

EUMASLI THESIS



Dealing with gender

A study of gender-inclusive choices

Interpreting from French Sign Language into French

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Abstract

This thesis examines the use of gender-inclusive language in interpreting from French Sign Language (LSF) to French. While LSF seems to have only a few gender markers, the existing literature considers gender to be very present in the French language, and binary (Abbou, 2022). That gender paradigm does not conform with the understanding of gender as a spectrum that has been gaining momentum in France (Viennot, 2014). Furthermore, gender-inclusive language has been more and more used (Abbou, 2022, Viennot, 2014). This research utilises Lami's categorisation of gender-inclusive strategies in French (2022) to evaluate the preferred strategies of four hearing interpreters during two interpreting tasks: one general, mainstream source text and one that has a feminist focus. Enhanced by semi-directed interviews and a think-aloud protocol (TAP), where participants comment on source texts identifying gender issues and explain their choices, this research explores this potentially feminist interpreting practice and its compatibility with the interpreter's role. Data analysis suggests that the inclusiveness of LSF could encourage interpreters to prefer gender-neutral, collective terms or impersonal phrases in French, over word pairs or strategies that make women visible. Worried about negative reactions or overstepping their role, interpreters might also censor themselves and avoid the most visible forms of gender-inclusive language like neologisms. Findings indicate that interpreters navigate between feminist ideology and current language evolution, a shared agency with deaf people they embodied when working in that direction, and the perception of their role, including ethical values. Further research on the effects produced by different chosen strategies on hearing audience could yield knowledge on the general topic of gender-inclusive language. Specifically, when it concerns deaf communities, it could explore language interferences and how LSF can impact French discourse.

Abstract in French

Ce mémoire s'intéresse aux pratiques de langue inclusive dans l'interprétation de la Langue des signes française (LSF) vers le Français. En effet, la LSF semble peu recourir à des marques de genre alors que la littérature indique que le Français est une langue très genrée et binaire (Abbou, 2022), ce qui ne correspond pas à la vision se déployant actuellement en France du

genre comme un spectre (Viennot, 2014). Cette recherche s'appuie sur la catégorisation des stratégies de langue inclusive de Lami (2022) pour explorer les stratégies privilégiées par 4 interprètes entendant·es lors de deux tâches d'interprétation (textes sources standard et féministe). D'autre part, un protocole de pensée à voix haute post-tâche a permis aux participant·es d'identifier des difficultés spécifiques liées au genre dans le texte source voire d'expliquer leurs choix. Également complété par des entretiens individuels, ce travail de recherche explore cette pratique d'interprétation potentiellement féministe et sa compatibilité avec le rôle de l'interprète. Les résultats suggèrent que la relative inclusivité de la LSF pourrait influencer les interprètes à privilégier les termes neutres (épicènes ou collectifs) ou le contournement par des tournures impersonnelles plutôt que la féminisation via les doublons de mots féminin et masculin. Craignant les réactions négatives des personnes entendant·es présentes dans la situation et ne voulant pas outrepasser leur rôle vis-à-vis des personnes sourdes, les interprètes semblent également s'auto-censurer et éviter les formes les plus visibles de langue inclusive comme les néologismes. Les interprètes paraissent naviguer entre leur idéologie féministe, l'évolution actuelle de la langue, une agentivité partagée avec les personnes sourdes qui sont incarnées dans ce sens d'interprétation, et leur rôle et valeurs éthiques. Analyser les effets que produisent différentes stratégies sur des publics entendants permettraient d'approfondir la recherche sur la langue inclusive en général. Dans le cas de langues en contact, l'impact de la LSF sur la production en français est un aspect à explorer également, concernant les communautés sourdes.

Abstract in LSF (not a translation)



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Declaration

I declare that the thesis embodies the results of my own work and has been composed by myself. Where appropriate within the thesis I have made full acknowledgment of the work and ideas of others or have made reference to work carried out in collaboration with other persons. I understand that as an examination candidate, I am required to abide by the Regulations of the University and to conform to its discipline and ethical policy.

Word count: 23 464 words (including references).

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Positionality

As difficult as it is to write a positionality statement, that is “constrained by the very positionality [I] seek to express” (Savoleinen, 2023, p 2), I thought it correct to write one, especially for qualitative research. This way, the reader can have a better idea of the context surrounding this research. Working on a topic that could potentially be considered a feminist interpreting practice, rooted in Feminist research practices and standpoint theories (Naples & Gurr, 2013), it is even more necessary to state my positionality.

As a hearing sign language interpreter, without deaf family but involved in the community since my first interests in the profession, I continuously reflect on my practice, and I am very interested in how my choices impact the interpreted interaction, notably regarding power dynamics. Being a cis-gender able-bodied white woman who so far, has exclusively had heterosexual relationships, gender is the main aspect of my identity that has brought me into uncomfortable to violent situations, and through which I experienced power-imbalanced relationships first hand.

Feminism and feminist research have been a great way for me to understand and overcome some of my lived experiences and realise which ones I could never experience. Especially through learning sign language and discovering deaf spaces, my need to grasp what was at stake in deaf communities was reinforced as I was going to work on a daily basis as a hearing person with people who are part of ‘cultural and linguistic minority groups’ (Kusters et al., 2015, p 9).

While I have observed how often mainstream ideologies are negative about feminism, I could not stop enlarging the knowledge I was acquiring. While being a sign language interpreter student, I have realised the power of language in our mental representations, stereotypes, bias and its political aspect. Since that, I have started questioning gender in my primary language: French. I have been reflecting on my own interpreting choices regarding gender in my use of language, especially when interpreting from French Sign Language (LSF) to spoken French. In the end, studying the use of gender-inclusive language among sign language interpreters working from LSF to French, put me in a position of ‘insider’ (Griffith, 1998; Gair, 2012 as cited by Higson-Sweeney et al., 2022, p 48). That has helped me identify how to design the research and approach interpreters whose participation could be relevant to the topic

(Higson-Sweeney et al., 2022, p 48). However, the latter is influenced by my own perspective on the topic, which I acknowledge here. Also, growing up middle-class, with access to good education, I had the privilege for example to be part of Eumasli which could have impacted how participants perceived me.

That being said, I can assure the reader that I worked on the project as scientifically and as humanly possible, with a rigorous methodology, reflecting on the blind spots, all in an attempt to contribute to the collective body of growing knowledge in our profession.

Some notes on terminology and language use

There is a great variety of terms referring to gender-inclusive language in the French context. The most common ones are inclusive language, non-sexist language, epicene language and inclusive French. Even if some subtle differences exist among this terminology and because this thesis is written in English, this thesis will mainly use ‘gender-inclusive language’. However, it will be used as an umbrella term that can cover various strategies or choices, such as the use of neutral nouns, inclusive neologisms, feminisation of the language (see also section 2.2). ‘Inclusive writing’ is sometimes used as a literal translation of the most used terminology in the French context: ‘écriture inclusive’, referring to gender-inclusive or gender-fair language in written form.

All examples of French words used to illustrate the subject will be written in *italics*, especially for readers that might not be as familiar with French. As I live in metropolitan France, the given examples might be specific to that area of the French-speaking world.

All examples of sign languages will be glossed and written in CAPITAL letters.

Possibly new for the non-French reader, this thesis uses the typographic marker · (mostly known as median point) that is to be found in some written forms of inclusive French. Though, to respect the accessibility guidelines, I used the ‘hyphenation point’ • which looks pretty the same but is more likely to be recognised by screen reader softwares and provides better digital access to this kind of strategies of inclusive French (Schneider, 2019).

1 Introduction

It was a positive surprise reading the guidelines for this thesis and discovering a requirement for the use of gender-inclusive language. In my home country (France), it is still not the norm and people are very often unaware of gender bias implied by the traditional grammatical rule that you learn at school: 'le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin' - the masculine dominates over the feminine [own translation] (Brauer, 2008, p 245; Grunenwald, 2021, p 83). When a group of people includes 99 women and one man, most French people still refer to the group with a masculine word. Gender is marked grammatically and the masculine one is then used as a neutral feature, which does not exist in French (Gygax et al., 2012; Viennot, 2019, p 16). If you work as a translator, you are either a *traducteur* or a *traductrice* ("-eur" refer to a man and "-rice", to a woman). But, even if you are an interpreter, you are either *un* or *une interprète* (*un* marking male, and *une* marking female both used with a gender-unmarked noun). Therefore, if you refer to the whole profession as *les traducteurs*, or *les interprètes*, one is masculine when the other one is gender neutral. To achieve gender equality, one gender should not have control over the other one. That is the reason why feminists have challenged this power relationship in language as well (Abbou, 2022, p 9). Its role in categorising the world has highly impacted their full participation in society (Abbou, 2022, p 9). Also, this thesis will rely on the definition of gender as a complex and fluid aspect of identity, as explored by many researchers (Viennot, 2019, p 33).

The emergence of forms of gender-inclusive language is still quite controversial in France. For example, in 2017, the government adopted a ministerial decree that discourages alternatives to generic masculine and explicitly targets inclusive writing practices (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 27). In 2021 a policy proposal aimed to 'prohibit and penalise the use of inclusive writing in public administrations and organisations in charge of a public service or receiving public subsidies' (Abbou, 2022, p 67). To date, the bill is being read by the Committee on Constitutional Law, Legislation and General Administration of the Republic. Interestingly, this polemic is mainly coming from people lacking proper knowledge on what gender-inclusive language constitutes (Viennot, 2019, p 107) and focuses on a specific typographic marker - that can be found in *traducteur·ices*, yet promoted by the High Council for Equality (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 29). But in spoken French language, you would simply pronounce both words *traducteurs* and *traductrices*, or use *traductaires*, which is a neologism for translators

in a gender-neutral way, based on a suffix that is to be found in other epicene words such as *destinataire* (recipient) and has started to spread, within the profession at least (Alpheratz, 2021, p 18; Lami, 2022, p 10).

Interpreters play an important role in conveying meaning through language. But, as part of the interaction, it could be argued that every choice can impact it and challenge their role and their ethical values, such as neutrality. Gender is an important aspect of identity of deaf people (Barnartt, 2006). Furthermore, sign language interpreting is a female-dominated profession (Gebruers 2022, MacDougall, 2012). Thus, it could be argued that gender issues are crucial to explore. Since the 1970s, Feminist Translation studies have focused both on the translation of feminist texts and the way women could be visible in the language when the translation was coming from a 'natural gender language' like English, into a 'grammatical gender language', like French (Horvath et al, 2016, p 2). However, the concept of feminist interpreting has not been documented that much. And as pointed out by Castro & Ergun (2018, p 2-3), most research about gender avoids the use of the word 'feminism' preferring "other terms that euphemise the political," as reminded by Carvalho Fonseca in Susam-Saraeva et al. (2023, p 4). As a professional practitioner myself, working with a sign language that has few markers of gender (LSF) and a 'grammatical gender language' (French), I am interested in analysing how interpreters who have similar concerns deal with gender. More specifically, this thesis will focus on the following questions:

What are the preferred gender-inclusive strategies of interpreters working from French Sign Language into French?

Are there differences between a feminist discourse and a general discourse?

An additional research question would be to explore the following:

What impacts their decision-making process?

The current thesis will first focus on the existing literature about differences in working with languages in terms of gender markers, the recent rise of gender-inclusive language, and the perception of interpreters' role in that specific case. The methodology section will explain how the research was designed and realised. The results are shared in the data analysis section. Finally, the discussion brings together the literature review and the findings, to answer both research questions.

2 Navigating language evolution and the interpreter's role

This chapter considers the evolution of gender presence in both working languages, LSF and French. It also examines the notion of inclusive language and gender-inclusive language, especially the variety of strategies used in French. Moreover, the evolution of the interpreter's role and how it is related to feminist translation in interpreting studies will be investigated in this chapter.

2.1 Gender in both working languages

Grammatical gender is a proposal to classify the world (Abbou, 2022, p 22), and I will focus in this section on the way signs/words referring to humans are assigned a gender or not – both in French and LSF.

2.1.1 Gender in LSF

Research on gender in sign language interpreting is pretty scarce (Gebruers, 2022, p 18). Specifically concerning LSF, it could be argued that there is no proper grammatical gender per se (Tournadre & Hamm, 2018, p 11), not in the same way gendered languages like French or Italian function. Indeed, in her descriptive grammar of LSF, Millet (2019, p 39) explains how sign languages have been analysed historically: applying frameworks initially created for spoken languages. In the case of LSF, she thinks most lexical signs can be part of several categories – like nouns, adjectives, and verbs (Millet, 2019, p 79).

In American Sign Language (ASL), the location of a sign is used as a marker for gender (Wilkinson, 2009, p 68). Specifically for kinship terminology, signs referring to men are placed on the top of the forehead and the ones referring to women on the lower part of the face, which could be a metaphor of imbalanced social positions between men and women (Kopf, 2022, p 6-7). In Japanese Sign Language (JSL), for kinship, gender is marked by a specific finger in the handshape: thumb for a male kin, pinky finger for a female kin, middle finger referring to a male sibling, and ring finger for a female sibling (Wilkinson, 2009, p 68). In regard to these gender markings in ASL and JSL potentially including power relationships, it could be questioned whether LSF has the same kind of hierarchy.

In LSF, gender can be expressed: mostly in a binary perspective of gender. Some signs referring to humans exist as a pair, for instance: MAN and WOMAN, or MOTHER and FATHER (Delaporte, 2007, p 240, 288, 380 and 453-454, see also Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).



HOMME 3. © Ivt 1993.

Figure 1 Drawing of LSF sign for MAN (Delaporte, 2007, p 288)



FEMME. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 2 Drawing of LSF sign for WOMAN (Delaporte, 2007, p 240)



PÈRE 4.
© Ivt 1986.

Figure 3 Drawing of LSF sign for FATHER (Delaporte, 2007, p 453-454)



MÈRE 2. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 4 Drawing of LSF sign for MOTHER (Delaporte, 2007, p 380)

Interestingly, Delaporte (2007), who studied LSF signs' etymology, noticed that hearing teachers may have influenced the evolution. Indeed, there was initially a unique sign for father/mother/parent (2014, p 454, see also Figure 5), and hearing teachers asked their deaf students to add the information of MAN or WOMAN (2014, p 455).



PÈRE 2. Pélissier 1856
« père, mère ».

Figure 5 Drawing of ancient LSF sign for PARENTS (Delaporte, 2007, p 381)

Consequently, gender may have occurred in LSF throughout time, with the rising inclusion of deaf people in French society, which sees gender as binary (Abbou, 2022, Viennot, 2014), leading to French influencing LSF. The way the actual sign PARENT(S) is made as a compound of FATHER and MOTHER (Delaporte, 2007, p 438, see also Figure 6) also shows the heteronormativity that underlines in gender issues (Pringle, 2008).



PARENTS. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 6 Drawing of modern LSF sign for PARENTS (Delaporte, 2007, p 438-439)

Interestingly, Wilkinson (2009, p 68) noticed that kinship is the only domain where gender marking is part of nominal constructions in Argentinean Sign Language, where gender marking is intrinsically part of nominal construction in spoken Spanish. More research on gender marking in LSF could allow verifying if kinship specificity exists in LSF as well. In LSF gender appears to be mainly expressed through lexical elements, like other genderless languages as described by Horvath et al (2016, p 2).

Based on my own observation and discussion with LSF signers, including deaf researchers, another way to mark gender in LSF is to add the sign WOMAN 'female' or MAN 'male' to an unmarked sign. This has been observed in other sign languages such as Argentinean Sign Language (Massone & Johnson, 1991 cited by Wilkinson 2009, p 68). Though, I would argue that LSF signers, as a minority living among a majority of French language users, are exposed to the predominance of masculinity in all written texts: ads, subtitles, daily correspondences, etc. Indeed, LSF is in close contact with French (Garcia et al, 2018, p 61) and like ASL is a high-contact language (Hou et al, 2020 cited by Macias, 2023). As such, there are good chances that deaf people first feel the need to specify the gender of the referent because of the importance it has in France society, and second that they correlate gender-neutral LSF signs to masculine words in the French language, perceived as neutral. Then, sometimes when the situation requires it, gender-neutral signs can be completed by a 'female' or a 'male' sign to add precision. But one can wonder if that precision is done equally or if the WOMAN sign would not be the only one used to add precision. By default, the masculine gender would be considered the norm. To draw a parallel with English: one can wonder if 'male writer' is used

as often as ‘female writer’. It could be argued that as in French, the feminine version is considered as the specific one, while the masculine is perceived as generic. This point will be further explored in section 2.1.2.

