NZSL Translation Project:

Quality and Systems

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Introduction

This project provides an insight into the Deaf community, with regards to their access to government New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) translations currently available online in New Zealand, as well as the range and accessibility of such NZSL translations.

The written term 'Deaf' will be used in this report to refer to all the Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants and community members, including those who share a language (NZSL) and cultural values that are distinct from the hearing society and have culturally- and linguistically- diverse experiences.

Information Sources

Information Source	Dates of Engagement
Focus Groups consisting of 20 Deaf NZSL users from the Deaf community, held in Wellington, Christchurch and Palmerston North	21/05/21; 26/05/21; 28/05/21; 29/05/21
Discussion with a national translation service provider	04/05/21
Discussion with an experienced Deaf translator/provider	11/06/21
Discussion with Associate Professor, Victoria University of Wellington	23/04/21
Discussion with Deaf Mental Health and Addictions Programme Manager, Platform	07/06/21
Reviewing research and literature from local and international sources	ongoing

Project Rationale

The NZSL Board is responsible for the maintenance and promotion of NZSL. The NZSL Strategy (2018-2023)[1] describes the language planning principles that guide the work of the Board and the work happening in government agencies to maintain and promote the use of NZSL.

NZSL is an official language in New Zealand and the preferred accessible language of many Deaf New Zealanders. Some Deaf community members are not bilingual in both NZSL and written English, which can impact on their access to information from core government agencies released in written English or presented with English captions.

In recent times, the demand for NZSL translations has increased with the need for NZSL made apparent during the government response to COVID-19. Currently there are no standards or guidelines for NZSL translated material to determine whether NZSL translations are effective for

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[1] NZSL Board. (2018 – 2023). New Zealand Sign Language Strategy.
https://www.odi.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/NZSLStrategy-DocumentDigitalF.pdf

community members, especially for NZSL users who rely the most on NZSL to access information, rather than written English.

In the NZSL Strategy (2018-2023)[2] under Use/Access, success looks like:

> *'core government services and information, which are the responsibility of key central government agencies such as the Ministries of Education (pre-school, compulsory and tertiary), Health, Justice, and Social Development as well as local government agencies that are accessible to Deaf NZSL users because they:*
>
> - *Translate written information into NZSL'*

The mandate to present information in NZSL is supported by the government's Accessibility Charter which has been signed by all government agencies in New Zealand and demonstrates commitment to *'ensuring that all information intended for the public is accessible to everyone and that everyone can interact with our services in a way that meets their individual needs and promotes their independence and dignity'*. The Charter states that this means:

> *'our forms, correspondence, pamphlets, brochures and other means of interacting with the public are available in a range of accessible formats including electronic,* **New Zealand Sign Language***, Easy Read, braille, large print, audio, captioned and audio described videos, transcripts, and tools such as the Telephone Information Service.'*
>
> *'responding positively when our customers draw our attention to instances of inaccessibility in our information and processes and working to resolve the situation.'[3]*

This project has attempted to identify the availability and accessibility of government NZSL translations that are obtainable for the Deaf community. An online audit of NZSL translations was carried out alongside engagement with the Deaf community to identify and review their access to core government information translated from English to NZSL. This project is guided in part by Hodge et al's 2015 study, who investigated whether online Auslan translations currently provide adequate access to information for Deaf signers, especially Auslan users whose English literacy skills limit access to information in written and captioned English form[4].

Background

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[2] NZSL Board. (2018 – 2023). New Zealand Sign Language Strategy. https://www.odi.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/NZSLStrategy-DocumentDigitalF.pdf

[3] Ministry of Social Development. The Accessibility Charter. https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/the-accessibility-charter.html

[4] Hodge, G., Goswell, D., Whynot, L., Linder, S., & Clark, C. (2015). *What standards? The need for evidence-based Auslan translation standards and production guidelines.* Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.

Definitions

'Translation' is generally defined as the process of transferring meaning between languages[5]. It involves reconstructing a source language message into a target language message (Baker, 1984)[6]. This concept is generally used between written languages, however as sign language does not possess a written form, the translation process differs. Leneham (2005)[7] describes the difference between sign language interpreting and sign language translations:

> *Interpreting: a speech-based event which occurs in real time, without the potential for it to be corrected.*

> *Translation: a text-based event which does not occur in real time and is potentially correctable.*

Translations therefore provide more opportunities for the information to be reviewed, repeated or explained, with grammatical and cultural choices being made before producing a final version[8]. With regards to sign language translations, some have referred to this as an 'adaptation of source material' or recreation of the source text that goes beyond literal translations, by modifying how the information is portrayed to meet the information needs of the Deaf population and provides a match for their learning preferences[9]. This typically means changing, adding to and/or deleting portions of the original text. It is apparent that deviating away from the original source text comes with some risk, however researchers have found that translation alone would not address the gaps in information and knowledge that maybe apparent between a Deaf person and a Hearing person, whom the original information was intended for[10]. Pollard described the process of the 'adaptation' approach as allowing the translation to bridge the information gaps and providing additional context relevant to Deaf culture and the everyday lives of Deaf people in the script. This was found to increase the interest level for Deaf viewers, as well as making the material more meaningful and relevant and supported Deaf viewers to have a better understanding and retention of the learning points[11].

Context

Hodge et al's Auslan study also found that there was a need for translations to match the communication needs and life experiences of the Deaf community, including supporting gaps in English literacy and general knowledge. Auslan translations fixed to the English source text were less preferred by the Deaf community as they resulted in a compromised Auslan message and instead it was found that the translation approach should prioritise the needs of community members who are

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[5] Napier, J., McKee, R. & Goswell, D. (2011). Sign language interpreting: theory and practice in Australia and New Zealand.

[6] Hodge, G., Goswell, D., Whynot, L., Linder, S., & Clark, C. (2015). *What standards? The need for evidence-based Auslan translation standards and production guidelines.* Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.

