Sign space as paralinguistic device and the ABC story in American Sign Language

William Robert Hay

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SIGN SPACE AS PARALINGUISTIC DEVICE
AND THE ABC STORY
IN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

by

William Robert Hay

B.A., University of Montana -- Missoula, 1984

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ABSTRACT

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Sign Space as Paralinguistic Device and the ABC Story in American Sign Language

Committee Chair: Gretchen G. Weix

This thesis examines two processes in American Sign Language (ASL) that mark the sign space with particular ways of signing: one, is the evolvement of arbitrary signs within an everyday sign space as language use becomes more systematic; and two, the maintenance of traditional ways of signing ASL which are often iconic.

Since the early nineteenth century presence of an Old American Sign Language the American Deaf have used these linguistic strategies to preserve ASL and to create a Deaf cultural worldview in the open order of spoken and written English. This essay describes and analyzes these strategies as paralinguistic aspects of sign space in relation to sign play, in particular, the genre of ABC Stories within a performance frame. The performance frame allows us to use contextual meaning and it recalls, preserves, and evolves tradition for the Deaf in America by preserving older ways of signing in ASL.

The situations of use indicate that ABC Stories are a core-Deaf activity. The ABC Story is a signed performance which follows a sequential, external order using fingerspelled English. At the same time, it also has an internal structure that uses the conceptual or iconic signs of ASL. The ABC Stories exemplify both processes at once: the arbitrary creates a systematic format for the story while the story content is flexible for iconic expression.

Data for this essay is drawn from a published video by a Deaf humorist, inquiries on the Internet, and other published ethnographic data on the Deaf in America.
This thesis never would have seen completion without the help and direction of several individuals connected with the Anthropology Department at the University of Montana. To everyone there I wish to express my warmest appreciation. I would like to also thank both Mary Morrison, Coordinator for Interpreter Services, and Gretchen G. Weix, Anthropology, for their patience and guidance in helping me clarify the concepts that were brewing within my head. I am doubly indebted to my wife, Linda, for her love and encouragement, and to the many individuals of the Missoula Deaf Club for their open hearts in allowing me to share with them many warm moments.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Orality is the difference alphabetic writing invents for itself as the ground of the arbitrariness of the sign. It is the difference that enables the sign's origin and justifies its other-ness. Without it, the whole possibility of arbitrary and unnatural signs collapses. Signs become once again marks of a determinate natural order.

Stephen A. Tyler, On Being Out of Words, in Rereading Cultural Anthropology

The most fundamental difference is the possession by signed languages... of "dimensionality," which makes it possible for them to employ... "icons" to a degree impossible for spoken languages.

David F. Armstrong, William C. Stokoe, and Sherman E. Wilcox, Signs of the Origin of Syntax

Sources on qualitative design suggest that for those engaging in this type of research individuals should stick with what they know. So, a taxi driver does a study on the attitudes of taxi drivers; and a visitor of second-hand stores explores the types of conversations that are exchanged between patrons, as well as reasons for coming to
such places. These and other projects are done by researchers who could be called native anthropologists. They have some direct experiences which they study and represent; they exemplify and reflect "shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" in the contemporary world (Narayan, 1993, p. 671). In studying the culture of the Deaf within the United States, and as a hearing and oldest son of Deaf parents, I have tried to make sense of certain aspects of language use in American Sign Language (ASL) as it relates to languages in general and to American Sign Language (ASL) in particular.

Some of the studies I have read, incorporate video and deal with the ways to transcribe or to interpret what is being signed. In the works of Frishberg (1979), Margutti (1982), Rimor, Kegl, Lane, and Schermer (1984), Zimmer (1989, 1990), and Lucas and Valli (1992), video is used in varying ways to show the presence of registers (or synchronic variation) and/or historical (or diachronic) change in ASL. From these works I have tried to incorporate methods to determine how the Deaf community marks sign spaces with particular ways of signing.

One difficulty here is the absence of a written form of ASL. Recently one of the hot topics on the Sign Language
Linguistics List (SLLING-L), a listserv on the Internet, discusses the status of ASL and University English-Literature departments. Many regard literature with only the medium of writing, while others are quite able to include oral folklore. For ASL there is no writing for everyday usage, only in the field of scientific notation; and there it is represented by several varieties. Other difficulties include the nature of ASL and its regional variations, home signs, and introduced manual systems. Because of these difficulties it is always necessary to be aware of the context as well as the history of the signer.

I attempt to overcome these shortcomings by studying context for ASL use by equating performance with that part of language use for showing respect; I look at performance because all members of the community, including those who are hearing, pay attention to good performances. People of varying backgrounds accept the signer or the context of what he/she is signing. My research then, looks at ABC Stories, a genre of performance art (which I will soon describe more specifically), and at how the American Manual Alphabet is manipulated as a part of this genre. American Manual Alphabet use is affected through the range of sign space adopted to sign. In this essay I will also describe and analyze the use of sign space as a means to preserve
traditional ways of signing which are often iconic and not arbitrary. In particular, I will look at sign play and the genre of 'ABC stories' where manual signs become iconic within a performance interpretive framework.

The ABC Story is a signed performance which follows a sequential order using fingerspelled English. Sequences may vary and are not always restricted to those presented by that of the English alphabet. They can also consist of the types of letter sequences found in the names of persons, things, and ideas or in ranges of consecutive numbers (one to ten, one to 15, ... one to n). They do not follow a certain meter or rhyme such as that found in speech poetry but there is a structure to them that can be described as an overlay of two language systems: fingerspelled English which determines the sequence of presentation, and signed ASL which determines the content of what is being narrated.

The performer from whom I get data is Ken Glickman (1993), a Deaf humorist, who also runs a graphics studio in Silver Springs, Maryland. His video is about an hour long and has two instances of ABC Stories in it. In transcribing these two stories, I use a format used by Rutherford (1993) in her article on ABC Stories and which I describe latter in this thesis.
The recruitment of data in this study went through a progression of interests and the decision to use ABC stories was not foremost. At first, not knowing how I was going to research and study the Deaf, and desiring to do a qualitative study, I thought it necessary to begin with interviews and try to identify features of Deafness in America. With my own signing being inadequate on too many levels, I felt that I could not conduct a proper interview without an interpreter. While interpreters have often been part of many informer-based studies, I also felt that I had yet to meet enough members of the community here in Western Montana. I had started to make those contacts by attending Deaf club and associated gatherings here in Missoula. The nature of the community is very dispersed and meetings are on the order of once-a-month. I then started looking at jokes but most of my data came from published sources and that is when I came upon the ABC Story. I, myself, was taken with them because I had never heard of them growing up in a Deaf-parented family. My mother, who never heard of ABC Stories, had attended residential schools for the deaf during the 1940s. My father, who is post-lingually Deaf, attended hearing day school.

The performance of Glickman's (1993) is a purchased video. The e-mail posts were used to give qualitative
support, definition, and setting for ABC Stories in general. Permission was obtained by those who posted responses to my initial inquiries about ABC Stories and they are cited. Other ethnographic data comes from descriptions by Susan Rutherford (1993), who writes on Deaf Culture in America today.

Throughout the whole performance, fingerspelling is utilized as it is in everyday sign conversation; to represent verbatim English words to which there exist no direct sign equivalents. When performed it is done within a small sign space located in front of the dominant shoulder. I notice, Glickman uses suffix endings like -ly which is a feature of Signed Manual English.

When performing the ABC Stories the handshapes of the American Manual Alphabet take on more descriptive meanings. They become mimetic of actions. The space is enlarged and the otherwise static handshapes take on some of the other phonetic parameters of signs: various orientations, movement, and points of articulation.
Historical Background

American Sign Language (ASL) has helped American Deaf Culture appear as a legitimate area of study (Friedman, 1975; Baker, 1977; Hoemann, 1978; Stokoe, 1980; Coulter, 1990, 1993; Fischer and Siple, 1990; Yau, 1990; Allen, Wilbur, and Schick, 1991; Hanson and Feldman, 1991; McArthur, 1991; Coulter and Anderson, 1993). Part of this acceptance is because research on ASL has produced analytic categories congruent with those used to study spoken English, thus demonstrating the status of ASL as a language. We can now talk about ASL in terms of its phonology, morphology, grammar, and syntax. Further inquiry has highlighted the differences between these two modes of communication, signed and spoken, while demonstrating the unique qualities of sign language (Anderson, 1993). The iconic nature of ASL is minimized in earlier congruent studies. In this thesis I look specifically at iconicity as a distinctive aspect of visual communication (Macken, Perry, and Haas, 1993).

Modern ASL derived from an Old American Sign Language that Woodward (1978) described as a creolization of introduced French Sign Language (FSL) with various sign systems which were indigenous to the continent prior to
From the establishment in the early nineteenth century of the first schools for the deaf in America (Gannon 1981), the Deaf have preserved ASL in the face of both spoken and written English influences. They accomplish this goal by adopting various sign spaces. In the case of ASL, the Deaf have adapted the paralinguistic device of sign space to improvise and to communicate Deaf culture to in-group members.

In the United States, since the middle of the nineteenth century, two models have been in use to describe those who have a hearing loss. Both models have contributed to a cultural hierarchy between Hearing and Deaf similar in relation to that of the colonizer and the colonized (Lane, 1993). One model, "infirmity", considers deafness a condition deserving treatment with a spectrum of devices which only a technological industry can provide. The cochlear implant, which requires physical surgery, the full-time wearing of hearing aids, or the speech training, are recommended during periods of natural cognitive development. Individuals who hold this model see deafness as an auditory deficit which should be corrected. The other model, "the Deaf cultural world view", associates deafness with a natural language and a set of in-group behaviors. It recognizes a particular way of life bound up in "webs of
significance" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) that are somehow maintained and reproduced. The use of the terms deaf and Deaf apply to each of these descriptions respectively; deaf being the physiological condition of a hearing loss and Deaf, the cultural. Each has been passionately maintained by those who hold it, and onerously criticized by those who are grounded in the other.

