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TRAN7006A Research

Bridging the Gap: Achieving Professionalization Through Memes

by

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MA – Interpreting

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Plagiarism declaration

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

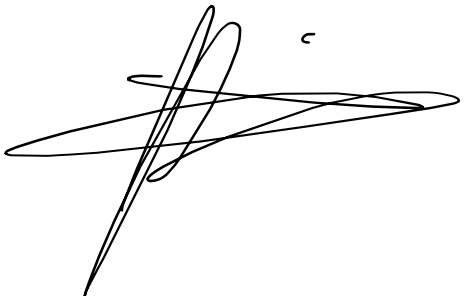
School of Language Literature and Media Studies

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Abstract

‘Bridging the Gap: Achieving Professionalization through Memes’ focuses on how social media is a useful marketing tool that South African Sign Language interpreters can use to promote the professionalism of interpreting. Up to now, there has been little focus on the ways South African Sign Language interpreters can use social media memes/behaviours to promote and advocate for the mainstream recognition of interpreters. This research bridges that gap by conducting a discourse analysis of the various hashtags South African Sign Language interpreters can employ to promote their personal brands as well as the brands of interpreting agencies. It also looks at the various social media strategies individuals and companies use to reach wider audiences. Although social media is a useful tool to promote professionalism, it does not come without its risks and ethical concerns. These risks are discussed in depth, and it is imperative that interpreters keep these risks in mind when using social media.

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List of Abbreviations

AIIC	International Association of Conference Interpreters
ASL	American Sign Language
BSL	British Sign Language
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board
POPIA	Protection Of Personal Information Act
SASL	South African Sign Language
SASLI	South African Sign Language interpreter
SL	Source language
TL	Target language
VIR	Video Relay Interpreting

Chapter 1 – Study Overview

1.1 Introduction

Memes are not just humorous videos, images and/or text that circulate on social media and the internet; they are culturally transmitted tools that can have an impact on communication, cultural and socialization practices (Shifman, 2014). Memes are handshakes, elbow tap greetings, as well as humorous images on the internet; they are behaviours that are passed from person to person (Shifman, 2014). Memes disseminate information, which may be true or false, and have a positive or negative impact depending on the way the memes are used (Shifman, 2014). Tseng (1992) explains that professionalism can be achieved through the use of two theories, trait theory and control theory. Trait theory provides a checklist that professions can use to elevate the respective fields, whereas control theory explains four stages of professionalism in order to evaluate the progress that has been made within the field. South African Sign Language (SASL) has historically struggled to gain recognition which is why professionalism in this field is crucial (Pym et al., 2012). By exploring the way memes are used in relation to the professionalization of interpreting, memes may be discovered that act as impactful tools for assisting interpreters. This research looks at meme theory through the lens of professionalism and social media marketing.

1.2 Background

This research builds on previous research which explored the idea that language planning is generally considered in times of crisis (Mothapo, 2023). Mothapo's (2023) research focused on how the production and spread of memes can guide the use of language within the context of SASL becoming the 12th official language in South Africa. By looking holistically at the experience of the SASL community in relation to its sociocultural history, it examined memes such as #SASL12. It was noted that SASL was a status-gaining language en route to becoming an official language. SASL has since been approved as South Africa's 12th official language (Mothapo, 2023). This study built on the recommendation that public awareness of how to work with an interpreter needs to be researched. This is directly linked to

professionalization practices. Studying this awareness may improve interpreter education and training as well as interpreting practice by making specific recommendations. It may additionally address ethical concerns and inform advocacy and policy.

1.2.1 Interpreting Overview

Owing to certain variables, such as history and socioeconomic factors, the professionalism of interpreting and the challenges it has faced between the global north and the global south may differ. The interpreting profession has historically struggled to gain respect and recognition. In the global north, especially in Western societies, interpreting has a long history of professionalization and acceptance. This can be explained by elements like the evolution of legal systems, global diplomacy and the requirement for interpreting during significant historical events. For instance, interpreting is essential in institutions like the European Union and the United Nations. In contrast, historical considerations in the developing world may have hampered the growth and acceptance of interpreting. For example, the development of interpreting as a profession may have been hampered by colonial legacies, a lack of resources and political unrest in some areas. The multiplicity of local languages and dialects in the global south may also pose difficulties for interpreting services. References?

In the case of South Africa with 12 official languages, interpreting is challenging as language users code-switch when talking. Moreover, until very recently interpreting has had a relatively low status in the country, which could stem from the misconception that anyone who is bilingual, irrespective of whether they have the training, can serve as an interpreter. This belief is still prevalent today. The current state of interpreting professionalism means that untrained bilingual people can apply and be appointed to an interpreter position, regardless of whether they have the essential skills or not. As a result, this contributes to reducing the general standard of interpreting. References?

The first steps taken in professionalizing interpreting did not emerge until the 20th century when academic circles began to pay special attention to interpreting. When interpreting was finally given a thorough description in the 1960s, it was said that it was a type of translation in which a source language (SL) text is provided only once and cannot be examined or repeated. As a result, the target language (TL) text is created under pressure and in a short amount of time, leaving little room for editing or correction. In the 1940s and 1950s interpreter training institutes were established. The establishment of education programmes

for translation abilities, which were encouraged by the growth in the demand for communication in international trade and policy, the market's continued expansion and the increasing number of graduates from these educational institutions prompted the need for professional organizations for translators and interpreters on a national and international level. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) made efforts to gain a better grasp of the requirements for a career in professional interpreting. It was around this time that simultaneous interpreting was introduced to the public. Simultaneous interpreters are often overlooked, as they sit in booths invisible to the public, providing the necessary access to the relevant people. South African Sign Language interpreters (SASLIs), in contrast, are spotlighted, put in the front of the room, or on camera to convey the message from SL to TL (Mikkelson & Jourdenais, 2015; Gambrell, 2018).

1.2.2 The Relationship Between Memes and Interpreting

Pym et al. (2012) found that no official academic qualification, or even any kind of formal qualification at all, is necessary to assume the role of a translator or interpreter. Almost anyone can be referred to as a 'translator' (Pym et al., 2012). Technically speaking, the generic term 'translator' is essentially unprotected (Pym et al., 2012). Important milestones were hit with the implementation of the Use of Official Languages Act (Act 12 of 2012), and the South African National Language Practitioners' Council Act (Act 8 of 2014), which regulated the interpreting profession. However, this progress was tarnished by the government appointed SASLI, Jantjie, at the memorial service held for the late President Nelson Mandela, leading to interpreting in South Africa receiving overwhelming attention from the general public accompanied by harsh criticism (You, 2014). This public embarrassment led to the public losing trust in interpreters. Moreover, memes (culturally transmitted norms) started to circulate on the internet and on Jantjie's social media platforms,[1] and an image of him standing on stage next to the speakers at the funeral became infamous as people captioned it with random non-sensible words and sentences in an attempt to imitate his interpretation (You, 2014).

[1] See annexure A: meme analysed in previous research on the interpreter at Mandela's funeral.

1.2.3 How are Memes Involved in Professionalism?

Memes are an impactful method of creating language communities. Owing to the rapid increase in technological advancements, the internet and social media have become popular tools for distributing memes (Shifman, 2014). Using these platforms, language planners can create and spread memes to challenge negative language attitudes or to promote the use of language (in the case of this research, SASL). It is important to acknowledge that memes can also be used to spread prejudice and hateful language practices and attitudes, therefore, language planners should use memes responsibly and ethically (Shifman, 2014). Internet memes are considered as a way to upgrade professional practice as they have the potential to foster closer-knit communities as well as spread information on the norms of the profession (Shifman, 2014).

Studying the relationship between memes and professionalism, specifically in relation to SASLIs, may give us better insight into the cross-cultural social implications memes have for professionalism. SASLIs are often placed in the spotlight, which means they are often the subjects of memes. In a digital era, this potentially provides opportunities to educate the public and the people they work with on how to work with an interpreter, as memes shared on social media (digital memes) can reach a sizeable and varied audience (Shifman, 2014). Additionally, memes may assist in educating the public on the nuances of professions (in this case SASL interpreting), as well as the value of working with qualified professionals (Shifman, 2014).

Memes have emerged as a significant medium for cultural expression (Song & Crowder, 2019). Studying memes in relation to professionalism may clarify the attitudes and viewpoints held by interpreters and the larger interpreting community, as well as explain how these viewpoints are evolving over time. In order to promote the interpreting profession and make sure that interpreters are respected for the significant work they do, it may be helpful to research memes and their role in the professionalization of interpreting.

1.3 Research Question

How can memes contribute to the professionalization of South African Sign Language Interpreting?

1.3.1 Sub-question

Memes are culturally transmitted ideas and behaviours, in an era where technology is rapidly expanding, hence the following sub-question is posed:

1. How can memes assist in promoting South African Sign Language Interpreters?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Little attention has been paid to the relationship between the professionalization of SASL interpreting and memes. The AIIC provides guidelines on the memes (norms) that can be found when working online (AIIC Taskforce on Distance Interpreting, 2020) but there is a gap in the research as no specific studies have been conducted on sign language and digital memes or interpreting and digital memes. SASL is increasing in status, and in July 2023, the National Assembly approved the adoption of SASL as South Africa's 12th official language, thus ensuring the Deaf community's right to equity, diversion and inclusion (Arcangeli, 2023). It is important to put efforts into research related to SASL as well as SASLIs. As SASL gains status its language practitioners are spotlighted. Therefore, it is possible that interpreters are missing a crucial tool (memes) in the professionalism of interpreting. This study will better equip language practitioners, advocates and planners to understand how memes can add value to the profession. It could further help to define the role memes play in professionalizing the interpreting profession for SASLIs.

1.5 Organization of the Study

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Chapter 4: Hashtag Analysis and Discussion

Chapter 5: Ethical Concerns

Chapter 6: Findings and Recommendations

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Memes on the internet are basic units of cultural transmission, over time they have developed into complex entities that mirror and influence the way we all think. As a result, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have paid close attention to memes, Taking an interdisciplinary discourse approach about their nature, purpose, and significance. This study of the literature aims to explore the complex and diverse concept of memes, with a special emphasis on the implementation of interpretating in their production, transmission, and reception. Looking at a wide range of academic publications from various disciplines including sociology, media/marketing studies, communication studies, business studies, and cultural studies to understand the complex relationship between memes and the professionalization of interpreting. Extensive examination of the existing literature will address questions such as, how can memes contribute to the professionalization of South African Sign Language Interpreting? And how can memes assist in promoting South African Sign Language Interpreters?

2.2 Introduction to Memes

2.2.1 Introduction

Parallels are expected to be found by applying existing literature on memes and marketing to models of professionalism. Using meme theories such as Dawkins' (1979) definition of a meme in relation to a gene, as well as Shifman's (2014) explanation of an internet meme, and applying them to models of professionalism such as Tseng's model of professionalism in relation to control theory, SASLIs may gain an understanding of how memes can be useful tools for the spread of professionalism practices.

2.2.2 Memes

Memes are culturally transmitted ideas and behaviours that are becoming increasingly popular in online interaction (Dawkins, 1979; Shifman, 2014). Internet memes or digital memes are used to communicate a range of ideas, from humour and amusement to political criticism and social critique (Shifman, 2014). Internet memes, which take the shape of images, videos or text, are cultural symbols or ideas that spread quickly throughout the internet and social media (Shifman, 2014).

> Bradley E. Wiggins and G. Bret Bowers (2014, 1893) consider memes a genre, defining them as "messages transmitted by consumers-producers for discursive purposes". Specifically, the term "discursive" points to the repetition of subject or thematic matter, which connects one image to the others. A meme is born when one image macro is shared widely and then modified over and over again by many participants within a community that recognizes the original macro (Song & Crowder, 2019, 103).

Memes have an impact as they reflect and reinforce prevailing beliefs and attitudes (Shifman, 2014). This means that memes can aid in the socialization process by helping people learn and internalize societal norms and values (Song & Crowder, 2019). Muruganandam (2018) explains that memes can be considered a unique genre of discourse with unique processes of creation, dissemination and consumption. They contend that investigating memes as a genre might illuminate how memes affect the formation of cultural identities and public debate (Muruganandam, 2018).

Memes can assist in the dissemination and appropriation of new words and phrases across linguistic boundaries. For instance, the expressions 'lol', 'meme' and 'hashtag' have spread over various cultures and linguistic groups, obscuring the distinctions between them and possibly fostering the creation of a universal online vernacular (Shifman, 2014). Memes and language status have a bidirectional relationship (Milner, 2013): when used to convey disapproval or criticize established power systems, memes have the capacity to challenge and disrupt prevailing language ideologies (Milner, 2013). For instance, memes that make use of uncommon or minority languages, like SASL, can be used as an act of defiance against prevailing linguistic conventions and as a declaration of the cultural and linguistic identity of oppressed groups (Shifman, 2014).

