



Title Considering the Deaf Perspective: Insights of a Hearing Researcher Working with Deaf Participants

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# Considering the Deaf Perspective: Insights of a Hearing Researcher Working with Deaf Participants

Rebecca Foster and Emma Richardson

<p>Case Study Title</p> <p><i>Maximum of 20 words.</i></p> <p><i>Please ensure that the title aligns with APA style.</i></p>	<p>Considering the Deaf Perspective: Insights of a Hearing Researcher Working with Deaf Participants.</p>								
<p><b>Authors.</b> The order of authorship in the publication will follow the order below. Please add additional rows for co-authors if necessary.</p> <p>Please specify the number of contributors to this manuscript: <b>[Click here to indicate # of authors]</b></p>									
1	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 2px;">Name</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Rebecca Foster</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Author email</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">r.foster@worc.ac.uk</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Affiliation, country</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Great Britain</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">SAGE Author ID</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">[office use only]</td> </tr> </table>	Name	Rebecca Foster	Author email	r.foster@worc.ac.uk	Affiliation, country	Great Britain	SAGE Author ID	[office use only]
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<p>Author bio.</p> <p><i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i></p>	<p>Rebecca Foster MBE is a Principal Adapted PE lecturer at the University of Worcester and Senior Fellow of HEA. Her own research interests are on disability, specifically Deaf sport. This interest arose from competing as an international heptathlete and upon retiring learnt British Sign Language and then volunteered as a coach and team manager or UK Deaf Athletics for over 12 years and is now a UK Deaf Sport Board Member. This afforded her to travel abroad for three consecutive Deaflympic competitions. Her active interest in the disabled community allowed her to co-edit a book titled '<a href="#">Physical Education for Young People with Disabilities</a>'. Rebecca has delivered inclusion workshops and presentations in China, Japan and Lithuania.</p>								

		As a further accolade, Rebecca has been <a href="#">awarded an MBE</a> in recognition for her services to inclusive sport and supporting young people to achieve their potential. Her work at both university and community level have supported this application.  <i>I have published with Sage before</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	Author bio. <i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i>	Dr Emma V. Richardson is a Senior Research Fellow of Inclusive Sport at the University of Worcester. Dr Richardson is a qualitative researcher whose work focuses on improving access and equity to physical activity opportunities among disabled communities. Prior and ongoing research include how gyms, rehabilitation spaces, sport and physical education can be made more inclusive of individuals with physical impairments and/or chronic illness.  Maximum of 200 words]  <i>I have published with Sage before</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
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For which student level is this case study most suitable?	<b>Introductory Undergraduate</b>
Method Categorisation	Qualitative
Discipline of Original Research	<i>Education [D2]</i>
Which thematic areas best describe the research practise the student will learn about? Select up to two. They can be updated subsequently.	<i>Ethics, Integrity, and Researcher Responsibilities</i> <i>Inclusive, Adaptive, and Flexible Data Collection Methods</i>
Published articles based on the research project this case study reflects on.	Foster, R., Fitzgerald, H. & Stride, A. (2018) The socialization and participation of Deaflympians in Sport. <i>Sport in Society</i> , 9, 1-16. DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1530219">0.1080/17430437.2018.1530219</a>

## Abstract

This Case Study discusses the complexities and considerations of working with an interpreter to authentically capture the Deaf voice as well as the broader challenges of interviewing Deaf individuals while honoring Deaf culture. The original research explored the factors that support Deaf athletes in accessing and advancing within elite Deaf sport. It also aimed to identify the key challenges Deaf athletes encounter in their participation and progression. To gather insights, semistructured interviews were chosen as the most effective method. Of the four participants, three communicated orally, whereas one used British Sign Language (BSL). The first author (RF), who is hearing and has basic sign language skills, obtained consent from the BSL-using athlete to involve their team interpreter to facilitate communication. This Case Study provides valuable guidance for researchers seeking to undertake further work within this community, particularly in elevating Deaf voices in research and embedding allyship as a core principle of inclusive practice

## Learning Outcomes

After reading this Case Study, students should be able to

- assess ethical considerations in research involving hearing people interviewing Deaf participants;
- express/show respect for and awareness of Deaf culture and difference through inclusive research practices; and
- provide guidance to enhance confidence and encourage Deaf participation in research to promote more Deaf research from a marginalized group.