Another influence of the spoken language that can be observed is the mouthing of pronouns that are inherently not gendered (Millet, 2019, p 282). LSF pronouns are mainly produced through pointing and eye gazes (Tournadre & Hamm, 2018, p 11). Pointing to the side could mean HE, SHE, or THEY, even though Millet refers to this variation of signs as a generic masculine *lui* (he) (2019, p 282, see figure 7).



Figure 7 Various sign for he/she/they (Millet, 2019, p 282)

However, as for mouthing French pronouns, mostly *il* or *elle* are used (him and her). It could be argued that other pronouns which are now used outside of the binary spectrum could be delivered by mouthing. Though, I would argue that they would have to be fingerspelled, at least for the first occurrence. Indeed, it could be discussed that the mouthings of *il*, *elle*, and *iel*, the most common non-binary pronoun, are very similar and hard to distinguish through lipreading. This practice of integrating mouthings can be considered as ‘code-blending’ (Schembri et al., 2015) or ‘translanguaging’ (Kusters, 2022). Millet (2019, p 173) calls these ‘bilingual practices’, considering that they are not part of LSF, and should be viewed as borrowings only if fixed and observed in many sign language users. She cites the example of the sign SPOUSE (see Figure 8) that can be enhanced with the mouthing of the word WOMAN (see Figure 2). I would argue that more research would be required to identify if gender information produced by mouthing should be considered as part of LSF or not.



ÉPOUX, ÉPOUSE. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 8 Drawing LSF Sign for SPOUSE (Delaporte, 2007, p 221)

LSF has no articles, and indicating the specific number of people involved is an option (Tournadre & Hamm, 2018, p 17). The plural of animate referents can be realised by using pointing or all of hand swiping on the side of the signer with a circular movement (see Figure 9). If the human referents are defined, they would be on areas 3(a) or 3(b) of signing space, and if undefined, on X(a) or X(b) (Garcia et al., 2018, p 57, Millet, 2019 p 127, see also Figure 9 and 10).



Figure 9 Plural sign with flat handshape identified in ST 1 (SSB, 2019)

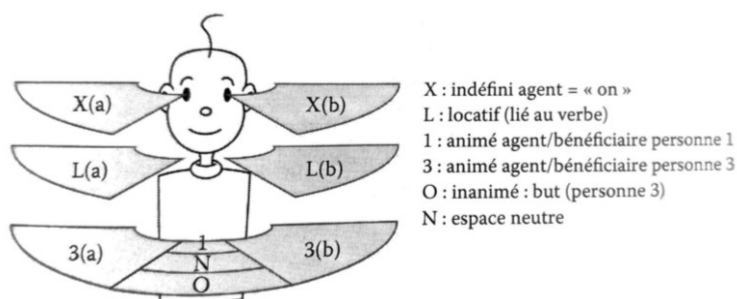


Figure 10 Visual representation of the use of space for referents (Millet, 2019, p 127)

According to Millet (2019, p 127), there is no possible ambiguity among 'I', 'he/she' - and they I would add - and impersonal *on* (we or they). However, Garcia et al. (2018, p 65, 73) estimate that more research is needed to explore the 'vague plurality' when a circular movement is done with a flat handshape (see also figure 9).

To summarize, gender is present in LSF, mostly in a binary way, but it is not overarching LSF as it does in the French spoken language. It could be argued that the influence of the latter can not be put aside when it comes to gender in LSF because of the diglossic situation of LSF in France. Because gender emerges but is not present by default and is very often unmarked, it could be argued that LSF is gender-inclusive by nature.

The work of Macias (2023) about trans-inclusive language practices in ASL shows that looking at mouthings in ASL as translanguaging practices can highlight the gendered aspect embodied in ASL and questions the nature of sign languages as inclusive language by nature, by questioning the status of ASL pronouns as non-gendered. It could be argued that French has a similar influence on LSF with mouthings, which would not make LSF an inclusive language by nature per se, but rather a 'natural gender language', like English (Horvath et al, 2016, p 2).

Having established the way gender marking happens in LSF, the next section focuses on observing how the French language is a very gendered language.

2.1.2 Gender in French

In French, the word *genre* (gender) has evolved recently influenced by English language (Arrivé, 2013) to cover not only its first meaning as a grammatical tool for the lexical organisation but also a way to socially categorise individuals (Abbou et al. 2018, p 15, Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 24). Grammatical gender in the French language is strictly binary and concerns even words that label inanimate objects. However, this section will mainly focus on words referring to humans, like role names, because of their relevance to the present study.

Feminine and masculine

Most of the words that relate to a human have a feminine and a masculine version. This gender is not arbitrary; it matches the gender of the person referred to (Gygax et al., 2012 p

3, Grunenwald, 2021, p 90, Viennot, 2014, p 83, Candea in Abbou et al. 2018, p 14). As a matter of fact, the French language is an inflected language, so suffixes vary in accordance with the gender of the person they designate (Abbou, 2022, p 98), especially in role names like director or lawyer (Gygax et al., 2012 p 3). Various feminine suffixes exist to differentiate from the masculine form: *chanteur/chanteuse* (singer), *acteur/actrice* (actor). However, some epicene nouns designate humans too, without gender variation in the suffix, like *enfant* (child), *journaliste* (journalist), *fonctionnaire* (public employee), *ministre* (minister) or *interprète* (interpreter). These can be used with either the feminine or masculine articles (*la* or *le*, *un* or *une*). But *une personne* (a person) is grammatically feminine and can designate people regardless of their gender. This could lead to the idea that French is a very equal language between men and women because female and male gender exists for most words referring to living beings. Not everyone recognizes themselves as being part of either the female or male gender, however, and in any cases, agreement complicates the topic.

The masculine agreement

Gender is not only present in every noun but also in adjectives, articles, pronouns, and past participles (Oster, 2013, p 11, Viennot, 2014, p 83). When a group consists of people of the same gender, the designation and agreement are pretty simple, but when it comes to a mixed group, the grammatical rule everyone learned at school is that ‘masculine prevails over feminine’ (Abbou, 2022, p 15, Brauer, 2008, p 245, Grunenwald, 2012, p 83). If a group is composed of 99 women and one man, then it will be referred to as masculine and the plural masculine pronoun *ils* will be mostly used (rather than *elles*).

The masculine gender is then used as generic (Brauer, 2008, p 245) whereas the feminine gender is specific (Abbou, 2022, p 37). Like other Romance languages (except Romanian), the French language lost the neutral item that the Latin language did have (Viennot, 2019, p 16). However, using the masculine by default can lead to semantic ambiguities, which will be further touched upon in section 2.2.3 (Braeur, 2008, p 249, Gygax et al., 2012, p 3).

Because grammatical gender is complex in the French language, gender markers are very diverse (Abbou et al. 2018, p 4). Though, what is relevant to the topic of this study is that French is strongly marked by the binary of gender (Brauer, 2008, p 251, Viennot, 2014, p 83, p 111) and the predominance of the masculine one (Viennot, 2014). Considering the generic

masculine as neutral and relevant even if feminine animates are concerned is indeed very often used as a linguistic argument. But it is actually an ideology inherited from sexist grammarians of the 17th century (Abbou et al. 2018, p 13, Viennot, 2014). The 'masculine agreement' or universal generic masculine, is considered by several linguists as discriminatory (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 25) and anti-feminist as expressed by Candea (Abbou et al. 2018, p 14). The historical linguistic evolution of French regarding gender will be deepened in the next section.

Androcentric language

French is binary and gendered but not necessarily unequal per se (Viennot, 2014). During the 17th century, a male, religious elite decided to impose their ideology through language (Viennot, 2014, p 25). Basically, women should not be equal to men and that is the reason why masculine grammatical gender should dominate, Vaugelas wrote for example in 1647: "masculine gender is the nobler one, it has to dominate every time both genders are in presence" [own translation] (Viennot, 2014, p 67). Beauzée specified in 1767 that "masculine gender is known to be nobler than the feminine one because of male superiority over female" [own translation] (Arrivé, 2013, p 2).

This masculinisation of the language was also partially embodied by the creation of the *Académie française* (French Academy) in 1635, directed by Richelieu (Viennot, 2014, p 23). This institution, which had no linguist until very recently, was back then requested to establish a national dictionary (Viennot, 2014, p 23). Viennot, a historian of women of ancient France notes that the French Academy contributed to the masculinisation of French (2014). These dynamics are strongly related to the power relationships in place at that time (Viennot, 2014). What is at stake is political because the very presence of women at the head of the country, in their families, or at their work is disputed by the male elite (Viennot, 2014, p 24). Their presence in the language is then constantly and cyclically criticised (Viennot, 2014).

When it comes to poetry, rhymes and lines are viewed as masculine or feminine, and balance theories exist as an anthropomorphic mirror of heterosexuality, an ideal in human society (Viennot, 2014 p 21).

For several centuries, the accumulation of masculinist ideologies and theories on language ended up infusing the minds of speakers, particularly at the time of the generalisation of

public schooling, when French is imposed as the one and only national language, around 1830 for boys and 1880 for girls (Viennot, 2014, p 24).

Understanding the political aspect of these language conventions, feminists have been challenging the power relationship with gender-inclusive language practices – which will be explained in the next section.

2.2 Gender-inclusivity in French

To analyse the contemporary gender-inclusive practices in France, this section will first focus on the broader notion of inclusive language and its apparition in various parts of the world before focusing on how it appeared in France. Concerning French, gender-inclusive language is now mainly referred to as ‘inclusive language’ or ‘inclusive French’ (Alpheratz, 2021) and may be currently evolving from a binary to a broader perspective of gender. This section will explore these experiments in French. Inclusive French may imply other aspects than gender that will not be developed in detail in this thesis but should be taken into account when discussing inclusion and equality.

2.2.1 General concept of ‘inclusive language’

Even if ‘inclusive French’ tends to currently focus on gender equality (Abbou, 2022), it is important to understand the broader notion of inclusive language to understand which other aspects it could cover. The notion of ‘inclusive language’ is hard to separate from the concept of ‘inclusion’. This concept that emerged in France in the 1970s sought to address ‘societal exclusion’ (Kusters et al., 2015, p 15). Much criticism can be addressed with the use of this concept that this thesis will not pursue. ‘Inclusive language’ mainly started with the question of gender and specifically, including women in the language. The first appearance of the idea of linguistic inclusion in research seems to be in 1976, Gertrude Berger and Béatrice Kachuck, two feminist researchers, reacting to the ‘Dictionary of Occupational Titles’ disseminated by the United States, in a report in English (Abbou, 2022, p 168). They support the idea that words like “*foreman* and *master*, intentionally excluded women in fact as well as form” (Berger & Kachuck, 1976 cited by Abbou, 2022, p 169). Religious feminism in North America in the 1970s also promoted the idea of including women by advocating for the

reinterpretation of biblical texts, arguing that they were also addressed to them, and suggesting a reproduction of biblical material relevant to the current social and cultural context (Abbou, 2022, p 173-174). But the proper notion of 'inclusive language' appeared only in 1981 in the 'Inclusive Language Policy and Guidelines' of Metropolitan Community Churches (Abbou, 2022, p 167-174). A revised bible was even produced and published in 1992 (Abbou, 2022, p 173). Protestants were prolific regarding inclusion, but they were not the only church interested in those questions. Evangelists were also supportive of the idea that "diversity is evident in God's miraculous creation" (*Policy of Inclusive Language in the Life and Ministry of the Community of Christ*, 2008 cited by Abbou, 2022, p 171). In these guidelines, referring to a human being with words like 'person' or 'human' should be preferred instead of 'man' (Abbou, 2022, p 171). However, gender is not the only aspect of the notion of 'inclusive language' in that context. Nancy Hardesty in *Inclusive Language of the Church* in 1987 writes for example "on a human level, an effort to use more inclusive language makes us aware not only of sexism, but also of our racism, elitism, nationalism, classism, ageism, homophobia, and all our other prejudices" (Abbou, 2022, p 172). According to Abbou, it is rare that discrimination based on sexuality is mentioned, as the topic is considered too delicate (Abbou, 2022, p 173).

At the same time, in Jewish religion, the notion of inclusion has been disseminated since 1975 by feminist theologians like Judith Plaskow (Abbou, 2022, p 173). In the Muslim religion, an inclusive form of Islam emerged in Malaysia with Sisters in Islam in 1988, before the development of inclusive and progressive movements in the United States, Canada, and South Africa (Abbou, 2022, p 176).

In the opinion of Abbou, Catholicism is the only monotheistic religion to resist the use of inclusive language, and only gives in to the feminisation of language when it comes to clarifying that there should be no relationships between men (Abbou, 2022, p 178-81).

The inclusion paradigm started more than 40 years ago and is at the intersection of religious community dynamics, political requests for parity, and liberalisation of feminisms (Abbou, 2022, p 168). Handicap is an important aspect of inclusive language. Among the recommendations from the *Policy of Inclusive Language in the Life and Ministry of the Community of Christ*, 'a person who uses a wheelchair' should be preferred to 'a disabled person' (2008, cited by Abbou, 2022, p 172). Kusters et al. advocates for using the terminology

of ‘group rights’ for Sign Language People, instead of the more traditional inclusion paradigm, as it highlights the self-determination and action of deaf people (2015, p 21).

Abbou also highlights how the feminist history researcher Stéphanie Latte Abdallah traces the emergence of the ‘inclusion activist’ concept in European and American democracies back to the anti-discrimination movement and specifically those linked to the sexual identities or sexualities (Abbou, 2022, p 177).

In conclusion, ‘inclusive language’ starts with gender but considers other aspects of identity like sexuality and disabilities. The next section focuses on the emergence of the concept specifically in France.

2.2.2 Historical perspective of inclusive French

The first language practices to reclaim visibility for women could have started in France with political discourses after French women obtained the right to vote in 1944 (Candea in Abbou et al. 2018, p 6). One of the most iconic examples is Charles de Gaulle explicitly addressing French men *and* women in 1961: "*Françaises, Français*" (Abbou et al. 2018, p 6, de Gaulle, 1961, Viennot, 2019, p 16) However, debates about linguistic sexism arise with feminist discourses in the 1970s/1980s (Candea in Abbou et al. 2018, p 6). The linguist Yaguello published as early as 1978 the book ‘Words and women’ [own translation] describing language asymmetry. The first references to *langue inclusif* (inclusive language) in French are from 1987 and 1989, in Canadian context and religious feminisms as well (Abbou, 2022, p 182). In 1992 the feminist linguist Hélène Dumais from Quebec argued about the contemporary debates happening in Canada about ‘non-sexist writing’, ‘de-genderisation’ or ‘feminisation of language’, ‘writing with two genders’, etc. (Abbou, 2022, p 183).

