

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETING IN TURKEY: INTERPRETER TRAINING
AND PUBLIC INTERPRETING SERVICES



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Interpreter Training and Public Interpreting Services

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, NESRİN CONKER, certify that

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

The Professionalization of Sign Language Interpreting in Turkey: Interpreter Training and Public Interpreting Services

This thesis explores the development and current status of sign language interpreting in Turkey since 2005, which was the year that marked the official recognition of Turkish Sign Language (TİD) and the Deaf community's right to interpreting. The study focuses mainly on the state-led (through the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) community interpreting services available for the Deaf and the interpreter training programs designed by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). Within this scope, the study aims to find out the degree of cooperation among the stakeholders authorized by the Turkish government to plan and provide language services for the Deaf and how effective the current interpreting services are. Based on the literature on the professionalization of community interpreting services, the current study determines at which state sign language interpreting in Turkey stands on its journey towards professionalization. Within this frame, the study mainly relies on the information received from the relevant stakeholders regarding their work, views, expectations and cooperation with other actors involved in the planning and/or provision of the interpreting services for the Deaf. In addition to drawing a picture of the current state of sign language interpreting in Turkey, the study ends with a number of recommendations to further develop and professionalize the field based on the international best practices. The thesis also hopes to increase the visibility of sign language interpreting in Turkey as a developing profession that requires further attention and cooperation from the Turkish government, professional organizations and academia.

ÖZET

Türkiye’de İşaret Dili Çevirmenliğinin Profesyonelleşmesi:

Çevirmen Eğitimi ve Kamusal Alandaki Çeviri Hizmetleri

Bu tez çalışması, Türk İşaret Dili (TİD)’in ve Türk Sağır toplumunun çeviri hakkının resmi olarak tanındığı 2005 yılından itibaren Türkiye’de işaret dili çevirmenliğinin gelişimini ve mevcut konumunu araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, devlet tarafından (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı aracılığıyla) yürütülen sağırlara yönelik toplum çevirmenliği hizmetlerine ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) tarafından tasarlanan çevirmen eğitim programlarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda, Türk hükümeti tarafından Sağırlara yönelik dil hizmetlerini planlamak ve yürütmekle yetkilendirilen paydaşlar arasındaki işbirliğinin derecesi ve mevcut çeviri hizmetlerinin ne kadar etkin şekilde yürütüldüğü ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Toplum çevirmenliği hizmetlerinin profesyonelleşmesini konu alan literatür ışığında mevcut çalışma, Türkiye’de işaret dili çevirmenliğinin profesyonelleşme yolculuğunda tam olarak nerede durduğunu saptamaktadır. Bu çerçevede araştırma, ağırlıklı olarak ilgili paydaşlardan çalışmaları, konu hakkındaki görüşleri, beklentileri ve Sağırlara yönelik çeviri hizmetlerinin planlanması ve/veya yürütülmesiyle ilgili diğer aktörlerle işbirlikleri konusunda edinilen bilgilere dayanmaktadır. Türkiye’de işaret dili çevirmenliğinin mevcut durumunun ortaya konmasına ek olarak, çalışma, uluslararası alandaki en iyi uygulamalar ışığında alanın geliştirilmesi ve profesyonelleştirilmesine yönelik öneriler sunmaktadır. Bu tez çalışması ayrıca Türkiye’de gelişmekte olan ancak Türk hükümeti, meslek örgütleri, ve akademinin daha fazla ilgisi ve işbirliğine ihtiyaç duyan işaret dili çevirmenliğinin görünürlüğünü arttırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

ASPB: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (*T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı*)

CODA: Children of deaf adults

EEOC: US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EFSLI: European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters

GDLLL: General Directorate of Life-long Learning (*Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Müdürlüğü*)

İDTD: Association of Sign Language Interpreters (*İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği*)

İSMEK: Vocational and Artistic Training Agencies of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (*İstanbul Sanat ve Mesleki Eğitim Kursları*)

KAMK: Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency of Sweden

MEB: Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education (*T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*)

MYK: Republic of Turkey Professional Qualifications Authority (*T.C. Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurulu*)

NAD: U.S. National Association of the Deaf

RID: U.S. Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

SLTIT Courses: Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training Courses (*İşaret Dili Öğretici ve Tercüman Eğitimi Kursları*)

TDK: Turkish Language Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu*)

TİD: Turkish Sign Language (*Türk İşaret Dili*)

TİDBO: Turkish Sign Language Scientific and Approval Board (*Türk İşaret Dili
Bilim ve Onay Kurulu*)

TSMF: (Turkish National Federation of the Deaf (*Türkiye Sağırlar Milli
Federasyonu*))

WASLI: World Association of Sign Language Interpreters



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sign language interpreting (SLI) started gaining visibility only recently in Turkey. It was in 2005 that Turkish Sign Language (TİD) was officially recognized in Turkey even though the history of a sign language spoken by the Turkish Deaf community can be traced back to the middle Ottoman period. Following the 2005 Turkish Code on Disabled (Code 5378), certain state institutions were assigned the duty of officially documenting TİD and developing a system for the procurement of language and interpreting services in TİD. The TİDBO (Turkish Sign Language Scientific and Approval Board), a board which included representatives from the Turkish Language Society (TDK), the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) (currently the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs), the Ministry of National Education (MEB), the Higher Education Board (YÖK), Administration for the Disabled (a division operating within the Turkish Prime Ministry), and the Turkish National Federation for the Deaf (TSMF), was established. The Board started making projects to document and popularize TİD.

Following the Code 5378, a number of regulations were issued on the procurement of sign language interpreting services and interpreter trainings by state institutions. The regulations entitled the SHÇEK to provide language assistance (interpreting services in TİD) to the Deaf in public settings by assigning its interpreters to other state institutions. Subsequently, the SHÇEK announced that it would employ one sign language interpreter at each provincial SHÇEK directorate. To select the interpreters, the TİDBO organized a certification exam in 2007. The applicants who passed the TİDBO examination were appointed to the provincial

SHÇEK directorates as certified sign language interpreters. In 2013, a second TİDBO examination was administered in order to select sign language interpreters that shall fill the vacant positions at the provincial directorates. Since then, the sign language interpreters employed by the ASPB provide community interpreting services for the Deaf in public settings.

At the same time, public training centers of the Ministry of National Education (MEB) started offering TİD courses and certifications. Private training schools also started offering these courses. In 2014, sign language trainer and interpreter training (SLTİT) courses were introduced as a follow-up to the TİD courses. The 200-hours SLTİT courses are the only available sign language interpreter training in the country. In 2010, the Association of Turkish Sign Language Interpreters was founded. This was a significant initiative for the future development and professionalization of sign language interpreting in Turkey.

However, there is currently no study that investigates the content, context, connectedness, and effectiveness of the aforementioned initiatives or the status of sign language interpreting as a profession in the Turkish context. I became particularly interested in this topic after I started taking TİD courses offered by the Department of Linguistics at Boğaziçi University and eventually became engaged with the Deaf community. I observed criticism from Deaf and CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) individuals who saw something lacking in the scope of interpreting training courses and the absence of a coherent system to monitor the quality of interpreting services.

Elaborating on these criticisms, this study interrogates the professionalization process of SLI in Turkey with an emphasis on community interpreting services supplied in TİD by the state, interpreting training courses and the level of

collaboration among the relevant public and private bodies. To what extent is sign language interpreting professionalized in Turkey? What exact role do public and private institutions play in the planning and procurement of SLI services and training programs? Is there sufficient cooperation among these institutions? What exactly is being taught at interpreter training courses? Is there a standard in terms of the curriculum, teaching methods and certification exams administered in these courses? How sufficient and effective are the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs' interpreting services for the Deaf? Are there binding codes of conduct and a professional network of sign language interpreters?

Building on the literature on the professionalization of public/community interpreting services (Mikkelsen 1996; Pöchhacker 1999; Ozolins, 2000, 2010), this thesis intends to answer the aforementioned questions from a qualitative research perspective. I will initially analyze the legal basis of the SLI services provided in community interpreting settings and the sign language training and interpreting courses. In addition, this thesis draws on the interviews with trainers working for the sign language trainer and interpreter training (SLTIT) courses, representatives of the Turkish Federation of the Deaf (TSMF), the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (İDTD) and sign language interpreters working for the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (ASPB). The interviews will draw a picture of the current practices, restraints, and collaboration (opportunities) relating to interpreter training courses and sign language interpreting services provided in the community interpreting context. I will then compare my findings to the best practices observed in the world, with an emphasis on the cases of the USA and Sweden. The study will conclude with recommendations for improving and professionalizing sign language training and public interpreting services in Turkey. In addition to the aforementioned

goals of the study, this thesis will hopefully increase the awareness of Turkish academic circles towards TİD interpreting and contribute to the visibility of sign language interpreting as an emerging profession in the country.



CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sign languages

According to Napier and Leeson (2016), seminal authors in the study of sign languages, rather than being artificial bi-products of spoken languages, sign languages are “natural languages that have evolved through contact between Deaf people.” (p. 23). Similarly, Janzen states that Deaf people use these *natural*, i.e. indigenous, languages to communicate with their community and with the non-Deaf community “in every walk of life” (2005, p.6).

Unlike spoken languages, sign languages depend on visual-gestural modality, which requires a harmonic use of hands, eyes, facial expressions, body posture, and the space around the speaker. However, as Arik (2013) suggests sign languages have a number of characteristics that they share with spoken languages in terms of their emergence, acquisition and linguistic fragments they are composed of, to name a few. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that the spoken and the sign language used in a given society follow the same grammatical, syntactical, phonological or discursive patterns. The sign language (SL) used in a specific region can well display different linguistic structures from the dominant spoken language of the same region. In other words, contrary to the general misperception among non-Deaf people, each society has its own indigenous SL with linguistic and discursive patterns of its own, not to mention regional dialects. Moreover, in counties where different dialects of the same language are spoken as official languages, sign languages used among the Deaf community can well be different as in the cases of

the ASL (American Sign Language), the BSL (British Sign Language) and the AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language).

According to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), there are 70 million deaf people and more than 300 sign languages used worldwide (WFD, n.d.). Sign languages and Deaf communities were in fact neglected areas of study until the middle of the twentieth century. In this regard, the Dutch linguist Tervoort (1953) and the American linguist Stokoe (1960) carried out the pioneering research on sign languages in Europe and the USA, respectively (Arik, 2016). These studies showed that sign languages are fully autonomous and unique languages. This generated a sense of pride among Deaf communities of their languages and culture (Janzen & Korpinski, 2005), which was followed by a social empowerment movement. Associations defending Deaf rights and advocating more educational opportunities for the Deaf were established. This empowerment movement found political response and changed the discourse on deafness. One of the examples of this change is the capitalization of the letter “d” when referring to Deaf people, Deaf communities and Deaf culture. The choice to use the capital letter represents Deaf individuals’ self-identification with their community which is embodied by their language, culture and the experience of deafness. It should also be noted down that a significant contributor of the politically sensitive discourse was the proliferation of university level programs on Deaf studies, Deaf education and sign languages.

Following the establishment of the WFD in 1951, a need to develop an international sign system occurred since the WFD meetings started bringing the international Deaf community together. In the 1970s, the WDF developed the International Sign “a form of contact signing used by Deaf people in cross-linguistic contexts where no national signed language is shared” (Leeson & Vermeerbergen,

2010, p. 325). Rachel Rosenstock and Jemina Napier (2015) state that in 1973 the Federation established the Commission of Unification of Signs which selected naturally spontaneous signs that were in common use by the Deaf communities in different countries. These signs were later compiled into a photographic dictionary which included approximately 1500 signs. However, to what extent the International Sign (IS) could be internalized by the Deaf in general is open to discussion. According to Rosenstock and Napier (2010), it is skeptical to which extent the IS is understood by the Deaf audiences even though the IS interpretation has been provided at international Deaf events since the 1990s. In fact, from a culture-oriented perspective, it is interesting that the IS is still used and supported by international Deaf associations. As previously mentioned, Deaf communities regard Deafness as a social identity. In this regard, the national sign languages are important components of indigenous Deaf cultures and their recognition in local and international arenas is vital. The trend to prefer IS interpretation over interpretation into national sign languages can be considered as a decision that places the local cultural and linguistic values shared by indigenous Deaf communities to a secondary position. It should also be highlighted that the use of IS interpretation at international events help the organizers make substantial budget savings. Though IS interpreting is not the primary focus of this study, it is an interesting research area considering the abundance of factors that can be brought up by the defenders and/or critics of its use in interpreting contexts.

If we move to the linguistic studies on sign languages, we can say that there are two main strands of studies that mutually feed on and influence each other: sign linguistics and applied sign linguistics. Discussing the main points of departure of the each, Napier and Leeson (2016) comment that

While sign linguistics has focused on the development of robust descriptions of sign languages, often framed within linguistic, psycholinguistic or neurolinguistic theoretical perspectives, applied sign linguistics focuses on the applications of findings in these realms to understanding the relationship that hold between sign languages and society. (p. 39)

As can be understood from this brief description, contemporary research on sign languages explores a myriad of theoretical and practical aspects. With the emergence of applied sign linguistics, research concentrating on the sociolinguistic aspects of SLs has gained popularity, with the emphasis shifting to human experience with sign languages.

In a discussion on sign languages, the important role national and international Deaf associations play in increasing the visibility of the Deaf communities and their languages should also be noted. The associations fund research projects and conferences, publish reports and educational materials to raise the public awareness of deafness, Deaf cultures, and sign languages. The WFD (the World Federation of the Deaf) and the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) can be counted as two influential examples in this regard, along with the several national federations and associations they bring together.

2.2 Turkish sign language (TİD)

When the body of academic literature on sign languages is examined, we see that a major part of the literature concentrates on Western and American Sign Languages (Zeshan, 2013). This is mainly because of the comparatively late recognition of the national sign languages in Eastern countries and the resulting late coming academic studies. Turkish Sign Language also shares a similar destiny since its official recognition came in 2005.

The sign language used in Turkey is called Türk İşaret Dili (TİD). According to the Turkish Disability Survey conducted in 2002 by the Turkish Statistical Institute and the Office of the Turkish Prime Minister, there are 250,000 people in Turkey diagnosed with a hearing disability (the Turkish Statistical Institute, n.d.). On the other hand, the UN states that the number of hearing impaired citizens in Turkey reach up to 2.5 million while Deaf federations claim 3 million hearing impaired in the country (Mine Tuduk, 2011). The Turkish Disability Survey states that 67.10 per cent of the Deaf people are not born with a disability and lose their hearing ability in later stages of their lives. Hearing loss can actually be prevented or decreased with cochlear implants if the hearing impairment is diagnosed at early childhood. According to Deniz İlkbaşaran (2013), children wearing cochlear implants are discouraged from using sign language by audiologists following the procedure. However, most of these children still “cannot acquire sufficient functional hearing [...] and later transfer to schools for the Deaf and hard of hearing” (İlkbaşaran, 2013, p.27). In other words, even though some people start using cochlear implants in their early childhood, they may still need to learn and use TİD.

The history of a sign language used by the Deaf community in Turkey dates back to the Ottoman era. Miles (2000) states that Deaf people (called mutes at the time) served as servants at Ottoman courts for reasons of confidentiality, and there is evidence suggesting the use of a well-developed signing system by these people as early as 1583. However, according to Zishan (2013) it is not possible to estimate how old TİD is and whether it bears any connection to the historical sign language used during the Ottoman period due to insufficient documentation of the language. On the other hand, stressing that TİD is one of the oldest sign languages, Arık (2016) states

TİD has not derived from another sign language and it is a unique language on its own.

The foundation of the first school for the Deaf in Istanbul also dates back to the Ottoman era. The first Deaf school of the Ottoman Empire was founded in 1889 by an Austrian Merchant, Grati Efendi (Tanyeri, 2016). The school also contributed to the development of a sign alphabet. According to Günay and Görür (2013), Ferdi Grati and his team adjusted the French sign alphabet to the Ottoman alphabet with minor changes so that they could instruct their students using sign language.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Mösyö Albert Carmona founded the first Deaf school of the republican era in 1923 in İzmir and the school was named *İzmir Sağır-Dilsiz Okulu* (İzmir School for the Deaf and Mutes) (Tanyeri, 2016). This school might have instructed its students in sign language other than forcing them to lip read or make sounds. According to İlkbaşaran (2013) sign language might have been the language of instruction at *İzmir Sağır-Dilsiz Okulu* since Mösyö Carmona was a former student of the Paris School for the Deaf and France played an influential role in promoting the use of sign languages in Deaf schools during that period. However, the Turkish education system excluded the use of sign language at Deaf schools as of 1953 (Zeshan, 2013). The 1880 Milan conference (The Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf), was a turning point for Deaf education. Following the Milan Conference the approach of excluding sign languages in favor of oral methods, i.e. lip-reading, gained dominance among Deaf educators. The majority of the stakeholders involved in Deaf education supported the idea that signing discouraged the children from making sounds and impeded on Deaf children's remaining hearing, if any. This *oralist* approach became the international trend except for a few countries, the main exception being the USA.

However, in many countries Deaf children suffered enormous pressure at school to give up sign language. Lorraine Leeson (2005), for example, mentions how Ireland also followed this trend and Irish Deaf students were threatened to be sent to Deaf and Dumb sections of their respective schools when they were caught signing following the 1950s.

In the following decades the negative influence on of the *oralist* approach on the academic performance of Deaf students became evident. Students who could not adopt the *oralist* methods lacked an effective communication tool to follow their classes. The decrease observed in the academic performance of the Deaf children and the increasing activism for disability rights in the 1970s allowed sign languages to strikingly return to the Western education system for the Deaf (Kemaloğlu & Kemaloğlu, 2012). However, Turkey has still not been able to re-integrate sign language to Deaf schools. As a result, Deaf people are not employed in Deaf schools as teachers and this results in little interaction between Deaf schools and the adult Deaf community (Zeshan, 2013). Teachers willing to use SL can only learn it from their Deaf students (Kemaloğlu & Kemaloğlu, 2012) or from TİD courses offered by public and private training centers and Deaf associations. The fact that Turkish Deaf students are still forced to lip-read and make sounds within an educational approach that is not accompanied with TİD influences their academic success negatively. The number of schools available for Deaf children is another problematic aspect. According to İlkbaşaran (2013), the current number of schools for the Deaf “accounts for only 10% of the presumed national deaf population of school age” (p. 31). There is only one university in Turkey that offers degree programs designed for the Deaf and hearing impaired. Operating since 1993, School for the Handicapped within. Anadolu University in Eskişehir province has bachelor and associate degree

programs in three majors, namely applied fine arts, computer use, and architecture and urban planning (Anadolu University, n.d.). Unfortunately there are no other academic departments that are designed taking into consideration Deaf and hearing impaired students' special needs. Recently degree programs on Deaf education at a number of Turkish universities such as Yakın Doğu University and Samsun On Dokuz Mayıs University started offering TİD courses within their BA programs. Despite the fact that TİD lessons are available for only one or two semesters within these programs, it can still be regarded as an important step to introduce future teachers of Deaf children in Turkey with TİD.

Linguistic studies on Turkish sign language emerged only after 2000 even though there has been a growing academic interest in TİD and related studies ever since. However, researchers willing to conduct research on TİD face several linguistic challenges. Özsöy et al. (2013) list some of these challenges as (1) the fact that not all deaf people are signers, (2) most Deaf people are born to hearing parents who are not familiar with TİD, (3) the great variation in the competence level of the Deaf using TİD, and (4) the insufficiency of the education system to meet the needs of Deaf students.

