

Sign Language Court Interpreters in Turkey: Professionalization and Impartiality

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Interpreters in court settings have a significant role to play. A party in a court who does not speak the language of the country will be dependent on a court interpreter to present their claim accurately, unbiasedly, fairly, and effectively; and therefore, well-trained and professional interpreters are needed. However, worldwide (Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004; Napier and Haug 2016) and particularly in Turkey (Conker 2017; Gökce 2018), it is reported that there are problems concerning education, language skills, and other professional conditions of sign language court interpreters. This study investigates the professional profile of sign language court interpreters in Turkey. The research was conducted through an online survey which focuses mainly on the components of professionalization (Tseng 1992), professional interpreters' knowledge and skills (experience, training, accreditation, in-service training), professional working conditions (payment, security), professional association, and professional ethical standards, specifically impartiality (Judicial Council of California 2013). The online survey was administered to 23 Turkish Sign Language court interpreters from 10 different cities in Turkey. Briefly, the results strikingly suggest that none of the interpreters, who are mostly CODA (child of deaf adult) (91%), graduated from translation and interpreting programs of the universities, which is seen as one of the major hindrances among participants in terms of professionalism. Most of the interpreters with more than ten-years-experience are exposed to unstable jobs with low payments and have a profession other than sign language interpreting due to financial concerns. Regarding impartiality, the general tendency of the participants reveals that they serve for both the victim and the defendant parties (52%) and that they are in a conflict of interest such as interpreting for someone they know (74%). The results of the study indicate that it may not be an easy task to be professional and impartial under these circumstances. Finally, the findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practices such as sign language court interpreter training and professionalization.

Keywords: sign language interpreting; court interpreters; professionalization; ethical standards; impartiality

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1. Introduction

One of the most significant current discussions in court interpreting is the lack of professionalization and different standards of interpreting quality (Bajčić and Dobrić Basaneže 2016). Recognizing that in Europe, court interpreting is the most common legal setting where sign language interpreters provide services (Napier and Haug 2016), several studies have produced estimates of professionalization on court interpreting (Tseng 1992; Mikkelson 1996; Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004; Ho and Chen 2014; Chen and Liao 2016; Resta and Ioannidis 2016; Katschinka 2016; Napier and Haug 2016; Conker 2017; Yücel 2018; Gökce 2018). However, there is still insufficient data for the professional profiles of sign language interpreters in courts. Besides, de jure and de facto conditions of sign language court interpreters differ in terms of expectations and competencies.

Regarding these unstable conditions of court interpreters, the European Union (EU) adopted the Directive 2010/64/EU on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings; however, previous studies (Napier and Haug 2016; Resta and Ioannidis 2016) demonstrated that the level of professionalization on court interpreting in the EU still remains uneven.

For instance, Zoi Resta and Anastasios Ioannidis (2016) examined the professionalization level of court interpreting in Greece with regard to the professionalization model of Joseph Tseng (1992). The results of the study show that there is “a lack of any educational possibility for prospective court interpreters in Greece,” “a specialized professional association,” “a lack of code of ethics,” and there is no “credible accreditation system” (Resta and Ioannidis 2016, 70).

Also, Liese Katschinka (2016) depicted the trends in the profession of legal interpreting in the EU. In the light of this study, there are examples of both professionalization and deprofessionalization in the EU. As well as the nationwide attempts among Member States, European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA) tries to create an international standard for legal interpreting. Katschinka (2016) proposes that an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standard for interpreting services in judicial settings can be helpful concerning professionalization.

Furthermore, Anna Witter-Merithew and Leilani Johnson (2004) investigated the degree to which the profession of sign language interpreting in the United States has gained

elements of professionalization. Sign language interpreting in the United States was “characterized as an emerging profession.” Although the researchers reported that the interpreting profession has some emergence of the traits of a profession such as “educational programs, certification, a code of ethics, and a culture, some of the remaining essential traits are missing or unstable—particularly systematic theory, authority, induction, and community sanction” (39).

In addition, Jemina Napier and Tobias Haug (2016) studied the current status of sign language interpreting in legal settings across Europe to better understand what the training needs of interpreters and other stakeholders such as police officers and Deaf people themselves might be. The findings revealed that there are inconsistencies in how legal sign language interpreting provision occurs across Europe.

Also in Taiwan, Yaling Chen and Posen Liao (2016) confirmed that there has been little discussion regarding the development of court interpreting. The researchers studied the development of court interpreting in Taiwan based on the professionalization model of Tseng (1992). The newly-established Taiwan Judicial Interpreters Association (TJIA) has been an essential association through “formulating a set of ethical standards,” “conduct[ing] training workshops,” and “actively recruiting both novice and experienced practitioners” (Chen and Liao 2016, 137).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the professionalization of court interpreting in Turkey. Nesrin Conker (2017) mentions the practice of sign language interpreting in courts in a part of her study about the certification of language competence and lack of standardization. She asserts that the acceptance of all kinds of documents to prove language competence is indicative of the low status of interpreting in this field. Furthermore, she clearly depicted the situation in Turkey as follows:

[T]he current applications of Turkish courts are far from promoting professional development for interpreters. Courts in Turkey do not have established and trustworthy criteria for selecting the interpreters they work with. . . . general lack of standardization in selecting the court interpreters applies to sign language interpreters as well. Provincial Justice Commissions apparently do not require their interpreters to have professional certification or a degree in translation and interpreting or in any relevant field. (100)

Also, İmren Gökce (2018) presents the role of sign language interpreters in Turkey. In respect to impartiality and code of ethics, the results of the empirical study demonstrated that

sign language interpreters adopt a helper role in the situations where they know the deaf person and think the individual expects advice from them. In addition, the perception of code of conduct is shaped by their experience. In terms of professionalization of the sign language interpreting, Gökce deduces that the participants believe that this occupation should be voluntary. In another major study, Bihter Esin Yücel (2018) discusses the visibility and role of court interpreting in Turkey; the findings related to professionalization demonstrate that nearly half of the interpreters in the list in İstanbul identify themselves as an interpreter or lawyer while the other half list a different occupation, with court interpreting as a secondary occupation. Furthermore, she concludes that court interpreting is not a professional field because of the absence of awareness and especially the low criteria for recruiting interpreters in the courts.

