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THE ROLE OF SIGNED LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTIONS OF COACHES WITH DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING ATHLETES

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Abstract

In the present study, based on a doctorate thesis, data obtained from practitioners was evaluated to determine the role of CODA sign-language interpreters in Deaf sports. The study includes a multifaceted analysis of the role played by sign language interpreters in the communication of hearing national team coaches working with athletes who are deaf in the Turkish Deaf Sports Federation (TIESF). For this purpose, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with seven experienced CODA interpreters involved in the national and international activities of the TIESF. To date there have been few studies in the field of sports interpreting in Turkey, and particularly interpreting for athletes who are deaf. The present research is a pioneering and exemplary study that focuses on the role of signed language interpreters as sports interpreters.

Keywords: *Coach-athlete relationship, Sign language interpreter, CODA, Deaf.*

İŞİTEN ANTRENÖRLERLE S/SAĞIR VE İŞİTME ENGELLİ SPORCULARIN ETKİLEŞİM VE İLETİŞİMİNDE İŞARET DİLİ ÇEVİRMENİN ROLÜ

Öz

Bu çalışmada Sağır sporlarında çevirmenlik yapan CODA işaret dili çevirmeninin rolü, uygulayıcılardan verilerle ele alınarak betimlenmiştir. Araştırmada TİESF (Türkiye İşitme Engelliler Spor Federasyonu) bünyesinde görev yapan, duyan milli takım antrenörleri ile Sağır sporcuları arasında iletişimi sağlayan işaret dili çevirmenlerinin rolü sahadan toplanan veriler sayesinde çok yönlü bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında, TİESF'nin ulusal ve uluslararası faaliyetlerinde görev alan, mesleki alandaki deneyimleri olan yedi CODA çevirmenle yarı yapılandırılmış telefon görüşmesi yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler katılımcılardan izin alınarak üçüncü şahısla paylaşılmamak şartı ile kaydedilmiştir. Ülkemizde spor çevirmenliği ile ilgili çalışmalar ve özellikle de Sağır sporculara yönelik çevirilerle ilgili çalışmalar oldukça sınırlı sayıdadır. Araştırma, alan yazınında işaret dili çevirmeninin spor çevirmeni rolüne odaklanan nadir bir çalışmadır, takip edecek araştırma ve çalışmalar için de kaynak niteliği taşıyacağı umuduyla kaleme alınmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Antrenör-sporcu ilişkisi, İşaret dili çevirmeni, CODA, Sağır.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The opportunities for education in sign language interpreting (SLI) are limited in Turkey (see: programs at Ankara and Hacettepe Universities), and this may be detrimental to the efficient communication of people who are deaf with the hearing population due to the small number of qualified interpreters. Consequently, the responsibility for ensuring communication between the Deaf community and the hearing population tends to rest with CODA (Child of deaf adult) signed language interpreters. Many steps have been taken in recent years to address the lack of professionalization of interpreters such as the drafting of national standards and proficiencies for the profession (see: MYK, 2020) and the drafting of a regulation supporting professional interpreting for media services (see: RTUK, 2019). It is a fundamental right of the Deaf community to live on equal terms with the hearing community, as called for in international documents (see UN CRPD, 2006), in which the right to communicate and express oneself is stated to be a priority. In addition, as research has validated it is also vital to encourage people who are deaf to participate in society in the areas in which they are active (Atherton, 2009; Atherton, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2013; Fitzgerald & Long, 2017; Kiuppis, 2018; Peers, 2018). Sports is one of these areas. People who are deaf and are involved in sports regard themselves as a cultural and linguistic minority rather than as disabled (Butterfield, 1991). These individuals are active in sports as can be seen in the events organized solely for them.

The “Deaflympics”, held every four years with the ICSD (International Committee of Sports for the Deaf) at the helm follows the example of the Olympic Games. Turkey is one of the countries that has been competing in these events in the current century. The first international Deaf sports event attended by Turkey was the Helsinki Summer Games of 1961 (TIESF, online, 2021). Although Turkey took part in the event, the country had no official sports federation to look after the interests of their athletes, as the Disabled Sports Federation (TÖSF-Türkiye Özürlüler Spor Federasyonu) was founded in 1990. Later, separate federations were established for each disability group leading to the establishment of the Turkish Deaf Sports Federation in 2000 (see TIESF, 2020).

Within TIEFS activities in support of Deaf sports in Turkey, communication among the athletes and administrators who are deaf and hearing coaches and hearing authorities is supported by signed language interpreters; it is the role of CODA sign language interpreters in the field that is the particular focus of the present study. To this end, the views of interpreters who are central to the social integration of the people who are deaf and the hearing were sought. The study focuses on the phenomena from an interpreting studies perspective.

