



I Can See You: On the Impact and Efficacy of Video Telephony as Understood by Interpreters for the Deaf

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BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS VIDEO RELAY SERVICE (VRS)?



- ❖ The interpreter and Deaf parties both cannot see the hearing party.

WHAT IS VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING (VRI)?

- ❖ In VRI, both the Deaf and hearing parties can see each other in real-time, while the interpreter is engaged remotely.



Video vs. Face-to-Face (FTF) Communications for the Deaf

- ❖ Suggested in previous literature that the technological limitations of video and audial telephony (versus in-person interpretation) have a dramatic impact on perceptions of what is being said (Vincent, Bergeron, Hotton, & Isabelle, 2010).
- ❖ Video telephony leads to reduced clarity in more subtle non-manual signs, altered sign space, and greater repetition. Further, delay and opacity in audial telephony is common (Keating & Mirus, 2008).
- ❖ Video telephony is 2-dimensional communication for a 3-dimensional language.

How do technological limitations impact the efficacy of interpretation, if at all, from the interpreter's point of view?

AIM

There is very little research investigating the way VRS and VRI methods impact the mediation of interpreters for the Deaf. This study is a survey of interpreters asking them how they feel about video telephony and whether it affects overlap, prioritization of one party over another, and the communication of emotion during the conversations that they interpret.

METHOD & SAMPLE

- ❖ Anonymous online survey regarding experience with VRS, VRI, and FTF
- ❖ Interpreters answered questions related to the media in which they had experience interpreting
- ❖ Sample pulled from Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)'s pool

| | Interpreters |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| N | 105 |
| Age | $M = 45.37, SD = 10.765$ |
| Sex | 85.7% Female |
| Certified | 95% |
| ASL Native Language | 19.2% |
| Interpreting for 10+ Years | 81.9% |

SELECTED RESULTS

1) Face-to-Face Was the Most Frequently-Used Form of Media for Interpreters

| | 0 Hours* | <1 - 10 Hours | 10 - >30 Hours |
|------------|----------|---------------|----------------|
| VRS (n=79) | 55.2% | 17.2% | 27.6% |
| VRI (n=34) | 80.0% | 16.15% | 3.85% |
| FTF (n=93) | 13.3% | 20.1% | 66.6% |

