

## (IN)ACCESSIBILITY OF THE DEAF TO THE TELEVISION CONTENTS THROUGH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AND SDH IN TURKEY

İmren GÖKCE<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Research on Turkish Sign Language has gained momentum since its official recognition as a full-fledged language in 2006, but sign language interpreting still remains as an under-researched field in Turkey. Departing from this lack, the present study aims to present the current situation of media accessibility for the Deaf in Turkey, to find out perceptions and thoughts of Turkish Deaf individuals regarding the options provided for the Deaf community to access the television contents, and to prove the hypothesis that accessibility of the Deaf to the television contents through sign language interpreting and subtitles is still an unresolved issue in Turkey due to various reasons. Considering the fact that sign language is available, though limited, on Turkish televisions since 1993, but no study has been carried out on the subject within the scope of translation and interpreting studies by Turkish scholars so far, this research contributes to the efforts on Turkish Sign Language interpreting by hopefully paving the way for further research to understand the Deaf community, to improve sign language interpreting services and to train more qualified interpreters.

**Keywords:** Accessibility, Turkish Sign Language, Sign Language Interpreting, Television Contents, Turkish Deaf Community, Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

## TÜRKİYE’DE SAĞIRLARIN İŞARET DİLİ ÇEVİRİSİ VE ALTYAZI ARACILIĞIYLA TELEVİZYON İÇERİKLERİNE ERİŞEBİLİRLİĞİ

### ÖZET

Türk İşaret Dili üzerine yapılan araştırmalar Türk İşaret Dilinin 2006 yılında resmen tanınması ile birlikte hız kazanmıştır, ancak Türkiye’de işaret dili çevirmenliği Çeviribilimin henüz yeterince araştırılmamış alanlarından biri olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu eksiklikten hareketle doğan bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de Sağırın medyaya erişiminin mevcut durumunu ile Sağır Türk bireylerin televizyon içeriklerine erişimleri için kendilerine sunulan seçenekler ile ilgili düşünce ve değerlendirmelerini ortaya koymak ve Sağır toplumunun işaret dili çevirisi ve altyazı aracılığıyla televizyon içeriklerine erişiminin çeşitli sebeplerle hala çözülememiş olduğu hipotezini kanıtlamaktır. 1993 yılından beri Türk televizyonlarında işaret dilinin bulunmasına rağmen, işaret dili çevirisi üzerine Çeviribilim açısından Türkiye’de konuyla ilgili araştırmaya rastlanmaması sonucu

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<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Dokuz Eylül University Department of Translation and Interpreting, imren.gokce@deu.edu.tr

ortaya çıkan bu çalışma alanda yapılacak çalışmalara örnek olmayı, Türkiye’de Sağır toplumu üzerine yapılan çalışmalara katkı sağlamayı ve daha nitelikli çevirmenler ile çeviri hizmeti sunma konusunda gösterilen akademik çabaları geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Erişilebilirlik, Türk İşaret Dili, Türk İşaret Dili Çevirisi, Televizyon İçerikleri, Türk Sağır Toplumu, İşitme Engelliler İçin Altyazı

## INTRODUCTION

Accessibility and translation are inseparable concepts. When we want a service or knowledge to be accessible for a specific group of people, we transform and translate it into a convenient form for that particular group taking into consideration their needs, culture, and so on. For ages, translators and interpreters have been working to enable communication between people from different cultures and languages to let them access knowledge and services from outside sources. And as Translation Studies have been going through a sociological and technological turn today, accessibility for the disadvantaged groups such as the disabled or minorities is becoming a more and more intriguing study topic for researchers in Translation Studies. This paper aims to find out to what extent current alternatives on the TV meet the needs and expectations of the Deaf community as well as exhibiting the general situation of deafness and sign language interpreting in Turkey. ion, and on whether current services meet expectations of the Turkish Deaf.

The paper first provides a brief historical overview of deafness and sign language in Turkey, and then gives information regarding the current sign language interpreting services. The second part introduces the current TV accessibility alternatives for the Deaf, and it is followed by the description and analysis of the data collected for this study. The final part of the article summarises the findings of the study along with providing suggestions for further research.

### **Deafness, Sign Language and Sign Language Interpreting in Turkey**

The oldest story about a deaf community in Anatolia points out the Hittite period (2000-1200 BC) suggesting that Hititian deaf men and women took part in religious ceremonies and festivals (Kemaloğlu&Kemaloğlu, 2012).In Hititian cuneiform texts, a city in Hakmis (Amasya in modern Turkey) is described as 'the city where deaf people talk' (Murat, 2008). So, it may be right to say that deaf communities using SL are in existence in Anatolia for at least 3500 years, although we do not have enough information regarding the daily life of the deaf and the sign languages used then.

