

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AS SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING

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Abstract: *Sign language interpreting (SLI) is increasingly recognized as a form of simultaneous interpreting, sharing many of the cognitive challenges and strategic requirements of spoken language interpreting (SLI). This article explores the theoretical and practical parallels between SLI and simultaneous interpreting, examining the cognitive demands faced by interpreters working in both modalities. It will then delve into specific strategies employed by both spoken and sign language interpreters to manage these cognitive loads, emphasizing the unique linguistic and cultural considerations that differentiate SLI. Finally, the paper will examine the implications for interpreter training and professional development, advocating for a more integrated approach that recognizes the shared skills and competencies required for effective interpreting in both modalities.*

Keywords: *sign language interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, cognitive load, interpreting strategies, interpreter training, spoken language interpreting, sign language, accessibility*

Introduction. The field of interpreting has traditionally focused primarily on spoken languages, with sign language interpreting (SLI) often considered a separate discipline. However, with growing recognition of sign languages as legitimate and complex linguistic systems, there is an increasing understanding that SLI shares many fundamental characteristics with spoken language interpreting, particularly simultaneous interpreting. Both modalities involve receiving a message in one language (the source language), processing it rapidly, and conveying it into another language (the target language) in real-time. This demands a high level of

cognitive skill, linguistic proficiency, and cultural awareness.

This article aims to provide a comparative analysis of SLI and simultaneous interpreting, highlighting the cognitive demands and strategic approaches employed in both modalities. It will explore how SLI can be viewed as a form of simultaneous interpreting, while also acknowledging the unique challenges and considerations specific to sign language interpreting.

Simultaneous interpreting, whether spoken or signed, places significant demands on the interpreter's cognitive resources[P.Tuychiyeva, 2024]. These demands can be broadly categorized into the following areas:

The interpreter must actively listen (in spoken language interpreting) or watch (in SLI) the source language message, rapidly decoding and understanding its meaning. This involves processing linguistic information, identifying key concepts, and inferring speaker/signer intent. The speed and complexity of the source language input can significantly increase the cognitive load.

Interpreters rely heavily on STM and WM to hold information in the source language while processing and formulating the target language equivalent. WM is particularly crucial for managing the temporal delay between receiving the source language input and producing the target language output, known as the *ear-voice span* (in spoken language interpreting) or the *eye-sign span* (in SLI).

The interpreter must formulate and produce the target language message in a clear, accurate, and fluent manner. This involves selecting appropriate vocabulary, grammatical structures, and idiomatic expressions to convey the meaning of the source language message effectively. In SLI, this also requires skilled use of the visual-gestural modality, including facial expressions, body language, and spatial referencing.

Interpreters must constantly coordinate and monitor their comprehension, memory, and production processes to ensure accuracy and coherence [Хасанова, Д, 2024]. This involves paying attention to the flow of the source language message, anticipating upcoming information, and adjusting their target language output accordingly. They must also monitor their own performance, identifying and

correcting errors as they occur.

While these cognitive demands are shared by both spoken and sign language interpreters, there are some key differences:

Modality: Spoken language interpreting relies primarily on the auditory and vocal modalities, while SLI relies on the visual and gestural modalities. This difference in modality impacts the sensory processing demands and the types of information that are readily available to the interpreter. For example, spoken language interpreters may rely on prosody (intonation, rhythm, stress) to identify key information, while sign language interpreters rely on non-manual markers (facial expressions, head movements) for similar cues.

Spatial Referencing: Sign languages utilize space to convey grammatical and semantic relationships, such as location, direction, and person reference. This requires interpreters to maintain a mental map of the signing space and accurately represent spatial relationships in the target language. Spoken languages typically rely on verbal descriptions for spatial information.

Iconicity: Some signs in sign languages are iconic, meaning that they visually resemble the objects or actions they represent. While iconicity can aid comprehension, it can also be misleading if not interpreted correctly within the context of the signing. Spoken languages generally have less iconicity.

To manage the cognitive demands of simultaneous interpreting, both spoken and sign language interpreters employ a variety of strategic approaches:

- Skilled interpreters actively anticipate and predict upcoming information in the source language message, based on their knowledge of the topic, speaker/signer style, and linguistic patterns. This allows them to prepare for the target language output and reduce the cognitive load associated with processing new information;
- Interpreters break down complex source language messages into smaller, more manageable chunks. They may also simplify the syntax and vocabulary of the target language output to reduce the processing demands and maintain fluency;
- When faced with difficult or ambiguous source language input, interpreters

may reformulate or paraphrase the message in the target language to convey the intended meaning as accurately as possible. This requires a deep understanding of both languages and the ability to creatively re-express ideas.

While note-taking is more commonly associated with consecutive interpreting, some simultaneous interpreters use brief notes to aid memory, especially when dealing with numerical data, names, or complex arguments. SLI may involve mental note-taking using visualization techniques to remember the spatial relationships and non-manual markers.

In conclusion we can say that interpreters act as cultural mediators, bridging cultural gaps between the source language speaker/signer and the target language audience. This involves explaining cultural references, adapting communication styles, and addressing potential misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences. In SLI, cultural mediation is particularly important due to the distinct cultural norms and values of deaf communities.

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