The study refers then to CODAs and the field of signed language interpreting. Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with seven experienced CODA interpreters who have been involved in the activities of TIESF. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The study concludes with suggestions based on the data obtained from the field, aimed at strengthening the role of interpreters in Deaf sports and increasing quality in the provision of such services.

1.1.Oral and Signed Language Interpreting

Preliminary studies in SLI, were seen in the 1950s, and these antecedent and didactic studies would form the basis of many of the topics discussed in the field of oral translation (Gile, 2009: 53).

Since then, interpreters in spoken languages have acknowledged that signed language interpreters are experts who work in a specific subfield of their field of expertise. With the increase in the number of studies on signed languages the studies focusing on SLI have also increased (Janzen, 2005). Pöchhacker (1999) points out that social and political developments in the 1960s in countries such as the USA paved the way for SLI to develop as a practice that facilitates the integration of the Deaf community in social, professional and educational life. Napier (2015: 135) underlines that the Deaf community state that they require accessibility and not assistance to participate in society. Bontempo (2015) stresses the importance of social developments and the efforts by the Deaf community in raising awareness about signed language interpreters. The establishment of professional organizations such as EFSLI (European Federation of Sign Language Interpreters) in 1993, and WASLI (World Association of Sign Language Interpreters) in 2003 also contributed to professionalization.

Different settings in SLI have received relative attention with these developments. Napier (2015) points out that studies and practice tends to concentrate on interpreting for public services or community interpreting settings. Other studies underline the use of liaison interpreting (Shaw et al. 2004) or the use of international sign in conferences (Rosenstock & Napier, 2015: 5).

Unfortunately, there are few resources on interpreting for sports (Kurková et al., 2011; Stewart et al, 1988; Schultz et al, 2013), especially those concentrating on the role of the interpreter. The most current publications in the field of sports interpreting in Turkey are Ünsal's article on sports interpreting (2019) and Bulut's book (2018). Ünsal (2019), in her article, referred to translation in sports as "bordering on the synchronicity of action and discourse ... verbalizing the actions of the player, keeping pace with the player." Both publications concentrate on interpreting for sports, not specifically SLI.

In practice, the role of the signed language interpreter in sports is very complex. For example, sign language interpreters are expected to provide communication support at every stage of the event, including providing communication between the coach and athlete, between the injured athlete and the medical staff, in conferences (award ceremonies, opening-closing speeches), in doping control procedures and in controversial situations etc. Among these tasks one of the most important is undoubtedly to support the interactions and communications of the coach and athlete. The role of a sign language interpreter consists of initially supporting the athlete in understanding the hearing coach and passing on instructions. In certain situations, having the language skills and cultural awareness may not be sufficient for the performance of these duties. The interactions of a coach and an athlete is essentially a subordinate-superior relationship. The coach is the person who is higher up on the hierarchy, gives instructions and expects these to be followed. The athlete needs to understand the message, which is originally in a different language and from a different culture. The interpreter, whose job it to transmit the source message, needs to know the technical rules of the sports branch, and the meanings of referee decisions made during the competition/match. Since there is an intercultural, field specific and role specific type of communication and interaction, the SLI process between a coach and athlete requires the ethical and professional execution of an interpreting task and not only language transfer.

One of the most important factors interpreters keep in mind during the act is the end-user profile, including issues such as background knowledge. For example, athletes who are deaf may not know the meaning of international technical terms due to the lack of equivalence of some concepts in signed language. On the one hand one could argue that, to a certain extent, the language of sport is universal, but the deaf practitioner may be unfamiliar with sports language and may not have access to terms. This makes learning the language of a sports (or a specific sport) challenging.

It is necessary to maximize the performance of the athlete to ensure success, for which effective cooperation is required within the team. In deaf sports, the interpreter is central to the interaction. Thus, interpreters need to have a good command of the language and culture and should also be skilled communicators/interpreters to ensure the athlete is able to understand the message. In an effort to contribute to the field, the present study details some strategies and approaches to achieve communication based on examples from practice. The study was conducted to fill the gap in the literature referred to above, and furthermore it draws upon 20 years of experience and the personal observations of the researcher-interpreter, who is a CODA herself.

1.1.1. CODA and Signed Language Interpreting

CODA – an acronym of "Child of Deaf Adult" –are bi-cultured and hearing individuals, who have been raised by one or more Deaf parent(s) (Hoffmeister, 2008: 207). Since CODAs are part of both the Deaf culture through their parents, as well as the hearing community, they possess elements of the cultures of both communities. Thus, CODAs serve as a bridge between their parents and the hearing world, and in a sense, many CODAs grow up translating for their families (Clark, 2003), and making use of they choose to become signed language interpreters. In other words, a CODA is a born interpreter who, uses sign language within the family, as well as the spoken language in communications with the outside world.