[7] Leneham, M. (2007). Exploring power and ethnocentrism: in sign language translation. Babel, Vol. 41, Issue 3. Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations.

[8] Hodge, G., Goswell, D., Whynot, L., Linder, S., & Clark, C. (2015). *What standards? The need for evidence-based Auslan translation standards and production guidelines.* Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.

[9] Pollard, R.Q., Dean, R. K., O'Hearn, A, & Haynes, S. L. (2009). Adapting health education material for deaf audiences. *Rehabilitation Psychology, vol. 54(2). 232-238.*

[10] Pollard, R.Q., Dean, R. K., O'Hearn, A, & Haynes, S. L. (2009). Adapting health education material for deaf audiences. *Rehabilitation Psychology, vol. 54(2). 232-238.*

[11] Pollard, R.Q., Dean, R. K., O'Hearn, A, & Haynes, S. L. (2009). Adapting health education material for deaf audiences. *Rehabilitation Psychology, vol. 54(2). 232-238.*

most reliant on the signed translation e.g. Deaf monolingual signers, older Deaf people and children[12].

A NZ study highlighted the significant challenges many Deaf NZSL users face when accessing and understanding health information. Many Deaf participants struggled to understand printed health information such as brochures or instructions written in English, and at times used family members to explain written material[13]. They also indicated gaps in their health literacy and English literacy, signifying a need for information to be accessible in NZSL.

According to the Ministry of Social Development's Accessibility Guide, '*Deaf people are provided significantly greater access and understanding of information when it is provided in their first or/preferred language – NZSL*'[14]. Making information accessible for Deaf people is reported to involve translating the information into NZSL on video, ensuring that the NZSL video is uploaded and shared widely in Deaf community networks, including Deaf Aotearoa's communication channels and including captions on videos.

The current translation process involves government departments connecting with the Ministry of Social Development's Accessibility team and the appropriate Disabled People's Organisation (DPO). With regards to NZSL, Deaf Aotearoa is currently a recognised DPO advocating for the Deaf community, providing advice on how to produce information in alternate formats suitable for the Deaf community. Currently, government departments decide on what documents of written material should be translated into an accessible format. When presented to the DPO, they can then be advised whether they think this is valuable and worthwhile or not. The DPO/translation provider will always inform the government department on the need to make changes and adaptations for the Deaf community. In NZ there are a number of translation providers to deliver government content in NZSL, who can work in their own preferred way. A national translation service currently works with a team of NZSL users to consult on how to create a translation video that is the right match for the Deaf community. This process may include going back to the government department with the source text and advising them that the material is not suitable for the Deaf community, or providing information on how to make it more suitable to match the needs of the Deaf community. Translation providers do not always get specific feedback from the Deaf community on the outcomes of their NZSL translations, but at times may see comments posted on social media.

The translation process has been reported to be a time consuming process, using a lot of resourcing, which can be challenging. Challenges can also be faced when information changes quickly, e.g. especially in relation to COVID-19 information and updates, where NZSL translations cannot be easily updated or edited, but instead need to be recreated. A challenge was also identified on how to create translations with additional information and explanations to make them more relevant and accessible for the Deaf community, while also balancing the cost outputs (including time and money) in creating these adaptations.

It was reported that finding NZSL translations online can be difficult. Sometimes government departments may not inform the translation provider of where the translation will be posted online

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[12] Hodge, G., Goswell, D., Whynot, L., & Clark, C. (2015). Guidelines: English-into-Auslan video production. The companion document to What Standards? V1.2. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.

[13] Witko, J., Boyles, P., Smiler, K, & McKee, R. (2017). Deaf New Zealand sign language users' access to healthcare. *New Zealand Medical Journal, 130(1466), 53-61.*

[14] Ministry of Social Development. Accessibility guide https://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/accessibility-guide/alternate-formats.html#Deaf

or stored. This impacts greatly on the Deaf community's access to the translations as they are not able to be notified on the translations' whereabouts.

Translation Project: Quality and Systems

This Translation Project consisted of:

1. The identification of existing NZSL translations available to the Deaf community online, and
2. A review of existing NZSL translations through Focus Groups with the Deaf community.

Project Aims

The main objectives of this project were to:

1. Identify and review government material translated from English to NZSL, currently available to the public.
2. Engage with the Deaf community via focus groups to gather information on audience needs and fit, including the value and relevance of the translations for the Deaf community, identification of any gaps, and accessibility to the translations.
3. Share feedback from a sample of the Deaf community with the NZSL Board.

Scope

The scope of the project included:

- A sample of the Deaf community throughout New Zealand, with more of a focus on those who rely heavily on NZSL to access information, rather than accessing information via written English.
- The scope of the project also involved reviewing participants' access to high-stakes information or services.

The three key areas of focus for this project are:

1. Perceptions of understanding from the Deaf community
- The value, usefulness and relevance of current NZSL translations as a source of information for the Deaf community
- Are the NZSL translations meeting the everyday information needs of the Deaf community?

2. Access to NZSL translations
- How does the Deaf community currently find and access government NZSL translations online?
- Ways the Deaf community can easily access NZSL translations in the future

3. What the Deaf community is wanting for future NZSL translations - meeting their needs
- The types of useful and valuable information that is wanted
- The selection of information that is translated
- Style of translations most preferred

Considerations

There are some key factors to take into consideration for this project. This project does not include a comprehensive review of feedback from the Deaf community, but rather a representation of a small sample of the community. Therefore, there may be limitations and gaps in the findings.

Due to the small nature of the community, many participants in the focus groups may have personally known some of the presenters in the videos, especially as many presenters in the videos are well known in the wider NZ Deaf community. It is important to note that this was discussed within all focus groups and there was clarification that the feedback was about the content and information shared in the video, not on the specific person presenting.