Code of ethics is one of the crucial components of professionalism in interpreting; interpreters must be “aware of the general principles of professional ethics specific to interpreting” (UNHCR Austria 2017, 70) such as confidentiality, impartiality, accuracy, and integrity. The principle of impartiality is the main point of the Turkish court interpreters’ oath, and it has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of sign language interpreting. To illustrate, according to Marc Marschark, Rico Peterson, and Elizabeth Winston (2005), while on one hand interpreters need to be impartial, on the other hand, they have to be “involved and invested enough to ensure that communication is accurate and successful” (5). Gökce (2018) also mentions the helper role of sign language interpreters.

Similarly, in her study on asylum hearings through discourse analysis of the interpreted case records, Sonja Pöllabauer (2004) suggests that during the hearings, interpreters do not behave as “neutral” mediators, but instead summarize or paraphrase speech, explain the questions and intervene when they believe it is required, and try to fulfill the officers’ expectations if there is a matter of conflict (175). Robert F. Barsky (1996) also argues that the interpreters in asylum hearings interpret the speech of asylum seekers in an appropriate way and structure, embellish their narrative, and make explanations about cultural differences in case these affect the acceptance of their asylum applications. The active participation and partial behavior of interpreters in these cases demonstrate that the perception of impartiality varies by setting where interpreting is performed.

Besides, Esra Özkaya (2015, 2018) explains that being professional with adequate competence does not necessitate behaving impartially and concludes through an empirical study on conference interpreters that the concept of impartiality is dynamic and shaped by the situation and context. Also, in an empirical study on healthcare interpreters, Duygu Duman (2018) concludes not only that the participants' subjective decisions on the code of ethics affect their professional experiences but especially that the perspective on impartiality can differ from country to country.

In brief, sign language court interpreters have a critical role inasmuch as a Deaf individual in a court will be reliant on a sign language court interpreter to present their claim accurately. However, in Turkey, it is reported that there are major problems in court interpreting, particularly sign language court interpreting, such as the “lack of standardization in selecting the court interpreters” (Conker 2017, 100), the tendency of considering court interpreting as a secondary occupation (Yücel 2018), and eventually, the change in their role as they adopt helper role in the situations where they know the Deaf individual (Gökce 2018). As one of the significant codes of conduct and as a consequence of the aforementioned dilemma in sign language interpreting, impartiality must be researched in depth.

The present study investigates the professional profile of sign language court interpreters in Turkey. Having basically adopted the professionalization model of Tseng (1992) with a special focus on impartiality, the main issues addressed in the study are:

- (i) professional interpreters' knowledge and skills (experience, training, accreditation, and in-service training),
- (ii) professional working conditions (payment and security),
- (iii) professional association,
- (iv) interpreters' views and expectations on court interpreting,
- (v) professional ethical standards, specifically impartiality.

2. Court Interpreting

Court interpreting is likely to be as old as law, but the studies on court interpreting and the evolution of court interpreting as a profession are considerably new in many countries. Studies on court interpreting in the context of Turkey are very limited (Tahir Gürçağlar and Diriker 2004; Doğan 2004, 2010; Yücel 2018).

Court interpreting, regarded as a sub-branch of community interpreting, is a situation where interpreting services are provided to people with limited language proficiency in the official language of the court or to people with hearing impairments and others who communicate with them during the judicial process. In general terms, this is called courtroom interpreting and considered as one of the settings where legal interpreting takes place in addition to police centers, prisons, and asylums (Hertog 2015, 230; Morris 2015, 91).

This interpreting activity varies from one culture to another as their law systems, cultures, languages, and physical conditions differ greatly. For instance, in the United States interpreters perform their occupation in the booths and simultaneously without missing any word in the courts, while in some other countries only the summary of the case is interpreted consecutively at the end of the case (Mikkelsen 2016, 3–4).

Turkey's law system resembles the system of continental Europe. Turkey is also a party of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) which ensures that people have interpreting service in the court if they are not able to understand or speak the language of the court. Also, the last version of the Turkish Criminal Procedural Law, which was enforced in 2004, indicates the necessity of providing an interpreter during criminal proceedings if needed. This article states some of the issues related to the interpreting service in Turkish courts; for instance, interpreting service is provided as a summary of the charges and the defense and is not obligatory during all the case (Tahir Gürçağlar and Diriker 2004, 78). In addition, if the accused persons feel uncomfortable with the official language of the court, even if they have Turkish citizenship and origin, they have a right to be provided with an interpreter. This article also argues that people with hearing impairments have a right to an interpreter in their proceedings.

Turkey's first effort to employ court interpreters was to establish a Translation Bureau under the Foundation of Strengthening the Judicial Organization in 1997. They had a list of interpreters for various languages and called them when it was required in Bursa and Ankara (Doğan 2003, 58). Today, the court interpreters in Turkey are recruited as per the By-laws on the Arrangements of Interpreters' Lists in Criminal Proceedings by the Provincial Judicial Commissions in accordance with the Law of Criminal Procedure¹ established in 2013. The

¹ "Ceza Muhakemesi Kanununa Göre Tercüman Listelerinin Düzenlenmesi Hakkında Yönetmelik" (By-laws on the arrangements of interpreters' lists in criminal proceedings), *Resmi Gazete*, March 5, 2013, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/03/20130305-6.htm>.

by-laws determine the qualifications of the interpreters and the requirements for application and include the duty and the list of the code of ethics for court interpreters in the provincial courts. However, it lacks sufficient information related to the duty of interpreters and detailed explanation concerning the code of ethics, which may cause a gap in the procedures, create inconsistency in implementations of court interpreting service, and hinder professionalization of the occupation.

2.1 Professionalization of Court Interpreting

For court interpreters, working as professionals instead of ad hoc interpreters has been a new situation (Mikkelson 2016, 6). In order to be considered as a profession, an occupation needs to have some features such as “special education and skills and consequently recognition and status in the society” (Grbić 2015, 322). This dynamic process of becoming a profession is defined as professionalization.