The next important information on the history of sign language in Turkey comes from Miles (2000) who suggests that SL was first used as a preferred means of communication in the Ottoman courts. Research on

Ottoman empire also indicates that deaf people had important duties in the palace and were specially recruited to ensure confidentiality of governmental issues. The sultans and sultanas and other royal staff also learned SL to communicate with these deaf or mute servants. The curious thing here is that when these servants get old and retired, they came to the palace occasionally to teach sign language to the new young recruits in some kind of school in the palace's garden. Considering the fact that those new recruits didn't know any sign language when they got into the palace, then it can be inferred that deaf people had no educational opportunity outside of the palace for a long time in Ottoman period.

As for the education of the deaf outside the palace, the first deaf school was established in İstanbul around 1889/1891 during the reign of Abdulhamid II, and we know that there were deaf teachers in this school the first of whom was Pekmezian, a graduate of a deaf school in Paris. Historical records show that four more deaf schools founded in Ottoman state (Merzifon, Corfu, Selanik-Thessalonica, and İzmir) during this period, and SL was used in the schools in İstanbul and İzmir, but we have no information on the teaching methods used there (Dikyuva, et. al.2015; Gök, 1958). To shed more light on the history of deaf culture and sign language in Ottoman period, we need more research, which needs time and access to Ottoman texts majority of which have not been translated into modern Turkish yet.

When the Republic period began in 1923, it is observed that oralism started to become the main and only education method in deaf schools, probably as a part of modernisation process which included adoption and adaptation of Western viewpoints and methods. Although there has never been a law prohibiting sign language usage in Turkish history, such practices like exclusion of deaf children over 12 from deaf schools and deaf schools' being handed over to the ministry of education, and appointing managers and teachers to those schools who came from or trained in Germany caused the dissemination of oralism and restricted use of sign language, thus hindering its academical development in Turkey. Nevertheless, the deaf schools in this period still provided a meeting place to practice sign language in the social lives of students most of whom were boarders. Graduates of these schools later founded first Deaf, Mute and Blind Solidarity Association in 1930, and then Turkish National Deaf Federation (TNDF) in 1960, playing important role in keeping this signing community together. (Gök, 1958; Kemaloğlu&Kemaloğlu, 2012)

The transformation of negative perceptions on signing into the positive way in the Western world with the beginning of the second half of 20th century could only begin to be felt in Turkey during the late 90s, and volunteers and researchers began to support Deaf NGOs. However, studies on Turkish Sign Language (TID)only started in the 2000s. The disability

code no. 5378 implemented on 1 July 2005 is a turning point for both TID and signing community in that it is the first code in the history of the Turkish Republic that includes the phrase "Türk İşaret Dili" (Turkish Sign Language), thus acknowledging its existence. According to Article 15 of the same code, Ministry of Education (MEB) and Ministry of Family and Social Policies have been appointed to analyse linguistics of TID, to prepare written and visual education materials, to create Turkish sign language system, and to train sign language instructors and interpreters. Within the scope of this law, Board of Turkish Sign Language Science and Certification (TIDBO) which consists of academics and members from TDK (Turkish Language Institute), Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Ministry of Education and Turkish National Deaf Federation (TNDF) was founded. TIDBO's duties include approving all scientific and educational materials regarding TID and certification of TID instructors and interpreters. Since the beginning of 2000, Turkish researchers have produced many studies on TID, however, sign language interpreting still remains to be an under-researched area.

As for the current situation of being Deaf in Turkey, it is necessary to check some numbers regarding the subject. 2002 Turkey Disability Survey suggests that 0.37% of the total population has hearing disability, and 0.38 % of the total population has speaking disability. The proportion of profoundly deaf people and profoundly mute people to the disabled population is 32.45% and 45.99 % respectively. The survey also indicates that 10.31 % of speaking disability is caused by hearing disability. Another statistics given by 2012 Health Survey demonstrates that 2.2% of the total population has hearing problems, and 4.7% uses hearing-aids. On the other hand, although there is no up-to-date statistical information regarding the number of deaf people, associations of the Deaf claim that there are about 3 million deaf people in Turkey<sup>1</sup>.

