an atmosphere for learning and provide a context within which new insights are translated into knowledge (Wenger, 1998: 214).

There is mutual engagement between the Language Centre and the Disability Unit. The interpreters, Deaf lecturers and Deaf students have a good working relationship with the Disability Unit and do get support from them. So, while at this university the SASL interpreters operate under the ambit of the Language Centre, the relationship with the Disability Unit remains a very important one.

Kate made specific reference to how they approach SASL interpreting differently at her university when compared to other South African universities.

> *We do things differently than other universities because we offer the interpreting service for Sign Language under the Language Centre and not as part of the disability unity [as other universities do].*

John also values the relationship they have with the DU.

> *We also get support from the Disability Unit at the university but more from an administrative support perspective. We have a wonderful working relationship with the Disability Unit, and they are very accommodating towards our students and towards us.*

There are, however, elements of mutual engagement that fall short, and that Kate believes should be addressed. One of the aspects is the mental wellness of the interpreters.

I think things like debriefing options or support should be available. We do need a lot more psychological or mental health support, because we are exposed to the students' wellness, and what the students experience. I do not know about the other interpreter, but I personally become so involved emotionally. Not because I want to take over or become involved in their daily lives. What is discussed during those sessions [extra mural session] and seeing how they live or experiencing their struggles, and being part of the discussions, impacts on you as an individual. But there is no space to let that go, I have to find and pay for my psychologist to go and debrief somewhere.

Another aspect that concerns Kate is the university's lack of investment in professional development, and unwillingness to listen when problems are raised.

I feel that there is no investment, financially, in our growth. We are completely reliant on ourselves to go and look for opportunities to grow and then it has to be outside the university because there is no money. Continuous professional development (CPD) is important to keep up with new terminology and changes in the Deaf community and the way things are being done, especially after Covid. I have just had to do my research the whole time because the university does not have a clue. For example, they say we may only use MS Teams, but Teams is not accessible to Deaf people, but they just will not budge. So, we have had to go look for funding to buy a one-year Zoom subscription, because the university does not condone it.

John realised that the fastest way to become fluent in SASL would be to engage more holistically with the Deaf culture. This COP between John and his housemates created a safe environment, a circle of trust so to speak, where John could not only improve his signing skills but could also learn more about the community. The relationship he had with his flatmates also created the opportunity for feedback and discussion.

I think I only really started to become part of the Deaf community about a year after I started learning Sign Language, I fully immersed myself in the Deaf culture by moving in with four Deaf people, staying with them, being the only hearing person when I could barely sign. That was where I literally become part of the Deaf community because I ate with Deaf people, lived with Deaf people and I socialised with Deaf people. My whole daily existence revolved around the Deaf community and Sign Language.

This is an example of where a shared purpose and various forms of mutual engagement (live, eat, socialise) worked together successfully towards a common goal.

Shared repertoire

A shared repertoire is made up of the resources and ways that are used during the process of meaning-making within a joint enterprise. Elements such as common language, shared routines, and ways of doing things, stories, gestures, and concepts that are developed within the COP form part of this. While these elements stand independent of each other, they also interact and influence each other. According to Wenger (1998: 214), a history of mutual determination will result in the development of a shared repertoire, which is in a state of constant flux as the COP evolves and changes.

The fact that Kate specifically makes mention of the fact that she and John are permanent employees shows the value she attaches to the COP of securely employed personnel when compared to Sign Language interpreters at other universities. This sense of security created a shared history of practice and knowledge that also presented the COP members with some stability in an environment that is constantly in flux.

> *We are also employed as permanent employees compared to other interpreters [at other universities] who are only appointed on a one-year contract, depending on whether there is a student or not. So, our sense of security is definitely better.*

John is a member of several COPs at work. While these COPs are independent with specific goals, in the greater scheme of things, they are also interrelated and form part of a constellation of collection of communities of practice. According to Wenger-Trayner (2015: 4), an organisation's collective knowledge is contained within these constellations, each community taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organisation needs.

> *We [my mentor and I] also formed different groups to discuss, for example, terminology, and these groups included both like Deaf lecturers and Deaf students for whom we interpret. At the same time, we liaised with other South African universities where Sign Language takes place to find out how do they deal with certain challenges, or for example, how you do external moderation of interpreting to make sure that quality assessment is done and so forth. In addition, we also worked with some international universities in The Netherlands and Belgium.*

Pertinent aspects of shared repertoire are evident from the above except and are closely linked to the broadening of his workplace literacies. Specifically, the joint enterprise of sharing and developing approaches to external moderation and assessment. While these elements stand independent of each other, they also interact and influence each other. Similarly, while other universities locally and abroad

might be independent of this university, there are bound to be common practices and knowledge that can be of benefit to all parties.

5.4 Dialogical self-theory

I-positions

Dialogical self-theory can be applied as a framework for this research as the multiple selves of the sign language interpreters throughout their lifelong journeys provide interesting insights into the development of their literacies, how they evolved and changed as they interacted with people in different contexts and communities of practice. The framework provided by this theory illuminates how the shifting identities of people can be used to understand and interpret the data collected through narratives in a meaningful way.

The different levels of memberships or sense of belonging of the interpreters to the Deaf community, while also having membership within the hearing community, create discord. Through this, the construction and maintenance of the SASL interpreters' identity are shaped. These I-positions compete for the position of dominance, create conflict, or form an alliance, strengthening I-positions to support the imagined self. Correspondingly, these I-positions can also work together to reinforce negative perceptions of the self through criticism or self-reproach. The following quote from Kate reveals some of the many I-positions that are reflected within the narratives. Her internal struggle is to put the needs of her students ahead of her own while balancing that with self-care.

I-as-CODA

I-as-Advocate

From my interaction with Deaf adults and Deaf kids, you can start to see why they don't speak up for themselves—how they have been silenced their whole lives. You learn to become hard,

I-as-You

and you learn to fight for your place and learn to forget your

I-as-SASL interpreter

feelings as an interpreter because others are always more important. The message is more important than you and your

I-as-subordinate to the message

feelings of opinions.

I-as-Self-aware

… when you start actually absorbing what is going on around you and adjusting and growing your emotional intelligence and begin self-aware. [You realise] It is about that person; it is not

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I-as-SASL interpreter	*about you. Unfortunately, the long-term effects of that on an individual as a <u>Sign Language interpreter</u> is that you feed yourself this thing that it is <u>not about me</u>, it is always about the other person, and you really do get to a point where you lose yourself. And that has happened to me a few times, and then you just go boom, okay, I need to reset things. I need to <u>just find myself</u> again.*

I-as-subordinate to the message

I-as-Knowledge leader	*There is <u>no leadership</u> to guide us in SASL interpreting specifically, it is something I could have done, but I am too busy interpreting. <u>Burnout</u>. Too much to do, but not enough time. We can do so much better, if there was another interpreter, freeing up my time to provide the <u>guidance and training</u>.*

I-as-Knowledge leader

I-as-burnt out

I-as-Knowledge leader

Several I-positions are evident from the above excerpts, for example, the I-as-CODA and I-as-Advocate. These multiple self-positions create a constellation of mutually reinforcing negative positions. Hermans (2012) refers to this process of an alliance with the self. 'The positioning process can lead to monologue in which one voice is overly dominant and the other silenced, with the implication that co-constructive learning is hampered or even blocked' (Hermans, 2012: 12). Within the boundaries of this specifically constructed society of the self, the I-as-Advocate may become dominant and reinforced by the I-as-CODA position. In conjunction with this, the external positions of the self, such as I-as-SASL interpreter, I-as-Self-aware and I-as-knowledge leader, may lead to a dominant monologue with the self, which hampers dialogue with other possible I-positions of the self. Kate's position of I-as-lost is very revealing. Not only does she sometimes have to force herself to just rediscover her worth concerning the I-as-subordinate to the message but there is also a sense of being lost between all the various contending I-positions. Similarly, the I-as-burnt-out position links to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's (2010a: 260) point about emotions as temporary I-positions. While Kate's various I-positions are interdependent and impact each other, the various I-positions can also influence the self, while the self might in turn influence emotions.