This project looked at perceptions of understanding through feedback from community members' personal views on *their* perceived understanding, match and fit of the translated material. The project did not conduct a linguistic study into community members' actual comprehension of presented information.

This project is not a review or opportunity to critique the translation service providers, instead it is an opportunity to gain feedback from the community on their perceived access to important government information.

Identification of Existing NZSL Translations

Government information translated from English into NZSL videos online as of May 2021, have been identified. As there is no central hub or register of currently available NZSL translations, videos were identified by exploring the websites of core government departments, Deaf community organisations and their translation services, translation service provider pages, social media, and so on. Focus group participants were also asked where they have found NZSL translations online.

It should be noted that due to existing translations being stored on a variety of websites and locations, we cannot guarantee that every English-to-NZSL translation from a government department currently available online has been included. Therefore this representation should be considered as a broad indication of what is currently available, rather than a definitive number. It was sometimes difficult to find NZSL translations based on the government departments' websites, as for the majority of the websites there was no easy way of searching for 'NZSL' content or no clearly marked pathway to find NZSL translations. Some NZSL translations were not always located on the main government website, but were discovered via YouTube only or appearing in a different location. For example, NZSL translations do not appear on the Civil Defence: National Emergency Management Agency website, however they are located on the Get Ready website (www.getready.govt.nz), which is operated by Civil Defence: National Emergency Management Agency. NZSL translations could not be discovered on the Inland Revenue website, however were discovered on YouTube. Deaf Aotearoa have created a central page – 'Information in NZSL' on their website with a number of NZSL translations in one place. Some videos were found via this page but not found on the government department's page.

A total of 237 translations (including educational e-books) were identified during the search, and appeared across 15 government departments. It is important to note that the number of actual NZSL videos online may be higher, as some of the translation videos were based on one source text of information but broken down into multiple videos. E.g. 'The OIA Guide' from the Ombudsman was from one source text and produced into 12 NZSL videos, so therefore technically only represents 1 document translated. For the purposes of this project, the number of source texts translated into NZSL has been counted to represent the number of actual NZSL translations, rather than videos. 121

translations are related to COVID-19 specific information and updates created within the last 18 months, and represent 51% of the total government translations discovered online.

Some previous NZSL translation videos appeared to be on the government websites, but when clicked on, it was discovered the link had been removed.

Figure 1 – Identification of government information translated into NZSL videos online

NZ Government Department	Number of NZSL videos	Location of NZSL videos
Ministry of Justice	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	http://www.justice.govt.nz/
Ministry of Education	0 – no NZSL videos discovered on website 16 – e-books	https://www.education.govt.nz/ (16 e-books in NZSL are available via Apple App Store only)
Family Violence	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	http://www.areyouok.org.nz/
Inland Revenue	5 NZSL videos discovered	https://www.ird.govt.nz/ (all videos were not discoverable on the IRD website, but via YouTube)
Employment NZ	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	https://www.employment.govt.nz/
Consumer Protection	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	https://www.consumerprotection.govt.nz/
Victim Support	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	https://victimsupport.org.nz/
Ministry of Social Development (MSD)	6 NZSL videos discovered (found via Deaf Aotearoa website, mostly consisting of policy papers)	https://www.msd.govt.nz/
Ombudsman	2 NZSL videos discovered (1 document is broken down into 12 NZSL videos)	https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/
Statistics NZ	2 NZSL videos discovered (6 videos are related to one text source)	https://www.stats.govt.nz/
Civil Defence: National Emergency Management Agency	9 NZSL videos discovered (4 videos linked to 1 document)	https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/ and https://getready.govt.nz/ (8 videos found on Get Ready website)
Worksafe NZ	0 – no NZSL videos discovered	https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/
Health and Disability Commissioner	1 NZSL videos discovered (4 videos based on 1 document)	https://www.hdc.org.nz/ (discovered on Deaf Aotearoa website)
Health Ed	5 NZSL videos discovered	https://www.healthed.govt.nz/

Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission	1 NZSL video discovered	(found on Deaf Aotearoa website)
Capital & Coast District Health Board (CCDHB)	5 NZSL videos discovered (1 document broken down into 11 videos)	https://www.ccdhb.org.nz/ (1 video found via Facebook)
Depression NZ	55 NZSL videos discovered (all information on website was available in NZSL, apart from 4 pages)	https://depression.org.nz/
Unite Against COVID-19	73 NZSL videos discovered, plus 35 NZSL videos on Deaf Aotearoa website, (there were an additional 11 updates on Deaf Aotearoa website, that were not counted as an official translation) plus 2 from Counties Manukau DHB	https://covid19.govt.nz/
Netsafe	2 NZSL videos discovered	https://www.netsafe.org.nz/ (found via Deaf Aotearoa website)
Human Rights Commission	13 NZSL videos discovered	https://www.hrc.co.nz/
Electoral Commission	5 NZSL videos discovered (NZSL included in language option)	https://www.vote.nz/

Focus Groups: Discussions and Analysis

Engagement with the Deaf Community

Four focus group discussions were held across three cities in NZ (Wellington, Christchurch, and Palmerston North). A total of 20 Deaf NZSL users participated in these groups, including one targeted group for Deaf senior citizens. Participants represented the diversity of the Deaf community, (including participants ranging from 21 – 72 years, from diverse cultural backgrounds) with a focus on community members who have limited access to information in written English form and rely more heavily on accessing information through NZSL.

The focus groups were facilitated by the report writer, a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) fluent in NZSL, and for three groups was supported by a Deaf community member who provided a co-facilitator role. The facilitator consulted with local Deaf community members to make contact and inform community members of the focus groups, whilst managing numbers to ensure a comfortable group size for engagement and free-flowing conversation. The focus groups were conducted using a mixture of general and specific questions to guide discussion. Feedback was collected and used to identify common recurring themes. Focus groups were arranged with the intention of being at times

most suitable for the participants and included meeting during weekdays, an evening and on the weekend.