Are the Deaf in America a distinctive cultural group that is maintained and reproduced? The profusion of Deaf interests in the general media and the accommodation to Deaf causes in society suggests it is. Groce (1985) described a time on Martha's Vineyard when, because of a hereditary deafness resulting in a large number of deaf births, deafness was not even distinguished; the entire community adapted by all learning sign language and making it a part of their everyday language use. Nevertheless, there was a time when the Deaf in America were more distinct than they are today. The contemporary community is made up of a wide range of abilities; it is not strictly the language that defines one's membership in the Deaf community (Higgins, 1979). In the past, language use was more of a litmus test for group identity. The earlier combined method of Laurent Clerc, who introduced elements of French Sign Language to this continent during the early nineteenth century, coupled
sign language with speech in instruction. Because of underlying differences in grammar, Clerc came to see that a congruence between spoken and signed languages was unworkable, so he deserted the combined method. Schools in the United States also abandoned the combined method and adopted the sole use of manual sign for language along with the use of Deaf instructors. During the mid-nineteenth century there was even a proposal for Deaf independence and the establishment of a Deaf State. Some thought this aim came out of feelings of alienation among the deaf (Winzer, 1986); others, the goal of an "... eccentric, and bizarre [sic] individual [who] may not have had a firm grip on reality" (Crouch, 1986, p. 322). In any case, the fact that an independent state for the Deaf was considered without fruition stems from close consideration by many who were deaf themselves of the connection that existed for them to the hearing world (Crouch, 1986). Many offspring of the Deaf were hearing, for one thing, and the question arose as to what was to be done in these cases? Were Deaf parents to abandon their hearing children?

This distinction of the Deaf in America began to change at an increasing rate after 1880, when the Congress of Milan advocated an oral-based program in the education of the deaf. The Deaf were excluded from its decision-making
process, even though until then they had been able
participants in their own education and well-being.

Educators in the United States did not accept this
immediately; when they did, it rapidly changed curriculum
due to a:

..."rising tide" of immigration, which seemed to
threaten the country's economy, mores, and "racial
stock" ... Residential schools for deaf children
meted out severe punishment for using ASL, and in
federal boarding schools for Indians, children
were beaten for using American Indian languages
(Lane, 1992: p. 115).

This was done to assimilate all those who used alternative
languages into the mainstream of spoken English. In spite
of this exclusion, the Deaf world view continued to develop
through the use of sign language.

ASL was used for formal registers such as the church
sermon. When the Detroit Lutheran School for the Deaf
began operation in 1875 as a German mission, it had
instituted an oral method of education even before the Milan
Congress proclamation. In the associated church, however,
this method was not strictly followed for the simple reason
that congregational members found the speech at the pulpit
difficult to lip-read from the pew (Bellhorn, 1970). Out of
concern for the spiritual education of the deaf as much as
their oral-speech development, the German method tolerated
manual signing from the pulpit. A signed religious sermon however, required an underlying community of sign language users. Residential schools across the country had become both the physical and intellectual locus for a new social Deaf community. Many of the Deaf shared affection for their residential schools. While oral methods were used in the formal aspects of education, sign became the communication of choice in the hallways, on the playgrounds, and in the dormitories. In this manner, ASL ways of signing became associated with Deaf culture.

Language Use

An ASL signer engages a dynamic space when using sign language. This signing space can enlarge or shrink from a standard medium-sized space to which Frishberg (1979) alluded when she said that "signs normally do not extend below waist level or above the head, nor beyond the reach of the arms to the sides, with elbows close to the body" (p. 71). Figure 1.1 shows the extent of this area as it relates to the human body. This space is not always constraining; there are other dimensions within which to sign. Wilbur (1980) refers to these when she described sign space as
"that allowable [emphasis mine] area in which signs are made" (p. 19). The word allowable implies acceptance of varying degrees of enclosure. Only when the boundaries of an enclosure have been transgressed is signing not accepted. Different ways of signing have developed; each way is associated with an acceptable size of sign space.

![Diagram of normal signing space](image)

**Figure 1.1.** The rectangular dimensions of normal signing space (Frishberg, 1979, p.73).

A cultural view of Deafness focuses on ASL to elaborate certain features similar to those in speech. It would look at how these features have been adapted suitably to signing such as paralinguistic space. This process takes time and
is based upon the connection between similar meanings and similar forms (McArthur, 1991). In transcribing speech, paralinguistic features are often absent from transcriptions (Bauman, 1984). This context is necessary for interpretation. Because the visual mode of space is vital to ASL grammar, sign space as a paralinguistic device cannot be ignored. Moreover, proxemics, the human perception of social and personal space, is "a specialized elaboration of culture" (Hall, 1966, p. 1). Therefore one needs to know what role paralinguistic devices play in order to interpret any mode of communication, whether it be speech or sign language.

The paralinguistic device of sign space signals three things: 1) the traditional, 2) the introduced, and 3) the everyday. These three things correlate to the basic distinctions underlying the three types of signs referred to by Macken, et al. (1993): 1) icons, 2) symbols, and 3) indexes.

A traditional way of signing is less constraining in its use of sign space and more inclusive of non-manual components and emphatic expression. In this mode many iconic or descriptive signs which resemble the objects they represent are signed in this larger sign space. The similarity here with spoken languages is the lexical
formational process known as onomatopoetic. The signs (words) created look (sound) like what they reference. Since the signs are not always exact phonetic copies of what is represented they can and are expressed differently between sign languages worldwide. The sign space of traditional signing is larger than that allowed for everyday signing. In this large sign space the Deaf concentrate on the details, or content of delivery.

In contrast, from the model of "infirmity" to view deafness, the American manual alphabet was introduced to the Deaf community. As part of the world view of this community, the Deaf have learned to concentrate on a smaller sign space to read the manual alphabet. The surrounding space within which the word is spelled renders a "contour" which is read as well (Hoemann and Lucafo, 1980). This contour enables the reader to see the entire spelled word as a sign with an arbitrary and conventionalized association that is a symbol.

Within the medium-sized space or, standard space, elements are drawn from both the large and the small spaces described and signs are modified for everyday communication. One aspect of standard sign space is the degree indexical signs. These are signs "casually or geographically related to what they signify" (Macken, et al., 1993, p. 378).
Personal pronouns illustrate these kinds of signs in ASL. The sign for the personal pronoun is always indicated by an extended index finger or, to be more technical, the D-handshape that points to an area of the sign space which has been temporarily set up to represent some person, place, or thing. Every time that designee is indicated or, indexed, in this manner, that person, place, or thing is being referenced. This saves time rather than requiring the signer to sign the conventionalized or descriptive label for that person, place, or thing every time it needs to be referenced.

I have described three kinds of sign space. Medium or standard sign space is that area in which everyday conversational signing is produced. Its range in area is characterized by signs that have undergone change through time in order to make the language more systematic and full of arbitrary but categorical associations. The standard sign space serves as a mediating field between the large sign space and the small sign space, since signs produced within it are modifications of signs borrowed from each of the other.

Small sign space is used as a contour when fingerspelling the letters of the American manual alphabet. This space tightly circumscribes the fingerspelled gloss and
is most often located in an area directly in front of the user's dominant shoulder (there may be other areas and purposes for small sign space but they will not be included, since in this analysis I will look at the American manual alphabet and how it is distributed between these various spaces).

Large sign space is big enough to include movement of the whole body of the user, as when a lecturer describes the evolution of events along a timeline which s/he walks along presenting sequential stages (Winston, 1991). Large sign space may also be reminiscent of a previous way of signing, before ASL was influenced by spoken language. It is seen in the signing of prose, poetry, or lectures.

Emphatic expressions, or non-manual communication, is also associated to some degree with each of these various kinds of sign space. The association of each size of space with meaning or type of symbolic label is demonstrated in Table 1. Picture a rectangular box which encloses all the action of sign production. Its size indicates how the reader should interpret the topic. This box gets bigger and allows for signs that are more expressive and iconic. A large sign space directs the reader to concentrate on the particulars or details presented by the signer. When the box is smaller, the associations with the signs produced
are less expressive and more arbitrary, leaving the reader to concentrate on the whole utterance or even on the space itself. The Deaf fingerspell very fast within this small space—so fast, that the individual letters are just about impossible to discern. The Deaf read the combined flow of all the fingerspelled letters, much as one reads the whole printed word. Whereas emphatic expression may not be totally absent from this smaller space, it is significantly less than that which appears in larger sign space. In normal sign space, there is a reliance upon non-manual components and upon more signs with arbitrary associations. The Deaf continually make assertions that a sign-naive individual is boring, similar to one speaking in a monotone because he is not expressive enough.
Table 1
Sizes of Sign space and Their Associations to Meaning

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Iconic associations</th>
<th>Emphatic expression</th>
<th>Arbitrary associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large sign space</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal sign space</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small sign space</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as there are forces within ASL to modify sign space, there are forces of maintenance as well. This division of sign space within ASL includes both forces, because the two modes of communication, sign and speech, are used by a linguistic community which is much larger than the core group of ASL users. ASL has been described as diglossia by both those who view deafness as an infirmity and those who view Deafness as a cultural worldview (Lee, 1982). However, the infirmity perspective sees ASL as "broken English" located at the low end of a diglossic continuum. At the high end resides spoken English associated with tradition and written English literacy. The
Deaf, however, do not have full access to literacy in English because here there are experiences with which they cannot identify as well as experiences of their own which cannot be included. Literature performed in a formal register need not be written, but can be expressed in oral storytelling, at the high end of an ASL diglossic continuum. On the low end would exist everyday informal sign which has been influenced by forces of both diachronic and synchronic change for "ease of articulation and ease of perception" (Rimor, Kegl, Lane, and Schermer, 1984, p. 101). The same forces which make ASL more systematic, i.e. less iconic, in a predominately English-speaking community have also worked in the opposite direction to maintain traditional ways of signing which improvise new iconic signs. Sherzer (1993) tells us that iconic features "reflect the playful and poetic imagination and creativity of the language/culture intersection" (p. 218). Macken, et al, (1993) remind us that iconic associations are used in other modes such as writing:

A. Cisely, Alaska is a lonnnng way from New York.

B. Big small
The way in which a word is spelled as in example A or formatted in example B adds iconic information. In the Glickman (1993) entry in the reference section of this paper is the name of his video production in which he performs: DEAFology 101. The capitalization is something that he spins off on in many other configurations such as "DEAFined" and "DEAFlected". These examples demonstrate that, in writing, meanings can be communicated in ways other than that indicated by their literalness. We must bring to the interpretation of these utterances contextual information. We can also picture someone using speech to communicate example A. Rather than it being just a long way from Cisely to New York, the manner and style in which long is drawn out can convey many things about the difficult logistics of getting there. Spoken or written English advances the lexical substitution of very for this style:

C. Cisely, Alaska is a very long way from New York.

D. very big very small

From the above example, one can see that for written English, iconic associations are not as expressly drawn upon or, as richly developed, as they are in ASL.
The visual nature of ASL constitutes a particularly appropriate mode for iconic signs and a linguistic form which I call sign play. This term characterizes the ABC Story, much in the way that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sherzer (1979) defined "speech play... as any local manipulation of elements and relations of language, creative of a specialized genre, code-variety, and/or style" (p. 1). With ASL, since the mode is visual, making the substitution for aural allows for the distinction of "sign play" (Rutherford, 1993, p. 28). A more comprehensive term that includes both types of modalities would be linguistic play. Sherzer (1993) noted two particulars about such play: 1) it is "...useful to the outside analyst attempting to understand the languages and cultures of others", and 2) it "...often involves culture experimenting with and working out its essence and ... limits of its possibilities" (p. 217). Linguistic play is found in all languages and can become a cultural focus. The ABC Story is a specialized genre which manipulates features of the American manual alphabet (an English-based system) to conform with a formal style, variation or register of ASL. To include it in the category of linguistic play allows us to combine the variant modes, speech and sign, into a discourse-centered approach
toward an understanding of the intersection between language and culture (Sherzer, 1987).

A genre of ASL narrative informs its users of the historical context of ASL however it does not specifically educate a way of life; rather genres retain a creative style of signing which is distinctly Deaf. When the content of these ABC stories does not relate experiences of Deafness and the form for the ABC story emphasizes use of the American manual alphabet it becomes relevant to cultural analysis of Deafness.

The American manual alphabet is a system originally imposed by educators who viewed Deafness with infirmity, but which was adapted by the Deaf to be used as an aspect of ASL to categorize experience. In ABC Stories, ASL is an essential element of a particular way of signing. In the telling of ABC stories, the manual alphabet handshapes lose arbitrary designations as signs and pick up iconic associations. This process invents iconic signs which have passed through non-manual reductions. The imposed signs of fingerspelling gain iconic status in an otherwise arbitrary system.

The American manual alphabet supplies a point of entry into the Deaf community for those who are new to sign. Those who are unfamiliar with the language proceed by
spelling out words by individually forming successive letter shapes. When they read someone else's fingerspelling, they take in each of the letters one-by-one while often asking the signer to slow down. Classes in sign language teach students to sound out the letter-shapes as they are produced. In this way, one can, with practice, see the production as a whole word. The Deaf perceive these kinds of utterances, as a whole, and they are able to do so because they focus upon the small space within which the letters flow. By doing so, they can produce and read fingerspelling very fast and also discern words from greater distances, as from a stage within an auditorium.

An interpretive frame such as sign space supplies a context to any communicative act or event. This is prevalent within a performance frame, that is, an interpretive frame which accesses tradition (Bauman 1984; Foley 1992). When the space is small, it is entering spoken English. In a world influenced by English, ASL becomes more systematic and creates modes of discourse within a standard space. When the space is large, signing may actually be more traditional. The Deaf use the American manual alphabet in such a performance frame when telling an ABC Story, a genre of storytelling, and also, they use it in casual informal conversation.
As an element of Deaf culture, the American manual alphabet also supplies an avenue for creativity in performance. Performance is available to all in the American Deaf culture. This can be seen in the performance of 'ABC Stories'. Those who are less fluent are not hindered by the strict form which requires the iconic use of alphabetic handshapes. They are still free to use loanwords and initialized signs and to discuss taboo subjects in this form. Those who are more fluent are constrained to perform the letter handshapes as iconic describers. They reach this level of accessibility because they are viewed as legitimate performers within the Deaf culture. Those who are amateurs to the format are allowed a wider berth to practice sign skills and become a part of the culture. By injecting performance into their everyday talk, they work on accessing this skill and improving upon it. They also use this form among peers to touch upon taboo subjects and to develop a solidarity. Only those who have developed the genre to its ultimate form, as evidenced by the whole use of iconic descriptors, achieve performance and the acceptance of the American Deaf community.
CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Background

Paralinguistic Devices and Language Preservation

Those features of an audio tape which are not normally transcribed are thought of as the paralinguistic features of a text. They may include things such as pitch, stress or loudness. Bauman (1984:20) wrote that paralinguistic features can be used to key the performance frame implying the existence of associated meanings that go beyond the literalness of the words used in the text.

The Deaf in America use sign space as a paralinguistic device tantamount to the way an individual uses volume in speech. A deaf person may sign large so that others who are far away will be able to see what s/he is "saying". Likewise, someone will shout from across a large auditorium when amplification is not provided because s/he wants to be heard. Decrease the distance between sender and receiver, either by supplying amplification or actually moving these points closer together, and one is shouting in someone's ear. Consequently, the Deaf will adjust the sign space when the conversation is personal and intimate. If the signing
were kept large in such a close encounter, the user would be considered by others as being rude, similar to that person who shouts in someone's ear. Such situations involving ASL to communicate similarly correspond to those in which people use speech. The two modes provide for the user strategies to indicate aural or visual limits that relate to the nature of the physical or spatial distance between them. In certain circumstances however, the Deaf can go beyond this limitation when in close proximity.

As a paralinguistic tool, sign space has special consequences for signed communication which cannot be fully duplicated within speech. Hearing people cannot break the rule of keeping the volume down when in close proximity without appearing to be rude or incompetent, while there are special instances in which the Deaf can do so. For Margutti (1982) certain paralinguistic devices, such as non-manual components, are abandoned when ASL becomes more systematic. If this is true when moving from more formal toward informal registers in ASL, then analyzing use-of-space as a feature of grammar and paralinguistic feature is also more salient.

There are two components to ASL: the manual and the non-manual. The manual component is the actual sign as it is made on the hand. The non-manual component is everything else: the facial markers and the body posture.
which all indicate a host of contextual information such as yes/no questions, wh-questions, negatives, negative questions, interjections, and topic markers, at the least.

Contained within the usage of ASL are the forces of change and preservation present in any linguistic community. With demands upon ASL to become more systematic in relation to American speech, definition of a more personal space for everyday talk was needed. Information became lexicalized into the hands and space became centralized with an emphasis upon the manual components. As in any language, these forces are at an equilibrium. When other aspects are introduced, an imbalance occurs and the language usage adapts in some way in order to retain that equilibrium. If never attained, users are overcome by the new configuration and the original language becomes extinct. The improvisation that goes on within a large sign space involves developing "ways of speaking" or, in this case, ways of signing. The difference between registers, varieties of a single language in time (synchronic), and the processes that effect language change over time (diachronic), are not dissimilar (Rimor et al., 1984). Registers and language change result from "...the same natural phonetic processes that favor ease of articulation and ease of perception (p.97)." What distinguishes one
from the other is differences of time and space. In order to maintain an equilibrium and remain active over time, language change preserves certain styles within the language such as registers to certain situations of use.

With increasing centralization and lexicalization of information into the hands over time, the sign space has shrunk for the particular purpose of everyday talk. There are plenty of examples of this. Woodward and Erting (1975) illustrated a few, one of which involved what they classify as "elbow-to-hand shift" (p. 11). The older way of producing the English glosses for HELP and SUPPORT have been made with articulation between the right hand and the left elbow. They mentioned that groups or individuals in the ASL community still signed these glosses in this manner. Currently, as well as at the time of their analysis, the signs are made with the articulation point moved from that between elbow and hand to that between both hands.

Along with the reduction of sign space, the absence or inclusion of the non-manual component for communicating meaning is also relevant. According to Rimor, et al (1984) non-manual components are reduced in reference to both diachronic and synchronic processes.

ASL has been described as bilingual diglossia (Zimmer 1989). In other words, ASL was seen as the low variety used
in informal or casual situations and Signed English, a manual system only, was seen as the high variety used in more formal occasions. With this view, ASL was considered a form of broken English or explained as a pidgin-sign. Pidgins have been defined as languages that have lexically borrowed from another language but that have simplified the grammar in some way (Fasold, 1990). Of course, today, pidgins in any mode are viewed with interest and are seen as languages with vital linguistic communities. Lee (1982) questioned this use of diglossia in application to ASL and noted the variety of styles already apparent within it.

Users of ASL vary their signing according to the situation but also, they vary the signs within a particular construction itself, similar to "intratextual variation" (Zimmer 1989). This indicates variety within ASL. I attempt to see how diglossia exists within ASL itself, given that it has to exist in a hearing world while developing strategies to prevent language death. What indicates high and low use? Where is the "performative" literature of ASL being stored, given that there exists no written form of ASL? Does high ASL access the literature of a culture, and low ASL the everyday conversational use?
The Video Performance

Video has been used for gathering sign data much as tape recorders have been used for the gathering of speech data: to establish registers in situations in which performance is monologic and interactive with an audience.

For her analysis of current formal register in ASL, Margutti's (1984) data relied upon filmed performances of the Gallaudet College Dramatics Club, the National Theatre of the Deaf (N.T.D.), and the Hughes Memorial Theatre of the Deaf. The performances were "Tragedy of Hamlet" [1958], a segment from "My Third Eye" [1973], and "The Touch" [1977]. She compared aspects of the lexicon from these performances as contemporary-formal ASL with those that were performed and filmed between 1910 and 1920 by the National Association of the Deaf (N.A.D.) as historical data. Margutti, by demonstrating the comparability of this data, indicated the presence of synchronic variations or, registers, of ASL. She had also argued that an earlier study of Frishberg's did not use comparable data when she had earlier compared the historical data to contemporary informal usage. What Frishberg had established though was
that historical processes act upon ASL to change it phonologically.

Zimmer (1990) used video to record ASL use in different situations. In one analysis she showed that two different interpreters can focus upon separate sets of contextual cues from the same signed discourse and produce separate variations of the same meaning. In an earlier analysis, she also showed that the situation has a bearing upon the style of signing (1989). More recently, Lucas and Valli (1992) filmed dyads and triads of native ASL signers in order to get their responses as to the distinctive features of ASL.