## Project Overview and Context

Being welcomed into the Deaf community as a hearing individual is a profound honor. Serving as a team manager and athletics coach across multiple Deaflympics over a span of more than 12 years provided the first author (RF) with a unique opportunity for personal and professional growth. This experience allowed her to engage as an observant participant, gaining insight into the interactions between Deaf and hearing individuals, exploring diverse communication methods, and developing a deeper understanding of Deaf culture and the multifaceted nature of deafness (Ladd, 2003).

The second author (ER) acted as a critical friend supporting and challenging the first author's interpretations and experiences of working with Deaf athletes in qualitative work. The second author (ER) is an experienced qualitative researcher focused on disabled communities, but she does not have experience working with Deaf communities, nor has she been immersed in Deaf culture. She therefore acted as both a sounding board and questioner throughout the Case Study.

Paddy Ladd (2003) introduced the concept of *Deafhood* as a framework for understanding Deaf identity through a cultural and political lens. He argued that Deafhood encompasses the collective and individual experiences of Deaf people, shaped by historical oppression and resistance. Not all Deaf individuals are initially aware of the significance of Deafhood or the empowering potential of understanding Deaf history and culture. Ladd advocated for nurturing Deafhood within each Deaf person, aiming to foster self-awareness, pride, and equality in a society where such recognition often has been denied. Through increased Deaf awareness, education, and cultural knowledge, Deaf individuals can develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging. Ladd suggested that when Deaf people are given opportunities to explore and affirm their place in society, Deafhood can flourish. Conversely, when Deaf individuals are marginalized or denied access to their language and culture, their sense of Deafhood may diminish. As Deafhood strengthens, so too does a positive relationship with being Deaf, contributing to a more empowered

and cohesive identity. In alignment with Ladd's vision and his advocacy for Deaf cultural recognition, the first author (RF) was acutely aware of the marginalization faced by Deaf individuals across domains such as research, education, employment, sport, and everyday life (Foster, Fitzgerald, & Stride, 2018). Motivated by this awareness, she sought to contribute to the growing body of Deaf-centered research, aiming to amplify Deaf voices and promote greater inclusion within academic discourse. Regarding discourse, there are two main ways in which members of the Deaf community may identify themselves, big D and little d. *Big D Deafness* refers to those who were born Deaf and choose to embed themselves in the Deaf community and Deaf culture, such as using BSL as their main form of communication and positively identifying as Deaf. *Little d deafness* refers to those who often have acquired deafness and may not be aware of Deaf culture and may find navigating Deafness with their changed identity complex. In this Case Study, we will use big D to reflect the framework of Deafhood.

Due to my desire to support deaf voices and be an ally of the Deaf community, the first author (RF) chose to integrate her academic role at a university with her voluntary involvement in Deaf athletics. This dual engagement created a valuable platform for her to conduct research aimed at illuminating the challenges faced by Deaf individuals in sport with the goal of contributing to more inclusive and informed practices (Singleton, Jones, & Hanumantha, 2017). She had attained a Level 2 qualification in BSL, equipping her with foundational signing skills. Learning BSL allowed her to have basic communication with Deaf people and learn firsthand about their culture and identity. As a hearing person, she was aware that she had no lived experience of Deafness nor Deaf culture, but she soon recognized the vibrance and richness of Deafhood and the pride and honor within the Deaf community. She began to see her place within Deaf culture as an ally, working to bridge connections, nurture respectful relationships, and promote spaces where Deaf voices are heard. Richardson et al. (2026) argued that traditional forms of oral testimonial have long privileged certain voices, resulting in an imbalance in whose experiences are heard and validated. Building on this critique, Spencer and Molnar (2022) highlighted how individuals who are more articulate, those with socially valued accents, stronger vocal presence, and greater social capital, are disproportionately represented. Consequently, their narratives are elevated above those of people who may be less verbally expressive or entirely nonverbal, whose stories often remain marginalized or unheard. At the time, the first author (RF) was considered an early-career researcher, still becoming familiar with academic research practices and protocols. In retrospect,

she perceived no obstacles in approaching Deaflympians for interviews, viewing them as a significantly underrepresented group in academic literature. Her motivation stemmed from a strong desire to amplify their voices and provide a platform for their experiences to be shared and acknowledged (Ladd, 2003; McKee, Schlehofer, & Thew, 2013).