Another interesting aspect that comes to the fore in Kate's quotes is the fact that she often refers to herself in the second person using the word 'you' rather than 'I'. In this way, she creates distance

between herself and the position she fulfils. There could be many reasons for this and it is not the point of discussion here. But it does create an additional I-position, the I-as-you position that becomes part of the dialogue for Kate.

In John's case, the fact that he is not a heritage signer meant his membership to the Deaf community is very different. He only became part of it as an adult, and he admits that there are various levels of acceptance from the Deaf community.

I-as-Deaf community member

I-as-language practitioner

I am _part of the Deaf_ community because I serve the Deaf community, my services are aimed towards the Deaf community, and they accept me as a _language practitioner_ working in the language. But at the same time, you are not completely part of the Deaf community, because you are still a

I-as-hearing person

hearing person. So, there is that slight divide, but that is not always the case. Some people in the Deaf community are more

I-as-criticised

critical than others.

I-as-professional/ employee

If I compare myself to my colleague, who is a CODA, our perspectives are quite different in the sense that I view my profession more from a work perspective, if that makes sense.

I-as-Outside

[…]do not think, and I do not pretend to be a Sign Language expert or a Deaf Studies expert. So, I am not very outspoken

I-as-Auxiliary

when it comes to Deaf issues or Sign Language issues, that I do not have knowledge about, or rather that I do _not have enough knowledge about_, I would rather not stick my neck out if I do not have all the facts.

John's quotes show a disjuncture in terms of his perception of his position within the Deaf community. He knows and understands the fact that he is a non-heritage signer, which means that he will never be able to understand the culture as fully as a Deaf person, or even as fully as his CODA colleague. Here the dominant I-position is that of a COHA, working in the Deaf Culture. He views himself as a

professional, providing a service to a specific community. The I-as-COHA position is strengthened by the I-as-Professional, these two are in juxtaposition to the I-as-Auxiliary and I-as-Outsider. The dialogue is centred around the I-positions that know enough and are sufficiently accepted to provide meaningful service with the I-positions that are aware of the lacuna in terms of advanced expertise. The I-as-Auxiliary position refers to John being able and confident to provide his interpreting services but not to lead when it comes to the development of best practices. In such situations, he chooses to follow the lead of other more experienced members of the Deaf community.

5.4.1   Acceptance, denial, and the self

The fact that both participants are hearing people, working within the Deaf community means that their sense of self is often challenged. Their experience of either growing up, working, and socialising within the Deaf community has given them a keen insight into the daily struggles of Deaf individuals functioning in a world geared towards the auditory abled.

Disability impacts their lives daily and leads to a state of internal disharmony when their ability to function in a way that supports their chosen I-positions and social selves is limited or impacted. This discord and the multiple I-positions that vie for dominance may be a result of the fact that their acceptance by the Deaf community is not unconditional but also from the fact that they want to provide the Deaf with the best possible service, often at great cost to themselves.

In their current positions, both SASL interpreters are managed by and work in a system that is run by auditory enabled people. These people often do not have the necessary background or lived experiences that both Kate and John have, and therefore cannot support them optimally. Even when problems are pointed out, it is often the interpreters who are left at the coal face having to make do with whatever support is available; often knowing first-hand that it is insufficient, or that they can do better. This places an additional emotional burden on the interpreters who go the extra mile to accommodate their clients (students), often to the detriment of their health and mental well-being.

In both Kate and John's story, the liminality of their positions is very evident. The I-as-inside/I-as-outside position to a certain extent is the position of any interpreter and what makes interpreting possible. But in this case, it also entails the ambiguity of both belonging and not belonging, being accepted and being only partially accepted, having to mediate between the Deaf (I-as-advocate/friend/interpreter) and the institution (I-as-staff member/part of the system).

These narratives highlight the complex relationship that the Deaf have with the term disability as the way the disabled view themselves and the way society views them are vastly different. Society, in this case, a South African university, professes to be accessible to them, when in fact it is often ill-prepared

to provide the care that the Deaf students and the SASL interpreters, who work with them, need for this to be an effective partnership that promotes equal access learning. This is especially evident when you look at examples of the past three years, where both Kate and John have been working at the same institution.

John also explains the importance of self-care and setting boundaries.

> *… the importance of saying no, that is one of the [lessons] I learnt in my current position. That is one thing I learnt because I could never say no and I learnt you have to say no, otherwise you burn out.*

While there is a lot of support for the Deaf students and the SASL interpreters, John still feels that more should be done to educate hearing people who need to work with the Deaf.

> *I think if there was more preparation with the lecturers before we actually started interpreting for them, or in their classes, you know, I don't want to say send them on sensitisation courses but more awareness training. How to work with a Deaf student, how to work with a Sign Language interpreter. Little things, you know, like for example, when we interpret, we interpret in the first person. In the beginning, the lecturers would get confused and think 'Oh, no but now the interpreter's answering on behalf of the student', when in fact, we were just interpreting in the first person.*

The public's general ignorance about Sign Language sometimes also causes some frustration. John points out that with the Covid-19 pandemic, certain protocols had to change for both educational and community interpreting. And while the frequency of especially community interpreting has declined, or in the case of educational and community interpreting has been replaced with online interpreting where possible, the need still does exist for face-to-face interpreting.

> *There are occasions where you have to go out into the community, you know, where individuals do not have access to remote video interpreting services. Something new that we had to deal with is to explain to people why we do not wear masks or visors. Because it fogs up and you cannot see, and if you cannot see my face, then you know, half of what I am trying to communicate is lost in any way. Then you might as well put a hand over a spoken language interpreters mouth while they are busy trying to interpret, it is the same thing.*

5.4.2   Motivation, learning and the confirmation of the self

Dialogical self-theory highlights the interdependence between motivation and identity. Batory (2010: 47) explains that identity is moulded by motivational influences and that there are six motivational forces at play that influence identity construction. These identity motives are self-esteem, belonging, continuity, distinctiveness, efficacy and meaning. The narratives shared by participants reflect these identity motives.

Kate enjoys being challenged intellectually and that can be seen in many of her anecdotes. Her passion for research and the fact that she often advocates for her community are strong motivational factors in her lifelong learning journey. She maintains a very full and strenuous professional career but is constantly researching to improve daily practices while continuing to serve the Deaf community through community services activities as well—not only to provide the service but also to stay abreast of developments within their linguistic community. In addition, she is also busy finalising her proposal for a PhD.

From her life story, one can identify all six of the identity motives as they drive her. Her distinctiveness is closely linked to her sense of belonging to the Deaf community. Kate's distinctiveness is tied to the fact that she learnt SASL visually as her mother tongue, which distinguishes her from other hearing individuals. However, while this makes her part of the Deaf community, the fact that she can hear also distinguishes her from them. This creates various opportunities for belonging, both to the Deaf community and to the hearing community.

> *I learnt Sign Language from my parents as any child would learn a language <u>from their parents</u>, because both <u>my parents are Deaf</u>. I acquired Sign Language as any child would acquire a language. I <u>acquired Sign Language visually</u>, instead of a spoken language. I was <u>bilingual</u>, basically, because I would go to a crèche where you get the spoken word input as well. I see myself as part of the Deaf community—because <u>I was born into</u> it. I understand the culture because <u>I have lived it my whole life.</u>*

Belonging

Belonging

Self-esteem

Distinctiveness

Belonging;
Continuity

Continuity

Kate has a continuous drive to learn more and do better to improve the efficacy of the service and support she provides. She is not only interested in bettering her skill and craft but also in adding meaning and making a difference in the lives of Deaf students. Due to her distinctive bicultural

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membership, she also is aware of the sensitivities and hindrances that form part of a Deaf person's daily existence on a mainstream campus. Kate does not believe that her position as interpreter gives her any elevated status; her self-esteem is more strongly linked to her desire to be the best at what she does, and always stay at the forefront of what is happening in her field. Being a knowledge leader is tied to her desire to make meaning, add meaning and advocate for her community.