In France more specifically, as early as 1984, the ‘Terminology committee on the vocabulary concerning women's occupation’ was created by the French Minister for Women’s Rights Yvette Roudy and led by Benoîte Groult (Abbou, 2022, p 55, Viennot, 2019, p 22). The aim was to make the necessary proposals to ensure that the French language does not discriminate on the basis of gender (Becquer et al, 1999) including the creation of potentially lacking feminine role names to fill the gaps and so “to bring legitimacy to the social functions and professions exercised by women” (Abbou, 2022, p 55). In Canada, some words that

appeared in the dictionary only with a masculine version were attributed a feminine version, often by adding an 'e' at the end, like for the words *auteur/auteure* (author) or *chercheur/chercheuse* (researcher) (Viennot, 2019, p 22, p 77). Those feminine versions then sound just like the masculine one when using spoken language, which could maintain the invisibility of women while alternatives like *chercheuse* (female researcher) sound differently and have been used for a long time (Viennot, 2019, p 77). Another interesting example of a feminine noun developing is the female author: *autrice* (Viennot, 2014 p 17). It was one of the victims of the fight against some feminine version of role names/words labelling their professional activities, which were more or less accepted especially from the 17th century with the masculinisation of the language (Evain, 2008, p 5). It was then not used for a long time, and rediscovered with research, concentrating on the politicisation of the debate: for or against the feminisation of French (Evain, 2008, Ropert, 2023). Actually, every male job name has a female version as old as it, and vice versa (Viennot, 2019, p 22). Several researchers notice that it is the names of prestigious professions that are at stake but not every profession's names, which again makes the debate not just linguistic, but also political and power related (Abbou, 2022, p 56, Viennot, 2019, p 79-80).

New forms of referring to gender in French appeared first at the end of the 1990s, in feminist, anarchist, or libertarian brochures, and then in the 2000s, including in queer spaces (Abbou et al. 2018, p 6, Abbou, 2022, p 61). Later, some institutions started to spread inclusive language guidelines like the High Council for Equality between Women and Men (HCE) in 2015, which responds to the request of the European Council to get rid of any sexism in language used by administrations of EU countries, since 1990 (HCE, 2022).

According to Viennot and Abbou, a feminist linguist who studied these inclusive practices in the French language, they started in the written language (Abbou et al. 2018, p 6, Viennot, 2019). The intense controversy about 'inclusive writing' in 2017 clearly focused on written practices as claimed by Marignier (Abbou et al. 2018, p 7). It could be debated that inclusive practices are less visible in the spoken language (Abbou et al. 2018, p 6). As interesting as it is, this study does not retrace the whole quarrel. However, part of the critique was focusing on a specific feature of inclusive writing which is the median point (Candea in Abbou et al. 2018, p 1), because of its impossibility to be pronounced, as in *français·es* for example, which

is just a convenient way to write both feminine and masculine words, as in "*Françaises, Français*" used by de Gaulle (de Gaulle, 1961, Viennot, 2019, p 102, 115). As there is no research about the evolution of inclusive language practices in spoken French in France, I would argue that there is no way to be sure that these inclusive spoken language practices came after the written ones – and in which proportions or with which linguistic strategies.

The evolution of French regarding gender has been strongly fought by the French Academy, which even called it a 'deadly threat' to the French language in 2017, which 77 linguists from Belgium, Canada, France, and Switzerland answered with an open letter requesting that the Academy "watch its language, not ours" [own translation] (Viennot, 2019, p 68). Interestingly, in these other French-speaking countries, inclusive language practices are not controversial and, on the contrary, have been used by institutions for quite a long time (Abbou et al. 2018, p 7). Ultimately, all the work of 'feminisation of French' by the 'Terminology Committee' was recognised in 2018, after years of disparagement (REF). According to Alpheratz who proposed a whole new system for neutral gender in their work, inclusive French is now eventually conceptualised as a variation of standard French (Alpheratz, 2021, p 14). Though, French people have a very normative idea of their spoken language (Abbou, 2022, p 73), and as reminded by Bolter, 'bon usage' (good use) of French is an important social marker (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 39). Then again, it can take a long time for evolution to establish a new norm.

In conclusion, new practices in both marginal spaces and institutions may be currently leading to an evolution of French inclusive language (Abbou et al. 2018, p 7). After a historical perspective on gender-inclusive language, the next section focuses on the psycho-linguistic and socio-political perspectives and how mental representations are impacted by language.

2.2.3 Psycho-linguistic and socio-political perspectives

There is a significant amount of research that confirms that masculine forms, even when used as a generic, activate more male mental representations (Brauer, 2008, p 249), which contributes to gender inequality (Horvath et al, 2015). Specifically for French, Brauer's pioneering study set shows how masculine items are far from neutral in French (Brauer,

2008). For example, when asking participants to cite political figures, three times more women are mentioned when a feminine-masculine word pair is used in the question compared to a masculine form only (Brauer, 2008, p 254). Women also tend to cite more women (Brauer, 2008, p 255, p 268). When questioning participants about the typical people for a profession, again, the masculine form activates more male representation than gender-inclusive phrasing (Brauer, 2008, p 261). The research also shows that the lexical item *personne* (person), with a feminine grammatical gender, activates more female representation than *individu* (individual), with a masculine grammatical gender (Brauer, 2008, p 269). Gygax et al. (2012) show how the specific meaning of masculine in fact prevails over the generic meaning among their participants when reading various stimuli. It can also cause ambiguity when used for mixed-gender groups (Brauer, 2008, p 249, Gygax et al., 2012, p 3). Other results, specifically with children as participants are very interesting regarding the way gender is perceived and analysed in those studies. Indeed, some of the results were not considered because they were ambiguous regarding the gender of the described person (Brauer, 2008, p 264), and could not fit into the binary perspective of gender in which the studies seem to be rooted. Also, the third study mentions 7 people that 'forgot to disclose their sex' (Brauer, 2008, p 258). I would argue that some of them may not recognise themselves within the binary gender paradigm, or differentiate sex and gender, and that could be the reason for their voluntary omission. Further research, including a more diverse way for participants to be categorised regarding gender might find more refined differences. As women tending to mention more women, variation might be found in occurrences among people not recognising themselves within the binary paradigm. They may activate more diverse mental representation of people.

These pieces of research tend to validate Whorf's hypothesis that language impacts the way we think and conceive the world (Brauer, 2008, p 270, Viennot, 2014, p 11). Nevertheless, language is not the only factor responsible for the imbalance of gender representation in the mind in our society (Gygax et al., 2012, p 6). However, language as an important tool for propagating culture is an important contributor to gender stereotypes and gender discrimination propagation (Formanowicz & Hansen, 2021, p 128), which most users have no idea about (Viennot, 2019, p 63-64). Even without grammatical clue, stereotypes activate gender representation (Gygax et al., 2008). Nowadays gender-inclusive forms could in

contrast contribute to better gender equality. In the workplace, gender-fair forms like word pairs were mostly inclined to increase gender equality (Horvath et al., 2015, p 1). It could be argued that while the use of such forms could enhance women's visibility, it would also lower the status perceptions and salaries. This was debated by Horvath et al, who instead suggest that it could impact occupational gender stereotyping (Horvath et al., 2015, p 9). Further research could deepen the impact of gender-inclusive language, especially on people outside of the binary perspective.

The use of gender-inclusive language is justified from a psycho-linguistic perspective but some researchers like Candea insist on the political aspect of these questions (Abbou et al. 2018, p 4-5). Abbou uses the phrasing: "language is constantly moving from public to private" [own translation] (2022, p 18), which reminds us of the famous 'private is political' from the Feminist movement in the 1970s (p 156). With the growing dissemination of gender-inclusive language during the last 15 years (Abbou, 2022, p 158, 160-161, et al. 2018, p 4-5, 7, Lami, 2022, p 27, Viennot, 2019, p 11, 68), either the gender status quo is more questioned or the initially feminist practice is losing its political angle (Abbou, 2022, p 161, 165) to sometimes being commercialised (Abbou, 2022, p 208). Modification of language is challenging, however, because it disrupts people's perceptions about traditional gender roles (Acosta Vincente, 2019, p 11). As most French speakers strongly rely on the norm, they do not want to be perceived as making mistakes if they use alternatives, even though the norm is identified as sexist (Abbou, 2022, p 73, et al. 2018, p 7). However, it seems that experimentation is still ongoing, and heterogeneity is the norm in terms of inclusive language in France (Abbou, 2022, et al., 2018, Viennot, 2019, p 107). In any case, inclusive language seems to spread in the current inclusion paradigm, for people whose diversity has to be acknowledged and equality promoted (Viennot, 2019, p 125). Thus, making gender issues visible in language does not necessarily have to happen in discourses about that exact topic, but in basically every subject (Abbou, 2022, p 133). Besides, considering the paradigm of inclusion to signify the representation of women in language remains more prevalent in North America than in Europe according to Abbou (Abbou, 2022, p 183). The specific context of French universalism as a strong ideology makes the inclusion of women an equality issue mainly in politics but leaves very little space for multiculturalism (Abbou, 2022, p 186-91). I would suggest that consequently, intersectionality as theorised by the Black-feminist Crenshaw (1989) as an

overlap of discrimination that creates specific discrimination has very little space as well in the French context. Alpheratz (2021, p 6, 16) establishes that users' awareness of their ethical values is what leads their choices of employing inclusive French instead of standard French.

Eventually, a great diversity of creative techniques or strategies have been explored (Alpheratz, 2021, p 11), which is exactly what perpetuates its political angle to gender-inclusive language according to Abbou, (2022 p 94). About inclusive writing, Abbou, and Candea remind us that the term designates many possibilities and has previously been called (about 20 various terms) non-discriminant language, egalitarian language, non-sexist language, degendered language, demasculinised French, feminisation, epicene writing, etc. (Abbou, 2022, p 186-91, et al. 2018, p 1). The next section will focus on the various strategies operated by users who want to practise gender-inclusive French.

2.2.4 Gender-inclusive strategies in French

Pinning down evolutions specifically in spoken French in terms of inclusive language is challenging because of the lack of research in that area. Abbou et al. state that spoken practices of gender-inclusive language follow written practices (2018, p 6). Perez et al. confirmed that new writing proposals for designating people are subversive, overturning the established order between the spoken language as the origin of the language with the written language supposed to follow spoken practices (Perez et al., 2019). For this reason, inclusive writing appears to be a leverage for inclusive language in spoken practices (Viennot, 2019, p 110). Though spoken strategies look less noticeable to Abbou et al. (2018, p 6), they all aim to replace the masculine used as generic, as the main "target of linguistic change" (Formanowicz & Hansen, 2021, p 135). However, in some cases, it either makes women visible in the language (feminisation or balancing) or suppresses the information of both genders (neutralisation and detour), making them 'equally non-visible' (Formanowicz & Hansen, 2021, p 134).

Largely inspired by the categorisation used by Lami when researching inclusive language practices of translators working into French (2022, p 22-23), what follows is a table of various inclusive strategies that can be employed in spoken French (same categories that Lami's but

comments and examples can differ). This list is not exclusive, and many more examples could have been provided to show the creativity through alternatives. However, it summarizes most possibilities for users:

STRATEGIES	COMMENTS	EXAMPLES	TRANSLATION
FEMINISATION			
Feminine and masculine pair words	Words pairs demonstrated use during 2017 political campaign by all political spectrum (Viennot, 2019, p 11)	<i>Les traducteurs et les traductrices font un métier formidable.</i>	Translators (<i>male and female</i>) have an amazing job.
Alphabetic order in pair words	Maybe hard to do in the spoken language because it is not as spontaneous (Viennot, 2019, p 106)	<i>Les Français et les Françaises, égalité Femmes-Hommes.</i>	French people (male and female), gender equality (with female word before male one).
Feminine version for job title when woman	In most cases feminine versions have to sound differently in Romanic languages (Viennot, 2014, p 95)	<i>La chercheuse fait sa présentation en LSF (sound differently from <i>chercheur</i>).</i> <i>La chercheure fait sa présentation en LSF (sound similar to <i>chercheur</i>).</i>	The female researcher does her lecture in LSF (sounds different than male researcher). The female researcher does her lecture in LSF (sounds similar to male researcher).
Majority agreement	The more logical according to the meaning (Viennot, 2019, p 91-92)	<i>Les traductrices et l'auteur sont présentes.</i>	The female translators and the male author are here (plural female agreement).
Closest agreement	In use before 17th century masculinisation (Viennot, 2014, p 66-71, Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 26). Still quite widespread but with a preference for	<i>L'auteur et les traductrices sont présentes.</i>	The male author and the female translators are here (plural female agreement).

	masculine when referring to humanness (An & Abeillé, 2021, p 286)		
Generic feminine	Aims to overturn usage and the expectations and inferences that go with it (Elmiger, 2020, p 2)	<i>Les interprètes sont diplômées d'un niveau Master, elles respectent le code déontologique.</i>	Interpreters graduate with a Master's degree, they (female) respect code of ethics.
Universal feminine	A 'cheeky feminist grammar' created by Typhaine D. (n.d.) Very little used except for artistic projects?	<i>"Elle n'y a pas morte de femme" (instead of classical: <i>Il n'y a pas mort d'homme</i>)</i>	There are no human casualties (singular female).
Generic feminine and masculine alternatively in the full text.	Hard to do in spoken language because of spontaneous expression?	-	
Note in the beginning	Appropriate for an interpreting assignment?	-	
NEUTRALISATION			
Epicene words	Can also be considered counterproductive because the precision of gender may only happen when gender is opposite to the norm and could be more convenient for adjectives than nouns (Viennot, 2019, p 29-30)	<i>Un/une Interprète, une personne</i>	An (male/female) interpreter, a person
Hyperonyms, metaphors, group terms (Viennot, 2019, p 83)	If word pairs feels like unnecessary and repetitive (Viennot, 2019, p 83)	<i>Le monde agricole, la paysannerie et la présidence.</i>	The agricultural world, the peasantry, and the presidency.
Neutral neologisms	combination of a masculine term and a feminine inflection, resulting in abbreviation, from	<i>Toustes</i> (Elmiger, 2022), <i>traductaires</i> (Lami, 2022),	All (from masculine <i>tous</i> + feminine <i>toutes</i>), Translators,

	which the dot or hyphen has disappeared. Strong signal of a current of linguistic innovation, it is unlikely to 'catch on' beyond small circles (Viennot, 2019, p 84)	<i>lecteurices</i> (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 38)	readers (from masculine <i>lecteurs</i> + feminine <i>lectrices</i>)
Pronoun neologisms	lel is the alternative that seems most used, recently added in the dictionary (Elmiger, 2022)	<i>lel</i> (Elmiger, 2022), <i>al</i> , <i>ol</i> , <i>ul</i> , <i>ille</i> , <i>yel</i> , <i>ille</i> (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 40, 89)	They (from he: <i>il</i> and she: <i>elle</i>) Other alternatives for they
Anglicisms, abbreviations, Latinisms	Borrowing, notably from English perceived as 'contaminations' (Fleischman, 1997, p 835, 841)	<i>Deaf Studies</i>	-
DETOUR	'Contournement' in French		
Replacement of nominal forms by verbal forms		<i>J'ai fourni des services de traduction.</i> (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 107)	I delivered translation services.
Impersonal phrases (Abbou et al. 2018, p 1)		<i>Les transports en commun sont peu utilisés.</i>	Public transportation is not used a lot.
Impersonal pronouns	'On' can replace almost every other personal pronouns, (Elmiger, 2022, p 1)	<i>On</i>	
Direct address via an epicene pronoun or first name		<i>Vous</i>	You
Relative clauses			
Active voice			

Table 1 Strategies of gender-inclusive French inspired by Lami (2022)

Making women visible with word pairs for example, which are increasingly used including in public institutions, could reinforce a binary and heteronormative reading of social gender

roles (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 30-31). Though, some intersex, non-binary, transgender or non-gender-conforming people can feel included in written forms with a median point (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 40, 89). Indeed, joining the feminine form and the masculine one can be considered a path to a common gender (Abbou, 2022, p 58). It can be a strategy for agreement as well for people outside of the binary to use alternatively feminine and masculine along a text or both forms (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 89). Viennot states that as French forces users to choose between the feminine and the masculine every three or four words, employing neutral pronouns only partially addresses the issues of a gendered language such as French (Viennot, 2019, p 86). Abbou (2022, p 20) questions the unavoidable binary categorisation and wonders if there could be an 'art of joy' in contradicting them.