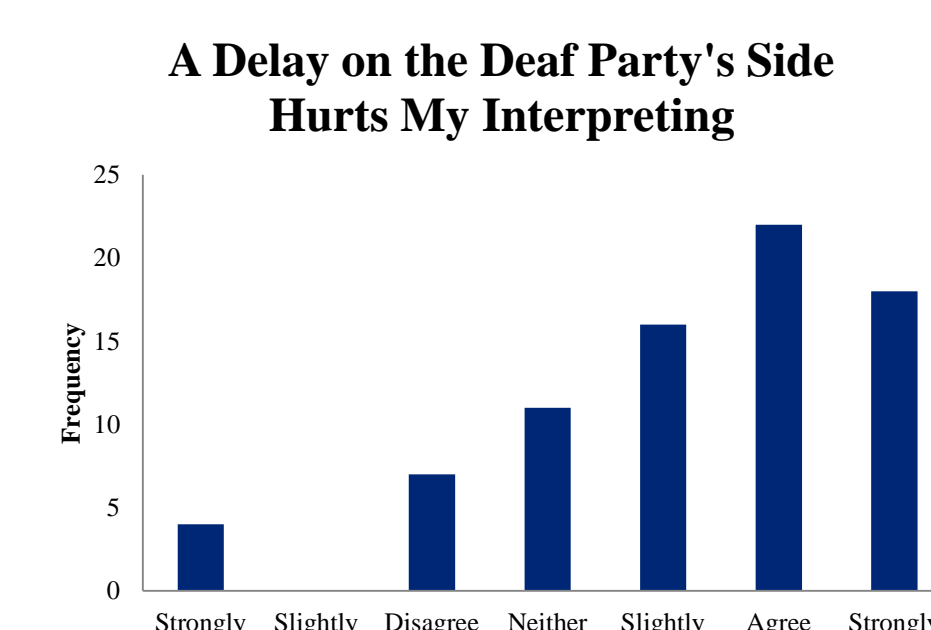
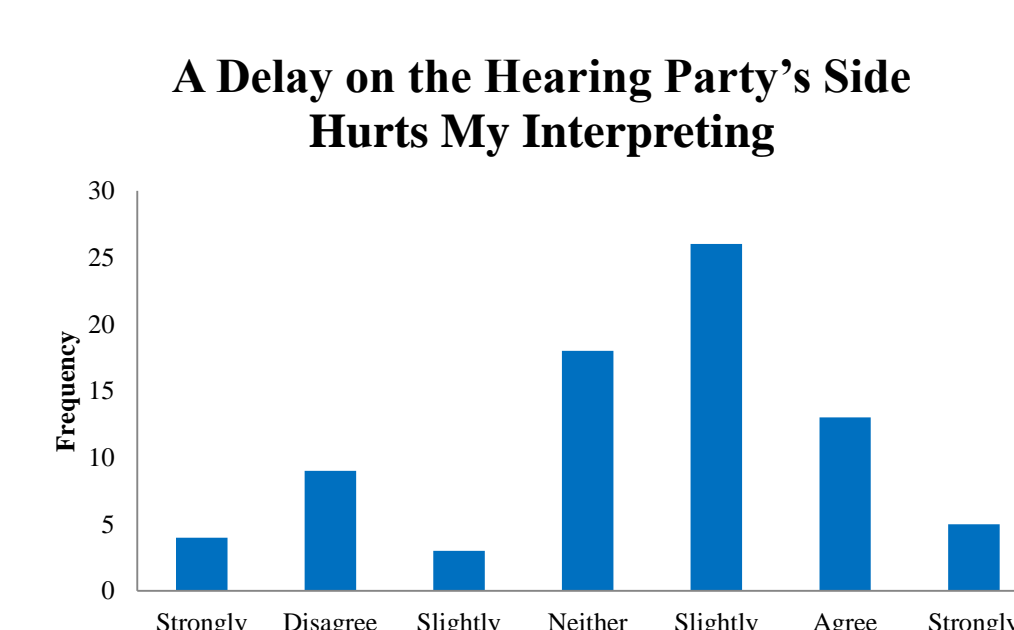
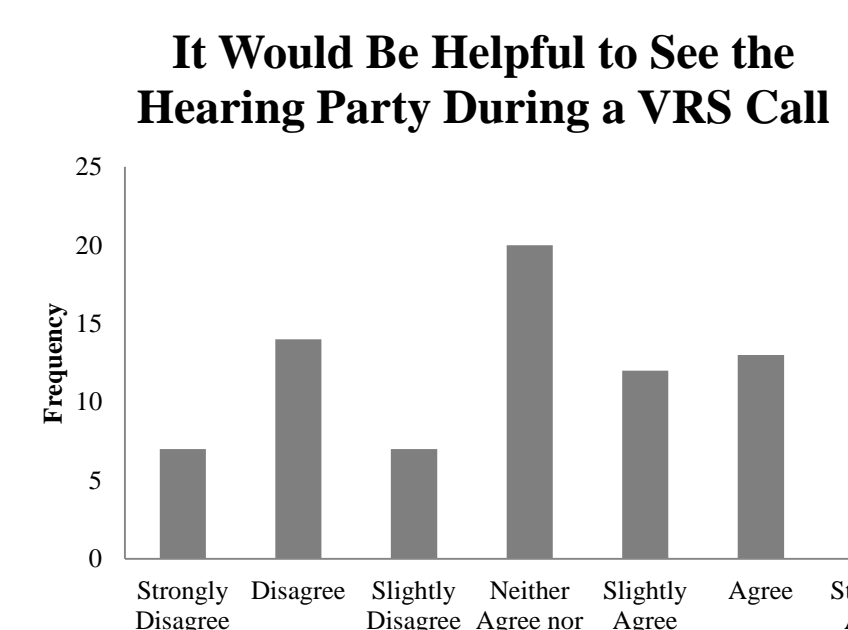
* Participants were asked to describe in which media they worked, for however many hours, from the week before they took the survey