I have actually gone and done a lot of reading and research just to see how other universities do it in other countries, [and] in South Africa.

Efficacy; continuity; self-esteem

Distinctiveness; meaning

Educational interpreting involves a lot of extramural interpreting as well, whether it is the mental health or physical wellness of the students. I think that is a component that no one really expected would come our way. The mental health component of a Deaf person is such a sensitive environment.

Meaning

Advocacy; meaning

By successfully doing that, she not only adds meaning to the lives of others but also provides meaning and purpose to her own. All of these identity motivations tie in with her self-esteem as a motivator, as it preserves and strengthens a positive self-image.

Distinctiveness; belonging

Belonging

Self-esteem

I definitely have two legs, one in the Deaf world and one in the hearing world. I do not really get accepted completely as a hearing person, because I come from a different visual culture. And there are limits to the acceptance that I get in the Deaf community. It [the fact that I am a heritage signer] does give me some credibility if I go, but guys, my parents are Deaf. But also,

Distinctiveness

Belonging

From John's story, it is clear that he feels strongly about concepts such as fairness and inclusivity, and that he will go out of his way to do what he can to include people and treat them fairly when it is within his purview. It is this sense of fairness and inclusivity that motivated John to learn SASL as an adult and helps him to strengthen and maintain a positive image of himself while making a difference in the lives of others.

Belonging

Distinctiveness

I noticed that one of the staff members, in other words, one of my colleagues is a Deaf person. I have grown up with exposure to quite a lot of languages, especially of the indigenous languages, so I could greet most of my other colleagues in their home language. At least saying, how are you, how was your day? But I could not do the same for my Deaf colleague, which I felt was grossly unfair.

Efficacy; meaning, continuity

Continuity; distinctiveness

John realised that to develop a sense of belonging with the Deaf community, he needed to learn not only the language but also immerse himself in their culture.

Efficacy

Distinctiveness

I fully immersed myself in the Deaf culture by moving in with four Deaf people. Staying with them, being the only hearing person that could barely sign. That was where I literally became part of the Deaf community because I ate with Deaf people, lived with Deaf people, and socialised with Deaf people. My whole daily existence revolved around the Deaf community and Sign Language.

Belonging

Continuity; belonging

Belonging; continuity

Meaning-making, and adding meaning to the lives of others, in this case, Deaf individuals, is important to John. John is acutely aware of the fact that as he learnt SASL so late in life, it made him an outsider. However, the tenacity and the enthusiasm with which he dedicated himself to master the language meant that he became part of the Deaf community—he does belong. The proximity within which John and the students operate in his position as educational interpreter add value and meaning to their lives, and that is important to him. The trust of others and being fair and inclusive are all self-esteem motivators for John.

Efficacy

Distinctiveness

Sign Language interpreting is already a very niche service but now to specialise in a specific field of Sign Language interpreting, such as educational interpreting, is a very personal

Meaning; efficacy; advocacy

Belonging

form of interpreting. You are literally dealing with <u>somebody's</u> <u>future</u>. And I mean, education is vital, and education is lacking for Deaf people in South Africa. <u>Begin part of that</u>, begin trusted to be part of that has definitely <u>affected the status</u> that I have a Sign Language interpreter, especially as a person who came <u>from outside the community</u>.

Self-esteem

Belonging

John understands the importance of continuity and aims to constantly provide the best possible service across time and situations. He knows that working within the Deaf community means that he needs to continuously stay abreast of changes and developments within that community and their language.

Distinctiveness; continuity

Your role as a Sign Language interpreter in the educational setting <u>constantly changes</u> in an organic manner, because besides the educational interpreting, you do a lot of <u>extracurricular interpreting</u>. We do a lot of community interpreting because that is how <u>you keep up to date</u> with the latest signs and the <u>latest trends in the community</u> and how you <u>network</u>.

Meaning; continuity

Continuity

Belonging

Continuity; efficacy; belonging

From John's lifelong learning journey, it is clear that he believes that if you are going to do something, that you should do it to the best of your ability. Instead of just acquiring a basic knowledge of SASL that would have allowed him to hold his simple conversations with his colleague, he ended up becoming so proficient in it, it became his career.

Motivation is specific to each individual within the context of this study and the motivations of the participants also vary. These motivations are to a large extent based on how they view themselves, their current situation and how they view their purpose in life. The interdependence between identity and motivation is also reflected in the stories they shared. Despite their different levels of membership in the Deaf community, both participants must be able to operate in both the Deaf world and the hearing world, and here their respective backgrounds, specifically as it pertains to SASL, play a prominent role in their continued learning journey. Learning, whether being formal, informal, or

incidental, helps the participants to reach their learning goals but it also endorses their chosen I-positions.

5.4.3   Emotions: the temporary self

The narratives are permeated with emotions throughout. The different social roles that an individual plays give rise to different I-positions. Similarly, emotions can also give rise to temporary I-positions. Emotions and the self, according to Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010a: 260) are interdependent and influence each other. While emotions can influence the self, conversely, the self can also influence emotions. Different I-positions can thus trigger different emotions and vice versa.

'The dialogical self aspires to promote integration between decentralising and centralising movements of positions in the self' (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007: 36). 'The movement is the dynamic process of positioning as the 'I' travels in time (i.e. the temporal dimension of the self) and space (i.e. the spatial dimension of the self) across the position repertoire' (Grimell, 2021: 4). The importance or dominance of certain I-positions depends on how sensitive the specific identity is to external contextual influences and the internal struggle for dominance of some I-positions over others (Batory,2010: 47).

Many strong emotions come to the fore in the narratives, among others, frustration, anger, protectiveness, concern, loyalty. These I-positions manifest internally and externally. People in the environment can become an external I-position if they hold relevance for one or more of an individual's internal positions. Many of Kate's I-positions are linked to the advocacy role she plays, largely because she was born into the culture but also because her CODA status gives her a better understanding of the challenges Deaf people face daily in all spheres of life. Kate explained that the mental health component is a very sensitive environment, especially for the Deaf students as they often are socially ill-prepared for the isolation that university can hold for them. They come from a Deaf school background, where they could converse with other Deaf children. At the university, they must function in the hearing world. Kate identified one of her Deaf student's needs for a connection in his new university environment.

> *You need to share some kind of interest with the Deaf people that you work with.*
> *For instance, the one student who loves watching TikTok, so I have started watching*
> *TikTok, so when he feels like he wants to talk about it, I can talk with him about it.*
> *So that he has that social connection with someone on campus. So, you [as*
> *interpreter] go out of your way, you do something extra, like a lot extra actually.*

Internal positions emerge as a result of the relevance and interaction with one or several external positions. For example, Kate forms part of the student academic support network as an interpreter

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that makes learning accessible to them in a hearing world. This position of I-as-Interpreter (knowledge partner) can come into conflict with the I-as-Ally and the I-as-Advocate positions. Kate needs and wants to provide a professional service, but as a member of the Deaf community with an understanding of its inner workings and challenges, she also knows that the needs of Deaf individuals are often silenced. This triggers her advocacy role. Batory (2010: 47) points out that the dominance of certain I-positions depends on how sensitive the specific identity is to external contextual influences and the internal struggle for dominance of some I-positions over others.

John is proud to be recognised as part of the Deaf community. He is cognisant of the fact that there are limitations to the level of acceptance that he will enjoy by nature of the fact that he is a hearing person who did not grow up in the Deaf culture. But he also advocates for the rights of Deaf people, the right of access to education, and their right to choose how they want to be served linguistically.

| I-as-service provider to deaf people | *One of the <u>challenges I have</u> had is to situate myself not more towards one side or the other, but in the middle to <u>straddle both</u> sides of the community. (Capital D versus lowercase d community.) Initially, obviously, I sided completely with pro-Sign Language and fiercely opposed oralism. But now, I understand from experience having been exposed to people from both parts of the community, that it is not for me to decide how somebody chooses to communicate. It is <u>their human right</u>, and if I want to be part of that, I need to adapt.* | I-as-straddling both sides |
| | | I-as-D/deaf advocate |

John is also very realistic about his limitations coming from an auditory background and makes no excuses for them. He rather accepts that he can provide a professional service but is more than prepared to let the experts lead when necessary and applicable.