There are many studies on CODAs in the literature (Adams, 2008; Angelelli, 2010; Bishop & Hicks 2008; Kanto et al, 2013; Roy 2000; Schiff-Myers, 1988; Williamson, 2012). CODAs assume responsibility, at an early age. Williamson (2015), claims that CODAs feel neither part of the Deaf nor part of the hearing community. CODAs may choose to get together as they feel different from their peers and may sometimes communicate in signed language among themselves. Studies by Bievenu (1987) and Sherwood (1987) refer to CODAs as a “third culture”.

Most signed language interpreters in Turkey today are CODAs. As deaf family members may experience various difficulties, the opportunities for CODAs to advance in academic or professional careers may sometimes be limited due to their realities.

The field of SLI, unlike other types of interpreting, alternates between volunteerism and professionalism. The profession has improved over time, reaching world standards in terms of interpreting quality and practice.

Those involved in sign language interpreting in Deaf sports activities in Türkiye are generally CODAs and volunteers, and it is for this reason that the role of sign language interpreters in sports is examined in the present study.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

A qualitative method was applied in the present study involving semi-structured interviews with CODA signed language interpreters. The interview questions were determined by drawing upon the 20 years of professional knowledge and experience of the researcher.

The first part of the survey addresses the importance of background knowledge and experience in the field of interpreting for sports; five of the survey questions are drafted to obtain personal information from the respondents on their sports knowledge, their knowledge of the branch of sports in which they are involved, their duration of tenure and the activities in which they are involved. Since the focus of the present study is coach-athlete interaction and communication, accordingly, eleven questions in the survey are related to the role, value, tasks, competence and influence of the interpreter in the coach-athlete relationship.

2.2. Sample Group

Interviews were conducted with seven experienced CODA signed language interpreters who had been involved in the national team camps and competitions organized by the TIESF. Of the seven respondents, five were civil servants and two worked freelance. The sample group included CODAs who are actively involved in the interpreting profession, and who frequently take part in TIESF activities.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured telephone interviews of approximately 30 minutes were conducted with seven sign language interpreters (CODA), all of whom had taken part in national team camps and competitions organized by TIESF in different deaf sports branches. Phone interviews were preferred due to the ongoing global pandemic. Ethical rules were followed at every stage of the interviews; participants’ interviews were recorded with their permission.

2.4. Data Collection

2.4.1. Personal Information Form

Data on the interpreters’ professions, level of sports knowledge and the time they spent with the team were obtained using a personal information form.

Questions about the Role of Interpreters in the Coach-Athlete Relationship

The interview questions were prepared based on the experience and observations of the researcher. The interview questions covered topics such as the interpreters’ level of knowledge of the sports in question, their sports background, the strategies they use in interpreting, their views on the difficulties of interpreting in the

specific field, whether they see themselves as part of the team, their roles and their influence in the coach-athlete relationship.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Interpreters Interviewed

Subject	Profession	When they started to take part in the federation	Sports interest	Branch in which they works	Camps & championships
C1	Public interpreter (Ministry of Family and Social Services)	Since the Deaflympics event 2017	Basketball	Soccer Judo	1 camp, 1 championship participation
C2	Public interpreter (Ministry of Family and Social Services)	Beginning under the previous president of the federation	Soccer	Volleyball Soccer Orienteering	2 camps, 2 championships
C3	Public interpreter (Ministry of Family and Social Services)	Since the Deaflympics event 2017	Soccer	Wrestling	5 camps, 3 championships
C4	Freelance Interpreter	Since the Deaflympics event 2017	Soccer	Volleyball	Many
C5	Freelance Interpreter	Since the Deaflympics event 2017	None	Soccer Futsal Tennis	15 camps, 5 championships
C6	Public interpreter (Ministry of Family and Social Services)	Beginning under the previous president of the federation	Basketball	Soccer Wrestling Table tennis Sailing	5 camps, 4 championship participations
C7	Public interpreter (Ministry of Family and Social Services)	Beginning under the previous president of the federation	Basketball (school)	Table tennis Wrestling Track-field Swimming	Many

2.5. Data Analysis

Content analysis was used. Similar data were grouped and assessment included processes for the identification, coding and categorization of the data (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011: 227), and analysis followed the steps indicated below.

The interview recordings were transcribed into written text; the interpreters (who remain anonymous) were numbered and coded with a "C" prefix. In the transcribed interviews, the seven interpreters were identified as C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7.

Participant statements were included in the analysis, as well as interpretation of the data. Since the present article is related to a thesis, the data prepared by the researcher had also been examined at an earlier date by the thesis advisors, who confirmed the validity and reliability of the data.