Following the official recognition of TİD by the Turkish Code on Disabled in 2005, the Turkish Language Society (TDK) was authorized to document the Turkish Sign Language system. The TDK is an official agency the main responsibilities of which are conducting research on Turkish language and implementing solutions for current issues of the language. In the aftermath of the 2005 legislation, the first Turkish Sign Language workshop was organized in 2007 by the TDK and the fingerspelling system for Turkish Sign Language was formally recognized. This was followed by the preparation and publication of the *Turkish Sign Language*

Dictionary in 2012. The dictionary includes 1986 words and idioms and the entries include visual depictions of the Turkish words in TİD (the TDK, n.d.). The dictionary is currently available online on the Turkish Language Society's web-site. In 2015, the *Turkish Sign Language Grammar Book (Türk İşaret Dili Dilbilgisi Kitabı)* was published by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (ASPB) as a result of a project carried out by its General Directorate of Services for the Disabled and the Old (Engelli ve Yaşlı Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü). The project was carried out by a team of academicians (7 people in total including four consultants and three researchers) who have previous experience in sign language research as well as Deaf participants who helped the researchers gather data from one quarter of Turkish cities (Arık, 2017). In 2015, the MEB (Ministry of National Education) published another TİD dictionary. This dictionary is also available in print and online, and it includes 2607 words selected from the signs most commonly used by the Turkish Deaf community (the MEB, 2015).

As part of the increasing academic interest in TİD, a number of public and private universities, such as Boğaziçi, Gazi, Koç and Bahçeşehir Universities, started offering beginner and elementary level TİD courses. These courses are usually offered with the assistance of Deaf and/or CODA people. In addition, there are also a number of public and private trainings available for the general citizenry. The most common course format is the 120-hours TİD program offered by Public Training Centers (Halk Eğitim Merkezleri). These centers offer TİD courses free of charge and operate under the General Directorate of Life-Long Learning of the MEB.

Deaf associations also increase the public awareness for TİD and Deaf culture. At the same time, they provide venues for the Deaf community to come together. The Turkish National Federation of the Deaf (TSMF) is the oldest

association in that sense. Established in 1960, the TSMF is a member of the World Federation of the Deaf. In addition to representing the Deaf community in official settings, offering TİD courses and organizing local projects, the TSMF also collaborates with UNESCO, ECOSOC, ILO, and WHO (the TSMF, n.d.). In addition, the Confederation of the Deaf was established in 2015. It now has the authority to represent the Deaf community in official contexts since the Turkish Law and consequently the Turkish state institutions consider confederations as the primary civil society constructs to consult.

To sum up, even though it is not clear whether the historical Turkish Sign Language and the TİD share a common history, the Turkish Deaf community has been using sign language for centuries. The elimination of sign language from the curriculum of Deaf schools as of 1950s and the late recognition of TİD by the state have prevented the documentation of TİD and its popularization in Turkish society. On the other hand, there has been a remarkable increase of interest in TİD within the last decade as a result of the work carried out by numerous institutions mentioned above. However, it seems that there is still a lot to do in order to guarantee equal access to TİD for every member of Turkey's Deaf community and thereby increase their participation in the society.

2.3 Sign language interpreting

Sign language interpreting can be defined as a type of interpreting that involves a signed and a spoken language “though it may also involve interpreting between a spoken language and a signed form of that language, a practice known as ‘transliteration’ (or fingerspelling)” (Leeson, 2009, p. 274). Pöchhacker (2004) recommends that using the term ‘signed-language interpreting’ would be more

accurate in terms of the implications of the term. According to Pöchhacker, this usage

allows for the significant distinction between interpreting from or into a signed language proper [...], a signed language which serves as the native language for the Deaf as a group with its own cultural identity [...], and the use of other signed codes, often based on spoken and written languages. (2004, p. 18)

Although Pöchhacker's approach is noteworthy, interpreter associations usually opt for "sign language interpreting" as part of their discourse.

Sign language interpreting (SLI) is a challenging task due to the very fact that interpreters face additional challenges when rendering information to "an audience which is deprived of equal access to public discourse that is much more widely accessible to a mainstream, hearing audience" (Savvalidou, 2011, p.88). However it is a misperception to think that only hearing people can work as sign language interpreters. Especially in recent years, Deaf people can also find opportunities to work as interpreters. They usually interpret for TV (e.g. the news), for the Internet, or for state services, often translating written scripts into sign languages (Stone, 2007; Leeson, 2009; Leeson & Vermeerberger, 2010). Deaf people can also work with Deaf-blind persons or Deaf people with limited sign language and communication skills. In certain cases, Deaf interpreters are preferred to work with the Deaf community since they can more easily adjust to the linguistic and cultural context and they can benefit from their shared experiences (Forestal, 2005).

Terry Janzen (2005) states that academic studies on sign language interpreting started right after the acknowledgement of sign languages by linguists as complex and unique language systems rather than compilations of rudimentary signs. The increasing academic and political interest in sign languages laid the foundations

for the first professional organizations of sign language interpreters. The professional associations were influential in turning sign language interpreting into a reputable profession with well-established standards and principles of conduct. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in the USA, for instance, “became a success story which very well stands comparison with the achievements of AIIC in the international interpreting arena” (Pöchhacker, 1999, p. 129).

According to Janzen (2005), while initial studies on SLI focused on the cognitive aspects of interpreting and what the interpreter should or should not do, the interpreter was conceptualized as a “conduit.” This approach has recently been abandoned in interpreting studies in general. As Lorraine Leeson (2005) remarks, interpreters are now seen as cultural mediators whose decisions and participation in the communication process influence the success of the linguistic mediation. Within this scope, approaches on SLI research have followed a similar path to interpreting research in general and gradually diversified. In fact, Janzen (2005) states that interpreting theory generally applies to sign language interpreting as well although working with a sign language involves specific challenges such as the shift of modality (the shift from the auditory perception to a visual one or visa-versa). For this reason, research on SLI has also benefitted from a number of disciplines such as cognitive sciences, linguistics and sociology, to name a few, in constructing research methodologies and an interdisciplinary approach. Cynthia Roy and Melanie Metzger (2014), for instance, point to the influence of sociolinguistic approaches and methodologies on SLI research as of mid-1980s by reviewing a number of sociolinguistics oriented research on SLI. Roy and Metzger (2014) conclude that among other disciplines sociolinguistic approaches have been as apparently influential on SLI research since “sociolinguistic concerns relating to discourse

analysis, bilingualism, multilingualism, and language contact, language variation, language policy and planning, and language attitudes all constitute aspects of the processes and products of signed language interpretation” (p. 170).

It is important that sign language interpreters are familiar with the Deaf culture. The cultural component has become an integral part of SLI education and training. Research in the field (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005; Winston, 2005; Erkenkamp et al., 2011) highlights the benefits of engaging the students of the SLI programs with the members of the Deaf community and persuading them to increase their awareness of the Deaf culture and the Deaf experience. In addition, developing self-assessment and critical thinking skills are also emphasized as significant goals of the training programs. According to Winston (2005), interpreting students should be encouraged to “respond critically, make decisions, and assess the effect of those decisions responsibly and professionally” (p. 212) and the content of the interpreting courses should be designed accordingly. Similarly, Elenkamp et al., (2011) in their critical review of the three-year BA programs in sign language and interpreter education in Norway, state that the primary goal of the programs is “to educate knowledgeable and skilled professionals who are able to make informed choices and reflect critically on their professional practices” (p. 18). Research on sign language interpreting education also investigates a number of interesting topics such as the development of proficiency in sign language interpreting (Shaw, Grbic & Frankling, 2004; Gomez et al., 2007), or the use of aptitude testing for SLI programs (Russo, 2011; Shaw, 2011).

Sign language interpreting in educational settings is also a prominent topic of study. The provision of such services is of particular importance when the principal of equal access to education is concerned. As Conrad and Steganga (2005) state,

interpreters in educational settings can work in diverse educational contexts, such as pre-schools, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, or training seminars. However, interpreting in educational contexts comes with certain challenges. According to Marschark et al. (2016), “educational interpreters may or may not be familiar with the content of a particular class, they may have lesser education than the students they are interpreting for, or they may have sign language and interpreting skills that are inappropriate for the audience or setting” (p.vi). For this reason, interpreting services in educational settings should be carefully planned, while interpreters should be enthusiastic about continuous personal and professional development. On the other hand, the role attributed to interpreters working in educational contexts can also become complex. Patricia Conrad and Susan Stegenga (2005) draw attention to diverse job postings designed by educational institutions when hiring interpreters such as interpreter aide, interpreter-tutor, and signing assistant. Needless to say, each definition creates a different perception of the interpreter’s role in the classroom even though the task designation usually aims to “encompass any task that might arise in the classroom” (Conrad & Stegenga, 2005, p. 295).

As this brief literature review indicates, research on sign language interpreting focuses on a myriad of areas that range from the cognitive processes of interpreting to the socio-cultural dimensions and impacts of interpreters’ work. Within this scope, SLI research focuses on a number of issues that interpreting research, in general, investigates. For this reason, research on sign language interpreting continues to provide invaluable insight and contribution for improving the educational programs, professional standards and public perceptions of the SLI and interpreters.

2.4 Sign language interpreting in Turkey

As previously mentioned, sign language interpreting was practiced in Turkish institutions centuries ago, with the deployment of Deaf people at Ottoman courts. For instance, Anthony Deusingen's report from 1660 (cited in Miles 2000 and Diriker 2015), accounts for the communication between the Dutch ambassador of the period and the mutes of the sultan via a sign language interpreter.

The amendment of the Turkish Code on Disabled numbered 5378 in 2005 was a landmark both for TİD and SLI in Turkey. It was followed by additional amendments to the statute of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, which recommended that each provincial directorate of the Ministry employ a sign language interpreter.

A pioneering initiative thereafter was the establishment of the Turkish Sign Language Approval and Scientific Board (TİDBO). The TİDBO included representatives of the Turkish Language Society (TDK), the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) (currently the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs), the Ministry of National Education (MEB), the Higher Education Board (YÖK), Administration for Disabled (a division operating within the Turkish Prime Ministry), and the Turkish National Federation of the Deaf (TSMF), was established. As previously mentioned, in 2007 and 2013, the TİDBO organized two exams to certify sign language interpreters. The certified interpreters were then employed by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs' (ASPB - initially the SHÇEK) provincial directorates. The first exam certified 24 candidates while the second one certified 87. However, Diriker (2015) notes that the certification exam was "carried out on an ad hoc basis" (p. 101), even though representatives of the Turkish National Federation of the Deaf were also present during the examination process as members of the

examination board. The ad hoc nature of the exam is largely due to the lack of a predetermined and systematic evaluation method. Instead, the candidates' performances were evaluated on the basis of the subjective opinions of the TİDBO committee members.

During a 2013 interview, Aylin Çiftçi, the director of the ASPB's Office of the Services for the Disabled and the Old (Engelli ve Yaşlı Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü), mentioned the ASPB's planned to establish a telephone line of sign language interpreters which would provide interpreting services via video conferencing technology ("Sağlık Bakanlığı 63, 2013"). She also stated that this project was planned in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications.

Sign language interpreters in Turkey are usually CODA people (Oral, 2015). However, there have been attempts to change this in recent years with the Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training (SLTIT) Courses offered by public training centers. Diriker (2015) states that it is promising to see increasing public interest in TİD while, on the other hand, these initiatives may lead to dangerous outcomes since "most people, including some public authorities, tend to believe that short language courses are sufficient for gaining competence in TİD and even TİD interpreting" (p. 101). Currently there are no undergraduate or graduate level SLI programs offered by Turkish universities. Similarly, there is also no training or certification program available for Deaf interpreters in Turkey. The SLTIT certification is still limited to hearing people who usually learn TİD in later stages of their lives.

In addition, the provision of public SLI services is still problematic. A survey conducted among Turkish sign language interpreters (Diriker, 2015) has shown that

most state institutions “do not know how and when to ask for signed language interpreters, which leads to difficulties in their deployment” (p. 102). In fact, any state institution that needs sign language interpreting has the right to file an official petition to the provincial directorates of the ASPB and demand an interpreter. However, many institutions are not aware of this practice and even so, only one interpreter deployed in each province is far from enough to supply the demand (the TSMF chair, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Recently some public and private hospitals in Turkey are also showing interest in TİD. They organize TİD trainings for their personnel in order to provide a better service to their Deaf and hearing impaired patients. The hospitals can opt for organizing TİD trainings in their own premises or cooperate with other institutions in this regard. The Ankara Onkoloji Eğitim Ve Araştırma Hastanesi, for instance, collaborated with the Public Training Center in Ankara and 21 of the hospital staff participated in the center’s 120-hour TİD training (Ankara Onkoloji ve Eğitim Hastanesi, n.d.).

TV channels have also contributed to the increase of awareness in Turkish society of TİD and TİD interpreting. The state television corporation, TRT, has pioneered TV programs specifically designed for Deaf people. The TRT currently broadcasts two daily news reports with accompanying TİD interpreting. In addition, it also runs an online TV channel for the Deaf and the Blind. As shown in Figure 1, Engelsiz TRT webcasts daily evening news, sports news and popular TV series with subtitles, TİD interpreting, and audio description. As can be seen in Figure 2, a number of private TV channels, such as Kanal D and NTV, also broadcast some of their news reports and TV shows with simultaneous TİD interpreting on the bottom right of the screen. There are currently two online TV platforms (Engelsiz TRT and

Engelsiz Kanal D) where various TV programs are presented in an upgraded format for the Deaf and the Blind.



Figure 1. Sign language interpreting during a news bulletin
(Engelsiz TRT, April 19, 2017)



Figure 2. Sign language interpreting during a live broadcast
(NTV Spor, September 13, 2015)

The foundation of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği, İDTD) in 2010 was a significant advancement for the development of SLI in Turkey. The İDTD was established by the members of the Turkish National Federation of the Deaf and the association became affiliated to the Federation (the TSMF chair, personal communication, May 10, 2017). The İDTD is a member of the WASLI (World Association of Sign Language Interpreters) and the EFSLI (European Forum Sign Language Interpreters) (the İDTD, n.d.). Right after its establishment, the İDTD co-organized with the WASLI the 2015 international WASLI conference in Turkey. The association also has a code of ethics which is available on its website. However, what kind of activities and projects İDTD plans for the development of sign language interpreting and to which extend it can enforce its code of ethics on interpreters working for the state (mainly for the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) and on a freelance basis is not known. In fact, we can talk

about an absence of knowledge in general in terms of the scope, quality and professionalization of sign language interpreting and training services in Turkey especially in the context of community interpreting services. The absence of academic programs and the scarcity of academic studies on sign language interpreting have so far negatively contributed to the invisibility of this profession.

An important step regarding the recognition of sign language interpreting in the official context was its inclusion in the national occupational standards report on translation and interpreting. The report, published in 2013 in the official gazette numbered 28543, included sign language among the languages interpreters work in (Professional Qualifications Authority, 2013). Despite the fact that the mention of sign language interpreting in this report increases its professional prestige and visibility, the problems translators and interpreters working in spoken languages face more or less apply to sign language interpreters as well.

Similarly, the Professional Qualifications Authority (MYK) prepared a draft report on sign language interpreter qualifications and distributed the report to the relevant stakeholders in order to finalize the report taking into consideration their views and recommendations (the MYK, 2012). The report was supposed to be finalized and officially released in 2014. However, the MYK report on the qualifications and occupational standards of sign language interpreters has not been published yet.

The problems sign language interpreters face in terms of public awareness and the lack of an effective professional structure is no different than the problems faced by Turkish translators and interpreters in general. Reviewing available legal databases governing the situations where institutions such as criminal and civil courts, prisons, public notaries and hospitals resort to interpreters, Şehnaz Tahir

Gürçağlar and Ebru Diriker, for instance, pointed to the “limited awareness and institutionalization with regard to community interpreting” in Turkey (2004, p. 74). According to a report prepared by the Directorate of Administrative Development (a department operating under the Office of Turkish Prime Ministry) in 2015, the lack of a properly functioning professional association and professional standards are the most urgent problems the Turkish translation and interpreting sector is facing (T.C. Başbakanlık İdareyi Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2016). These problems cause a decrease in the quality of translation and interpreting services since there is no system that measures linguistic and professional skills.

In public service contexts, translators and interpreters’ work is not deemed valid without the approval of a notary public, which automatically decreases the prestige and the financial status of the profession. In my personal experience as a freelance translator and interpreter, notary publics’ criteria for registering one as a sworn translator and interpreter is not consistent. Usually they request that the applicants present a diploma or certificate that proves their knowledge of the language in question. However, the diploma or the certificate presented does not necessarily have to be received from a translation and interpreting program and any language related diploma suffices. Moreover, in cases when no translator with a university-level degree is available, any language certificate (sometimes even verbal confirmation) can be deemed acceptable for registering a person as a sworn translator and interpreter. This inevitably develops a misperception in the society as if anyone who speaks a foreign language can translate and interpreter even in legal contexts without the need to any professional training. On the other hand, the certifications provided by the notary publics without a proper judgment of the applicants’ educational background and interpreting skills leads to an abundance of sworn

translators. The abundance in the number of interpreters causes extreme competition in the field where a well-established professional association that strictly regulates interpreter fees and charges is absent. In addition, the notary publics also charge customers additional fees for their approval work which causes the translation offices and freelance translators to cut down on their own charges.

The situation is, to some extent, different for court interpreting. According to the Article 202 of the Criminal Procedural Law (Ceza Muhakemesi Kanunu) 5271, complainants and defendants have the right to demand an interpreter if they are not fluent in Turkish. The law initially made it mandatory to use interpreters only at the final stage of court proceedings. The 2004 amendment of the Criminal Procedural Law paved the way for the employment of interpreters in all stages of criminal proceedings while suspects and witnesses were also entitled to an interpreter during the investigation phase (Tahir-Gürçağlar and Diriker, 2004, p. 78). A more recent amendment on this article in 2013 was concerned with the selection criteria of the interpreters that shall be used at various court proceedings. Accordingly, provincial justice commissions issue a list of interpreters and update their lists each year. Judges and prosecutors can choose an interpreter from any provincial interpreter list. In order to have a better understanding of how this system works, I talked to the translation and interpreting department of Istanbul Justice Commission which is responsible for keeping the list of translators and interpreters in Istanbul province. The details about how sign language interpreters are employed at the court will be discussed in section 4.4.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Professionalization of community interpreting services

This study builds on the literature in translation studies on the professionalization of community interpreting services. In fact, “sign language interpreting occurs in a range of domains, including conference, community, educational and public service settings” (Leeson and Myriam Vermeerbergen, 2010, p. 324). Nevertheless, as Shaw, Grbic and Franklin (2004) state, “spoken language programs usually focus on conference interpreting, while sign language interpreter education programs lean more toward community, or liaison interpreting” (p. 73). This study primarily focuses on the development and the current state of the sign language interpreting services provided by the ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) interpreters in public contexts and the interpreter training programs designed and offered by the MEB (Ministry of National Education). Therefore, the theoretical framework of the study concentrates on community interpreting and the indicators of a professionalized community interpreting field.

The term “community interpreting” refers to interpreting which takes place in the public service sphere to facilitate communication between officials and lay people (Wadensjö, 2009, p. 43). In other words, community interpreting (CI) services aim granting equal access to public services through language assistance. Typically, we find community interpreting operations in the contexts of legal, educational and medical services. Hospitals, schools, universities, courts, deeds offices and notary publics can be listed among the institutions that most frequently

use community interpreting services. Thus, community interpreting, also referred to as public service interpreting (mainly in the UK) and cultural interpreting (in Canada), is a wide field of interpreting practice that takes place in various contexts (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 15). Some interpreting activities that take place on the media, can also be considered as an example of the numerous contexts community interpreting is offered. According to Pöchhacker (2004), when the broadcast interpreting into sign languages is considered, “the community dimension of the media setting” becomes “fully evident” (p. 15). Broadcast interpreting, also referred to as media interpreting, not only provides the Deaf access to popular culture and contemporary issues (e.g. news interpreting), but also increases the visibility of the Deaf community and sign language interpreting as a profession.