Some scholars (Tseng 1992; Mikkelson 1996) attempt to elucidate the professionalization of the interpreting. For instance, in the field of conference interpreting, Tseng (1992) specifies that two schools of thought acknowledge two theories related to professionalization: theory of control and trait theory. He proposes a dimensional model for the professionalization of conference interpreting. In order to identify the level of professionalization, he divides the process into four phases, which can be achieved through fulfilling requirements such as professional training, professional association, code of ethics, registration, loyalty to colleagues, working conditions, and relation with clients. The four phases can be summarized as follows (revised version of Tseng’s model):

Phase 1: market disorder (training programs),

Phase 2: consensus and commitment (professional association),

Phase 3: judicial sectors and professional association (training programs, code of ethics, certifications, admissions, and standards for working conditions),

Phase 4: public recognition and trust (protection and licensure) (Chen and Liao 2016).

The four phases of professionalization refer to a continuum on which countries can be at various levels simultaneously. In the first phase, called market disorder, if the training institutions apply similar and well-arranged admission conditions for candidates, along with reliable examination and strict curriculum, the practitioners will be qualified. Otherwise, it

causes disturbance in the market. In the second phase, called consensus and commitment, the practitioners will be members of a professional association by committing themselves to their profession, and thus the shift from the second phase to the third phase will be achieved. Professionalization is promoted and controlled by this association, which organizes the practices and certification, preferably with the government agencies, in addition to creating a code of ethics and determining the working conditions to develop a standard on interpreting services. All of these implementations provide qualified performance in the market; the last phase can be achieved when the public trusts professional interpreters as their rights are protected and recognized.

Likewise, Holly Mikkelson (1996) adopts this model of professionalization to community interpreting and mentions training of other professionals to work with interpreters and accreditation of community interpreters. She also analyzes the United States in terms of professionalization of community interpreting. She claims that community interpreting is not regarded as a profession considering that ad hoc or volunteer people work as interpreters without training and without becoming a member of an association. Consequently, they do not feel loyalty to the profession. In response to the inadequate conditions, community interpreters work for low pay and do not gain recognition in the society.

Chen-En Ho and Tzei-Wei Chen (2014) conducted a preliminary study in Taiwan and revised the professionalization model. They concluded that professional associations should not take the shape of government agency. On the contrary, the association should work with nongovernmental organizations, academia, and practitioners in determining professional standards (301). Chen and Liao (2016) revised Tseng's model for court interpreting in Taiwan. They argued that professional associations' influence would be crucial on applying professional standards and code of ethics in the professionalization process (145). Considering the studies above, Tseng's model offers a framework to examine the level of professionalization of sign language court interpreting in terms of skills, training, certification, working conditions, professional association, and code of conduct.

2.2 Professional Standards and Code of Ethics in Court Interpreting

This section of the paper will examine professional standards and code of ethics in court interpreting. The phases of professionalization include determination of the professional

standards and the implementation of the code of ethics in court interpreting, as mentioned above. Strict professional standards and detailed code of ethics exist in many countries where court interpreting is regarded as a profession and has gained status in the society. This set of rules, or professional standards, consisting of ethics and practices are created for the members of a profession in order to guide them on how to behave in working life. According to Sharon Neumann Solow (2000), a code of ethics in the court interpreting context specifically “protects the interpreter and lessens the arbitrariness of his or her decisions by providing guidelines and standards to follow” (50).

Based on this definition, Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters (Judicial Council of California 2013) is one of the well-known guidelines for court interpreters in the USA. The guideline encompasses issues such as confidentiality, impartiality, accurate and complete interpreting, giving legal advice to the clients, professional relationships with other professionals, and assessing performance and ethical violations. Also, EULITA has been working on defining professional standards for legal interpreters (ISO/AWI 20228) (Bajčić and Dobrić Basaneže 2016).

In addition to these efforts specifically in the court interpreting field, sign language interpreting associations have been serving unequivocally to establish a professional code of conduct to regulate the professional behaviors of sign language interpreters. In line with this, the first attempt of an organization has been Code of Professional Conduct² (2005) by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). The association presents seven tenets: confidentiality, professionalism (to have professional knowledge and skills), conduct (ethical behaviors), respect for customers, respect for colleagues, business practices (ethical working conditions), and personal developments; each tenet is also clarified with the exemplificative behaviors.

The Australian Sign Language Interpreters’ Association (ASLIA) offered very similar issues with NAD-RID in the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct (2007) under the themes of the professional accountability, professional competence, non-discrimination, integrity in professional relations and in ethical business practices.

In the code of conduct or code of ethics in this field, impartiality is one of the controversial subjects due to the absence of an exact definition for it in these documents.

² “NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct,” 2005, accessed January 28, 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-HBAap35D1R1MwYk9hTU_puc3M/view.

Moreover, explanations are given through dos and don'ts to indicate the neutrality of interpreters and avoidance from bias (Hale 2007, 120). In her study conducted on the codes of ethics of 16 randomly chosen countries, Sandra Beatriz Hale argues that these codes of ethics suggest interpreters “be aware of and control their subjectivity” when they feel it is a matter of conflict of interest (121).

The issue of impartiality is clarified in the document for California Court Interpreters (Judicial Council of California 2013) under the following subheadings related to a violation of ethics: accepting gifts, giving or asking opinion related to the case, and conflict of interest because of the provision of the interpreting service by the same interpreter in the preparation process. Just as sign language court interpreters' violation of impartiality may endanger fair trial, a special focus on impartiality may enable interpreters to implement evaluation of professionalization through code of conduct in the field. In regard to the situations concerning impartiality in the abovementioned codes of conduct, the present study focuses on the reactions of the sign language interpreters in Turkish courts in these situations.

3. Sign Language Interpreting in Turkey

According to the General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly in Turkey which serves under the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services, there are 836,000 (male: 406,000, female: 429,000) citizens above the age of 15 who have difficulty in hearing, representing 1.1% of the general population (Disability and Ageing Statistical Bulletin 2020³).

In Turkey, Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili [TİD]) was officially recognized within the Act No. 5378 of 1 July 2005⁴ on disabled people. The Act was addressed to the public services concerning health, education, rehabilitation, employment, care, and social security to ensure the accessibility of the disabled. Within the scope of this Act, in particular Article 15, the Deaf Community can have access to areas such as information, communication, and education. It also entitled three institutions, the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK]), the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (Aile ve Sosyal

³ Available at https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr/media/46090/bulten_en_200508.pdf.

⁴ Available at

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=77387&p_country=TUR&p_count=781&p_classification=08&p_classcount=39.

Politikalar Bakanlığı [ASPB]), and the Ministry of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB]) in Turkey to develop a sign language system and to train sign language interpreters and instructors.