A sample of five NZSL translation videos was shared with the participants, with opportunities for discussion and specific feedback, including feedback on the content and style of the translation videos. This was followed by a more general discussion on NZSL translations, including accessing NZSL translations and what the community are wanting for future NZSL translation videos.

A thematic analysis was conducted after the focus groups to identify any recurring patterns of feedback and key points that were repeated across participants and groups, linked to the key areas of focus.

Key Themes Identified

The key themes that emerged from the focus groups were linked to:

1. Perceptions of understanding
   - Meeting the needs of the Deaf community through NZSL
   - Adaptation of information for Deaf audiences
   - Use of English captions
2. Style of translations
   - Role-plays and real life examples
   - Visual cues and key text
   - Background colour
3. Access to NZSL translations
   - Deaf community access to government NZSL translations online
   - Dissemination of available NZSL translations
4. Future directions of NZSL translations
   - Accessing NZSL translations in the future – what the Deaf community are wanting
   - Types of useful information identified as valuable for the Deaf community
   - Preferred style of translations

Perceptions of Understanding from the Deaf Community

Meeting the needs of the Deaf Community through NZSL

All participants across all four focus groups highlighted the importance and value of having government information translated into NZSL. They all shared their appreciation for what was currently available and the need for the Deaf community to have access to more NZSL translations, if not *all* government information.

A key issue that was raised by all participants across all four focus groups was the need for translations to be conducted using NZSL grammar, without following the grammar of the English text too closely. All participants reported that some of the translations were dominated by English grammatical structure, and resulted in their limited perceived understanding of the information, as the information came across as confusing and unclear.

Participants all reported that they preferred the translations to have the presenter using NZSL *'clearly'* with pauses to break up the information, as well as the use of clear lip patterns, facial expressions and role shifting. These grammatical characteristics of NZSL were reported to help the participants with their perceived level of understanding of the presented material, by making the

information more easily accessible without it feeling '*overwhelming*'. During one sample video, it was shared that the information was given '*all at once*' without any pauses, this was '*too much information, no role-shifts, confusing signing and not clear*'. Using role-shifting allowed the participants to differentiate between pieces of information being presented to them, e.g. information about two phone numbers that had two different purposes was reported to be confusing without the use of role-shifting as it was a challenge to distinguish between the two options. Some participants shared that they believed they were able to understand the information when these grammatical features were not used, however they believed they missed some information and were not able to retain the information afterwards.

Participants also identified that the use of these NZSL features allows the translated information to be more accessible to the older Deaf community, who may rely more on reading lip patterns and information presented slowly and clearly, broken down into simple sentences with pauses.

All participants agreed that the sample NZSL translations were all important pieces of information that they needed to have access to and discussed the importance of having access to translations that meet their everyday life information needs. For example, the participants responded positively to videos that reflected information needs relevant to their everyday life and valued these higher than translations of government reports or policy documents.

Participant responses also reflected the need for introductions at the start of translation videos, to clearly introduce the topic of the video and who the information is coming from. For example, many participants found some videos tended to jump straight into the content, and used the term 'we', without clearly distinguishing who 'we' is. The audience shared that they may recognise the Deaf presenters in the videos and assume they were giving information from their workplace, rather than the government department they are signing on behalf of.

Adaptation of information for Deaf audiences

Another key issue shared across all participants in all focus groups was the need and preference for NZSL translations to adapt the original material by providing additional information and explanations, while also filling in the gaps of assumed knowledge. All participants preferred the translation videos where extra information was given and terminology, or 'English phrases' were broken down and explained.

Additional explanations and information relevant to the Deaf community were also preferred and seen as crucial in NZSL translations, to ensure that the information was clearly matched for the Deaf community. Providing specific information for Deaf community members that is seen as 'Deaf-friendly' rather than generalised information was important, such as outlining clear options for Deaf community members. For example, a video about contacting Healthline through calling a phone number was described as '*poor*' as no options were outlined as to how the Deaf community can contact Healthline, so the entire NZSL translation was deemed irrelevant and meaningless to the target audience. One participant shared that '*Deaf people watching this still don't know what to do*'. However, a different translation outlining clear options specific to the Deaf community, such as texting, emailing, using the relay service, or using a trusted friend to call on your behalf, was perceived to be more accessible, relevant, valuable and meaningful.

These additional explanations and pieces of information specific to the needs of the Deaf community were reported to make the information more meaningful to the participants, they were perceived to have a better understanding of the information and therefore were more able to access important information.

Many of the participants shared that some of the time they tend to use their family members or friends to provide further explanations after watching the NZSL translations. They stated that even if

it is available in NZSL, they still require support to have the information broken down further, with added explanations so that they can fully access the information.

Some participants also highlighted that a lot of the options presented in the videos that were adapted specifically for the Deaf community are still based around communication using written English text, which requires having a sufficient level of written English. For example, a lot of the 'Deaf-friendly' options for contacting an organisation or government department were related to sending a text or an email. Many participants expressed their concern with having to communicate via written English and how they would be able to express themselves clearly using this method, even if it was to an email address specifically for the Deaf community to access. One participant mentioned the difficulty of accessing the national mental health and addictions helpline via text (1737), as they would have to explain themselves in written English, especially at a time when they are feeling overwhelmed – '*I don't know what to write or how to write English, especially when I am feeling stressed!*'.

NZSL translations that were a match for the target audience, the Deaf community, were described by participants as being: NZSL focused not English dominated, using clear, slow signing with pauses, lip patterns and role-shifts, having additional explanations and examples without assuming the audience already has this knowledge, having a clear introduction at the start of the video to provide context, and providing specific information relevant to the Deaf community, including options for Deaf community members clearly outlined and explained.