Community interpreting has been receiving growing interest since the early 1990s. CI services target populations with specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds in each society. For this reason, the extent to which these services are professionalized varies from country to country, on the basis of local, legal, social and economic dynamics. However, Ozolins (2000, 2010) suggests that, in most countries, the professionalization process of community interpreting services follows a similar path and proposes the spectrum of response shown in Figure 3.

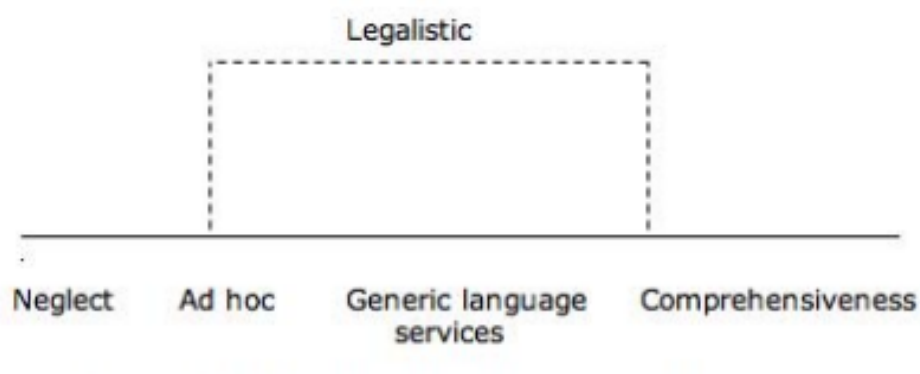


Figure 3. International spectrum of response to multilingual communication needs in interpreting (Ozolins, 2010, p. 195)

Ozolins' spectrum of response is an effective means to assess the status and extent of community interpreting services in a country when spoken and signed languages are concerned. Similarly, Jonathan Maurice Ross, PhD applied Ozolins' model to describe the development of healthcare interpreting in Turkey and presented his research findings during the 2016 Multilingualism Conference held at Boğaziçi University. I must state that Dr. Ross's research was an important example for me to shape the theoretical framework of this study.

According to Ozolins, the need for public language services is initially neglected by the authorities. On a later stage, individual institutions develop their own solutions. The solution they come up with is usually using ad hoc interpreters who are family members or friends accompanying the people that require interpreting to access the public service in concern. As a result, "there is usually no concept of training, little thought of accreditation or registration" (Ozolins, 2000, p.23) and the provision of interpreting assistance depends on the availability of a bilingual.

Generic language services, on the other hand, are usually introduced by governments and aim providing "boarder-based language services that make some attempt to cover public sector needs" (Ozolins, 2000, p.23). Telephone interpreting lines can be regarded as a common type of the generic language services provided by several governments worldwide (Ozolins, 2010). However, to what extend generic services are successful in meeting the public sector demands in each country varies. Only in countries where a comprehensive approach is adopted are generic and specialized language services provided in a widespread manner. Ozolins also draws attention to the "provision of language services, training and accreditation" (2000, p. 21) as three essential factors for the development of a comprehensive approach

towards public interpreting services. In addition, professional development opportunities, training for users (training the officers working for public institutions on how to work with interpreters), policy planning, private and public provision of the language services are listed as the “secondary characteristics of comprehensiveness and professional development” (Ozolins, 2000, p. 24).

Ozolins also claims that in some countries, such as the USA, legal interpreting services might be prioritized and therefore develop and professionalize earlier than other fields of public interpreting. Where a “legalistic approach” is maintained, other areas of interpreting usually have to struggle for recognition on their own. Pöchhacker (2004) also draws attention to the 1978 Court Interpreters Act in the USA, which dramatically contributed to the professionalization of interpreting standards since it “established mechanisms for testing and certification, ushering in a wave of professionalization efforts at federal and state levels” (p. 29).

Franz Pöchhacker (1999) had similarly concluded that professionalization of the community interpreting field depends on the existence of a number of constellations. After briefly reviewing the development of CI services in the U.S, Sweden, Canada and Australia, Pöchhacker lists these constellations as “legal provisions, institutional (and not least financial) arrangements of interpreting service delivery, a certification authority, a professional organization, a code of ethics and standards of practice, and university-level training” (1999, p. 131). In an earlier study, Holly Mikkelsen (1996) also drew attention to a number of factors for the professionalization of community interpreting. Following the 4 steps laid down by Tseng (1994) on occupational professionalization, Mikkelsen (1996) recommends that community interpreters must first agree upon their role and function in society, and inform their clients accordingly. Mikkelsen argues that the subsequent steps

should include the establishment of interpreter training programs and the emergence of professional institutions that will determine professional standards and a code of conduct. As Janzen and Korpiniski (2005) state, a code of conduct protects the public, the individual interpreter, and the organization of interpreters all together, by preventing unethical, unfair, and unprofessional practices in the profession. For this reason, the establishment of a code of conduct is in fact for the benefit of all actors involved in the provision of public language services and the maintenance of the professional setting. According to Mickelson (1996), the establishment of a code of ethics should be supported by a credible certification program since it will increase the quality of training programs and the credibility of the profession from the perspective of the outsiders.

If we go back to Ozolins' (2000) spectrum of response, we see that he later elaborated on the individual factors that prevent the equal provision of public interpreting services. Endorsing his "international spectrum of response," Ozolins (2010) interrogates "why different countries are at different points of the spectrum" (p. 195) by presenting the macro and optional factors that influence the development of these services. These factors are summarised as

- i. Increasing linguistic diversity,
- ii. Reliance on public sector finance,
- iii. Institution-led, rather than profession-led standards and practices,
- iv. Cross-sectorial interpreting needs that conflict with usual sector-specific policy development. (Ozolins, 2010)

In addition to these factors, Ozolins (2010) also proposes optional factors that might have an impact on the development and procurement of public interpreting services. Accordingly, (a) political/social attitudes to immigration (immigration-based and non-immigrant societies), (b) the political regime (federalist or centralist), and (c)

public policy models (the provision of public services in cooperation with NGOs, private sector and/or professional organizations) also play a role in the development of language services (Ozolins, 2010). As a result, countries may resort to different practices when they plan certain constellations that form the basis for professionalism in the field. For instance, “in some countries accreditation is available through professional organizations’; in others it is available through state controlled institutions” (Wadensjö, 2009, p. 46). In some countries, on the other hand, no professional certification is available due to the lack of a professional or state run agency.

No matter at which stage, it is clear that cooperation among relevant regulatory and administrative institutions is necessary for ensuring effective CI services that protect the interests of all stakeholders. The importance of cooperation is apparent in the international arena as well. Lorraine Leeson (2011), for instance, points to the success of the European Masters in Sign Language Interpreting (EUMASLI) program, established by Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences (Germany), Humak University of Applied Sciences (Finland) and Heriot-Watt University (Scotland), as an example of a successful cross-institutional collaboration.

Before moving forward with the methodological aspects of the study, in the following sections I will outline the development and professionalization of SLI services in two countries, the USA and Sweden. My intention is to illustrate how the necessary constellations for the professionalization of community interpreting services and country-specific macro and optional factors contributed to the development of sign language interpreting in these countries. I have specifically decided to focus on the cases of the USA and the Sweden since they both reflect

Ozolins' (2010) macro and optional factors in certain respects. While the USA is an immigration-based federal state, Sweden can be considered a relatively non-immigrant and centralist country. On the other hand, both Ozolins (2000, 2010) and Pöchhacker (1999, 2004) praise sign language interpreting and community interpreting services provided in both countries. For this reason, they are appropriate examples for examining the development of SLI services in different legal and social contexts.

3.1.2 Sign language interpreting in the USA

The establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1972 was a cornerstone for the professionalization of sign language interpreting both in the USA and in the world. In the 1960s, new legislation focused on the rehabilitation and reintegration of disadvantaged groups to the American society. In 1965, people involved in the provision of rehabilitation and interpreting services for the Deaf came together and founded the RID (the RID, n.d.). In the following years, the RID established a certification system and a code of ethics. Emphasizing the role of the RID in the development of community interpreting, Pöchhacker states that “the RID code of ethics became a much emulated model for subsequent attempts by spoken-language community interpreters to codify their professional standards” (2004, p. 29). In its website, the association lays down its goals as follows:

In collaboration with the Deaf community, the RID supports our members and encourages the growth of the profession through the establishment of a national standard for qualified sign language interpreters and transliterators, ongoing professional development and adherence to a code of professional conduct. (the RID, n.d.)

The RID has the authority to certify sign language interpreters in the USA. The association offers different types of certification based on applicants' competencies and their performance during the tests. The certification given by the RID is named the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) and the certification test administered includes three parts: a written knowledge test, an interview focusing on ethical decision making, and a performance test consisting of a signed and spoken portion (the RID, n.d.). The NIC, the NIC Advanced, and the NIC Master are the three levels of national certification. Additional certification is also available such as the Certificate of Transliteration (CT) and the Certificate offered to Deaf Interpreters (CDI). The RID cooperates with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) for the certification of sign language interpreters. The NAD defines itself as the nation's premier civil rights organization for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the USA, representing 48 million deaf and hard of hearing American citizens. (The NAD, n.d.).

The RID also runs the Certification Maintenance Program. This program aims at monitoring the development of certified interpreters as well as their adherence to the RID Code of Professional Conduct. In order to maintain their certification, interpreters should participate in the RID's continuing education programs. The certification granted to interpreters is valid for four years. During these four years, interpreters should remain RID members, abide by its codes of ethics and meet all necessary requirements to maintain their certification. The RID also monitors the quality of the interpreting services provided by its certified members. It has an Ethical Practices System, which receives customer complaints and remains actively involved in conflict resolution. The Ethical Practices System strives to uphold the standards of the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC), which

was co-authored by the RID and the NAD. The CPC has the following seven core principles:

- i. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
- ii. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
- iii. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
- iv. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
- v. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
- vi. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
- vii. Interpreters engage in professional development. (the RID, n.d.)

The cooperation between the NAD and the RID has resulted in a comprehensive, well-planned and closely monitored certification and tracking system in the USA, which confirms Ozolins' (2010), Pöchhacker's (1999) and Mikkelsen's (1997) remarks on the significance of cooperation among institutions for the development of public language services.

We should also re-emphasize the extent to which the US law has had an undeniable influence on the development of a comprehensive system. According to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities (the EEOC, n.d.). The ADA regulates that it is the responsibility of the public service agencies to provide and pay for a sign language interpreter when deemed necessary. According to the RID website, hiring entities can either hire individual freelance interpreters or consult an interpreter service agency. Professional sign language interpreter agencies also have to abide by the standards laid down by the NAD-RID professional code of conduct while recruiting, screening, and further deploying their own staff of interpreters. However,

the RID does not have the authority to determine or advise on the salaries or hourly rates of interpreters. In its website, the RID states that rates for interpreters are market driven, vary greatly by region, and are negotiated between the individual or agency and the hirer. The RID functions as a bridge between customers and professional interpreters/interpreter agencies, through the member directory and interpreter agency directory on its website.

Another factor that makes the USA an outstanding country in terms of SLI services is the inclusion of interpreting services to educational contexts as well as undergraduate and graduate level SLI programs. The proliferation of these programs is an extension of legislation dating back to the 1970s. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 allowed for equal access to education for children with disabilities. This brought along the deployment of interpreters at educational institutions to assist Deaf students and contributed to the proliferation of academic programs to train sign language interpreters.

The establishment of Gallaudet University was another milestone in the professionalization of the field. In 1864, the institution started granting college degrees, and in 1986 it was granted university status by the US Congress. Gallaudet University is a bilingual university, with English and American Sign Language as the official languages of instruction. It currently offers bachelors and graduate degrees in more than 40 majors for the Deaf and hard of hearing. The university also offers undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees in ASL (American Sign Language)-English Interpretation. Gallaudet is the world's only university for the Deaf and hard of hearing, providing a quality liberal arts education for all students (the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters, 2013). Gallaudet University was

followed by other higher education institutions with programs designed for the Deaf and hard of hearing such as the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and California State University.

In the USA, a number of colleges and universities offer SLI training. According to the 2013 WASLI country report, the USA has over 150 programs ranging from certificates of attendance to master's level training while approximately 30 programs offer four-year bachelor's degree programs. The increase in the number education programs has also resulted in a gradual increase of the RID membership. Christine Monikowski and Rico Peterson (2005) state that in 1986 the RID had more than 3,000 members in the USA while the number reached 10,412 by the year 2003. According to the 2013 WASLI country report, the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf has more than 11,000 members (the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters, 2013).

However, Monikowski and Peterson (2005) also warn about the importance of maintaining the quality of training programs against the increase in the quantity of certified SL interpreters. Monikowski and Peterson are mostly concerned by the decrease in the number of Deaf trainers teaching in interpreting programs and the insufficiency of the hours allocated for ASL studies, "typically anywhere between 90 to 240, assuming 3 to 4 hours per week in 10-18 weeks per quarter/semester" (2005, p. 191).

Another important component of the US interpreting training system is the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT). The CIT defines its primary goals in its mission statement of 2013 as increasing interpreting students' knowledge concerning the Deaf community and Deaf peoples' linguistic rights. The CIT's role is defined as the preservation of ASL, fostering teaching practices and research in the field, and

advancing teaching practices that lead to a deepening of cross-cultural awareness and interpreting practices based in the norms and values embraced by the Deaf community (the CIT website). The CIT accredits interpreting education programs in the USA and it has created a set of standards for these programs to follow.

It is clear that sign language interpreting services in the USA have covered a tremendous distance in terms of professionalization. The law, an active association that certifies interpreters and monitors the procurement of their services, the establishment of professional codes of conduct, and the development of comprehensive training programs have significantly contributed to the field and have positively supported each other. However, it would still be overly optimistic to say that there is no problem regarding the organization and provision of public language services. For instance, Ozolins (2010) points to the fact that in countries with complex public systems such as the USA, “hospitals, insurance companies, health maintenance organizations and private doctors all fiercely contest the issue of paying for language trainers” (p. 211).

3.1.3 Sign language interpreting in Sweden

Anna Lena Nilsson (1997) states that in 1947 the Swedish government issued a legislation which recognized the rights of Deaf people and of ethnic minorities to interpretation. As of 1976, full-time sign language interpreters were employed throughout Sweden while the financial cost of the interpreting services was covered by the government's public health budget (Nilsson, 1997). According to Helga Niska (2004), the Swedish government allocates more than 45 million Euros for community interpreting services every year.

As to the development of community interpreting services as a whole, Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson (2012) point to four fundamental principles and subsequent developments that defined the state's responsibilities for the procurement of language services. First of all, the National Board of Trade and shortly thereafter the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency (KamK) were assigned to authorize community interpreters, which gave authorized interpreters and translators “protected professional titles” (Norström & Fioretos & Gustafsson, 2012, p. 245). This was followed by (a) the compilation of the Good Interpreting Practices by the KamK, (b) the release of the Public Procurement Act, which required all state institutions to provide interpreting services on the open market, and (c) the development of effective interpreter training programs (Norström & Fioretos & Gustafsson, 2012). Currently, in addition to interpreting services supplied in person, remote telephone/video interpreting services are also offered by large-scale municipalities and interpreting agencies, while most of the interpreting work in both contexts take place in medical care and social welfare settings (Niska, 2004). Interpreting services offered for the Deaf, deaf-blind and hearing impaired cover a broader range of contexts. As Niska (2004) states, the regional county councils of Sweden are obliged to provide and organize language services for these people, in such contexts as contacts with public authorities or medical bodies, business meetings, legal/commercial transactions (such as purchases and sales), or personal social events (such as weddings and funerals or leisure-time activities).

The establishment of the KamK has had a critical impact on the professionalization of interpreting services in Sweden. The KamK collaborates with language experts in the country. For instance, it cooperates with the staff of the university and college level interpreting programs when preparing and evaluating its

authorization tests (Idh, 2004, p. 135). The KamK, just as the RID in the case of the USA, also functions as a supervisory agency. It receives and investigates complaints regarding interpreting services and interpreters and has the authority to withdraw an interpreter's authorization (Idh, 2004).

According to the 2011 country report of the EFSLI (European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters), there are approximately 10,000 Deaf among 9 million Swedish citizens (the EFSLI, 2011). Since the KamK assumed responsibility for authorizing interpreters in 1985, it authorized 38 interpreted languages, including Swedish Sign Language (Norström & Fioretos & Gustafsson, 2012). Leena Idh (2004) states that the KamK started authorizing sign language interpreters as of 2004, with the same entry requirements it asks from interpreters working in other languages, but in a different testing setting designed specifically for sign language interpreting.

The authorization exams, in general, consist of two sections. According to Idh (2004), the first section includes a written test which measures the interpreters' knowledge of terminology as well as their knowledge of the Swedish society, while the second section is an oral test based on a role-play of an interpreting session in public context. No formal education is required to sit the interpreter authorization test and the KamK does not offer preparatory teaching, which means that the candidates should already be proficient in the languages they apply for certification (Idh, 2004). Subsequently, a candidate should score minimum 80 out of 100 in each sub-section of the written test, which is followed by the interpreting performance test before a panel of experts as well as the test administrator (Idh, 2004). Another significant aspect of the authorization is its validity period. Once an interpreter

passes the test, the authorization is valid for five years and the interpreters should remain in the interpreting sector to be able to renew their authorization (Idh, 2004).

There is substantial emphasis on interpreting training in the Swedish system. The Institute for Interpreting and Translation at Stockholm University, established in 1986, is the sole authority for the organization of interpreting training in the country. Interpreting training is provided in two streams: with academic courses and folk high schools. However, as Niska suggests (2004) even if the Institute is not directly involved in the organization of non-academic courses of community interpreting and sign language interpreting, it is responsible for distributing government grants as well as supervising and evaluating their training programs. Within the Institute, programs in translation, community interpreting, sign language interpreting and conference interpreting programs are available (The Stockholm University, n.d.). The non-academic courses, on the other hand, are offered by Folk High Schools throughout Sweden. These adult education centers offer both community interpreting and sign language interpreting programs. According to the 2011 EFSLI country report, the sign language interpreting programs offered at Folk High Schools aim at giving their students a good command of sign language during the first two years of training before the emphasis shifts towards interpreting practices and additional courses in related branches, such as Deaf culture, social psychology and social studies (the EFSLI, 2011). Despite their inclusive scope, people who complete interpreting programs offered by adult education centers still have to sit the authorization test of the KamK while the graduates of the interpreting programs offered by the Institute for Interpreting and Translation are automatically authorized upon graduation (Niska, 2004). Still, Folk High Schools have in fact played an influential role in the development of community interpreting training in Sweden,

with CI courses offered since the 1960s (Bonnard-Sjögren, 2001). The legal amendments and the proliferation of available training programs brought along interpreting associations. Interestingly, The Swedish National Association of Sign Language Interpreters was founded in 1969 as “the first professional organization of interpreters to appear in Sweden” (Niska, 2004, p. 301).

As Pöchhacker (1999) states, interpreting as a profession emerged in Sweden as a result of the initiatives targeting “institutionalized service provision rather than the efforts of a professional body” (p. 130). The example of Sweden, just as the case of the USA, also depicts the importance of public regulations and state laws for triggering efforts to register and train interpreters and develop a system to ensure and monitor the provision of public language services.

3.2 Methodology

As Gabriela Saldanha and Sharon O’Brien (2013) state, in comparison to translation, “the activity of interpreting itself has a more prominent social aspect, which might make the use of research methods borrowed from social sciences a more obvious choice” (p. 168). For this reason research on interpreting frequently resorts to interviews and focus groups to gather data. “The use of interviews has been particularly common in research on community interpreting” (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2013, p. 168) due to the fact that “much of the interpreting material available for analysis is in the form of interviews, particularly in the public service domain” (ibid.) This study also follows methods borrowed from social sciences with a qualitative research perspective.

Sandra Hale and Jemina Napier comment that “qualitative methods look at the detail, at the specific trends and themes within a particular sample” (2013, p. 83).