> *I view my profession from a work perspective, whereas my colleague views it more from a humanitarian, or advocacy perspective. I am not, I do not think, nor do I pretend to be a Sign Language expert or a Deaf Studies expert. I am not very outspoken when it comes to Deaf issues or Sign Language issues that I do not have enough knowledge about. I would rather not stick my neck out if I do not have all the facts.*

Emotions also influence the dominance of one I-position over another. Emotions are not part of a purely internal process but rather part of a 'highly dynamic social and societal process of positioning. Depending on the positions in which people find themselves, particular emotions are expected to emerge, whereas others are expected to be absent or suppressed' (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a: 257). 'Emotions position us socially and personally. The saliency of the emotion, social context, adopted internal and external social I-positions and their associated role expectations will influence this process of positioning' (De Lange, 2015: 46).

From the above, it is clear that a person's I-positions will influence how they project their identity, how they manage these perceptions and the management of their relationships. Therefore, all of these I-positions have an impact on their lifelong learning journey. The management strategies that the SASL interpreters employ is borne from their I-positions and social selves. If these strategies complement their I-positions, they are more likely to be successful in affecting change and lead to a holistic learning experience. When the resources and tools that are available to the individuals conflict with a person's I-positions and social selves, they would probably abandon these management strategies, and rather choose the strategies that will help them to maintain and support their perceived selves—even if these strategies might not necessarily be the most effective.

5.5   Conclusion

The narratives yielded rich data from which particular themes and patterns could be identified. By employed Jarvis's learning theory, dialogical self-theory and communities of practice as theoretical lenses, I was able to contextualise and elucidate specific aspects such as holistic learning, communities of practice and workplace literacies as they pertain to the participants.

In summation, when I looked at these themes, I was able to form an understanding of the experiences of the lifelong learning journeys that these SASL interpreters have had to date, with specific insight into their experiences of working within the Deaf community and culture.

Their intrinsic and extrinsic experiences of the world and indeed, their lifeworlds, are directly impacted by the fact that they are hearing people working within a Deaf community and culture. Yet, they still work in an environment where their clients' disabilities directly affect their mental well-being. They have many additional barriers and obstacles that they need to overcome to provide a service to their clients, who form part of a minority group at the institution, which has definite and direct consequences for their continued learning and professional development as part of their lifelong learning journey.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1   Introduction

In the final chapter of this narrative study, I aim to integrate and combine the discussions and findings that came to the fore during the study. I respond to the research questions concerning the study's findings, the relevant literature as discussed in Chapter 2 as well as my theoretical framework. I then discuss the implications, insights and recommendations that arise from the research, while highlighting some of the limitations of the study and looking at some possible areas for future research.

Deafness or being hard of hearing impacts all aspects of such an individual's life. It does not matter how often the government or public institutions profess that they are open to people with disabilities, the reality is the mainstream education and work environments are seldom sufficiently prepared or equipped to accommodate people who do not form part of what is considered to be mainstream society. In addition, the fact that the Deaf most often do not view themselves as disabled adds another level of misunderstanding. To work for or provide a service to people in the Deaf community requires that such an individual learn more about the Deaf culture and being deaf is not only a condition but also a way of life that affects every part of their being.

In the literature review in Chapter 2, three disability models were discussed. The choice of disability model that a person subscribes to has a huge impact on how they approach and understand education in the context of disabled individuals.

Historically, education for the Deaf was dominated by two models, namely the medical model and the social model. A third model, the dialogue model (also called ontology model), redefines and broadens the Deaf person's identity to extend beyond the binary 'Deaf or not Deaf. It provides for a narrative interpretation that is sensitive to the crossovers and tensions living between deaf and hearing worlds (McIllroy, 2008: 12). This model allowed the Deaf community to explore their identity as a fluid concept that includes multiple identities that can coexist in a multicultural post-modern landscape (McIlroy, 2008: 28).

The plurality that Deaf individuals are faced with daily is addressed in the dialogical model, as it provides for multiple interpretations of the self and multiple ways of being. This was an important factor to take into account while analysing the learning journeys of the interpreters who work with Deaf individuals daily.

With this study, I endeavoured to gain some insight into the lifelong learning journeys of two SASL interpreters. While their narratives tell the stories of their entire lifelong learning journey, I to a large

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extent focused on the learning from their current positions as educational interpreters at the same South African university, and on their prior experiences that were relevant to their interpreter positions.

As discussed in Chapter 1 and explained through the analysis in the literature review, effective literacy acquisition is only possible in situations where new skills are acquired in such a way that they are inextricably linked to understanding and action. I tried to understand how the interpreters made meaning of their lived experiences by using different perspectives such as lifelong learning, communities of practice theory, and dialogical self-theory as they pertain to their professional lives.

6.2   Research questions

What do the stories of the CODA and COHA SASL interpreters at a South African university reveal about their lifelong learning journeys and the influence that this had on how they acquired new literacies?

The following secondary questions helped me to answer the main research question:

- How did participants become part of the Deaf community?

- What role, if any, did disjunctures play in the lifelong learning journey of participants?

- Which factors influenced the acquisition of workplace literacies of participants?

- How did the acquisition of SASL influence the professional practice of participants?

The findings and relevant literature were examined as determined by the research questions.

6.3   Research questions and findings

When looking at the main question, it seemed apparent that the main influence on the respective lifelong journeys was that Kate is a CODA (heritage signer) and John is not. Their stories, however, revealed that it is not as simple as that. The mere fact that SASL is in your mother tongue does not dictate that you will become a Sign Language interpreter. By the same token, wanting to become a Sign Language interpreter at the turn of the century in South African was not easy, even if it was a choice as very few formalised education opportunities were available.

I tried to explain this by answering the four secondary questions that flowed from the main question to give some structure to the interwoven elements. What do the stories of the CODA and COHA South African Sign Language interpreters at this university reveal about their lifelong learning journeys and the influence that this had on how they acquire new literacies?

6.3.1 How did participants become part of the Deaf community?

Kate and John had very different introductions to the Deaf culture. Kate to a certain extent was never introduced to it but was rather born into the culture and as such, it was ingrained in her from her earliest memories. SASL is the language she learnt (visually) from her parents; the language she learnt is her primary mode of communication with her immediate family and the direct community. For John, it was a very deliberate and conscious choice. His first real contact with Deaf people was as an adult, in an office setting.

Kate's membership to the Deaf community thus can be seen as a birth right, one that she chose to acknowledge, nurture and foster. The fact that her parents are Deaf, and she grew up in the Deaf community did give her a certain level of membership that an outsider might never acquire. Conversely, she is still a hearing individual and thus while understanding the culture better than most hearing people, there are still some things that she cannot claim to understand. Her status as CODA does, however, come with certain inherent responsibilities. This is where choice becomes part of Kate's reality. She did not have to choose a career with specific ties to the Deaf community, nor does she have to act as an advocate for them. The fact that she does is a testament to her parents and how deeply she is rooted in her community.

In John's case, his membership in the Deaf community is more complicated. It was his choice to acquire the language and by his admission, it endeared him to the community to some extent. However, having acquired SASL as an adult, even when done with such gusto and commitment, still means that there are the finer nuances of the culture that he can never fully understand. That, combined with the fact that he remains a hearing person, means that there will always be some form of a divide between him and the Deaf community. He is, however, accepted and respected as a language practitioner, otherwise, he would not be able to work for/with them.

Both Kate and John expressed their frustration with the lack of formal training opportunities at the tertiary level that were available to enable them to follow any career path in SASL, which includes training as a Sign Language interpreter.