Use of English captions

There was a consensus across all groups that viewers needed to have the option to watch translation videos with or without captions. One participant felt that having captions meant that it was accessible to all people, not just people who are fluent in NZSL, and it also meant that the hearing population could access the videos which could help to further promote the use of NZSL. One participant stated that they did not want captions on as they could not read the English and therefore just focused on the NZSL.

Some participants prioritised their access to NZSL, however they liked to have the option of viewing with captions (especially a second time around), so that they could link some of the signs to the English word for future reference, or they could use the captions as a 'backup' if they were unsure of the sign being used.

Some participants found it visually distracting having captions as well as a signer on screen and they felt like they were constantly shifting their eye gaze up and down trying to focus on both.

Style of Translations

Role-plays and Real life examples

There was consistent feedback across all participants and groups that the NZSL translation which incorporated role-plays and real life examples into their explanations was the most accessible, 'Deaf-friendly' and the 'perfect' match for the Deaf community. Using role-plays and real life scenarios was reported to make the information content more relatable and easier to comprehend. For example, one participant shared that the video was '*great, meaningful, it was real life and easy*'.

Participants shared that as Deaf were visual with their communication, having role-plays and real life examples made it easier to absorb the information and retain the information.

The use of role-plays was also described by many participants as giving Deaf community members more confidence when they need to enter into the same situation, as they now have a visual

understanding of what to expect. One participant also suggested that this style of translation shows what '*Deaf can do*' which can support community members' independence and preparedness by feeling better entering into an unknown or different situation. For example, participants mentioned that after watching the translation they now know they can ask questions and not worry about feeling 'silly' or using up time when they visit the doctor.

Visual cues and key text

All participants across all groups stressed the importance of having key text and visual cues on screen during a NZSL translation. It was shared that having key words/text appear on the screen helps the audience to relate to the information better. Participants also shared that the key words also help the viewers to link the sign to the written English text.

All participants shared their preference for having contact details and information visually displayed on the screen, so they can easily access the contact numbers, email addresses, websites etc.

Background colour

All participants preferred to have a clear contrast between the background colour and the colour of clothing the signer was wearing. For example, having a light and dark contrast to distinguish clearly between the two.

White or very bright backgrounds were not preferred as background colours, especially if captions and/or text were being used. Dark backgrounds were also not preferred, especially when it was too similar to the clothing colour and harder to view the hands clearly.

Access to NZSL Translations

Deaf community access to government NZSL translations online

The majority of participants across all focus groups had not previously seen any of the sample NZSL translations they were shown. Participants all commented that they were unaware of the NZSL translations available and where to find them.

A couple of participants had seen one or two similar translations in the past, but were unable to recall where or how. Some participants who had seen NZSL translations previously, typically discovered them through Facebook, but were still unsure of where to find them again. No participants across the focus groups had found the NZSL translations via searching the government websites.

Dissemination of available NZSL translations

Accessing the NZSL translations, knowing what exists and where to find them, was identified as a significant barrier for the Deaf community. Participants spoke about NZSL translations being made for the Deaf community, however the Deaf community are unaware of their availability and how to access them. Questions were raised by many participants such as – '*who are the NZSL translations really made for then?'*

All participants shared that they were not notified of new NZSL translations that were made available to the Deaf community, and only occasionally stumbled across one via social media. This made it particularly difficult for the older members of the Deaf community who may not have access

to social media. The sharing of some NZSL translations through social media has been done via Deaf community pages or individuals sharing it on their personal page. Therefore creating inconsistencies with regards to who may or may not see it. Some participants shared that previously they were informed of new resources available through the national service provider for Deaf people, via a national weekly newsletter on a Friday. This system seems to have changed to more of a local community focus and notifications of NZSL translations do not appear to be included. One Deaf community member, who is also experienced with creating NZSL translations, commented that many translations were placed at the bottom of the page on the government website, or on another page entirely to the given topic. Therefore, this meant that Deaf community members needed to read the English text in order to locate where the translations are, which created a barrier for a significant number of people.

Participants were also unaware of the 'Information in NZSL' page on the Deaf Aotearoa website, which includes a number of available NZSL translations.

A translation provider acknowledged that the government departments do not always notify them of where the translations will be kept, and therefore the producer is unable to notify the wider Deaf community. Another comment highlighted the problem with some NZSL translations being removed once government websites are updated after a few years. No one is notified of this and questions were raised as to where these translation videos are kept and what happens to them once they are removed from public access?

Future Directions for NZSL Translations

Accessing NZSL Translations in the Future - what the Deaf community are wanting

All participants across all focus groups highlighted the need for more access to NZSL translations – including improving and increasing the quantity *and* the accessibility i.e. having full access to all information via NZSL, knowing what is available and where to find them. Ideally, *all* government information currently accessible to the wider population of NZ, would also be accessible for the Deaf community through NZSL.

Online NZSL 'Hub' / Website

The majority of participants emphasised the need and desire for a central online 'hub' or website specifically for information accessible in NZSL. Ideally a 'NZSL website' or 'NZSL Translation Hub' where all information is accessible in NZSL and where all NZSL translations are kept in a central location. This website was discussed as having all government information categorised through drop-down tabs for the different government departments and topics, so they can easily be clicked on to bring up the NZSL videos of translated information. E.g. 'Health' tab including various topics such as COVID-19, Vaccinations, Ageing, Mental Health, as well as 'Education', 'IRD/Tax' and so on. This would mean information for the Deaf community would be '*easy to find, all in one place*'. This website was viewed as being a possible '*safe place*' for the Deaf community, to help extend their knowledge, while supporting their independence and confidence by filling in the knowledge gaps. It was also suggested that it would be available for anyone to access, so other communities or the hearing population would be able to access the information and learn from it too.