2) More Interpreters Prefer Voice-to-Sign and Prefer the Deaf Party In Overlap

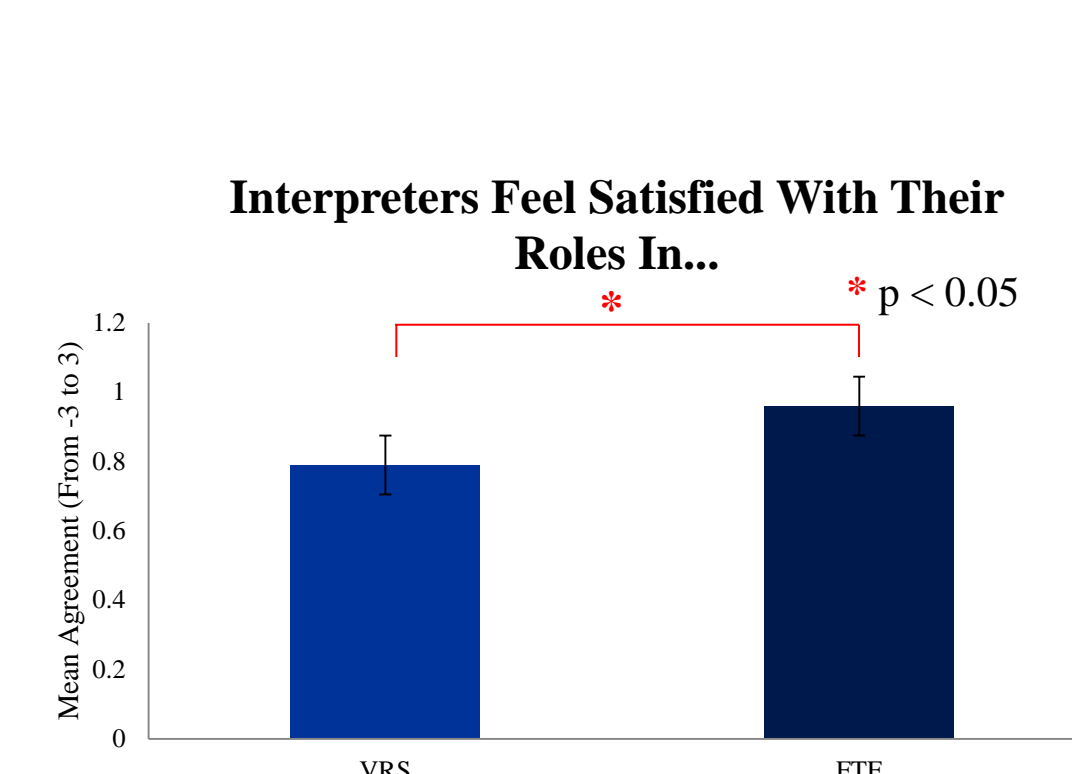
| When Parties Overlap, the Interpreter Chooses... | % |
|--|------|
| The Hearing Person | 12.4 |
| Both Equally | 60.0 |
| The Deaf party | 27.6 |

| The Interpretation Style Interpreters Are Comfortable With Are... | % |
|---|------|
| Voice-to-Sign interpretation | 21.9 |
| Both Voice-to-Sign and Sign-to-Voice. | 66.7 |
| Sign-to-Voice interpretation | 11.4 |

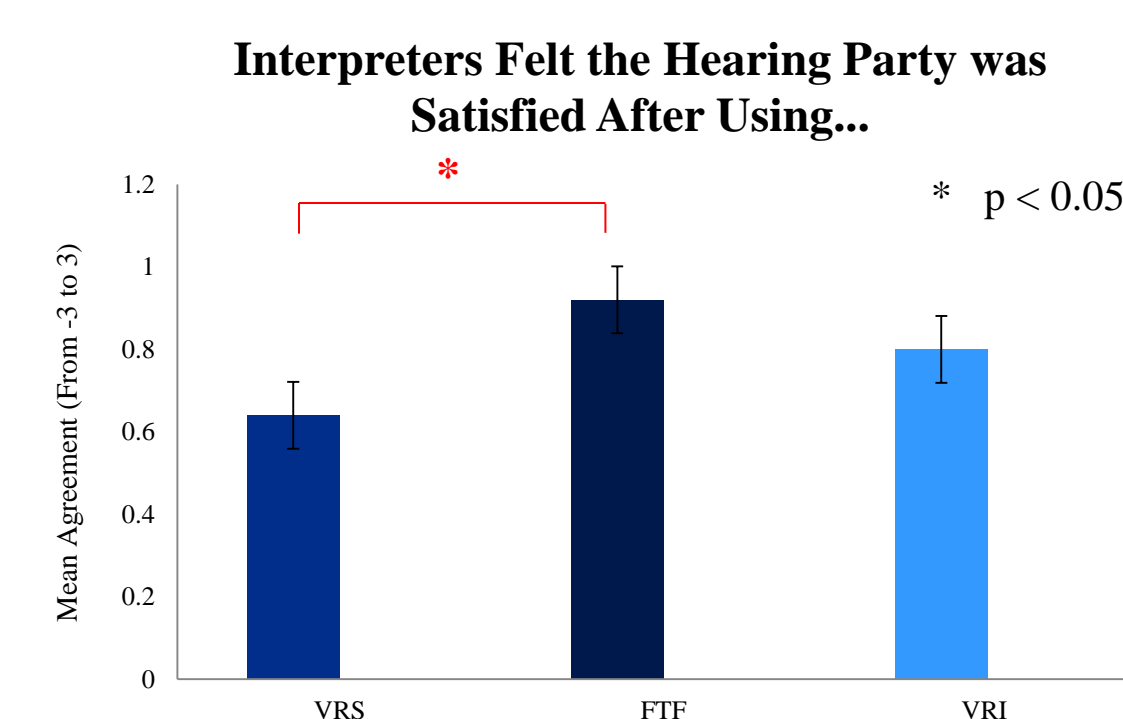
3) Interpreters Ambivalent About Seeing the Hearing Party; Opinionated About Video Delays