By fostering norms within a common language and culture in a specific professional community, memes may assist in the professionalization of that community. For instance, medical practitioners may utilize relevant memes to communicate complicated information in a comical or understandable way, improving relationships between practitioners in the community and promoting communication (Kubitschko, 2020). The use of memes in medical education has been suggested to have substantial effects on the formation of professional identity and authority because they have the potential to question accepted norms and power systems. Several case examples of memes utilized in medical education are presented by Song and Crowder (2019), including memes about patient care, medical language and professional behaviour. They contend that by analysing these instances through the prism of social learning theory, memes can function as a type of socialization and can assist in the formation of shared professional values and identity. In relation to the professionalization of interpreting, this could take the form of memes relating to client-care (how to build a good rapport with your clients), professional jargon (terms like 'lag-time' for example) and professional behaviour (ethics, confidentiality, 20–30-minute shifts, and so forth). The use of memes in medical training has significant drawbacks and risk factors. Hence, the use of memes should be carefully assessed in light of these potential risks because they have the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes and threaten established power systems. While memes can be very helpful in the formation of professional identity and authority in medical education, their use needs to be handled with care and thoughtful consideration.
Song & Crowder, (2019).

Wiggins (2017) offers a thorough analysis of meme theory and makes the case that memes may be viewed as a novel discourse form that results from the fusion of digital media, social networks and participatory culture. Memes can have important social, cultural and political ramifications, and more investigation into how memes influence discourse on public and cultural identities is urged (Wiggins, 2017). Julien (2022) explains that the rise of digital communication creates both new opportunities and problems for language innovation, creativity and cultural identity. Digital platforms offer previously unheard-of chances for linguistic innovation, experimentation, and the spread of new linguistic forms (Julien, 2022). Language in digital settings is evolving quickly as a result of people's ability to effortlessly create and share creative language practices like neologisms, slang, and memes through

social media, messaging apps, and online forums (Julien, 2022). The emergence of digital communication also presents difficulties for cultural identity, creativity, and innovative language use (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). Due to the influence of dominant languages and communication norms on online discourse, the pace and scope of digital communication can result in both linguistic fragmentation and standardisation (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). The threat to linguistic diversity and cultural legacy posed by this dominance is the marginalisation of minority languages and dialects (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). The study of digital language use, according to the author, can shed light on the intricate interplay between language, culture and technology in the twenty-first century (Julien, 2022).

Androutsopoulos (2013) investigated the way language is employed in online fan fiction communities, where authors and readers frequently participate in intricate types of code-switching and language mixing. It is believed that online communities offer a forum for the negotiation of linguistic and cultural identity and that research into these groups may foster linguistic variety by challenging prevailing language assumptions (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Milner (2013) makes the case that memes are crucial to a movement's participatory culture and the development of a feeling of collective identity among its members. It has been proposed that memes be viewed as a type of 'pop polyvocality' that gives people a platform to express their opinions (Milner, 2013).

These findings collectively imply that memes are intricately linked to language, culture and technology and that understanding memes can shed fresh light on the intricate and dynamic interaction between these elements in the digital era. Memes and language status are closely related, reflecting and influencing the way various languages are viewed and utilized in various circumstances. Memes can be seen as cultural and linguistic artefacts that offer a viewpoint from which to analyse the intricate and dynamic interaction between culture and language in the digital realm.
Shifman, (2014).

Internet memes disseminate information (Shifman, 2014). It is therefore possible to investigate the way memes may help create a community with shared cultural norms and principles, as well as informal networks of control, within a particular profession or community (Milner, 2013). It is crucial to remember that the employment of memes in formal settings may also have the power to erode systems of authority and control (Milner, 2013), as their development and dissemination may challenge accepted norms and expectations

(Milner, 2013). They also might not be subject to the same levels of examination and evaluation as formal professional procedures (Muruganandam, 2018). Therefore, it is important to be aware of the context in which memes are used.

2.2.3. Memes: The Glamorization of Professions

Memes have become a potent and pervasive method of communication on the internet and in the digital culture era. They have the power to quickly and effectively communicate complicated concepts, feelings and cultural commentary. Moreover, memes have found a place in the representation and perception of vocations, frequently glamorizing different professions in addition to their role in humour and social commentary. Memes contribute to the glamorization of professions by shaping the way people view professions.
Sharma, (2015).

Memes have been assimilated into modern culture and serve as cultural markers that reflect and influence our collective consciousness (Boylan et al., 2018). They are more than just jokes or internet phenomena; they have a deeper significance and frequently reflect the attitudes, values and goals of society (Boylan et al., 2018). As a result, memes significantly influence how we view different professions (Sharma, 2015). Memes can glamorise professions in a variety of ways (Boylan et al., 2018). First, they may exaggerate the glamorous and thrilling qualities of a career while downplaying its less appealing features (Boylan et al., 2018). In order to emphasize the adventurous and exciting nature of their profession, memes about astronauts, for instance, frequently include them in their spacesuits, set against the background of the cosmos (Boylan et al., 2018). Such jokes skirt the years of gruelling preparation, isolation and personal sacrifices that astronauts must go through, reinforcing the notion that being an astronaut is an exciting and distinguished vocation (Boylan et al., 2018). Second, by propagating glamorized or idealized images, memes can reinforce prejudices connected to particular professions (Sharma, 2015). Take medical-related memes, for example, which frequently feature doctors as valiant heroes who dedicate their lives to saving others (Sharma, 2015). Despite the fact that doctors genuinely save lives, these memes tend to ignore the long hours, intense stress and moral difficulties that they have to deal with (Boylan et al., 2018).

Movies have a long history of influencing how we view professions (Boylan et al., 2018). Hollywood, in particular, has long been fascinated by different vocations and frequently

depicts them in a way that is meant to enthral and motivate viewers (Boylan et al., 2018). Whether it's doctors in *Grey's Anatomy*, lawyers in *How to get away with Murder*, or spies in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, movies have the capacity to romanticize and glamorize professions, presenting an unrealistic idea that may not necessarily reflect reality (Tonkovich, 2004). Movies let audiences put themselves in the subjects' shoes and experience the highs and lows of a specific line of work firsthand (Tonkovich, 2004). These film representations frequently exclude the less exciting or difficult aspects of a vocation in favour of the most thrilling ones, such as high-stakes surveillance for spies or courtroom spectacles for lawyers (Tonkovich, 2004). The idea that a specific vocation is not only alluring but also accessible to those who acquire the proper skills or possess the required talents is further reinforced by the frequent appearance in films of charismatic and attractive protagonists who achieve in their chosen sector (Boylan et al., 2018). This image has the potential to be both motivating and deceptive because it may oversimplify the road to success in a particular field (Sharma, 2015). Consider how jobs in law enforcement are portrayed in popular culture (Jenkins, 2009): police officers are sometimes portrayed as heroes who take out villains single-handedly and resolve complicated situations. The collaborative and bureaucratic aspects of law enforcement job are overlooked in this portrayal (Sharma, 2015). When new police recruits arrive on the scene, they might anticipate nonstop action and swift justice but instead find themselves dealing with paperwork, office duties and the cumbersome nature of court hearings (Sharma, 2015)

Memes and movies, combined, form a powerful force for the glamorization of professions (Tonkovich, 2004). Memes frequently use elements of popular culture such as films to produce relatable content that appeals to a large audience (Andò & Campagna, 2022). This assimilation can strengthen and maintain romanticized perceptions of professions (Andò & Campagna, 2022). For instance, memes based on characters from well-known films might highlight the most alluring features of their line of work while employing comedy to make them easier to connect with (Boylan et al., 2018). Think about an internet meme of Tony Stark, a superhero and multi-billionaire inventor in the Marvel movies (Boylan et al., 2018). These memes frequently satirize the advantages of having unlimited resources or inventing high-tech outfits, conveniently omitting the ethical and moral complications of such power (Boylan et al., 2018). Movies and memes can also feed off one another (Boylan et al., 2018). A well-known meme may highlight a certain profession or persona, generating interest in movies or television shows with similar content (Andò & Campagna, 2022). On the other

hand, a popular film can spark the production of an abundance of memes that help spread a romanticized perception of a given industry (Boylan et al., 2018).

Memes and movies that emphasize vocations can have both beneficial and adverse effects on people and society overall (Sharma, 2015). On the plus side, professional glamorization can be a motivating and inspirational force (Andò & Campagna, 2022). It may inspire people, particularly youth, to go for their goals and desires (Andò & Campagna, 2022). When a career is shown as captivating, satisfying and doable, it can inspire people to put in the effort and conquer the challenges to achieve their professional aspirations (Andò & Campagna, 2022). For instance, portrayals of scientists in films like *The Theory of Everything* as bright problem solvers may encourage young people to seek professions in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects (Sharma, 2015). The drawback of professional glamorization is that it might lead to exaggerated goals and false beliefs (Andò & Campagna, 2022). People who choose careers based on how enticing they appear in movies and memes may be ill-prepared for the difficulties and setbacks they face in the real world (Andò & Campagna, 2022). When people discover that their chosen career does not fit the idealistic vision they had in mind, this can cause disappointment, burnout and feelings of inadequacy (Andò & Campagna, 2022). Additionally, the glamorization of some professions might lower the value of other, equally significant but less enticing professions (Boylan et al., 2018). For instance, despite playing a crucial part in society, jobs in education, social work, interpreting or public service are rarely portrayed as thrilling or glamorous in movies or memes (Sharma, 2015). This may reinforce the idea that only a select few occupations are deserving of appreciation and respect, deterring people from exploring employment in less well-known industries (Boylan et al., 2018).

The portrayal of professions in the media (television shows, movies and social media such as Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook and so forth) presents a number of professions such as lawyers, doctors, journalists and law enforcement officials such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the police, There is little focus on interpreters (Sharma, 2015). With its focus on careers in movies the media glamorizes and promotes the professionalism of the field by setting certain standards related to professionalism such as ethical codes, dress codes, codes of conduct and so on (Sharma, 2015). In addition, not only does it set those standards but it lets outsiders peer into the profession which helps them to understand who is hired in such professions (Sharma,

2015). This glamorization of professions could lead to an increased interest in pursuing the career portrayed due to its glamorized appeal (Sharma, 2015). Movies and social media have shaped our thoughts, ideas and even goals (Shifman, 2014). They influence people in various ways, including by representing careers (Shifman, 2014). Owing to the frequent glamorizing of certain occupations by the film and the media industry, viewers may develop fanciful expectations and opinions about them (Shifman, 2014). Career glamorization is therefore a phenomenon that affects how people regard various professions and is made up of a complex interplay between storytelling, narrative tactics and societal authority (Sharma, 2015). Storytelling is the foundation of career glamorization and fascinating storylines are the foundation of films and social media (Sharma, 2015). Dramatization and exaggeration are frequently used by filmmakers and content creators to enhance the attractiveness of and engagement with their narrative (Sharma, 2015). This implies that they frequently downplay the tedious or difficult aspects of a profession in favour of the more exciting and glamorous qualities (Shifman, 2014). In contrast to the hours spent on paperwork or mundane investigations, a detective movie usually places more focus on the heart-pounding moments of solving murders (Sharma, 2015). This selective representation could misrepresent reality and give the impression that a specific line of work is always exciting and adventurous (Sharma, 2015). Every profession has its own set of difficulties, monotonous work and sometimes dull periods. Movies and social media have the potential to distort people's perceptions of what a profession involves by emphasizing just the attractive aspects (Sharma, 2015). Furthermore, characters involved in these occupations are frequently portrayed in movies and social media as having idealized lifestyles, appearances and interactions (Jenkins, 2009). Consider how doctors are portrayed: they are typically depicted as intelligent people who detect uncommon ailments and carry out life-saving surgery with ease while leading ideal personal lives (Sharma, 2015). These representations ignore the significant effort, lengthy schooling and ongoing education that doctors go through (Shifman, 2014); in favour of a more interesting story, the strain, long hours and ethical difficulties they face are frequently glossed over (Sharma, 2015).

Professional glamorisation has effects that go beyond simple enjoyment: it may have an impact on the decisions people make about their educational and professional aspirations (Jenkins, 2009). Youth who have access to these idealized images may choose careers based on how they appear in the media rather than on a true understanding of the industry (Jenkins, 2009). Expectations and reality may not match up as a result, which may cause

disappointment and career discontent. Consider the movie *The Interpreter* (2005), which features actress Nicole Kidman as the interpreter, who overhears an assassination plan which sends her on an action-packed adventure (Nguyen, 2021). Although the movie showcases the people who are often heard and not seen (booth interpreters), highlighting the profession, the movie has professional ramifications as it perpetuates unrealistic expectations and stereotypes of the interpreting profession which can lead to career disappointment. Career disappointment will impact professionalism as the interpreter workforce may show up burnt out (Paul, et al., 2018). Nguyen (2021) posts a list on LinkedIn with a number of movies on interpreting which succeed in perpetuating these preconceptions and expectations. Accordingly, professional glamorization can also reinforce preconceptions and worsen already-existing socioeconomic disparities (Shifman, 2014). Some professions receive exaggerated glamorization, while others are ignored or portrayed incorrectly (Shifman, 2014). For instance, careers in the creative industries, such as art, music, or literature, are occasionally portrayed as quick routes to success (Shifman, 2014). However, most people in these sectors frequently experience monetary hardship, rejection, and labour-intensive work (Shifman, 2014).

