



Student Transitions:

Title: British Sign Language Interpreter Repository (BSLIR)

Transition(s) the practice supports:

- Develop the technical interpreting/translation skills to improve the transition from student to practicing sign language interpreter.
- Demonstrate reflective practice and life-long learning as a professional responsibility.
- Preparation for students to be able to enter employment immediately upon graduation.

Abstract:

The Aim of the BSL Interpreter Repository (BSLIR) project is to develop an online database of British Sign Language translations and interpreted scenarios that can be used as a resource to enhance teaching and learning in the British Sign Language/English Undergraduate Degree course at Heriot-Watt University. These translations and interpreted scenarios will serve as representations of the types of work practicing sign language interpreters experience on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, students will have exposure to environments, prior to working in them, which will give them an increased understanding of the dynamics and nature of the assignments they will face improving their transition into professional work.

Description:

The School of Management and Languages (LINCS department) is currently teaching the first cohort of a new undergraduate degree to teach and prepare students to become qualified British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreters on completion of the degree course in Scotland. Most students enter the program without any previous knowledge of BSL, and in their second semester of 4th year, will be completing work placements in the community as BSL/English Interpreters. With the current shortage of qualified sign language interpreters across the UK, upon successful graduation, students will have many employment options available to them. In order to prepare them for these work placements and for future practice as interpreters, it is vital they have access to the best resources in their first semester of their fourth year, due to start September 2015. There is currently a speech repository project that is an online learning system for students of conference interpreting throughout Europe (see: <http://www.multilingualspeeches.tv/scic/portal/index.html>). This platform houses high



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quality video material including real life situations and speeches. Materials have been categorized by skill level (e.g. beginner, intermediate, advanced), which aids instructors in selecting videos that best assist in meeting learning outcomes. Unfortunately, European signed languages have not been incorporated into this project. Additionally, due to the nature of signed languages and the fact that they have only very recently been recognised as official languages (British Government recognised BSL in 2003) there are no established translations of text from BSL - English or English – BSL. Due to this students have limited opportunities to see real works in the classroom, which is unlike the experiences of students studying foreign spoken languages, as they have access to many books and other texts previously translated and published. Educational resources for BSL/English interpreting students simply do not exist. Reasons for this include but are not limited to the status of Deaf people in society and the extent to which British Sign Language is recognised as a national language. Therefore, the BSL Interpreter Repository (BSLIR) project has taken form to begin to develop much needed resources.

The BSLIR team is developing teaching materials to supplement students' progression through their 4th year and preparing them to undertake interpreting work on successful completion of their degree course. Project team members are collaborating with community partners (e.g. working professionals, such as medical professionals, school teachers, and business professionals; British Sign Language users; and practicing BSL/English interpreter/translators) to develop state of the art video materials. These materials include role-plays, formal speeches, and narratives replicating real life situations that reflect sign language interpreters' work experience. Materials will be developed, filmed, edited and archived on a database accessible to educators at Heriot-Watt University, such as the Vision site. It is our goal that by replicating real life situations in the classroom, students will have smoother transitions into the workforce upon graduation. The filmed clips will include interactions with and without sign language interpreters present (allowing for students to see an interpreted model as well as practice their own interpretation). Additionally, the sign language interpreter will be filmed post-interpretation where he/she can reflect and self assess the work completed. This will allow students to know more about the choices the interpreter made during the interpretation and to learn more about how sign language interpreters engage in reflective practice to hone skills throughout their careers. Additionally, the BSLI project is creating translations from BSL-English and English-BSL. It is our goal that through the materials developed in the BSLIR project to assist in the technical skill development of students and increase their understanding of the dynamics and nature of the assignments they will face improving their transition into professional work.

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