Beyond the research on the general state of affairs regarding the evolution of sign language interpreting services in Turkey, this thesis also relies on interviews and personal communication carried out with the stakeholders involved in the provision of sign language interpreting services in public contexts in Turkey. Within this frame, I contacted and interviewed representatives of the TİDBO (the Turkish Sign Language Scientific and Approval Board) member institutions. As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, these institutions were entitled to implement a number of initiatives for the procurement of sign language interpreting services in public contexts after 2005. Within this scope, I initially interviewed the trainers teaching at sign language trainer and interpreter training courses operated by the Ministry of Education (MEB) and the sign language interpreters working at the provincial directorates of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs (ASPB). In addition to my interviews with the aforementioned people, I also contacted the administrators of the departments within the two ministries which are responsible for planning and delivering the relevant training and interpreting services. Within this frame, the General Directorate of Life-long Education of the MEB and the General Directorate of Services for the Disabled and the Old of the ASPB were contacted. My communication with these directorates aimed obtaining statistical data regarding their services (e.g. how many training courses are offered in Turkey or how many sign language interpreters work at the provincial directorates) and information in terms of the planning and administration of these services. My interviews, on the other hand, focused on the practical aspects of the interpreting and training services provided by the two Ministries. The interviewed trainers and interpreters' opinion regarding the comprehensiveness and quality of the available sign language interpreting and training services was also investigated. In addition to the trainers

and interpreters, the chairs of the National Federation for the Deaf (TSMF), and the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (İDTD) were also interviewed. The TSMF was interviewed since it was a member of the TİDBO as the representative of the Deaf community between 2005 and 2015. For this reason, the interview with the TSMF chair was designed to find out details about the work the TİDBO Board carried out since its establishment and the extent to which the Federation was included in the decision making processes—I placed a special emphasis on the interpreter certification exams and the interpreter training programs. In addition, the Federation’s approach towards the current state of the professionalization of the public sign language interpreting services and its collaboration with the stakeholders in the field were also among the aspects that I intended to discover. The Association of Sign Language Interpreters (İDTD) is the leading association that represents sign language interpreters in Turkey. For this reason, its active involvement in policy making and monitoring the interpreting services as a professional organization is essential for the professionalization of sign language interpreting services in the country. Within this frame, my interview with the İDTD chair aimed at clarifying the role and the influence of the association in the planning and procurement of the sign language interpreting and training services. My interview with the İDTD also aimed at finding out more about their future projects and collaboration with the involved stakeholders in the sign language interpreting field. Although the Turkish Language Society (TDK) is another member of TİDBO, it is not among the bodies that I collected data from, since its main responsibility is the documentation of Turkish sign language, which is beyond the scope of this study. The study also includes information obtained from the Translation Office of the İstanbul Justice Commission even though the Department is not a TİDBO member. Since courts are

among the public institutions that most frequently rely on community interpreting services, the communication with the İstanbul Justice Commission provided invaluable data for the study.

In addition to the data gathered by interviews and personal communication, this study also obtained data from the official documents that regulate the provision of sign language interpreting services in the public context and the interpreter training courses. In this context, I researched the legal background of these services by an examination of the Code 5378 and the following regulations issued by the Turkish Government. I also investigated the modular schedule designed for the sign language trainer and interpreter training courses by the MEB to have a better understanding of the course curriculum and content. The data obtained from the aforementioned documents, along with the theoretical framework of the study, also helped me prepare my interview questions since they gave me a general idea regarding the scope of the services offered by the stakeholders that this study focuses on. Another benefit of the inclusion of the information gathered from these documents is the increased triangulation of the research methodology. As Sandra Hale and Jemina Napier (2013) put forward, triangulation can be defined in simple terms as “collation of data from a range of sources” (p. 88), which contribute to the validity and reliability of the research findings. In this regard, the theoretical overview, the analysis/documentation of the current state of affairs, and my interviews aim at gathering data from the different actors involved in the sign language interpreting and interpreter training activities. Interviewing the interpreters and the trainers of the ASPB and the MEB as well as the representatives of the relevant associations also contributes to the study's triangular nature.

Within my study I used semi-structured interviews since they are more flexible when compared to structured interviews, and they help the interviewer to moderate the air of hierarchy and formality with the interviewees. In addition, they “allow variation in the order in which the questions are asked as well as to introduce new questions” (Saldanha and O’Brien, 2014, p. 173). In that regard, I used a combination of open-ended and structured questions to ensure that the interviews followed a certain structure to gather information on the issues the study aimed to clarify.

Before the interviews, I obtained permission to interview the trainers working for the sign language trainer and interpreter training (SLTIT) courses and the interpreters employed by the ASPB. The Directorate of Life-Long Learning in İstanbul *did not* grant me permission to interview the trainers working for the Public Training Centers in İstanbul. For this reason I interviewed trainers working for the SLTIT courses offered by İSMEK (İstanbul Municipality’s Occupational Training Courses) and private training centers. However, my interviews were representative of the general training system since all SLTIT courses follow the course structure and curriculum designed by the MEB’s General Directorate of Life-long Learning (GDLLL). I was able to access the trainers working for İSMEK and the private training center as these institutions have autonomy in their decisions to grant permission for interviews since the courses they offer are not financed by the MEB. However, my application to the İSMEK for interviewing their trainers was partially approved, on condition that I interviewed them over the phone. The İSMEK’s department of public affairs supplied me with the contact information of the trainers I was given permission to interview over the phone. I was given permission to interview the trainers working for only one course center (the İSMEK runs two

course centers in İstanbul), four trainers in total, two teaching at the İSMEK's SLTIT course and the other two teaching at the İSMEK's 120-hours TİD courses. In addition to their partial interview permission, the İSMEK also shared with me the demographical data it keeps regarding the participants of its TİD and SLTIT courses. This information was shared by e-mail. I also requested the GDLLL (General Directorate of Life-long Learning) and the General Directorate of Private Training Schools (Özel Eğitim Kurumları Genel Müdürlüğü) (GDPTS) to share with me demographic information about the SLTIT courses offered in Turkey as well as information about how the course was designed. Both administrations answered my questions by official petitions.

I also contacted the private training centers that offer SLTIT courses in İstanbul. According to the GDPTS there are two private training centers in İstanbul that offer SLTIT courses. Fewer number of people apply to private training centers for SLTIT courses since the public education centers and the municipalities offer the SLTIT courses free of charge. For this reason, private training centers start a new program once they have an adequate number of applicants. During the time I was gathering data for this study, only one private training center offered an active SLTIT course. It was, by comparison to İSMEK, much easier to access the trainer working for the private SLTIT course. The director of the center was very helpful and answered my questions regarding how their courses are planned and run. I was not required to take further permission to interview their trainer. In addition, the trainer I interviewed had teaching experience at three different private schools and her answers to my questions were based on her general experience as a SLTIT course instructor. Overall, the interviews I carried out with five trainers in total (four

İSMEK trainers and 1 private school trainer) led to findings that were in the same direction and representative of the current setting.

All interviewees were informed about the scope of the research and signed consent forms prior to the interviews. Since I interviewed İSMEK trainers over the phone, I sent them the consent forms by e-mail and received the signed and scanned forms by e-mail as well. In order to prevent that the trainers and the interpreters I interviewed face problems in the future because of the answers they provide and to ensure that they feel themselves more comfortable, I informed them that their names will not be mentioned within this study or any further academic work I publish based on this thesis. For this reason, throughout this thesis, the selected extracts from the interviews are not supplied with the names of the person interviewed if the data in concern was received from the ASPB interpreters or the İSMEK and/or private training center trainers.

I contacted the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs in the same manner as the MEB. I delivered a petition requesting information about their sign language interpreting services to the related department of the Ministry, the General Directorate of Services for the Disabled and the Old (GDSDO). I also requested that the Directorate grants me permission to interview the sign language interpreters that its provincial directorates employ. The GDSDO answered my questions by an official petition. I was also granted permission to interview the interpreters working at the ASPB's İstanbul and Ankara directorates. I interviewed two interpreters, one working in the İstanbul directorate of the Ministry and the other at the headquarters of the ASPB in Ankara. The interpreter assigned to the ASPB's headquarters is responsible for interpreting during the official events the ASPB organizes and coordinating the interpreters employed across the country. Interviewing the

interpreter deployed at the Ministry's headquarters gave me the opportunity to have a better understanding of how the sign language interpreting services of the ASPB are organized and managed.

Last of all, I contacted the Translation Office of the İstanbul Provincial Justice Commission in order to obtain information about the sign language interpreters they work with and their selection criteria of the respective interpreters.

I must note that the process of requesting information and interview permissions from the relevant regional and general directorates of the MEB, the ASPB and the İSMEK was one of the most challenging aspects of this study. The provincial directorates of the Ministries were unable to take a decision regarding my interview requests. I eventually had to contact the general directorates of each related department (based in Ankara) to be able to gather data about their services and to obtain permission for interviewing their staff. All institutions requested a written and detailed explanation of my study, its purpose, and the medium in which their data would be used. They also asked me to attach the questions I planned to ask their personnel during my interviews. My interest in their services was at first met with suspicion. This is partly due to the fact that Turkish state institutions are not still fully open to criticism. As a result, the state officers usually abstain from criticizing or sharing detailed information about their work and departments for fear of losing their positions. For this reason, they usually ask any researcher/investigator to obtain the permission of higher-ranking officers before they share any kind of information or opinion in writing or in interviews. Taking into consideration that the trainers and interpreters I interviewed work on contractual basis, it would not have been possible to interview them without receiving official permission first. The main challenge was that I had to refrain from asking questions that would have been regarded

unacceptably critical. For instance, interviewing the trainers, I could not directly ask them whether they found a 200-hours training sufficient to develop interpreting skills. This was one of the reasons why I resorted to semi-structured interviews. I asked the interviewees the questions I had previously prepared and submitted to the relevant Ministries regarding their work. The semi-structured nature of the interviews gave me the opportunity to ask them further questions based on the answers they provided to these questions.

The fact that no pilot interview was carried out might be considered a possible weakness of the study. According to Sandra Hale and Jemina Napier (2013) point out that piloting is not always helpful or possible even though the opportunity they provide to the researcher for refining her questions is undeniable. However, not only the semi-structured nature of the interviews but also the small number of interviewees I could access prevented me from conducting pilot runs in order to increase the effectiveness of the interviews.

The following chapter presents the data gathered using the methods defined in this section.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE OF TURKEY

4.1 The Turkish law on TİD and sign language interpreting

4.1.1 The Code 5378

As cited in chapter 2, the introduction of the Code No. 5378 of 2005 on Disabled People and on making amendments in some laws and decree laws formed the legal basis for the documentation of TİD, the provision of sign language interpreting services in public settings and the development of interpreter training programs.

The Code 5378 targets disabled citizens, their families and the institutions/bodies that provide public services for the disabled. The objective of the Law is explained as follows

The objective of this Law is to prevent disability, to enable the disabled people to join the society by taking measures which will provide the solution of their problems regarding health, education, rehabilitation, employment, care and social security and the removal of the obstacles they face and to make the necessary arrangements for the coordination of these services. (International Labor Organization, n.d.)¹

Article 15 of the Code 5378 concerns the documentation of the Turkish sign language and the procurement of related public services so that those with hearing disabilities can access education and communicate effectively in their social lives. The ASPB (the Ministry of Family and Social Policies), the MEB (the Ministry of National Education), and the TDK (the Turkish Language Society) are authorized to issue joint regulations for developing a sign language system. Article 15 was an

¹ The translation used herein is the unofficial translation available on the International Labor Organization's website.

important step for the Deaf community in Turkey since their language was finally recognized and official bodies were assigned to work on TİD.

Another important aspect of Article 15 is the responsibility given to Turkish universities to ensure a compatible educational environment for disabled university students. Within this frame, in 2006, the regulation for Higher Education Institutions' Consultancy and Coordination Units for the Disabled was issued. In 2010, the regulation was replaced with the new one, released with the same name in the official gazette numbered 27672. According to the regulation, universities are obligated to provide proper educational tools, materials and a suitable learning and research environment for their disabled students. In order to plan and organize the provision of these services, the YÖK founded the Disabled Students Commission and universities were encouraged to set up Consultancy and Coordination Units for the Disabled (Engelliler Danışma ve Koordinasyon Birimi). The regulation released in 2010 defines the responsibilities of the YÖK Commission and the consultancy and coordination units in a general manner. After examining it, I saw that there was no article that specifically focused on the Deaf or hard of hearing students. A reasonable solution would be the employment of sign language interpreters to interpret for the Deaf student(s) during the courses (as in the cases of Sweden and the USA). However, the current regulation does not include a content as to what the universities are expected to do if they have Deaf students attending their respective academic programs and any decision regarding the action that needs to be taken in such cases is left to the sole discretion of the university in question. In order to clarify what happens in such contexts, I sent an online information request to the Information Request System of the Prime Ministry of Turkish Republic (BİMER). My information request was forwarded to and answered by the YÖK's Disabled Students

Commission. Accordingly, the Commission does not have any knowledge about Deaf or hard of hearing students that use interpreters during their classes (BİMER, personal communication, August 4, 2017).

Article 30 of Code 5378 also includes annexes to a previous Code on Social Services. According to Annex 8 of Article 30

In order to work as interpreter to the people with hearing and speech impairment when needed personnel with the knowledge of sign language is assigned. The arrangement of the necessary courses are provided for the personnel to learn the sign language. The methods and principles regarding the duty and power and working conditions of these personnel are determined by the regulation to be prepared jointly by the Administration on Disabled People and General Directorate of Social Services and Protection of Children Agency. (International Labor Organization, n.d.)²

This article initiated the certification exams that were organized by TİDBO (twice to date). The certified interpreters were subsequently hired by the provincial directorates of the General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency which was re-structured in 2011 and became the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs. The solution the Code 5378 offers for the sign language interpreting needs of the Deaf in the context of public services is however problematic in a number of aspects which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1.2 Regulations resulting from the Code 5378

The regulation on “The Education and Working Principles of Personnel that will Procure Sign Language Interpreting Services” (İşaret Dili Tercümanlığı Hizmeti Verecek Personelin Yetiştirilmesi ile Çalışma Esasları) was released in 2006 in the official gazette numbered 26139. The objectives of the regulation are

² The translation used herein is the unofficial translation available on the International Labor Organization’s website.

to analyze the linguistic structure of Turkish sign language in order to assist the communication needs of the Deaf and hard of hearing; to prepare visual and written education materials, to develop Turkish sign language system, to educate sign language translators and trainers and to prevent the emergence of different practices in this regard. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2006)³

It is remarkable that the regulation emphasizes preventing different practices so as to establish a standard in terms of interpreter training. Within this frame the MEB (Ministry of National Education) was given the authority to plan and organize training programs for interpreters. However, as will be discussed in the following sections, the standardization of the training system planned by the MEB is rather questionable.

Right after the release of the Regulation 26139, the TİDBO (Türk İşaret Dili Bilim ve Onay Kurulu) was created. According to the regulation, the board consisted of two academicians, one representative of the TDK, one representative of the ÖZİ (Department of the Administration of the Disabled), one representative of the SHÇEK (Social Services and Child Protection Agency), one representative of the MEB (Ministry of National Education), and two representatives of the Deaf Federation that has the higher number of members. Accordingly, the TSMF (Turkish National Federation of the Deaf) became a TİDBO member to represent the Deaf community. In 2012, with a new Regulation published at the official gazette 28330, the number of representatives from each member body was doubled. With the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs in 2011, the SHÇEK units were affiliated to the Ministry and the ASPB representatives replaced the SHÇEK and the ÖZİ at the TİDBO board since a new department that deals with the disabled

³ Unless otherwise stated, all excerpts from the Turkish regulations used within this thesis are my translations.

and the old was established within the Ministry (The General Directorate of Services for The Disabled and the Old).

It is significant that the government included the TSMF (Turkish National Federation for the Deaf) in the TİDBO board as a representative of the Deaf community and as a first hand witness of their needs. However, the extent to which the government bodies within the Board seek the approval of the other members on their projects is not clear. As mentioned in chapter 2.2, the TDK published the *Turkish Sign Language Grammar Book* (Türk İşaret Dili Dilbilgisi Kitabı) in 2015. During my interview with the Chair of the TSMF, I learned that the TSMF did not approve the final version of the book since they detected some problems regarding certain signs and their Turkish equivalents. As a consequence, the TSMF did not sign the TİDBO document approving the publication of the book. However, the book was still published in 2015 since other TİDBO members approved it.

How the sign language interpreter is defined in the regulation is another interesting point. According to the 2006 regulation, the sign language interpreter is

the person who has recognized professional competency to assist the Deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with the related parties in legal, educational, professional, social and medical contexts. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2006)

This definition is vague and problematic. Professional competency is an ambiguous expression since what qualifications and skills are expected from a competent and professional interpreter is not defined anywhere in the Regulation. The criterion to judge one's competency as a sign language interpreter was initially the TİDBO examination. Currently, the only condition that one needs to fulfill in order to prove their competency as a sign language interpreter is to present a certificate received

from a 200-hour Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training Course. It is doubtful if one can truly obtain the appropriate competency to work as a sign language interpreter with only 200-hours of training, which is provided in a quite limited scope (as will be discussed in the following section).

Article 13 in the 2006 regulation concerns the training courses that will be organized to train sign language interpreters. Accordingly

- i. The Ministry (the Ministry of National Education) is entitled to authorize the courses that train sign language interpreters.
- ii. The courses run by the Ministry or the legal entities it authorizes follow a training schedule prepared by the MEB.
- iii. Official bodies and institutions cooperate with the MEB to train sign language interpreters.
- iv. Sign language interpreting proficiency exams are administered by the Ministry. Those who succeed are granted a proficiency certificate by the TİDBO Board. The certificates are valid for 2 years. After two years, the ministry re-assesses the interpreters' proficiency and the TİDBO re-news the certificates of those found successful.
- v. The trainings focus on improving the interpreters' knowledge in education, health care, law, art and sports. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2006)

With this article, the MEB was given the sole authority to design the training programs while the TİDBO Board already existed. The inclusion of the TİDBO Board in the preparation of interpreter training programs would have given the government the opportunity to bring the experiences of a number of experts in the field to design a comprehensive curriculum. The article also creates a number of ambiguities. There is no information regarding the format of the examination the MEB administers. In addition, the article does not state on which ground the Ministry re-assesses the certificates of the interpreters after two years. Interestingly, in 2011, the government issued a new regulation to amend certain articles of the 2006 regulation. The new regulation amended the purpose and scope of the 2006

regulation with a “temporary clause.” According to the temporary clause in Article 9 of the 2011 regulation

until the TİD system is developed, a certification exam shall be administered following the TİD trainer and interpreter training courses offered by the Ministry. The exam commissions include at least 3 members selected by the Board (the TİDBO Board). Those who pass the exam are granted TİD trainer/translator certificates. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2011)

This temporary clause provided the legal ground for the provision of the sign language trainer and interpreter training (SLTİT) courses designed by the Life Long Learning division of the MEB. The MEB started offering the SLTİT courses in 2014. With the introduction of the SLTİT courses, the TİDBO certification exam, organized twice until 2013, was eliminated. The SLTİT courses replaced the TİDBO exams to certify TİD interpreters and trainers. The scope of these trainings and current practices will be discussed in the following section.