It is important to remember that glamorizing one's career isn't necessarily a bad thing (Jenkins, 2009). It can encourage people to follow their goals, spur them on to overcome challenges and even enlighten them about lesser-known vocations (Sharma, 2015). It is, however, important to find a balance between imagination and accurate portrayal (Jenkins, 2009). Media producers, educators and society at large all have significant roles to play in addressing the problem of career glamorization (Jenkins, 2009). Content producers should work to portray a more complete picture of all professions, showing both the difficulties and the victories equally (Jenkins, 2009). They can highlight the education and resiliency that people require as they advance in their careers (Jenkins, 2009). In order to assist young audiences to differentiate between imaginary storylines and realistic expectations, educators can encourage media literacy and critical thinking (Jenkins, 2009). Education professionals may give students the tools to critically think about and evaluate the material presented in the media by fostering conversations about the veracity of portrayals (Julien, 2022). A more complete picture can be gained by highlighting the various aspects of each career (Jenkins, 2009) and having open discussions about the responsibilities, incentives, and difficulties of various professions might assist people in making better career decisions (Jenkins, 2009). An example of this could be documentaries.

Memes and movies have developed into potent weapons for the glamorization of professions, significantly influencing people's perspectives and goals. While they might encourage people to achieve their goals, they also run the risk of instilling erroneous expectations and maintaining prejudices. The public consumes a vast amount of this content so it is important to approach the glamorization of vocations critically. Understanding that these representations are frequently idealized and skewed versions of reality can assist people in making wise professional decisions and in appreciating the diversity and worth of all professions, whether or not they are depicted in memes and movies. To ensure that our professional choices are in line with our genuine interests and skills, it is ultimately important to strike a balance between aspirations and practicality.

2.2.4. The Hashtag

The symbol (#), accompanied by a sentence or word, is known as a hashtag (Tsur & Roppopor, 2012). This symbol has been an effective tool for advancing advocacy, increasing awareness and upholding professionalism across a variety of online forums (Tsur & Roppopor, 2012). The hashtag plays a diverse role on social media, helping to spread information and promote professionalism and social change (Bernard, 2019).

The hashtag first emerged and was widely used on Twitter (now known as X) in 2007, making it a relatively new idea (Bernard, 2019). It has since spread to a variety of social networking sites, including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok (Bernard, 2019). A hashtag, in its simplest form, is a type of user-generated metadata tag that organizes content into categories and into topics (Bernard, 2019). It functions as a hyperlink which, by clicking on it, gives consumers access to an archive of related content (Bernard, 2019). Hashtags have developed into a cultural phenomenon that extends beyond the digital sphere, having an impact on political movements, social movements and public debate (Bernard, 2019). Accordingly, hashtags provide a strong platform for promoting advocacy efforts (Bernard, 2019). People, groups and movements that create and promote specific hashtags form a critical mass of supporters who bring attention to their cause and call for change (Tsur & Roppopor, 2012). For instance, hashtags were a key organizational strategy for the 2013 #BlackLivesMatter movement (Zulli, 2020). They have also made it possible for activists to communicate their racial justice demands, experiences and tales, which has raised awareness of institutional racism and police brutality throughout the world (Zulli, 2020). The hashtag

acts as a focal point, encouraging a sense of belonging among individuals who are fighting for change (Zulli, 2020).

Hashtags are essential for generating support for advocacy initiatives (Zulli, 2020). They make it simpler to locate and connect with groups and individuals who share your values, which makes it simpler to assemble a large base of supporters (Zulli, 2020). Using hashtags, people are able to share resources, plan events and coordinate actions more efficiently (Zulli, 2020). As an illustration, the #MeToo campaign against sexual harassment and assault gained popularity in 2017 (Bernard, 2019). It prompted survivors to share their experiences, building a sense of community and raising awareness of how ubiquitous these problems are (Bernard, 2019). The hashtag brought together survivors and sympathizers, sparking a worldwide movement that put pressure on organisations and governments to deal with these issues (Bernard, 2019). Similarly, the hashtag #SASL12, which promotes the use of SASL and its approval as an official language by the National Assembly in May 2023. This hashtag has the potential to bring together the South African Deaf community and provide a platform on various social media forums for organizations to put pressure on the government in a call for policy implementation.

In addition to being advocacy tools, hashtags are effective methods for spreading awareness about a variety of issues (Clark, 2016). Users can reach a larger audience and share useful information and resources by adding a hashtag to pertinent content (Clark, 2016). This technique works especially well when dealing with complex or little-covered subjects (Bernard, 2019). For instance, the hashtag #ClimateChange acts as a focal point for the dissemination of research findings, policy updates and initiatives for climate action (Pearce et al., 2014). The hashtag has been crucial in raising awareness of the public's urgent need to solve environmental problems and in fostering the growth of the climate advocacy movement, which is being spearheaded by individuals like Greta Thunberg (Pearce et al., 2014). Hashtags play a crucial role in disseminating information and showing support during times of crisis (Pearce et al., 2014). Popular hashtags which give real-time updates and promote collaboration among impacted populations are frequently created in response to severe weather events, political turmoil and public health catastrophes (Salazar, 2017). Hashtags like #StayHome and #WearAMask appeared during the Covid-19 outbreak to spread crucial public health information and promote responsible behaviour (Rovetta &

Bhagavathula, 2020). Similarly, hashtags like #prayforPalestine emerged as a way to show support and share information on the situation in Palestine (Abbas et al., 2022).

Hashtags have emerged as important instruments for fostering professionalism and increasing brand visibility in the business and marketing worlds (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017) and businesses employ branded hashtags to foster a sense of belonging and community around their goods or services (Bernard, 2019). These hashtags are also used to monitor and assess client involvement. One example of this is Nike's #JustDoIt slogan which has not only come to represent the company and its products but has also inspired customers to share their own fitness experiences (Slater, 2018). This interaction not only encourages marketing professionalism but also builds a sense of community among others who have similar interests and beliefs (Slater, 2018).

In many professions, hashtags are significant for networking and career advancement (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Professionals use industry-specific hashtags on social media sites like LinkedIn to connect with colleagues, share knowledge and keep up with market developments (Bernard, 2019). These hashtags promote professionalism among the community by facilitating the exchange of information and opportunities (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Hashtags like #SEO or #ContentMarketing in the field of digital marketing assist professionals in finding and interacting with content pertinent to their area of expertise (Bajpai et al., 2012). This maintains their knowledge and competence in their positions and fosters professionalism within this industry (Bajpai et al., 2012). As more and higher quality product/service information becomes available, social media is playing a bigger role in influencing people's decisions (Bajpai et al., 2012). People are persuaded to share their skills, experiences and knowledge about products and services with peers through internet platforms like online communities (Bajpai et al., 2012). This encourages the spread of electronic word of mouth, making the information offered on these platforms crucial for customers since it offers impressions of a product that are not directly related to it (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). These communications serve as intelligent and economical corporate marketing tactics (Bajpai et al., 2012). This marketing method has also been broadened by contemporary technological and internet breakthroughs (Bajpai et al., 2012) and online communities have given customers the power to spread the news about businesses' new products (Bajpai et al., 2012). Word of mouth has long been a crucial component of marketing, as numerous studies have demonstrated, yet the reach of this marketing strategy is restricted to a network where

people are acquainted and interact socially as a result of prior connections (Bajpai et al., 2012). This restriction has been lifted thanks to new technology and the expansion of social media (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). As a result, word of mouth on social media has developed with widespread accessibility as well as the capacity for customer evaluation and measurement (Bajpai et al., 2012). With many professionals engaging and working with clients through social networking sites, social media and other online technologies have changed the way professionals/service providers and service consumers interact (Bajpai et al., 2012). There are several ethical concerns about secrecy, dual relationships and blurred boundaries that are related to online practice, however it is unclear how these concerns should be handled (Bernard, 2019).

While hashtags have many advantages for fostering activism, increasing awareness and upholding professionalism, they also bring some difficulties and ethical dilemmas (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). Since hashtags can easily become viral, false information and disinformation can spread quickly (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). Hashtags can be used by people or organizations with bad intentions to spread incorrect or destructive information (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). This emphasizes how critical thinking and fact-checking are crucial in the digital era (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). Hashtag activism occasionally fosters 'slacktivism' – a passive participation with social or political issues devoid of concrete action (Abbas et al., 2022). While hashtags can elicit interest and support, they are best used in conjunction with practical acts like volunteering, donating or supporting legislative reform (Abbas et al., 2022).

While sharing stories on social media through hashtags can be empowering and foster a sense of community among professionals it also raises some ethical concerns (Chen, 2018). People should exercise caution when disclosing sensitive information and think carefully about the implications of their online behaviour (Chen, 2018). One of the most serious issues is the visibility of online engagement, or where it falls on the continuum between public and private (Chen, 2018). Networked publics, however publicly accessible online, are not public forums (Chen, 2018). They are networked and governed by both individual and social norms (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). People use online networks but they are wary of the veracity of the information spread through word of mouth on these sites (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). As material transfers from physical spaces to digital spaces and back again, online relationships and interactions become embodied and contextualized as they are informed by and inform

offline relationships, behaviours and events (Chen, 2018). Daily interactions become tangible on social media and distort the line between virtual and actual reality as well as produce lived-in spaces that have value and meaning for the individual. Interactions on social media may be embodied with synchronicity of mind and body, but the user is unable to observe other people's reactions and cannot get quick feedback (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). This creates a disembodiment factor that might make it difficult for the user to foresee how other users will react to their information or what the outcome of a given comment will be (Chen, 2018). Therefore, using social media can make you feel both connected and disconnected.

Social media is a popular tool used by practitioners to advertise their services (Bajpai, et al., 2012). By promoting themselves as professional and employable on social media, they are better able to establish their careers (Bajpai et al., 2012). This is significant for job searchers since many service providers use social media for recruitment and frequently scan job applicants' personal websites and social media postings (Li et al., 2021). There is an 'ethical grey zone' here because it is unclear what is and is not acceptable on social media (Chen, 2018). With the emergence of social media, the lines between author and reader are becoming less obvious (Milner, 2013). Due to the way content is made, modified and distributed among people, its collaborative and participatory character denies people the sole authorship of their life stories, which instead become a composite of many people's viewpoints packaged as one (Milner, 2013). Professionals have to uphold constructive criticism in their practice in order to uphold professionalism, given the intersecting discourses on power, privacy, embodiment, professionalism, authorship, and repercussions (Malodia et al., 2022). Critical theories and critical reflective practice are helpful in comprehending and unravelling variety, posing issues that might not otherwise be thought of and preventing professionals from unintentionally engaging in unethical activity (D'Arcy & Young, 2012). Interpreters should use their basic beliefs and principles regarding social justice, human rights, integrity, competence and respect online; however, this is not enough on its own (D'Arcy & Young, 2012).
Professionals should be up to date on the most recent studies in this area and be well aware of the complexity of social media interactions (Chen, 2018). Professionals should also educate people to develop their digital and ethical literacy, enlightening them on privacy, authorship and other related issues, and teaching them about the potential advantages and risks of online interaction (Chen, 2018). They should also promote the rights of underrepresented groups in both face-to-face and online interactions (Clark, 2016).

Professionals would benefit from knowing the unintended consequences of their online behaviour, showing greater awareness of how material might be received by unintended viewers, understanding the privacy boundaries in online communications, writing in a way consistent with their professional values and using social media strategically, including for activism and career advancement (Abbas et al., 2022). Professionals should be aware of the blending of public and private lines, take care when deciding whether to accept contact requests from past clients, and consult the contact request policies of their professional association when making judgments (Abbas et al., 2022). National and international professional bodies should create detailed online communication rules that encompass how to challenge presumptions and conduct themselves as critically reflective practitioners on social media (Wiggins, 2017). Employers should partner with professional associations in creating social media policies (Li et al., 2021). Being proactive is essential since young people are less inclined than ever to rely solely on conventional media for communication (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017).

Hashtags are a way to categorize content. This categorization enables memes searchability, making it easier for their target audience to find them and for topics to trend and potentially go viral as people are able to engage with content they enjoy and find relevant. This categorization also leads to interpreter communities being able to easily connect with each other online. Interpreters who use social media marketing strategies are able to track the engagement of their audiences and adjust their content accordingly.

2.2.5. Social Media Marketing

The emergence of social media platforms has revolutionised the communication and marketing environment by providing businesses with previously unheard-of chances to engage with their target customers globally. The rise in social media has led to a new type of marketing and business promotion, social media marketing (McDermott, 2021). As practitioners and stakeholders manage the effects of social media marketing on their profession, the interpreting profession has also felt the ripples of this digital revolution. Social media marketing affects the interpreting profession, from influencing industry norms and practices to forming professional identities. By using social media marketing strategies, interpreter agencies and other companies offering interpreting services can reach wide audiences, giving them a much wider target group of clients (McDermott, 2021). There are

various social media marketing strategies which allow service providers (interpreters and interpreting agencies) to connect with their consumers (Deaf and Hearing communities).