The results of the study were presented descriptively through a content analysis; and the findings were explained, including direct statements by the interpreters and the observations of the author related to the emerging themes.

The answers were grouped and interpreted in terms of their stated effect on the coach-athlete relationship, with direct statements included in the findings.

3. FINDINGS

The findings obtained from the research were presented under certain headings and then analyzed. These headings included the interpreters' comments about the interpreting preparation process; their sports background and fields of knowledge; the strategies used to address gaps in terminology; the "sense of belonging" with other actors; the difficulties experienced in practice; their view on the coaches and their mutual interactions; the interpreters view of the athlete; a comparison of the forms of address used in the interpreter-athlete relationship and the interpreter-coach relationship; the additional duties of interpreters; mediation between parties, conflict resolution and peacekeeping; and interpreters role (in terms of deaf athletes) as an approving authority.

3.1. Sports background and the field specific knowledge

Of the seven interpreters interviewed, four had sport (soccer) backgrounds, while the other interpreters' interests and knowledge of sports were at an "amateur" level.

The interpreters revealed that their interest in sport was not sufficient or interpreting in the field, which is an issue highlighted in the literature as knowing the sports terminology, and understanding the rules of different sports.

The sports branches in which interpreters take part include soccer, wrestling, judo, futsal, table tennis, orienteering, tennis, volleyball, sailing and swimming.

3.2. The comments of interpreters on their preparations for interpreting

The statements of the interpreters revealed that their level of knowledge about sports (other than football) was limited. They stated, however, that when they engaged professionally in a branch, their level of personal knowledge improved, and they gained experience in the branch:

C1: "... it was not an area I knew."

C2: "... I learned from the coach at the camp."

C3: "... it was zero at first, but I learned wrestling terminology (flip, lock, suplex). I was helped by my friends."

C5: "My knowledge of sports was at an amateur level, but you learn during workouts and camps."

C1: "Before the camp, I was able to look up their meanings in Turkish, and I learned their equivalents in sign language from the athletes in the camp."

3.3. Methods used by interpreters to overcome deficiencies

In the activities in which they participate, as they have stated the interpreters strengthen their knowledge of the field and look to acquire sufficient field-specific terminology to be able to provide communication and interaction.

The first strategy is as follows: After learning the Turkish equivalents of technical terms, the interpreters try to learn their equivalents in signed language from the athletes. Thus, sports-specific signed language is developed and enriched naturally by deaf athletes. The athletes learned the international terms during an international event that they attended later, and these signs were then borrowed into the national signed language. Terms borrowed in the initial periods have, in time, come to be included in Turkish signed language. These terms are then passed on to young athletes as they are recruited to the national team.

Camps are important venues for coaches, athletes and interpreters. As stated by the interpreters, the process requires interpreters to learn, adapt and prepare together with athletes and coaches, following certain steps:

C4: "I learn the words used by the coaches in the camps, and by explaining them to the athletes, I can ask what sign they use. If they do not know, then we come up with a corresponding sign together."

C7: "You learn by talking to athletes. Before I went to swimming practice, I learned about the different swimming styles and their names. I look at athletes, and then learn how the athletes do that style. If there is no equivalent, I translate the word according to its meaning using body language and visual symbols."

The second strategy that interpreters use in this process involves generating equivalents to technical concepts making use of the possibilities of sign language.

The third strategy that interpreters use in the process is paraphrasing: an interpreter briefly describing or depict a concept that has no equivalent to provide complete understanding.

C1: "When I have difficulty translating some terms that have no equivalent, I demonstrate them with body language."

C6: "It was an unfamiliar territory for both us and the Deaf community. First, I spoke to the coach, stating that the deaf are not on the same level as hearing athletes, and asked him/her to explain the concepts to me. Afterwards, we came up with new signs for many terms and concepts in the camp. For example, for the term "full (pupa in Turkish) sail", we used the sign for "cigar" (puro in Turkish) in sign language (since the words resemble each other in Turkish)."

As stated by the interpreters, while the need to resort to these strategies will be less in established sports (sports that have been practiced by the deaf for a certain duration) such as wrestling, they become indispensable in the newer sports branches, such as orienteering.

C1: "Far Eastern sports are respect-based branches, with origins in discipline and philosophy. How do you describe the cultural of bowling? Deaf athletes were not aware of the concept of respect. The coach explained the importance of greetings and respect at length, as athletes often forget it, and once this is ingrained, they can start to explain the specific culture of the sport."

C6: "They (the deaf athletes) try to comprehend what they see. Athletes may not comprehend even the most common sentences that are so normal for others, let alone technical terms related to their sporting field. Therefore, we explain the terms and rules in such a way that they can understand. The interpreters show great devotion in this regard."