One participant shared their preference for not having a central hub, but rather keeping translations with the original English text on the government websites, so that the NZSL videos are matched with the English text. However, this requires a certain level of English literacy to be able to gain full access in this way.

Having a 'Deaf' or 'NZSL' tab on all existing government websites was also raised as an option, so NZSL translations would be easily accessible. Representing NZSL translations by displaying a logo depicting hands signing 'NZSL' at the top of existing government pages was also discussed as being valuable and supporting those community members who rely the most on NZSL and have limited access through written English text.

Notifying the Deaf Community

Developing a system of notifying Deaf community members of updated and new NZSL translations available was also raised as an important factor for all participants, to ensure people are aware of them. Various methods of disseminating this information was recognised as being needed to ensure wide coverage across the community. One translation provider suggested the need for a 'NZSL Consultant Role' to act as a bridge between the government departments and the Deaf community. This person would be able to advise the government departments on the selection of the most appropriate and valuable material to be translated into NZSL and how to connect with the Deaf community to promote the NZSL translations so there are clear links between the two groups. This would ensure that NZSL translations are shared with the right people, i.e. who the translations are made for, and the information is not lost.

Supporting Everyday Information Needs in a 'Deaf-Friendly' Way

All participants shared that there are many areas of importance that the community requires NZSL access to, ranging from everyday information needs to high-stakes information. It was consistently, raised by all participants that more NZSL translations are needed to support the everyday needs of the Deaf community, rather than policy-related information.

It was expressed that 'Deaf-friendly' options added to translations need to also include how communication can happen via NZSL, such as messaging via NZSL or meeting face to face. As previously discussed, many options made available via translations for the Deaf community to contact government departments are dominated by the use of written English, which continues to be a massive barrier for many people.

A translation provider shared that government departments selecting what information to translate into NZSL, does not always match the majority of the Deaf community's needs. It was shared that a very limited number of Deaf community members will access and watch NZSL translations of official government documents, such as policy documents, reports and reviews, due to the high language level used and it is not a match for members' everyday needs. It was also noted that the majority of Deaf community members who are interested in these types of information are mostly bilingual, have a higher level of English literacy and therefore would be able to access the information by reading the English text.

However the NZSL translations are disseminated, it was highlighted through the focus groups that the Deaf community require specific teaching around accessing the videos – step by step education on how to find and access the NZSL videos.

Types of information identified as valuable for the Deaf community

The participants identified that *all* information released by the government is classed as important and valuable. However, there was a higher weighting placed on material that supported their everyday information needs, which in turn supported their everyday knowledge, safety and independence.

Topics of Interest

- Access to important current events was deemed as essential by the majority of participants, including national and international news. For example, some spoke about the war in Israel and having access to very little information about this. On social media some have accessed international Deaf people who provide summaries in sign language, however these are not available in NZSL.
- IRD – tax information, especially the new changes that came into force recently. Many participants spoke about using family members to explain tax information or to do the tax work for them as the written information was too complicated.
- Regular updated information on changes happening to NZ and other parts of the world with regards to COVID-19, for example regular updates on the existing travel bubble with Australia, travel to other areas plus people travelling to NZ, changes to lockdowns and travel restrictions as they happen. Currently participants shared that COVID-19 related information is not translated into NZSL unless there is a significant government announcement, usually from the Prime Minister. However, other alerts and updates that are broadcast to the rest of NZ on a regular basis through written communication, radio or TV news, are not translated into NZSL. Some participants shared that they have been unaware of the changes to lockdowns and various Alert Levels as they had no NZSL access.
- Information from Department of Corrections including court information and attending Jury Trial.
- Information from Work and Income NZ (WINZ) on benefit entitlements and processes.
- Information from Work and Income NZ (WINZ) on superannuation entitlements, Gold Card information, pensions.
- General information, particularly relevant to the ageing population such as:
  - Funerals
  - Wills – understanding and creating
  - Public Trust
  - Retirement options and care information
- More information from Civil Defence: National Emergency Management Agency on emergencies, preparations, responding etc.
- Emergency information:
  - Being notified of a civil emergency
  - Processes for contacting, using an ambulance
  - Processes for contacting, using services from the Police, especially in an emergency
  - Support for when your car breaks down, e.g. how to write a message in English to AA when you require assistance.
- More everyday Health related information:
  - Strokes
  - Flu and other vaccinations including why we get them, what the possible side-effects are etc.
  - Pregnancy and childbirth
- Selling and buying a house
- Information for renting a property, tenants' rights
- Information on Māoritanga and Te Ao Māori for the Māori Deaf community and wider Deaf community to support understanding of Māori culture, including understanding whakapapa and marae customs.
- Information from Department of Internal Affairs on Visa applications and passports.

The need for more 'urgent' information to be disseminated in NZSL to the Deaf community was also raised by the majority of the participants. Many raised challenges with gaining access to high-stakes information through NZSL during an emergency situation. Currently, NZSL users are required to initially access crucial information through written English or English text alerts as their only means. This has been recognised as an issue by translation providers and it can be difficult to find a balance between sharing crucial information in a way that is accessible, without having the time or resources to provide additional explanations or to produce an alternative style of translation to make it more meaningful.

Preferred style of translations

Role-Plays and Video Style

All participants shared the common view that NZSL translations were more accessible to them if they were presented using role-play scenarios and real-life examples. This style of translation supported their perceived comprehension and made the information more relevant and meaningful to their current life situation. Having shorter videos was also shared as important by most participants as it meant they did not feel overwhelmed by facing too much information and were more likely to feel like they understood the information clearly. Some participants acknowledged that sometimes you may need to have longer videos and people are able to watch it in different sittings, rather than all in one go, as long as the information is clear. Having captions available as an option was also raised as important by participants.