For some feminists, generalising the form presented as non-gendered would mean ignoring the reality of gender inequality that this form makes invisible (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 30-31). However, it could be argued that neutralisation or detour strategies could be seen as more inclusive because they are closer to a vision of gender as a spectrum rather than the more traditional binary perspective. Another strategy that can be used for or by people outside the gender binary is the non-conforming agreement between pronouns and adjectives (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 89). That can lead to some ambiguity, just like the neologisms or new pronouns such as *iels* (plural 'they') that could designate both people outside of the binary or can apply to a mix-gender group (Abbou, 2022, p 159). The preferences for some strategies could lie in which feminist trends people recognise themselves (transgender-inclusive or not for example), which is beyond the scope of this paper. Lexical choices will not be treated either, even though they can be an important part of inclusive language, regarding gender or sexuality – for example as explained by Abbou (2022, p 156). Moreover, I would argue that regarding deafness and deaf identities, lexical choices could be of a great importance and be part of inclusive French. Many other aspects of identities could be discussed as well. In all cases, challenging the status quo with various and changing strategies is a way to move into a paradigm of subversion as a political horizon (Abbou, 2022, p 93).

In conclusion, gender in LSF and in French is marked very differently, as detailed in the latter section. Users of both languages share French social norms, which still rely on a paradigm

where gender carries in itself a hierarchy (Abbou, 2022, p 58). Feminists who seek not to perpetuate this hierarchy, will have to make gender visible when they wish it to disappear (Abbou, 2022, p 58). Because it is mostly absent in LSF, and strongly marked in French, practitioners who need to interpret from LSF to French have many decisions to make about the way they render this absence of gender. The next section will draw on the role interpreters have (or do not have) in inclusion, and how their ethical values impact the decision-making process in the case of interpreted interactions, as well as their agency, especially on this matter of gender-inclusive language. The confrontation of two languages may produce a new perspective.

2.3 Gender-inclusive language in Translation/Interpreting Studies

This section focuses on the use of gender-inclusive language in translation and interpreting studies. After examining the evolution of the profession of French/French Sign Language interpreters, based on global Translation and Interpreting studies as well as French specificities, it also explores the concepts of feminist interpreting and agency as well as the decision-making process of practitioners when interpreting.

2.3.1 Evolution of the role of sign language interpreters

In France, old records attest presence during the Middle Ages of interpreters who were deaf (Cantin, 2021). However, it is currently a role mostly occupied by hearing people whose professionalisation is quite recent and is concurrent to the 'Deaf Revival', the cultural and linguistic renaissance of the LSF movement between the 1970s and the 1990s (Burgat et al., 2022). In their paper reviewing French Sign Language/French Translation Studies in France, Burgat et al. argue that all training courses "ensure a similar way of interpreting practices" (2022, p 3). They do not specifically mention any gender approach in the training of interpreters in France. However, sociolinguistics is cited as part of the multidisciplinary approach to Deaf Studies in some of the universities that train interpreters (Burgat et al., 2022). It must be recognised that research about gender and sexuality in sign language translation and interpreting studies is still scarce (Acosta Vincente, 2019, Gebruers, 2022). Nevertheless, interesting points regarding our topic are examined in Burgat et al.'s paper

(2022). Future interpreters are taught in all French universities to produce the most iconic LSF, because, among other things, the influence of the semiological approach of Christian Cuxac (Burgat et al., 2022, p 3). This prescriptive use of a normalised and pure LSF is interesting to note in parallel to the prescriptive norm that has been observed in French (also see section 2.2.3) even if may not have a comparable impact.

In addition, the authors argue for a “specific positioning of the French/LSF interpreters” as their trainings insist on the respect of deaf people’s autonomy, viewing them as equal to hearing people (Burgat et al., 2022, p 2). The code of ethics adopted in 1988 by the French Association of Sign Language Interpreters and Translators (AFILS) still governs professional practice to date (Burgat et al., 2022). It includes three ethical values: confidentiality, fidelity and neutrality (AFILS, n. d.). It could be argued that the perception of the role of interpreter as a mere conduit, invisible and impartial is still driving interpreters’ trainings in the French context. The initial norms set up by AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) could still be ‘haunting us’ (Susam-Saraeva et al., 2023, p 2). Interpreters’ role is defined this way: “trained professionals who work between two languages and two cultures who are not doing things in the place of deaf people” (Burgat et al., 2022, p 2). Their professional practices contribute to allowing deaf people to take their place in the interaction fully (Burgat et al., 2022, p 2-3). That last statement seems more in line with the interpreted event as interaction in which the interpreter is a participant (Roy & Metzger, 2014, Russel & Shaw, 2016).

Another relevant thing to notice is that while interpreters were clearly sign language and deaf identity activists when the professionalisation started, it does not seem to be the case anymore (Nana Gassa Gongga, 2019). However, they are considered being part of the inclusion process that has been implemented in the law of February 2005 (Nana Gassa Gongga, 2019, p 67). Some deaf scholars have defended the idea that this inclusion through interpreters is only an illusion (De Meulder & Haualand 2019). Vadot argues that the concept ‘inclusion’ has been gradually used in France, first in the disability field and then with migrants, and is diametrically opposed to the Anglo-Saxons’ multiculturalist model (Vadot, 2017, cited by Abbou, 2022, p 192). One can wonder then, how the diversity of deaf identities, which is not necessarily present in research yet (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, 2022, Kusters, 2020), is considered in interpreting practices in France, in a context where ‘universalism’ is a strong ideology and is often opposed to the concept of ‘intersectionality’ (Bastide, 2020, p 23).

Various models of interpreting have been proposed in the broader translation and interpreting field, and the cultural and sociological turns were important turning points in the profession (Roy & Metzger, 2014, Zwischenberger, 2022) which feminist and queer translation theories contributed (Munday, 2016, p 208). Involvement of deaf people consumers have contributed to shape the profession as well, both from a practitioner and a consumer perspective (Napier & Goswell, 2013). The next section focuses on the emergence of deaf feminisms and the rising concept of feminist interpreting(s).

2.3.2 Deaf feminisms and feminist interpreting(s)

Inspired by Kelly's definition (2006, p 236), Feminism can be defined indeed as helping to understand the position of women and men in society, resulting from social institutions and attitudes. I would argue that a more recent definition could (or should) include people not recognising themselves in the gender binary. Furthermore, it could be argued that feminism has close ties to other social movements as anti-racist movements, or social justice, mostly thanks to Black feminism and Crenshaw's 'intersectionality' concept (1989). But as reminded by Kelly in Brueggemann & Burch's book about deaf women, feminism is a complex notion (2006, p 234). Feminism gains to be acknowledged in its multiplicity, therefore, to be referred to as feminisms (Kusters & De Meulder, 2013). While deaf women's specific issues intersect with Deaf Studies and Gender Studies, they lack representation and research (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, 2022). An interesting point in Barnartt's chapter of Brueggemann and Burch's book on deaf women is that the "master [social] status" for them is their gender (2006, p 73). This means that in the educational field and labour force, the main part of their identity that will impact their treatment is the fact that they are women before their deafness. I specify that this information does not imply a hierarchy of oppressions. Moreover, I would argue that even when they do not have a strong knowledge of the concept (Kelly, 2006, p 236), deaf women or people who do not recognise themselves within the binary paradigm could benefit from feminisms, bringing additional assertiveness, power, strength, and support, just like hearing women or people unconforming gender who can also have a negative connotation of feminism. In the case of sign language interpreting studies, combining feminist translation/interpreting theories and deaf feminisms appears mandatory.

Feminist theories offer a political vision of the world as confronting various perspectives, challenging the very idea of neutrality (Abbou, 2022, p 119). Consequently, feminist translation theories brought a different perspective on translational norms (von Flotow, 1991). For example, Simon stated that fidelity is due to the writing project which must be established both with the writer and the translator (Simon, 1996, p 2, cited by Munday, 2016, p 205). In the case of the study, this would suggest that fidelity would have to be defined between the deaf signer and the interpreter. Von Flotow defined three categories of interventionist feminist translator practices: supplementing, prefacing/footnoting, and 'hijacking' (Oster, 2013, p 16, von Flotow, 1991, p 74). 'Hijacking' is the most controversial one, as it deliberately changes the original intention of the source text (Oster, 2013, p 16). Hijacking or 'pirating' is used by Grunenwald who claims the translator has a responsibility to challenge norms in favour of power (Grunenwald, 2021, p 39). These practices could appear much more appropriate to written translational work, which leaves more room for interpretation (Simon, 1996, cited by Acosta Vincente, 2019, p 9). However, I would argue that feminist translation constitutes an interesting framework to question the practices of gender-inclusive language through a feminist interpreting perspective. Feminist translators have claimed a translation practice that makes the feminine visible in language (De Lotbinière-Harwood, 1990, p. 9 cited by von Flotow, 1991, p 79).

The concept of feminist interpreting seems more recent and is less explored than feminist translation studies (Susam-Saraeva et al., 2023). And yet, feminist interventions or practice are to be explored and could be just as feminist translators': mild or radical (Yu, 2015, p 186), serving an agenda of feminisms and gender aiming to achieve gender equality (Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023, p 4). Whether this agenda matches deaf feminisms' agenda remains to be seen, just like the question of compatibility with the interpreter's role. Furthermore, according to Yañez, interpreting studies are still stuck in the binary (male vs female) compared to translation studies that are interested in various gender identities (Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023, p 4). One could question if feminist practices in sign language interpreting should only concern deaf women discourses, or even discourses that contain content related to feminisms. According to Abbou (2022, p 155), on the contrary, gender criticism should happen precisely in discourse unrelated to gender, implicitly with the form. She mentions feminist

micropolitics, in the sense of “a politics that infiltrates all areas of life [...] in the heritage of the feminist idea that *'the private is political'*” (Abbou, 2022, p 156).

Feminist translation has encouraged feminist translators who were mostly women to show their agency through their practice (Acosta Vincente, 2019, p 9). It could be discussed then that feminist interpreting could have the same effect. Then, one can wonder who gets a chance to decide whether to disrupt the gender aspect of language during the interpreting process or not, or any other intervention. The next section discusses a shared agency between interpreters and deaf people.

2.3.3 A shared (lack of) agency

Indeed, on top of the interventions within the translation or interpreting product via gender-inclusive language choices for example, interpreters might intend to act through their agency within a professional environment. For illustration, Montero (Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023, p 2) mentions a colleague who refused to interpret misogynistic comments, consequently stopped interpreting, and her male colleague immediately took over. This example illustrates for Montero how a man silenced her in her attempt to exercise agency (Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023, p 2). The collective paper about feminist interpreting does not seem to address sign languages or more largely the situations of languages with unbalanced power-relationships, hence various social status and how it intertwines with the interpreters' own power (Russel & Shaw, 2016). In sign language interpreting, hearing interpreters (a majority in the profession) find themselves in a higher position socially than deaf people in terms of power (Russel & Shaw, 2016), but hearing status is not the only part of identity that can increase or lower their power. Then, one can wonder if and when their agency (or lack of agency) would combine to the deaf person's agency; if they would exercise it over the right to access to the source-text (ST) for the deaf person, leaving space for the latter to exercise their own agency. The whole interpreter's self as a social human being impacts their practice which contradicts the traditional norms of translation and interpreting studies as invisibility, neutrality and impartiality (Metzger, 1999, Angelelli, 2004, Downie, 2017 cited by Acosta Vincente, 2019, p 6). It could be argued that these ethical values serve to counteract the potential power of interpreters (REF). According to Loffler et al., ‘the topic of gender-fair language is not much

discussed in the deaf community' (2020, p 15). Still, as each situation is situated within communities with their own unique language contact phenomenon (Roy & Metzger, 2014, p 159) it could be argued that these choices should be discussed with members of the interpreted communities to gain appropriate knowledge of their habits. Indeed, some people consider gender-inclusive language as representing a political statement (Loffler et al., 2020, p 15). In addition, in the direction of interpreting from LSF to French, the interpreter embodies the deaf user's discourse. Then, it may have to be discussed specifically with them as they could be made accountable for some of the interpreter's choices.

Abbou states that gender is more marked in written French but also easier to subvert because of the linearity of spoken language (Abbou, 2022, p 123). It could be argued that the 'multilinearity' of LSF (Millet, 2019, p 37) could influence the spoken language used by interpreters when working from LSF to French. As analysed in section 2.1, LSF as a 'natural gender language' gives more room for inclusive language than French as a 'grammatical gender language', at least in its majority and prescriptive use. About the use of gender-fair language in a DGS-Corpus and dictionary project, the conclusions are the same: possible solutions are a trade-off between source-text-oriented interpreting and more mainstream language (Loffler et al., 2020 p 21). It could be argued that LSF could encourage interpreters to use a more inclusive language in the target text.

It is to be remembered that the profession of sign language interpreting is female dominated (Gebruers 2022; MacDougall, 2012, p 1; Napier & Barker, 2003, p. 22 as cited by Valentin, 2019). According to MacDougall (2012, p 35 and 43), female interpreters are more prone to politeness, face preservation and credibility. They would also be more sensitive to hypercorrectness (MacDougall, 2012, p 41, 43). This can contradict the idea of breaking into language to reveal the unbalanced relationships and how they can be overcome, as a political action that turns language on its head and challenges it as in feminist language uses (Abbou, 2022, p 83). In conclusion, interpreters must navigate between their own use of language and the ones in use in the setting they are working, navigating between their agency and the unreachable but potentially desirable neutrality. Furthermore, negotiating all of this regarding the source-text and the deaf user's ideology.

In conclusion, numerous aspects influence the decision-making process of interpreters regarding gender-inclusive language. Many researchers have explored various models of the interpreter's role which could be interesting to apply in the case of gender-inclusive language, which this thesis did not attempt. This study in particular focuses on the feminist ideology of participants and how it impacts their view of their role and specifically which strategies they will prefer. As clearly stated by Yu, "strategies *per se* cannot be labelled feminist or *unfeminist* (my term) [sic]. It is the use, the purpose, and the effect that define whether a strategy is feminist or not" (Yu, 2015, p 186-187). The next section focuses on the methodology of this research.

3 Methodology

This chapter focuses on the method used for the purpose of this research, how the sample of four participants were recruited, as well as the process of data generation, collection and analysis.

3.1 Process of a mixed method

The research method consists of three phases during each one-on-one meeting between the researcher and the participants: interpreting task, retrospective think-aloud protocol (TAP) and interview. The aim was not only to focus on the final product (Smith, 2014) but understand what drives interpreting choices regarding gender-inclusive language, as an attempt to create a full picture of their work (Smith, 2014). Meetings, which lasted about two hours, happened remotely (on Zoom) in French and were recorded. The method was designed and then tested on a participant whose data is analysed with the data of other participants. Some minor changes were made after the pilot meeting, but the results from that test were of interest, hence the decision to use the data collected from that pilot.

3.1.1 Interpreting tasks

First, participants were asked to do two short interpreting tasks from LSF to French. Initially, the source text (ST) was meant to be scripted, to design a video whose content would have included many gendered or ungendered linguistic elements that could prompt or trigger interpreters' strategies. 'Trigger' is here used as a specific input or language pair problem that could impact the decision-making process as used in Heyerick's work (2021) and do not necessarily imply an emotional and or negative response. This material would have been scripted by the researcher and signed by a deaf person who was aware of the researcher's intentions. Because of time constraints, this option was replaced by two existing videos with some gender triggers providing opportunities for interpreters to use gender-inclusive language or not, in French.

The first ST was a 2-minutes video extracted from a 10-minute news show in LSF about preferences among French people regarding transportation (car vs public transportation). The

signer is a deaf native translator/interpreter. The target audience was quite broad as the initial news segment was released online on the TV channel’s website. It is not a translation from French, but rather prepared with some material (notes, press release, etc.) in French (Leroy et al., 2019). The material used for the research was extracted from a Youtube channel who shared the whole journal of April 10th 2019 because they had an interest in another extract (Solidarité-Sourds-Bénin SSB, 2019, see also Figure 11).