The Turkish Sign Language Science and Approvals Board (Türk İşaret Dili Bilim ve Onay Kurulu [TİDBO]) was established in 2006. The TİDBO set two certification exams for sign language interpreters, the first in 2007 and the second in 2013. As a result of the first exam, The Social Services and Child Protection Agency employed 24 sign language interpreters.

The Professional Qualifications Authority (Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu [MYK]) has prepared the qualifications of sign language interpreters⁵ (2014). Within the frame of the qualifications (Level 6, 2020), it encompasses four different kinds of sign language interpreting: conference, community, audio-visual, and education interpreting. According to the qualifications, community sign language interpreters need to have experience in community interpreting for at least 60 days in two years. During the planned performance-based exam of the community interpreters, the candidates are asked to translate three types of texts on police, court, health, sports, social security, etc. However, these qualifications, the certification program, and the exams planned have not been put into effect yet.

Moreover, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey offered Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training (SLTIT) (İşaret Dili Öğretici ve Tercüman Eğitimi Kurs Programı) courses in 2014. Individuals who attend and complete the 210-hours SLTIT courses become sign language interpreters. The courses are being criticized by many practitioners and theorists on the grounds that they do not offer translation training in theory and practice. These courses have been the only opportunities to offer sign language interpreter training until Turkish Sign Language Interpreting and Deaf Studies Postgraduate Program in Ankara University was established in 2018. The two-year academic program was designed to offer bilingual training for hearing and Deaf individuals, and it prepares individuals who are fluent in Turkish Sign Language to become sign language interpreters. The prospective students of the program should meet the minimum Turkish Sign Language Proficiency Exam (Türk İşaret Dili Yeterlilik Sınavı [TİDYeS]) score of 70 out of 100. It is a nationally recognized program to train sign language interpreters and run master's and doctoral degrees.

⁵ Available at <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/en/haberler/34-meslek-standartlar-dairesi-bakanl/1794-aret-dili-cevirmeni-seviye-6-taslak-yeterlilik-hazrlandi>.

TİDYeS, the e-exam for sign language, was launched in 2019 to evaluate the sign language competence and performance of the Turkish Sign Language interpreters and instructors in all language skills. TİDYeS is an individualized computer-based exam developed by TÖMER (Ankara University, Turkish and Foreign Language Teaching, Research and Application Centre).⁶ The Ministry of Family and Social Policies in Turkey officially accepted it and announced that the sign language interpreters in Turkey have to take this exam and are required to get at least 60 over 100 (B1 level).⁷ TİDYeS is also an obligation for sign language users/interpreters who wish to enroll in Ankara University's Turkish Sign Language Interpreting and Deaf Studies Postgraduate Program.

Sign language court interpreters in Turkey are being selected from among Turkish candidates who have a certificate of the 210-hours SLTIT courses, are at least primary school graduates, and reside in the province where the courthouse is situated. Each courthouse creates a pool of sign language interpreters for court interpreting, takes their oath, and announces the list on their web sites. The oath's components and the ethical principles for court interpreters are as follows:

While working, interpreters shall always act in accordance with the following standards of ethics:

- a) independence;
- b) impartiality;
- c) being honest and telling the truth;
- d) performing their duties individually;
- e) keeping secret (confidentiality) and;
- f) acting in accordance with the fundamental proceeding principles.⁸

Considering the short list of code of ethics in the field of court interpreting in Turkey, the Turkish court interpreters' oath proves the significance of impartiality as the main point with a statement that "I swear to fulfill my duty impartially, devoted to the justice, in accordance with science, and on the basis of my honor and conscience."

⁶ The website of TİDYeS can be visited at <http://tidyes.ankara.edu.tr/>.

⁷ The announcement is available at <https://www.aile.gov.tr/eyhgm/duyurular/isitme-engelliler-iletisim-merkezi-icin-turk-isaret-dili-tercumani-istihdami/>.

⁸ "Ceza Muhakemesi Kanununa Göre Tercüman Listelerinin Düzenlenmesi Hakkında Yönetmelik" (By-laws on the arrangements of interpreters' lists in criminal proceedings), *Resmî Gazete*, March 5, 2013, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/03/20130305-6.htm>.

4. Method

The 40-item online questionnaire was designed by a literature review of professionalization in community interpreting, in particular court interpreting, to examine five main components of professionalization: professional interpreters' knowledge and skills (education, experience, and training); professional working conditions (payment, security); professional association; views and expectations on court interpreting (reflections/perceptions); and professional ethical standards, specifically impartiality (Tseng 1992).

5. Questionnaire Design Used in the Study

Having prepared the questionnaire based on the professionalization model of Tseng (1992), as well as the professional ethics adapted from certain manuals such as Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters (Judicial Council of California 2013), the researchers added four questions to establish the views and expectations of sign language court interpreters.

Afterwards, the researchers consulted a researcher⁹ of sociology to ensure that the questionnaire is content valid. Content validity is defined as the “degree to which elements of an assessment instrument are relevant to a representative of the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose” (Haynes, Richard, and Kubany 1995, 238).

The 40-item online questionnaire consists of different types of questions such as Yes/No questions, multiple choice questions, open ended questions, and five-point Likert-type scale questions. In the five-point Likert-type scale questions, interpreters specify their level of agreement to an ethical scenario statement: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) agree; (5) strongly agree. Büyüköztürk et al. (2009) mentioned that Likert-type scales are mostly used to show attitudes of respondents towards a variable and to reveal the views of the respondents on a subject.

Afterwards, the draft version of the questionnaire was piloted and consulted to a sign language interpreter¹⁰ who is a lawyer and holds a PhD in Translation Studies. In light of the feedback of this testing, some amendments were carried out: some questions were deleted,

⁹ Associate professor Nilüfer Özcan Demir, Dokuz Eylül University, Department of Sociology.

¹⁰ Assistant professor Bihter Esin Yücel, Nişantaşı University.

while some questions needed more information. As a result, the researchers preferred to ask them as example scenarios. To illustrate, instead of asking whether the interpreter thinks accepting a gift is appropriate, a question was re-written as “A court interpreter, who loves his/her work, accepts a gift given by the people who get interpreting service and demonstrate their gratitude after the proceedings as s/he was the mediator in this communication. This court interpreter thinks that s/he behaves properly. Do you agree with this idea?” The duration to fill out the questionnaire was around 15 minutes.