4. 2 Sign language trainer and interpreter trainer (SLTİT) courses

4.2.1 Training centers that offer SLTİT courses and participation conditions

As briefly mentioned in section 2.4, the only available sign language interpreting training program in Turkey is the sign language trainer and interpreter training course designed by the General Directorate of Life Long Learning (GDLLL) of the MEB. In each Turkish city, there is a Provincial Life Long Learning Directorate that operates under the Provincial Directorate of the MEB. This division is responsible for planning, organizing and managing non-formal education programs for adults and people with special learning needs (such as offering literacy courses for illiterate people). The LLLDs offer educational programs in a number of vocational and artistic fields. The administrative and operative principles that apply to LLLDs are

explained in detail within the Ministry of National Education's Regulation on Non-Formal Education Institutions which was published in the official gazette 27587 in 2010. According to this regulation, LLLDs can cooperate with public and private education institutions, associations, NGOs, and municipalities. The directorate signs protocols with collaborating parties, and the protocols become valid once the MEB's provincial directors ratify them. Within the frame of these collaborations, the related parties are entitled to run the courses designed by the LLLD on their own premises. However, in doing so they have to follow the training modules designed by the MEB in addition to adhering to a number of specifications determined by the GDLLL, such as the physical conditions of the classrooms or workshops that the courses will be offered in.

After completing the course modules and fulfilling other requirements for receiving a certificate (requirements can vary depending on the field of study—the trainees can be asked to sit an exam or prepare a project), the MEB ratifies the certification of the successful participants. Those who attend the courses offered by the LLLDs' Public Training Centers or other institutions the LLLDs cooperate with receive the same certification (the Regulation on Non-Formal Education Institutions, the MEB, n.d.).

Sign language trainer and interpreter training (SLTIT) courses in Turkey are offered by Public Training Centers (these centers are directly affiliated to the provincial Life Long Learning Directorates), the Vocational and Artistic Training Agencies (Sanat ve Mesleki Eğitim Kurumları) of municipalities, and private training schools that operate with the permission and under the supervision of the regional LLLDs of the MEB. I contacted the General Directorate of Life Long Learning (GDLLL) in order to receive statistical data regarding the number of SLTIT

courses in Turkey and the total number of people who have hitherto participated them. Accordingly, the first SLTIT course was offered in October 2014 in İstanbul. Currently, 94 Public Training Centers and Vocational and Artistic Training Agencies offer SLTIT courses country-wide. Unlike the private training schools, the courses offered by municipalities are listed together with those of Adult Education Centers since municipalities have a semi-autonomous structure. There are 49 private training schools in Turkey that have received the MEB's permission to offer SLTIT courses and two of them are located in İstanbul (the MEB's General Directorate of Private Training Schools, personal communication). Since 2014, 4,959 people enrolled to SLTIT courses offered by Public Training Centers and municipalities, 4,097 of the applicants were female while the remaining 863 were male. Until now, 2,651 people have been entitled to receive SLTIT certificates. 2,198 of the certificate holders are female and 453 are male. According to the GDLLL regulations, in order a course center to be able to start a new course in any field, a minimum number of twelve people should be demanding it by a written petition. Until now, 223 SLTIT courses were offered throughout Turkey. (The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, personal communication, June 8, 2017).

In the case of Istanbul, where I contacted and interviewed the trainers, twelve Public Training Centers and two Vocational and Artistic Training Agencies of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality offer the SLTIT courses. As of 2014, 799 people have enrolled to the SLTIT courses and 469 of them have received certification. 397 of the certificate holders are female while 72 of them are male (the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, personal communication, June 8, 2017). As the data shows, the SLTIT courses are by far more popular among women. In addition, almost half of the course participants did not receive sign language and interpreter

certification. Unfortunately the MEB data does not indicate why these people have been denied the SLTI certification. Possible reasons might be dropping out of the courses, regular absence from classes and failure at the certification exams administered at the end of the courses.

Recently some private training centers started offering online TİD and SLTİT courses. The online format also consists of 120 hours (the TİD course) and 200 hours (the SLTİT course) of instruction and follows the content scheme laid down by the modular schedule program of the MEB which will be discussed in detail in the next section. The students log in to the online platform using their IDs and passwords and gain access to the classes. As shown in Figure 4, the classes are prerecorded and the students cannot interact directly with the trainers. Once the student completes 200 hours of online instruction, s/he can take the certification exam at the course center. Candidates that take the online and face-to-face instruction formats sit the same exam.



Figure 4: An online SLTIT class offered by a private training school in İstanbul

Applicants of the SLTIT courses should hold a community college or undergraduate degree and a TİD certificate which certifies that they have previously completed a 120-hours TİD training (120-hours TİD courses are also offered by the training institutions operating under the same system).

The İSMEK also shared with me its data regarding the trainees that were enrolled to its SLTIT courses. Since the initial SLTIT course they offered in 2014, they have been keeping data on the demographical characteristics of the participants, such as gender, age, education, and their motivation for participating in the training program. According to the İSMEK's data, 233 people attended its SLTIT courses since 2014. 179 of the trainees were female while 54 were male. A big portion of the trainees, 150 people in total, had undergraduate degrees. 60 people had completed 2-year programs at community colleges. More than half of the participants (120 people) were aged between 20 and 30. The second dominant age range is 30-40 (74 people). In order to find out about the participants' motivation for participating in the SLTIT courses, the İSMEK gave a multiple-choice questionnaire to the participants. Among the options were statements such as acquiring a new profession, contributing to one's professional skills, improving oneself in a new field, taking advantage of one's free time, and expanding one's social circle. The most popular answer was that that their motivation was to begin a new profession. This is normal given that the dominant age range is between 20 and 30. In Turkey, where unemployment among university graduates is quite high, it seems sign language interpreting is regarded as a new career opportunity among young Turkish people.

4.2.2 The modular course schedule of the SLTIT courses

The centers that offer the SLTIT courses should follow the modular program prepared by the General Directorate of Traineeship and Non-formal Education (Çıraklık ve Yaygın Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü) which is the MEB division that is responsible for designing the weekly course modules for the courses offered at public training centers. This document is the only available material that can be regarded a curriculum plan. The modular program for the SLTIT courses was officially approved on April 2011 (the GDLLL, 2011). The document is available on the General Directorate of Life Long Learning's website.

In the introduction section, the document informs the reader about the legal frame of the TİD trainer and interpreter training courses, mentioned in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2. Within this scope, the document refers to the Code 5378, and the 2006 and the 2011 Regulations. The document does not include a clear statement regarding who prepared the content of the training program. It only states that the Ministry laid down the competencies specific to the Turkish sign language based on the views and recommendations of the experts it consulted while preparing the modular schedule document. Unfortunately there is no further information regarding the professional affiliations and the titles of the experts mentioned in the document. Within my official petition to the General Directorate of Life-long Learning of the MEB, I specifically asked who prepared the modular course program for the SLTIT courses. However, the General Directorate's reply to that specific question was not different from the brief and superficial explanation supplied on the modular program itself. In fact, the 2006 regulation has given the MEB the authority to design the training programs even though it stated that the MEB could cooperate with public institutions to train sign language interpreters (for the full article see section 4.1.2). However,

during my interview with the TSMF chair, I learned that the MEB did not invite them or other TİDBO members to collaborate for designing the training program.

4.2.3 Professional competencies expected from the trainers

The modular program for the SLTİT courses includes a section about the qualifications expected from the trainers that will be employed by the respective training centers. Accordingly, the following can teach at the SLTİT courses

- i. Preferably teachers who have pedagogical background and experience in teaching the Deaf,
- ii. Teachers who know TİD and have teaching experience of 8 years,
- iii. Preferably trainers holding sign language trainer and interpreter certificate,
- iv. Preferably the MEB teachers who have participated in-service trainings on how to communicate with the Deaf,
- v. Trainers/teachers that are equipped with the skills and the knowledge the modular program is expected to develop. (the GDLLL, 2011)

Through my personal communication with the General Directorate of Life Long Learning, I learned that the trainers teaching at the SLTİT courses usually fall to the 3rd category. I also learned that the qualifications included in the other categories were intended for the trainers teaching at the initial SLTİT courses. For this reason, the Ministry included a number of optional criteria that the training centers would look for in their trainers. The category 5, for instance, aimed at giving the CODA people the opportunity to teach at the SLTİT courses in case the training centers could not recruit MEB teachers already fluent in TİD. The trainers I interviewed also stated that they had previously attended the SLTİT courses in order to be able to teach TİD and SLTİT courses. In addition, the centers that offer SLTİT courses can develop special criteria for choosing the SLTİT trainers. As a result of my interviews with the İSMEK trainers, I found out that Public Training Centers initially employ the SLTİT certificate holders to teach 120-hours TİD courses. After gaining teaching

experience, usually two or three years, the trainers start teaching the SLTIT courses. The trainer who works for a private training center on the other hand, started teaching the private SLTIT courses without previous educational experience although she worked as an interpreter for a brief period of time after having received her SLTI certificate. In other words, there are no strict standards regarding the recruitment of the trainers. Instead, the course centers decide on the option they will follow based on the alternative criteria set by the General Directorate of Life-Long Learning.

It should also be noted that no previous interpreting experience is required from the trainers. However, all trainers that I interviewed have had some sort of interpreting experience after they learned TİD. Nevertheless, their approach to interpreting varied extensively. The trainer working for the private course center has previously worked as a TİD interpreter for the Ministry of Tourism and the Employment Agency on a contractual basis. She stated that interpreting was a challenging job that requires one to have excellent language and communication skills. One of the trainers working for İSMEK, on the other hand, stated that she prefers training over interpreting and rarely interprets in public contexts. She also stressed that she interprets on a volunteer basis. She claimed that teaching TİD to the Deaf who have had no previous access to the language and to their families was a more urgent priority for her. She also stated that most Deaf people do not know TİD well enough to understand the interpreting provided on the media or in real life situations, which makes her believe that the priority should be ensuring that all Deaf individuals can use TİD on an advanced level. Her rationale for attributing privilege to TİD training over interpreting is obviously interesting although to what extent the Deaf community in Turkey can understand interpretation in the TİD is beyond the

scope of this study. Another İSMEK trainer, who was quite critical of the training program in general, stated she refrains from interpreting in official/public contexts since she does not feel confident enough. She is therefore afraid of making a vital mistake that would harm the Deaf person she might try to assist. Another İSMEK trainer I interviewed said she never had any interpreting experience in her life.

4.2.4 Course objectives and content

According to the modular schedule document, the people who successfully complete the course program can (a) actively use TİD, (b) communicate with the Deaf using TİD, (c) translate from and into TİD, and (d) teach TİD. The document includes a chart of the program modules and the competencies the participants are expected to acquire at the end of each module. As can be seen in Table 1, the chart is followed by a brief description of each module. The training programs apparently take it for granted that language knowledge alone is sufficient to teach and interpret in TİD. An examination of the modular schedule reveals how the SLTİT course is actually designed as an advanced version of the 120-hours TİD course. The course mainly focuses on improving the fluency of the participants in TİD. Only the last module concentrates on interpreting. The objective of the 8th and final module of the training program is defined as ensuring that the participants can interpret from and into TİD correctly wherever TİD interpreting is necessary. It is not clarified what is meant by "correct interpretation." However, judging by the intense emphasis on TİD grammar and terminology in the previous modules, one infers that the definition of "correct" refers to grammatical and terminological correctness of the interpreted message. In addition to the expected competencies from the students, the modules also include a

section on the aspects that the students should pay attention to in order to develop and perform the expected competencies.

Table 1 The modular course schedule of the SLTIT courses

COMPETENCIES		MODULES	DURATION
1	Practicing sign language in accordance with its basic characteristics	General characteristics of sign language	40/8
2	Establishing the relationship between the TİD signs and the body posture	Relationship between the signs and the body posture	40/16
3	Communicating in TİD in daily contexts	Communication and daily language	40/24
4	Building sentences in accordance with TİD grammar	Sentences in TİD	40/32
5	Using the affixes and time adverbs correctly in TİD sentences	Affixes and time adverbs in TİD sentences	40/24
6	Using TİD sentence components correctly	TİD sentence components	40/32
7	Delivering prepared and spontaneous speeches in TİD	Prepared and spontaneous discussions in TİD	40/32
8	Interpreting in accordance with the TİD	Interpreting in accordance with the TİD	40/32
TOTAL			320/200

(The MEB's General Directorate of Life Long Learning, 2011, my translation)

According to Module 8, the principles that the participants should observe when interpreting from and into TİD are defined as

- i. Identifying the context in which interpretation will be provided,
- ii. Familiarizing with the environment and the people for which interpreting will be provided,
- iii. Familiarity with the topic,
- iv. Explaining the context of interpreting to the Deaf client,
- v. Terminology,
- vi. Rendering the information correctly,
- vii. Signing and speaking fluently,

- viii. Asking for time,
- ix. Verifying the information,
- x. Metaphorical expressions in Turkish,
- xi. Idioms. (the GDLLL, 2011)

The module continues with the grammar and speaking skills intended to be developed. Accordingly, the last module focuses on talking about daily events, and discussing the world issues using TİD. According to the same section, students need to have a high level TİD fluency, knowledge of the rational constructs of TİD, and they should be able to empathize with Deaf individuals in order to perform the aforementioned tasks.

I asked the trainers if they design activities that focus on developing participants' interpreting skills. Despite the fact that they all answered "yes" to this question, the scope of the interpreting tasks the students are expected to perform is limited. One of the İSMEK trainers stated that within each module she asks her students to build sentences and dialogues based on the new vocabulary and grammar structures they have learned. The private instructor stated that she asks her students to build sentences and/or write paragraphs and interpret them into TİD. However, at none of the courses do students perform interpreting tasks that are based on real-life interpreting settings. It is clear that the major problem of the SLTİT courses is the time limitation. Within only 200 hours the program intends to develop not only sign language fluency but also interpreting and teaching skills. In fact, the trainer working for the private training center and the two İSMEK trainers I interviewed also complained about the inadequacy of the 200-hours program to develop the skills expected from the course participants. Another problem is the lack of teaching materials the SLTİT trainers are supplied with. All the trainers I interviewed stated that they develop their own methods and materials for teaching the modules to their

students. Two İSMEK trainers complained about the absence of a proper instruction material that would guide the trainers in terms of the classroom activities and the material supplied to the students. One İSMEK trainer stated that she wanted to participate in a training program on translation and interpreting so that she could have a better understanding of the field and be of greater help to her students. Her personal endeavors to learn more about translation and interpreting studies have not been satisfactory since she could not be sure about which academic resources to resort to. For this reason, she stated that it would be extremely beneficial if translation and interpreting departments collaborated with the MEB to improve the SLTIT course content and provided seminars to the SLTIT trainers on interpreting theory and practice.

The document also includes a section that defines the teaching methods and techniques that the trainers should apply during the classes. However, the statements within this section are over-generalized. The section advises the trainers to guide the participants, to encourage them to be active learners, not to limit their learning experience with the classroom, to encourage them to conduct further research in the field, and to critically evaluate their performance. In order to do that, the trainers are advised to use the teaching methods and techniques which aim at developing personal professional competence. When the literature on interpreter training briefly discussed in chapter 2 is concerned, the expectations within this section of the modular schedule document are more or less in line with the aspects training programs pay attention to. Reading this section of the document, one has the impression that it is designed for people with a pedagogical background, already familiar with various teaching methods and techniques used in interpreter training. However, as already mentioned, most trainers teaching at the SLTIT courses have

become trainers only after having participated the same course program and having subsequently received the SLTIT certificate. Moreover, the document does not define what these methods and techniques are. The absence of clear teaching methods and available teaching materials prevents the provision of a standardized training in the SLTIT course centers.

An interesting point that I noticed after interviewing the trainers was their awareness of the importance of being involved with the Deaf community and in Deaf culture. Unfortunately the modular program document does not include any statement about the importance of activities that will familiarise the students with either the Deaf culture or the Deaf community. Nevertheless, all the trainers I interviewed are more or less involved with the Deaf community, and they advise their students to do so as well. The trainer working for a private training center stated that she tries to visit Deaf associations and attend their events and invites her students to accompany her. One of the İSMEK trainers stated that they advise their students to blend in with the Deaf community to get to know their world. She commented as follows

I tell my students that completing this course is not enough for them to become trainers. Without familiarizing with Deaf people and their world, no matter how good you use the sign language, it is not sufficient. Some things that we learn from the books can be very different when we practice them in real life. For this reason, in addition to the regular course, I took TİD lessons from Deaf people as well so that I could better understand their world. The training we offer here, after a certain point, does not go beyond books. You meet a totally different aspect of this profession once you enter their world. (İSMEK trainer, personal communication, April 21, 2017)⁴

Another İSMEK trainer stated that she has been warning the İSMEK training coordination about the significance of introducing their students with the Deaf

⁴ The interview excerpts used within this thesis were translated from Turkish into English by me. A word-for-word translation approach has been adopted.

community. She also stated that İSMEK decided to employ a Deaf course assistant to accompany the trainers during some of their classes so that the students could practice sign language with a native signer. The trainer commented that this can be regarded as a positive step even though it is clear that employing only one person would in no way be sufficient to familiarize the course participants with the Deaf community.

It is important that the SLI trainers are aware of the importance of involving their students in the Deaf community, considering the significance attributed to involvement in the Deaf community and its culture in the literature on sign language interpreter training as discussed in section 2.3. Unfortunately, it is completely up to the students' discretion whether they ever engage with the Deaf community since the modular course schedule does not include such activities and the trainers' encouragement in that regard are only recommendations.

One of the İSMEK trainers, on the other hand, made a very interesting comment on the issue. She stated that she tries to get in touch with her Deaf friends as much as possible. However, she does not get involved with the Deaf associations since she thinks they are prejudiced against those who learn TİD through the language courses, favoring CODA or actual Deaf people instead. She also stated that there was a prejudice against the trainers working at the TİD and the SLTİT courses. According to this trainer, the prejudiced circles among the Deaf community which seems to support the idea that only Deaf or CODA people should teach at the language courses. The trainer commented that she finds this idea discriminatory and irrational, given the increasing number of people interested in learning TİD and the insufficient number of CODA and Deaf people that can teach at numerous course centers. In fact, her remarks are substantiated by my own observation among the

Deaf community and my interview with the Chair of the TSMF (Turkish National Federation of the Deaf). The chair of the TSMF also mentioned the discomfort among the Deaf community regarding the TİD and SLTİT courses as follows

While people attend university level programs to become interpreters in spoken languages, these courses offer the participants those certificates and the opportunity to teach TİD and work as interpreters after a 200-hours training. I met a lot of people holding this certificate. When you ask them to interpret at an event or conference they usually disappear. They usually claim that they rather not work as interpreters and instead only teach TİD. (the TSMF chair, personal communication, April 15, 2017)

The chair of the TSMF also stated that because the MEB did not collaborate with them (and other stakeholders in the field) insufficient course programs (both for the 120 hours TİD and 200 hours SLTİT courses) were developed.

Another interesting point I should mention regarding the content of the 8th module on TİD interpreting is the brief section allocated to professional ethics. According to this section, the students should (1) observe the legal regulations regarding the profession, (2) pay attention to the professional ethics, and (3) refrain from putting the parties for whom interpreting is provided in a difficult position. However, the document does not include any information regarding what the professional ethics exactly are and which institution determines them. During my interviews with the trainers, I asked them if they are provided with any additional document on professional ethics and if they cover this topic during their classes. Unfortunately, the trainers do not receive any course material on the professional ethics of interpreting, and the inclusion of this topic in the SLTİT classes depends entirely on the trainer. For instance, the trainer working for the private training center stated that she had researched the ethical principles determined by the Deaf associations herself, and that she tries to inform her students about these principles as

often as possible. One of the İSMEK trainers, on the other hand, has an unconventional approach towards the issue of ethics. She sometimes interprets during the purchase and sale transactions at the notary publics on a volunteer basis. She explained the reason for her volunteer involvement as follows

I never interpreted at a court. But I do my best to help the Deaf at the notary public offices during the purchase and sale transactions. You should be careful when you interpret. Nowadays disability rights are on the agenda of the country. Unfortunately sometimes people exploit this situation. For instance if I am interpreting for an automobile sale I ask the Deaf person questions such as “Do you have a driving license? Can you drive? Do you really want to buy this car?” Because sometimes family members buy cars on their behalf so that they can benefit from the tax reductions the Disabled benefit from. In such cases the Deaf person would be unaware of the legal liabilities s/he would be subject to after the purchase transaction until s/he starts receiving the traffic fines because of the person who actually drives the car. (İSMEK trainer, personal communication, April 21, 2017)

The approach of the İSMEK trainer is clearly open to discussion when ethical dimensions of community interpreting are concerned. The variation among the SLTIT course trainers in terms of their approach to interpreting ethics indicates an obvious need for further research on sign language interpreting practices from a perspective of the professional ethics of the TİD interpreters. Within the scope of this study, the different approaches the trainers have towards ethical issues offers yet another example of the problematically diverse course content and materials the students are subjected to depending on their trainers.