Social media from a marketing perspective is considered a platform on which people build professional networks and share information (Li et al., 2021). Social media allows service providers and customers to connect in ways that may not have been possible before (Li, et al., 2021). This enables word of mouth on social media as consumers can share their experiences of working with a service provider, such as an interpreter or interpreting agency (Bajpai et al., 2012). Social media platforms are effective marketing and brand-building tools that help companies contact their target audiences with relevant content and compelling campaigns. Companies are increasingly able to manage client interactions and improve corporate decision-making because to the availability of social media data (Li et al., 2021). With the aid of contemporary information technology, a sizable amount of social media data derived from various platforms (e.g. social networks, blogs, forums) and in various formats (e.g. image/video/texts) can now be simply retrieved and used to improve business operations (Li et al., 2021). Gathering and delivering value from social media data suggests the emergence of a new strategic resource that can improve marketing outcomes, because social media data can be a significant source of customer insight, market research and crowdsourcing of new ideas (Li et al., 2021). Social media marketing has the potential to become a crucial factor in raising the exposure and awareness of language services within the interpreting profession. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram are and can be used by both freelance interpreters and interpreting companies to interact with possible clients, share industry information, and display their skills. Moreover, social media marketing has expanded the reach of language experts and demolished geographic barriers, democratising access to interpreting services (Bajpai, et al., 2012). Targeted advertising and natural content tactics are useful tools for interpreting firms to reach a wide range of clientele, including non-profits, corporations, government agencies, and healthcare providers (Li, et al., 2021). In addition to helping clients in need of language assistance, this improved accessibility gives interpreters new chances to grow their clientele and pursue specialised markets.

Consumer interactions on social networking sites fosters connection and a feeling of personalization. Individual followers can ‘retweet’ or ‘repost’ remarks made by the product being marketed on social networking sites like Instagram (Bajpai et al., 2012). Reposting the message allows it to be seen by the user’s entire network, expanding its audience. Platforms

for social networking serve as word-of-mouth (Bajpai et al., 2012). More traffic is delivered to the product/company/service as a result of the information about it being shared and repeated (Bajpai et al., 2012). Engagement on social media refers to the participation of users as opposed to passive observers (Bajpai et al., 2012). With regard to the marketing of businesses on social media, anyone and everyone can use it to voice their opinion at any point (Bajpai et al., 2012). As other consumers read their ratings or remarks, such participating customers join the marketing team, making the interaction process crucial for effective social media marketing (Bajpai et al., 2012).

Customers use the internet and social media to browse for product/service images and videos; they want more details and want to see what they are thinking about purchasing (Bajpai et al., 2012). The good news is that making and publishing videos and photographs is simple for businesses (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Videos are helpful for deconstructing difficult concepts or giving how-to instructions. Even the best-written text cannot compare with the demonstration of step-by-step instructions (Bajpai et al., 2012) and businesses do not need to invest a lot of money or resources in producing quality videos (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Multimedia marketing strategies such as videos and images can break down the faceless business-to-consumer sales flow and make companies appear friendlier (Bajpai et al., 2012). Videos and images can be used to show that the business is fun, it cares about its employees, and most importantly, that it cares about its customers (Li et al., 2021). Businesses are beginning to use more online platforms as they grow more adept at using social media (Li et al., 2021). The majority, however, offer the same message across numerous channels as opposed to customizing messaging for each website (Li et al., 2021). Each social media platform has its own ecology; what may be deemed spam on Facebook might be fine on Instagram (Bajpai, et al., 2012). Recognizing how unique each site is and then tailoring the message will ensure businesses perform effectively on each one (Bajpai et al., 2012). Creating unique messages for different websites not only promotes the message but also prevents people from receiving duplicate communications (Bajpai et al., 2012). Sending two distinct messages to someone who follows a company on Facebook and Instagram will help it reach as many people as possible (Bajpai, et al., 2012). Social marketing is more than just creating a community, the ultimate strength of social media lies in using that community to boost commerce, spread marketing, or crowdsource tasks (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). One strategy for engaging the community is to work together to organize a contest or provide a special discount (i.e. the contest might spur user competitiveness) (Li et al., 2021). A contest

not only generates buzz naturally, but also goes viral if participants must, for instance, produce an article with the most comments in order to win (Li et al., 2021). A decent social media contest should have sharing or virality criteria in order to be eligible to win (Li et al., 2021). Discounts are a fantastic way to engage with your consumers (Li et al., 2021). Giving your social media network access to unique coupons rewards them and serves as a reminder that you are a company that people can buy from as well as participate with (Li et al., 2021).

Young people are the primary users of social media and are becoming more and more reliant on it for recreation, networking and education, hence the significance of social media networking and social media marketing for consumers (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Companies are re-examining their advertising strategies and conventional media techniques in response to this by reevaluating the impact of media on consumer decision-making (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Changes have to be made to companies' mixed media advertising strategies, in order to better engage with consumers in a digital era (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Consumers in the digital age tend to shun advertising and promotional content, as seen by the sharp fall in click-through rates and rate of conversion in digital advertising (Malodia et al., 2022). Thus, advertisers face challenges in ensuring that their messages are seen by customers (Malodia et al., 2022). Studies show that people are more inclined to skip or scroll past adverts in order to avoid them (Malodia et al., 2022). Millennials tend to avoid sponsored and commercial material, however, 84% of them are affected by user-generated content (including memes) from social media accounts run by businesses (Malodia et al., 2022).

Memes have been regarded as one of the most effective forms of marketing communication and as one of the easiest ways to interact with target consumers. Although memes facilitate customer engagement, there are several benefits to implementing meme-based advertising (Malodia et al., 2022). Compared to traditional and digital advertising, meme-based marketing is very cost-effective (Malodia et al., 2022). Meme-based advertising makes use of already-popular memes so that the target audience may relate to the context of the campaign with ease (Malodia et al., 2022). Marketers can naturally establish a connection with their audience since memes are so popular (Malodia et al., 2022). By changing pre-existing meme templates, memes are simple to make (Malodia et al., 2022). The widespread use of social media marketing in the interpreting industry also brings up significant issues with professionalism, ethics, and quality control. Interpreters must avoid possible conflicts of

interest, protect client privacy, and adhere to industry norms of practice when they promote and network online.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

2.3.1 Introduction

Memes are a great tool for raising awareness, promoting advocacy and building professional communities, however they do not come without ethical concerns. To understand the risks of using social media platforms as a way to spread and group memes in the promotion of interpreter professionalism it is imperative to critically analyse the way information is spread, the nature of the content, as well as the various dangers it could lead to. Social media is not only rainbows and sunshine when it comes to sharing information within a professional context; the dangers in this regard include oversimplification, misinformation, hashtag hijacking, lack of context, echo chambers, short-term engagement, tokenism, lack of accountability, privacy concerns, as well as the emotional impact. Understanding these aspects of online interactions will provide a brief guideline for interpreters to follow when promoting interpreter professionalism online.

2.3.2 Oversimplification and Misinformation

SASL interpreting is more than merely taking one language and putting it into another. Simultaneous interpreting is a complex cognitive task that requires various cognitive efforts and an acquired skillset (Gile, 1999). This means that a simple hashtag linked to a few posts or reels might not be enough to convey this complex information properly. Although the information is shared in a fun and engaging way, it may become oversimplified which can lead to misunderstandings and the promotion of stereotypes.

Jantjies – the infamous SASLI who went viral because of his poor interpretation (if it can even be called that) was criticized globally by interpreting organizations as well as the Deaf community. This had a ripple effect as the government officials who employed him also experienced a backlash from angry citizens taking to the media to express their concerns as well as a lack of trust in the government. Not only was the government under scrutiny but all SASLIs as well, as this loss of trust extended to SASLIs. With the influx of memes on

Jantjies flooding social media, obscuring any relevant educational sources on interpreting, the interpreting profession became a laughing stock.

The hashtag #fakeinterpreter is a hub for news and memes on fake sign language interpreters. Deaf communities have also used this hashtag to spread news on the increasing number of hearing people who have basic knowledge of sign language and Deaf culture, who have started interpreting songs on social media and teaching classes on TikTok and Instagram. Although Deaf people encourage others to learn sign language, they say that this is not an accurate representation of sign language or Deaf culture. It is this spread of misinformation that the *Washington Post*, as well as the accounts @hashtagdisabled and @whyisign, claim could cause lasting damage to sign languages. References?

2.3.3 Lack of Context and Lack of Accountability

Online memes such as Instagram posts contain a limited amount of information. Such a meme is very subjective as the person or group who is posting decides what content to post, generally revealing their worldviews and biases. Instagram posts have some restrictions such as ten pictures per post, with a caption limit of 2200 characters or reels with time limits of fifteen, thirty and sixty seconds. This shows that there is a short amount of time or space into which to compact the complex theories and nuances of interpreting. This can lead to information being taken out of context and distributed within a new context that may be harmful to the profession. In the case of the memes that flooded social media over Jantjies, many hearing people were replicating them and mocking SASLIs without the context of what happened to Jantjies (that he was having a schizophrenic attack). This leads to a lack of accountability. In many cases when people are called out for misinformation or posting out of context, they are able to delete the post or block the person calling them out, therefore ignoring the harm they may be causing to both the interpreting and the Deaf communities. References?

2.3.4. Echo Chambers, Short-term Engagement and Tokenism

Social media platforms run off algorithms that reinforce people's existing beliefs. This is referred to as echo chambers (Terren & Borge, 2021). Algorithms show you what you want to see based on your interests and previous posts you have interacted with (Terren & Borge,

2021). The fundamental premise of echo chamber theory is that people use social media to choose to interact with other like-minded people and ideologically aligned content, hence limiting their exposure to the opposing viewpoints that comprise the public domain (Terren & Borge, 2021). The curation of social media algorithmic content restricts the variety and diversity of the content users are exposed to and, instead of promoting viewpoint diversity, leads to online grouping and division (Terren & Borge, 2021). This can lead to a limited perspective which may make people less likely to accept and understand facts, thus the spread of false information is enabled (Terren & Borge, 2021).

Social media engagement is the process of using an interface, moving from physical interaction to cognitive immersion in the content it offers, and finally taking proactive steps to share the results of this involvement (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Short-term engagement refers to the way users are quick to react to surface-level information such as headlines without understanding the story as a whole (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). With features including likes, comments and notifications, social media platforms aim to draw users in and promote frequent, quick conversations (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). This may have an impact on the attention span of content consumers which leads to a decrease in critical thinking skills (Smith & Gallicano, 2015).

Tokenism refers to the behaviour whereby people or companies portray a specific image in order to make it seem like they include the Deaf community; in reality, however, they do not provide opportunities to practically include the Deaf community, nor do they address the systemic inequalities (Grant, 2017). This maintains the idea that society is accessible when it is not and in reality the power of the status quo is maintained (Grant, 2017).

These three social media challenges (tokenism, echo chambers and short-term engagement) constitute ethical concerns for the use of social media in promoting professionalism. Although social media and memes are useful tools in the promotion of interpreting and awareness, there are also challenges such as those mentioned above that need to be addressed and considered when using social media as a promotional tool.

2.3.5 Privacy Concerns and Emotional Toll

Social media usage has successfully integrated itself into daily life (Chen, 2018). The numerous platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter) and so forth have persisted in

incorporating diverse digital affordances to present fresh chances for growing personal networks, engaging with people and exchanging information (Chen, 2018). Although social media platforms are thought to benefit people in terms of communication, entertainment and information sharing, they also house vast reservoirs of personal information, which raises serious privacy concerns (Chen, 2018). Due to the fact that social media is frequently accessible through mobile applications (apps), where a substantial quantity of personally identifiable information is stored, compiled and connected across various media platforms, the potential for privacy infringement has increased (Chen, 2018). Social media users are generally somewhat concerned about privacy danger, yet several studies have shown that there may be differences between people's actual practices of sharing personal information and their worries about privacy risk (Chen, 2018). This phenomenon is known as the privacy paradox (Chen, 2018). People continue to share their personal information on social media for a number of reasons, despite growing concerns about privacy (Chen, 2018). Although people express a significant deal of concern about social media privacy, some research indicates that people do very little to safeguard it, while other studies demonstrate that consumers are not inherently naïve about their revealing habits (Chen, 2018). Users of social media can employ a variety of privacy-protection techniques to alleviate their worries and safeguard their privacy when sharing personal data (Chen, 2018). The interpreting profession by nature is a confidential one. Not only do interpreting ethics codes stipulate the importance of confidentiality but the importance of confidentiality is supported by section 14 of the SA Constitution and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). This means that interpreters should take great care when choosing what to post when promoting their professional brand on social media.