Figure 11 Screenshot of ST 1 (SSB, 2019)

The second ST was an extract (about 6 minutes and 30 seconds long) from a video recording of a lecture by Laure Abdelmoumeni Perini (2022, from 45'05 to 51'41), who is a deaf feminist researcher. She explicitly gave her consent for her name to be mentioned. Her PhD is about deaf feminism(s) in France. The lecture was part of a conference that happened at the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS) under hybrid conditions, and the link of the recording was accessible only to people who attended or are part of the mailing list of Deaf Studies’ seminar (see also Figure 12).



Figure 12 Screenshot of ST 2 (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, 2022)

The target audience in this situation was more restrained: other researchers and some deaf or hearing people interested in her topic. The aim of having two interpreting tasks was to provide two different settings: one with a generic approach and another one more specific, where interpreters could feel entitled, if not encouraged, to use gender-inclusive language by the topic of research of the deaf lecturer.

To keep the one-on-one meeting relatively short, and to avoid participants from being anxious, they were sent the same contextual information about the two videos a few days before the meeting, and all slides or screenshots of the slides used during the videos, providing some details about content information. The whole preparation for interpreting tasks were quite different for each participant as each of them prepared their own way. Additional preparation was provided as well depending on their specific needs and questions. This is discussed in the limitations section.

The total duration of the interpreting tasks was not more than 10 minutes because remote interpreting tends to be more tiring than on-site interpreting (De Meulder et al., 2021, p 38). This also ensured me to keep the amount of data manageable for a MA thesis. Especially because other kinds of data were generated.

3.1.2 Think-aloud protocol (TAP) and semi-directed interviews

The research topic was revealed to participants only after going through the interpreting tasks to avoid influencing their work. Then, STs were watched again with the participant through what can be called a think-aloud protocol (TAP) (Smith, 2014), as a verbal report or retrospective verbalisation of the interpreting tasks that they just accomplished (Russell & Winston, 2014). Indeed, the comments were not provided during the interpreting task but after the task, retrospectively. Participants had to ask me to stop the video when they saw something relevant that could have triggered them regarding gender choices. They were invited to express other strategies they could think of, or basically, any thought related to the topic prompt by the viewing of ST. After they expressed themselves, if I noted which specific strategy they used, I could tell them to additionally comment on it. This protocol aimed at a

participatory approach as it could contribute to the reflexive analysis of the participants (Smith, 2014) as well as generate data for my research.

Interviews were the last part of the meeting. The aim was to go deeper into some topics that were discussed during the TAP protocol, and exchange with participants about their habits and practices of the gender-inclusive French. Questions were asked to cover all topics that I wanted to discuss with them.

The next figure shows the whole process of one-on-one meetings in a visual way.

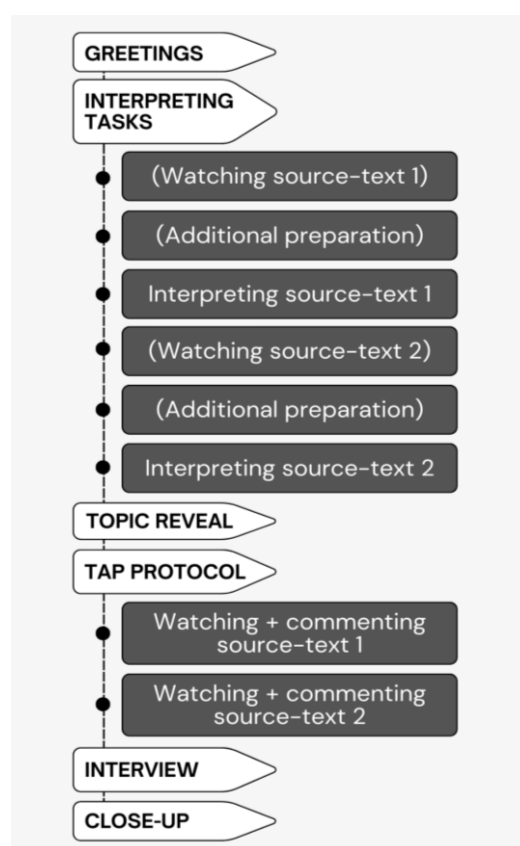


Figure 13 Visual flow of one-on-one meeting with participant

3.2 Purposive Sampling

Participants were hearing interpreters with potentially some kind of gender-inclusive language practices in my network. They were identified through personal exchanges, working discussions, or even while working together. Participants were recruited with a 'network technique of sampling' as described by Hale & Napier (2013, p 73) with a preference for interpreters I knew the least. Indeed, the aim was to ease the process of the research and

limit the confirmation bias that could have been stronger with interpreters I would have previously discussed the topic with. However, because of the criteria that participants must have some kind of gender-inclusive language use, a relation of sympathy at the minimum was existing previously to the study between the participants and myself. The fact that to some degree they have a practice of gender-inclusive language narrows the vision of the topic to interpreters who actually use it, or try to, which is why this research was done. The position of interpreters who for some reason would think that this is not appropriate is not properly analysed in this thesis. However, there is a relative variety in the positionality of the participants which sought to allow alternative ways of doing to emerge (Naples & Gurr, 2013).

The pilot participant to test the methodology for this research was recruited for the same reasons, and was also part of a previous pilot study realised in preparation of this MA Thesis (Thomas, 2022). Because they were quite aware of my topic interests and we already discussed them, I decided to test the methodology with them as their feedback could be even more interesting in regards to their expertise on the topic. This choice was another occasion to apply a feminist approach to the research (Naples & Gurr, 2013). It did mean they more or less knew my topic of interest before doing the interpreting task. This may lead them to be hypervigilant about the use of gender-inclusive language, and this is addressed in the results section.

The final sample consists of three female and one male interpreters, all cisgenders and all white. No transgender, non-binary or people recognizing themselves in another label within the gender spectrum participated. Initially, five potential participants were contacted, including a transgender interpreter who turned down the proposal because of the interpreting task being into French, without knowing the theme. This may be related to a different attitude to working languages or a preferred direction (Napier and al., 2005, p 197, Wang & Napier, p 521), for example one participant hesitated before accepting, because of the direction. The trans interpreter could have felt pressured because the aim of the tasks was for research purposes. According to Baril (Swamy & Mackenzie, 2022, p 67), there are specific difficulties in French-speaking countries, for some feminist movements to include transfeminism. Then, it could also be the fear to be considered as the trans token/quota in the research. All female participants consider themselves as feminist, and the male

participant considers feminism an ideology he finds himself in line with, without feeling he knows enough to be labelled as a feminist.

All participants are hearing, which is to be linked to the absence of deaf interpreters in my network, working from LSF to spoken French, as its use is often not possible or desirable for deaf people (De Meulder & Hualand, 2019). The structure of the profession in France implies that deaf translators have mainly worked from French to LSF (Nana Gassa Gongga, 2019) and deaf interpreters have only started to professionalise few years ago and are working mainly between sign languages: LSF and/or International Sign (Leroy et al., 2019). Other functions that are occupied by 'deaf interpreters' in the English academia, like healthcare or justice mediation, have been covered by other deaf professionals in France, and called intermediators, who have been trained separately (Leroy et al., 2019). The deaf perspective in this study is not absent, however. The deaf lecturer for the second ST, the aforementioned Abdelmoumeni-Perini, was informally interviewed before data collection. In future studies on the topic of gender-inclusiveness in LSF and in French, it could be interesting to include deaf practitioners' perspectives who face choices similar to the hearing participants of this research shared.

Participants were mostly familiar with me, which probably provided a feeling of trust and contributed to their participation. By participating in the pilot study a few months ago, or by being aware of its existence, most participants had at least some knowledge of my topic. As participants belong to my network, most of them have an idea of my positionality. For example, as a member of the board of the French national association of sign language interpreters and translators (AFILS), I helped organise a meeting where inclusive French was discussed with an expert. Furthermore, my own characteristics as an interpreter, potentially a colleague and as a researcher, could affect the results and need to be taken into account in the data analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

The four recordings were fully transcribed by me, with the help of the automatic dictation tool of Word. They were then anonymised. After that, each participant was sent their transcript and was given a week to comment, if necessary, to confirm their informed consent

for the data analysis. They were also invited to choose a pseudonym for the purpose of the research, which none of them ended up doing. In the end, I did the pseudonymisation on my own, inspired by famous French feminist authors: Georges, Louise, Monique and Simone. During the transcription process, I was confronted with the recurrent use of the generic masculine and the nonrecognition of feminine versions of words or pronouns and neologisms by the automatic recognition tool. That was interesting on a meta-level and confirms the gender bias that has been observed in algorithms in machine translation (Lopez Medel, 2021).

The STs in LSF were glossed in French which was also interesting on a meta-level because of the effort to not make the glossing masculine-dominant in the word choices but rather inclusive. Then, I produced a translation in French for the two STs, mostly to get familiar with the data. The translation for the first ST was even directly comparable to the subtitles that existed in the original video and were hidden in the video presented to the participants. Coincidentally, the whole section's subtitles and the researcher's translation were the exact same number of words (170). The translations were not analysed per se in detail but aimed to become familiar with the data and reflect on my own inclusive choices.

To analyse the interpreting choices, several steps were necessary. First, I created a table sheet which synthesised and categorised sections of ST and participant's interpreting choices in terms of gender-inclusivity. The main purpose was to compare and estimate the presence of gender and correspondence or divergence, in both the ST through glosses on the left of the table, and in the target-texts (TTs). Each participant is represented by one colour in the table. The participants' data also included other possibilities mentioned during the TAP protocol. For each specific section of the ST or interpreting choices, the following column gives information about number (singular or plural) and gender (feminine, masculine or neutral) of people involved. Then, another column aims to represent this information in a more visual way. If the choice is feminine, the colour of the cell is pink, if inclusive, a rainbow picture is in the cell, if the choice is grammatically marked, then the background of the cell is coloured accordingly. If gender is marked in a binary way, then a blue and pink picture is in the cell. When needed, multiple choices are contained in the same feature; the background allows for marking the second most prevalent gender. If the choice is masculine (whether it is generic masculine or not), the cell is blue (also see section 4.1 for data analysis and Figure 15).

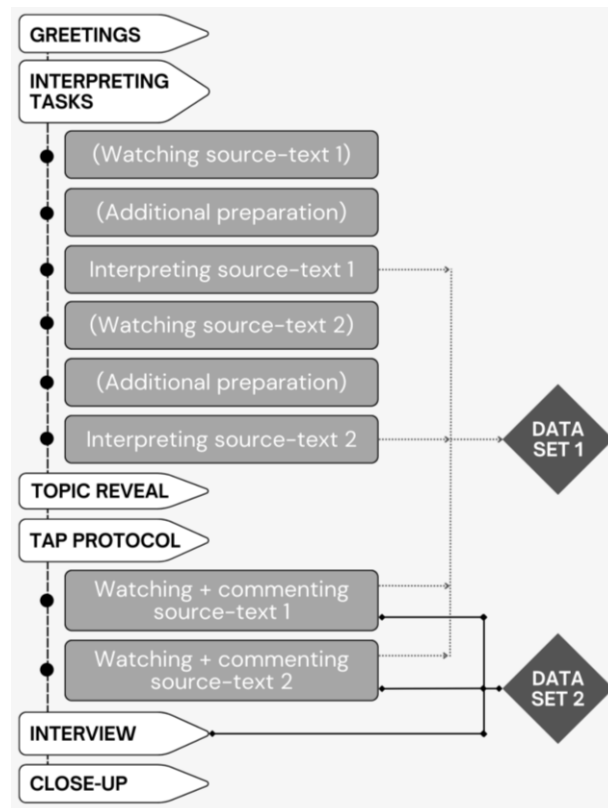


Figure 14 Visualisation of data analysis

The first data set enabled a qualitative analysis of preferred strategies with information about their frequency in the TTs. Still, the data analysis was a qualitative one and did not seek to produce quantitative knowledge. It focuses on the main research question: what the preferred strategies of participants are and why.

What impacts their decision-making process?

The second data set was coded with deductive coding after an attempt to visually represent the decision-making process. Indeed, what could impact interpreting choices in the matter of gender-inclusive preferred strategies was gathered in a visualisation tool to help analyse the data modified accordingly during the analysis process. A lot of features overlap, and the coding is very subjective, also no other researcher had their pair of eyes on it, which is another limitation in this study.

The interviews were mostly analysed to have additional information about the decision-making process of gender-inclusive strategies and were not analysed as deeply as they could have been in a proper thematic or discourse analysis.

3.4 Limitations of the study

The interpreting tasks were rather different from what practitioners are used to doing in their interpreting practice, as they were working from videos and not natural and live discourse, which is a first limitation.

Both STs were extracted from videos available online. That implies a limited quality for the task material, which impacts the results of this research, especially for the second video. In fact, the conference was hybrid, and the low quality of the initial recording may have impacted the screen recording realised for generating the ST 2. Thus, some participants reported struggling with understanding it, not being able to see properly the visual support. This happened despite a substantial improvement between the material used for the pilot participant and the other participants. The lecturer's space on screen and the slides' space were switched to gain visibility of the source text. However, participants could then barely read the slides and had to rely on their memories of what was written on each slide. One of the participants' interpreting task was even realised as a consecutive interpreting and not a simultaneous one. In fact, participants were given complete control for starting and stopping the videos during interpreting tasks.

Furthermore, to ease the process and make participants comfortable, at first, they were given the opportunity to stop the video anytime to be able to catch up with processing time, if necessary, which only one participant actually used. Adjustments were made throughout the process in between participants' meetings – like additional preparation (specific signs were shown, questions were answered) and one viewing of the video before interpreting was permitted. The variations between participants regarding preparation hence terms of interpreting situation among participants is listed as the following and constitutes another limitation:

	Louise	Monique	Georges	Simone
ST 1 watching	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
ST 1 preparation	Slides	Slides	Slides	Slides
ST 1 interpreting	Simultaneous	Simultaneous	Simultaneous	Simultaneous
ST 2 watching	No	No	Yes	Yes
ST 2 preparation	Slides, but NO specific mention of deaf feminism being the topic of lecture + specific signs shown: DEAF STUDIES, EPISTEMOLOGY, POSITIONALITY	Slides + specific mention of deaf feminism being the topic of lecture + specific signs shown: DEAF STUDIES, EPISTEMOLOGY, ACADEMIC + after 1st attempt to interpret, watching to the slides together to discuss what the lecturer will be explaining	Slides + specific mention of deaf feminism being the topic of lecture + specific signs shown: EPISTEMOLOGY, DEAF STUDIES, ACADEMIC, INDIGENOUS	Slides + specific mention of deaf feminism being the topic of lecture + specific signs shown: EPISTEMOLOGY, DEAF STUDIES, ACADEMIC
ST 2 interpreting	Simultaneous with few breaks and direct addresses to researcher	Consecutive	Simultaneous	Simultaneous

Table 2 Preparation for 4 participants for both STs

When I revealed my topic research, some participants confessed having an idea of my topic research before doing the interpreting task. This might have led them to be hypervigilant about the use of gender-inclusive language, even if the participants who had doubts say they were not necessarily influenced (Monique interview, Pos. 13). The sample is very small and does not represent the whole profession, meaning no generalisation could be made out of the results. All participants being cisgender, other interpreters being genderfluid, queer or non-binary could have brought a different perspective on the topic. In the same spirit, deaf, disabled, non-white interpreters could have different views, especially on the other aspects of inclusive language that French potentially carries. Interpreters that identify with diverse feminist movements (intersectional feminism, radical feminism or universalist feminism) could also reflect a great variety of angles about inclusive language in French, which this thesis does not address in detail.

4 Findings

Results of interpreting choices analysis will be presented in the first section of this chapter. After analysing results for each interpreting tasks, generally preferred strategies will be discussed, with some explanation when mentioned during the TAP protocol. Then, the reasons for these preferences will be deepened in the interviews analysis section, as well as other secondary results of the research.

4.1 Participants' interpreting choices

Participants' interpreting choices were analysed through both a comparison of gender-inclusivity contained in the STs (Table 1) and through a coding of all productions from the categorisation of Lami (2022, p 22-23) (Figures 15 and 16).