The trainers at İSMEK also complained about the variations among the TİD levels of their students. Since the number of training centers that only offer the 120-hours TİD courses is higher than those offering both the SLTIT and the TİD courses, the trainees usually receive their TİD certificates from different course centers and trainers. Apparently, there is no consistency in terms of the degree of language skills

of the people participating to different TİD courses. In fact, the İSMEK trainers stated that they designed a 40-hours program and the SLTİT students initially attend the 40-hours program before they actually start the 200-hours training. The 40-hours program includes a brief revision of the 120-hours TİD courses. This can be considered as another example of the different practices followed by course centers.

Last but not least, all trainers I interviewed stated that they are against the online course format offered by some private training centers. They stated that distant training format was not suitable for the TİD and SLTİT courses since personal interaction with the trainers and classmates is a must. One trainer commented as follows:

I think the online courses are nothing but products of commercial concerns. For instance, I work with my students one-to-one and ask them to repeat the signs I have shown. Because I want to see if they can sign a concept correctly. Deaf community is very sensitive about the correctness of the signs. For instance, sometimes you accidentally raise one of your fingers and the meaning of the sign changes completely. For this reason, we should watch our students and their signing carefully. We ask them to repeat the signs after us. But how can you do that with distance learning? It is impossible. The trainer only shows the signs and nothing more. I don't believe this is sensible at all. This method is indeed quite risky since it is based on commercial concerns. It is more appropriate if the courses are offered in one-to-one basis, with the opportunity to practice with the trainers. (İSMEK trainer, personal communication, April 23, 2017)

The trainers' remarks and criticism about the online courses are perfectly reasonable. However, another point should also be mentioned here. Just as in the comment provided above, the majority of the trainers I interviewed focused on the impossibility of controlling how the students sign when the course is in online format. However, the online format also makes it impossible for students to engage in any interpreting practice and to be assessed by the trainer regarding the interpreting performance. This can be regarded as another indicator of how much the

SLTIT trainers are in fact terminology oriented and almost no emphasis is put on teaching or interpreting techniques and practice within the SLTIT courses.

The data presented in this section clearly shows that the content and scope of the current interpreter training program is limited to grammar and terminology instruction in TİD. However, a translator and interpreter should combine a number of competences when performing challenging translation and interpreting tasks.

According to Neubert (2000), for instance, language competence, textual competence, subject competence, cultural competence and transfer competence are the competences translators should have to carry out complex translation tasks. In another study, Brooke Macnamara (2012) lays down the cognitive skills and capacities interpreters should have to perform interpreting tasks based on theoretical research in the domains of second language acquisition, spoken and signed language interpreting, and cognitive psychology. According to Macnamara (2012), these skills and capacities include the dimensions of working memory, attentional control, performance monitoring, long-term memory, set-shifting, processing speed and multitasking. Macnamara (2012) also refers to social-cognitive aptitudes expected from interpreters, some of which can be listed as emotional and stress control, self-awareness, empathic accuracy (assessing others' perspectives), performance monitoring, risk-taking, boundary balancing, cross-cultural sensitivity and message analysis. An interpreter-training program, therefore, should include the necessary theoretical and practical content to develop and assess the aforementioned cognitive skills and aptitudes of interpreting students.

However, as this study shows, current sign language interpreter training of the MEB (Ministry of National Education) is far from developing and evaluating these interpreting skills and competences. In fact, even though the MEB courses'

main focus seems to be teaching TİD grammar and terminology, it is debatable to what extent this language training is sufficient either. According to Jacobs (1996), a student should ideally need more than 1,350 hours of language learning to reach a high level of language command and fluency in a sign language (cited in Gómez et al., p. 74). However, the participants of the MEB courses can only receive 320 hours of language instruction in total, 120 hours with the prerequisite TİD training and 200 additional hours with the SLTİT courses.

4.2.5 Certification exams

There is no consistency in terms of the assessment of the students' skills at the end of the courses. In order to receive the sign language trainer and interpreter certificate, the students completing the 200-hours instruction should sit an exam. As a result of my interviews with the SLTİT course trainers, I can state that a semi-standardized exam is administered. There is an examination format determined by the General Directorate of Life Long Learning and each course center follows it. However, there is no standard in terms of the exam questions since the content of each exam is prepared by the trainers of the SLTİT course administering the exam. The trainers are also not satisfied with the examination format. The trainer working at the private training center comments as follows

In fact, the exams administered at the end of this course do not make much sense. The exam papers include the signs taken from the books we use during our classes. I mean the exam consists of the visuals of the selected TİD signs. Students are then asked to find the right Turkish equivalents of the signs. The exam is a multiple-choice exam and they simply choose one answer among four options. (İSMEK trainer, personal communication, April 29, 2017)

According to the information I received from the trainers, the certification exam includes 25 multiple-choice questions. Unfortunately the exam does not include any other section. In other words, the examination does not include a section that is designed to assess how well the students can use and/or understand TİD in practice, let alone assess their interpreting and teaching skills. The same trainer stated that even a course participant who has very poor TİD skills can easily score above 90%. The trainers working for İSMEK stated that they test how well the topics were understood by the students at the end of each module. For this purpose, they prepare short quizzes which require the students to interpret a number of written sentences into TİD. However, this practice does not have an official foundation since the certification exam is the only formal assessment criteria for the MEB. It is obvious that there is a lack of a standardized and comprehensive examination system to evaluate the performance of the SLTİT course participants. Since the exam questions are not prepared by a single authority, students at each course center sit different exams and are evaluated based on different questions. It is also clear that the current examination is not suitable for measuring the skills the SLTİT courses intend to develop.

If we remember the data received from the GDLLL (General Directorate of Life Long Learning) mentioned in section 4.2.1, almost half of the course participants have failed to receive certification from the SLTİT courses since 2014. However, the information received from the course trainers show that the certification exam is far from providing a suitable format and content to assess the exam takers' TİD and interpreting skills. Thus, a possible answer is that most of the people that do not receive a certificate after applying the SLTİT courses drop out of their respective courses at some point of their training.

4.3 Sign language interpreters of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs

4.3.1 The employment process of the interpreters

The Code 5378 which recognized Turkish Sign Language in 2005 included a supplementary clause (annex 8) on the provision of sign language interpreting services by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu) (SHÇEK). Each provincial directorate of the SHÇEK was supposed to deploy a sign language interpreter at their respective offices. Annex 8 initially required the provincial SHÇEK units (later to become provincial directorates of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) to provide sign language training for their staff. The personnel that become fluent in sign language would then be assigned to other public institutions whenever they required sign language interpreting. This way the SHÇEK would resolve the issue using its own staff, without outsourcing interpreters to employ. The Code also offered the SHÇEK some flexibility in terms of the provision of interpreters. Accordingly, the SHÇEK could employ outsiders working as sign language trainers and/or interpreters on a temporary basis in case the number of SHÇEK personnel was not sufficient to meet the interpreting demand.

The employment of sign language interpreters in this manner by the SHÇEK resembles the ad hoc practices that Ozolins (2000, 2010) points to when discussing the professionalization of community interpreting services. Public institutions resort to ad hoc practices where the public interpreting services are not professionalized. In this case, even though the essential intention is to assist the Deaf and offer state-run public interpreting services, the Turkish government cannot go beyond offering an ad hoc solution to the interpretation demand. As was the case with the recognition of Turkish sign language, the inclusion of sign language interpreting services in the new Code on the Disabled was a vital step. However, the manner in which the

interpreting services were envisaged prevented the provision of these services in a professionalized context. First of all, similar to the structure of the SLTIT courses, it was believed that linguistic knowledge alone was enough for the SHÇEK personnel to provide interpreting to the Deaf. The Code envisaged that the SHÇEK personnel could easily perform interpreting services once they received training in sign language. Another point I should note here is that the article did not say anything regarding the duration of sign language training the SHÇEK was expected to provide for its future interpreters. SHÇEK was made the sole authority in deciding on the length and scope of the training that should be adequate to “turn” its personnel into sign language interpreters in short notice.

The plan to assign SHÇEK personnel as sign language interpreters did not succeed. In 2007, the SHÇEK announced that it would employ 81 sign language interpreters at 81 provincial SHÇEK units on contractual basis. In addition to the general conditions required for becoming a government officer according to the Turkish Law, the Agency also required the applicants to have at least high school degree. The applicants were also required to present a certification to prove that they knew Turkish Sign Language. There was an interesting detail on the job advert regarding the certification issue. The SHÇEK wanted the applicants to have their sign language certificates approved by the TİDBO. During my interview with the Chair of the TSMF (Turkish National Federation for the Deaf), I learned that this decision was taken due to the fact that several Deaf associations and private training centers offered sign language courses back then. None of these courses were authorized to issue certificates that were recognized in official contexts due to the lack of a legal ground for TİD and TİD trainings. For this reason, the sign language certificates were evaluated by the TİDBO before they were deemed valid. According

to the chair of the TSMF, after the TİDBO Board approved the sign language certificates of the candidates, the SHÇEK general directorate received applications for the interpreting positions it had previously declared.

The validation of their sign language certificates was not the only criterion for the job applicants to be accepted for the interpreter positions. After the application period was over, the TİDBO board administered an exam with the participation of all TİDBO member institutions. Those who passed the exam were entitled to receive sign language interpreter certificates. The exam consisted of video conversations in TİD and Turkish that the examinees were asked to interpret. In addition, they were distributed written texts that included passages on a number of subject matters. The examinees were then required to make on sight interpretation into TİD from the texts. However, only 24 of approximately 80 applicants could pass the certification exam.

According to the TSMF chair, the TİD courses offered by the MEB were designed following the 2007 job advert of the SHÇEK. After the release of the advert, some people applied to the MEB's public training centers in Ankara, the capital, to learn TİD. However, the GDLLL (General Directorate of Life Long Learning) did not offer TİD courses in 2007. Following the requests they received for TİD lessons, the GDLLL assigned teachers working at Deaf schools to offer TİD courses at its public training centers. Afterwards, the 120-hours TİD courses were introduced and spread to the country. The TSMF chair also stated that some of the candidates that took the 2007 TİDBO exam were the first attenders of the MEB's TİD courses. However, none of them were successful at the certification exam. The TSMF chair also commented that the candidates who had participated the MEB's TİD trainings had dramatically weak TİD command. However, the MEB did not

upgrade its TİD courses after the TİDBO exam even though its representatives were also among the examination jury of the TİDBO.

In 2013, the ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) announced a second TİDBO exam to employ sign language interpreters. The new exam aimed at filling the vacant interpreter positions in several provincial ASPB directorates. The exam was carried out in a similar fashion with the previous TİDBO exam in terms of the examination method (the TSMF Chair, personal communication, April 15, 2017). A commission including four MEB members and three TİDBO members was set up to carry out the examination for certifying sign language interpreters (the ASPB website). An interesting aspect of the exam was that the interpreters previously employed by the SHÇEK were also required to take the new TİDBO examination (the ASPB interpreters, personal communication, July 7, 2017). In fact the 2006 regulation on “The Education and Working Principles of Personnel that Procures Sign Language Interpreting Services” stated that the certification provided to sign language interpreters by the TİDBO would be valid for five years. Therefore the 2013 certification exam was also seized as an opportunity to renew the certifications of existing interpreters. I intrinsically wondered what would have happened if an ASPB (by 2013 the ASPB had replaced the SHÇEK) interpreter failed the 2013 certification exam. One of the interpreters I interviewed was among the interpreters re-examined by the TİDBO in 2013. She answered that they were not informed about the procedure the ASPB and/or the TİDBO would have followed if one of the interpreters previously certified in 2007 failed the 2013 examination. It is obviously an unusual practice not to have a clear-cut policy regarding the future employment (or dismissal) of the interpreters the ASPB and the TİDBO tested in 2013. It can be considered as an indicator of an insufficiently planned and managed employment

process in general. Luckily, all interpreters previously certified by the TİDBO were successful at the second TİDBO examination. They eventually kept their positions at the ASPB.

In total, 87 people passed the TİDBO certification exam among approximately 930 candidates (the TSMF chair and the ASPB interpreters, personal communication). Even though Diriker (2015) states that the TİDBO certification exam was carried out on an hoc basis, it was nevertheless a more selective exam method compared to the current sign language trainer and interpreter certifications the MEB offers. On the other hand, when the TİDBO certification and the MEB certification are compared, it is clear that with the introduction of the MEB's SLTIT courses, the certification system for sign language interpreters in Turkey has not improved but deteriorated. In 2014, the MEB introduced its sign language trainer and interpreter courses. A regulation issued in 2011 (Türk İşaret Dili Sisteminin Oluşturulması ve Uygulanmasına Yönelik Usul ve Esasların Belirlenmesine İlişkin Yönetmelikte Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Yönetmelik) entitled the MEB to offer interpreting courses and certification. However, since the ASPB has not announced a new job advert for sign language interpreters since 2013, it is not clear if the TİDBO examination will continue or the MEB's certification will be deemed adequate when assessing future interpreter candidates for the ASPB.

It should also be highlighted that it took the ASPB six years to announce its second job advert for employing sign language interpreters while most interpreter positions were already vacant. During the interview, the TSMF chair stated that the TİDBO and its projects were largely neglected after 2007. The TSMF chair further claimed that the exam in 2013 was organized following the TSMF's endeavors to re-activate the TİDBO work. As mentioned in section 2.2, the fact that the TDK's

(Turkish Language Agency) sign language dictionary was also published only after 2012 can be another indicator of neglect. In fact, the TİDBO has not accelerated or intensified its work after 2013 either. The interpreters I interviewed stated that the TİDBO Board has not organized a meeting in years. Their statements support the TSMF's claims of neglect. On the other hand, the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs supported and financed the project on the preparation of *Turkish Sign Language Grammar Book* as mentioned in section 2.2. Within this scope, we cannot claim a total neglect in terms of projects that target the Deaf community. On the other hand, we might infer that the documentation of the TİD has lately been the priority of the TİDBO member institutions.

Currently 60 interpreters certified by the TİDBO are employed by the ASPB. The General Directorate of Services for the Disabled and the Old (GDSDO) (Engelli ve Yaşlı Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü) is the division within the ASPB that runs the interpreting services for the Deaf. Therefore, sign language interpreters are deployed at the directorates of services for the disabled and the old that operate within the provincial ASPB directorates. Unfortunately only 40 provincial ASPB directorates have a sign language interpreter/interpreters deployed (the GDSDO, personal communication, July 7, 2017). This means that there is no sign language interpreter deployed at the provincial ASPB directorates in almost half of the Turkish cities. In metropolitan cities that are more densely populated, more than one interpreter can be assigned to the provincial ASPB directorates. For instance, 3 interpreters are deployed at the İstanbul directorate while 4 interpreters work for the provincial ASPB directorate of Ankara, the capital of Turkey. In addition, there are 4 sign language interpreters deployed at the ASPB headquarters in Ankara. These interpreters are responsible for providing sign language interpreting during the

events, i.e. conferences, seminars and trainings, organized by the ASPB. They also supervise the interpreting services provided by the provincial ASPB directorates. In case a Deaf citizen, an interpreter or a public institution that uses the ASPB's interpreting services has a complaint, they initially contact the interpreters deployed at the ASPB headquarters. The interpreters deployed at the ASPB headquarters can also participate in the TİDBO meetings (the ASPB interpreters, personal communication, July 7, 2017).

According to the ASPB interpreters, most of their colleagues are CODA people. However, even the non-CODA interpreters have been closely engaged with the Deaf community due to their Deaf or hard of hearing relatives and/or friends. When I mentioned about the small number of active sign language interpreters that are not CODA people and the insufficiency of the current training system in Turkey to train future interpreters, the ASPB interpreters I interviewed also agreed. Their common belief is that a training that is limited to a few months and lacks a proper design to engage its subjects with the Deaf community cannot succeed. They complained about the current policy of the MEB which prevents the Deaf from teaching at the interpreter training courses. As mentioned in chapter 4, the Deaf usually cannot participate the current SLTIT (sign language trainer and interpreter training) courses of the MEB since most of them do not supply the criteria of having a university degree. Pointing to this obstacle caused by the current regulations, the interpreters remarked that the public training centers of the MEB should start providing higher quality trainings with the inclusion of Deaf people among the teaching staff. One of the interpreters stated that the MEB's trainings should become more flexible and commented as follows

What I mean with flexibility is amending the requirements expected from the trainers teaching at the MEB's TİD and interpreter courses. I know a number of Deaf people who are excellent trainers. If the current system is amended, not only will the Deaf be provided with new employment opportunities but also the quality of the trainings will increase. We should go beyond the prejudice that only CODA people can do this job. On the contrary, as long as appropriate education is offered, other people can also become sign language interpreters. The same applies to all languages. (the ASPB's sign language interpreter, personal communication, July 7, 2017)

It should also be noted that the ASPB interpreters' comments on the MEB's trainings apply both to the SLTİT and TİD courses. They believe that Deaf trainers will inevitably increase the quality of the both.

4.3.2 Working conditions of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs' interpreters

Following the decision to employ sign language interpreters at the SHÇEK directorates, the Regulation on the Training and Working Conditions of Personnel Procuring Sign Language Interpreting Services (İşaret Dili Tercümanlığı Hizmeti Verecek Personelin Yetiştirilmesi ile Çalışma Esasları Hakkında Yönetmelik) was issued in 2006 and published on the Official Gazette numbered 26264. Article 7 in the Regulation is concerned with the duties of the interpreters. Accordingly, the sign language interpreter shall (a) provide communication with the Deaf or hard of hearing, (b) sign and approve the documents that are related with the interpreting services provided to the Deaf, (c) act as a sworn interpreter in legal cases, and (d) keep a report for the each interpreting service provided, and send a copy of the report to the relevant official institution upon request. Article 8, on the other hand, regulates working conditions of the interpreters and how official institutions may contact them to ask for their services. When public institutions need sign language interpreters, they shall notify the provincial SHÇEK directorate (currently the ASPB directorate) about their request via a petition which includes information regarding the context,

place, and date of the interpreting service in question. The regional directorate examines the request and assigns its sign language interpreter if the request is approved. Here, one inevitably wonders what happens in emergency cases. In Turkey, official correspondences usually take a few days to be processed, especially if the correspondence is between two different institutions. In that case, it would not be possible for the regional directorate of the ASPB to respond to interpreting requests in short notice. As such, a public institution that requires sign language interpreting should always be notified about the language assistance requirement beforehand so that it can ask for an interpreter on time. In emergency cases, do the officials reschedule the Deaf individual for a later date and wait for the assignment of an interpreter by the ASPB? Or, do they resort to ad hoc solutions and ignore the entire procedure regarding the ASPB's sign language interpreting services? This was one of the questions I asked to the ASPB interpreters. Apparently, the public institutions that require sign language interpreting services do apply to the ASPB's regional directorates prior to the actual date of the service. However, in emergency cases, whether an interpreter will be supplied or not depends on the schedule of the interpreter(s) deployed at the relevant provincial administration. According to the ASPB interpreters, if interpreters are assigned to provide sign language interpreting during an event or meeting organized directly by the ASPB, they are expected to prioritize their assignments at the Ministry. However, the ASBP administrations may not be facing such emergencies as often as one might think. The main reason is the lack of awareness among other public institutions and their officers in general regarding the sign language interpreting services they can procure from the ASPB. One of the interpreters commented on the issue as follows

I don't think public institutions in Turkey are aware of the sign language interpreting services available through the ASPB interpreters. Actually our Ministry informed other governmental institutions about this service in 2007. I am sure that my colleagues working at the provincial directorates are still doing their best to inform the Deaf although there is no project directly led by the ASPB administrators in that sense. Sometimes the Deaf can also contact us for more information. However, the communication and cooperation is not at the level we initially expected. Their (other public institutions) priority is always solving the interpreting and communication issues within their offices. They resort to the assistance of other institutions only when they cannot handle the situation on their own. For this reason, I do not think that the interpreters deployed at the provincial directorates are used efficiently. (the ASPB's sign language interpreter, personal communication, July 7, 2017)

The ASPB interpreters also observe that the entire Deaf community cannot benefit from their services since they do not know about it. However, the interpreters have so far received positive reactions and comments from the Deaf individuals they have assisted.