Here I analyze ABC Stories from a single video production for their use of register indicative of performance. Each of the two ABC Stories from the Glickman video (n.d) are transcribed in a format similar to that used by Rutherford (1993); she presented illustrations of various ABC Stories using three columns which are headed by the following categories: 1) Manual Alphabet, 2) ASL Sign, and 3) ASL Gloss (All Caps) and Storyline. Each row is then an entry in the transcription for each letter element of the story. The Manual Alphabet column consists of a rendering for each letter in its handshape form. The ASL Sign column, in most instances, contains a detailed drawing of the movement performed by the storyteller. Direction of
movement is then indicated with arrows. The third column, ASL Gloss (All Caps) and Storyline, usually contains an English gloss of the sign, which is always fully capitalized, and a description of its contribution to the storyline. In parenthesis, she sometimes included additional interpretive information usually consisting of communicative aspects which are non-manual. Preceding each illustration she included an English-worded synopsis of the story. Taken all together, the reader should get an idea of the form and content of the story.

Glickman's ABC Stories

The two stories were produced and signed by Ken Glickman and are only a small part of the content of the published video titled DEAFology 101. While this video is an hour of humorous entertainment geared toward the Deaf community, it is also accessible to members of the outgroup, or hearing people who are sign-naive. In one part of the show, Glickman brings from the audience a hearing woman with whom he makes certain comparisons to himself as a Deaf person. Specifically, he compares differences in postures and voice quality between the Deaf and hearing.
While the shoulders of the woman's are smooth, his are indented. He refers to these as "tapcraters" and that these arise from having to tap a deaf person on the shoulders to get his/her attention. Another postural difference was that he had one arm and one leg each longer than its opposite; this also stemmed from behavior such as getting another deaf person's attention by waving one's arm through the air and/or stamping one's foot on the floor. He points out differences in voice quality. The hearing person could produce controlled and steady sounds while those of the deaf were unsteady and discordant. In the production, her facial and bodily composure is relaxed, while his is exceedingly static. The whole performance is carried out in front of a live and mostly Deaf audience from a stage in an auditorium; however the produced video is vocally interpreted for, as Glickman himself states, "the Deaf impaired."

The general performance is comedy and uses a variety of forms: puns, jokes, riddles, parody, sarcasm, etc., with English writing on a backdrop of chalkboards, to get across the Deaf experience to both Deaf and hearing audiences. One of the jokes related by Glickman has to do with those "Deafies" who tend to sign too big and are socially perceived as rude. He demonstrates this with the sign for the gloss SIGN and does it with elbows extended out beyond
both sides of the body. On one of the chalkboards, he labels this as "JOHN-HANCOCKIZING"; a reference to the highly-profiled, historical signature on The Declaration of Independence. With this I set the tone for this discussion of sign space and its relationship to performance: space is taken up in a grand manner, but only in allowable situations. In addition to all the different genres that can be observed in this video, Glickman's performance of the two ABC Stories transcends the normal constraints of everyday sign space. The first ABC Story deals with smoking marijuana and the second one details a pilot's preparations for flight.
CHAPTER 3

Ethnographic Information

American Manual Alphabet

The American manual alphabet is used as an English sign system for what is commonly known as fingerspelling. It is used to spell words with the hands—each letter of the alphabet having its own handshape. To spell, for example, the English word "golf", one moves through the applicable handshapes in the proper sequence: G-O-L-F. Generally, fingerspelling is done with a dominant hand in the corresponding upper quadrant of the sign space and with an orientation toward the receiver in the communication.

The American Manual Alphabet is derived from a Spanish system published in 1620 by Jean Pablo Bonet. He had intended this system as a means to teach speech to deaf people (Abernathy, 1959). By the time it had arrived in the United States by way of France, its purpose had altered. Combined with conventional signs for words and phrases, it became a language element in its own right by the end of the 18th Century. The Abbé de l'Epée's application of this
system in France transformed the original code from a manual alphabet to mimic speech to a visual language.

Today, fingerspelling has become both an end and a means for the Deaf. While those who are sign-naive use it as a point of entry into the Deaf world, the Deaf use it frequently to facilitate those who are sign-naive. In this way, both groups each use it to approach the other in communication. A second way it is used is as a source with which to expand the ASL lexicon. Still another purpose for fingerspelling is to code-switch for "stylistic purposes" (Wilcox, 1992, p. 10). In areas of text where the ASL lexicon is adequate, fingerspelling may be the system used to emphasize a point. Thus, fingerspelling is used in various ways by the American Deaf community.

To the sign-naive observer, the flow of handshapes used by the ASL communicator is immediately apparent. These same observers are not readily aware of the separate systems employed. For instance, Padden and Le Master (1985) noted three differences between the structure of the handshapes that make up the American Manual Alphabet, which are used to spell out English words, and the handshapes of ASL, which are used to produce signs.

First, two handshapes are employed to produce ASL signs. In the production of signs, there is movement from
one hold or stop position to another. In the American Manual Alphabet the number of shapes correspond to the number of letters in the English word being spelled. Battison (1978) described the presence of loansigns in ASL that have their origins in fingerspelled words. These spellings have changed to conform to the phonological constructions of signs (Lucas and Valli, 1992, pp. 21–2; see also, Woodward and Erting, 1975). For example, the loansign for WHAT conforms to the phonological units in ASL by employing forward movement of the dominant hand from a W-handshape to an A_t-handshape. Note that only two handshapes are used—the first and last letters of the English word. In the fingerspelled English version, there is a movement through as many handshapes as there are letters in the English word—in this case, four for W-H-A-T. Another example is the loansign for JOB. To produce this sign, there is a twisting movement from the I-handshape to a rear-facing B-handshape. At one time the sign was represented by the English spelling, J-O-B, within a limited space and without the twisting in orientation to the B-handshape. In both examples given here the internal letters have all been omitted from the fingerspelled versions and the two remaining letters of each word have been brought under the formational constructs of an ASL phonology.
Second, there are handshapes that make up the American Manual Alphabet which are not represented in the domain of handshapes which are possible for ASL signs. The letters D, J, M, N, T, and Z occur infrequently, if at all, as base configurations for ASL signs (Padden and Le Master, 1985). However, this is not a hard-and-fast representation as can be shown for the sign DOG. For some populations, this sign used to be made with the B-handshape lightly slapping the front of the upper thigh. Others made the sign by adding a finger-snap. Today, one is more apt to see the formation of DOG has represented by a loansign from the fingerspelled version, D-O-G, to look much like a finger snapping from a D-handshape to a G-handshape. The D-handshape has been classified as a subprime of the G-handshape, G_D, and the T-handshape with that of the A-handshape, A_T (Rutherford, 1993, p. 36). In any case, there is no one-to-one congruence between the handshapes which form the base parameters of ASL and those of the American Manual Alphabet. This is evidence of the outgroup introduction of the American Manual Alphabet to the Deaf community.

The third and last difference noted by Padden and Le Master (1985) is that ASL signs can be produced within a space around the body which is much larger than that which accommodates fingerspelling. The third difference has to do
with the acceptable range of space within which the handshapes are made and whether they are to represent ASL signs or fingerspelled words.

**Sign Space**

For fingerspelling, the acceptable range of space is described as "a small region in front of the fingerspeller's body" (Padden and Le Master, 1985, p. 163). This "small region" is located directly in front of the dominant shoulder involved in the production, and usually, does not vary from it. Fingerspelling is also done smoothly without any punctuating movement within this space—if not, it might be difficult to read.

The "movement envelopes" that are described by Akamatsu to surround fingerspelling (Wilcox, 1992) are very useful as a frame to explain how the Deaf can send and receive manual spelling so quickly. The Deaf adhere to the total pattern of the fingerspelled word, rather than to each individual letter. Studies indicate that the normal rate for a reader proficient in fingerspelling is 200 milliseconds per letter (Wilcox, 1992, p. 15). These envelopes, rather than the letters which are inserted in them, are what is learned and
their sequences are what the Deaf use to "read" a whole fingerspelled word as a sign. In essence, the Deaf user is using an ASL representation and not an English one.

In alluding to the sign space, Frishberg (1979) said that "signs normally do not extend below waist level or above the head, nor beyond the reach of arms to the sides, with elbows close to the body" (p.71). This is what is shown in Figure 1.1 on page 13 of this paper. Wilbur (1980) defined the sign space as that "allowable area in which signs may be made" (p. 19). Sign space varies from very restricted space to handshapes associated with the American Manual Alphabet.

Sign space, as a parameter of ASL, has changed historically and varies now in dimension. Frishberg (1979) describes diachronic processes and demonstrates that the signs of ASL have become more restricted by space as the language becomes more systematic.

**Meaning**

Meaning can be arbitrary when the labels have no association, or descriptive when they do. Another word for
descriptive is iconic. In ASL, both are used, in varying ways, according to the situation.

ASL signs predominate and hold true to the formational properties of ASL. In other words, they are formed, created, and maintained through the phonological parameters of handshape, orientation, movement, and place of articulation. This is very similar to the formational properties of phonemes in spoken language. The definition of phoneme is that it is the minimal meaningful unit of speech.

Some signs, however, maintain parameters and appear descriptive when compared to the way they were formerly; this is a result of the language change over time in which parameters have been applied to make it more systematic.

This is seen with the categorization of two other types of arbitrary signs, which suggests stages in the evolution of diachronic change; these are initialized signs and loansigns. Initialized signs are those which are borrowed from ASL but which are distinguished through a change in the handshape employed by the signer. The handshape will take on the first letter of the English gloss. An example would be the sign for the English gloss CLUB or ASSOCIATION. Both are signed the same way. Both C-handshapes, left and right, are held at the chest level with their open sides facing
away from the signer. In unison, they move forward from this position. The movement traces a circle—the center of which the open sides of each C-handshape continuously is directed. Both hands come together on the other side of the circle and the C-handshapes are both open toward the signer. This sign is used for a number of English glosses: CLASS, CASTE, AUDIENCE, COMPANY. Other English glosses use this sign with the only difference being the handshape. The F-handshape is used to indicate FAMILY; G for GROUP; O for ORGANIZATION; and T for TRIBE or TEAM. Loansigns are those about which Battison (1978) describes. Along with ASL signs, these also contribute to the set of arbitrary signs used in ASL.