Having completed the final version of the questionnaire, it was sent and administered to the sign language court interpreters with their consent via social media and personal contacts. A social media group was established by CODA (child of deaf adult) members of Turkish Sign Language interpreters nationwide, encompassing 179 CODA members in Turkey. The network of the sign language interpreters was prepared due to the fact that three of the researchers organized a webinar (the first author, the moderator; the second author, the speaker; the third author, the sign language interpreter-CODA) regarding court interpreting in May 2020, with the support of Ankara University TİDLab, which was founded in the Turkish Sign Language Interpreting and Deaf Studies Postgraduate Program. This webinar hosted approximately 70 participants working as sign language interpreters, mostly in courts in Turkey. Also, the first and the third researchers have been working for this aforementioned program for two years, and they have the network/contact information of many Turkish Sign Language interpreters, as well as Turkish Sign Language court interpreters in Turkey. Lastly, the study was approved by Kırıkkale University Ethics Committee. The data was collected through Google Documents online in July and August 2020.

6. Results

The questionnaire addresses five main parts: professional interpreters’ knowledge and skills (education, experience, and training); professional working conditions (payment, security); professional association; interpreters’ views and expectations on court interpreting; and professional ethical standards, specifically impartiality.

The first part encompasses 15 questions concerning professional interpreters’ knowledge and skills as well as some demographic facts. Twenty-three sign language court

interpreters (male: 11, female: 12) participated in this study. The mean value of the age distribution of the participants was 33.9 (see table 1).

Table 1. Age and gender

Age	Female	Male
<i>Average</i>	32.4 years (n 12)	35.6 years (n 11)
Mean	33.9 years (n 23)	
<i>Total participation</i>	100% (n 23)	
Gender	Female	Male
	52.2% (n 12)	47.8% (n 11)
<i>Total participation</i>	100% (n 23)	

Many participants graduated from high school (47.8%), while 34.7% of them hold graduate degree (see table 2). They come from ten different cities including Ankara (6), İstanbul (4), Denizli (3), Konya (3), İzmir (2), Bursa (1), Eskişehir (1), Trabzon (1), Çorum (1), and Isparta (1).

Table 2. Education

	Mean
<i>High school</i>	47.8% (n 11)
<i>Undergraduate degree</i>	8.6% (n 2)
<i>Graduate degree</i>	34.7% (n 8)
<i>Postgraduate degree</i>	8.6% (n 2)
<i>Total</i>	100% (n 23)

Participants mostly reported that they are CODAs (21 interpreters). One of them mentioned that she/he learned Turkish Sign Language in a Deaf association, and one participant stated a mild hearing loss (27-40 dB).

Regarding professional development, participants reported that they mostly do not attend courses/seminars on law (78.3%); nearly half of them attend seminars on translation/interpreting (53.3%); and most attend in-service training (73.3%) (see table 3).

Table 3. Professional development

	Yes	No
<i>Do you attend course(s)/seminars on law?</i>	21.7% (n 5)	78.3% (n 18)

<i>Total</i>	23	100%
<i>Do you attend courses/seminars on translation/interpreting?</i>	53.3% (n 8)	46.6% (n 7)
<i>Total</i>	15	65.2%
<i>Do you attend in-service training?</i>	73.3% (n 11)	26.6% (n 4)
<i>Total</i>	15	65.2%

The participants were asked further to find out more about the courses/seminars they attended, and five respondents mentioned that they took law seminars from different institutions such as Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği [TMMOB]), Certified Translation Federation (Yeminli Çevirmenlik Federasyonu [TURÇEF]), and General Directorate of Security (Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü [EGM]). It was also stated that seminars on translation and interpreting were mostly held by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (ASPB), Sign Language Interpreters Association (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği [İDTD]), Turkish National Federation for the Deaf (Türkiye Sağırlar Milli Federasyonu [TSMF]), and by some of the national and/or local Deaf associations in Turkey such as Association of People with Hearing Disabilities in Denizli (Denizli İşitme Engelliler Derneği) and Anatolian Deaf Federation (Anadolu Sağırlar Federasyonu).

In terms of experience in a general translation profession (table 4), it is clear that 15 respondents (65.2%) have 10 or more years of experience. Regarding experience in court interpreting, it is reported that 9 respondents have 4–10 years, and 9 respondents have 10 or more years' experience. Briefly, the sign language court interpreters in Turkey are experienced interpreters.

Table 4. Experience in translation profession and court interpreting

	1–3 years	4–10 years	10+ years	Total
<i>Experience in translation profession</i>	—	34.8% (n 8)	65.2% (n 15)	100% (n 23)
<i>Experience in court interpreting</i>	21.7% (n 5)	39.1% (n 9)	39.1% (n 9)	100% (n 23)

The responses to the question on the frequency of interpreting show that 91.3% of interpreters (n 21) have court interpreting task 1–3 times a month.

The second part concerning professional working conditions (payment and security) consists of four questions (see tables 5, 6, and 7).

The results on the payments of court interpreting (see table 5) reveal that respondents are mostly (69.5%) being paid 150–250 Turkish Liras (15–25 Euros) per court task. It should be noted that this payment is neither per day nor per hour, since they are being paid for the whole work.

Table 5. Payment

	N	Percentage
<i>30–150 TL</i>	6	26%
<i>150–250 TL</i>	16	69.5%
<i>250 TL+</i>	1	4.3%
<i>Average Payment</i>	<i>175 TL</i>	
<i>Total</i>	23	100%

The responses to the question concerning the factors affecting the amount of payment show that according to just over half the sample (52.2%), the judge decides the amount of the interpreting fees (see table 6).

Table 6. Factors affecting the amount of payment

	N	Percentage
<i>The judge</i>	12	52.1%
<i>They do not know</i>	6	26%
<i>Time spent/duration of interpreting</i>	2	8.6%
<i>The payment chart of court experts</i>	2	8.6%
<i>The number of people they served and travel expenses</i>	1	4.3%
<i>Total</i>	23	100%

Also, the results on the expectations concerning the amount of payment show that over half of the respondents (21.7%) believe payments should be charged according to the number of people they served, and 21.7% of the respondents think that payments should be charged according to the quality and the accuracy of the interpreting.