However, there are only 61 deaf schools (41 elementary and secondary schools, and 20 vocational high schools) under the roof of Ministry of Education. Considering the fact that there are 81 cities in Turkey, it is clear that there are not deaf schools in each city. On the other hand, there is only one university in Turkey offering only four programmes for the deaf (graphic arts, ceramics, computer operator training, and architectural drawing). Unfortunately, none of these schools offers education in sign language, and they even don't have sign language classes. The university mentioned above accepts only those students who have only mild hearing impairment or with a background of highly audial-verbal education.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tsmf.org.tr/tarihce/>, <http://uiefed.org/2-baskanin-mesaji.html> , <http://www.ief.org.tr> (05.01.2018)

The education method used in the deaf schools especially after the 1950s has negatively affected the literacy rates among the Deaf in Turkey. The 2002 research on the disabled in Turkey<sup>2</sup> indicates that 37% of the deaf and hard-of-hearing population cannot read and write at all, and this illiteracy rate is three times higher than the one among the total population of Turkey (12.9 %). Nevertheless, it is highly possible that the given illiteracy rate among the deaf does not reflect the real numbers in that the mentioned research has acknowledged that having at least primary education was a sign of being literate. But previous research on the subject reflects that most of the deaf students graduate from above mentioned schools either without acquiring any reading-writing skills, or with very limited ones (İlkbaşaran, 2016; Kubuş et. al., 2016) There are two main interrelated reasons behind this scenario: Late acquisition of sign language and lack of education in sign language at schools. Most of the deaf children are either late diagnosed with deafness or are not exposed to any kind of proper and natural language education in the family until it is too late. Although it is known that 90-95 % of deaf children are born to hearing families (Napier & Leeson, 2016) who do not know any sign language or are not aware of the importance of the sign language acquisition for the child's language development, even the deaf children of deaf adults may have the same experience when their deaf parents do not know standard sign language and only use limited home signs. The majority of deaf children usually learn sign language from their peers when they start a deaf school or join a sports team at their local Deaf association. As for the schooling, teachers in Deaf schools know little or no sign language, so they fail to contribute the conceptual linguistic development of students. Moreover, either student are mostly allowed to pass the exams and classes with higher marks than they deserve or they are exempted from some classes.

As for the interpreting services, we have witnessed advancements over the last 10 years, but efficiency and adequacy of these services is still a controversial topic. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies has hired about 100 interpreters since 2006 to offer free interpreting services to the deaf. However, we still do not have interpreters in all cities, and these ministry interpreters are not preferred by the community due to bureaucratic requirements and extra fee demands by some of the interpreters. Another problem is that there is still no undergraduate programmes for sign language interpreters, and this means current interpreters (99% of whom are CODAs) have received no professional and academic education apart from annual seminars provided by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Today public education centres offer 210-hour sign language interpreting and

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT\\_ID=11&KITAP\\_ID=14](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=11&KITAP_ID=14) (05.01.2018)

teaching courses for everyone who completes 120-hour Turkish Sign Language learning course. However, the curriculum of these courses focuses mostly on teaching the sign language, and the implementation of the curriculum highly varies depending on the instructors. This means we still do not have qualified interpreters to serve in specialised interpreting fields such as education, law, health, and media. Moreover, we still do not have any regulation or effective organisation to bring standardisation to the interpreting profession<sup>3</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are some pleasing improvements recently in the name of providing access to the Deaf through interpreting services. For example, the Ministry of Health launched an application, called ESİM, which allows the deaf to make video calls through interpreters 24/7 in the case of emergencies or when they are in need of a doctor's appointment. The other one is the video call centre for the Deaf by Turkish Telekom, which is the main telecommunication company in Turkey. Unfortunately, these services are not effectively benefitted by the Deaf, probably due to lack of sufficient and efficient introduction of the services to the community. They either just are not aware of these services, or they do not bother to use them because they are used to do their work with the help of their hearing family members and acquaintances. It is reported that Turkish Telecom video call centre receives only one or two calls in a month<sup>4</sup>.

### **Deaf Accessibility to the Television Contents in Turkey**

Turkish televisions have been hosting accessible programmes for the Deaf for 24 years. The first sign-interpreted news programme was broadcasted on TRT-1 in 1993, and it continued for 10 years while the first and only sign-presented programme was aired on TRT-2 between 1998-2004. Since then, different programmes have been presented with sign language interpreting on different channels. Today we have only four TV programmes<sup>5</sup> with sign language interpreting.