4.1.1 First interpreting task

The first chart for analysis (also see section 3.3) shows the comparison of ST gender-inclusivity in regard to interpreting choices of four participants (in alphabetic order) for ST 1, all along the TT. Here is an overview of the visual rendering of the inclusivity comparison between ST 1 and participants' choices:

Classes	Mouthing	Potential gender issues	ST Category	Seigneur gender choices	TT Category	Other gender choices	Top Ideas Category	Lower gender choices	TT Category	Other gender choices	Top Ideas Category	Multiple gender choices	TT Category	Other gender choices	Top Ideas Category	Simple gender choices	TT Category	Other gender choices	Top Ideas Category
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Table 3 Gender-inclusivity in ST 1 interpreting choices for 4 participants

Gender is rather absent in the ST 1 which is about people living in France, without any information about their gender, which can be considered inclusive. Only one component in the last quarter of the video is a mouthing of a French adjective *prêt* (ready) in the masculine form. I would argue that it could be considered a mark of generic masculine, influenced by the spoken language and the social environment.

That seems to have impacted Georges who made the masculine agreement using this word and the masculine pronoun *ils* (they), although he has used the epicene word *personne* (person) all along, which is grammatically feminine. As he puts it during the TAP about that inconsistency: “habits are easy to make but hard to break” (Georges TAP ST 1, Pos. 32), which shows that even when trying to not use generic masculine, you can struggle to do so.

After starting with a generic masculine *les français* (the French - people), Louise switched to a gender-inclusive strategy: she mostly employed the same word as Georges, except one time when she used *les gens* (people), which is also gender-neutral, but grammatically masculine. Halfway through the task, she used the masculine pronoun *ils* (they) when it was supposed to refer to the gender-neutral *personnes*. During the TAP protocol, she specified that generally if she must interpret only a section where there is a pointing, she may choose *ils* (they), but with the prior use of *personnes*, she would not for consistency reason. That is however not what she has done during the interpreting task, as she recognised herself (Louise TAP ST 1, Pos. 26).

Monique started with a word pair: *les Françaises et les français* (the French - people), putting the feminine word first, which is not consistent with the alphabetical order but could rather indicate a preference for putting feminine words first to counteract masculine representation, although she did not specify anything in that sense during the protocol or the interview. She then used *les gens* until the end. Interestingly, at the end of the TAP protocol for ST 1, I asked her if the use of generic masculine seemed more efficient to her, when she in fact produced an inclusive TT (0 instance of generic masculine) but with a presence of the masculine grammatical gender. The general impression, or even maybe the mental representations that it generates seemed masculine to me, at that moment.

Simone is the one who used the most of generic masculine forms with *les français* but also *les parisiens* (the Parisians). But, she is also the only one who applied the group term *la population française* (the French population) before switching to *personnes* for the second half of the video. At some point, it is hard to distinguish, but it appears that she used *ils* (male they).

As a reminder, this data analysis was produced with the chart presented in Table 4, Figure 15 and with the use of MaxQDA, mostly with the analysis section and ‘Comparison of groups’ with qualitative method (see also Appendix), and secondary with the ‘Code Matrix Browser’ tool for an overview of frequencies. Here is a visualisation of frequency for the preferred strategies used by the participants when interpreting ST 1:



Figure 15 Strategies used by 4 participants for ST 1 (only real interpreting choices)

To summarise, most participants seemed to prefer a neutralisation strategy with epicene words, except Simone who mostly used generic masculine. Louise used a certain amount of generic masculine items as well. However, as a reminder, she is the only one who did not see the video prior to interpreting it. Her production might have been different if she had, based on her comments during the TAP protocol.

Georges and Louise who used the epicene '*personnes*', wondered if it was because of the repetitive use in the ST of the sign PERSONNES. Louise for example realised that even if previously she could have avoided this word as much as possible; it is now part of her daily life (Louise TAP ST 1, pos. 18). She finally concludes: "I think it's interesting, I mean, in the space of a few years, I wouldn't have translated it in the same way, and I wouldn't have been made to translate it ... I mean, I wouldn't have assumed it in the same way." (Louise TAP ST 1, pos. 33).

Words pairs are mentioned as an alternative by all participants during TAP protocol, however they were used by Monique only, who did not seem convinced by her own use as she thinks word pairs are unnatural and too visible (Interview, pos. 35).

4.1.2 Second interpreting task

The second ST is completely gender-inclusive when it is referring to people in general. Some signs designating people as a group like COMMUNAUTÉ SOURDE (deaf community) or MONDE UNIVERSITAIRE (academic world) incorporate mouthing of matching French words, potentially giving them a gender flavour from the grammatical gender of the word in French: feminine for COMMUNAUTÉ and masculine for MONDE. But gender triggers mostly appear when the deaf researcher (female) refers to herself, which leads participants to verbalise her gender in French (or not) even if it was not in LSF (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, 2022, 45'56). Gender is also visible when she mentions her supervisor (female) (46'38) and right after, the deaf women she is currently doing research on (46'41). Later, the woman/women identity(ies) are mentioned in a list, as not being researched enough, yet, in Deaf Studies, in comparison to other aspects of identity, like Blackness (49'18).

Following is an extract of the first chart for gender-inclusivity comparison between ST 2 and interpreting choices of participants:

Glosses	Mouthing	Potential gender issues	ST Category	Monique gender choices	TT Category	Other ideas during TAP	Tap ideas Category
MOI-paumeplatetorse AUJOURD'HUI JUSTE SEMINAIRE PROFITER ECHANGES ENUMERATION-4 INDEX-CIBLE-4 OBJECTIF QUESTION AUSSI OBJECTIF QUOI?	... SEMINAIRE PROFITE ... 4 OBJECTIF QUESTION AUSSI OBJECTIF QUOI			vous	gender-neutral pronoun		
PENSER DÉJÀ DISCUTER JUSQU'A-MAINTENANT GROUPE UNIVERSITÉ RÉUNIONX2 TOURNE-AUTOUR RECHERCHE SOURD-E	PENSE DEJA ... UNIVERSITE ... RECHERCHE SOURD-E	GROUPE UNIVERISTE	gender-neutral				
		RECHERCHE SOURD-E	gender-neutral			chercheurs et chercheuses	feminine + masculine noun + proximity agreement
OU-paumesretournees PERSONNES RECHERCHE SUR COMMUNAUTÉ SOURD-E	OU PERSONNE RECHERCHE COMMU SOURD-E	PERSONNES RECHERCHE	gender-neutral plural	chercheur	masculine singular	les personnes sourdes qui font de la recherche	gender-neutral plural with epicene noun (feminine grammatical gender)
		SUR COMMUNAUTÉ SOURD-E	gender-neutral				
DISCUTER AFFAIRE PLACE EUX/ELLES/IELS/NOUS/VOUS-possession POSITIONNALITÉ RELATION COMMUNAUTÉ SOURD-E COMMENT MOI-index PROCHE À-DISTANCE RELATION COMMENT? RÉFLEXION VOULOIR CONTINUER CA-index PLUS RECHERCHE OUVRIRE-... CA-index	... AFFAIRE PLACE ... COMMENT ... RELATION COMMENT ... VEUX CONTINUE PLUS	EUX/ELLES/IELS/VOUS-cercle DISCUTER AFFAIRE PLACE EUX/ELLES/IELS/NOUS /VOUS-possession	gender-neutral plural				
		RELATION COMMUNAUTÉ SOURD-E COMMENT	gender-neutral collective				
PLUS LIEN AFFAIRE POUVOIR MOI-index ÊTRE SOURD-E SIGNE ORALISER PARLER ZERO	LIEN AFFAIRE POUVOIR ZERO	MOI-index ÊTRE SOURD-E	gender-neutral + context	sourde	feminine noun	moi en tant que personne sourde	gender-neutral plural with epicene noun (feminine)
CA-VEUT-DIRE COMMENT EUX/ELLES/IELS/NOUS/VOUS-cercle GUILLEMETS UNIVERSITÉ SOCIETE GROUPE COMPLET ENTENDANT-E REGARDER-versoi + QUOI? CA-indexmainND CONSTAT-mainND PEUR OU ACCUEILLIR OU ESSAYER COMPRENDRE PARTICIPER-del' extérieur PLACE ETC. CA-enface PERSONNE-indexND INTERESSANT CA-enface C'EST-POUR-CA VOULOIR SAVOIR VOUS-cercle RECHERCHE SOURD-E OU AUTRE POINTAGE-aléatoireDH+ND EXPERIENCE JUSQU'A-MAINTENANT QUOI? POINTAGE-aléatoireDH	CA-VEUT-DIRE COMMENT UNIVERSITE COMPLET ENTENDANT-E ... QUOI PEUR OU OU ESSAYE ... PLACE C'EST-POUR-CA VEUX SAVOIR RECHERCHE SOURD-E OU AUTRE EXPERIENCE QUOI	COMMENT EUX/ELLES/IELS/NOUS /VOUS-cercle	gender-neutral plural	les gens	gender-neutral plural epicene noun (masculine grammatical gender)		
		UNIVERSITÉ SOCIETE GROUPE	gender-neutral collective	le monde universitaire	gender-neutral collective noun (exact correspondance with signs -> masculine grammatical gender)		
		COMPLET ENTENDANT-E	gender-neutral collective	exclusivement à des personnes entendantes	gender-neutral plural epicene noun (feminine grammatical gender)		
		VOUS-cercle	gender-neutral plural	vous	gender-neutral pronoun	vous	gender-neutral pronoun
		RECHERCHE SOURD-E	gender-neutral plural	chercheurs et chercheuses sourdes	feminine + masculine noun + proximity agreement		
				curieuse	feminine adjective		

Table 4 Gender-inclusivity between ST 2 and interpreting choices of Monique (randomly chosen)

Interestingly, even if their gender appears in the ST, no participant marked both the gender of the supervisor and the deaf women. Georges did not mention either during the interpreting task or during the viewing of her TAP protocol and realised his omission only after my comment and a last viewing, feeling bad to have missed her very research topic.

Louise only mentioned the female supervisor while Monique and Simone only mentioned deaf women during their respective interpreting tasks. Louise and Simone both realised their omission during TAP protocol. About the deaf women, Louise expressed it this way: "I realise that it's been completely ignored, whereas it's the heart of... Well, there's something in the subject that's really important and the fact that I'm focusing on other things, other areas of understanding, well, you can take away the most important thing. And conveniently, it's the

feminine” (smiles) (Louise TAP ST 2, Pos. 26). An explanation of this omission could be because as stated in the limitation section (see 3.4), Louise was not told specifically that the lecturer’s topic research was deaf feminism. Also, as a reminder, both Monique and Louise have not seen the ST 2 before interpreting it, their productions may have been different if they had. Monique worked in a more consecutive way than simultaneously, which could have eased the process for her, giving her more flexibility timewise. Simone remembered having understood the presenter’s supervisor was female at first viewing, unsure if it was from mouthing, but recognised that for some reason it did not appear in her interpretation. She even thought she had omitted the deaf women as well. For this specific section, during TAP protocol, Monique referred to the supervisor with a masculine word ‘*tuteur de stage*’ (internship tutor) and the epicene ‘*personne*’ (person). She was more preoccupied by some ambiguity between the deaf people doing research or being studied: “Oh yes, well I suppose the person asks her how she manages to get data and she says that she can find a lot of material in sign language but not necessarily in literature. And so the problem is that when I say ‘deaf people’ [...] we don't really know if we're talking about people who are being studied or people who are studying...’ (Monique TAP ST 2, Pos. 36). That seems to have taken all of her mental energy during the interpreting process because further, she adds ‘[...] the effort to concentrate on the fuzzy stuff wastes energy on the form” (Monique TAP ST 2, pos. 41).

For the last clear mention of gender when listing other identities that need to be researched in the source text, only Monique, who produced a consecutive interpreting, specifically mentioned women. Other participants did not include them in the list, except Georges who referred to “identity or feminism”. This could be due to interpreters’ tendency to do omissions (consciously or unconsciously) in a context of a university lecture notably because of the lexical density (Napier, 2004).

Here is a table of strategies used by the participants:



Figure 16 Strategies used by 4 participants for ST 2 (only real interpreting choices)

For ST 2, detour strategies appear on average as the preferred strategy with a lot of impersonal pronouns. Indeed, Georges for example used the gender-neutral ‘on’ (we, but as a third-person singular pronoun) 21 times, which is useful according to him ‘to level out certain things between gender or even hierarchies between people etc.’ (Georges TAP ST 2, Pos. 48). On the other hand, Simone used it only 4 times. However, she used more direct addresses with the gender-neutral ‘vous’ (you, plural). Some participants evoked uncertainty about the subject that the deaf lecturer was referring to sometimes. Several times, they were unsure if she included herself or not in the group of deaf researchers she was referring to. Thus, this variable understanding could explain partially the diversity of interpreting choices. ‘Vous’ (you, plural) can be a good alternative to ‘on’, judged ‘familiar’ by Georges (TAP ST 2, Pos. 48) and a good way to be “both in the expected levels and something efficient, not heavy so as not to waste time and weigh down with female and male researchers” (Monique TAP

ST 2, pos. 57). Operating impersonal phrases could be a deliberate choice to be inclusive or not. Georges is unsure of the conscious or unconscious choice of using them, but he notices that either way, he does not have to make a gender choice in his translation (Georges TAP ST 2, Pos. 91). The use of space through the use of the sign AREA/PLURAL (also see section 2.1.1 and Figure 9) or by pointing, as potential equivalents of pronouns in LSF, seems still unclear for some participants. For example, Georges states that there is no relation to gender when he sees that AREA/PLURAL sign, during TAP protocol (TAP ST 2, Pos. 15).

Neutralisation through the use of many group terms or hypernyms is also an important way to convey gender-inclusivity among participants. '*Monde académique/universitaire*' - academic world, '*monde entendant*' - hearing world or '*savoir(s) sourd(s)*' - deaf knowledge are examples of interpreting choices. These latter are really close to glosses of the ST and thus could have been influenced by LSF.

Anglicisms are used only for Deaf Studies. Participants may have been influenced by the fact that before interpreting the task, I showed the sign borrowed from International Sign used by the presenter to participants during the additional preparation phase, using the English concept 'Deaf Studies' as well, instead of the potential and epicene French equivalent '*études sourdes*'. Monique recognises that English borrowings can be convenient in regard to inclusive language but seems not fully convinced of using them for that reason (Monique TAP ST 2, Pos. 77).

Another strategy mentioned is using the plural, which in spoken French sounds the same whether it is feminine, masculine or mixed grammatical gender. Simone cites the example of '*à des professionnel·les*' (to professionals) to 'evade the [gender] topic' (Simone TAP ST 2, Pos. 52). However, no example of that strategy appears in the interpreting task data.

Louise is the one who used the most generic masculine for this ST, but again, as being the only one not having viewed the video first and still working simultaneously, she might have produced different choices if she had pre-viewed the video. She instantly reflected on her use of "convenient masculine [...] I feel like I don't know why but... you know the 'ah I've got too much to think about I can't figure it out' my brain didn't even have time to think about that, and went to what I learned as a kid." (Louise TAP ST 2, Pos. 1). A lot of the uses of generic masculine forms concerns '*les sourds et les entendants*' (deaf and hearing people, masculine version for both) and as it appears for Simone and Monique: 'deaf and hearing people, it

comes out by itself, it's not even gendered anymore' as Monique expresses it (Monique TAP ST 2, Pos. 75). However, it should be noticed that the epicene *personnes* is more often associated with *sourdes* (deaf, adjective). Interestingly, that resonates with Abdelmoumeni-Perini's position that would prefer the use of gender-inclusive language for people with less power in society and carry on with generic masculine for people with a lot of power, hearing people in that case (personal correspondence, February 13, 2023). Indeed, using inclusive language in referring to the hearing and academic world could weaken the criticism of the power relationships with deaf people or Deaf Studies for her. However, when addressing criticism of the lack of diversity in Deaf Studies, this could be an issue – Deaf Studies being in a specific position as a minority potentially obscuring other minorities (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, personal correspondence, February 13, 2023).