3.4. The "sense of belonging"

In the Turkish setting Deaf athletes generally consider CODAs to be part of their communities. The interview data revealed the use of expressions such as "great", "very good" and "very positive" by the deaf athletes for the CODA interpreter indicating that CODA interpreters are accepted as a natural part of the team.

The sense of belonging observed among athletes regarding their team and other actors, is also established through CODA interpreters. For example, CODA interpreter to add many things to their interpreting or use signs to increase motivation, and may even experience such emotions as sadness and joy, which are usually suppressed and not reflected during other interpreting practices.

C1: "While I am serious in my official interpreting duties, relationships develop into friendships with the deaf athletes. Even though s/he may be seeing you for the first time, s/he may act like s/he has known you for years."

C3: "Particularly during the European Championships, the athlete hugged me when s/he won, s/he did not forget me when hugging his/her coaches, and constantly looked me in the eye."

C6: *"... I was with them all the time; I felt like I was part of the team. I was very happy with their success. The interpreter usually only translates what s/he is told, but in a sporting environment, I was included in the events."*

C7: *"Everybody in the team told me that they did not want any other interpreter at the camp for the next organization, saying that we had worked as a team, and that together we were outstanding. They said they definitely wanted me to come again."*

3.5. Examples of some difficulties experienced by the interpreter in practice: language level, discourse, style, etc.

The interpreters reported facing certain difficulties, especially when conveying the discourses of coaches. Interpreter stated that they generally tend not to like relaying slang or vulgar statements to the athlete. Instead, they try to convey the message to the athlete that the coach is angry, irritated and stern.

C6: *"The coaches use a lot of profanity. If it was a simple profanity, I would translate that the coach was angry and was using harsh words rather than translating the profanity itself."*

C7: *"I have difficulties translating profanity, I do not normally translate it at all; it is very difficult for me. In particular, if the athlete is someone you love, this situation makes you very sad."*

C2: *"Sometimes, when a coach uses profanity, athletes can understand from sight, and look me in the eye."*

C4: *"The coaches behave the same way they do with hearing athletes, and use profanity very easily. However, swearing is not a commonly used discourse in the Deaf culture, and can have very deep meaning when used. Translating profanity is very risky, and so when the coach swears, I do not translate it, but rather tell the athlete that the coach is angry."*

Interviewees tell that athletes who are deaf, due to cultural and educational differences, may not understand when the coach is explaining a complex tactic if the signed language is insufficient. In cases coaches may resort to their basic level sign language repertoire and unable to convey what s/he wants; the athlete may turn to the interpreter as a "savior". Coaches may become frustrated and angry when they realize that the athlete still cannot understand something when they believe they are conveying it clearly. These situations, which according to the interpreters make communication even more difficult, from their point of view are issues to be corrected or that require sensitive intervention when necessary.

C1: *"It bothers me when coaches use sign language that they know at an insufficient level, because the athlete may misunderstand, and the coach may get angry at the athlete because of the misunderstanding. It is acceptable for conversations (between an athlete and a coach) to take place during training, but miscommunication on a wrestling mat can lead to a match being lost."*

C3: *"The coaches had difficulties at first, as they have training systems that they have been using for years. Rather than saying 'I am an interpreter, use me', I step back a bit, because there is a certain hierarchy. I do not want to disrespect a coach who has been serving for 7–8 years by pointing out errors."*

According to the interviewees when the interpreter translates the anger or appreciation of the coach, the athletes may believe that the emotion is coming from originating from the interpreter, not the coach. Inexperienced athletes are prone to confusion. Sometimes athletes may even ask, "Why is the interpreter angry with me?"

C3: *"It was half-time in the match, and the coach was speaking angrily. Naturally, I was also acting angry, following the coach's gestures and relaying the same reactions. I frowned. You do such things such as this ... The athlete protested and asked me why I was angry at him/her, and so I had to explain that it was the coach, not me, who was angry."*

C6: *"Our role here can sometimes be confused by the deaf. Coaches may say very nice things when making a motivational speech. I translate what the coach says, but the athletes applaud me, as if the words are mine."*

3.6. View of interpreters of coaches and their mutual interactions

The common view of interpreters about coaches is that the coaches are not acquainted with the Deaf culture. Only three of the fifty coaches working in twenty-four sports branches have sufficient personal experience of the Deaf culture.

C2: "Coaches who previously worked with hearing athletes do not understand deaf athletes, unless they work together with them for a long time. In fact, there have been many coaches stating their surprise at seeing first-time situations specific to deaf athletes. It is like the coach is not shaping the team, but is instead shaped by the team."