The following are types of ASL signs which are more descriptive or iconic in nature. Grounded iconic symbols refer to the uniqueness of ASL in communication (Macken, Perry and Haas, 1993). Iconic and descriptive symbols are used to a degree unequaled by speech. Also, classifiers demonstrate certain attributes of an object such as location or shape (Humphries, Padden, and O'Rourke, 1980).

The difference between arbitrary and descriptive signs has been demonstrated in the practice of using name signs in the American Deaf community. Name signs are very special and are only given to an individual by his/her peers. No
two are the same, even when their English ones are equivalent. Descriptive names signs are given in situations in which Deaf identity is sought after or among those who are new to deafness. Arbitrary name signs are given when there is a tradition to substantiate the continued use of ASL (Mindess, 1990; Suppalla, 1990).

**ABC Stories**

The ABC Story is a genre of storytelling or verbal art that excludes those who are not at the core of Deaf culture and community. "Sign play" is what characterizes the ABC Story, much in the way that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sherzer (1976) define "speech play... as any local manipulation of elements and relations of language, creative of a specialized genre, code-variety, and/or style" (p. 1).

The ABC Story is a way for Deaf people to simultaneously use each of the two languages that are a part of their community: signed ASL and fingerspelled English (Rutherford, 1993). Internally, the stories are told in ASL using the full range of manual and non-manual communication. Externally, they are guided by a sequence that goes back to the learning of English. The two languages are each
represented in the storytelling because of the nature of the handshape.

The sequencing used in ABC stories is English, which is not surprising since it is the handshapes of the English alphabet and numbers that are first taught to, and used by, ASL aspirants. It is an accessible way to get an idea across if the signs are unknown. If the exact ASL sign for a concept cannot be remembered, it can be spelled out and thus, always available on some level. Eventually however, a reading of these combined signs by those who are Deaf are not conceptualized as a collection of phonemes but rather, as a collective symbol for the concept being spelled. This is much like the manner in which we read the whole word in a text without seeing all the individual letters.

This introduction to ASL as a system of language and eventually one of culture is tantamount to its introduction employed by the National Theatre of the Deaf (N.T.D.) as it is related by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries in their book _Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture_ (1988). Up until the 1960s, signed performances on the stage were more descriptive than arbitrary in that the signing itself was never focal; rather, it was background to the action. During the sixties, the N.T.D. shifted away from the presentation of performances that were based upon direct
translations of English literature and toward ones that were created for, and instructional of, the grammar of ASL with its manipulation of space and movement. Productions came to involve the audience much more in the productions of signs in the sign space.

ABC stories are a form of art performed in the American Deaf community. They consist of narratives which are signed in a performance register.

ABC stories are a type of performance that involves members of the American Deaf community. More specifically, they are told by members who are closer to the core concepts of Deaf culture and the use of ASL. This can be demonstrated by listing those settings wherein they occur and the individuals who participate. In each setting, participants are Deaf; hearing people are not involved.

That there are these restrictions upon the situations in where and when they can be performed can be demonstrated by Irvine's (1979) statement about registers and their degree of formality which serves the force of tradition. McDowell (1983) considered formal register as more apparent than real because any style of language use is multifaceted. Rather, it is the dimensions of "accessibility, formalization, and efficacy" which combine to produce
speech varieties, as well as the places and times for their use.

Listing those settings and the types of participants associated with the ABC Story begins to show how restrictive the genre is. ABC Stories were widespread by the early 1970s and were known as a kind of Deaf folklore by members of various age-grades of the Deaf community (Frishberg, 1995). Whereas its original date of use has not been demonstrated, Rutherford (1993) mentioned a sixty-year-old informant whose mother learned of ABC Stories while attending the Ohio School for the Deaf during "the early 1900s" (p. 55). In each setting, participants are Deaf while hearing people, as a rule, are not involved. Inquiry on the SLLING-L, a listserv on the Internet that discusses sign linguistics, produced this information as well as the following situations in which the performance of the ABC Stories was conducted:

- Gallaudet University
- Other universities
- Deaf social clubs
- Young Deaf students and Deaf instructors
- Deaf families
- Performance
The respondents consisted of a hearing individual with deaf parents and deaf siblings, a hearing educator of the deaf, a hearing individual who is both a researcher of and interpreter for the Deaf, and a hearing individual who has hearing parents. None of the responses indicated that ABC stories were endemic to a mainstreamed situation in which there were deaf students with hearing instructors. One informant specifically stated that the ABC Story never came up in the mainstream situation (Boutcher, 1995).

Gallaudet University. Some of the performers of ABC Stories are Gallaudet alumni (Wolf, 1995). Gallaudet College is located in Washington D.C. and was opened in 1864 with Congressional authorization to grant degrees to deaf students. At Gallaudet, learning ASL, if not already known by the student, is necessary because classes are conducted in it and campus life is permeated by it. While the ABC story was used between signers in a competitive way (Rudy, 1995), it was also used by Deaf students as a form of "hazing" other deaf students new to ASL (Frishberg, 1995). Most new students to the University, had previously gone through intensive oral training, or they were familiar with one of the English-based sign systems. In either case, they were unfamiliar with ASL with all its manual and non-manual
components. As part of the hazing, ASL aspirants had to learn how to pick out the letters of their name in a particularly bawdy story presented by another student proficient in ASL. At Gallaudet University, ABC stories were engaged in only by Deaf students. Whereas the university does have hearing students and hearing faculty, they were entirely left out of this type of linguistic play. Students already familiar with ABC stories had learned them while at one of the residential schools for the deaf or from their deaf family members, who attended residential schools or other university settings. Those who were subjected to oral training in classroom settings with hearing instructors learned the form of ABC stories from dormitory life. So ABC stories have their beginnings in dorm culture which corresponds to where, for most, the Deaf cultural experience is generally attributed.

Other Universities in the country now have services that provide interpreters in the classrooms. This setting also provides Deaf students an opportunity to congregate with others to share experiences and the use of ABC stories a means of communicating experiences, as well as the exploration between peers into topics, some of them taboo. The bawdy nature of these stories also can play a part in these settings (Mandel, 1995).
Deaf social clubs present another situation for the communication of ABC stories. Generally some individuals become known as ABC storytellers because they are so good at it. Needless to say, even if others have attended Gallaudet or another university with interpreter services, most others come to abandon the ABC story as a form of narrative. So, it doesn't seem to pervade as an art form for most into adulthood, but it is recognized and supported when one adopts its as a form of expression. I might add at this point and return to it latter, that this support only comes when the story is legitimated by a pure expression of the rule; that is to say, that the handshapes are mostly, if not entirely, used to mimic expression and not actual ASL signs.

Young Deaf students and Deaf Instructors. Today, with the limited return to a classroom setting dominated by a deaf instructor, one of the ASL language-development protocols involves the use of ABC stories in play. Deaf children will select a sequence of letters that spell an occupation or event and create stories that have something to do with it (Nussbaum, 1995). Such instructions prepare young students for the manipulation of handshapes and special visual grammar entailed by ASL by something similar to that resembling tongue twisters (or alliterative phrases) for children learning speech English. Also, the
performances of the special sequences aid in the development of both long-and-short-term memory functions like they do for hearing children learning speech when they are taught "add-on" songs such as "Old MacDonald had a Farm" (Ernest, 1995).

**Deaf Families.** These are also places where ABC stories are learned. In Deaf-parented families, either parent may use this format with his/her children, hearing or deaf. Rutherford (1993) mentioned a bedtime story told by a parent to child ending with the sign Z-handshape indicating sleep. Family members who are hearing can also be members of the Deaf community, such as those who are known as Children of Deaf Adults (CODA) (Preston, 1994) and they may themselves pick up on this genre of verbal art (Hoza, 1995). As children, siblings, or parents of Deaf individuals, these hearing members of the Deaf community can be exposed to ABC stories and become participants as when deaf students spend time at home with their hearing siblings. Other than performance, this is the only other avenue in which hearing people may be involved in the transmission of ABC stories.

**Performance.** Frishberg (1995) says that:

ABC stories or Alphabet stories are definitely performance art. A very few people can create novel ones spontaneously, other people can perform memorized pieces, many people can quote the first
few signs of one or more traditional pieces, and still others simply recognize quoted material from a "traditional" sequence (e-mail).

The ABC story is not pervasive; not every one used it. Some let it pass out of their usage while considering it an aspect to pass along to their children (Riolo, 1995). Only those who are good at it become storytellers within the community. In a staged performance, the audience is clearly marked as receiver. Even in these types of situations however, there exist perceptual differences of the story being told between the hearing and the deaf. Rutherford (1983) noted this in her transcription of the telling of a deaf joke that turns out to be more humorous in deaf than in hearing:

One time a man, well a person, a Deaf person, was driving along and stopped at some train tracks because the crossing signal gates were down but there was no train going by. So he waited for a long time for a train to go by, but nothing. The person decided then to get out of the car and walk to the control booth where there was a man who controlled the railroad gates. He was sitting there talking on the phone. The Deaf man wrote in his very best way (elegantly), "Please b-u-t," and handed the paper to the controller. The controller looked back at the Deaf person quizzically, "Please but? Huh?" He didn't understand that.
The sign for the English gloss BUT is used here as an icon because it looks very much like opening crossing signal gates and it is used here in a fashion similar to a spoken pun. Just as this joke is a metaphor for Deaf experience, so are ABC stories with their overlay of sign systems.