6.3.2 What role, if any, did disjunctures play in the lifelong learning journey of participants?

As explained in Chapter 2, Jarvis's holistic learning theory is premised on the fact that learning always starts with a disjuncture or feeling of being disconnected and that the resultant feeling of 'unknowing' can be seen as the catalyst for learning (Jarvis, 2009: 22).

The catalyst for learning is not only bound to the individual but often also context-driven. This can be seen in both Kate's and John's stories. While the learning of SASL cannot be seen as a disjuncture for Kate, it was a major disjuncture for John which to a certain extent launched his adult learning journey.

Kate had several moments of disjuncture in her career leading up to her current position which was not as disruptive as John's. Kate's earliest memory of a disjuncture in a professional setting, albeit through community interpreting at her church, was at the age of 16. To translate the sermon for a German visitor, Kate had to first translate it from Afrikaans into English before she could attempt to sign a coherent message of the sermon. After some self-refection, she realised that this is probably where the seed for her future career was planted. This was because without knowing it, and without any formal training, she had mediated the communication through relay interpreting[4]. While she might not have realised the full significance of the incident at the time, it can be pinpointed as a moment when her worldview changed, when she realised that through her interpreting, she was providing an opportunity for meaning-making to others.

During her career, leading up to her current position, Kate had many small disjunctures, but nothing that changed her worldview significantly. In Kate's case, her choice to become a full-time interpreter was in a sense the culmination of a series of smaller disjunctures, such as her gravitation to interpreter roles in several job positions. This combined with the realisation that her unique position as a member of the Deaf community positioned her not only to provide a meaningful service to the Deaf but also to advocate on their behalf when necessary.

She has some ambivalence about her role as a professional interpreter. Initially, she was reluctant to enter the world of professional interpreting, rather she preferred community interpreting. She initially pursued a different career path outside interpreting as her mother was convinced that a career in SASL interpreting was not a viable option at that time. On the one hand, she is hesitant to be too outspoken, because she is fully cognisant of the fact that, while she has a better understanding of the Deaf community than other hearing people, she also knows that solutions to Deaf problems should be sought, developed, and implemented by the Deaf—and not by the hearing who think they know how to help them. On the other hand, she knows that historically, the Deaf have been conditioned to not speak up for themselves and in some cases need someone to advocate for them.

The catalyst for John's learning journey as an adult was the major disjuncture he experienced when he started working. The realisation that he would not be able to speak to his Deaf colleague if he did

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[4] 'Relay interpreting is the practice of interpreting from one language to another, through a third language' (Shlesinger, 2010: 276).

not learn her language had a life-altering impact on his worldview. This feeling of unknowing extended further when he realised his initial plan to only learn the basics, such as greetings and salutations, was not only unrealistic but would not serve the purpose of inclusivity as she would still be side-lined during most conversations. This led him to join her church, which had a Deaf group within the congregation. By widening the circle of SASL speakers that he socialised with, he was able to accelerate the rate at which he acquired Sign Language, while also learning more about the culture.

Like Kate, his involvement with the Deaf community was through the church and acted as a springboard for his professional career. Early on in his SASL learning journey, John was approached by a Deaf member of the congregation who required the services of an Afrikaans Sign Language interpreter at work, creating another disjuncture for John. Initially, John declined the offer as he felt that he still had too much to learn before taking on such a project. Eventually, after months of resisting, he did agree, with the provision that it would be on a trial basis. From there, John's career trajectory shows deeper and deeper involvement and understanding of Deaf culture and the language, and also an obvious willingness to learn.

6.3.3   Which factors influenced the acquisition of workplace literacy of participants?

While the lifelong learning journey of the interpreters spans their whole lives, for this sub-question, I focused on the acquisition of workplace literacies as they pertain to their current positions.

Workplace literacies comprise various capacities, abilities, and expertise that a professional person needs to perform their duties. It thus includes all the different ways that colleagues use to create communication and negotiate meaning (Lankshear & Knoble, 2006: 64).

The acquisition of new workplace literacies is an ongoing process in any job as there is always something new to learn. This is also true in the case of the two SASL interpreters, who had to undergo a rather steep learning curve after joining the university. This was in part because it was both Kate and John's first appointment in an academic environment, and part because SASL interpreting was new to the university in question.

In the following section, I discussed some of the literacies gained. From my perspective, the themes that stood out in terms of the workplace literacies are adaptability, communication skills, cultural awareness as well as self-awareness. It is also worth mentioning that the participants' proximity to the Deaf students also helped them to develop interpersonal skills and a holistic approach to support that contributed to their workplace literacies

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified and expedited some of the learning experiences as it brought with it a disjuncture that resulted in a previously unknown shortcoming. Adaptability is paramount for

SASL interpreters. In this study, the need for adaptability is a golden thread that runs through both Kate and John's stories. Their practice of face-to-face interpreting in class was disrupted by Covid-19 and replaced by predominantly online interpreting, bringing about technical and communication barriers that had to be overcome. Living and working in the Deaf community, while also forming part of the hearing community, also requires that they constantly manage and adapt their behaviour and perceptions to the specific context.

Coming from outside the academic culture, from a corporate culture, both Kate and John had to develop new workplace literacies that pertain to the university culture and how to navigate between their various I-positions without betraying any party. The workplace literacies that were acquired, were to a large extent due to Kate and John's participation in various COPs, as discussed in Chapter 5. It is, however, important to note that there were many incidental benefits to other learnings, which benefitted their workplace literacies directly and indirectly. For example, when looking at the DST section, it is clear that both interpreters are quite self-aware and that self-reflection forms part of their learning regime. They know what their strengths and weaknesses are; they also know where the strengths and weaknesses within the project lie. Their self-awareness as individuals, but also their awareness and intimate knowledge of the Deaf culture, means that they are aware of the gaps that need to be filled, and they know how to communicate those needs.

When Kate and John joined their current employer, they formed part of a pilot project which thus meant that there were many uncertainties. To combat this uncertainty, certain measures were put in place. While they worked under the auspices of the Language Centre, a strong working relationship between the Language Centre and the Disability Unit ensured that any learnings and skills that were acquired could be applied to the benefit of both divisions. To further promote learning and the expansion of their workplace literacies, the interpreters formed various communities of practice to address issues as they arose. These communities of practices (COPs) were not permanent structures. They came into being, adapted and disbanded as the learning process progressed. Among others, these COPs included three groups: the interpreters, the interpreters and Deaf students, as well as the interpreters, Deaf students and Deaf lecturers.

When examining the work literacies of the interpreters, one has to look at the larger social, cultural, and historical context in which it takes place, and not confine it to their actual workplace, as work literacy forms part of social practice (Hull, 1995: 7). Workplace learning is an inherently subjective process that affects individuals and groups of workers. Self-reflection about their knowledge, skills and emotional commitment to the workplace is done through the lens of each individual's life story. This self-reflection is, however, also influenced by their broader cultural community as well as the available institutional resources.

Both Kate and John make mention of the fact that they have to guard against losing themselves or working to the point of burnout. The fact that they do understand the isolation of the Deaf individuals, especially Deaf students, who joined a hearing tertiary community while coming from Deaf-dominant schooling background means that their emotional commitment often drives them to go the extra mile. This is in addition to the fact that they already do a lot of pro-bono community interpreting, on the one hand, because it is expected of them, and on the other hand, because it allows them to stay abreast of trends and developments at the grassroots level.

Being aware of one's professional development needs is an important aspect of workplace literacy. Formal education and training are not always sufficient when it comes to the expansion of knowledge as skills in the ever-changing landscape of the workplace. However, the importance of formal learning and specifically continuous professional development should not be neglected. Kate pointed out that she feels that their current employer is not investing enough (or any) funds and time in their continued professional development. It is, therefore, necessary for Kate and John to ensure their professional development.

John admitted that there were structures in place, chief of which was probably the fact that he was assigned a CODA as a mentor. By the time that John joined his current employer, he had been working as a SASL interpreter for many years, which meant that he had the experience of working in the Deaf community and that he was already an accepted language practitioner within the community.