As for SDH<sup>6</sup> availability, according to the 2014 regulation on procedures and principles regarding broadcasting services, all channels are supposed to provide SDH for films, series, and news programmes. The determined rate for the subtitled programmes according to this regulation is 30% for TRT channels, and 20% for private media service providers in three years (which means by the end of this year), and again 50% for the former and 40% for the latter in five years. However, today no Turkish television

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ercüment Tanrıverdi on 24.09.2017 (the chairman of TNDF)

<sup>4</sup> Interview with SLI Selver AYTEKİN on 24.09.2017

<sup>5</sup> "Çalar Saat" on FOX TV, "İşitme Engelliler İçin Haber Bülteni" on TRT1, "Ana Haber Bülteni" on NTV, and "Yüzde Yüz Futbol" on NTV.

<sup>6</sup> Subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing

channels provide open or closed subtitles for any programmes, except for two digital TV service providers which provide SDH only for paid movie channels.

On the other hand, there are recent attempts to provide accessible TV and radio contents on the internet for the Deaf and the Blind. Today, three mainstream television channels (Engelsiz TRT, Engelsiz Kanal D, Engelsiz Show TV<sup>7</sup>) broadcast some of their contents on their internet pages with audio description, sign language interpreting and SDH in coordination with SEBEDER<sup>8</sup>. Among them, only TRT provides a cartoon, a news programme for the deaf, a documentary, and a sports programme in addition to the series and sitcoms while others provide only TV series. TRT Radio also broadcasts the sign language interpreted version of a radio programme for the disabled on Youtube<sup>9</sup>. Another example is the annual film festival<sup>10</sup> held in three cities with the coordination of the municipalities and SEBEDER. During the festival, the chosen movies are shown with audio description, SDH, and sign language interpreting. There are also an increasing number of individual attempts to provide sign language interpreted video contents on Youtube.

Although all these developments within the last two decades or so prove that the very presence of the Deaf community has been acknowledged and realised in Turkey, they are not enough to meet the needs of the community. This study seeks to prove this hypothesis and to reveal the expectations of the Deaf community in Turkey.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to find out the balance between current services and expectations/ needs of the Deaf community, I have carried out one-to-one semi-structured interviews with ten deaf adults (5 women and 5 men) and three sign language interpreters with the experience of interpreting on media apart from extracting data from previous studies which are few in number. Following answering the questions related to their perceptions on available interpreting services and current media accessibility opportunities, the deaf participants also watched fragments from two videos (a news programme with sign language interpreting which airs every morning on a mainstream TV channel, and a documentary with SDH from TRT's website for the Deaf

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<sup>7</sup><http://engelsiztrt.tv/>, <http://engelsiz.kanald.com.tr/>,  
[http://www.showtv.com.tr/dizi/tum\\_bolumler/fatih-harbiye--engelsiz-sezon-1-bolum-34-izle/18125](http://www.showtv.com.tr/dizi/tum_bolumler/fatih-harbiye--engelsiz-sezon-1-bolum-34-izle/18125)

<sup>8</sup> The Audio Description Association: <http://sebeder.org/>

<sup>9</sup> The programme is called "Biz De Varız". The broadcast of this programme ended very recently. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mup8YPLv\\_Qw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mup8YPLv_Qw) (05.01.2018)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.engelsizfestival.com/tr/> (05.01.2018)

and the Blind) and, then they answered comprehension questions on each video. The interviews with the Deaf participants were carried out with the help of a sign language interpreter and were filmed while the interviews with the interpreters were only voice recorded.

### **Deaf Participants**

The age of deaf interviewees ranges from 26-36. Only three of the participants stated that they learnt sign language at home from their deaf parents or siblings. Six of them learnt the sign language from their peers when they started deaf schools, and one mentioned that he learnt how to sign at the age of 20 from his Deaf friends. As for their education levels; 3 are high school dropouts, 4 are high school graduates, and 3 graduated from 2-year vocational colleges.

When the participants were asked their television viewing habits, all participants told that they watch TV in the evenings when they are back home from work. This data conforms to the 2007 research by RTUK<sup>11</sup> on television viewing habits of the disabled in Turkey. The study suggests that people with disabilities tend to watch TV mostly between 18:00-21:00 (62% on weekdays / 59% at weekends). Half of the people taking part in this research also tell that they mostly watch TV between 21:00-24:00 at weekends.