The ABC Story is a way for Deaf people to simultaneously use both languages: ASL and English (Rutherford 1993:28), because the handshapes used in both are similar. Internally, the stories are told in ASL using the full range of manual and non-manual communication. The content is strictly American Sign Language (ASL) in the overt spelling of certain "loan signs", and the production of regular signs, both arbitrary and iconic (but mostly iconic). Externally however, the stories are guided by a sequence that is a reminder of learning English. The external structure of any story employs American Manual Alphabet in that a sequence of events is conveyed with the alphabetic handshapes. The handshapes, however are not intended as they were originally intended. Their meaning has been abandoned and they do not play a role in the "internal expression" of the story. The use of the American Manual Alphabet, therefore, is a "metaphor for the language situation in which the community functions" (Rutherford, 1993, p. 66).
Handshape is the point of contact between the two language systems of ASL and English. For fingerspelling, handshape is the dominant phonological dimension with orientation and movement playing to a lesser degree. For ASL however, it is only a subset. Phonologically, ASL has four manual dimensions (Stokoe had originated them, calling them cheremes as opposed to phonemes for speech. When it comes to the more universal concept of minimal units, the term phoneme works just as well for sign). The manual dimensions of ASL are: handshape, orientation of handshape, point of articulation, and movement. The combination of these factors within the sign space produce the pattern recognized with the arbitrary meaning of any sign, as do the place and manner of articulation of the tongue, lips, and teeth within the oral cavity.

Maxwell and Kraemer (1990) interviewed Deaf students and elicited developing narratives about their experiences with the speech lessons they had to endure. Speech lessons can pervade the day to day activity of deaf youth and overshadow academic learning. They go through life told by their hearing instructors that their speech production is very good, but when they get out into the real world they find that such is not the case. Maxwell and Kraemer cited Goffman (1974) as someone who sees narrative as "the way we
put together our reality in conversational interaction" (p. 339). Deaf students who perform narratives which are important for any sense of identity of self and group membership, demonstrate that to be successful in the hearing world, they must ultimately use their deafness to succeed. Such efforts can be personally satisfying while conforming to hearing peoples expectations.
The Marijuana ABC Story

English-worded synopsis

The first of two ABC Stories performed by Glickman ("Prof Glick") is the marijuana story and is transcribed in Figure 3.1. This story is initiated with the rolling and lighting of a marijuana cigarette. After which, it is passed along to someone to the right of the storyteller. Throughout the story, the individual accepts various other devices for the smoking of marijuana in the form of a lit joint (a lit marijuana cigarette), a roach (the tiny end of a marijuana cigarette usually attached to a clip for easy handling), a pipe, and a bong (a large pipe filled with water through which the smoke passes). He has to re-light some of them. With every passing, he smokes and progressively becomes less focused until he can hardly tell where in his own hand the smoking device is. He begins to fantasize or see things and is carried away with the experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manual Alphabet</th>
<th>ASL Sign</th>
<th>ASL GLOSS (ALL CAPS) AND STORYLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>![Sign A]</td>
<td>He SPRINKLES the marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>![Sign B]</td>
<td>on the flat (classifier) paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>![Sign C]</td>
<td>He ROLLS the paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>He holds it up to his lips.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>He LIGHTS it and inhales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>He passes the joint off to his right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right.

He accepts a smaller used joint from his left and re-lights it because it has burned out.

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
| K | He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right. |
| L | He accepts a PIPE from his left and |
| M | lights it, while puffing. |
| N | He passes the pipe off to his right. |

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
He accepts a BONG (shape classifier) from his left, hand covering the opening to keep the smoke in. Removing his hand, he inhales, then passes it along to his right.

He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right.

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>passes the diminishing joint (shape classifier) off to his right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Pounds his chest to suppress a cough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, and passes it off to his right.

He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, passes it to the right, and is starting to show effect of the marijuana.

He accepts the joint from his left, inhales, passes it off to his right, and is seeing double vision.

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
He starts to DREAM.

"OH-I-SEE!"

He passes out into a stupor.

Figure 3.1. Transcription of Glickman's Marijuana ABC Story (Con't).
The Airplane ABC Story

English-worded synopsis

This second story involves the preparation of the pilot as he goes through his checklist before takeoff and is transcribed in Figure 3.2. Starting out with testing the flight wheel, he goes through the motions of the flaps and then checks the fuel gauge. Finding the gauge needle on FULL rather than on EMPTY, he becomes immersed in momentary introspection. He reaches up to scratch his chin, stretches forward toward the panel to flip a switch, and then reaches up to his cocked head to scratch his ear, inspecting his finger afterwards. Vehicles with rotating warning lights move in front of the plane showing the way out of dock. The pilot fastens his seat belt and then moves the throttle forward while watching the motions of the flagman...After doing a visual check through the windshield of the pilot's compartment, he adjusts his headset radio and moves the plane down the runway to a successful takeoff.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manual Alphabet</th>
<th>ASL Sign</th>
<th>ASL GLOSS (ALL CAPS) AND STORYLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>![Image of ASL sign A]</td>
<td>He holds the steering wheel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>![Image of ASL sign B]</td>
<td>He test the flaps on the wings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>![Image of ASL sign C]</td>
<td>Classifier for the fuel gauge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>The needle in the fuel gauge.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Letter on the one side of the fuel gauge indicating empty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Same on the other side of the fuel gauge indicating full.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Scratches chin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>?he flips switches?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Hand gesture]</td>
<td>![Drawing of a person flipping switches]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>He cleans ear with finger.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Hand gesture]</td>
<td>![Drawing of a person cleaning ear with finger]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J</th>
<th>He looks at stuff from his ear on the end of his finger.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Hand gesture]</td>
<td>![Drawing of a person examining ear]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K</th>
<th>Vehicle warning lights; sign similar to AMBULANCE.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Hand gesture]</td>
<td>![Drawing of a person with a sign similar to AMBULANCE]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
L Vehicle moves to front of plane.

M He grabs the end of the seat belt.

N He attaches his seat belt.

O He moves the throttle forward.

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>?He sees the motions of the flagman?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>The wheels begin to move forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>He does a visual check through the windshield.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>He reaches up to the right side of his headset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>He makes an adjustment on his headset.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Radio microphone.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>The plane moves down the runway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>The plane takes off into the air.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Transcription of Glickman's Airplane ABC Story (Con't).
CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Before discussing observations on the presentation of the two ABC Stories by Glickman, I will reflect upon elements regarding the performance approach and how it can highlight avenues of cultural maintenance and reproduction.

Performance and Avenues

In the performance approach, folklore, also known as verbal art, is vital to language use and communication because it supplies an additional context by which to interpret the performance act or event. This is done within each culture by specific means that key such a presentation of verbal art as performance, such as:

- special codes;
- figurative language;
- parallelism;
- special paralinguistic features;
- special formulae;
- appeal to tradition;
- disclaimer of performance
  (Bauman, 1984, pp. 16-22).

Bauman goes on to describe each of these each as "communicative means...to key performance", and shows that any particular culture will use them in various
combinations. While some cultures may rely heavily on each of these means, others may only allow for a limited number of means, perhaps one or two.

Performance then is the culmination of events, as well as the event which directs subsequent acts. Tradition, however, is also changed in the process, yet its original tenor is never completely abandoned. Tradition has been fittingly defined as:

...a dynamic, multivalent body of meaning that preserves much that a group has invented and transmitted but that also includes as necessary defining features both an inherent indeterminacy and a predisposition to various kinds of changes or modifications...in short, a living and vital entity with synchronic and diachronic aspects that, overtime and space, will experience (and partially constitute) a unified variety of receptions (Foley, 1992, p. 277).

Just as performance engages a tradition that has been maintained through time, so it changes it. Diachronic change may manipulate the everyday use of language, but synchronic variation records the history of language use for a particular linguistic community. Performance engages tradition while transforming it to be used in contemporary context.

The performance situation is useful for evaluating communication developed within a linguistic community or
culture. The linguistic community is an arena within which multiple voices are combined rather than something that only communicates artfully to others who are willing or able to listen. This concept, introduced and applied to the evolution of the literary novel by Bakhtin (1981), known as heteroglossia. Gottlieb (1989) used the concept of heteroglossia in her description of the conflicting perceptions of the hyena in myth and ritual among the Beng of Côte d'Ivoire. Bakhtin's introduction of the concept applies to a verbal art that he described as written; Gottlieb's adoption of the concept applies to something oral and passed down from generation to generation, just as is the written. Hers is based upon oral tradition as containment for a consciousness that is based upon both acts and events.

The notion that a consciousness can transcend the bounds of written documentation is not new. Certainly it happens today with the development of a kind of consciousness which Tyler (1992) discussed for the genre of oral literature. Mascia-Lees and Sharpe (1995) developed this further by discussing certain perceptions within the public consciousness or, the "historically constructed optical unconscious", particularly, and ironically, that of silence and manual communication with depictions of
innocence, truth, and simplicity. Recent films, they pointed out, such as *The Piano*, *The River Wild*, and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* used the knowledge of manual communication to aid the protagonist in the final outcome. This kind of everyday awareness has been referred to as tactility which:

... functions like peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imageric and sensate rather than ideational and as such not only challenges practically all critical practice across the board of academic disciplines but is a knowledge that lies as much in the objects and spaces of observation as in the body and mind of the observer (Taussig, 1992, p. 8).

As the context for interpreting novels has extrinsic associations, so do oral-traditions. As works of verbal art, "...oral-traditional forms are situated in part within a set of associations and expectations formally extrinsic but metonymically intrinsic to their experience" (Foley, 1992, p. 276). Literature on performance, or to say it another way, avenues for the expression of heteroglossia, have evolved through literary criticism (Bauman, 1962; Bauman & Sherzer, 1989; Bauman & Briggs, 1990). These avenues can also be applied to social situations.

These factors of performance are not restricted only to cultural performances in which they are known as structured
events. They also apply as performance in action. Performative verbs organize discourse as acts generated with their use. They are used as a higher level utterance or meta-commentary upon the lower level of any discourse (Stubbs, 1983). When I say, "I promise," there is an action implied. While more commonly perceived as a structured event, performance can also be thought of as action inserted in discourse to create events. The diachronic and the synchronic are synergistically connected. Performance can provide the means for, or be enabled by, an event. Thus, cultural performances are both action and event and the line drawn between them may be an artificial construction.

Performance also has varying associations for roles within a community. Some individuals within a linguistic community may have the only access to certain types of performance. For instance, at a certain time of their lives (post-menopausal) some women in the Serbian culture, known as bajalica, have sole access to the chanting of healing charms. These charms demonstrate all the keys except the last one mentioned in the list of paralinguistic devices (p. 58, this paper): disclaimer of performance (Foley, 1992). No one but the bajalica would think of uttering these phrases. While no one, including the bajalica, know the precise meanings associated with the specific words in the
chant, they all feel that the performance of these chants by these women will produce the desired event.