C3: "Aside from a few, there are no coaches who understand and know the Deaf culture. Deaf athletes cannot hear when they are eating noisily or walking with their slippers squeaking on the floor. The coach may believe the athlete is doing it on purpose, leading them to become angry. In these cases, I have to explain. This situation negatively affects the coach-athlete relationship, however, as the coaches are unable to fully perceive it."

C4: "Since the coaches have no knowledge of the Deaf culture, they sometimes get very angry during training. It seems very strange for the coach that a 20-year-old athlete does not understand when told to 'take that ball and serve it over the net.' They may not realize that the main issue is communication. In addition, the lives, social environment and views of deaf people are different; they are not like hearing people. They can be hurt, upset and offended. You can get angry and yell at a normal athlete in the field, and the athlete gets motivated and starts to play better, but this is not the same with the deaf. The more you yell at them, the worse they will perform. S/he may lose motivation. An athlete who gets angry and yells will not achieve success."

C7: "I cannot say that they are in command (when working with a deaf athlete). They may try to adapt, but in each case it can be understood that they are on unfamiliar ground. Deaf people chat a lot when eating because it's in their nature, but the coach forbids it, and says 'sit down and eat your meal; no talking'. S/he says to those who want to chat after dinner, 'No! Everyone should go to their room and rest.' It is a difficult situation for deaf athletes. They try to discuss topics and gain information on things they are curious about by chatting with each other. When the coach does not allow them to chat, deaf athletes cannot understand what's going on around them, and this situation is really sad."

3.7. How athletes view the interpreter, according to the interpreter

The athletes have told the interpreters that communication would not be possible without them.

C3: "They (athletes) say 'the coach is talking, but we do not understand; we try to follow it visually, which tires us very much', but one athlete said 'The interpreter's sign language and visual explanations helps us comprehend the subject in our minds.' I liked that very much."

C6: "There were two athletes performing in this sports branch before I came, and they did not understand when the coach spoke to them. As the deaf athletes had worked only with hearing coaches and engaged in sports based only on observations, they had never heard the technical aspects of the sport; no one had taught them the rules or the terminology; and there was no signed language for the sports they were performing. We learned the terminology, concepts and rules together for the first time."

3.8. Comparison of the interpreter-athlete, interpreter-coach relationships

While the athletes address the interpreter as "friend", "brother" or "sister", indicating "closeness" in the interpreter-athlete relationship, they use "teacher" to address the technical staff, as an expression of respect. Interpreters prefer to use the term "we" when talking about athletes and themselves, and "them" for the technical staff and coaches. Moreover, the interpreters stated that they preferred to spend their spare time with the athletes rather than the coaches or technical staff during the camp.

C1: "The athletes can openly complain, because they see me as one of their own."

C2: "The athletes see the interpreter as one of their own, and the coach as part of the team."

C3: *"The coaches and athletes sit separately while eating. I eat with the athletes and we watch TV together in the evenings, because I like to mingle with the athletes. Sometimes we even play games together."*

C4: *"We keep in contact with athletes not only during matches and camps, but also outside. When they have any problems, they call me directly. They even call me to help them communicate with their families."*

C5: *"I am emotionally on the same side as the athletes, but have to be on the side of the coach as a professional."*

C6: *"I feel closer to the athletes. We, as CODAs, understand the athletes better, since we have a good understanding of their culture. We understand very well how and why they behave. We have a relationship with the coaches, but I would prefer to be closer to the athletes, if it were up to me."*

C7: *"We make friends (with the athletes) outside the team, but pull ourselves back during training. If s/he is someone you love, the negative circumstance s/he experiences can make you very sad. I try to separate friendship and work, but when the coach scolds (an athlete), I also assume an angry attitude, which makes me sad."*

3.9. Additional duties of interpreters: Mediation

Although their main task is to translate, interpreters stated that they take on other roles, such as mediating at various times. These may include simple acts such as having to explain to a coach who reacts to the involuntary noises made by athletes in the national wrestling team camp that the deaf are unaware of the sounds they make because they cannot hear; calming a coach who gets angry when an athlete makes a mistake; and persuading athletes to accept their mistakes.

C5: *"It is necessary to convey to the athlete when the coach is both happy and angry. All are in the best interest of the athlete, as otherwise, the athlete may think s/he is being scolded because the coach doesn't like them. In such cases, it is necessary to explain the reasons why the coach is acting in such a way. I found myself explaining all the time, and trying to find a balance."*

4. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study investigates the role of interpreters, as the third person in the interaction (entailing different native languages and cultural backgrounds) providing communication between deaf athletes and a hearing coach. In this case the interpreter can be viewed as one of the sides of an equilateral triangle in the exchange of messages between a hearing coach and a deaf athlete.