Table 7. Expectations concerning the criteria of payments

	N	Percentage
<i>The number of people</i>	5	21.7%
<i>The quality and the accuracy of the interpreting</i>	5	21.7%
<i>The importance of the cases</i>	4	8.6%
<i>Time and effort the interpreters spend</i>	4	8.6%
<i>Total</i>	18	60.6%

Finally, the sign language court interpreters were asked, “Do you think your personal information and confidentiality are not protected when you provide interpreting services in the proceedings?” 43.5% (n 10) of them marked “Yes.” On the other hand, 56.5% (n 13) of them marked “No.” An explanation was requested in order to clarify the answers related to the protection of their information. All in all, 14.2% (n 3) of them thought that their information is shared, while 23.8% (n 5) explained that their information is written on the documents, and 4.7% (n 1) expressed that sharing their information is a requirement. Lastly, 33.3% of them believed that the courts protected their information.

The third part regards professional associations and consists of one question. The results regarding memberships to professional associations (see table 8) show that 52.17% of the respondents do not have memberships, 26.08% of them are the members of a professional association, and 21.73% of them have local Deaf associations’ memberships.

Table 8. Association memberships

	N	Percentage
<i>No membership</i>	12	52.1%
<i>Sign Language Interpreters Association (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği [İDTD]) membership</i>	4	17.39%
<i>Turkish National Federation of the Deaf (Türkiye Sağırlar Milli Federasyonu [TSMF]) membership</i>	2	8.69%
<i>Other local Deaf associations’ membership</i>	5	21.73%
<i>Total</i>	23	100%

The fourth part concerns the views and expectations of the sign interpreters and encompasses four questions. The responses concerning the views on considering sign language interpreting as a profession (see table 9) reveal that 73.9% of them (n 17) see sign language interpreting as a profession, although 95.7% of them (n 22) have another occupation other than sign language interpreting.

Table 9. Views on considering sign language interpreting as a profession

	Yes	No
<i>Do you see sign language interpreting as a profession?</i>	73.9% (n 17)	26.1% (n 6)
<i>Do you have another occupation other than sign language interpreting?</i>	95.7% (n 22)	4.3% (n 1)

The results of the views of the participants on the issues confronted during interpreting in proceedings (see table 10) show that issues regarding the Deaf such as not knowing sign language, lack of literacy, and education are the most frequently (33.3%) mentioned hindrances.

Table 10. Views of the interpreters concerning the issues confronted during interpreting in proceedings

	N	Percentage
<i>Issues regarding the Deaf such as not knowing sign language, lack of literacy, and education</i>	6	33.3%
<i>Terminological issues in Turkish Sign Language</i>	3	16.6%
<i>No problem</i>	3	16.6%
<i>Payment</i>	1	5.5%
<i>Remote interpreting issues (SEGBİS)</i>	1	5.5%
<i>Job security</i>	1	5.5%
<i>Impartiality</i>	1	5.5%
<i>Other</i>	7	38.8%
<i>Total issues</i>	23	100%
<i>Total participation</i>	18	78.2%

The results of the views regarding the issues of professional qualifications reveal that assessment and certification (41.3%) is seen as the biggest problem (see table 11). The second leading problem is on education, knowledge, and skills (27.5%).

Table 11. Views of the interpreters concerning issues of professional qualifications

	N	Percentage
<i>Problems of assessment and certification</i>	12	41.3%
<i>Problems of education, knowledge, and skills</i>	8	27.5%
<i>Law terminology</i>	4	13.7%
<i>Other</i>	5	17.2%
<i>Total problems</i>	29	100%
<i>Total participation</i>	21	91.3%

The last part, which is on impartiality, contains 15 questions. In regard to the responses related to impartiality (see table 12), most of the court interpreters who participated in this study (82.6%) met the Deaf person for whom they interpreted before or after the proceedings; they interpreted for the same person in the proceedings more than one time (69.6%); they interpreted for their acquaintances in the proceedings (73.9%); and just over half the sample (52.2%) interpreted for the litigant in the same case after they interpreted for the defendant.

Table 12. Responses to the Yes/No questions related to impartiality in terms of knowing the parties

Questions	Yes	No	Total
<i>Did you meet the Deaf person for whom you interpreted before or after the proceedings?</i>	82.6% (n 19)	17.4% (n 4)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you interpret for the same person in the proceedings more than one time?</i>	69.6% (n 16)	30.4% (n 7)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you interpret for the litigant in the same case after you interpreted for the defendant?</i>	52.2% (n 12)	47.8% (n 11)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you interpret for your acquaintances in the proceedings?</i>	73.9% (n 17)	26.1% (n 6)	100% (n 23)

An additional question was asked to all participants who stated that they interpreted for their acquaintances, and 52.9% of them explained the reason for this situation by pointing out that they know many Deaf people in the city where they live and work, while 29.4% of them indicated that the courts have a lack of sign language interpreters in the city. Furthermore, 11.7% stated that the Deaf person did not trust other interpreters, while 5.8% stated that it was a coincidence (see table 13).

Table 13. The reason to interpret in the acquaintance's proceedings

	N	Percentage
<i>Getting acquainted with many Deaf people in the city</i>	9	52.9%
<i>The inadequacy of sign language interpreters in the courts</i>	5	29.4%
<i>The Deaf person's not trusting other interpreters</i>	2	11.7%
<i>Coincidence</i>	1	5.8%
<i>Total reasons</i>	17	100%
<i>Total participation</i>	17	73.9%

Moreover, the respondents mostly reported that they were not asked about their personal thoughts related to jurisdiction (65.2%); however, almost 96% of the respondents stated that the Deaf person for whom they provided interpreting service asked for help or advice. Also, most (78.3%) mentioned that they express their personal thoughts related to any cases in the proceedings as a court interpreter (see table 14), and around half of them (52.2%) stated that they intervene in the situations where there is misunderstanding between speakers while interpreting (see table 15).