Feminisation is more present compared to the first source text but still not the most preferred strategy. Word pairs only concern the word 'researchers' for all three participants who used it: Georges, Monique and Simone. As previously analysed, Monique prefers other strategies like 'vous' (you, plural) over this one. Louise as well says that she does not often use 'the double gender because it's too complicated, there are too many words' (Louise TAP ST 1, Pos. 33). Simone has a tip for that to save time, she would pronounce both words as one, insisting on the feminine ending like in '*chercheu-res*' (male and female researchers) (Simone TAP ST 2, Pos. 91), as a way of actually 'pronouncing inclusive writing' (Simone TAP ST 2, pos. 93). Interestingly, '*chercheur-es*' is the way the deaf lecturer typically refers to 'researchers' on her slide deck – which could imply that she uses the feminine '*chercheuse*', which sounds like the masculine. Whereas, in the email of preparation and discussing with participants, I used the other feminine version '*chercheuse*', which sounds differently than the masculine version. No participant used '*chercheur*', whether referring to the deaf lecturer herself or in word pairs, even though Simone noticed this specificity during the preparation (Simone interview, Pos. 56). This could confirm the preference for the *-euse* ending in France over *-eure* in Canada. Indeed, during his TAP, Georges uses '*superviseuse*' whereas the presenter would rather employ '*superviseure*' in use where she studies, in Canada (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, personal correspondence, February 13, 2023). Closest agreement (i.e., agreement with the closest noun, see also section 2.2.4) is used by all participants except Louise who did not use word pairs. Indeed, closest agreement was always made concurrently as word pairs for

researchers, as in *'en tant que chercheurs et chercheuses sourdes'* - male and female deaf researchers (Monique Interpreting ST 2, Pos. 1).

Analysis of both interpreting tasks can be done comparatively as well as preferred strategies by interpreters. The reader can find additional visualisations of the results in Appendix B. However, because STs were not produced in a similar setting, the comparison of preferred strategies will not be pursued in this section. After proper analysis of both interpreting tasks and the corresponding TAP protocol data, the next section focuses on additional comments based on interview data analysis.

4.2 Interviews

As stated in the methodology section (also see 3.3 and 3.4), the interviews were not analysed in detail through a systematic thematic analysis for example. However, coding of the data and selection of specific comments of the participants enable follow-up on their decision-making process of using gender-inclusive language and how.

4.2.1 Disruption of social-norms

Participants relate that since a few years (up to 10 years for the more experienced), they have been reflecting on issues about gender in their work as interpreters between LSF and French. As feminism is much more mainstream and no longer has the negative image it had 15 years ago, as expressed by Monique (interview, Pos. 57), social-norms about gender have been challenged, both to question the hierarchy and the binary perspective, which has impacted participants. Some of them directly experienced gender inequalities or hegemonic-heteronormativity as described by Marchia & Sommer (2019). Other events have contributed to their feminist awareness like discovering the existence of intersex people or interpreting with or about transgender, non-binary or gender-fluid people. They also mention other social justice concerns like anti-racism and intersectionality perspective. They all mention a feminist stance.

Participants also became conscious of the masculinist ideology behind the use of the generic masculine in contemporary French. Hence, they stated willingness to not be instrumental in maintaining it. They indicated that both in their personal and professional use of language,

they pay growing attention to detouring masculine hegemony, especially in their written practice, where it is even more visible according to Monique just as gender-inclusive practices (interview, Pos. 33). This attention about written language has been influencing their spoken language as well (Simone interview, Pos. 26), thus in interpreting settings.

Still, their language resources may be limited when they are interpreting. First, because this language evolution is ongoing and second because of the interpreting constraints. Louise, for example, justifies her use of the generic masculine in the second video, stating “my brain didn't even have time to think about it, and went to what I learned as a kid” (interview, Pos. 16). This lack of time is pointed out by others as well. Georges considers that his use of gender-inclusive practice is not yet automatised (interview, Pos. 34). Interviews indicate that tiredness, processing time and knowledge of the topic, are other aspects of interpreting constraints that also impact the decision-making process.

4.2.2 Collaboration with deaf people

The source-text is cited as influencing the gender choices in French, especially mouthing, but also mental representations arising from a ST in LSF. This might indicate that supposedly gender-inclusive LSF could still elicit masculine mental representations.

Familiarity of the interpreter with the deaf and hearing participants in the interaction is also quite crucial. For example, if Georges knows the positionality of the deaf presenter, like Abdelmoumeni-Perini, for some visible gender-inclusive strategies like the epicene or non/binary pronoun *'iel'*, he would not hesitate to use it (interview, Pos. 48). Monique considers that it is even mandatory then (interview, Pos. 48) which is shared by Abdelmoumeni-Perini who considers it part of preparation in a conference setting (personal correspondence, February 13, 2023). Other participants showed concerns about the vagueness of the signs PARTNER or SPOUSE (see also Figure 22 and 23), and their strategy to not decide which gender they should use when interpreting in a liaison setting for example. Then, they can either ask the deaf person (Simone, interview, Pos. 40) or include an additional sentence like “husband or wife, the interpreter does not have the information” (Louise, interview, Pos. 87). However, Monique also cares about protecting the way deaf people refer to their partner in a matter of confidentiality. Indeed not giving information about the gender of their partner can be a conscious choice of the deaf person and even though the interpreter

knows the information, it is not their role to reveal it or to make visible that the information is blurred (interview, Pos. 43).



PÉTIT(E) AMI(E) 2. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 17 Drawing of LSF Sign for PARTNER (Delaporte, 2007, p 52)



ÉPOUX, ÉPOUSE. © Ivt 1986.

Figure 18 Drawing of LSF Sign for SPOUSE (Delaporte, 2007, p 221)

Whether they know the deaf person or not prior to the interpreting assignment, collaborating with them to have an idea of their preferences is something they do, or can do.

4.2.3 Context of interpreting assignments and neutrality

Fidelity to the ST is mentioned with the difficulty to be faithful to the language use and register the deaf person would have in the situation (Louise interview, Pos. 75, Monique interview, Pos. 68-69). For example, Monique considers that neologisms like *'toustes'* (all - constructed from *'tous'* masculine and *'toutes'* feminine) and *'iel'* (they) are inappropriate because they are too visible and easily readable as activist preferences (interview, Pos. 68-69, 73). However, Georges feels entitled to use the neologism *'éducateurices'* (educators) in a recurrent workspace, where he saw that it did not cause negative reactions; or the short version of the word: *'éduc's'* which is genderless (Georges interview, Pos. 36). One of the potential reasons

for his wider flexibility could be explained by his familiarity with this space. Indeed, being familiar with the hearing participants in the interaction can change interpreters' attitude and choices as well. If the role of interpreter is not clear for them, then the interpreter would not want to risk being too much included in the interaction, hence too visible, by having to justify some of their gender-inclusive choices for example, according to Georges (interview, Pos. 50-52). But on the contrary, when you are comfortable enough and well identified in your role as interpreter, it seems easier to make these kinds of choices. As an illustration, Georges can use generic feminine in this space where the majority of people are women, even in presence of some men conditionally upon knowing their positionality about this kind of choices (interview, Pos. 34, 36, 42, 50). Another reason could be the gender of Georges: as a man, his agency in his workplace could be more important than for other female participants. For example, Monique mentioned the use of generic feminine about interpreters, but only outside of interpreting settings and declared to employ it very carefully because she knows it is suitable in that context. On the other hand, people might think it is the overthrow of the hegemonic masculine (interview, Pos. 35). Overall, the ultimate goal is to not sound inappropriate in the given context to avoid being responsible for a change of focus from the content of the interpreted message to the form of it (Georges interview, Pos. 34, 50, Monique interview, Pos. 39, 98-99).

Besides, participants also question the non-neutrality of majority language uses like Simone who wonders "isn't it more committed to translate in masculinist language than...; isn't it more respectful of sign language to translate in inclusive language [...] than to translate it in masculinist spoken language, you know?" (Simone interview, Pos. 87). That led to questioning their own neutrality as one of the three values included in the code of ethics of sign language interpreters in France (AFILS, n. d.). In that matter, participants recognize the complexity of that notion, questioning its own possible existence (Georges interview, Pos. 9). For Monique, that aim of neutrality has evolved a lot throughout her career: it will impact the very choice of gender-inclusive strategies, as she would try to convey as few things as possible (interview, Pos. 45). Simone states that she would "take the opportunity to take sides in a way, but without it being obvious [...] It's a bit of... disguised activism" (Simone interview, Pos. 32). Louise has a different perspective, she considers that there are bigger issues with neutrality in interpreters' work than gender-inclusive choices, like those who take over (interview, Pos.

121). Each participant seems to have their own limits which are not easy to define, even by themselves because of the intuitive aspect of their evaluation of the acceptability of their choices in the given context.

4.2.4 Between self-censorship and make-up activism

Participants seem to navigate (Monique interview, Pos. 51) diverse spectrums, between normative language and most visible gender-inclusive language, but also between agency and neutrality. Monique uses the expression “walking on eggshells” (Monique interview, Pos. 51) which synthesises the experimental aspect of this practice. Participants appear to wish for a very dissimulated activism, a way of expressing their agency without people even noticing (Georges interview, Pos. 97, Simone interview, Pos. 32) which seems a paradox: can one exert their agency when no one is conscious of it? Participants related that they end up hiding behind the fidelity to ST argument for example, censoring themselves, thereby expecting potential negative reactions or because of their own perception of this new norm rising (Louise interview, Pos. 59, Simone interview, Pos. 66). Though, evolution among institutions makes interpreters feel more legitimate to use gender-inclusive language, or some strategies at least.

Appropriateness to qualify this practice as feminist interpreting remains uncertain (Simone interview, Pos. 82). The agency that is at stake seems also shared with deaf participants in the interaction who were mentioned as part of the decision-making process. In their collective paper, Susam-Saraeva et al (2023) discuss a situation where an interpreter refuses to translate a misogynistic statement. The participants, while understanding the human choice that was made, did not seem to recognise themselves as they referred to the importance of not preventing people to have access (Georges interview, Pos. 114). They consider that the interpreter acted outside of their role. It could be argued that there might be a specific angle of sign language interpreting given the diglossic situation of sign languages. For Louise, gender-inclusive practices can be qualified as feminist interpreting as she is reflecting on her interpreting practice on that matter; a clear feminist interpreting move was when she used a neologism ‘*organisateurices*’ (organisers) when interpreting a non-feminist space (interview, Pos. 87, 117). After hearing her colleagues’ choices of the masculine word, while she could

clearly see a mostly feminine team, she decided that she knew enough of the deaf person to know that they did not mean to say 'male organisers'.

The data analysis indicates an additional perspective on the preferred strategies and specifically the motivation for them in the decision-making process. A few additional results worth mentioning are presented in the next section.

4.3 Additional results

Some other results seemed interesting in regards to the topic but were hard to classify in the previous analysis. These are analysed in this section.

First, participants reckon that the notion of 'inclusive language' might cover other aspects than just gender, but they mostly struggle to cite concrete examples in French. Simone shared her thoughts on talking about non-white people in a respectful and inclusive way (interview, Pos. 96). Louise would use the epicene '*personnes racisées*' (racialised people). Others mention this identity aspect as well as others that can be grounds for discrimination and for which inclusivity is at stake – but without reporting specific strategies in French.

The other interesting aspect is how participants' experience and learning path could illuminate other LSF to French interpreters. Apparently, raising awareness of the existence of intersex and transgender people contributes to a change of paradigm from a binary perspective to a better understanding of gender as a spectrum (Monique entretien, Pos. 119). Having a discussion with peers is also a way to learn from each other (Georges interview, Pos. 105). Podcasts were mentioned as a way to learn both about the activist movements challenging social norms and the role of language in that matter.

This chapter gathered findings regarding interpreters' preferred strategies of gender-inclusive language in French when working from LSF in two different settings: a mainstream ST and a feminist academic discourse. It also explored some aspects that impact their decision-making process. Other features that could be contained in the broad notion of inclusive language were touched upon as well.

5 Discussion

A shared agency to navigate ethical values and disseminate inclusivity

This chapter aims to examine the consistency of the findings with the existing literature investigated in the second chapter of this thesis.

Firstly, the analysis of gender markers in LSF in this study questions the inclusiveness by nature of this potential natural gender language. Indeed, probably influenced by French, some occurrences of masculine (like PRÊT - masculine READY) used as neutral are incorporated in mouthings and could indicate the presence of a generic masculine in LSF. Moreover, as discussed in the literature review, deaf people living in France are exposed to the same predominance of masculine words in various written contents as non-deaf people (also see section 2.1.1). The gendered aspect of pronouns highlighted by Macias in ASL (2023) was not observed in this study because the STs' content in LSF was not providing opportunities to observe the unique use of pronouns outside of the binary perspective of gender. Gender-inclusive language in French may not be discussed much in deaf communities neither between interpreters and deaf people yet as suggested by Loffler et al. (2020). While she uses some form of 'inclusive writing' in her slides in French, the deaf feminist lecturer herself recognised that she did not think to discuss the topic with the interpreters before her conference prior to our conversation but will be willing to do so henceforth (Abdelmoumeni-Perini, personal correspondence, February 13, 2023).

Secondly, it should be noted that all participants have been engaged in an evolutionary process of their first language, to become more inclusive, just as the general evolution of French society described by several academics (also see section 2.2). Aware of the specific space gender (and heteronormativity) has in French society, and conscious of the persisting inequalities between men and marginalised people (notably women), participants express a willingness not to contribute to maintaining masculine forms as the norm in language anymore. According to them, that is an attitude which can be found in every kind of discourse, both privately and professionally. However the strategies they would use differ according to the context, people, and setting they are interpreting in. They also differ from one participant to another, each of them having their preferences based on standard language ideology (like

avoiding using the impersonal pronoun *on*, judged too familiar or imprecise, or preferring epicene words over longer word pairs as a voluntary avoidance strategy).

The use of epicene words is very present, like the word *personne* (person) which can be considered as interference, but is also affirmed as a purposely chosen word. As examined in sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.1, this is one of the words recommended when referring to human beings (Abbou, 2022, p 171, Viennot, 2019, p 28). Surprisingly, based on the findings, the word pair is far from being the preferred solution and can be produced to offset the generic masculine that they realised they were about to use. In one's daily life, using gender-inclusive language, and especially in written forms, gives more time and mental space to make deliberate gender-inclusive/gender-neutral choices according to participants and my own personal and professional experience. This seems to confirm the idea that inclusive language started in written language (Abbou et al., 2018, p 6). Generally, heterogeneity of gender-inclusive strategies shows in the results and confirms existing literature (Abbou, 2022, et al., 2018, Viennot, 2019, p 107). Overall, participants would like to get rid of the generic masculine completely, but they recognise that changing linguistic habits is challenging – not to mention societally. Moreover, they do not always feel they have the mental space to do so when they are focusing on understanding the content. This specific issue could be examined in further research with a cognitive sciences framework. Interpreters could also feel limited by their linguistic resources or in some situations feel they are not encouraged or entitled to use gender-inclusive alternatives. In that sense, gender-inclusive language guidelines published by French institutions are seen as helping participants who consider that they contribute to facilitating the use of alternatives to an androcentric and thus unfair and sexist norm. A new '*bon usage*' (proper use) could effectively be taking more and more space, at least in some specific places like activist associations (feminist, LGBTQIA+, etc.).