4) Interpreters Feel Hearing People and Interpreters More Satisfied with FTF Than VRS Interactions



A repeated measures ANOVA suggested that interpreters felt the hearing party preferred the dynamic of FTF interactions ($M=0.92, SD=0.28$) over VRS interactions ($M=0.64, SD=0.49$), $F=4.72, p=0.014$. The differences between FTF and VRI, and VRI and VRS were not statistically significant.



Turn-Taking between the two parties feels:
(an open-ended question)



QUALITATIVE RESULTS (continued)

The following comments are from an optional open-ended comments section (n=27):
Comments on VRS

"I've currently reduced my VRS hours in an effort to take better care of myself." (19%)

"VRS has made phone conversations...natural and given the deaf community unmatched autonomy."

"When both parties are not experiencing technical difficulties [in VRS] the conversations run "smooth as butter"...When there is a technical issue I feel it is my job to clarify...to make sure the communication is effective AND correct." (52%)

Comments on VRI

"VRI is easier in that the hearing person can see the Deaf party. They can see their facial expressions and body language. it makes the interpreting process much easier."

"Technical issues seem to be more frequent in VRI..."

"I think [VRI is] okay for the initial triage, while waiting for a live interpreter, but not for a hospitalized patient...The camera is limited...There may be other family members in the room who like to serve as CDI's...it is difficult to engage their assistance...The patient may be unfamiliar with VRI and have no videophone at home. Questions are rushed and grouped...when they are finished with their questions, they want to hang up, and I have to ask..."Please give me a minute to see if there is more information...having established little to no rapport, the answer is usually no on VRI, where in live interpreting, I find that usually there IS more information [to transmit]..." (19%)

Comments on Face-to-Face

"I do not accept VRS/VRI assignments because I feel so much communication is missing without the face-to-face component."

"Face-to-Face normally involves several hearing to one deaf person. Turn-taking is more difficult because it's more rapid."

SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

❖ Interpreters in this study:

- ❖ Describe Face-to-Face as a more "smooth," "natural," "easy" experience than either VRI or VRS, which is often "natural," "smooth," and "easy," but also occasionally "awkward," "unnatural," and "stilted."
- ❖ Do not often work in Video Remote Interpreting.
- ❖ Find VRS important for the Deaf and enjoy working in it; also felt strongly that tech delays on the Deaf party's side hurt transmission.
- ❖ More often pick the Deaf party in overlap, but prefer Voice-to-Sign.
- ❖ Interpreters feel both they and the hearing party prefer face-to-face.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE DEAF, HEARING, AND THE INTERPRETER

- ❖ A survey investigating the interpreter's as well as his/her clients' perspectives.
- ❖ A thorough inspection of overlap and its relation to cultural and linguistic foundations.
- ❖ A deeper look at Children of Deaf Adult interpreters, whose native language is American Sign Language, and their responses against non-CODA interpreters. This may give hints for how and why interpreters control conversations as they do.
- ❖ Preliminary investigations into VRS with visual access to the hearing person.

REFERENCES

- ❖ Bergeron, F., Deaudelin, I., Hotton, M., & Vincent, C. (2010). Message Transmission Efficiency Through Five Telecommunication Technologies for Signing Deaf Users. *Assistive Technology: The Official Journal of RESNA22*(3). Retrieved from 10.1080/10400430903519928
- ❖ Keating, A., Edwards, T., & Mirus, G. (2008). Cybersign and New Proximities: Impacts of New Communication Technologies on Space and Language. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 40(6). Retrieved from 10.1016/j.pragma.2008.02.009