An interesting point that arose during the interviews was related with telephone interpreting. I learned that one of the provincial ASPB directorates started a telephone interpreting line that uses teleconference technology to assist the Deaf. This service is currently provided in Gaziantep province and two interpreters are deployed to work for the telephone interpreting line. As mentioned in section 2.2, this project actually envisaged addressing to the entire country. However, the ASPB has not been able to spread it country-wide. The current number of interpreters which is apparently insufficient (60 interpreters in a country of approximately 80 million) can be the major reason behind this delay. Another interesting point is that sometimes, especially in urgent cases, Deaf individuals can video-call the ASPB interpreters to request interpreting. Those who call the interpreters are usually the people they have previously assisted or the Deaf individuals that they are acquainted with through their own social circles. However, in such cases the interpreters are

called through their personal contact numbers (usually their mobile phones). The interpreters stated that they do their best to assist the people that reach them through their personal phones. On the other hand, this practice puts the interpreters in a complex situation in which they have to take personal initiatives each time they decide to respond such interpreting requests. It also makes it impossible for the Deaf individual to complain about any potential misconduct since the interpreting is not provided in an official setting. However, this situation can be regarded as an indicator that video-calls can be a practical and accessible solution to reach the Deaf community for their interpreting needs in public contexts. Subsequently, the interpreters I contacted also agreed that establishing a comprehensive interpreting line and ensuring that the Deaf community and the state institutions are sufficiently informed about the practice would be an effective and reasonable solution. However, one of the interpreters was concerned about the challenges the telephone interpreting line can possibly cause. She commented as follows

Telephone interpreting may not be an effective option when, for instance, courts are concerned. Because the interpreter should be present at the courtroom to sign the relevant documents in person. You cannot do anything about this procedure when you are on a video-call. Would it be possible to solve this problem? I don't know. Maybe an inter-institutional protocol can be the solution. However, this is a big step and high-ranking statesmen can only take such steps. I cannot predict what kind of problems the video-call system can cause. Because I know that the procedure about the interpreter's signature is very important. Or, would every doctor want to see their patients when they are video-recorded? This has been one of our hesitations since the beginning of this project. Some doctors may be against the idea of being recorded by a phone. The same applies to Deaf patients. So, how can we find a suitable solution? People can have diverse opinions about this practice. In short, video-calls can be a good solution overall but we should discuss in which contexts we can resort them. (the ASPB's sign language interpreter, personal communication, July 7, 2017)

It is clear that a video-call line would be a practical solution especially when emergency sign language interpreting requests of other public institutions are concerned. According to the ASPB interpreters, courts, the ministry of health (hospitals) and police stations are the public institutions in Turkey that most frequently request the ASPB's interpreting services. For this reason, it is important that these official bodies are included to the entire process when an interpreting line is planned. Their active participation in the planning stage will definitely make it easier to overcome the legislative or operative obstacles that might prevent the video-call interpreting services from reaching the masses.

There is another point I have to make regarding the interpreting the ASPB interpreters provide for the courts. As will be mentioned in more detail in section 4.5, the Provincial Justice Commissions in each city keep a list of the interpreters they can assign for their trials. These lists include sign language interpreters as well. In that case, it is not clear on what basis the judges and prosecutors appoint an ASPB interpreter or a sign language interpreter within the relevant Justice Commission's list for a Deaf citizen's trial. This is just another indicator of how complex and vaguely planned the community interpreting services offered for the Deaf in Turkey are.

During my interviews with the ASPB interpreters, I found out that they have had a number of in-service trainings as of 2007. The initial training in 2007 was delivered by the TSMF (Turkish National Federation of the Deaf). This training aimed informing the ASPB's (SHEÇ back in the day) newly appointed sign language interpreters about the international associations of the Deaf and sign language interpreters as well as the interpreting practices in other parts of the world (the TSMF chair, personal communication). In the following years, the ASPB interpreters

participated in trainings delivered by academicians specialized in translation and interpreting as well. The main focus of these trainings was familiarizing the ASPB interpreters about the theoretical and practical dimensions of translation and interpreting since none of the ASPB interpreters had an academic background in the field. The interpreters stated that they are open for further training in the field to improve their knowledge and awareness of the field. Unfortunately the ASPB interpreters have so far not been offered training on professional ethics. The interpreters I interviewed stated that not all ASPB interpreters are İDTĐ members. This means that some ASPB interpreters may not be informed about the İDTĐ's code of conduct. This can be a primary area the İDTĐ (Sign Language Interpreters Association) and the relevant academic departments in the country can cooperate with the ASPB.

Last but not least, the interpreters are dissatisfied with the low wages they are paid by the Ministry. They also face a number of logistic challenges when they are assigned to other public institutions to provide interpreting for the Deaf. They usually cannot have an official car provided for their use. Therefore they are expected to find suitable solutions on their own to reach the relevant public where they are expected to interpret. Their solution is usually using the public transportation and the transportation fees paid by the interpreters themselves. This is an urgent problem that requires solution and is undoubtedly against international professional standards.

As can be inferred from this section, the ASPB's sign language interpreting services require improvement not only in terms of the quantity of the interpreters but also the quality of the interpreting services and the interpreters' working conditions.

4.4 The association of sign language interpreters

The association of sign language interpreters (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği) (İDTD) was founded in 2010 (the İDTD chair, personal communication). The association lays down its objective as finding solutions to the problems sign language interpreters encounter in professional and social contexts and professionalizing sign language interpreting in Turkey (the İDTD, n.d.).

The association was founded by sign language interpreters and received the support of the TSMF (Turkish National Federation for the Deaf) since the chair of the TSMF was one of the founding chairpersons of the association. The İDTD became a member of the TSMF and the chair of the TSMF became the honorary chairperson of the İDTD. The association cooperated with the TSMF according to the protocols signed between the two. These protocols included the following objectives:

- i. carrying out joint projects with the TSMF's Turkish Sign Language Board to train sign language interpreters,
- ii. supporting the Turkish Sign Language Board in preparing the curriculum for the interpreter training programs,
- iii. selecting the trainers that will teach at the interpreter training programs in coordination with the Turkish Sign Language Board,
- iv. collaborating with universities, state institutions and NGOs for projects that aim improving sign language interpreting in Turkey. (The İDTD, n.d.)

However, despite a collaborative start, the relationship between the İDTD and the TSMF got complicated. In its general assembly held in May 2017, the İDTD cancelled the honorary chairperson position it had previously attributed to the chair of the TSMF. Not surprisingly, the chair of the TSMF was quite critical of the İDTD during my interview. The TSMF criticizes the İDTD for remaining silent and inactive for the last three years while there was an obvious need to take action for

designing a new and more organized training system of the sign language interpreters. During my interview with the İDTĐ chair, on the other hand, I found out that the TSMF is no longer a member of the TĐDBO Board. The İDTĐ and the Confederation of the Deaf, established in 2015 (Sağırklar Konfederasyonu, n.d.) now represent the sign language interpreters and the Deaf community at the TĐDBO Board. As mentioned in Chapter 4.2.1, the 2006 regulation (the official gazette numbered 26139) stated that the Deaf Federation that has the highest number of members is entitled to join the TĐDBO Board. The TSMF represented most of the Deaf associations when the TĐDBO Boards were first established. However, in 2015, the Confederation of the Deaf was established and it was automatically granted the right to represent the Deaf community in TĐDBO Board since confederations are attributed greater representative authority by the Turkish law. Nevertheless, the İDTĐ chair stated that they are aware of the importance of collaboration among Deaf associations and that they shall continue their cooperation with the TSMF as well.

It is clear that both the TSMF and the İDTĐ are significant associations for the professionalization of interpreting services for the Deaf in Turkey. A conflict between the two definitely would not benefit the Deaf community or the sign language interpreting profession. The İDTĐ and the Confederation of the Deaf, the two non-governmental bodies that currently represent the Deaf community and sign language interpreters at TĐDBO Board, on the other hand, appear to be in close collaboration with each other. The İDTĐ chair at the same time serves as the deputy chair of the Confederation of the Deaf (Sağırklar Konfederasyonu, n.d.).

The İDTĐ is a member of the WASLI (World Association of Sign Language Interpreters) and the EFSLİ (European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters). The association has also laid down a code of ethics for sign language interpreters. If the

İDTD discovers that an interpreter has breached its ethical principles following the investigation of a complaint, the membership of the interpreter in question can be terminated (the İDTD website). The chair of the İDTD stated that they took the WASLI and EFSLI code of ethics as examples when they were preparing their own. According to the İDTD's code of ethics, a sign language interpreter

- i. abides by the principle of confidentiality,
- ii. provides interpreting services without discriminating the clients based on their gender, religion, disability or any other criteria,
- iii. analyzes the needs of the clients and makes the necessary arrangements before and during interpretation,
- iv. interprets the message in a discreet manner,
- v. interprets the message clearly, correcting the mistakes in the source message discreetly,
- vi. seeks support when necessary to be able to transfer the message without omissions,
- vii. solves the communication challenges that may arise,
- viii. refrains from giving advice or stating personal opinion,
- ix. provides interpretation without violating the client's rights,
- x. updates her knowledge of the laws, policies, rules and regulations related with the profession,
- xi. adapts herself according to specific interpreting cases,
- xii. respects her clients,
- xiii. investigates available opportunities for professional development. (the İDTD, n.d.)

The fifth point seems at some point problematic since it entitles the interpreter to interfere with the client's message when deemed necessary. This is an unfamiliar component when the code of ethics followed by other professional associations in the world, such as the RID as briefly discussed in section 3.2, are considered. As mentioned within the literature review in section 2.2, some members of the Turkish Deaf community can experience problems communicating with TİD. This is mainly due to late exposure to the language. The article 5 might have been included to the İDTD's code of ethics in order to provide the interpreters the authority to interfere in the communication flow in cases when the Deaf clients cannot use TİD effectively.

However, even so, the cases of interference that are regarded acceptable by the İDTD should be explained in detail so that this article is not misinterpreted or abused by the interpreters. I should also state that the İDTD chair mentioned about their plans to organize seminars in cooperation with the WASLI and the EFSLI. The seminars will focus on professional issues, including code of ethics as well. Future seminars with international associations can improve the İDTD's code of ethics. Currently the İDTD is focused on the 2017 Deaf Olympics which will be held in Samsun, Turkey. The İDTD chair stated that they are seeking the WASLI and EFSLI's assistance to organize trainings on International Sign (IS) for their interpreters who will interpret during the organization.

The İDTD chair stated that membership to the İDTD provides its members a professional network. According to the chair, since the İDTD is the only association in Turkey that represents sign language interpreters, several private and public entities contact the İDTD when they require sign language interpreting at their organizations.

The İDTD also provides sign language interpreter certificates, which are in no way connected to the certification offered by the SLTIT courses of the MEB. According to the İDTD website, when an interpreter applies for certification, the association forms an examination committee and tests the applicants' interpretation skills. The examination committee includes a Deaf member of the Turkish Sign Language Board, one representative of the TSMF and 2 representatives of the İDTD, on condition that all representatives are fluent in TİD.

The MEB sign language trainer and interpreter certification is not deemed sufficient for İDTD certification, nor is it a prerequisite to have the MEB certificate to apply for the İDTD certification exam (the İDTD chair, personal communication,

May 10, 2017). In fact, the chair of the İDTĐ is firmly against the MEB interpreter trainings. She commented that it is definitely unreasonable that the MEB issues certificates that enable people to work as TĐD trainers and interpreters. According to the İDTĐ chair, the MEB's SLTĐT courses do not go beyond basic language courses and are far from developing teaching and/or interpreting skills in terms of their duration and curriculum.

The chair of the İDTĐ was also critical of the examination format of the MEB, which is a multiple-choice exam format as mentioned in section 4.2.5. The İDTĐ certification exam, on the other hand, evaluates the interpreting performance of the candidates. The candidates are asked to consecutively and simultaneously interpret certain texts written or signed by the committee members into Turkish and the TĐD. However, this examination also consists of a single session that focuses solely on interpreting performance. The candidates are not subjected to an interview or written exam on the Deaf culture, linguistic characteristics of TĐD or the social structure in which they will work as in the case of the RID certification exams as mentioned in section 3.1.2.

The İDTĐ has four different competency categories. According to the İDTĐ website, level 1 is the beginning level. This category includes those who want to learn the sign language and become interpreters in the future. The people in the level 1 category become volunteer members of the association. Only those who are entitled to receive certificates for level 2 and above become full İDTĐ members. Nevertheless, the volunteer members are also informed about and can participate in the seminars and trainings offered by the association. However, they do not have the right to vote at the İDTĐ's general assemblies (the İDTĐ chair, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

The level 2 category, on the other hand, includes people who can use the TİD on basic level to communicate with the Deaf. The level 3 and level 4 interpreters can work in community interpreting settings. However, only the level 4 interpreters can work as simultaneous TİD interpreters at conferences (the İDTD chair). According to the İDTD website, the level 4 category includes sign language interpreters with interpreting experience of at least 5 years. During my interview with the İDTD chair, I found out that all their level 3 and 4 members are CODA people while the level 1 and 2 members usually consist of people holding the MEB's SLTİT certificates. The association has 220 members in total.

It can be inferred that the İDTD has a more or less ad hoc examination system. The examination committee does not include permanent members. The judgment criteria regarding the performance of the applicant during the examination is not clear. Thus, how an applicant's performance is judged is based on the personal approaches of the committee members towards interpreting. In that sense, we can say that the İDTD's certification exam more or less resembles the previous TİDBO exams in terms of its ad-hoc nature. However, the chair of the İDTD stated that they have been cooperating with the Professional Qualifications Agency (MYK) in the preparation of professional qualifications for sign language interpreters, as briefly mentioned in section 2.4. According to the İDTD chair, the new MYK regulation on sign language interpreters will set new standards for the profession. The chair stated that the new regulation would require the establishment of a new certification system and authorize an institution to administer the certification exams. The institutions willing to certify and register sign language interpreters will apply to the MYK after the institution releases the professional qualifications report. The İDTD chair also stated that they plan to apply to the MYK for becoming the officially authorized

body to certify sign language interpreters in Turkey. The chair of the İDTD also hopes that the new MYK regulation will eliminate the validity of the sign language interpreter and trainer certificates offered by the MEB. She stated that the MEB should be authorized to offer only TİD courses and certificates that indicate one's level of TİD. I also asked the chair of the İDTD about the examination format the İDTD plans to administer if it is entitled to officially certify the sign language interpreters in Turkey. I found out that during the MYK meetings, a commission including the representatives of the MYK, the İDTD, other professional translation and interpreting associations (TURÇEF), and academicians from related fields of study was established. The commission also worked on the format of certification exams, the criteria the candidates should have to apply for certification, and the characteristics of the commission that will administer and evaluate the exams. However, the İDTD chair could not share more details about the future certification exams since examination format will be finalized once the MYK regulation on sign language interpreters is released and an agency to certify sign language interpreters is authorized. The chair of the İDTD also stated that universities should urgently start working on developing sign language interpreting programs.

4.5 Sign language interpreters at the court

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.4, the Code of Criminal Procedure 5271 gave the complainants and defendants the right to demand an interpreter if they are not fluent in Turkish. Within this scope, provincial justice commissions issue and keep a list of interpreters. The interpreter lists are updated each year. There are currently 18 sign language interpreters registered in the İstanbul Provincial Justice Commission's list of interpreters (İstanbul Justice Commission, personal communication, April 28,

2017). However, it is not a prerequisite to present a document to prove one's language competence to be included in the list. The applicant merely signs a declaration that states s/he is competent in the language in question. Those who have a university degree or language certificate add this information to their applications files so that they can be given priority on the list of available interpreters and translators. The same practice applies to sign language interpreters as well (İstanbul Justice Commission, personal communication, April 28, 2017).

During my communication with the İstanbul Justice Commission's Translation Department, I was given access to the application files of the sign language interpreters on their list. Upon a brief examination of the files, I saw that one interpreter stated on his application form that he was at the same time an employee of the TSMF (Turkish National Federation for the Deaf). Another interpreter added his 200-hours SLTIT certificate issued by the MEB to his application file while another one submitted a 120-hours TİD certificate. In other words, there was no standard in terms of the educational background or previous interpreting experience of the applicants.

The interpreters appointed by the court to provide interpreting during the trials are paid by the state. I also asked the officers at the Translation Department what happens if someone gives a false statement regarding her/his language competence and fails to interpret correctly during a trial. I learned that they never experienced such a case. On the other hand, the article 276 of the Turkish Criminal Procedural Law states that if an interpreter or a legal expert appointed by a legal authority misstates, the individual in concern shall be sentenced to prison term for at least one and at most three years. Considering the almost arbitrary interpreter

selection criteria followed by the courts, one can infer that there is a problem in terms of the enforcement of the article 276 of the Turkish Criminal Code.

Apparently there is an obvious lack of standardization regarding the translation and interpreting services provided in the legal context. The misconception that anyone who speaks a foreign language can be a translator/interpreter applies to legal institutions as well. The current translation and interpreting practices in the legal context can be considered as a significant indicator of the low professional status attributed to interpreters of the spoken and signed languages by the Turkish state and its official bodies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Sign language interpreting in public contexts has become more visible and prevalent in Turkey within the last decade. Several factors have contributed to the recent emergence of community interpreting services in sign language: government legislation, the resulting interest of Turkish society and institutions in sign language, and the increased media visibility of the profession are perhaps the principle factors. The development of interpreting services in TİD provides the Turkish Deaf community broader access to public services, increases their visibility in society and contributes to the establishment of stronger ties between the Deaf and the non-deaf community. As such, the professionalization of sign language interpreting services is extremely significant in creating an environment in which the Deaf have equal access to social services and are better represented in the Turkish community.

If we remember the literature on the professionalization of community interpreting services, it would not be wrong to argue that the sign language interpreting services provided in Turkey within this frame have reached a mediocre level of success. When Ozolins' (2000, 2010) spectrum of response is concerned, we can argue that the sign language interpreting services offered in Turkey are somewhere between the ad hoc and generic level. There already exists a legal framework which recognizes the Deaf and hard-of hearing citizens' right to interpreting in public institutions and holds state institutions responsible for providing interpreting services. Therefore, we cannot talk about an *official* neglect. On the other hand, if we remember the cases of the USA and Sweden, for instance, the provision of public sign language interpreting services has been dramatically

delayed in Turkey. While Sweden recognized its citizen's right to SLI in 1947, similar US laws came into effect in the 1970s, while such legislations were not available for the Turkish Deaf community until 2005.

Similarly, it would not be possible to talk about the prevalence of a legalistic approach to public interpreting services in Turkey. Ozolins (2000, 2010) states that in some countries such as the USA, translation and interpreting practices in legal contexts set an example for the development of the field in general. Unfortunately the current applications of Turkish courts are far from promoting professional development for interpreters. Courts in Turkey do not have established and trustworthy criteria for selecting the interpreters they work with. As section 4.5 indicates, this general lack of standardization in selecting the court interpreters applies to sign language interpreters as well. Provincial Justice Commissions apparently do not require their interpreters to have professional certification or a degree in translation and interpreting or in any relevant field. For this reason, future work on improving translation and interpreting services in Turkey should put special emphasis on the interpreting services provided by the legal institutions as well.