However, the strong prescriptive norm analysed by several academics is also evident in the participants' interviews. Some of them are unsure if certain neologisms like *iel(s)* (they) are specific to people outside of the gender binary or if they are meant to be inclusive for everyone as noted by Abbou (2022, p 159). Afraid of being wrong, they would not use these strategies unless specifically discussed with the deaf participant in the interaction or unless they consider the deaf user competent and ready to justify its use themselves. This is in line

with the attitude described by Burgat et al. (2022, p 2-3) among sign language interpreters in France. To have a proper idea of one's positionality about gender-inclusive language, it could be argued that an exchange on the topic should happen. It is worth noting that participants did not mention a systematic discussion with deaf people they work with to raise preferences about gender-inclusive language (or other aspects of the interpreting process) during the interviews. However, deaf people have mentioned collaborating with interpreters before, during, and after mediated interactions (De Meulder & Carmichael, 2020, Haug et al, 2017, p 123). The shared agency discussed in section 2.3.3 seems to be mostly implicit rather than systematically and explicitly discussed and negotiated with deaf people, at least regarding the use or rejection of gender-inclusive language.

Interestingly, based on the participants' comments, additional information can be added during the interpreting in the target text, such as: '*mon/ma conjointe, l'interprète n'a pas l'information*' (my male/female partner, the interpreter does not have the information') or 'the interpreter does not know'. I would argue that this kind of extra text could be categorised as 'supplementing' or 'footnoting' when using a feminist translation framework (Oster, 2016, p 13). Regarding 'hijacking', it seems that it is to be avoided by interpreters who do not want to change the focus from the content of the ST to its form. This is especially true when the interpreter's role is not fully understood. One female participant evokes an interpreting situation she has been involved in and categorises it as feminist interpreting because of her use of the neologism *organisateurices* (organisers) that combines the female *organisatrices* and the male version *organisateurs* of the word. It was used in a setting that was not openly feminist and probably composed of people of all genders, with various perspectives on the topic of inclusive language. Thus, I would argue that it could be categorised as 'hijacking'. The interpreter made a language choice that may not be the majority's linguistic preference among that language community. The male participant mentions using the same kind of neologism: *educateurices* (educators), in a familiar workspace (mostly feminine) where he did not perceive negative reactions. It could be argued that both the gender of the interpreter and the hearing audience, could impact those perceptions of reactions, real reactions or non-reactions. Again, the agency of the interpreter is at stake.

Generally, interpreters seem to navigate between bringing an LSF flavour to the hearing person, preferring a 'foreignised' perspective of interpreting to a 'domesticated' one (Venuti, 1995) and not being very interventionist. Moreover, it is still to be defined if there is a difference of 'visibility' of the interpreter between various gender-inclusive strategies. Equally, it could be questioned if there is a difference in the mental representations produced by these kinds of neologisms and word pairs. Also, this could help to establish which strategies are the most efficient for including people who do not identify in a binary way. The concrete reactions of a hearing audience should be researched as well, as it appears that rightly or wrongly, many interpreters fear negative reactions. I would argue that they mostly self-censor, framed by their ethical values. Moreover, those apprehensions are potentially based on negative experiences in their private or professional life that eventually could lead to the end of the interaction. In the pilot study in preparation of this thesis (Thomas, 2022), a participant (interpreter) mentioned an interesting situation. When interpreting a deaf person that she knew quite well, she used the generic feminine about interpreters, as the profession is female-dominated. Then, a hearing person questioned this choice to the deaf person, which made the interpreter first feel bad, as if she had gone too far. In good trust, the deaf lecturer suggested that the hearing person and the interpreter would discuss the topic together, which they did. Interestingly, in the current study, the male participant mentioned the generic feminine as a strategy he could use when interpreting, provided that the hearing male audience understood this choice. Because he can show that as a man, he can use the generic feminine for interpreters and still include himself as well, he feels like it is a possibility. Whereas another female participant might still hesitate to use it, even when not interpreting, since it may raise suspicion about overthrowing the hegemonic masculine. Again, the gender of the interpreter could impact their agency in the situation.

It could be argued that the degree of self-censorship could vary from interpreter to interpreter, but also the people in the interpreting setting – both hearing and deaf. Interpreters navigate and experiment openly, as gender-inclusive language is currently still in its infancy. When asking the participants how they felt about gender-inclusive interpreting practices, the answer was not necessarily joy or excitement, unlike 'joy in pirating' as mentioned by feminist translation researchers (Grunenwald, 2021). Some did relate a certain satisfaction when finding inclusive alternatives, especially subtle ones. They mostly see themselves as sprinkling small doses of feminism, or doing disguised activism. This is in line

with the 'micro-politics' Abbou talks about (2022, p 156), that questions gender in every kind of discourse – from political to private. However, it should be noted that other interpreters who considered themselves feminist might hold a different view on the topic and be more radical in their choices, which should be researched as well.

Another interesting point of this research is how the interpreter's gender could influence the reception of the ST as well as the production of gender-inclusive TT. Though, considering that the participant sample was composed of 3 female and 1 male interpreter, it is challenging to draw conclusions based solely on the results of this research. Nevertheless, it was established that women tend to cite more women in response to various stimuli (Brauer, 2008, p 261). In this research, the male participant is the only one who cited neither the female supervisor nor the deaf women mentioned by the deaf lecturer, when all other participants got at least one of them. That gender bias would be interesting to explore in the reception of LSF. Nevertheless, in some cases, gender omissions could be explained by cognitive-load or lexical density as researched by Napier (2004).

As interpreters are humans and humans inevitably make mistakes, an interesting point is how one of the participants can inform the hearing audience of her limits in terms of gender-inclusive language. Before an assignment, she would inform them concerning the absence of information about gender in LSF and quickly explain the cognitive load that the interpreting process implies. That helps create a space that allows her to make mistakes either in the way she addresses people or in the lexically preferred choices of this community. Then, this does rely on her and is not coming from the deaf person. Pedagogy on the interpreter's role seems necessary, especially to hearing participants of the interpreting setting to help them not make the deaf person accountable for every linguistic choice the interpreter makes. Also, as it contributed to awareness of gender diversity of the participants, knowledge about intersex and transgender people could improve global awareness of gender diversity among society. The fact that LSF marks less gender thus encourages interpreters to use gender-inclusive language in French and this could raise awareness about the androcentric aspect of French to a hearing audience. In the same vein, strategies mentioned by interpreters unaware of the partner's gender could contribute to challenging 'heterogender', hence hegemonic heteronormativity.

The other direction of interpreting, from French to LSF, would also be very interesting to analyse in regards to gender as well. Hearing interpreters whose first language is French, can have a great impact by potentially adding the information of gender when it is not necessary, or not giving it when the deaf person would have wanted it. I would argue that this as well should be negotiated and discussed with deaf participants of the interaction, to know when relevant to them (Aksen, personal correspondence, February 13, 2023). Just like collaboration in general between deaf people and interpreters this can happen before, during or after an interpreted event, with transcriptions for example (De Meulder & Carmichael, 2020). Even more so about inclusive language, because inclusion of deaf people grows, and rising concepts in the lexical field of inclusion and equality pop up in LSF, like *validisme* (ableism) for example. I would argue that knowing those neologisms in LSF is part of a gender-inclusive practice in interpreting between LSF and French.

Other aspects can be involved in gender-inclusive language and could be included in the concept of 'inclusive language', as it is named in French, which were only slightly covered in this research that focuses on gender-inclusivity. Regarding lexical choices, interpreters have some leeway in their choice of words for people of colour, people with a disability, etc. which can have an impact on the hearing audience. I would argue that a feminist interpreting framework on this topic should take these aspects into account as well, a unique form of feminism cannot be sufficient by itself for achieving gender equality. Thus, other aspects than gender in language must be researched further.

6 Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the use of gender-inclusive language in interpreting from LSF to French. LSF as a potential 'natural gender language' like English (Horvath et al., 2016) contains few gender markers. Some comments of the participants and one utterance in ST 1 lead to hypothesise on the existence of a generic masculine in LSF, which might be a result of language contact with French. Indeed, gender is very present and binary in the French language (Abbou, 2022). With the perspective of gender as a spectrum gaining momentum in France (Viennot, 2014), interpreters who identify themselves as feminist can feel increasingly inclined to use gender-inclusive language in their interpreting work from LSF to French. This is what this research was focusing on: which strategies are the preferred ones and for what reason?

With the analysis of four participants' interpreting tasks of two source-texts: a mainstream source text and a deaf feminist researcher's lecture, retrospective TAP protocol and interviews, the thesis answered the main research question.

Based on the data analysis, it could be argued that most of the gender-inclusive strategies used by participants are greatly influenced by the ST: gender-neutral or epicene words, collective terms and impersonal phrases for example. This is in line with existing literature that stated a willingness to make gender disappear, hence a preference for neutral and impersonal solutions (Abbou, 2022, p 58).

Participants declare preferences for less noticeable solutions for several reasons. First, it can be perceived as fitting better with a non-binary perspective of gender. Second, in order not to change the focus of the interaction from the content of the deaf person's discourse to its form, so to them basically, they preferred less visible strategies. This allows them to be in line with their ethical values and is linked to their perception of their role and could also be related to their consciousness of agency and respect for the deaf person's autonomy as described by Burgat et al (2022). Even if they recognise neutrality as a myth, they consider it important that their opinion does not show in their interpreting. Ironically, they are quite aware that the generic masculine in French was implemented through a sexist ideology and acknowledge that using it also shows an opinion. In the end, they navigate and experiment according to the deaf and hearing people they work with. They also noticed difficulties in not using generic

masculine forms at all, as it is easy to rely on as a deeply rooted language resource, especially when the interpreting process challenges their cognitive load.

Knowing French people have a very normative idea of their spoken language (Abbou, 2022, p 73; et al. 2018, p 7), interpreters can have a rather conservative attitude towards it. Current language evolution both in margins and institutions contributes to ease of use in gender-inclusive language. Indeed, neologisms made from a combination of female and male words such as *traducteurices* (translators) seem to be the hallmark of a strong political identity. Word pairs which contribute to highlighting women are perceived as 'heavy'. They seem to be used mostly when interpreters realise that they have chosen a masculine word. Additionally, the generic feminine strategy is selected with great care, only when concerning a female-dominated group with common knowledge of that aspect.

Fear of negative reactions and limited agency shows in the results and indicates potential self-censorship. Abbou et al. suggest, however, that inclusive language is less noticeable in the spoken language (2018, p 6). Differences according to gender between the participants confirm the findings of Brauer (2008) that women tend to cite more women. However, the context of the research is very different and gender bias is at stake in the reception of ST in LSF in this specific case. Variation of agency could also be impacted by gender. Further research on the various gender-inclusive interpreting choices, their impact on hearing audiences and open discussions with deaf people's preferences could contribute to a better understanding of the general topic of gender-inclusive language. Further research could also highlight the language interferences between LSF and French. Other aspects than gender that could be encompassed in the broad notion of inclusive language as used in French (*langue inclusive* or *écriture inclusive*), could be of a great interest in the paradigm of inclusion.

7 References

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Information and consent form

Information sheet for a study

Notice d'information pour une recherche

Delphine Thomas conducts this study at the University of **Humak** University of Applied Sciences (Finland) within the EUMASLI (European Master of Sign Language Interpreting) program. **Karolien Gebruers** at Heriot-Watt University (Scotland) and **Jens Hessmann** at Magdeburg-Stendal University (Germany) are the two supervisors for this research.

Delphine Thomas mène une recherche à l'université des sciences appliquées de **Humak** (Finlande) dans le cadre du programme EUMASLI (Master européen d'interprétation en langue des signes). **Karolien Gebruers** à l'Université d'Herriot-Watt (Ecosse) et **Jens Hessmann** à l'université de Magdeburg-Stendal (Allemagne) sont les deux personnes supervisant cette recherche.

This study seeks to **explore some challenges sign language interpreters could face when interpreting from french sign language (LSF) to French**. Hence, participants must be practicing sign language interpreters in France.

During a **private meeting online with the researcher**, participants will be asked to realise an interpreting task from LSF to French and right afterward to express their opinions and share their views during a post-assignment interview conducted in French. The whole set should take on **between one hour and a half and two hours**. The **interpreting task and the post-assignment interview will be recorded** with your permission.

The **specific lens of this study will be presented to the participants after** the interpreting task to avoid the participant making a specific effort in that direction.

Cette étude vise à **explorer certains des challenges auxquels les interprètes travaillant de la langue des signes française (LSF) au Français** peuvent être confronté·es. Les personnes participant à cette recherches doivent être des interprètes en exercice.

Lors d'une réunion privée en ligne, les personnes participant à la recherche devront réaliser une interprétation de la LSF au français. Dans la foulée, elles seront interrogées à ce sujet en français pour partager leur opinions et réflexions. L'ensemble devrait durer **entre une heure et demie et deux heures**. La situation d'interprétation et la discussion en découlant seront enregistrées avec votre permission.

L'angle d'approche spécifique à cette recherche sera présenté après la situation d'interprétation pour éviter d'influencer les interprètes.

Every participant is free to withdraw their consent and cancel their participation at any time during the study, without giving a reason.

Chaque participant·e est libre de se retirer et d'annuler sa participation à tout moment de l'étude, sans motif.

As the researcher, I will **neither allow other people access** to the interviews and data collected **nor share personal information** about the participants. I will make sure no sensitive information is shared in the study about participants which permits readers to guess who the participant is in regard to **small communities' ethics**. I will use your transcribed quotes and data in the study anonymously, again without sensitive information.

En tant que chercheuse, je m'engage à **ne pas donner accès aux données** récoltées (dont **personnelles**) et aux échanges à d'autres personnes. Je m'assurerai qu'aucune information sensible pouvant permettre de reconnaître les personnes participantes n'apparaissent dans l'étude. Ceci au regard de **l'éthique propre aux petite communautés**. Il sera fait usage de vos citations et données de manière anonyme dans l'étude, sans information sensible.

The findings of this study will be **published in a Master's Thesis and presented in September 2023** during EUMASLI 4th cohort final presentation. The content of this study might be released in scientific publications to share new information and this research topic could be discussed in presentations and during lectures. If they want to, all participants will have access to the thesis written in English.

Les résultats de cette recherche seront **publiés dans un mémoire de recherche et présentés en septembre 2023** dans le cadre de la présentation finale de la 4ème cohorte du Master EUMASLI. Le contenu de cette étude pourrait faire l'objet de publications scientifiques afin de partager de nouvelles informations. L'objet de cette recherche pourrait également être abordé lors de présentations ou conférences. Il sera possible d'avoir accès au mémoire écrit en anglais pour les personnes participantes sur demande.

Participants can ask any question, before, during, and after the study. Personal data is accessible and can be rectified. Before the interview, **participants will be asked to sign the following consent form**.

Les participant·es peuvent poser toute question avant, pendant et après l'étude. Les données personnelles sont accessibles et peuvent être rectifiées. Avant l'interview, les **participant·es doivent avoir signé le formulaire de consentement suivant**.

Consent form

Formulaire de consentement

I have been asked to participate in Delphine Thomas's study for the EUMASLI program.

Il m'a été proposé de participer à la recherche de Delphine Thomas dans le cadre du programme EUMASLI.

I have read and understood the information above. Enough information was provided about the research. Delphine Thomas has also answered to my questions about it.

J'ai lu et compris les informations transmises ci-dessus. Les informations fournies sont suffisantes pour me permettre de participer. Delphine Thomas a répondu à mes éventuelles questions.

I understand that participating in this study is voluntary. I can, at any time during the research project, cancel my participation without any reason. Canceling my participation will have no negative consequences for me.

J'ai compris que ma participation à cette étude relève de ma propre volonté. Je peux, à tout moment retirer mon consentement et annuler ma participation sans motif. Ceci n'aura pas de conséquences pour moi.

Yes, I agree to participate in the study:

Yes / No

Oui, j'accepte de participer à cette étude :

Oui / Non

Participant's Name / Nom de la ou du participant:

(block letters / en capitales)

Signature / Signature :

Date / Date :

Researcher's Name / Nom de la chercheuse : DELPHINE THOMAS

(block letters / en capitales)

Signature / Signature :

Date / Date :

Appendix B: Comparative analysis of preferred strategies

in ST 1 and ST 2 and by interpreter



Figure 19 Comparison of preferred strategies in ST 1 and ST 2 and among interpreters