## Section Summary

- *Deafhood is recognized as a cultural and empowering identity through an understanding of the concept of Deafhood, which reframes Deaf identity through historical awareness, language, and community.*
- *The role of hearing allies in Deaf spaces is acknowledged, because hearing individuals' involvement in the Deaf community highlights the importance of respectful and informed allyship.*
- *A platform for Deaf-centered research is created by learning BSL, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive research practices.*

## Research Design

Exploratory qualitative research was chosen as the most suitable approach for this research due to its commitment to gaining rich, in-depth, and experientially based understandings of an area or phenomenon that is underexplored or poorly understood (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Because Deaf individuals are often excluded from qualitative work due to a historical privileging of individuals that communicate orally, the experiences, meanings, and perceptions of this group are limited in research (Richardson et al., 2026). This therefore necessitates an open, inductive, experientially driven research approach to address this gap in knowledge and research practice. The purpose of this research therefore was driven by a desire to explore the lived experiences of Deaf participants and to understand the factors that may have shaped their involvement in Deaf sport. The aims of this research thus were based on the following questions: (a) What are the key factors enabling Deaf athletes' involvement and progression in elite Deaf sport? and (b) What are the key challenges Deaf athletes face when participating and progressing in Deaf sport?

This research approach supports gaining authentic testimonies from people who may be seldom heard and also understanding social constructs and attitudes that such people uniquely experience (Young & Temple, 2014). Interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection

because they offered a flexible platform to negotiate between questions the authors thought to be pertinent to the Deaf experience and as space for participants to engage in direct conversations that reflected their lived experiences and authentic testimony (Singleton, Jones, & Hanumantha, 2014). This approach also was practical given that the first author (RF) was serving as both team manager and coach for the Great Britain (GB) athletics squad and therefore was traveling with the team throughout the 2013 Deaflympics Games.

Aware of her dual responsibilities as both team manager and coach, the first author (RF) tried to avoid exerting any undue influence or pressure on potential participants. She recognized the privileged position she held through a close working relationship with the athletes, particularly potential power differentials between her and the participants as their team manager and coach. Throughout, she adopted a culturally responsive, reflexive ethical underpinning, which as Lahman et al. (2011) emphasized is an ongoing practice of critically examining one's positionality and power in research to ensure respect, equity, and ethical sensitivity toward participants' cultural contexts. For example, she was reflexive about being seen as a potential authority figure and that participants might agree [isto](#) take part through obligation rather than desire. To combat this, she positioned herself, in this context, as a novice researcher eager to learn about authentic experiences, not as coach or manager. She also emphasized that this research was not related to the team selected, that taking part (or not taking part) would not in any way affect or change their relationship with her or with team GB, and that this was a completely voluntary exercise.

Prior to addressing the GB Deaflympic squad in person, the first author (RF) obtained ethical approval from the university where she was employed, ensuring that the study adhered to appropriate research standards. For example, she emphasized the voluntary nature of participation in the Deaflympians, the timing of recruitment, and that athletes would only be approached after completing all their events and finals to avoid interfering with their competitive focus and purpose of being at the Deaflympics (Pieper & Thomson, 2014). These principles also were agreed [to](#) by the gatekeeper, UK Deaf Sport, which is the overall governing body of the Deaflympics. Beginning the recruitment process, the first author (RF) introduced herself to the entire GB Deaflympic squad during their first team meeting. This introduction served to familiarize the athletes with her dual role as both team manager and coach as well as a researcher. She explained that she would later approach athletes within their specific sport groups to invite those interested in participating in the research, emphasizing that to do so or not would not change relationships with her, the squad, or

UK Deaf Sport. Equally, she conveyed that athletes could ask questions or seek clarity about her role at any time, emphasizing the ethical underpinnings of equality, respect, and trust (Lahman et al., 2011).