Table 14. Responses to the Yes/No questions related to impartiality in terms of personal opinions

Questions	Yes	No	Total
<i>Did anybody ask your personal thoughts related to jurisdiction as a court interpreter in the proceedings?</i>	34.8% (n 8)	65.2% (n 15)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you experience any situation where the Deaf person asked for help or advice?</i>	95.7% (n 22)	4.3% (n 1)	100% (n 23)
<i>Do you explain your personal thoughts related to case in the proceedings as a court interpreter?</i>	78.3% (n 18)	21.7% (n 5)	100% (n 23)

In terms of the tendency of partiality, all the interpreters participating in this study (n 23) stated that they never show bias while interpreting in the proceedings and that they have never withdrawn from the interpreting service with the thought that they had bias. Also, 95.7% of those who were surveyed have never experienced a situation where the judge asked them to withdraw from the interpreting service or advised someone else for interpreting service (see table 15). A total of 56.5% of them stated that their personal information and confidentiality are not protected when they provide interpreting services in the proceedings.

Table 15. Responses to the Yes/No questions related to impartiality in terms of intervention

Questions	Yes	No	Total
<i>Do you intervene in the situations where there is misunderstanding between speakers when you are interpreting?</i>	52.2% (n 12)	47.8% (n 11)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you have a bias when you were interpreting in the proceedings?</i>	0	100% (n 23)	100% (n 23)
<i>Did you withdraw from the interpreting service with the thought that you were biased?</i>	0	100% (n 23)	100% (n 23)

<i>Did you experience a situation where the judge asked you to withdraw from the interpreting service or advised someone else instead of you for interpreting service?</i>	4.3% (n 1)	95.7% (n 22)	100% (n 23)
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The next question on impartiality was “When the Deaf person for whom you interpret in the proceedings asks you for help or advice, how do you respond to him/her?” The responses (n 18) reflect that court interpreters (13 respondents) have the tendency to help the Deaf individuals in the proceedings (see table 16). One of the respondents has two professions; she is both a lawyer and a sign language court interpreter. She stated that she is not able to stay hesitant about helping Deaf people, especially those who do not have a lawyer.

Table 16. Sign language interpreters’ responses to the Deaf in courts when they ask for help or advice about the case

	Leading to authorities	Not helping and explaining my role	Helping as far as my knowledge	Explaining indirectly	Asking his/her lawyer and giving information through the lawyer	Total
<i>Responses for help or advice</i>	16.8% (n 3)	11.1% (n 2)	33.3% (n 6)	11.1% (n 2)	27.7% (n 5)	100% (n 18 78%)

Also, the interpreters were asked to respond to a scenario (a) as follows: “A court interpreter, who loves his/her work, accepts a gift given by the people who get interpreting service and demonstrate their gratitude after the proceedings as s/he was the mediator in this communication. This court interpreter thinks that s/he behaves properly. Do you agree with this idea?” It is clear that (see table 17) around 87% of the respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with accepting gifts.

Table 17. Views of impartiality in terms of accepting gifts

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
<i>Accepting a gift</i>	43.5% (n 10)	43.4% (n 10)	8.7% (n 2)	4.3% (n 1)	0	100% (n 23)

The interpreters were asked their final comments on sign language interpreting in courts, and 17 respondents answered this open-ended question. Some comments reflecting nine respondents' views were as follows: "Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training (SLTIT) courses of the Ministry of National Education are not adequate for sign language interpreting. Deaf people are being abused with uneducated interpreters," "There are no selection criteria; everyone can be a sign language interpreter in courts," "Sign language interpreters should be certified interpreters by an authority."

7. Conclusion and Discussion

The present study was designed to explore the professionalization level of sign language court interpreters in Turkey. Within this scope, an online questionnaire was administered to 23 sign language court interpreters from ten different cities in Turkey. They were all CODA sign language interpreters, with the exception of two interpreters, and the average age was nearly 34. These sign language interpreters are experienced interpreters who have worked for more than ten years (65.2%) in general, and specifically more than four years in court interpreting. Also, 91.3% of these interpreters work 1–3 times a month as sign language court interpreters. In general, this study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field. The conclusions will be presented in five categories including professional interpreters' knowledge and skills (education, experience, and training), professional working conditions (payment, security), professional association, interpreters' views and expectations on court interpreting, and professional ethical standards, specifically impartiality.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study on professional interpreters' knowledge and skills is that while 48% of the respondents graduated from high school, none of the sign language interpreters graduated from a higher education institution which offers translation training. The respondents also confirmed with their last comments

obtained through the open-ended question that “Sign Language Trainer and Interpreter Training (SLTIT) courses of the Ministry of National Education are not adequate for sign language interpreting,” as well as that “Sign language interpreters should be certified interpreters by an authority.” This result may be explained by the fact that, in Turkey, the newly founded (in 2018) Turkish Sign Language Interpreting and Deaf Studies Postgraduate Program in Ankara University is the first and only program of its kind, and there is not a graduate program that offers sign language interpreting or court interpreting—the program at Ankara University offers Community Interpreting and Advanced Community Interpreting courses. Also, there is no training/certification program of court interpreting available in Turkey provided by any association or institution. The findings of this current study are consistent with those of Resta and Ioannidis (2016) who found that there is a lack of educational possibility for prospective court interpreters in Greece. However, it is reported that many countries have undergraduate and postgraduate degrees available in sign language interpreting in Europe (de Wit 2012). Also, Napier and Haug (2016) stated that across Europe there is no uniform approach to the training and certification of legal interpreters. Moreover, there is no accreditation system which ensures qualified interpreters in courts. In Turkey, the Professional Qualifications Authority (Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu [MYK]) prepared the qualifications of sign language interpreters (2014) together with academia and experts; however, these qualifications, the certification program, and the exams planned have not been put into effect yet, as mentioned previously. The National Professional Competence of Sign Language Interpreters in the fields of conference, audio visual settings, community, and education was accepted in 2020 in Turkey. It establishes the assessment and accreditation criteria of sign language interpreters in community contexts such as legal, health care, sports, economy, and disaster settings. It gives detailed information about the accuracy of information; a knowledge of professional ethics was mentioned as a requirement for competence, but without an explanation of what it involves. This finding is in agreement with Napier and Haug’s (2016) findings which concluded that in Europe, “the qualifications required of sign language interpreters in legal settings varies [*sic*] from country to country, ranging from none, to general SLI qualifications; but none require a specific legal interpreting qualification.”

