ABSTRACT

ALISON EUNMEE EGGERTH. Handling Diversity in ASL Interpreter Training Programs. (Under the direction of Dr. Walt Wolfram.)

This exploratory study is concerned with the role and status of diversity education within ASL interpreter training programs (ITPs). This paper offers a brief introduction to ASL, Black ASL, and the field of ASL interpreting. The purpose of the paper is three-fold. First, it aims to establish the importance of multicultural awareness and training in ASL ITPs; second, it seeks to identify and assess how ASL ITPs currently address linguistic and cultural diversity; finally, it advocates for a curriculum that produces culturally competent interpreters who understand and value the importance of ethical decision making and the impact that race has upon multicultural interactions.

Data were collected from thirty one participants between the years of 2018 and 2019 via in-person and virtual sociolinguistic interviews. Participants were hearing students currently enrolled in ASL ITPs or hearing and Deaf professionals who have lived or worked within the Deaf community of Washington, D.C. or of the Triangle region of North Carolina for a minimum of five years.

Results showed that a lack of minority representation within the field of ASL interpretation often leads to minority Deaf individuals using interpreters of a different racial and cultural background, which risks the message and, thus, the consumer being misrepresented. This, in turn, brings attention to the need for ITPs to produce culturally competent interpreters and places the responsibility on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, the licensing body for professional ASL interpreters, to create a method of assessing cultural competency among its interpreting students and its professional members.