A further reflection she had as a result of a culturally responsive ethical framework was her privileged position as a hearing person and the importance of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research. She was acutely aware that, as a hearing person, she might be perceived as an outsider within the Deaf community. This awareness was especially significant given the historical context in which Deaf sport has been predominantly managed by Deaf individuals and was intentionally positioned as Deaf led. Recognizing this, she understood that some individuals might choose not to engage with her, and she respected that decision. She also was mindful of the lasting emotional impact and serious consequences that past discrimination by hearing people has had on the Deaf community, particularly in relation to the concept of Deafhood (Ladd, 2003).

In addition to cultural considerations, she faced linguistic challenges. Her BSL skills were limited to a Level 2 qualification, roughly equivalent to a General Certificate of Secondary Education, which meant that her proficiency was at a basic conversational level. She did not possess the advanced BSL vocabulary required for more complex or nuanced discussions. This limitation further reinforced the importance of conducting the research with cultural humility and sensitivity, acknowledging the potential barriers to communication and trust. Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) recognized cultural humility as a lifelong process for researchers to be able to self-critique and self-reflect so that they could continue to examine their own cultural identity, assumptions, and potential biases. Therefore, on using cultural humility, the first author (RF) acknowledged the power imbalances she represented in her role within the research. She also recognized that people with Deafness are from a different cultural background to herself, and she did not assume expertise about their Deaf culture or identity. This example aligns with Marshall and Batten's (2003) emphasis on the importance of reciprocity, informed consent, and cultural sensitivity in ethical cross-cultural research practices. This approach not only reinforced transparency but also validated the authenticity of the participants' contributions.

It is essential to acknowledge the varied communication styles within the Deaf community, which are shaped by multiple intersecting factors such as the extent of hearing loss, parental hearing status, and access to education and Deaf cultural experiences. According to Dammeyer, Chapman, and Marschark (2018), these influences determine whether an individual communicates

through sign language, spoken language, or a combination of both, underscoring the need to respect each person's preferred mode of communication. The first author (RF) understood that not all participants would use sign language, and therefore, she adopted a flexible approach.

Initially, 10 athletes had expressed interest in participating in the study after the first author had promoted the research opportunity through the GB Deaflympic Bulletin, which was circulated to all athletes prior to their departure for the games. Several athletes indicated their willingness to be interviewed during the event. However, due to logistical constraints, only four were ultimately able to take part in the study. Of the four participants, three were oral communicators, whereas one was a BSL user. In the context of Deaf communication, *oral* refers to individuals who have some degree of hearing, often supported by hearing aids, and who use spoken English as their primary mode of communication. None of the oral participants used BSL. The BSL user, in contrast, was a fluent signer who considered BSL his first language. He did not use spoken language but was able to lip-read.

To support all participants, the first author (RF) shared the interview questions in advance with both the participants and the interpreter. This allowed time for reflection and reduced the risk of any questions being triggering. It also gave participants space to consider their responses without pressure. The interpreter then was able to translate the English questions into BSL in a format that was accessible and appropriate. Cloud Native Computing Foundation's (n.d) approach aligns with best practices in accessible interviewing, which recommend providing written materials ahead of time to reduce anxiety, support comprehension, and ensure meaningful engagement, particularly in interpreted or cross-linguistic contexts.

The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The BSL interview also was transcribed because the interpreter provided aloud oral translation that was captured on the audio recorder. The first author transcribed the four interviews herself once she returned to the United Kingdom. All transcripts were shared with participants for member reflections, allowing participants to reflect on the testimony they gave and expand on or clarify any topics they wished, permitting them to ensure robust theme development and refinement. None of the participants requested any amendments to their transcripts.

Reflective thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-stage reflexive guide. The first author chose this approach because it was congruent with ethical underpinnings regarding reflexivity of herself and participants. In this way, emphasis

was placed on the co-construction of meaning among the participants, the first author, and the interpreter, making reflexivity central to creating knowledge about D/deaf perspectives through negotiation of hearing and communication differences. Meaning making was recognized in the context of the multiple modes of “talk” being captured and for deep and authentic interpretation of the Deaf athletes’ lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2023). To do this, first the first author immersed herself in the data through ~~by~~ conducting the interviews and transcribing the data. She then openly coded the data in an inductive manner to best reflect the lived experiences of participants rather than incorporating a framework or theory to guide coding. She then grouped codes together into larger themes of meaning, moving iteratively through theme development to reviewing themes to refining themes. Once themes were named, she created a comprehensive report that represented participant experience (see Foster, Fitzgerald, & Stride, 2018)