In parallel with previous studies in Turkey (Conker 2017; Gökce 2018), the lack of sign language interpreters in the field, the problem of training, code of ethics, and certification of sign language interpreters are still a matter of debate. However, the postgraduate programs in sign language interpreting (Ankara University, Sign Language Interpreting and Deaf Studies Postgraduate Program, 2018; Hacettepe University, Sign Language Studies and Practices Postgraduate Program, 2020), the approval of the National Professional Competence of Sign Language Interpreters, and the TİDYeS (Turkish Sign Language Proficiency Exam) demonstrate important improvements along the path of professionalization of the field.

In spite of the fact that they have no opportunity to be trained in terms of translation in general, and specifically in law and court interpreting, 78.3% respondents reported that they attended courses/seminars on law, while 53% of them attended courses/seminars on translation/interpreting, and 73.3% of them attended in-service training. These short courses/seminars were provided mostly by associations of Deaf and government institutions as stated above. It is clear from these results that professional development of sign language court interpreters in Turkey is based on voluntary attempts.

The second major findings, on professional working conditions, were that the interpreters are not paid enough and do not feel secure. As seen from their responses, 69.5% of them are being paid 150–250 Turkish Liras (TL) (15–25 Euros) per court task, while 26% of the interpreters are being paid less than the mentioned amount (30–150 TL [3–15 Euros]). It should be noted that this payment is neither per day nor per hour, since they are being paid for the whole work. In Turkey, interpreting services in proceedings are being paid by the government only for criminal proceedings. In Europe, although sign language interpreting in legal settings (such as court, police interviews, meetings with a solicitor or lawyer, Jury Service Duty, and Jury Service Selection) is organized by language agencies, they are paid for mostly by the government, courts, or police (Napier and Haug 2016).

Furthermore, the present research has shown that among other factors such as the payment chart of court interpreters, time spent on interpreting, and the number of people they serve, the majority (52.1%) of respondents stated that the judge of the court is the most important factor affecting the amount of the payment. However, the interpreters (51.2%) believe that the number of people to whom they give interpreting service needs to be the most important payment factor. The results of this investigation show that there is no payment

standard for court interpreting, and it is not paid well. Regarding security, the researchers found that lists of the sign language interpreters containing names and communication information are being announced through each province's courthouse websites.¹¹ Some of the respondents mentioned that they do not feel comfortable being announced as a court interpreter on a webpage.

Concerning professional association, which is the third dimension of professionalization, the following conclusions can be drawn: there is no professional court interpreting association in Turkey, which is a finding in line with the previous studies (Resta and Ioannidis 2016) reporting that there is a lack of specialized and active professional association. Also, Jemina Napier and Della Goswell (2013) found that many countries in Europe do not have a formal professional association. In addition, 52.17% of the respondents do not have any professional association memberships, although 26.08% of them are the members of Sign Language Interpreters Association (İşaret Dili Tercümanları Derneği [İDTD]) which was established in 2011 and has mostly CODA interpreter members. However, the researchers were unable to access the webpage of the association (21 July 2021).

In addition, the findings on the respondents' views and expectations also confirm that assessment and certification (41.3%) is seen as the biggest problem followed by the problem of education, knowledge, and skills (27.5%).

Regarding impartiality, the questions that were asked were related to general issues in the code of ethics such as knowing the parties (78.9% n 17), giving advice or personal opinion (78.3% n 18), intervention during the proceedings (53.2% n 12), and accepting gifts from the clients (4.3% n 1). The answers of the participants reveal that they do not have adequate knowledge on the code of ethics in practice as they perform it as a second occupation. Also, they do not have formal training specifically on interpreting or in the legal field. In addition, the lack of a control mechanism on implementation of the code of ethics or any clear guidelines may lead to sign language court interpreters perceiving impartiality only in terms of faithful interpreting. The results of Özkaya's study (2015, 2018) related to the impartiality perception of conference interpreters in Turkey demonstrate that interpreters perceive impartiality as indicator of professionalism and professional competence, and according to

¹¹ "2021 Yılı Tercüman İlanı" (Interpreter job announcement in 2021), *Ankara Adliyesi*, October 2, 2020, <https://ankara.adalet.gov.tr/2021-yili-tercuman-ilani>.

them if the interpreters are professional and competent, they will not behave partially, or they will be aware of their impartiality and will not accept or perform the interpreting. Associated with this study, the findings related to impartiality obtained from the sign language court interpreters can be explained via their unprofessionalism and incompetency in interpreting. In addition, it can be estimated that the interpreters' desire to help the Deaf people leads them to behave against the perception of impartiality in Judicial Council of California (2013), which is in line with Duman's (2018) study on healthcare interpreters.

Regarding the dissemination of a code of ethics, including impartiality, an intense training on a code of ethics is recommended, which can be organized every year on the interpreters' oath-taking day. Moreover, guidelines including sample situations and clear explanations should be created in cooperation with the training programs, associations, and the state level institutions (Commissions in the cities or the Ministry of Justice). The guidelines should be published and distributed to the interpreters. Besides, professional associations need to be in charge of the control mechanism of ethical standards. Finally, the impartiality dimension that this study has identified in the Turkish context assists in our understanding of the conditions of professionalization of sign language court interpreting in Turkey. To illustrate, by knowing the parties (78.9% n 17), by giving advice and/or expressing personal opinion (78.3% n 18), and by serving for the victim and the defendant parties (52%), the participants may have a real struggle to be professional; thus, it may be difficult to maintain professionalism even if the interpreters have a high level of language proficiency (CODAs).

This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the relations of different phases of professionalization (Tseng 1992) such as professional interpreters' knowledge and skills (education, experience, and training), professional working conditions (payment and security), professional association, and professional ethical standards, all of which are holistically interrelated with each other; therefore, sign language court interpreting in Turkey is in the first phase within the framework of all mentioned phases of professionalization. The professionalization of sign language court interpreters that we have identified so far, therefore, assists in our understanding of the role of standards in profession. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be

transferable to all the sign language court interpreters in Turkey. Also, further research might investigate other dimensions of code of ethics.

Furthermore, more work needs to be carried out to improve translation and interpreting services in sign language court interpreting in Turkey. Moreover, the findings of this research indicate that further investigations are needed to evaluate the expectations and views of Deaf sign language users who have experiences in criminal proceedings. As Napier and Haug (2016) noted, it is necessary to carry out research on the perceptions and experiences of all stakeholders “in terms of safeguarding the rights of Deaf sign language users to access quality interpreting services in criminal proceedings” (15).

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