He is, by his admission, aware of the limitations that come with not having grown up in the Deaf culture. This reality means that in John's case, workplace literacies and the building on existing literacies were strongly tied to the communities of practice he belonged to and the social circles he moved in. He is keenly aware of the fact that he is working in and for a community that has its culture and practices and to expand and sharpen his skills and knowledge it is very important to see learning as part of social practice, as indicated by Hull (1995: 7). John is cognisant of the value of formal education and made a point of explaining the difficulties he has experienced in his endeavours to obtain a formal education. He is also aware of the fact that soft skills are the area where he needs to focus his attention. Analysing and reflecting on the workplace learning and the literacies he has gained in this milieu is an ideal way in which to identify gaps in his soft skills. This has and will continue to enable him to work towards addressing them while working with the people who will benefit from his upskilling.

6.3.4   How did the acquisition of SASL influence the professional practice of participants?

The method of acquisition of SASL has, in my opinion, determined how Kate and John see their professional careers. In Kate's interview, the word 'advocacy' came up more than once. Even John

referred to Kate as an advocate who approaches interpreting from a humanitarian perspective, while he approaches it from a professional perspective. This of course does not mean that professionalism is not important to Kate, nor does it mean that John is so clinical that he loses sight of the need for advocacy that often comes as part and parcel of their current jobs.

By virtue of her background as a CODA, it makes sense that Kate would want to advocate for her community. I find that at times there is evidence of an internal struggle for Kate when it comes to her role as advocate. She knows first-hand that the Deaf do not identify as disabled, that it is a label society gives them because they (the hearing) choose not to learn the SASL. The Deaf are not a community whose members view themselves as less abled, or in need of help and guidance from the hearing world. Yet, how society views them, and therefore to a large extent the way the education system is structured, often forces them at times to use the label to get access to equal opportunities. Kate's advocacy role is interwoven with the knowledge that the hearing would more likely listen to her because they understand her, and she knows how to communicate in a language that they understand, linguistically as well as emotionally. On the other hand, Kate also knows that while Deaf individuals have the power and ability to advocate for themselves, society has for many years tried to rob them of the right, through systems and policies designed to force them into the disabled lane of life.

John might not have the benefit of the inbred knowledge and understanding of the culture, and that might be why he says he approaches his interpreting from a professional perspective. He does, however, underestimate the advocate within himself. His journey with the Deaf community started with the realisation that he could not treat his Deaf colleague equally, because she was Deaf, and he did not understand her language. John did not start his journey by advocating for inclusivity, he started with educating himself to bridge the divide between himself and his colleague. Through his actions and his example to others, he inadvertently became an advocate as his journey progressed. This was because, as he became more knowledgeable and more involved in interpreting from a professional perspective, he gained insight into the struggles of the Deaf community.

Ultimately, both Kate and John provide a professional service aimed at making education accessible to Deaf students at a predominantly hearing university. The relationship between SASL interpreters and Deaf students in an educational environment is by default an intimate one. In addition to the close physical proximity that they work in for extended periods, the interpreters are also involved in many other adjacent areas of the students' lives. Whether it happens consciously or not, advocacy naturally starts to play a role, especially because Kate and John bear witness, daily, to the struggles that Deaf students are faced with as a result of the unbalanced power balance that society has created, not only in society at large but also at the university where they work.

6.4   Implications

As Ouane (2009: 302) argues, 'Lifelong learning recognises all learning systems, whether it be formal, non-formal or informal'. From Kate and John's stories about their lifelong learning journeys, it is clear that not only did they engage all learning systems but that their families, communities, workplaces and social circles contributed to the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Their continued self-directed learning is a testament to their drive toward continuous improvement. John struggles to get recognition for his prior learning, to enable him to formalise his education, and Kate's direct references to the lack of opportunities when it comes to continuing professional development is a further indication of her inherent desire to improve and expand on her knowledge.

Their current employer should recognise and harness this innate drive to improve and capitalise on their investment in their human capital. They should consider providing opportunities for Kate and John to continue their professional learning journeys. Currently, quality control and maintaining of professional standards of South African language practitioners are largely left to the industry, with each company or sector responsible for its CBD, quality control and mentorship programmes.

Continuing professional development (CPD), as a form of lifelong learning, has four key characteristics according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Learning is seen as part of a connected system that includes all forms of learning, namely formal, informal and non-formal. Learning is based on a supply and demand principle, where the needs of the learner form the basis of all learning strategies. There is a strong emphasis on recognising what it is that motivates individuals to learn, and therefore attention is given to self-paced and self-directed learning while recognising that these motivators may change throughout a lifetime (OECD:3).

The Language Practitioners' Council Act (Act 8 of 2014) was passed in 2014. Once implemented, this Act will call into being the Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), which will regulate the profession. Eventually, all language practitioners who wish to practise will need to register and be accredited by the council. The regulations that will govern the field have been published under the SALPC Act, outlining detail on requirements but additional regulations will follow its promulgation. At this stage, an implementation date is yet to be announced for the establishment of SALPC (SATI 2019).

It bears mentioning that while this Act has been enacted, it has not yet been implemented. Thus, one must realise that many structures will have to be put in place to enforce these regulations. SATI is in the process of establishing a mentorship programme for members who are new to the profession. This programme hopes to provide mentorship principles, appoint mentoring officers, identify potential mentors, set up and maintain a database of mentors and invite applications for mentees

(SATI 2019). Until such a programme is established, as with CPD, the responsibility remains the sole responsibility of interpreters and the organisations they work for.

It also bears mentioning that there is growing pressure from the Deaf community on the government to recognise South African Sign Language as the 12th official language of South Africa. Should that happen, it will have far-reaching effects on the education of Deaf children and will also, by law, require that all Deaf/deaf citizens have access to all communication in the form of SASL. As with the SALPC, even if such an amendment to the Constitution is made, the implementation thereof will remain the challenge.

From the lifelong learning journeys of the two interpreters, it is clear that they embrace the concept of lifelong learning. They recognise the importance of continuous learning to ensure that they are constantly upskilling and scaffolding existing knowledge to remain current in terms of their professions. It is clear that all forms of learning, be it formal, informal and/or non-formal add value to the individual as a whole.

6.5   Insights—learning from the research process: a dialogical perspective

6.5.1   Insights into Kate and Johns journey

During their narrations, while describing their lived experiences, I could observe multiple I-positions within each participant. It was clear that the telling of their stories had given rise to a process of self-reflection as they considered how their relationship with South African Sign Language and how they acquired it, impacted their lifelong learning journeys, and in essence all spheres of their lives.

I believe that the honest and judgement-free atmosphere in which these conversations took place allowed the participants to engage in what Hermans (2013: 86) refers to as critical self-reflection. While this self-reflection by the participants provided me with an opportunity to gain insight into the lived experiences and how they affected them, the study generated evidence that the process also allowed them to learn more about themselves and how they view themselves and how they approach learning.

Dialogical self-theory is based on the supposition that each individual has many selves, referred to as I-positions. These I-positions are influenced by context and the different people that an individual interacts with (Hermans, 2001: 249; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010a: 348). Meta-positions, according to Hermans (2013: 86), allow the self to distinguish itself from the other positions of the self and reflect on them, establish a dialogue between them and thus learn about itself. Within the dialogic space (Rule, 2004) that was created by this study, many I-positions were identified.

While the participants' opinions about their meta-positions may not concur with my interpretation, this is how I experienced it while listening to them. The insights I gained are by no means meant to portray them as one-dimensional. I acknowledge and respect that they are multifaceted beings with multiple I-positions that can change the position of dominance according to the context. However, from our conversations, this is how I would summarise my experience with each of them.