Social media, a groundbreaking tool for bringing people together and spreading knowledge, has permeated every aspect of contemporary life (Braghieri et al., 2022). It has undoubtedly changed the way we communicate and obtain information, but its emotional impact cannot be ignored (Braghieri et al., 2022). Social media may affect users’ emotional health in a variety of ways, including through cyberbullying, feelings of inadequacy, pressure to maintain a flawless online persona, and the platforms' addictive qualities (Braghieri et al., 2022). The incessant comparison that social media encourages is one of its most pervasive emotional costs (Braghieri et al., 2022). Users are inundated with meticulously chosen highlights of other people's lives (Braghieri et al., 2022). These glorified portrayals may cause self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy (Braghieri et al., 2022). Research has indicated that individuals

who use social media more frequently are more susceptible to anxiety and depressive symptoms (Braghieri et al., 2022). When they view other people's seemingly flawless lifestyles, they could start to doubt their own achievements, looks or way of life (Braghieri et al., 2022). To gain likes, shares and follows, a lot of people feel pressure to project an ideal profile online and upholding a flawless image may subsequently become emotionally draining (Braghieri et al., 2022). High levels of stress and anxiety might be brought on by the worry of being judged and rejected by one's online peers (Braghieri et al., 2022). Moreover, authentic self-expression can be impeded and real-life experiences diminished by the laborious effort of constructing and maintaining this idealized image (Braghieri et al., 2022). The frequency of cyberbullying and online harassment is another facet of social media that can be emotionally detrimental and, because these platforms offer anonymity, people frequently engage in harmful activity that they may otherwise not engage in (Braghieri et al., 2022). Cyberbullying victims may go through severe mental anguish, which can result in problems including social disengagement, despair and even suicidal thoughts; hence, online harassment has a significant emotional cost that should not be disregarded (Braghieri et al., 2022). It is impossible to avoid these risks (emotional toll and lack of privacy) when using social media. However, there are steps interpreters can take to decrease their risks. It is therefore important to acknowledge these risks in depth before using social media as a platform to promote professionalism.

2.4. Conclusion

Memes have a significant influence on society; from humorous content to strategic marketing, memes are able to assist in networking and community building. Memes can also reach a wide target audience. Hashtags memes are grouped and categorized which allows consumers to find them easily and to reproduce them; moreover, there are thousands of meme templates that service providers can use and modify to fit their target audience. Memes assist in establishing norms within a profession as well as creating awareness of those norms. By using memes to promote such awareness, interpreters are able to reach wider audiences as well as connect with the youth on an engaging platform where feedback is readily available. In the era of social media, cooperation and knowledge-sharing among interpreters can promote a culture of ongoing education and professional growth. Online discussion boards, webinars, and virtual conferences give professionals a platform to share knowledge, talk about new developments, and discuss issues that are prevalent in their field. Through the

utilisation of the community's combined knowledge, interpreters may successfully navigate the always changing social media marketing scene while adhering to the highest standards of professional conduct.

On the other hand, the use of social media comes with various challenges which raise ethical concerns. The major concerns relate to privacy and the protection of personal information, the emotional toll that the use of social media invokes through a warped sense of reality, the oversimplification of complex ideas which leads to misinformation and the lack of context owing to word/character limits or post limits, leading to a lack of accountability as people claim ignorance. Instagram, for example, is designed for short-term engagement and consumer attention, using an algorithm that analyses individual preferences based on post interactions. The Instagram algorithm shows people what they want to see and reinforces their beliefs and values; this means that the public might prefer to ignore the presence of human rights violations if they don’t affect them personally. It is therefore important to develop online literacy skills to mitigate these challenges.

Given these intricacies, it is imperative that interpreters and interpreting services take a strategic approach to social media marketing that is in line with industry best practices and moral standards. When it comes to establishing credibility and trust in the digital realm, transparency, honesty, and client-centered communication are critical components. Social media platforms are a valuable resource for interpreters, serving as forums for advocacy, education, and community involvement in addition to serving as marketing tools.

Chapter 3

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework for this dissertation was based on Richard Dawkins' concept of memes (discussed in the literature review), as well as the various ways in which memes have been contextualized in the digital era by Limor Shifman. It will also focus on the application of memes to Tseng's model of professionalism in relation to trait theory and control theory.

3.1.2 Trait Theory

Memes have not yet been studied in relation to the professionalization of interpreting; however, by using models of professionalization in relation to meme theories, similarities can be found. Tseng (1992) examines the work of various academics who have looked at how an occupation develops into a profession (Mikkelson, 1996). Mikkelson distinguishes between two schools of thought: the trait theory of professionalization and the theory of control (Mikkelson, 1996). According to trait theory, specific traits such as following an ethical code, a body of theoretical knowledge, certification and fidelity to colleagues are required for an occupation to become a profession (Pym et al., 2012). According to Pym et al. (2012), the checklist for is as follows

1. An established body of systemic theory;

2. The extent of influence enjoyed by practitioners over the policy-making

that affects their work;

3. The acquisition of academic and professional credentials that satisfy

established and recognised professional and government standards;

4. The process of transitioning new practitioners into the profession through

mentorship, supervision and direct guidance;

5. A code of ethics reflecting the profession's commitment to uphold the professional ideals and standards;

6. The existence of a range of salary and benefit options;

7. Availability and degree of participation in continuing professional development;

8. Efforts to gain public recognition for the services defined in the practice standards; and

9. The existence of a culture or a formal network of practitioners designed to promote and perpetuate a shared mission, and these networks are often found in the form of professional associations. (Pym et al., 2012, p. 81)

This checklist of qualities was created to gauge how far a particular occupation has come in attaining the objective of professionalization (Mikkelson, 1996).

3.1.3 Control Theory

The theory of control looks at how an occupation is related to other elements such as employment opportunities and societal institutions rather than just internal qualities (Mikkelson, 1996). Control theory builds on the conceptual framework of trait theory by connecting the profession to its position in the socioeconomic landscape: the more control practitioners have over the work they do and the market they operate in, the more professionalized they may be (Pym et al., 2012). This theory holds that an occupation becomes increasingly professionalized the more control its practitioners have over the nature of their work and the industry in which they compete (Mikkelson, 1996). Tseng (1992) points out that professionalization is a group endeavour rather than an individual one, and that the theory of control evaluates occupations according to the amount of influence they wield (Mikkelson, 1996). According to Pym et al. (2012), this theory has four stages:

1. Market disorder: There is constant competition among practitioners, and unskilled outsiders cannot be easily excluded from the labour market. Consumers usually do

> not understand the service very well, and purchase decisions are often made based on price only. Hence, there is little incentive for the existing practitioners to improve their skills and knowledge. There is little consistency in training standards, so there is a "'vicious cycle' of unprofessional behaviour and mistrust of practitioners" (Mikkelson 1996: 81) and the mobility ratio (meaning practitioners entering and leaving the market) is the highest of the four stages.
>
> 2. Consensus and commitment: There is a general consolidation in this segment of the labour market. The goals for training and professional development have become clearer, and the educational programmes are of better quality and cater more to the needs of the labour market. The development of professional organisations is also better supported.
>
> 3. Formation of formal networks: There is better collaboration among the practitioners in further delineating their job descriptions, regulating the practitioners' conduct and behaviour, controlling admission to the profession and enhancing the recognition of the profession.
>
> 4. Professional autonomy: Clear and formal ethical standards are established. There is appropriate control over who is admitted to the profession, and the professional organisations work closely with the various stakeholders to achieve market control and influence legislation and certification (Pym et al., 2012, p. 82).

In relation to memes, the second theory can be applied as a way to wield more influence over the industry. An occupational group may exercise both internal and external control over factors such as working environment and client interactions, as well as the body of knowledge and training necessary for admission to the profession and the conduct or ethics of practitioners (Mikkelson, 1996). The establishment of a knowledge bank that practitioners gain, such as jargon, is one aspect of professions (Mikkelson, 1996). By using jargon with colleagues and utilizing technical phrases, mystery is generated by keeping the public out of the conversation as the language around interpreting is developed (Mikkelson, 1996). This professional jargon is a way for people to ensure that those who enter the field are able to understand their responsibilities. For example, doctors use medical jargon to convey technical terms in medical settings; in comparison interpreters use interpreter norms to convey messages. By using terms such as SASLI (South African Sign Language interpreter), lag-time, working in 30–40-minute shifts and writing notes to each other when on shift break, as

well as the use of aptitude tests, interpreters can successfully ensure that outsiders who enter the profession are able to demonstrate the relevant skills. A profession that is successful at obscuring its field of competence is able to dominate the market by forbidding outsiders from entering the field without the required training (Mikkelson, 1996). The idea that professions gain influence by defining the demands of their clients, rather than letting the clients define the agenda, goes hand in hand with this concept of obscuring jargon (Mikkelson, 1996). However, Mikkelson explains that although this theory may be more useful than trait theory, the application guidelines are unclear.

Although memes might not perfectly fit within control theory, it is still possible to investigate how memes might help establish authority within a certain profession or sector. Establishing common cultural references and norms is one way in which memes may help to maintain control within a profession (Song & Crowder, 2019). A shared language and culture that can help to foster a sense of control and shared purpose may develop, as members of a profession or community create and exchange memes related to their work (Song & Crowder, 2019). Memes may also aid in the growth of covert networks of authority within a profession (Song & Crowder, 2019). For example, memes created and shared by members of a profession may form unofficial channels of influence and communication that serve to control and uphold professional norms and practices (Song & Crowder, 2019).

It is contended that professionalization calls for the development of a body of knowledge and a market in which people are able to find trained practitioners (Pym et al., 2012). In a study on American Sign Language interpreters, a number of recommendations for the field for moving towards professionalization were made (Pym et al., 2012). These recommendations included the creation of communities of investigation and practice, making a distinction between paraprofessional and professional practitioner competency, providing more information on the educational prerequisites, as well as educating the community (Pym et al., 2012). The presence of the interpreting profession in official records such as census data, lists of economic activity and taxation systems serves as a general indicator of status (Pym et al., 2012), as well as serving as recognizable identity cues (Pym et al., 2012). The first step towards status is acknowledgment (Pym et al., 2012).

3.2 Research Methodology

This research study aimed to gain an understanding of how memes may be used as tools for professionalization. By using qualitative research methods such as a discourse analysis and comparison of secondary sources, this study aimed to understand the relationship between memes and the professionalization of interpreting. Qualitative research emphasizes the holistic treatment of concepts, thus moving social science away from its conventional emphasis on the interpretation of cause and effect toward human interpretation (Daniel, 2016). The existential (nondeterministic) and constructivist epistemology of high-quality research is based on the idea that concepts have an intricate relationship to chance events and that understanding them necessitates a variety of contexts, including temporal and spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social and personal contexts (Daniel, 2016).

This research used readily available platforms such as Instagram and the internet to gather the necessary data to perform the discourse analysis. Discourses have recurring connections to other discourses that were produced previously, as well as those that emerge simultaneously and thereafter (Adolphus, 2009). The writer's views, the local political, economic and social environment, the profession or community to which the person belongs (with its own jargon), as well as the current circumstances in which the words were uttered, are all context-sensitive factors that influence language, rather than giving it a fixed, objective meaning (Adolphus, 2009). The data gathered from readily available memes in the interpreting field were compared to each other using discourse analysis in order to understand their patterns and applications in terms of their impact on the professionalization of interpreting. Keywords related to SASL interpreting were used to develop hashtags found on Instagram, which in turn provided the memes for the discourse analysis. The hashtags were chosen by cross analysing keywords such as ‘Deaf’, ‘interpreter’, ‘SASL’, ‘Deaf awareness’, ‘interpreter resources’, and ‘SASLI’ on social media and then determining which keywords generated more posts and which tags were related to the various posts. The final hashtags were chosen using process of elimination.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

This is a no-risk study as it merely required readily available secondary sources; therefore no harm could come to the participants involved as the information had already been made

public. In this study a discourse analysis was conducted, comparing the memes from hashtag searches such as #whereistheinterpreter, #signlanguageinterpreter, #accessforall, #interpretinglife, #1nt, #interpretertraining and #signlanguageaccess. These memes were analysed and compared in order to find commonalities. It is important to uphold strong values of integrity, respect, and confidentiality throughout the research process therefore, ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical).

3.4 Conclusion

The main argument of the trait theory explores the notion that certain characteristics, such as adhering to an ethical code, possessing a body of theoretical knowledge, being certified, and being faithful to colleagues, are necessary for an occupation to advance to the status of a profession. Through the lens of control theory an occupation is related to other elements such as employment opportunities and societal institutions. Control theory builds on the conceptual framework of trait theory by connecting the profession to its position in the socioeconomic landscape: the more control practitioners have over the work they do and the market they operate in, the more professionalized they may be. 3.2. outlined the chosen research methodology detailing the qualitative study of memes in social media through a discourse analysis as a guide for this research. Ethical clearance was granted. This chapter on the theoretical framework provides a conceptual framework based on control theory and trait theory, which serves as the foundation for this research. In addition to the corpus of knowledge already available in the field to get fresh insights into the phenomenon of memes and the professionalization of interpreting by incorporating these theoretical viewpoints into the research methods.