Due to the essence of the setting and the aim of the interaction direct two-way communication is essential in the coach-athlete relationship, however, factors such as the national policies in deaf sports in Türkiye can be considered limiting. The educational levels of coaches, and the assignment of hearing national team coaches to athletes who are deaf, requires the engagement of signed language interpreters as third persons facilitating communication and interaction.

This communication and interaction can be analyzed from multiple facets and a plethora of issues effect the quality of the interaction and communication. A break-down of the issues investigated in the study yields interesting results. The results obtained in the interviews have been presented in the previous sections under several headings. In this section the discussions and recommendations are considered in the light of previous sections.

The first issue that was considered was 'if the interpreters knew the field they were interpreting'. In terms of the sports background and the specific field of knowledge of the interpreters, it could be understood from their personal statements that many interpreters had a basic knowledge of football, but that their level of knowledge about other sports is limited to non-existent (see section on 'comments of interpreters on their preparation for interpreting'). In such cases the interpreting quality will suffer. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that sign language interpreting in sports is an act of communication and interaction.

The second issue referred to in the study was the issue of preparing for interpreting in a specific field. The interpreters interviewed stated that they had become more acquainted with the “language of sports” after exposure to branches of deaf sports. As interpreters work in the environment, they gain experience in a specific branch and improve their understanding. Therefore, the long duration of national team camps presents an ideal opportunity for the interpreter to prepare. Interpreters acquire detailed knowledge of a sports branch not only through their own research for interpreting, but during the time they spend at the training camps. In the current Turkish case they learn by exposure and by interpreting.

The third issue referred to was about the methods/strategies used by interpreters in overcoming either their lack of knowledge, or the lack of equivalent terms in the specific fields. The research revealed that (see ‘methods used by interpreters in the field overcome deficiencies in knowledge/terminology’), sign language interpreters come up with solutions/strategies to challenges encountered by following certain approaches. Exposure to the athletes and learning from the settings was one of the strategies they employed. It is a highly laborious process for an interpreter to get to know about a sport that they have never interpreted before.

In addition, the interpreters also make use of the opportunities provided by the visual features of the sport. These include the use of body language or visual symbols, and demonstration of movements. Furthermore, interpreters also used paraphrasing as a strategy.

A fourth issue of scrutiny was the ‘sense of belonging’ to the same community. The relationship forged between the interpreter and the team, especially given the shared excitement and ambition associated with sports, necessitates some sort of closeness among participants. From this perspective, the concept of ‘interpreter visibility and/or invisibility’ introduced by Venuti (1995, 2000) regarding the role of the interpreter (although he focuses on literary translation in his work) can be considered a useful concept to investigate the role of signed language interpreters in the context under scrutiny. Venuti (1995) referred to the interpreting strategies used to transmit the message in a way that can be understood by the recipient as the domestication approach. (see section on ‘sense of belonging’).

Another issue of interest in the research were the primarily linguistic challenges (on the macro level of language use, discourse and style) encountered by interpreters. Reiss and Vermeer identify principles for the suitability of a translation for a purpose: “to be bound to the purpose, to comply with the exit culture and language, consistency, compliance with the exit text, and adherence to an ordinal and hierarchical order (Büyüknisan, 2009: 75). This requires interpreters to convey the message with certain deviations that may sometimes be inevitable and sometimes consciously adopted. The interpreters reported certain challenges when conveying the discourse of caches, especially when it came to the use of slang and vulgar language. In addition to this the interpreters also underlined that they may have to explain to the athlete when the mood of the coach changes, for example when they are angry or nervous. As the athletes who are deaf may not be able to perceive this the interpreters felt the need to convey the coach’s action/reaction with a cause-and-effect explanation to ensure the intelligibility of the interpreting. The interpreters stated that this requires careful handling and the use of explicitation and sometimes explanations to make the athlete understand who is angry and why the person is angry for example (see section on ‘examples of difficulties’).

Some interesting findings emerged regarding the relationships between interpreters and the other actors in the environment (see section on ‘how athletes view the interpreter’). The research focused on the issues of how the interpreters viewed the coaches and the mutual interactions, how the athletes viewed the interpreter according to the interpreter, and a comparison of the interpreter-athlete and interpreter-coach relationships. One of the challenges for the signed language interpreters in this setting was the fact that coaches did not have a command of deaf culture. Although a coach’s rudimentary knowledge of signed language may make the athlete feel valued, it this will not resolve problems as awareness of the Deaf culture is essential. In the interpreting process the source as well as the target languages and cultures play an important role. Interpreting cannot only involve a linguistic perspective (see Toury 2000). According to the interpreters’ responses the predominant issue is the so-called communication challenge between coaches and athletes lies in the differences between the cultures. On the one hand, from the interpreters’ perspective, constantly striving to understand what part of

the instruction given by the coach may be misunderstood or not understood places a cognitive burden on the interpreter. The presence of the interpreter becomes vital for the motivation and performance of the athlete. Although the absence of the interpreter may not lead the failure of an athlete, their presence has a positive effect.