## Section Summary

- *The study adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach to explore the lived experiences of Deaf athletes.*
- *Ethical approval was obtained, and participation was strictly voluntary, with careful attention paid to avoiding coercion due to the first author’s dual role.*
- *The first author acknowledged her position as a hearing person within a Deaf-led space and approached the study with cultural humility.*
- *Although 10 athletes initially expressed interest, only four were interviewed due to logistical constraints.*
- *The participants included both oral communicators and a BSL user, highlighting the diversity of communication styles within the Deaf community*

## Research Practicalities

Due to logistical constraints, the GB team was accommodated in three separate hotels, each situated near their sporting venues. This arrangement posed considerable geographic challenges for both travel and coordination. The dispersal of athletes across multiple locations, away from the central city, made it difficult to recruit participants after the initial team meeting. It also limited informal interactions because the first author (RF) had fewer opportunities to engage with athletes casually and address any questions about the study. Due to her responsibilities as team manager

and coach, whose primary responsibility was the welfare of the athletes she was assigned, it would have been inappropriate for her to leave her team and go elsewhere on her personal research quest. Only four of the 12 GB teams ~~s-members~~ were based at her hotel, which further limited opportunities for recruiting [more](#) participants. Luckily, there was a representative from each of the [four](#) teams based in her hotel. Separating the team among different hotels may seem odd, but it is a common logistical constraint at large sporting events, yet this issue was not foreseen by the first author because she had assumed all teams would reside together or at least closely. This would be an area that future researchers need to consider.

As mentioned previously, three participants communicated orally, whereas one used BSL. The first author (RF) soon recognized that her limited experience and proficiency in BSL hindered her ability to fully understand and engage with the BSL-using participant. This presented a significant concern because she was committed to ensuring the inclusion of all participants regardless of communication method. The resulting communication challenges underscored a broader issue: the accessibility gap that can arise when hearing individuals without sufficient BSL skills attempt to interact with sign language users. As Kusters, De Meulder, and O'Brien (2017) highlighted, this situation reflects systemic barriers commonly faced by BSL users when engaging with those unfamiliar with their primary language. The first author (RF) was keen to include the BSL user in the study but was uncertain about how to communicate effectively. To address this, she approached the team interpreter, a hearing individual with a Level 6 interpreting qualification. Although initially hesitant, the interpreter understood the importance of the opportunity for the BSL user, who might not have another chance to participate unless an interpreter were available.

The interpreter's concerns centered on accurately conveying the researcher's questions and ensuring that the BSL user's responses were faithfully represented. As a researcher, one must be mindful of potential bias and strive to avoid imposing one's own interpretations on what one hears. This principle was clearly communicated to the interpreter, who was offered reassurance and support before formally agreeing to assist. The responsibility of an interpreter can be daunting when asked to do something out of their ordinary role, which was simply as a team interpreter. The interpreter had not necessarily signed up to be an interpreter involved in Deaf research. The first author (RF) carefully considered the interpreter's well-being and therefore reviewed the interview questions with the interpreter in a one-to-one meeting prior to data collection. The interpreter confirmed that they were comfortable with the line of questioning and were willing to

support the interview, which assured the first author that she could proceed with the original interview schedule without the risk of causing offense, discomfort, or distress. Drawing on insights from Edwards (1998), the first author (RF) highlights that interpreters are not neutral conduits but active co-constructors of meaning within qualitative inquiry. Edwards (1998) critically examined how linguistic mediation shapes the production of qualitative data. In “Interpreters/translators and cross-language research: Reflexivity and border crossings,” Temple and Edwards (2002) further developed the argument for reflexivity and attention to “border crossings” within cross-language research. This body of work calls for greater methodologic transparency and a reconceptualization of interpreters as collaborative partners rather than invisible translators.