Finally, performance can vary with intensity (Bauman, 1984). From the perspective of roles and how they play off each other within a community, performance can be the definitive attribute, completely absent, or somewhere in between. A community as a whole may have narrow or broad provisions for performance. Irvine (1993) finds performance restricted to those who use an informal register of the Woloff speech community. The people of the noble class are not allowed to show emotion and they use only one variation of the language which makes no provision for the expression of emotion. The lower class, however, has ready access to a speech register that provides for speaking loudly, varying pitch, etc...and to do this in a ritual in which they actually speak for the feelings experienced by the noble people themselves, who must sit stone-faced nearby. So, performance varies according to social rank.

As a type of speech activity, performance can vary from one speech community to another. According to Roger D. Abrahams, the Quakers of the seventeenth-century limited performance to a narrow range of activity (Bauman, 1984). Among a number of South American groups, a type of ritualized discourse is available to all and is used as the
basis for all sorts of other types of social interactions (Urban, 1986). Also, Sherzer (1993) described multiple forms of speech play among the Balinese, to the point that it is a cultural focus. For the Deaf, as I have tried to show, performance is recognized through the expansion of sign space. It can be an act inserted into the discourse or into an event that members of the sign community support. In any case, performance is either act or event in which one signals the other.

With any way of speaking there is "native organization ...and cultural expectations for performance" (Bauman, 1984, p. 27). Through this organization, performance can be more accessible to anyone within the community. Zimmer (1989) wrote about intratextual register variation in the setting of a lecture given by a Deaf native ASL signer. In it, the Deaf lecturer shifts among three identifiable ASL registers, with that associated with performance on one end of a continuum. Performance is identified by its metaphoric and iconic content. Zimmer noticed that within a given presentation (body of discourse) of text, at a lecture, a presenter may switch from one register to another "even though the field, mode, and tenor of the discourse remain constant" (pg. 271). McDowell (1974) demonstrated that paralinguistic features are an important "key to
performance". McDowell does this through the comparison of two presentations of a tale by a Bolivian Quechuan narrator. The first was the actual tale and performance, while the second was an account of what the tale consisted. The paralinguistic features of each presentation were in contrast to the other.

**Observations**

Both the ABC stories which are presented by Glickman differ from those ABC Stories which Rutherford (1993) refers to as "traditional text" (pg. 28). The difference is in the use of ASL signs (and these include those which are initialized and those which are known as loansigns) which are either descriptive or arbitrary when it comes to the attachment to meaning. The similarity is derived from the form and not the content in the way recognized by Crapanzano (1994):

The distinction between original, spontaneous writers and those who make use of ready-made material is simplistic, for even those writers who appear to be most original are in fact constrained by language, expressive conventions, and literary heritage. These constraints are structural, pragmatic, and axiological. Even the most avant-garde writer is caught, whether by acceptance or
rejection, in the grammar and rhetoric of his language, in the communicational conventions of his society, and in the literary and artistic heritage of his culture (p. 867).

This demonstrates that it is the form and not the content of the story which is passed along as folklore because in other ABC stories such as those presented by Rutherford, ASL signs, initialized signs, and loansigns are utilized. All the elements of Glickman's two ABC Stories are overwhelmingly iconic by using the alphabetic handshapes as descriptive images of action in relating a story. There are some instances of ASL signs but they do not dominate. The ASL signs for DREAM and OH-I-SEE appear in the Marijuana ABC Story, and the sign for AMBULANCE and LOOK, in the Airplane ABC Story.

When taken as a whole, DEAFology 101 reveals how the American Manual Alphabet is used by the Deaf community in two ways which are demonstrated through the degree of constraint that is applicable when looking at the signing space. How is the signing space used as a paralinguistic device or key to performance in these two different ways of using the American Manual alphabet? The first way it uses the American Manual Alphabet is through fingerspelling and the second is through the telling of ABC Stories. The whole
performance of DEAFology 101, then, is a sample of the linguistic community of the Deaf.

The signing space which is associated with the fingerspelling that occurs throughout this discourse is small and specific. The transitions between letters flow quickly and the location of their presentation is specific. They are used to spell words that come from the English language, having no equivalents in ASL. The orientation of each letter is precise.

In the ABC Stories, however, the space is grand in that it includes the entire body in movement. Consequently, the transition between letters in the form is not as rapid as that which is seen in the spelling of English written words. Movement is not constrained; anything goes; orientation is abandoned. Space is also grand throughout the whole performance during the telling of puns and other jokes and humorous stories; however, when fingerspelling, the space is always constrained, and fingerspelling in the ABC Story does not occur. Its absence is made more relevant though the presence of descriptive signs and the absence of even remotely related signs that are either loaned or initialized. Even those signs which are part of the lexicon of ASL (the ones previously alluded to) are grounded in descriptive meaning.
In the marijuana story, A is used as iconic action: the spreading or sprinkling of the marijuana over B: the smoking paper. Following this is C for the rolling of the paper into a marijuana joint. Both B and C can be interpreted as classifiers which characterize the flatness of the paper and the roundness of the joint, respectively. This usage of classifiers demonstrate shape and location of the object. D is also a classifier combined with the directionality of verb movement and is used to place the joint to the lips for lighting. A group of letter-shapes is used for the lighting of the marijuana joint and other devices for smoking marijuana: E, J, and M. Other letter-shapes that perform as iconic action are used for the accepting of the marijuana devices from the left, and the passing of it off of them to the right after inhaling. These are F, G, H, K, P, Q, R, T, U, V, and W. What is significant about these is that they transcend the sign space as indicated by extended elbows. In accepting the device from the right, the arm and hand extend out beyond the sign space, and in passing the device off, they extend out beyond the sign space to the left. These letter-shapes also tell a story about a joint which is diminishing more with each cycle, and of a user who is becoming more affected. The joint, for both reasons is becoming harder to use and this is demonstrated with the way
the letter-shapes are employed. Other devices are classifiers because they emphasize shape: the I for a clip, the L for a pipe, and the O for a bong. Other letter-shapes are similar to the iconic actions of A. These are for S which is used to pound the chest after making a heavy inhale, X for DREAMING, Y for OH-I-SEE, and Z for going into a stupor. The production of Z also moves the whole body out of a normal sign space.

The airplane story demonstrates the same kind of use of iconic action in a sign space which is larger than that allowed for everyday conversation. Most of the letter-shapes are used for action signs: A, B, G, H, I, J, M, N, O, U, V, W, and X. These actions involve the storyteller directly as pilot. Other actions which he observes happen outside of himself but have a connection to his role as pilot: L, P, Q, Y, and Z. C, D, E, and F are employed as types of classifiers. C shows the shape and location of the fuel gauge, and D indicates the location of the needle in it. Surely E stands for empty and F for full but they stand for the letters on the gauge and in this way do not represent initialized signs. K approaches an ASL sign for the gloss AMBULANCE but it is not an ambulance which is being depicted, rather it is a warning vehicle on the tarmac.
and the sign itself is iconic, far from arbitrary in production.

In-group behavior has an indication of acceptance of the storyteller's ability and linguistic competence. The Deaf perform ABC stories as in-group behavior. Some of the data from SLLING-L indicates that ABC Storytelling is only done as in-group behavior. Even though DEAFology 101 is a product for the general public, and is voiced for the "deaf impaired", the audience renders a distinct Deaf behavior which consists in the type of applause that is exhibited. Instead of clapping, the Deaf, as a group raise both hands into the air over their heads, extending all digits into the 5-handshape, and shake them. This silent applause says volumes to the Deaf. The interaction between performer and audience, by virtue of the UPLAUSE, demonstrates in-group behavior on a formal level.

At any rate, one would never find a word spelled out at any part of the alphabetic sequence that did not conform to the sequence. One would never find the word A-P-P-L-E for the A-entry in the storyline. This genre is totally at the core of Deaf culture. It does not introduce English forms, written or spoken. Rutherford states that the storyteller would rather skip that letter in the sequence if it could not contribute to the storyline.
The deaf rarely use fingerspelling among themselves as in-group signing. Is there anything in the signing of ASL that can demonstrate this principle for articulation? To ask it in another way, is register evident through the distribution of any features as evident through the parameter of articulation? Supalla (1990) demonstrates that, in the practice of namesigns, articulation is important to the one type of system known for its arbitrariness when it comes to the relation between signified and signifying sign. The arbitrary namesign system has very specific rules about forming namesigns which adhere to the four parameters of sign. Mindess (1990) noted that this system tends to lie at the core of Deaf values and behavior. Arbitrary names are given to the children of Deaf adults who are well into Deaf culture. Mindess, however, also noted the presence of a more descriptive namesign system which is more iconic. It is what those new to the culture use in their introduction to the culture. Articulation is not so important in this system as are any of the other parameters.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

We can see that one of the ways the Deaf in America have strengthened ASL is through performance; they have developed an innovative linguistic strategy to transform elements such as manual finger spelling introduced under the influence of spoken English. This scheme maintains and reproduces a Deaf cultural worldview by preserving early iconic ways of signing and marking a register or style through the paralinguistic device of sign space. This greater or smaller use of space is both a form of diachronic change and synchronic variation in ASL. In terms of diachronic change, ASL iconic signs are reduced to small sign space usually used for fingerspelling and become associated with arbitrary meaning. The example of synchronic variation is when the manual alphabet is moved into large sign space with more descriptive associations as in the ABC story. The salience of each letter is reduced the form of the hand. Thus, ASL has become more systematic in some ways, while its originality continues to improvise iconic selections in performance.
This scheme takes elements introduced by spoken English in ASL in the fashion of the bricoleur:

His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17).

Many of the iconic signs of ASL have borrowed from initialized signs and introduced loansigns. The Deaf found ways to maintain their iconic language of ASL but, at the same time, facilitate change.

The two uses of the American manual alphabet described in this thesis also reflect, through a paralinguistic division, the two worldviews which affect the Deaf in the United States today. First, using the American manual alphabet as it was intended: the small sign space allows Deaf to spell English glosses that have no direct equivalent in ASL. This includes abbreviations or words which relate to the written mode of English. Second, the American manual alphabet accommodates the hearing through an interface of small sign space. When signing ASL, fingerspelling is used by the Deaf sparingly for those words which have hearing
currency. Finally, the American manual alphabet in a large sign space keeps in existence a way of signing reminiscent of a cultural view of Deafness.