As for the programmes they choose to watch, all participants stated that since they do not have many accessible alternatives on TV, they choose to watch foreign subtitled programmes provided by some satellite channels. They tend to opt for action movies/series because they can understand the theme and content of the programme through highly visual materials even if they are not able to comprehend and follow the subtitles fully. Women participants especially mentioned that they like to watch Turkish TV series, but since no subtitle or/and sign language interpreting is provided, they choose to watch foreign movies and/or series or programmes with regular subtitles on satellite channels. They also added that sometimes they like to follow some Turkish series on a mainstream channel, and they try to understand it from the visual material and/or they ask their family for the details.

Among ten participants only one participant mentioned that he regularly watches the morning news programme with sign language interpreting to get the news while the rest revealed that they just do not watch the news because the programmes with sign language interpreting are broadcasted at unsuitable hours for them, and they do not understand anything from other news programmes, adding that they usually get news

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<sup>11</sup> The Supreme Board of Radio and Television

from their family or acquaintances. Concerning the statements of the participants, it is clear that none of the participants are aware of the evening news programme and the sports programme broadcasted with SL interpreting on NTV because they only complained that they could not get the news because FOX TV broadcasts the programme very early in the morning, and TRT broadcasts the news for the Deaf at 3 pm when they are at work.

When the participants were asked whether they know and watch the online TV channels for the Deaf and the Blind (Engelsiz Kanal D, Engelsiz TRT), 9 of them told they knew those channels, but only 4 told they occasionally watch series on them. The rest 5 participants told they did not prefer to watch them at all. All participants mentioned that provision of sign language interpreting together with SDH on these channels is very favourable and beneficial for the Deaf community, however they do not prefer to watch them due to the need for internet connection to access the contents, and to the fact that the series is usually loaded on the websites a few days after they have been already broadcasted on TV. They all shared the opinion that they want to access the television content at the same time as the hearing community does.

Following the interviews, the participants were asked to watch parts of two videos – first a part of the news programme with sign language interpreting broadcasted on FOX TV, and then a part of a nature documentary with SDH broadcasted online on Engelsiz TRT. Each participant watched the videos individually and answered to five comprehension questions for each video. The questions were structured in a way to observe whether the participants can acquire specific information in the videos which cannot be gathered by only visual materials without understanding the SL interpreting or the SDH.

As for the results, none of the participants could answer correctly more than one question for the first video. All participants suggested that the interpreter's signing was too fast to follow. Other reasons given by the participants for not understanding the content were: (1) "The interpreter used no gestures and facial expressions"; (2) "The interpreter did not provide the main information. For instance, he made the sign for Europe but did not tell which country was subject of the news" (By the way, the news was about CIA and the president of the USA); and (3) "I don't know some of his signs." On the other hand, only one participant could give correct answers to four questions out of five about given information in the video with SDH. Six participants could answer only two questions while three participants could answer none of the questions correctly. The reasons given by the participants for their failure to understand the content were like "I don't know most of the words in the subtitles" and "I am not good at reading". Finally, when the participants were asked what they needed to understand

more of the content in each video, they mentioned that they needed to have both SL interpreting and subtitles together so that they could understand the meaning of a word in the subtitle via sign language interpreting or vice versa. One participant also stated that the language in the SDH or in regular subtitles are rather different and more complicated than the written language they use while texting and that is why they have difficulty to follow them.

### **Sign Language Interpreters**

I have also interviewed three SL interpreters with experience of interpreting TV contents. Although I carried out in-depth interviews with these participants about SL interpreting in Turkey, this paper includes only the parts related to the interpreting of TV contents.

Of all the three interpreters, the first one has been interpreting the same news programme on FOX TV<sup>12</sup> for eight years. He is also a well-known person by all the community due to his position as the chairman of the TNFD. The second interpreter works for SEBEDER for five years and has been interpreting TV series, cartoons, and plays since then. The third interpreter has interpreted a health programme on a TV channel for ten months. All of the interpreters are CODAs who learnt the language at home from their Deaf parents, and only one of them - the interpreter working for SEBEDER- received interpreting education through attending an interpreter training certificate programme in England, but none of them had any kind of training to interpret media contents.