Consequently, when interpreters start working with a team, they feel closer to the athletes than the coach, likening him/herself to a lawyer defending the rights of a client. For the athlete, the interpreter is a friend who helps him/her, rather than a person who facilitates their communication with the coach. But in fact (in terms of employment status) part of the coaching and technical staff. One of the issues pinpointed in the research is that the interpreters have underlined that it is easier for the athletes to communicate with them (see section on 'comparison of relationships'). The interpreters have highlighted that athletes talk about their problems and discuss solutions with them. It could be inferred that on a personal level, the interpreters consider themselves as a part of the athletic team rather than a part of the coaching and/or technical staff. While they consider coaches as the masters of the sport, athletes are their 'friends' or buddies' and they can establish an emotional and personal connection with them. This ties in with the acceptance of the interpreter which was another issue discussed in the interviews. If an interpreter is appreciated by the athletes who are deaf, this is an advantage for the interpreter. Interpreters may choose to spend time with athletes to improve the quality of their work and this may also positively impact their professional reputation within the community. This also ties in with a further issue which is referred to as the additional duties of the interpreter (see section on 'additional duties'). Interpreters stated that they take on different roles such as mediation and this is probably because of the specific realities of the setting and the languages, cultures involved. Though this is not uncommon in interpreting as there have been studies in interpreting literature investigating situations in which the interpreters take on a mediating role. Researchers such as Baker (2006, 2009) analyzed the activist and mediating role of the interpreter. When the interpreter manages a situation in a way that ensures the most effective communication and outcome this professional is playing the role of mediator. In addition, there have been studies emphasizing that the role of the sign language interpreter is mainly mediating with the deaf community (for example Reagen 2010).

Being an interpreter in the world of sports is different from other fields of interpreting, in that the interpreter is part of the support team, like a masseur, assistant coach or doctor. Since the common goal of the team is success, everyone strives and contributes to the success of the athlete(s). Everyone in the team must be dynamic, fast, practical and focused. It is necessary to be alert, and to counter an incoming attack or defense with immediate and rapid action are essential. In this energetic and synergistic environment, no one has the luxury of being late, or delaying or postponing what must be done. Hence, in the sharing of duties and responsibilities within the team, it is imperative that each person involved knows the basic rules of the sport related to their roles, and of the branch in which s/he is involved.

So what is the interpreter profile? Do we opt for an interpreter who has a good command of sports literature, but who conveys what is said to the athlete in a less fluent interpretation; or is it an interpreter belonging to the community that possesses a strong ability to speak in his/her native language, but that is less familiar with sport? The coach has no say in this issue and furthermore finding a CODA interpreter who knows sports is difficult under the current conditions in Türkiye. Perhaps in the future it will be possible to make use of the experience acquired by interpreters in the camps (through permanent employment) by making interpreters part of the team. Thus, it would be possible to avoid wasting the efforts of the coach in the development of an interpreter, and the development of an interpreter through learning the sport.

The findings of the present study reveal that TIESF, as the only official body involved in Deaf sports in Türkiye, needs to organize professional development seminars to address issues and to increase the efficiency of sign language interpreters who are involved in sports, or those with an interest in entering this field. The updating of the professional knowledge of interpreters in such seminars is important in establishing standards for interpreting quality, and in minimizing the problems encountered. In addition to such seminars, interpreter manuals for Deaf sports should be prepared where necessary.

Based on the observations of the researcher and the interpreters interviewed, it was concluded that the most common problem related to interpreters and that needs to be addressed is the constant turnover of interpreters in the field. One of the criteria in the selection of signed language interpreters to teams should be specific knowledge of the sports branch. Although currently there is some awareness about the issue, concrete steps have not been taken. Furthermore, the need for interpreters is still not recognized in the widespread works and structures of federations in Türkiye, communication problems are still being experienced. Since the Samsun 2017 Deaflympics organization, interpreters have become more permanent, and there have been attempts to integrate them into particular sports branches. Finding a permanent solution to the SLI issue requires certain steps. For example, both the federation and interpreters will be more efficient if TIESF comes up with rules covering the interpreter's scope of work, duties, working conditions and the method of assignment. Something along the lines of a manual like "Instruction on Duties, Authorities, Working Procedures and Principles of Sign Language Interpreters" is necessary.

The support of young interpreters who perform their profession conscientiously, the lessons learned from successful examples in the world and the experience of the federation reveal that the steps needed to be taken are not limited to those stated above. However, more studies need to be conducted to expand upon the conclusions reached here.

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