Hispanic/Latinx Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Interpreting

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Purpose of Research

• The purpose of this project was 1) to determine the role of culture in the selection of careers and specifically around sign language interpretation, 2) recruitment measures, and 3) perceptions of participants toward the field of interpreting.

• The researcher utilized an interview format to determine the participants' perceptions regarding the field of interpreting.

• A lack of research into diversity within the field of interpreting from the perspective of cultural groups provides an opportunity to add to the discussion.
Review of Literature

- According to Call (2006), as the general Hispanic/Latinx (H/L) population increases, there is a proportional increase in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Hispanic/Latinx (H/L) community.

- Sign language interpreting is not a traditional field of employment as many H/L parents view deafness as a disability (Friedner, 2018), not a difference (Emmorey & Lane, 2000).

- Many interpreters are under-prepared to work with and for the multitude of rich cultural identities within the American Deaf Community (Gallon, 2008)

- Having a culturally sensitive interpreter who can mediate between cultures reduces false assumptions about Deaf/hard-of-hearing individuals. (Parasnis & Fischer, 2005)

- Some student interpreters have seen success regardless of obstacles. Confidence to meet their goals is derived from interaction with people like themselves. (Parasnis & Fischer, 2005)
Demographics

Participants were recruited by convenient sample.
- Classification: four seniors, one junior
- Gender: four females, one male
- Age: early 20's
- Signing experience: 2.5 to 7 years
- Language usage: four trilingual (Spanish, English, ASL or English, ASL, Arabic); one multilingual (Spanish, English, ASL, Portuguese)
Results

For research questions 1 and 2, descriptive coding and In Vivo coding were used to identify common themes from interviews and discussions. Second cycle coding reduced 13 themes to five major themes (93%). The remaining themes (identified as Misc 7%) did not fit into any of the other categories.
Research Question #1
What are the perceptions of Hispanic/Latinx students toward interpreter training?

Discussion
• Three themes were determined to be related to interpreter training: preparedness, advocacy, and mentorship. 47% of the comments from participants were about these areas. Participants agreed that this field requires ongoing motivation and persistence for skill development. They emphasized the need for self-advocacy, cultural advocacy, and community advocacy. The key to maintaining a presence in the field is mentorship. Individuals who have at least one strong mentor tend to be more active in the field, more proficient in their communication, and more capable of their role as interpreters.

In Vivo Comments
• You can't just put your foot into it because you're really gonna have to fully go into it and fully experience it.
• ... like I said before I feel like it all comes down to advocating and wanting to do it ... it takes ganas (motivation) because not everybody has it.
• ...being able to use your personal experiences ... to advocate for [the community]. I'm sure there's deaf Hispanic/Latinx who really need the alliance.
• If I can provide the information necessary, then I can consider myself going in the right path, and if not, then you know, I just take time to myself, and practice and communicate with those staff interpreters.
Research Question #2
How do Hispanic/Latinx students perceive the impact of culture on interpreting as a profession?

• As described in the review of literature, culture has a significant impact on the daily lives of the participants and on their decision-making. Themes related to culture often overlapped other categories. Participants were aware of the statistics regarding Hispanic/Latinx interpreters and were determined to try to increase those numbers to promote representation for themselves and to support the cultural community they plan to serve.
Research Question #2 cont.
How do Hispanic/Latinx students perceive the impact of culture on interpreting as a profession?

Discussion
• Culture inundates the professional and personal lives of Hispanic/Latinx interpreters. Cultural categories included knowledge, expectations, awareness, pride, insensitivity, advocacy, representation, microaggression, unconscious bias, independence, invisibility, and acknowledgment. Culture or the lack of such impacts confidence of students to pursue this field of study.

In Vivo Comments
• Immerse in culture the same way that we...grew up with our culture.
• I feel ... it's very, very important just being able to ... be within the community, really ... understand their culture understand their ... language.
• I would want to ... create a ... deeper connection too, because ... I fully understand the culture.
• I never see Hispanic person[s], so it might feel you ... it might make you feel smaller.
Research Question #3
How does parental perception affect choice of occupation for the field of interpreting?

• The results for the question regarding parental occupation and parental education levels found that there was no pattern in the success and retention of the participants in interpreting. 70% of the parents were engaged in labor and public service occupations that did not require college training. Only 10% of parents held advanced degrees, indicating that most of the participants were first-generation college students. The choice of occupation for participants was unexpected and independently chosen.
Societal Benefit

Knowing the perceptions of Hispanic/Latinx student interpreters helps to identify strategies of recruitment that would not only benefit the field of interpreting, but also the Deaf community, which is rich in diversity. Understanding how culture influences the students' choice of major allows us to manage new methods for recruitment and retention. Culture not only affects preparedness, motivation, and advocacy but profoundly influences access and the response to mentorship. Successful training is crucial to the professional development of Hispanic/Latinx student interpreters.
References