Nevertheless, the dynamics of the BSL interview differed noticeably from the lip-reading interviews. In the lip-reading interviews, the interaction was strictly dyadic: a direct one-to-one exchange between the first author (RF) and the athlete, allowing for a natural conversational flow. By contrast, the BSL interview necessarily introduced a third participant, who was the interpreter, which transformed the communicative structure into a triadic interaction. The first author maintained eye contact with the BSL user and spoke directly to him; however, his visual attention was directed toward the interpreter, who conveyed the first author’s questions in BSL. During his responses, the first author continued to look at him while the interpreter voiced his signed replies. This interpretive process extended the duration of the interview, as expected, yet the discussion remained productive and rich in detail. At points where translation ambiguity arose, the interpreter sought clarification from the BSL user to ensure accuracy, and the BSL user similarly requested clarification on specific terms or concepts. The first author provided further explanations when needed to support mutual understanding and maintain the integrity of the dialogue.

Once the interviews were over, the first author (RF) could have furthered the reliability of the data through backtranslations or double translation, but this wasn’t feasible due to time constraints, nor was there research funding to manage this additional cost, so there was no alternative. To reflect, the reality of doing research with those who communicate nonverbally is that of opportunity, flexibility, and trust—for example, asking their preferred communication style, building relationships, reassuring in relation to what the interview process may literally look like, being available for informal conversations and answering questions. Yes, there may be inconsistencies with some translations, but the historical and ongoing silencing of Deaf voices that use BSL is unacceptable, and the first author argues that capturing authentic, raw testimony in an

imperfect way is better than not doing so at all (Singleton, Jones, & Hanumantha, 2014). Equally important was considering the BSL user's comfort with employing an interpreter. Fortunately, the interpreter had previously worked with the user, and the user felt completely at ease with the interpreter's involvement.

The oral Deaf participants were interviewed individually in quiet settings, with each session audio recorded by the first author (RF). The interview with the BSL user also was audio recorded, but in retrospect, it would have been best practice to video record this session. A video recording would have allowed an independent interpreter to review any BSL signs that the first author or interpreter might not have fully understood. This aligns with Heyerick's (2020) argument that video recordings are essential in signed-language research because they capture the full multimodal nature of communication and allow for detailed analysis, including interpreter verification and sign accuracy.

## Section Summary

- *The geographic dispersal of the GB Deaflympic team across three hotels limited the first author's ability to recruit participants and engage formally. Her dual role as team manager and coacher restricted her further due to having to prioritize athlete welfare over research recruitment.*
- *The first author faced challenges engaging with the BSL-using participant due to her limited sign language proficiency. To ensure inclusive participation, she enlisted a qualified interpreter, carefully addressing concerns about accuracy, bias, and participant comfort.*
- *The oral interviews were audio recorded, as was the BSL interview, although the first author later recognized that video recording would have been more appropriate. Going forward, she would gain access to visually record the BSL actions.*

## Method in Action

Given her dual role at the Deaflympics as both team manager and researcher, the first author (RF) felt that the experience unfolded as well as could be expected under the circumstances. In retrospect, it may have been more effective to focus solely on one role, either conducting research or managing the team, rather than attempting to balance both. This decision was influenced by the

unique financial context of the Deaflympics, where athletes, coaches, and officials receive no government funding and must independently raise between £3,000 and £4,000 to attend. To support her involvement, the first author successfully applied for a small university bursary, which provided research leave and covered some expenses. This funding enabled her to fulfill her aspiration of managing an athletics team while also conducting meaningful research. The opportunity to live alongside Deaf athletes at such a prestigious event was rare and valuable. By initiating research in this setting, the first author aimed to demonstrate her commitment to raising awareness about the disparities and limited opportunities faced by Deaf individuals in sport.

The prospect of interviewing 10 participants, all of whom had initially expressed interest in taking part, was encouraging. The first author arrived at the games confident that she had secured a solid participant base, with any additional volunteers considered a bonus. A sample of 10 would have provided a robust foundation for the study, offering a range of interaction and communicative experiences from oral users to lip-readers to BSL users. However, as mentioned previously, the geographic separation of the team across multiple hotels led to the immediate exclusion of six participants. It became clear that there was no feasible way for the first author to meet with them at appropriate times following their events. Although discussions were held to coordinate around athletes' competition schedules, the varying start and finish times across different sports made it impossible to find suitable interview windows. In some cases, athletes had to depart for home immediately after their events. Ultimately, the logistical demands proved too great to overcome. It is also important to note that this occurred prior to the widespread use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams, and videoconferencing was not a practical option at the time.