Chapter 4

4.1 Data Analysis

4.1.1. Introduction

This section analyses the data collected in this study. Fifteen hashtags were analysed using discourse analysis in order to identify common themes and patterns. Social media platforms have been deemed excellent locations for increasing awareness of professions in general and companies in particular using social media marketing strategies (Bajpai et al., 2012). The data analysis will demonstrate where the profession of sign language interpreting currently fits in to this popular marketing convention by means of hashtags. Although the main focus of the data analysis is hashtags on Instagram, it briefly discusses how movies contributing to the glamorization of professions fits into the ideologies that social media perpetuate.

4.1.2. Advocacy In Media

An activist documentary called *Where is the Interpreter* followed the campaign #whereistheinterpreter, which advocated for British Sign Language (BSL) to be included in the British government's Covid-19 announcements and briefings. On 23 August 2023, an Instagram search was conducted using the #whereistheinterpreter. The top post is by a Deaf journalist who posted the following image on 4 January 2021:

Figure 1: #whereistheinterpreter



The post is a plea for the use of BSL to provide access to important government announcements. The post is linked to the documentary which follows the advocacy of Lynn, a Deaf campaigner, who advocated for BSL interpreters to be recognized and included in all media briefings. This portrays not only the struggle for recognition by the interpreting profession but also the struggle for access, which is a human right of the Deaf community.

It is evident that the media, particularly movies, affect how we view the world, and the kinds of professions people want. While intriguing and motivating, career glamorization can sometimes distort reality and create exaggerated aspirations. We may achieve a balance between expectation and realism by recognizing the dynamics at work in media depictions, increasing media literacy, and advocating for a more nuanced conversation about different vocations. In this way, we may develop a society that values the complexity of every profession as we learn to negotiate the complex interplay between media and professions. After extensive search on social media, cross-checking posts related to interpreting and sign language, various hashtags were identified. These hashtags are related to promoting awareness of the professional community of interpreters and advocating for access.

4.1.3. Access Advocacy on Social Media

Access to interpreting should be considered a matter of justice. In a general sense, access to sign language interpreters is considered a tool for securing the human rights of the Deaf community (Haualand, 2009). On 19 July 2023, the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, signed the 12th amendment bill making South African Sign Language the 12th official language in the country. The government released the following statement:

> We are also giving effect to the provision of the Bill of Rights that prohibits unfair discrimination on grounds such as disability, culture, race and gender. South African Sign Language has served as an essential communication tool for our citizens living with disabilities, and this step will further empower the community. By making sign language official, we aim to advance their rights to substantive equality, dignity and their social inclusion. […] Having sign language recognised as an official language will address access to education, economic and other social opportunities as well as public participation. People with hearing impairments will be able to also access more services, public information and a host other opportunities. Official recognition is just the beginning, much more work still needs to be done to support this language. […] It is also crucial that there are sign language interpreters to enable access to services for people who cannot hear or hear properly. For many years, lack of sign language interpreters at the courts, police stations, hospitals, clinics and many service centres or points has been compromising access to justice for victims of violence, including victims of gender-based violence and many other crimes. (Presidency, 2023)

In taking steps to represent SASL in the Constitution, the government has indicated how the work of advocacy can have an impact on society. The inclusion of SASL as the 12th official language means that the government has to make provision for SASLIs (Presidency, 2023). Accordingly, there should be a mechanism in place for the equitable provision and availability of SASLIs, and Deaf persons and Deaf organisations should not have to pay for their services (Haualand, 2009). Consequently, the government should uplift the interpreting profession, moving it from level 1 to level 2, as proposed by control theory.

The interpreting industry in South Africa can be very competitive (Lotriet, 2001). There are many people and organizations that provide interpreting services, which can make it difficult for interpreters to find steady employment and make a respectable living (Lotriet, 2001). Owing to the fierce competition, interpreters may undercut one another to get contracts, which occasionally results in a price war. It is possible that the South African interpreting industry has lax admission standards, making it simple for inexperienced people to find employment (Lotriet, 2001). This may lead to a mixture of qualified and unqualified interpreters, which could result in variations in the calibre of interpreting (Lotriet, 2001). This has been observed in previous research, which analysed memes in relation to ‘fake’ interpreters (see Annexure A). It is possible that many South African customers are unaware of the complexity of interpreting services, as well as of the quality disparities between trained and unskilled interpreters (Lotriet, 2001). As a result, customers might choose interpreters based on price rather than talent, which would further encourage interpreters to cut their rates rather than make an investment in their abilities (Lotriet, 2001). Professional interpreters may lack motivation to invest in ongoing professional development and enhancing their interpreting abilities given the price-driven nature of the business, which may keep the profession mired in a cycle of mediocrity (Lotriet, 2001). In South Africa, the requirements for certification and training for interpreters differ; this lack of consistency may increase people's scepticism of interpreters and give the impression that there is unprofessional conduct prevalent in the field (Lotriet, 2001). The SASL interpreting industry has a high number of people entering and exiting the market and this turnover threatens the profession's consistency and can exacerbate interpreters' perceptions of instability and unreliability (Lotriet, 2001). To address these problems and advance the interpreting industry in South Africa, there should be consistency in training and certification requirements, consumer education on the value of qualified interpreters and incentives for interpreters to make professional development investments (Lotriet, 2001).

On 6 September 2023 the Instagram hashtag '#languageaccess' retrieved a video by the account @whyisign as its top result. The account shares people's experiences and stories about why they sign and how they learnt sign language. In the video, a hearing mother uses American Sign Language to explain why she requests an interpreter at a doctor's appointment for her 11-month-old Deaf daughter. She explains that hearing children hear everything at doctor's appointments; although they might not fully understand all the words, they still get that language contact and they are able to hear tone of voice. Children (including Deaf children) learn language through language contact and exposure. Interpreters play a pivotal role in that exposure, not only in the medical field but in other fields such as education and media (televised and social medial). She explains further how she is able to focus on what the doctor is saying, and her child is able to receive the same language contact a hearing baby would. This shows the important role of interpreters in language contact and breaking down the barriers of language deprivation. This video reached 64 000 people, explaining the importance of language access and access to knowledge through interpreters. This amounts to 64 000 people who are potentially more aware about the role of a sign language interpreter as a communication facilitator. This video also shows the rapid spread of information on social media.

Hashtags are used to organize and collect content relating to a certain subject or cause. When professionals use a specific hashtag in their postings, it makes their information easier to find by a wider audience, especially individuals who are passionate about the same subject or cause. For advocacy campaigns, this increased visibility is essential since it makes sure the message is heard by more people. Professionals with common interests and objectives can connect and create online communities using hashtags. These groups serve as gathering places for debates, teamwork and information exchange. Within these networks, professionals can share knowledge, resources and support, boosting their group advocacy efforts. Hashtags can be used by people to draw attention to important problems and causes in their industry. They can inform their followers and the general public about particular difficulties, fads, or opportunities in their field by developing and promoting pertinent hashtags. This understanding may serve as a motivator for action and change. The usage of hashtags can help promote a range of causes. Advocates can persuade people to take up a cause by inviting them to participate in discussions, events, petitions and other activities. A clever hashtag campaign may foster a sense of community and encourage people to participate. This is seen in the hashtag #languageaccess which is linked to over 5000 posts on

Instagram. Hashtags are used in many professions to promote professionalism, ethics, a sense of community and professional awareness. The hashtag #languageaccess can be compared to the hashtag #accesstojustice. The latter is used in the legal setting as a way to promote equal access to justice services. This hashtag serves as a platform for the public to share resources and stories, and to advocate for closing the gap in the judicial system, as well as for crowd funding for legal aid. The hashtag #languageaccess serves the same purpose in both the interpreting community and the Deaf community, as it is used to promote equal access to interpreting services as well as equal participation in society. It is also used to share resources for language access such as providing a qualified sign language interpreter and sharing stories related to language discrimination and access.

The hashtag #signlanguageinterpreter has over 35 000 posts on Instagram linked to it. This fosters a sense of community among interpreters and spreads awareness of the profession. On 18 September 2023 the top post for this hashtag was a humorous video of an interpreter. The interpreter explains how stressful it can be trying to prepare for a hard job with no preparation material. This post may spread awareness to clients so that they know to provide preparation material and an interpreting brief. At the same time a comedy skit was generated, where a CODA (Child of a Deaf adult) explains the difference between asking a CODA to interpret and procuring a qualified interpreter.

> If you're familiar with sign language, you may notice that my signing is not as clear as the people you see on tv. The interpreters and that's normal. ASL interpreters are like the six pack abs of sign language. Okay. It takes a lot of work to get to that point and I am way too lazy to do it. Don't tell Pete. But ASL interpreters are the best. Okay, they're amazing. They're like Morgan Freedman narrating a nature documentary. It's beautiful. Its smooth. It's like velvet for your eyes and ears. Me? I'm more like Gilbert Godfrey narrating a haemorrhoid commercial. It's a pain in the butt. It's sloppy but boy are you going to remember what you just saw.

This raises awareness of the importance of the interpreter skillset, showing that bilingualism alone is not enough. The video discussed here relates to a meme analysed in previous research, showing metal poles supporting a tall skyscraper that is likely to collapse (see Annexure B). "We don't need a sign language interpreter", the lettering on the crumbling structure says, while the messages on the poles are "her family can interpret for her". Hence, the fallacy that a deaf person's family and friends are qualified to interpret for them in a

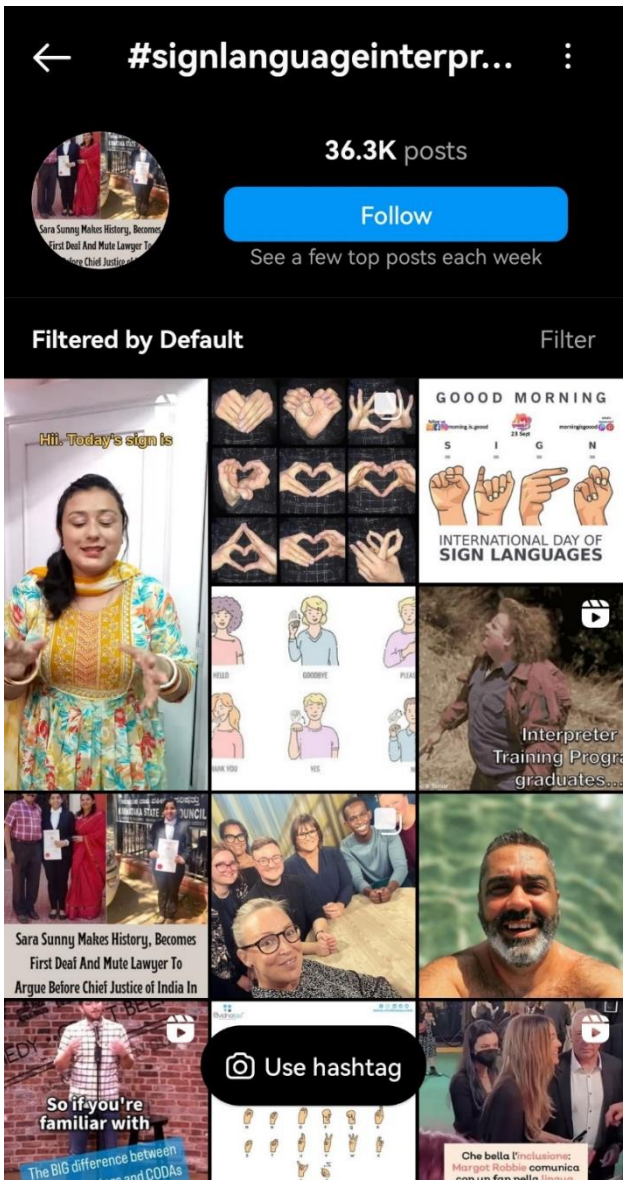
medical setting is shattered by this meme. The phrase that says her family will interpret for her essentially means a violation of her right to privacy. Furthermore, family members may not completely comprehend certain terms, which might result in misunderstandings. The caption in the memes continues by explaining that the solution to these human rights violations is to employ a qualified interpreter.

Additionally, hashtags like #communitypolicing and #safetyfirst on professional conduct within law enforcement are used to share articles, reports and videos explaining and showcasing police misconduct as well as calling for more accountability in law enforcement. These hashtags can serve as a plea for law enforcement to have an open channel of communication with the public, calling for transparency. They also provide real-time updates and tips to the effected communities. In the interpreting community as well as the Deaf community hashtags like #signlanguageinterpreter, #fakeinterpreter and #interpreterethics serve the same function.

4.1.4 Promoting Professional Awareness on Social Media

There are various hashtags related to promoting awareness of SASL interpreting as well as the Deaf community and these serve various functions. It is important to acknowledge here that the hashtags are not limited to these seven presented in this study.