Kate is an interpreter. As CODA, Kate has been an interpreter her whole life. Initially, it was an unconscious action in which she participated without giving it any thought, as it was part of her lived reality. As she grew older, she became aware of the interpreting role she was playing in the various spheres of her life and the changes that it can affect. It was much later in her professional career that she chose to make interpreting the main focus of her career. Having said this, it is important to emphasise that there is a lot more to Kate than being an interpreter. She is also just a woman, daughter, wife, colleague, and friend, who happens to identify with part of the Deaf community. While Kate was born into the Deaf community, choosing to remain part of it and serve the community is a conscious choice. I learnt so much from my conversation with her, specifically about how insensitive some of my questions were, even though I had tried to be respectful and sensitive in the wording I used. I will try to do better.

Interpreting is what John does. Choosing interpreting as a career was not a conscious choice for John. It was the result of other choices that he made that inadvertently opened up this career path. While it was not his initial plan, John now is a professional language practitioner who works within the Deaf community, thus he identifies as a member of the community that he serves. He knows that there are limitations to this acceptance but this has in no way held him back or stopped him from striving towards continued growth, both personally and professionally. He is very cognisant of the important role he plays in the lives of the students (and the community members) he interprets for.

While they view their motivations very differently, the net result is the same. Both individuals provide a professional service to the best of their knowledge and ability. They both aim to provide support to Deaf students in an educational environment. In the process, whether consciously or not, they also advocate for the rights of these individuals by being their voice and their ears in communities where they are still marginalised.

6.5.2   Insights into my research journey

At the end of the research project, I think it is also important to do self-reflection on what I learnt as an interpreter and a researcher. To do so, I made use of Jarvis's idea of learning as a holistic process. My disjuncture was brought about by my need for new challenges in a personal capacity and also with an eye on broadening my skills set in adjacent academic disciplines.

I had to approach my studies holistically as it is impossible to separate the I-as-interpreter, the I-as-researcher and the I-as-social-being from one another. I had to find a way for my dominant I-position to function together to work towards the goal of fulfilling my professional commitments, completing a masters' degree as well as managing all spheres that form part of my I-as-social-being position.

My self-reflection was largely guided by some of the obvious parallels between the participants and me. All three of us are interpreters working in the field of educational interpreting. I have some understanding of the milieu in which they work, and their position of liminality as it is something that I am familiar with from my interpreting experience.

The purpose of interpreting service is to provide clients access to a communication event that they would normally be excluded from due to a language barrier. While Kate, John and I all serve linguistic minorities, that is where the similarities end in our current positions. I-as-hearing-interpreter can never really understand how all-encompassing their interpreting jobs are. The linguistic minority that they serve, the Deaf, is also a minority in other aspects of life. While the Deaf do not necessarily see themselves as disabled, the world does and that affects how services aimed at them are structured.

SASL interpreting makes it possible for Deaf students to access institutions of higher learning in South Africa that would not otherwise be open to them. This means that Kate and John are more involved in all aspects of the students' lives. In contrast to this, interpreting for hearing students provides students with the option to listen to lectures in their mother tongue. This also provides access to equal opportunities based on linguistic rights but it does not need to address any disabilities from a societal point of view.

In my position as I-as-interpreter, I am acutely aware of my liminal position. My purpose is to provide the students with equal access to lectures. What is conveyed in lectures is not my message, thus I am not allowed to add to alter the meaning of the message, even if it will improve the message. In the case of SASL interpreters, their role is much more complex and due to the inherent disjuncture between Deaf people, and the hearing who cannot use SASL; their job often entails much more. My job is also bound by office hours, while SASL interpreters are expected to do more and be available for meetings and extramural interpreting activities for students.

I know that my different I-positions are interconnected and that the dominant position varies according to the context. Concerning SASL interpreters, I have a greater sense of freedom when it comes to alternating between the various I-positions. I have the luxury of being an office hour interpreter, something that is not true for Kate and John. This is even more so for Kate as a CODA, whose whole life and identity are connected to the Deaf culture. Therefore, like John, while I love what I do, interpreting is my job, but it does not form an intricate or inextricable part of my personality.

Unlike John, as a hearing interpreter, I am seldom called upon to do interpreting outside of office hours.

6.6   Limitations

There are certain limitations to the study. The choice of participants was predicated on the fact that there are only two permanent employees who work as South African Sign Language interpreters at the university in question. A further limitation was brought about by the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the protocols that were put in place, the interviews were conducted online, via MS Teams, instead of in person. While the online format allowed me to virtually see them, it did contribute to a certain sense of separation that might have been less pronounced with face-to-face interviews.

The fact that the university where the participants are employed approach educational interpreting for the Deaf students from a linguistic support service, rather than a service provided by the Disability Unit (as other South African universities do), means that the workplace challenges they face cannot really be generalised in the South African context.

6.7   Future research

Future studies could investigate and compare how the professional environment influences workplace learning when interpreters are seen as part of a Disability Unit instead of a Language Centre.

Because the population to choose from for this study remains finite at this stage, it also limits the research opportunities and future research will need to extend past the specific university in question to include other South African universities and even international universities.

Other related fields of research can include research about developing and implementing meaningful continued professional development (CPD) opportunities for SASL interpreters. There are also some significant gaps and limitations in the formal training opportunities of interpreters who work with the Deaf.

6.8   Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the lifelong learning journey of two South African Sign Language interpreters at a South African university. Their experiences were viewed through the lens of their status as CODA and COHA, with specific reference to learning as it pertains to SASL interpreting.

This chapter presented the consolidated findings that came to light as a result of the study as guided by the research question and relevant literature. The implications, insights and recommendations that

resulted from the research that was presented were guided by the limitations of the study. There is some reference made to future research but it is clear that future studies will require a significant directional change and might need to focus on the various forms of training for individuals who serve the Deaf community.

The stories about their lifelong learning journeys, as told by Kate and John, highlight the fact that no learning is ever wasted, that there is no single way to acquire knowledge and skill, and above all, that learning never stops.

While they now work at the same institution and serve the same niche audience, they might still approach learning differently, but they are both driven by the desire to serve this particular community to the best of their ability. Much of their learning that has culminated in their appointment as educational SASL interpreters had been transformative as it had changed not only them as individuals but also how they view themselves and the world. It has also impacted their friends and family. Both participants referred to their life partners and how they have had to adapt to accommodate the Deaf community into their respective lifeworlds as well.

The more recent learnings are to a large extent driven by an experiential learning cycle. This can be ascribed to the fact that when they joined the project, it was still in its pilot phase and therefore no one knew exactly what was needed, what to expect or how to overcome the knowledge and skills gaps that were identified. By their admission, they have learnt a great deal but continue to do so as they continue on the journey.

Thus, while these two SASL interpreters joined the world of educational interpreting via very different routes, had very different learning journeys and hold very different positions in the Deaf community, they are bound together in a common and shared purpose.

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Plagiaatverklaring / *Plagiarism Declaration*

1 Plagiaat is die oorneem en gebruik van die idees, materiaal en ander intellektuele eiendom van ander persone asof dit jou eie werk is.
Plagiarism is the use of ideas, material and other intellectual property of another's work and to present is as my own.

2 Ek erken dat die pleeg van plagiaat 'n strafbare oortreding is aangesien dit 'n vorm van diefstal is.
I agree that plagiarism is a punishable offence because it constitutes theft.

3 Ek verstaan ook dat direkte vertalings plagiaat is.
I also understand that direct translations are plagiarism.

4 Dienooreenkomstig is alle aanhalings en bydraes vanuit enige bron (ingesluit die internet) volledig verwys (erken). Ek erken dat die woordelikse aanhaal van teks sonder aanhalingstekens (selfs al word die bron volledig erken) plagiaat is.
Accordingly all quotations and contributions from any source whatsoever (including the internet) have been cited fully. I understand that the reproduction of text without quotation marks (even when the source is cited) is plagiarism.

5 Ek verklaar dat die werk in hierdie skryfstuk vervat my eie oorspronklike werk is en dat ek dit nie vantevore in die geheel of gedeeltelik ingehandig het vir bepunting in hierdie module/werkstuk of 'n ander module/werkstuk nie.
I declare that the work contained in this assignment is my original work and that I have not previously (in its entirety or in part) submitted it for grading in this module/assignment or another module/assignment.