I asked the participants about their interpreting strategies, and what they think about to what extent their interpreting is understood by the Deaf community. The first interpreter told that he has no difficulty during interpretation since the newscaster presents the programme in a way that as if he was chatting with the audience, that is he uses mostly informal language and light terminology. However, he added that he does not usually have time to explain every complicated or absent-in-TİD concept for the Deaf because of the speed of the streaming. Nevertheless, he mentioned that he was sure that deaf people understand his interpreting. The third interpreter also thinks that her interpreting was understood by the people since she always interpreted as if she was interpreting for her family members. She mentioned that she studied the medical terms before the programme, and tried to add explanations for the absent-in-TİD terms after fingerspelling them during the interpreting. As for the second interpreter, she stated that she had most difficulty while interpreting humour into sign language and that as a solution she either tried to explain the humour if she had enough time or just ignored it. When I asked her whether she thinks that her

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<sup>12</sup> I used a part of that programme to test the comprehension levels of the Deaf participants

interpreting is understood by the community, she told that she tried to interpret as if she was talking to a deaf person at that moment, so deaf people must understand her signing. She also shared the results of her unpublished study which was carried out to reveal to what extent the SL interpreting and SDH provided by SEBEDER is understood by the community. About 200 deaf people from different age groups participated in that study and some the results were as follows: (1) Deaf people want to see sign language on TV, and adaptation to internet settings for TV accessibility is problematic, especially for the elder; (2) Young deaf people are likely to prefer to watch TV with subtitles because they are used to watching foreign movies/series through subtitles on online channels; (3) Young people complain that they do not understand the sign language on TV while old people complain that the signing is too fast and complicated; (4) One of the current programmes is criticised heavily due to the interpreter's lack of using gestures and facial expressions<sup>13</sup>.

In sum, the interpreters seem to be content with the work they do, and each of them stated that they are doing their best to help deaf people to access TV contents. However, they all agree that current alternatives are far from being enough, and there must be more TV programmes for the Deaf.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the interviews with the Deaf participants reveals that current media accessibility alternatives for the Deaf do not meet expectations and needs of the community. The most clearly observable cause of this situation is the lack of accessible contents. Turkish televisions still do not provide any SDH options for their contents, and the amount of contents with SL interpreting is very limited. Besides, online accessibility options are not preferred by the community because those alternatives continue to restrict deaf people, and they are far from providing equal accessibility. Although increasing the amount of accessible contents on TV for the Deaf seems to be the exact short-cut solution, the data extracted from this study shows that it can be only a beginning step on the way to solving a deep-rooted problem.

The exact solution to this problem - together with guaranteeing the increase in accessible contents on TV through legal enforcement - is should be recognizing the target audience and acknowledging their needs. Both TV service providers, subtitlers and interpreters should know that their target audience mostly lacks complete linguistic capabilities, both in oral/written language and sign language mostly due to lack of adequate education. Therefore, accessibility options for the deaf should be reorganised considering this fact.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Berrak Fırat on 15.09.2017

The beginning step to address the accessibility problem could be to provide SDH as a teletext option because it is the most easily and cost-effective applicable option, and SDH practices in countries such as Germany, the UK, Portugal, Italy and Netherlands can be benefitted as models (Remael, 2007). More research on the Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing can also shed some light on the provision of the best comprehensible and the most beneficial form of subtitling for the community. On the other hand, it is clear that no matter how successful SDH options are provided, they will fail to effectively address the whole community unless the problem of illiteracy and Deaf education is solved out in Turkey. Still, TV service providers, especially the official channels can and should take the responsibility to educate the Deaf through TV contents by providing sign language interpreted and/or sign language presented programmes with optional SDH.

The other step which needs to be taken is developing training programmes for existing SL interpreters as well as establishing university degree programmes to train new SL interpreters. Despite the fact that the interpreters who participated in this study stated they were sure that their signing is understood by Deaf people, interviews with the Deaf participants suggest the opposite. Actually, the fact that deaf people do not usually understand sign language interpreting on TV has been revealed by previous studies as well (Steiner, 1998; Xiao&Li, 2013; Xiao et. al. 2015). The reasons put forward by both the participants of the current study and of previous studies show consistency in that the speed of interpreters' signing, lack of use of body movements and facial expressions, and lack of familiarity with the signs used by the interpreter hinder comprehension of the information given through interpreting. These problems related to sign language interpreting skills can be addressed and solved through formal interpreting training programmes.

Consequently, the findings of the present study reveal that illiteracy is still a significant problem among Turkish Deaf people, and available accessibility alternatives do not meet the expectations and needs of the community. Additionally, increase in the proportion of sign-interpreted and/or sign-presented programmes with clearer and quality sign language interpreting together with SDH as a teletext option stands as the most fundamental expectation of the community. This small-scale work as a part of a larger study on sign language interpreting in Turkey hopes to inspire more research on sign language interpreting and interpreter training, on subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard-of-hearing, on Turkish Deaf community, on bilingual deaf education, and on building pedagogic materials for the deaf, SL interpreters, and trainers.

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