The dual responsibilities of the lead researcher proved to be particularly demanding, especially when trying to balance team obligations with participant engagement. Time management quickly emerged as a major challenge because the availability of the first author and the athletes rarely aligned. Even when interviews were scheduled, they were frequently disrupted by the demands of the surrounding environment. On occasions when both parties were available, fatigue became a limiting factor; both the athletes and the first author often lacked the energy for meaningful engagement. This was further compounded by concentration fatigue, particularly relevant for participants who relied on lip-reading (Gürses, Kılıç, & Çıldır, 2024). Acknowledging these challenges, the first author occasionally allowed scheduled interviews to lapse, instead opting for informal conversations about the athletes' events and experiences. These conversations were not

part of the interview process but allowed for rapport development so that when the athlete was ready and less tired, the first author could arrange the more formal interview. She believed that this showed empathy and honesty in her approach. While this approach reduced immediate pressure, it heightened concerns about meeting data-collection goals within the limited timeframe. Additionally, the lack of private space presented another obstacle: Mmost athletes shared rooms, and communal areas within the hotel offered little privacy. This underscored the importance of having designated quiet spaces for conducting interviews without interruption.

## Section Summary

- *The first author's attempt both to manage her responsibilities as team manager and to conduct research proved difficult. In hindsight, focusing on one role might have been more effective, but financial constraints and the unique opportunity to live alongside Deaf athletes influenced her decision to pursue both.*
- *Despite initial interest from 10 athletes, only four could be interviewed due to the team's dispersal across multiple hotels, conflicting schedules, and the absence of videoconferencing tools at the time. These factors made it nearly impossible to coordinate interviews after competition.*
- *Time management, lack of private spaces, and participant fatigue, especially among those relying on lip-reading, hindered the quality and consistency of interviews.*

## Practical Lessons Learned

Although the first author (RF) was an early-career researcher, her prior immersion in the Deaf community proved to be an invaluable asset. Living alongside Deaf individuals had fostered a strong sense of Deaf awareness, which greatly facilitated communication and nurtured a respectful, curious approach to gathering information. This background enabled more sensitive and effective collaboration throughout the research process. The insights gained have been deeply meaningful, and she shares key lessons in Deaf awareness along with practical guidance for other researchers.

When interviewing Deaf participants, it is essential for researchers to approach each individual with sensitivity and respect for their unique communication needs. One of the most important principles is to always ask participants about their preferred method of communication rather than

making assumptions. This ensures that the interview process is inclusive and comfortable for everyone involved.

For oral Deaf speakers, the interview environment should be quiet to reduce background noise, which can interfere with both lip-reading and the effectiveness of hearing aids. Good lighting is also crucial; the interviewer's face should be clearly visible, avoiding backlighting and ensuring that the mouth is not covered or turned away. When speaking, it is best to use a natural tone and pace. Shouting or exaggerating mouth movements can distort lip patterns and make it harder for the participant to understand. Researchers should be open to questions and requests for clarification, encouraging a two-way dialogue. Written materials should be kept simple and accessible, provided in advance, when possible, and participants should be given time to review them. It is important not to speak while the participant is reading because they cannot lip-read and read simultaneously. Interviews may take longer due to the need for repetition or rephrasing, so researchers should plan accordingly. Time management is also crucial; interviews involving interpreters or other forms of communication support often require extra time to accommodate pauses, clarifications, and interpreter breaks. Above all, researchers should approach each participant as an individual, respecting their unique communication preferences and adapting accordingly.

Reflecting on this Case Study, the first author (RF) learned that researchers must be aware that BSL varies across different regions of the United Kingdom, including Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish BSL. Regional signs and dialects can differ significantly, so it is helpful to clarify which version the participant uses. If an interpreter is needed, researchers should ask whether the participant prefers to bring their own or would like one to be provided. Interpreters should be booked well in advance, and for longer interviews, two interpreters may be necessary to allow for breaks. When working with interpreters, it is important to speak directly to the Deaf participant, wait for the interpreter to finish signing before continuing, and avoid speaking too quickly. Some participants may use International Sign Language, especially in international contexts, so preferences should be confirmed and shared with the interpreter.