Training and Use of the 'Right' Person

Participants across all focus groups also specified the need for using the 'right' person when doing NZSL translations and training for Deaf people to become efficient NZSL translators, so that the information is more accessible to *all* Deaf community members. Key areas raised were linked to the ability of the translator to provide clear explanations and breakdown the information clearly into more manageable chunks of information, adding in information as required, using clear signing such as the use of pauses, role-shifting, lip patterns, facial expressions and going at a slow pace. Being knowledgeable in specific topics was also raised by a couple of participants who felt that having sufficient or in-depth knowledge in certain areas will help with the ability to provide clear, additional explanations and fill in the assumed knowledge gaps. For example, having the right person knowledgeable in legal information or health topics.

An experienced NZSL translator shared that currently translation providers are in competition with each other to provide NZSL translations for government departments, however there are some Deaf community members who maybe skilled at translations but are not included as an option for the government departments. This runs the risk of having the same people and the same faces presenting information, who may or may not be the right person for the job. The importance of building up the skill base of more Deaf community members was raised, so that there are more opportunities to find the right match for the job or request. Having more diversity represented across NZSL translators was also highlighted, as currently the translations appear to be dominated by Pākehā /NZ European translators. The need was expressed for a wider representation of the Deaf community and in particular to also support more Māori Deaf and Pacific Island translators.

Guidelines for Consistency

It was shared across all focus group participants that some form of NZSL translation guidelines were required to ensure consistency across all translations in NZ. This is believed to help raise the standard so that all translations are more accessible to the whole Deaf community, including those who rely the most on accessing information through NZSL, rather than written English. All participants agreed that having further developed guidelines would help to ensure the information is being translated in the most accessible way that meets the needs of the wider Deaf community. Some participants shared that guidelines will be important to ensure the '*right match for the Deaf community, to limit videos that are more English-based and don't make sense, or are overwhelming with too much information*.' One translation provider suggested setting up a working group under an independent organisation with representatives from the translation providers and Deaf community, to work together to collaboratively develop some guidelines.

Summary

All government information translated into NZSL is deemed extremely important and vital for the whole Deaf community in NZ, particularly those who rely primarily on accessing information through NZSL. Current NZSL translations of government information have given some Deaf community members access to essential information in their primary language, including information related to their everyday needs, health and wellbeing, access to some government policies and reviews, disability services and emergency preparedness. It is widely acknowledged, however, that a very small amount of information provided by the government, and available on government websites, is currently accessible in NZSL. Therefore, a significant number of Deaf community members in NZ are missing out on accessing vital information relevant to their lives.

More recently, there has been an even higher need for more NZSL translations due to the COVID-19 situation and the whole population of NZ needing access to crucial information regarding alert levels, lockdowns, restrictions, community updates and so on. Information has also become more widespread and accessible via social media and other online means, which further support the use of NZSL translation videos.

This project has provided an insight into a sample of Deaf community members, gaining their feedback on the current situation of NZSL translations in NZ, with a focus on community members who have limited access to information in written English form and rely primarily on accessing information through NZSL. Engagement with a sample of the Deaf community has raised key factors impacting on their ability to fully access current NZSL translations of government information, and were consistent across all four focus groups. This feedback is also consistent with the Auslan Translation Project, which highlighted the need for greater awareness of the specific audience, having coherent Auslan target text as the main goal, optional English captioning, needing sufficient time to be allocated for translation preparation and the need for translation team training[15]. A number of the key findings from this current project are also in line with a report on health information in NZSL, in which they identified the preferences of a sample of Deaf community members as including the use of sign language as a basis of presenting information rather than an interpretation of English text, allowing for adaptations and additional explanations to the English text to be made, incorporating personal stories if relevant, as well as keeping the information as

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[15] Hodge, G., Goswell, D., Whynot, L., & Clark, C. (2015). Guidelines: English-into-Auslan video production. The companion document to What Standards? V1.2. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.

simple as possible and having a clear 'go to' location for health information in NZSL on health websites[16].

Significant barriers for the Deaf community having access to information during an emergency situation were identified in this project, where adapted NZSL translations may not be possible or practical. However, these barriers highlight the importance of having clear adaptions of material, with Deaf-specific information, to prepare Deaf community members so that they can feel well equipped with the tools for responding and understanding what will happen during an emergency situation.

Issues have also been raised throughout this project in relation to the presentation and sharing of 'new' information. According to Canino and Bravo (1999), content equivalence occurs when the content of an item is relevant to the life experiences of the relevant culture[17]. At times NZSL translations appear to present some information based on an assumed knowledge, whereas many community members maybe accessing this information as 'new', creating a mismatch of accessibility, that is not relevant to their lived experiences.

The summary key points from the current project after consultation with the Deaf community are outlined below:

Meeting the Needs of the Deaf Community in NZ

➢ The need for translations to be conducted using NZSL grammar, without following the grammar of the English text too closely.

➢ Translations dominated by English grammatical structure resulted in limited perceived understanding of the information, which came across as confusing and unclear.

➢ All translations were viewed as important pieces of information that they needed to have access to, however translations that met their everyday life information needs were seen as a priority.

➢ The need for introductions at the start of translation videos, to clearly introduce the topic of the video and who the information is coming from.

Adaptation for a Deaf Audience / 'Deaf-Specific' Information

➢ The need and preference for NZSL translations to provide additional information and explanations, while filling in the gaps of assumed knowledge.

➢ A preference for translation videos where extra information was given and terminology, or 'English phrases' were broken down and explained.

➢ Additional explanations and information relevant to the Deaf community was also preferred and seen as crucial, to ensure a clear match for the Deaf community.

➢ Additional explanations made the information more meaningful to the participants, they were perceived to have a better understanding of the information and were more able to access important information.