13684477	
Studentenommer / *Student number*	Handtekening / *Signature*
D. C. Joubert	Oktober 2021
Voorletters en van / *Initials and surname*	Datum / *Date*

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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear _____

My name is Christine Joubert and I am busy with my MPhil degree in Education and Training for Lifelong Learning. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project entitled: *Exploring the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at a South African university.*

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary,** and you are free to decline to participate. If you decline, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study will investigate the lifelong learning (LLL) journeys of the two SASL interpreters at a South African university, with specific focus on how their respective backgrounds have influenced how they go about acquiring new literacies in their professional lives.

Differentiation will be made between interpreters who are Children of Deaf Adults (CODA) and those who grew up as children of hearing parents (non-CODA). This will provide insight into how their LLL journey from childhood to professional South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters has influenced the way in which they now acquire new literacies and how they make meaning of newly acquired knowledge. This study aims to understand how the worldview, of each of these interpreters, has been shaped by their upbringing and how it influences their lifelong learning journey.

This will be a narrative study, as I hope to form an understanding of the lifelong learning journeys of my two participants through the telling of their life stories. **Each participant will get the opportunity to tell me about their childhood years, their journey with the South**

African Sign Language (SASL), how they acquired it and how that has influenced their way of learning and how they continue to learn in their professional careers.

The process of gathering data for the study will involve individual interviews and possibly a group interview involving both participants. Interviews will be done in a conversational, semi-structured style, allowing you the freedom to tell your stories about your lifelong learning journey. I will use the information gathered to weave a story of you shared lived experiences, shining a light on the role of LLL in your professional lives and the literacy you acquired specific to your current working environment.

The interviews will be done digitally (e.g. via Microsoft Teams) as the government restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic do not allow for face-to-face interviews. The interviews will take place at a time that is convenient to you and could be done in one sitting or in a few sessions, depending on your preference. The voice recordings of the interviews will be stored on an external hard drive which will be kept in a safe. You will have access to the recordings and transcripts of the files at any point of the study.

As I will conduct all the interviews, your identity will be known to me but the data you provide will be anonymised. This will be done by removing all identifiers and making use of pseudonyms. The data will be analysed by myself and treated as confidential.

Participants were identified based on their status as full time South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at Stellenbosch University (SU), and their status as a CODA or non-CODA. Participants are being invited to share information about the lifelong learning journeys and how their respective backgrounds have influenced how they go about acquiring literacies in their professional lives.

As outlined above, if you do agree to take part you will be invited to participate in either a focus group, an individual interview or in both. Please indicate the expected nature of your participation in this study, below, by ticking on or more of the options, below:

For this study, I am willing to participate in a

☐ Group interview

☐ Individual interview

☐ Both a focus group and an interview

If you have agreed to participate in a <u>focus group</u>, please read the following relevant information:

Pending confirmation of your willingness to participate, you will be contacted to schedule a convenient time for the focus group discussion. You will be given the focus group topic guide, should you request it, and will be informed who the other participants will be.

The group discussion will last a maximum of ninety minutes. The discussion will be recorded in audio format, subject to your permission. Recordings of responses will be deleted after transcription. Even if you have decided to take part, you are still free to cease your participation at any time and to have research data/information relating to you withdrawn without giving any reason up to the point of publication.

No data will be accessed by anyone other than myself and/or my study supervisor, Prof Peter Rule. Anonymity of the material will be protected, as far as possible, by using pseudonyms or codes. By virtue of the fact that the SU only has two full time SASL interpreters in its employ, the institution will also by anonymised to ensure that the identity of participants is not uncovered in that way. It must however be acknowledged that given the small size and close interwovenness of the Deaf community in South Africa and the fact that my institutional affiliation will necessarily be known to the readers, it is impossible to keep the identity of the participants confidential.

All recordings of data on audio-equipment will be deleted after transcription. If you decide to withdraw your data at any time before publication, I will remove all traces of it from the records.

If you have agreed to participate in an <u>individual interview</u>, please read the following relevant information:

Pending your confirmation of your willingness to participate, I will contact you to discuss the interview procedure with you. On request you will be given the interview schedule. With your consent, I will arrange to interview you in a private area (for confidentiality reasons) or at a suitable venue in a public site (if preferred).

The interview will take approximately one hour to ninety minutes. The interview will be recorded in audio format, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted after transcription. Even if you have decided to take part, you are still free to cease your participation at any time and to have research data/information relating to you withdrawn without giving any reason up to the point of publication.

No data will be accessed by anyone other than myself and/or my study supervisor, Prof Peter Rule. Anonymity of the material will be protected, as far as possible, by using pseudonyms or codes. As the study will be focussing on two widely marketed online courses, however, you may be identifiable by virtue of your position within SU or your contribution to the course (e.g. relating to a specific module).

All recordings of data on audio-equipment will be deleted after transcription. If you decide to withdraw your data at any time before publication, I will remove all traces of it from the records.

There is no financial incentive to participate in this research. Any reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed, and refreshments will be served during the focus group discussions.

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in the study. The main disadvantage to taking part in the study is that you will be donating your time to take part. It is possible that you may find answering some of the questions challenging. This is unlikely but, if this was to occur, the interview could be terminated at any time. The study has been approved by the Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee (REC).

I will produce a final report summarising the main findings, which will be sent to all study participants. I also hope to disseminate the research findings through publication and conferences in South Africa. Relevant study participants (i.e. who contributed to the data used for these publications) will be informed of these publications, beforehand.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Myself	Supervisor
Ms Christine Joubert	Prof Peter Rule (Research Supervisor)
Email: christinejoubert@sun.ac.za	Email: prule2015@sun.ac.za
Tel: 082 783 9734	Tel: 021 808 2300
Language Centre (Stellenbosch University)	Department of Curriculum Studies (Stellenbosch University)
Ryneveld street 44	4th Floor, Room 4022
7600 Stellenbosch	GG Cillié Building
	Ryneveld Street
	7600 Stellenbosch

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding

your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development. You have right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form.

If you are willing to participate in this study please sign the attached Declaration of Consent and hand it to the investigator, Christine Joubert.

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

By signing below, I ……………………………………………………. agree to take part in a research study entitled……… **……………….** and conducted by …… (Name of Researcher)

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant] [He*/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator   was   used/this   conversation   was   translated   into   _____   by _____*].

Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

![Stellenbosch University logo]

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NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

22 October 2021

Project number: 16714

Project Title: Exploring the lifelong learning journeys of two South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters at a South African university.

Amended Project Title:

Dear Ms DC Joubert

Co-investigators:

Your response to stipulations submitted on 15/10/2021 10:53 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
26 November 2020	25 November 2023

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

The researcher is reminded to submit a final report to the REC once the study is complete in order to register the REC record as closed.

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (16714) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	ChristineJoubert_Research Proposal_May2020	23/07/2020	Final
Recruitment material	Introductory Letter_Christine Joubert_Final	23/07/2020	Final

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Proof of permission	Institution Permission Email	23/07/2020	PDF
Informed Consent Form	Consent Form_ChristineJoubert_Final amended 1 Dec	01/12/2020	2
Data collection tool	Interview Guide_Christine Joubert_Final amended 1 Dec	01/12/2020	2
Data collection tool	Group Interview Guide_Christine Joubert.Final amended 1 Dec	01/12/2020	2
Budget	Research budget	13/10/2021	1
Default	Chrsitine Joubert_Response Letter_15 October 2021	15/10/2021	1

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

Conducting the Research: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research protocol. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

Participant Enrolment: The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the protocol for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

Informed Consent: The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

Continuing Review: The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

Amendments and Changes: Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

Adverse or Unanticipated Events: Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

Research Record Keeping: The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

Provision of Counselling or emergency support: When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

Final reports: When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits: If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.