Clarification is a natural and welcomed part of communication with BSL users. Repeating or rephrasing is culturally acceptable, and providing context first is helpful due to differences in sentence structure between BSL and English. Some BSL users have regular interpreters with whom they prefer to work, and interpreters may benefit from receiving a glossary of terms

beforehand because not all English words have direct BSL equivalents. In group interviews, seating should be arranged in a circle so that everyone can see each other's faces. A visual cue, such as a pen, can be used to manage turn taking, with the person holding the pen having the floor to speak.

Although the first author (RF) did not achieve this particular aspect in her research, she would advise that when conducting interviews with Deaf participants, especially in remote settings, it is important to ensure that the videoconferencing platform supports multiple screens and records in full so that interpreters remain visible throughout the conversation—this allows for backtranslations to occur to ensure rigor and accuracy. Additionally, check the accuracy of closed captions because some may be autogenerated and unreliable. Furthermore collaborating with Deaf academics can enrich the research process, foster mutual professional development, and show informed allyship and meaningful collaboration.

## Section Summary

- *It is important for researchers to approach every Deaf participant with respect and sensitivity, recognizing their preferred communication style.*
- *Practical considerations such as the interview environment, lighting, and pace of spoken speech are crucial for oral Deaf speakers, whereas BSL interpreters should be made aware of regional dialects.*
- *Planning around technology could enhance the accessibility and inclusion of Deaf participants as well as Deaf researchers.*

## Conclusion

Grounded in the principles of Deafhood and informed by the cultural-linguistic model of Deaf identity, this study sought to create a space where Deaf athletes could share their experiences authentically. To facilitate the recommendations of this Case Study, one must enact informed allyship by embedding inclusive research practices, such as collaborating with Deaf communities from the infancy of research through the entire process, and use the preferred communication style of the Deaf person and support, where necessary, an interpreter or hybrid communication style (e.g., lip-reading, BSL, or written). When communicating in BSL, one should have access to a visual recording device to enhance rigor and accuracy. Despite potential logistical and linguistic

challenges, working with Deaf communities is a privilege, and amplifying the voices of Deaf communities adds to academic discourse surrounding marginalized communities and enhances the practice of inclusive approaches.

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the ethical, practical, and intellectual considerations when choosing to collaborate with Deaf participants or include Deaf participants in your research?
2. If you were to engage with the Deaf community, what would be your initial steps, and why would you prioritize them?
3. If you feel hesitant about working with the Deaf community, what internal or external barriers might be influencing your perspective?
4. How can researchers ensure that their engagement is not tokenistic but instead fosters genuine inclusion research.
5. How can technology or working with interpreters be used to amplify Deaf voices in research contexts?

## Multiple-Choice Quiz Questions

1. Why was exploratory research chosen as the methodologic approach for this Case Study?
  - A. It allows for statistical analysis of Deaf athletes' performance.
  - B. It focuses on exploring lived experiences of unexplored phenomena, aligning with the study's aim. (CORRECT)
  - C. It is the most efficient method for data collection.
2. Which of the following best illustrates cultural humility in the research design?
  - A. Using only written English to avoid miscommunication
  - B. Acknowledging the researcher's outsider status and potential biases and assumptions about the Deaf participants (CORRECT)
  - C. Assuming that all Deaf participants use BSL
3. Why was the use of an interpreter necessary for the BSL-using participant, and what does this illustrate about inclusive research practices?
  - A. The researcher wanted to avoid learning BSL.
  - B. The interpreter could simplify the participant's responses.

- C. It ensured accessibility and accurate communication, addressing systematic language barriers. (CORRECT)
4. In retrospect, why would videorecording the BSL interview have been a more appropriate methodologic choice?
- A. It would have allowed the researcher to avoid taking notes.
- B. It would have made transcription faster.
- C. It would have captured the full multimodal nature of signed communication for accurate analysis. (CORRECT)
5. How does the researcher's dual role impact the methodologic integrity of this study?
- A. It enhances objectivity by allowing closer observation.
- B. It introduces potential bias and time constraints, requiring careful ethical management. (CORRECT)
- C. It eliminates the need for ethical approval.

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