Figure 2: #signlanguageinterpreter

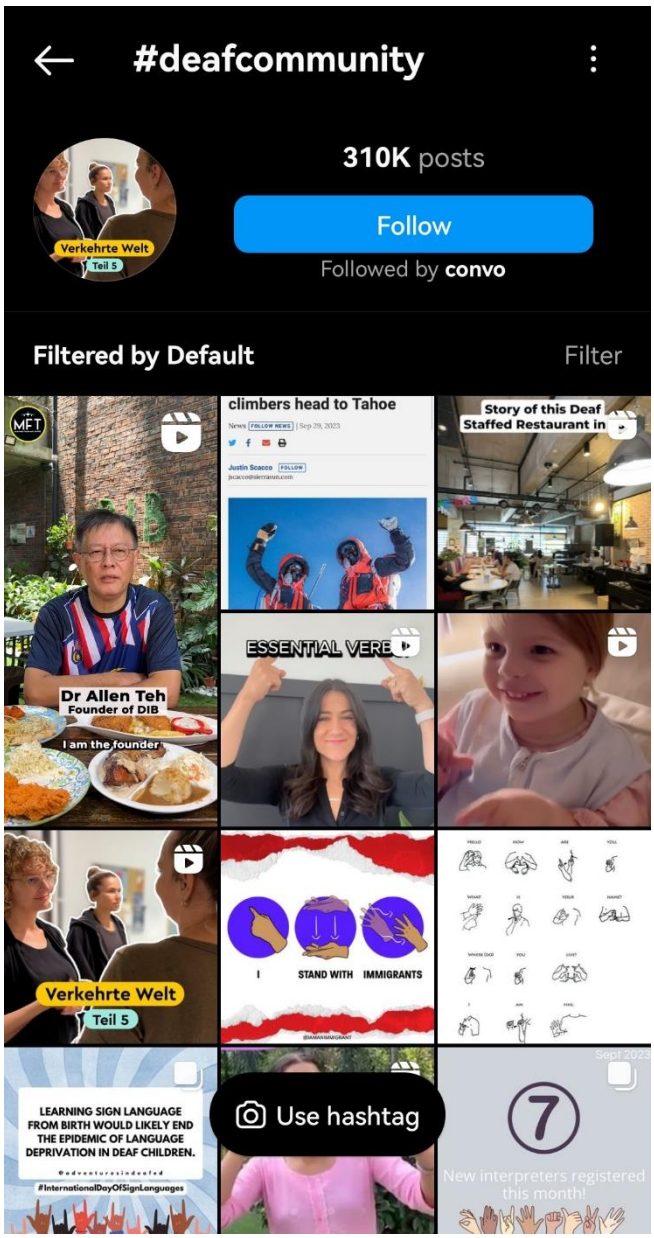


The hashtag #signlanguageinterpreter is a general hashtag that includes stories, experiences, events, news and so forth relating to the interpreting community. As seen on 28 September 2023 on Instagram, this hashtag has been used in over 36 000 posts and may be regarded as a focal point for general discourse related to sign language interpreters. It serves as a platform for interpreters to network worldwide by offering a gathering place where people may talk, share stories and interact with others who are enthusiastic about sign language interpretation, thus helping to build a sense of community. By using this hashtag, communities are able to promote awareness of interpreters and the Deaf community. People can spread discourse about the significance of sign language access, the rights of Deaf people, and the crucial role of interpreters in fostering good communication. Interpreters have background stories of how

and why they got into interpreting. They might relate anecdotes about their jobs, difficulties they've encountered, special occasions, or encounters that had a significant influence on them. These stories have the power to uplift, instruct and foster empathy among a larger audience. The hashtag is commonly used by interpreters and companies to promote conferences, workshops, webinars, and other sign language interpretation-related events. It facilitates the dissemination of crucial information and expands the audience. Through this hashtag people are able to find educational tools and resources about interpreting, the Deaf community and other related topics. People are able to raise awareness about inclusivity and the right to access information through an interpreter. #signlanguageinterpreter serves as a platform for discourse about sign language interpretation. It facilitates communication among a global network of people committed to advancing effective communication and information access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people. This hashtag fosters knowledge exchange, awareness promotion and the development of deep ties within the sign language interpreter community.

One cannot talk about SASLIs without involving the Deaf community, therefore, the hashtag #Deafcommunity plays a role in the promotion of interpreting. The discourse on sign language as a fundamental means of communication for the Deaf community is a major theme under this hashtag. Discussions cover subjects including teaching sign language, the importance of various technological tools that facilitate communication between Deaf and hearing communities and the importance of interpreters as communication tools. These dialogues help people comprehend the significance of sign language in the lives of Deaf people in greater detail. This hashtag has over 300 000 posts, as seen in the screenshot in Figure 3.

Figure 3: #Deafcommunity

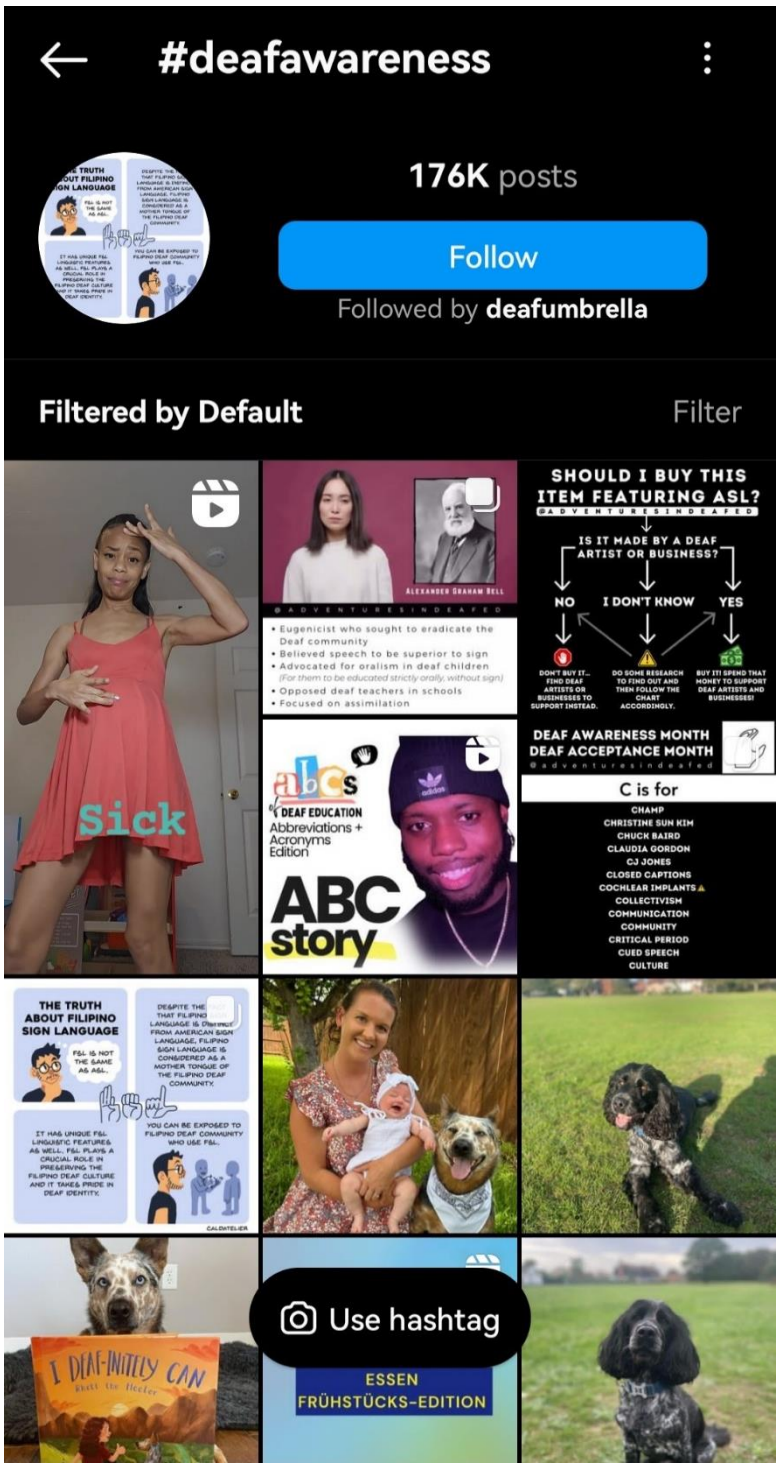


From educational resources to cultural expression, this hashtag has diverse elements made up of intersectional topics. The hashtag is used by various people, such as companies/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals. It is a hub for resources and advocacy. Issues discussed include challenges related to access to employment, education, healthcare (discussions on the experiences of Deaf people in the healthcare system and the need for accessible healthcare information) and public spaces that do not cater for the Deaf community. This advocacy encompasses Deaf rights, including legal and policy issues that affect the Deaf community, such as the right to quality education, access to information which often includes signed content or interpreted content, and equal opportunities. There are

also various themes associated with education, such as the value of Deaf schools, the use of sign language in the classroom, and Deaf role models. Deaf people thus have a lively forum on which to share and promote their culture, language and identity. They post works of art, experiences and stories which showcase their individual Deaf worldview and inventiveness. The rich cultural heritage of Deaf people can be preserved through this platform as the Deaf community can reach a wider audience. This hashtag fosters a flexible and inclusive platform where the Deaf community is able to advocate for Deaf rights, promote understanding and inclusivity, and embrace and celebrate Deaf culture and cultural expression. It is a platform that fosters awareness as well as promoting networking within Deaf communities and their allies, globally. The hashtag #Deafcommunity serves as a symbol of the Deaf community's tenacity, diversity and cohesion by amplifying the voices of this community. This fosters a society for Deaf people that is more inclusive and equal, therefore creating societal change.

The hashtag #Deafcommunity goes hand in hand with the hashtags #Deafawareness, #deafculture, and #signlanguageresources. #Deafawareness as seen in the screenshot below, is a platform for awareness raising on the diverse experiences and challenges the Deaf community faces. It gives Deaf people and their advocates an environment to share personal experiences, struggles and triumphs while bringing attention to topics like prejudice, challenges to accessibility and the value of inclusive policies.

Figure 4: #Deafawareness

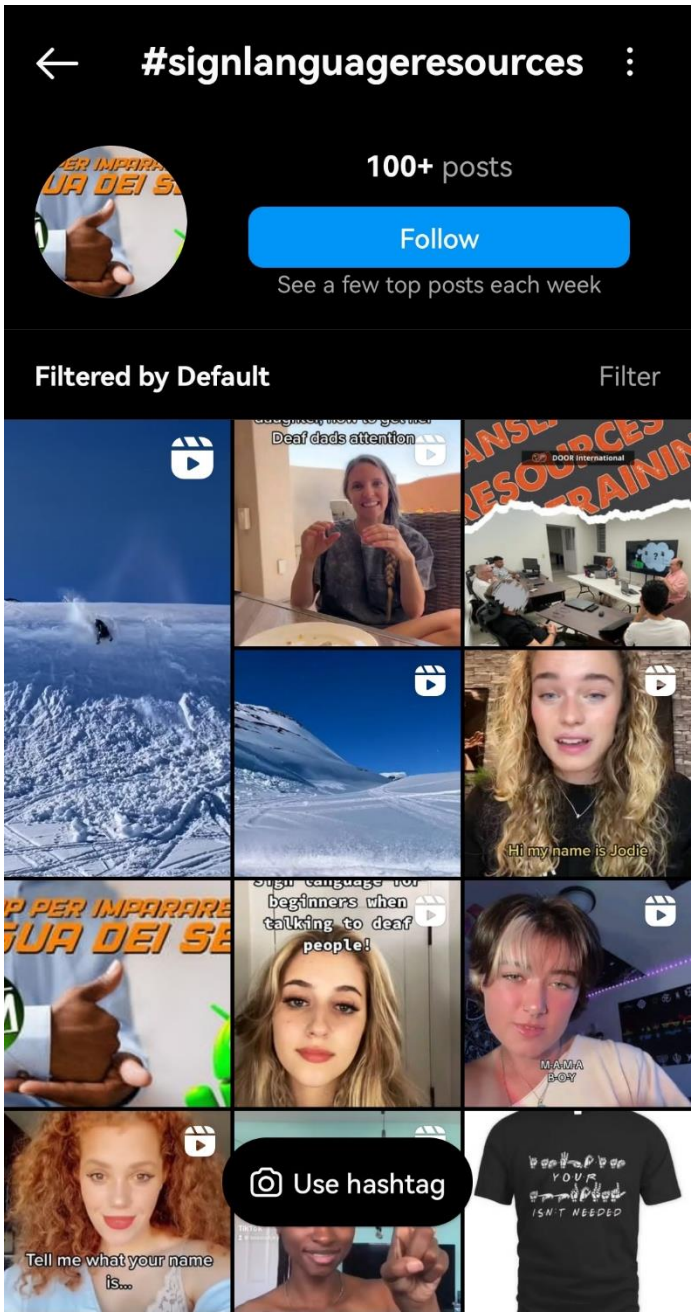


The #Deafawareness online initiatives have been crucial in promoting Deaf rights. This hashtag is used by activists and groups to call attention to important topics, demand legislative reforms and mobilize support. For instance, #Deafawareness has significantly boosted the popularity of campaigns relating to captioning, Deaf education and job prospects for Deaf people. Aside from activism, #Deafawareness is crucial for fostering a sense of

community. Through this hashtag, Deaf people all over the world connect, share experiences and provide support. It helps the Deaf community feel more united and included.