The state has developed a generic interpreting service by employing sign language interpreters at the provincial directorates of the ASPB (the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs). However, this solution is clearly not sufficient for providing comprehensive, well-planned, and timely interpreting services in the country. The community interpreting services provided by the ASPB are not sufficient to meet the actual demand. The insufficient number of interpreters (sometimes only one interpreter in the whole province) and the absence of interpreters in certain provincial directorates diminish the accessibility and the quality of sign language interpreting services. As this study demonstrates, the current

system established by the Ministry fails to answer urgent interpreting demands. The public institutions that require sign language interpreting should get in touch with the directorates of the Ministry days before the actual interpreting takes place. Since the interpreters are also expected to interpret at seminars, conferences, and other events organized by the ASPB, they sometimes cannot prioritize the interpretation requests received from other state institutions for individual cases. The long waiting time for the appointment of interpreters by the ASPB directorates creates certain risks. State institutions can totally ignore the Deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens' interpreting needs or resort to ad-hoc solutions. Both scenarios overshadow the purpose of the interpreting service the Ministry has organized and the right to interpretation the Deaf and hard of hearing have been supplied by the Turkish law. The telephone interpreting line previously planned by the ASPB has not been successfully implemented and currently only one provincial ASPB directorate (in the city of Gaziantep) provides sign language interpreting services using the video-call technology. Moreover, the interpreters working for the ASPB do not think that all public institutions in Turkey are aware of the interpreting service the provincial ASPB directorates offer. Public officers working for the relevant state departments that can potentially benefit from the ASPB's interpreting services have been informed about this service only once, when it was first introduced in 2007. There is clearly a problem regarding the sufficiency of training supplied to the users of the interpreting services. This automatically prevents the ASPB's interpreters from reaching all members of the Deaf community that require interpreting services. Similarly, not all Deaf people are aware of their right to interpretation or the ASPB's interpreting service available.

In addition, the interpreters working for the ASPB are not satisfied with their salaries and complain about the absence of additional resources to pay for their logistic expenses. For this reason, they sometimes have to pay for their own transportation expenses when other institutions require their assistance. The insufficient budget allocation for such costs also damages Deaf community's access to interpreting services. As a result, the current state of public interpreting services is stuck between ad hoc and generic level on Ozolins' (2000) spectrum. Because the interpreting service planned and offered by the ASPB is not sufficient to prevent ad hoc practices and/or total neglect.

If we remember the necessary elements discussed within the theoretical framework to professionalize community interpreting services, it is possible to say that Turkey already has a number of them established. There are laws that grant the Deaf and hard of hearing the right to interpreting, and there is a professional organization as well as a training and certification system. However, as clearly indicated in chapter 4, none of these elements have provided the expected impact and success for the development of a comprehensive SLI approach in the country. First of all, there is a very confusing and complicated setting when we talk about sign language interpreting in Turkey, especially for someone who is an outsider to the field. For instance, there are currently three different sign language interpreter certifications in Turkey, each supplied by different institutions by different examination processes. The TİDBO Board has until today administered two certification exams and most of the TİDBO certificate holders have been employed by the ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) to offer community interpreting services to Deaf citizens. These interpreters perform their profession based on this certification. On the other hand, the MEB (Ministry of National Education) has been

offering sign language trainer and interpreter certificates since 2014 and a large number of people have received this certificate. Although the MEB's interpreter training and certification system can be criticized in a number of aspects as discussed in detail within the section 4.2, the certificates are officially valid and recognized by Turkish government institutions. In addition to these two certifications, the İDTD (Association of Sign Language Interpreters) also has a certification system and a network of interpreters it has so far certified. However the İDTD certification does not have the same level of prestige as the RID certification in the USA or the Kamk certification in Sweden. The İDTD certification does not have official validity. The İDTD certification, unlike the TİDBO and the MEB certifications, does not entitle its holders to provide interpreting services for government institutions since it is not issued and/or approved by a government institution authorized in that sense. One of the main reasons of the limited nature of the İDTD certification is that the association has not been in close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders in the field contrary to the cases of the RID and the KamK.

The complex setting is not only caused by various interpreter certifications. In certain cases, it may not be clear from whom the Deaf procure interpreting services. For instance, while the ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) can deploy its interpreters to court hearings, the courts can also work with the freelancer interpreters enlisted by their justice commissions as discussed in section 4.5. In that case, it is not clear in which cases the ASPB interpreters or the freelancers are appointed for a trial by the respective judges and/or prosecutors. This vagueness complicates the interpreting setting, especially for the Deaf.

The current sign language interpreter training is completely unsuitable for a professional setting. The very fact that the MEB's training program is designed to

train sign language trainers and interpreters within the same program restricts the scope and effectiveness of the training. In addition, the limited duration of instruction (200 hours and a previous 120 hours instruction on TİD) contributes to the problematic nature of the current interpreter training. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education, just like other Turkish institutions, takes the approach that anyone who knows a language can interpret in it as well. To add to the problem, the duration and the nature of instruction provided by the MEB courses are not sufficient for reaching proficiency in TİD either. As can be seen in the examples of the USA and the Sweden, sign language interpreting programs offered at university level usually consist of at least two and often four academic years and are designed to develop a number of skills required for interpreting.

Another problematic aspect of the MEB's SLTIT (sign language trainer and interpreter training) courses is that the participants cannot interact with the Deaf community and culture, since the course design does not allow for such interaction. Moreover, the Deaf cannot teach at the TİD or the SLTIT courses. The main reason behind this restriction is that one must first attend a SLTIT course and receive certification in order to teach TİD and SLTIT courses in the future. Unfortunately the current SLTIT course design does not allow for the Deaf to attend the course because the participants are expected to have college degree. Unfortunately a majority of the Deaf community cannot go beyond high school because of a number of fundamental challenges they face within the Turkish education system as mentioned in section 2.2. Thus, the current regulation on the SLTIT courses prevents the Deaf from receiving the necessary certificate to teach. In that case, engagement with the Deaf community is at the course participants' own discretion even though the trainers are aware of the importance of real-life interactions with the Deaf community. In cases

where students do not make an effort to engage with the Deaf community, the only people with whom they communicate using TİD are their trainers, who are not native signers either.

The certification exams of the MEB are incapable of evaluating the candidates' TİD proficiency, let alone their teaching and interpreting skills. Since the exams are prepared individually by the trainers of each course center, there is a serious lack of standardization. In addition, considering the wide range of skills and aptitudes a certification exam is supposed to assess, one inevitably asks how can an examination consisting only of multiple-choice questions ever be effective.

The inadequacy of the SLTİT courses in terms of improving interpreting skills causes certificate holders to focus their attention on teaching positions at TİD courses that continue to flourish in the country. They avoid taking part in interpreting services and related activities. The SLTİT course trainers I have interviewed also confirmed that their students usually aim at working for language courses once they receive the SLTİT certification. As this study has shown, a large percentage of the people who passed the TİDBO certification exams in 2007 and 2013 and almost all İDTD (Sign Language Interpreters Association) members are CODA people. In other words, the SLTİT courses are not successful in providing new interpreters to the field. Even if the government embarks upon new projects and decides to employ more interpreters for expanding and improving sign language interpreting services in the country, it will clearly be a big challenge to find qualified people to fill these interpreting positions.

The existence of an association of sign language interpreters in Turkey (İDTD) is a promising development for the future professionalization of the field. The association has been remarkably active in improving the professional status of

sign language interpreters and establishing professional standards. Its collaboration with the MYK (Professional Qualifications Authority) to lay down the set of qualifications expected from sign language interpreters is one example of its important contributions to the field. However, its active involvement and cooperation with all relevant public and private stakeholders within the field is extremely important in order to ensure that the professional qualifications of the MYK are embraced by all parties. The future practices of the İDTD are just as important for the provision of an environment that supports and encourages future interpreters. The İDTD functions as a network of interpreters and acts, in some way, as a mediator between its certified interpreters and the clients seeking sign language interpreting services. On the one hand, this mediation benefits the customers since they procure interpreting services from interpreters whose qualifications have been assessed by a professional body. On the other hand, the İDTD should be careful about being transparent in its activities in order to avoid causing a perception of favoritism among interpreters. Another point that the İDTD should prioritize is its code of ethics. The association should make sure that its code of ethics is clearly defined, and understood by its members. Collaboration with international associations of sign language interpreters and translation and interpreting studies departments at Turkish universities can be beneficial to keep the İDTD code of ethics up to date and compatible with international standards.

One of the major issues that prevent the development of a professional sign language interpreting setting is the absence of cooperation among the relevant stakeholders. A clear indicator of this problem is the TSMF chair's remarks about their failed attempts to collaborate with the MEB to improve current TİD and interpreter training programs. During the interview, the TSMF chair commented that

I contacted the relevant general directorate of the Ministry of Education. I kindly asked them to work together on their sign language trainer and interpreter courses. I wanted to inform them about the problematic aspects of their trainings. The TİD trainer and interpreter certificates are valid only if they are approved by the MEB. However, our Federation also has a certain degree of authority since it is a member of the TİDBO board. For this reason, I proposed them to work together and to redesign the courses that will train future TİD trainers and interpreters. (the TSMF Chair, personal communication, April 15, 2017)

Just as the MEB did not cooperate with the TSMF, other Deaf associations, or translation and interpreting departments at Turkish universities when designing the SLTIT courses, it neglected the TSMF's call for improving them as well. However, as the theoretical framework of this study also indicates, cooperation among the public and private stakeholders and the NGOs is a significant component for the development of professional community interpreting and sign language interpreting services. For instance, as discussed in section 3.2.1, in the USA, the RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) and the NAD (National Association of the Deaf) collaborated for establishing the RID code of conduct. These two organizations are still collaborating for the preparation and administration of the RID certification exams. In addition to the RID, the CIT (Confederation of Interpreter Trainers) works with and monitors the university-level interpreting programs. A similar example of collaboration exists in the Swedish context as well. The KamK (Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency) collaborates with the University of Stockholm for its interpreter certification exams, while the University of Stockholm has the authority to monitor interpreting trainings provided by the folk training centers in Sweden. The establishment of an effective collaboration among the stakeholders of sign language interpreting field is a must for the development of standardized and professional interpreting services.

The next chapter proposes recommendations for the professionalization of public sign language interpreting services in Turkey based on the findings of the study and the discussion provided in this chapter.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Needless to say, the endeavors of the government hitherto to recognize and document TİD and provide public interpreting services for the Deaf are indicators of a more inclusive policy and positive intentions for improving the social status of the Turkish Deaf community. How these services are planned and how effectively they are run, on the other hand, are just as important as the provision of the legal framework. However current community interpreting services provided for the Deaf and hard of hearing as well as the available interpreter training system jeopardize the professionalization of sign language interpreting in Turkey.

The Turkish political system resembles more to the Swedish political system since both countries have unitary and central governments in power. In fact, the introduction of the sign language interpreting services in Turkey was also a state-led initiative following the 2005 legislation as in the case of Sweden. Currently both the community interpreting services for the Deaf and interpreter trainings are offered by Ministries. For this reason, the inclusion of state institutions in the process of expanding and professionalizing sign language interpreting services is critical. The current status quo of the sign language interpreting setting in Turkey shows that the field is not ready for a profession-led development process. Here, the significant role of the İDTD (Association of Sign Language Interpreters) in developing and professionalizing sign language interpreting in Turkey is by no means underestimated. On the other hand, it seems that a state-led initiative carried out in cooperation with the İDTD can be more effective to solve the problems in the field. One of the primary solutions can be developing a single, well designed and officially

recognized certification and monitoring system to resolve the complicated certification situation. As such, the TİDBO board plays a key role since it brings the relevant Ministries, representatives of the Deaf community and the association of sign language interpreters together. The TİDBO board should work in active cooperation for developing projects to improve sign language interpreting services in Turkey as in the case of the certification system. When a new certification system is developed, the best interpreter certification practices in the world should also be examined.

Another area that requires urgent improvement is training of sign language interpreters. University-level programs to train sign language interpreters should be established. Regarding this issue, the chair of the İDTİD states

I don't know what the people offering these courses think about teaching or interpreting but I definitely believe that they should not be entitled to certify sign language trainers or interpreters. Instead, universities should directly get involved in this process by developing academic programs for TİD trainers and sign language interpreters. The Ministry of Education should not act as the authority that grants access to this profession. Just as foreign language teachers or interpreters of spoken languages, sign language instructors and sign language interpreters should also attend university level degree programs. (the İDTİD Chair, personal communication, May 10, 2017)

The academy, Deaf associations, and sign language interpreters who have experience in community interpreting and conference interpreting contexts should collaborate in designing a comprehensive curriculum for the degree programs on sign language interpreting. Deaf instructors should also be included within the teaching staff of these programs. In addition, the program design should encourage the students to engage with the Turkish Deaf community and the local Deaf culture as well as introducing them with the medical and social aspects of Deafness. In the process of designing a program for the Turkish context, we must carefully study the curriculum

design of sign language interpreting programs in other countries, such as Sweden and the USA. Extensive literature on training sign language interpreters should also be closely analyzed. A similar process should be followed for the MEB trainings if the public training centers continue providing interpreter training as in the case of Sweden's folk high schools.

The ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) can improve the interpreting services it provides for the Deaf. First of all, the number of sign language interpreters can be increased. This way, the number of interpreters would be sufficient to meet the interpreter requests of the other state institutions. One of the priorities of the ASPB and the TİDBO board would be developing a comprehensive telephone interpreting line and ensuring that is accessible from all Turkish cities. This interpreting line can definitely assist the ASPB interpreters in providing faster assistance to public institutions. In addition, the ASPB should work in close cooperation with the public bodies that frequently resort to the ASPB's interpreting services. Such cooperation can help the ASPB solve legislative and operative challenges the interpreters may potentially experience providing interpreting services using the telephone interpreting line based on teleconference technology. The involvement of all relevant state bodies can decrease the public concerns about confidentiality as well. As mentioned in section 4.3, the ASPB interpreters are worried about the confidentiality concerns that may arise within the service users once the telephone interpreting line is established.

Second, the Ministry should offer training for the users in order to ensure that public service employees are aware of the interpreting assistance they can request from the ASPB. In the Turkish context, in-service trainings would be a suitable method to raise the public institutions' and public service employees' awareness of

sign language interpreting services available for the Deaf community. Another agenda of the in-service trainings should be informing them about how to work with interpreters. In case a comprehensive telephone interpreting line is introduced, the training should include information about the operational principles of the line as well. Ozolins (2000) states that training for users can be haphazard since they often do not reach “those staff in institutions who would most benefit from it” (p.28). For this reason, in-service trainings should be carefully designed and planned so that ultimate benefit is obtained. The TİDBO Board can contribute to the planning and provision of such trainings as well. The TİDBO Board can also play an important role in raising the Deaf community’s awareness of the available interpreting services. The Deaf associations and the ministries within the Board can develop projects to advertise the interpreting services provided for the Deaf by the ASPB. As mentioned in section 2.4, there are already a number of broadcast companies that include sign language interpreting in their TV programs. The TİDBO Board can cooperate with the media to prepare and broadcast ads that inform the citizens about the sign language interpreting services, which will at the same time increase the visibility of sign language interpreters.

The establishment of the İDTD (Sign Language Interpreters Association) and its inclusion in the TİDBO Board will definitely provide undeniable advantages to the field and accelerate its professionalization. It has collaborated with the MYK to lay down the professional qualifications expected from sign language interpreters. The İDTD is also ambitious to become the officially authorized agency to certify sign language interpreters in Turkey. These are indicators of its desire to increase the quality of sign language interpreting services and professional qualities of the interpreters. As the theoretical framework of this study shows, the existence of an

active, objective, and collaborative professional organizations is one of the key elements in ensuring a professional and standardized interpreting system. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the İDTD should be careful about maintaining a transparent and objective stance regarding the representation of its member interpreters. This is particularly significant for strengthening the public and professional confidence in İDTD's activities. The transparent stance of the İDTD therefore should demonstrate that the İDTD maintains an equal distance to its members and does not allow for favoritism. The İDTD can benefit from the practices of other professional organizations to ensure that it establishes a system based on objectivity. The RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf), for instance, has an online directory of interpreters and interpreter agencies, as mentioned in section 3.2. A customer in search of an interpreter or agency can easily use the RID's database which is open to public. In that case, potential customers can directly reach contact details of sign language interpreters or interpreting agencies based on their search criteria (region, name, years of experience, level of certification etc.) on the RID directory. This system ensures transparency since every certified RID member is included in its directory of interpreters and the RID does not directly recommend a certain interpreter for a certain interpreting project. The introduction of a similar system by the İDTD would contribute to its transparency and objectivity, especially if the number of sign language interpreters it certifies increases in the future. It is also crucial that the İDTD collaborates with translation and interpreting departments at Turkish universities regarding the preparation, administration and evaluation of its certification exams if it is officially granted the authority to certify sign language interpreters in Turkey. The İDTD must also continue its cooperation with

international professional organizations in order to keep its mission and code of ethics in line with the international standards.

The initial point of this study was to expose the complex structure of the sign language interpreting as a field that struggles for professionalization in Turkey. It also aimed to offer suitable and applicable solutions for the improvement of the available interpreting services for the Deaf. The study has shown that Turkey already has the necessary legal ground for the development the sign language interpreting services. However, the precipitately planned services without proper investigation of the international examples and the lack of communication and cooperation among the relevant stakeholders have led to a complicated and malfunctioning system.

This study has also shown that a major reason behind the insufficient development of community interpreting services for the Deaf is the general misconception among Turkish institutions that mere language knowledge is sufficient to work as an interpreter. This is a problem that concerns all interpreting fields and their future in Turkey. Within this frame, not only the actors involved in the provision of sign language interpreting services but also the stakeholders of the entire translation and interpreting sector (academic departments, professional associations, translation and interpreting agencies) in Turkey should be in closer coordination to alter this approach. When state institutions recognize translation and interpreting as professions that require a number of linguistic, cognitive, cultural, and professional skills, not only the quality of the translation and interpreting services but also the status of translators and interpreters in professional life shall increase.

APPENDIX

Important Dates

1889: The first Deaf school of the Ottoman Empire is founded.

1923: The first Deaf school of the republican era in 1923 is founded in İzmir.

1953: The Turkish education system begins to exclude the use of sign language in Deaf schools.

2005: The Turkish Code 5378 on Disabled is issued. TİD (Turkish Sign Language) is recognized. The Deaf community is entitled the right to interpreting in TİD in the procurement of public services.

2006: The TİDBO (Türk İşaret Dili Bilim ve Onay Kurulu – Turkish Sign Language Scientific and Approval Board) is established.

2007: The TİDBO administers the first certification exam for sign language interpreters.

2007: The SHÇEK (Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu – Social Services and Child Protection Agency) employs 24 sign language interpreters certified by the TİDBO.

2007: The fingerspelling system for Turkish Sign Language is recognized by the TDK (Türk Dil Kurumu – Turkish Language Society)

2010: The İDTİD (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği – Sign Language Interpreters Association) is established.

2012: The TDK publishes *Turkish Sign Language Dictionary*.

2013: The TİDBO administers its second certification exam for sign language interpreters.

2014: The MYK (Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu – Professional Qualifications

Authority) prepares a draft report on sign language interpreter qualifications.

2015: The ASPB (Ministry of Family and Social Affairs) publishes *Turkish Sign*

Language Grammar Book (Türk İşaret Dili Dilbilgisi Kitabı).

2015: The Confederation of the Deaf (Sağırlar Konfederasyonu) is established, the

TSMF (Turkish National Federation for the Deaf) is no longer represents the

Deaf community in the TİDBO.

2017: In its general assembly, the İDTD cancels the honorary chairperson position it

had previously attributed to the chair of the TSMF.

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