➢ NZSL translations reported to be a match for the Deaf community include: NZSL focused not English dominated, using clear, slow signing with pauses, lip patterns and role-shifts, having additional explanations and examples without assuming the audience already has this knowledge, a clear introduction at the start of the video to provide context, and providing

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[16] Noble, R. (2017) Health Information in New Zealand Sign Language, CCDHB.
[17] Montoya, L. A., Egnatovitch, R., Eckhardt, E., Goldstein, M., Goldstein, R. A. & Steinberg, A. G. (2004). Translation challenges and strategies: The ASL translation of a computer-based, psychiatric diagnostic interview. *Sign language studies, 4(4), 314-344.*

specific information relevant to the Deaf community, including options for the Deaf community clearly outlined and explained.

Accessibility of NZSL Translations

➢ The majority of participants across all focus groups had not previously seen any of the sample NZSL translations and they were unaware of the NZSL translations available and where to find them.

➢ Accessing the NZSL translations, (e.g. knowing what exists and where to find them), was identified as a significant barrier for the Deaf community.

➢ Government departments do not always notify translation providers of where the translations will be kept, and therefore the wider Deaf community are unable to be informed.

➢ Some NZSL translations are being removed once government websites are updated after a few years.

➢ A need for more access to NZSL translations – including improving and increasing the quantity *and* the accessibility i.e. having full access to all information via NZSL, knowing what is available and where to find them.

➢ There are many areas of importance that the community requires NZSL access to, ranging from everyday information needs to high-stakes information.

➢ More NZSL translations are needed to support the everyday needs of the Deaf community, rather than policy-related information.

➢ Government departments' selection of what material to translate into NZSL, does not always match the majority of the Deaf community's needs.

➢ 'Deaf-friendly' options added to translations need to also include how communication can happen via NZSL, such as messaging via NZSL or meeting face to face.

➢ The Deaf community require specific teaching around accessing NZSL translations– step by step education on how to find and access the videos.

Future Directions – What the Deaf community want

➢ All information released by the government is classed as important and valuable. However, there was a higher weighting placed on information to support their everyday knowledge and information needs, safety and independence.

➢ A need and desire for a central online 'hub' or website specifically for information accessible in NZSL. E.g. a 'NZSL website' or 'NZSL Translation Hub' where all information is accessible in NZSL and where all NZSL translations are kept in a central location.

➢ This website was viewed as a potential '*safe place'* for the Deaf community, to help extend their learning, while supporting their independence and confidence by filling in the knowledge gaps.

➢ The need for more 'urgent' information to be disseminated in NZSL to the Deaf community.

➢ Some form of NZSL translation guidelines are required to ensure consistency across all translations and to help raise the standard so that all translations are more accessible to the whole Deaf community.

➢ Further developing guidelines would help to ensure the information is being translated in the most accessible way that meets the needs of the wider Deaf community, including those who rely the most on accessing information through NZSL.

➢ A range of topics were identified as being of particular value and importance to the participants, such as access to important current events, further COVID-19 related information, information from IRD, WINZ, emergency services, Department of Corrections,

information for the ageing population, property information, information on Māoritanga and Te Ao Māori and so on.

Style of Translation Preferred

➢ **Clear use of NZSL**: Using NZSL '*clearly'* with pauses to break up the information, as well as the use of clear lip patterns, facial expressions and role shifting.

➢ These grammatical features helped the participants with their perceived level of understanding of the information presented, by making the information more easily accessible without it feeling '*overwhelming'.*

➢ **Role-Plays and Real Life Examples:** Role-plays and real life examples helped make the information the *most* accessible, 'Deaf-friendly' and the 'perfect' match for the Deaf community.

➢ Having role-plays and real life examples was reported to make it easier to absorb the information and retain the information.

➢ **Visual Cues:** Key text and visual cues on screen helped the audience to relate to the information better and to link the sign to the written English form.

➢ **English Captions:** Viewers need to have the choice to watch translation videos with or without captions.

➢ **Background:** a clear contrast between the background colour and the colour of clothing the signer is wearing. E.g. a light and dark contrast to distinguish clearly between the two.

➢ Having shorter videos meant viewers did not feel overwhelmed by facing too much information and were more likely to feel like they understood the information clearly.

Training

➢ A need for using the 'right' people when doing NZSL translations and training for Deaf people to become efficient NZSL translators, so that the information is more accessible to *all* Deaf community members.

➢ Key factors for the 'right' person include: providing clear explanations and being able to breakdown the information clearly into smaller chunks of information, adding in information, using clear signing such as the use of pauses, role-shifting, lip patterns, facial expressions and going at a slow pace.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the process for translating government information into NZSL requires greater consistency and accessibility. Translations involve a timely and costly process and these factors also need to be taken into consideration, especially in relation to ensuring the 'right' information is being translated, the dissemination of translations is meeting the needs of the target audience and there is clarification of the lifetime and/or ownership of a translation. Translating from verbal/written information into a language of another modality is also a challenging process and does not always work out in the same way as the original source. Hence, the need for further bridging between government departments and the Deaf community to ensure there is the right match and adaptation required, as well as ensuring that the translation is worthwhile, in terms of content, cost, time and resources.

Overall, many Deaf community members have not accessed and are not accessing NZSL information that is vital to their everyday lives, wellbeing and independence. The Deaf community have shared that improvements are required to make the NZSL translations more accessible by the viewer. Such as, adaptations of the original content and additional explanations to fill in knowledge and language

gaps, including more 'Deaf-specific' information, as well as the promotion and dissemination of NZSL material. Knowledge of what NZSL translations are available and how to access them also requires considerable support to ensure that the Deaf community, the target audience, can actually access this information.

It appears that further guidance around collaborative processes will help NZSL translations by having more of a multi-disciplinary team approach, involving links between the government departments and the Deaf community, gaining feedback from the Deaf community, working with NZSL translators, focusing on content adaptability and the recreation of material, and ongoing quality assurance to create fully accessible information in NZSL.