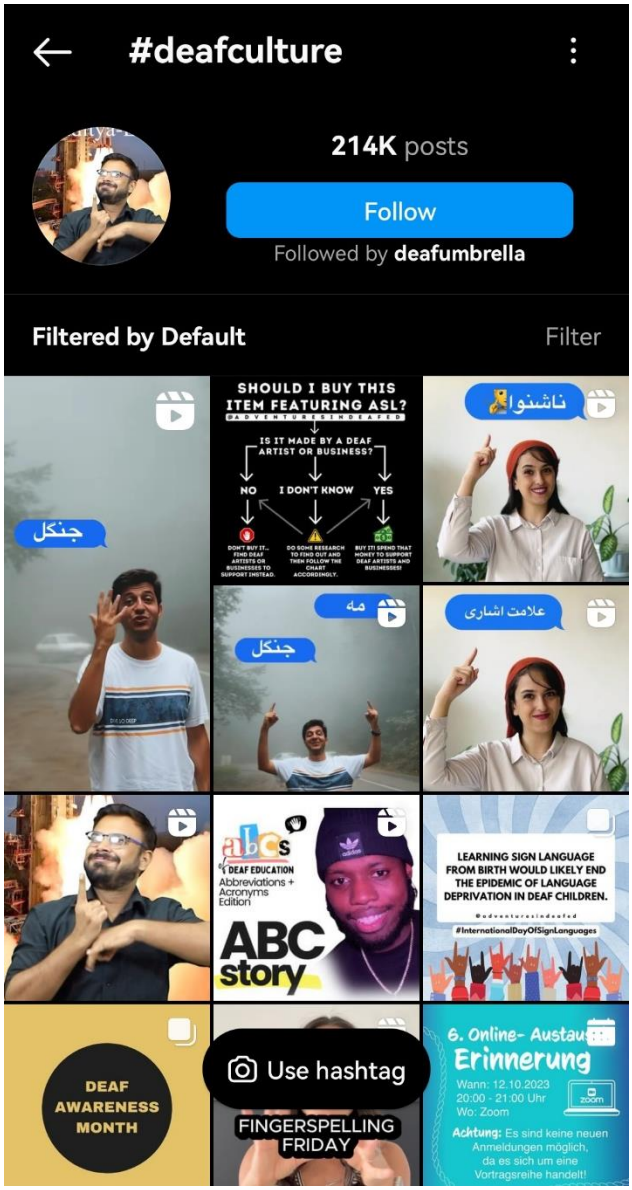
The hashtag #signlanguageresources is a platform that empowers the Deaf community as it provides a place where people can share resources about their language. People are also able to promote the learning of sign languages. It should be noted that this hashtag focuses more on the promotion of American Sign Language.

Figure 5: #signlanguageresources



The hashtag #Deafculture fosters a sense of Deaf identity and pride. It promotes the diverse and rich culture and identity of Deaf people. In this way, Deaf people are able to reach a global audience by promoting and showcasing their individual traditions and experiences. This in turn creates a ripple effect by promoting Deaf awareness and fostering a more inclusive society globally, because Deaf people are able to counteract the stereotypes about them. This happens through the sharing of art, stories, experiences and educational resources.

Figure 6: #Deafculture



While these hashtags empower the Deaf community by fostering awareness, encouraging linguistic and cultural conservation and dispelling prejudices, it is important to be aware of the barriers these hashtags involve, especially regarding accessibility and cultural

appropriation. The constantly evolving nature of the Deaf community and its continual initiatives to build a more inclusive and equitable society are reflected in the ongoing evolution of the hashtags. The influence of these hashtags in promoting Deaf awareness, linguistic variety and cultural celebration will change along with social media as it develops. Through this promotion of Deaf awareness and Deaf rights, interpreters are automatically included as allies of the Deaf community as well as tools to secure their rights.

Two hashtags are relevant in showcasing the interpreting field globally. These hashtags are #Interpretinglife and #1nt, which indicate various aspects of what it is like to be an interpreter.

#Interpretinglife discusses various aspects of interpreters' lives, ranging from educational resources, differentiating interpreters from translators, to life stories and lived experiences. This hashtag creates a global community of interpreters with various language combinations in various language modalities. The hashtag creates interpreter visibility by spotlighting interpreters and creating awareness around the complex skillset interpreters require, the nature of this highly demanding job and the professional nuances of the field. By focusing on life experiences, this hashtag offers relatable and engaging content that can be used to build a close-knit community of professional interpreters. Although this hashtag comes with many ways to empower interpreters, there are some concerns relating to oversimplification and lack of educational value. A hashtag alone is not enough to explain in depth the nuances of a highly skilled profession such as interpreting. There are various categories of interpreting, including simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, whisper interpreting and VRI. Interpreting environments and contexts also vary and may include courts, hospitals, or police stations. While hashtags can simplify interpreting resources to make them accessible and relatable, a hashtag alone is not enough to fully equip the public for working with an interpreter or fully understanding interpreting.

#1nt is a specialized hashtag that focuses on discussions of interpreting techniques and practices, challenges and ethics. It is commonly used among professional interpreters and scholars to build a global interpreting community. The abbreviation is used to refer to simultaneous interpreting; that is, one interpreter. It has a limited scope on general language topics as it specializes in interpreting (specifically simultaneous interpreting) whereas the hashtag #xl8 refers to translation. #1nt is exclusive as only people within the profession

would understand the hashtag and the public might have to do some research to figure out what it is for. This would fall under step 3 of Tseng's control theory, which states:

> 3. Formation of formal networks: There is better collaboration among the practitioners in further delineating their job descriptions, regulating the practitioners' conduct and behaviour, controlling admission to the profession and enhancing the recognition of the profession. (Pym et al., 2012)

4.1.5 Conclusion

Hashtags are relevant to the professionalization of interpreting as they not only provide platforms for interpreters to build communities and to network, but also create a space where interpreters can engage on various aspects of the profession as well as express their identity. They assist in achieving point three of Tseng's control theory as they enhance interpreter visibility. These meme groups (hashtags) create awareness and promote advocacy on the profession, thus enabling access to a wide and diverse audience.

These global hashtags and the lack of local hashtags show that hashtag use is lacking within the SASLI community. Hashtags like #SASL12 and #SASLI hardly feature for sign language interpreters in comparison to the more globally oriented hashtags. The hashtag #SASL12 seems to be a recent hashtag, with just over 100 posts referring to South African sign language becoming the 12th official language. The posts are related to the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) and have emerged since the language was approved for inclusion in 2023. The hashtag #SASLI refers to South African Sign Language interpreters and has been used by over 100 people. Most of the posts are not related to SASL or interpreters, however, and are related to a spoken language.

Chapter 5

5.1. Findings and Recommendations

5.1.1 Introduction

This research aimed to find out how memes can contribute to the professionalization of SASL interpreting. It was observed that armed with social media literacy skills and knowledge of the risks of using social media, social media marketing can be a useful tool for interpreters.

5.1.2 Discussion

The interpreting profession has faced challenges in gaining professional recognition, especially in the global south as opposed to the global north, owing to various factors. These challenges have reinforced the belief that bilingualism alone is sufficient in order to become an interpreter. The low status of interpreting in South Africa means that regardless of training anyone can apply and obtain an interpreting job. This is why South Africa has situations of poor interpreting which go viral, such as Thamsanqa Jantjie at late President Nelson Mandela's funeral, making a mockery of SASL interpreting and reinforcing negative stereotypes of interpreters. In 2012 and 2014 important milestones were reached in South Africa as legislation started to regulate the translator and interpreter professions. With the assistance of guidelines from institutions like the AIIC and universities like the University of the Witwatersrand, training programmes have been established, thus complying with step 2 of control theory and steps 1–5 of trait theory. However, interpreting still struggles to gain recognition with many people confusing interpreting and translation, or not understanding the role and significance of the interpreter.

Social media provides a platform for interpreters to advocate for awareness of interpreting, specifically SASL interpreting. Memes have the potential to go viral on social media, thus reaching wider audiences. To determine how memes contribute to the professionalization of SASL interpreting the memes related to the relevant hashtags on Instagram were analysed. A discourse analysis was subsequently carried out to determine the type of content produced under the 12 hashtags (#whereistheinterpreter, #languageaccess, #accesstojustice,

#signlanguageinterpreter, #communitypolicing, #safetyfirst, #fakeinterpreter, #interpreterethics, #deafcommunity, #deafculture, #deafawareness, #signlanguageresources, #interpretinglife, #1nt, #SASL12, #SASLI). It was found that the global interpreting community frequently uses hashtags to connect with colleagues (social networking), share stories and experiences, share news and current events, as well as educational content used to advocate and spread awareness. Popular hashtags include #1nt, #interpretinglife, #deafawareness, #deafculture, #signlanguageinterpreter, #languageaccess, #accesstojustice. It is important to note that these hashtags are more popular in the global north than the global south. This correlates with previous research by Gambrell (2018) who found that interpreting in the global south is less acknowledged owing to a lack of resources and sociopolitical setbacks. This became clear as it was noted that popular hashtags were global in nature and linked to languages like BSL and ASL, whereas the hashtags related to SASL (#SASLI, #SASL12) were hardly used by South Africans.

To bridge this gap, it is recommended that interpreting educational institutions set up social media pages to share resources and information from a South African perspective, which in turn will build a closer-knit interpreting community. The scope of hashtags was limited therefore it is recommended that more research be conducted using a bigger range of data. Owing to a lack of resources pertaining to memes and the professionalization of interpreting, it is recommended that more research be conducted on this with a more in-depth analysis on social media marketing strategies. There are various ethical concerns when it comes to the use of social media to promote professionalism. It is therefore important that ethical guidelines be developed on the use of social media in the interpreting profession, as there seems to be an ethical grey zone which could lead to unethical online practices.

5.1.3 Conclusion

As an SASLI, to fully understand the risks of using social media it is important that more studies be conducted on the risks of using social media to promote interpreting. It is important that guidelines be developed on how to avoid and mitigate the various challenges that come with social media. In developing online literacy, SASLIs would be able to use social media as an excellent tool for fostering a stronger community, which in turn would assist in regulating the entry requirements, as interpreters would be able to advocate that bilingualism alone is not enough to interpret. Through the use of social media SASLIs would

be able to promote the vocation as professional which might lead to more people understanding what the role of an interpreter is.

This research set out to understand how memes can contribute to the professionalization of SASL interpreting. It was found that memes contribute to this professionalization as they connect interpreters globally, creating a closer-knit interpreting community. In relation to South Africa, it was noted that SASLIs seldom use social media to promote their businesses, which as freelancers is crucial. Not only do memes build communities through hashtags, but they also create awareness on various topics related to SASL interpreting, which can help this developing profession grow even further.

Memes on social media are an excellent way of spreading awareness about the professionalization of interpreting. They help to build connected interpreting communities where interpreters can seek advice and share experiences. The use of hashtags enables interpreters to group memes and connect with each other on common topics. By linking Dawkin's concept of memes to Tseng's model of professionalization, as well as to social media marketing strategies, this research has demonstrated how SASLIs and interpreting agencies can utilize social media and memes to promote professionalism and market themselves.

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Annexures:

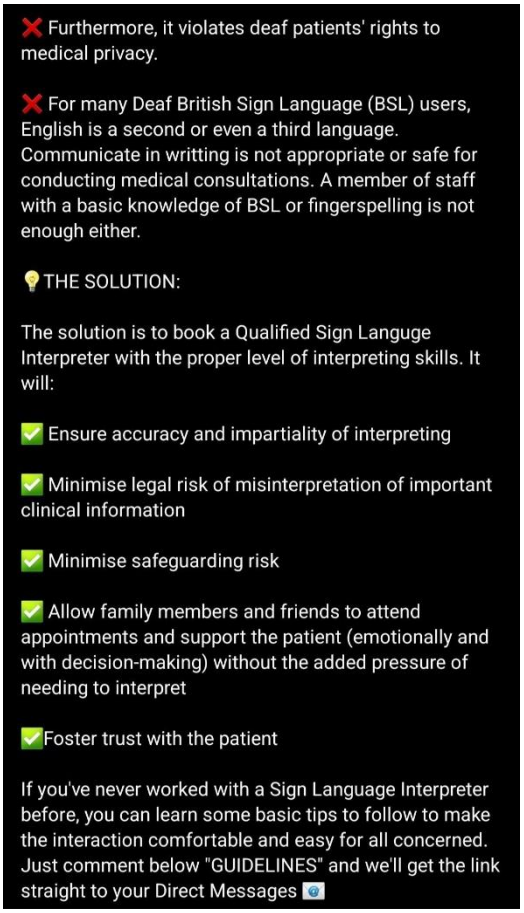
Annexure A:



(Photo E by: Rayjason,2020)

Annexure B:





(Photo A by: Deafumbrella, 2022)