The Glickman performance demonstrates the interaction of space with different ways of signing using the American manual alphabet. Deaf use of the American manual alphabet also distinguishes sizes of sign space. When used to fingerspell English words, alphabet handshapes are constrained to that small area in front of the signer. Wilcox (1992) has noted, as a system that is used in conversational signing, the space that surrounds the alphabet handshapes is highly constraining. The Deaf focus upon this contour of space to read fingerspelled words such as those on a printed page. In addition to this, the alphabet frequency varies. When users of ASL or Deaf individuals are the only participants, the frequency of the alphabet is low. When hearing people are part of the interaction, alphabet frequency is higher.

This is inversely correlated with alphabet use in the genre of the ABC story. The form of the story-telling happens as an in-group activity. As a core-Deaf activity, no hearing people are included. This kind of alphabet usage occurs: at Gallaudet, as well as other universities and colleges attended by the Deaf; between those learning
sign for the first time and those already familiar with it; at Deaf social clubs; between Deaf students and Deaf teachers; and within Deaf families where some may be hearing but who also have been brought up in an environment where they have had to mediate between two cultures and two languages. The only place inclusive of hearing is the stage performance such as Glickman's. Even here however it demonstrates a Deaf solidarity as evidenced by the UPLAUSE of the audience.

In ASL, concepts are anchored in space and referenced through indexing as the Deaf orient the topic to the sign presented at the beginning of their utterances. In a world in which anyone could see what one was signing, there developed certain conventions to gauge the importance of witnessed transactions, especially when signing was discouraged and regarded as a punishable offense. When caught signing the consequences were stern: separation from classroom activity, isolation, slapped hands, chores. Social distance between members of Deaf culture are expanded and indicated by a way of signing that is "loud" enough for those who are distant to see it.

When the Deaf concentrate upon a fingerspelled utterance they read the whole fingerspelled word. However,
in the ABC stories, the detail of the shape of each letter must conform to the order of the story.

Everyday signed conversation within a standard sized space both iconic and fingerspelled words along with emphatic expression as non-manual communication. Within the large space arbitrary associations are not emphasized, while in the small space, the iconic are not. Emphatic expression plays a much more significant role in larger space than it does in smaller space.

Language Change

Frishberg (1979) and Woodward and Erting (1975) showed that, over time, signs have undergone a reduction to bring them within a certain arbitrary and systematic production. However, these equivalent phonological parameters are sometimes abandoned to induce emphatic expression. In speech, emphatic expression can be indicated through volume, tone, or rhythm but, in sign, it is introduced using non-manual components. Woodward and Erting refer to these non-manual components as non-manual reduction, a process of diachronic change, not entirely absent in everyday

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conversation. Non-manual components are reduced as more of the lexicalization is placed within the hands.

The ABC story touches upon taboo subjects (Rutherford, 1993, pp. 45-46). Glickman describes marijuana, a taboo subject, but the telling of this story permits the close miming of many of the artifacts and behavior of the marijuana smoker. The pilot with his radio is a distant behavior for most Deaf individuals, but the story is worked by adhering to the form of ABC stories. Maxwell and Kraemer (1990) demonstrate that many Deaf with developing narratives of the speech training experience emphasize that they ultimately accept and use their deafness to appear successful to the hearing.

The divergent use of the American Manual Alphabet within Deaf culture in America indicates signing to maintain a cultural core. This variance can be seen in the two ways that the American Manual alphabet is used within the whole context of the Glickman video. When spelling words that have no English gloss, he maintains the envelope of space associated with fingerspelling. He does it swiftly and keeps it close to the area in front of the shoulder of his dominant signing arm. He uses the alphabet to anglicize many words by attaching suffixes: -ic, -ly, and -ies. Altogether, the frequency of fingerspelling is low and does
not dominate the performance. When he tells his two ABC stories, he takes the handshapes of the American manual alphabet out of small space and produces them in a large sign space which is introduced through movement, points of articulation, changes in orientation, and even alternative handshapes which are accepted as sub-primes of the prime handshapes that compose the signs of ASL. The application of syntactic parameters to make elements of the American manual alphabet more iconic match those applied to former iconic signs in ASL to make them more arbitrary within a usable space for everyday conversation. These processes mirror each other as loansigns and initialized signs evolve out of fingerspelled words. Two worldviews develop alternative ways to utilize the alphabet: one Deaf, the other hearing.

How this research might fit into other studies is by including performance as an area worth considering when studying how language is used. Performance is accessible to all users of ASL through the expansion of sign space. Within this large space, anything is possible with the situation governing its acceptance by other users. As monologic discourse, Glickman's staged performance is a demonstrated art-form in which alphabetic handshapes are used only as iconic signs in the form of the ABC Story.
Yet, for those who first identify experiences other forms of the story are accepted, as traditional texts which include arbitrary signs as well as initialized signs and loansigns (Rutherford, 1993). Especially in a situation in which generational transmission of cultural knowledge is not the norm, as is the case for the Deaf in America, this may be a prerequisite of in-group identity. Solidarity within Deaf culture is strengthened by someone like Glickman, who now stresses both ASL and the cultural identity of the Deaf.

The anthropological significance is that first, within a culture, language develops through usage but unique schemes maintain and reproduce a core culture as "residual" and "emergent" (Williams, 1973, pp. 10-12) by means of strategies developed to maintain these groups in the face of outside influences (Wolf, 1986). Policies to assimilate such as teaching English through fingerspelling may ironically accentuate the differences. While cultures or minority communities transform elements to show autonomy under the influence of a controlling ideology, they also work to maintain an autonomy. For the Deaf in America, the visual mode of communication or ASL, accentuates the differences that are already present. Sociolinguistic analysis can be used to demonstrate how language maintains
and reproduces solidarity for the Deaf in the contemporary United States.

This work is much too dependent upon my own experiences and introspection; its repeatability is not guaranteed. However, for further study one might consider two avenues. The first is by doing "subjective reaction" tests to establish evidence of a linguistic hegemony for those who are ASL users within the United States. Woolard (1985) shows this by doing a "matched guise" technique with speakers of Catalan and Castilian in Spain. Keyed toward tradition, using ranges of sign space, interviewers could elicit responses toward ways of signing ASL within varying sign spaces.

The other avenue is to look at the role of iconicity. Are there similar processes of change, both synchronically and diachronically, in spoken languages that exists in minority kinds of situations? The visual nature of ASL may allow for the broad expression of these processes. If they exists for spoken languages as well we could perhaps demonstrate the connection between language and culture and the role of grammar and how it is used to define worldview.
APPENDIX I

Following is the correspondence that ensued over the Internet in the Sign Language Linguistic mailing list. I have deleted some of the information regarding front and end matter. These postings are archived for one year at listserv@yalevm.ycc.yale.edu. To get a list of available files, which are compiled into files by month, send the following message to the listserv address:

    index slling-1

To get a specific file send:

    get slling-1 logyymm

Logyymm is the file name. The archive for April 1995 would then be log9504. Bearing unforeseen circumstances, I will also have copies of the entire postings. My original request with their abridged formats follow:
I was wondering if anyone on the list could tell me anything about alphabet stories or jokes. An interpreter for the deaf first described them to me as stories or jokes told in the format of the fingerspelled ABC's, where they relate a narrative, usually humorous, while using all the fingerspelled letters of the alphabet in order, from A through Z.

Then, I saw Ken Glickman's performance using this kind of word or sign play in his video, "DEAFology 101". How prevalent is this in the Deaf community? Would you say it is a recent development, or am I making more of this than there is? As a CODA, I don't remember anything like this in my youth.

William Hay
william@selway.umt.edu
University of Montana
Missoula, MT, USA
Hello William,

We just read your question about ABC stories used by Deaf people. I am a graduate student at Cal. State/Northridge, majoring in linguistics with a focus on ASL. My roommate is a senior Deaf Studies major at the same University. Her name is Bonnie and she is profoundly deaf. This response is actually from her, but it is my e-mail!

She says, "I was raised oral and began involved in Deaf community during high school years -- 1970. ABC stories were very common and popular at that time at the Deaf club. NTID and Gallaudet U. students created them a lot, almost like a competition with each other. "Some deaf students here play around with it too, especially the deaf students who are from Deaf families. It helps to be a creative person and can use the letters and signs artistically. "Also, numbers can be used -- from 1 to 10 or 1 to 15 -- more if you can think of how to use past 15. It is not easy -- really a challenge and can be a lot of fun. "Sometimes they are 'dirty' -- or connected with the 'peer culture.' (EXAMPLE: smoking marijuana, like 1970's Hippies) Recently, a friend here at CSUN invented one that shows a contestant at the Miss Deaf America contest. It is really good!"

I hope that answers your question.

Write back to us sometime and tell us something about you and your interest in ASL.

Karen Naughton and Bonnie Rudy
Though I've enjoyed reading the discussions on the SLLING list for several months now, this my first attempt at replying to 'the list'--I'm actually nervous!

So...Hello to all. My name is Kimberly Nussbaum, and I am an interpreter (trained in Arizona) completing a master's degree in Deaf Education at the University of Pittsburgh. My focus is on language acquisition and ASL/ESL issues.

Anyways, regarding ABC stories...

Ditto to what the interpreter told you, and I think it is important to add that ABC stories are first and foremost: a form of poetry.

Until a few months ago, I didn't completely understand the notion of ABC stories--I knew that there were "classic" ABC stories, and I had seen several versions of the same stories performed by Deaf adults.

But I recently had the opportunity to watch deaf children (6-8yrs) create their own ABC stories. The Deaf teacher began by asking the class of 8-10 students to think of a topic. (Interesting, of the topics they suggested, "Firefighter" was selected - possibly because of the 'action or activities' involved? Topics like "Zoo" and "Winter" were not considered.) Then the class proceeded to brainstorm the possibilities for each letter, taking great care to check for proper handshape and logical sequencing of the story as they went along.

It was both beautiful and fascinating to watch. We all had great fun!
And I can still remember the story. Before having this experience, I thought ABC stories were more of a "deaf thing." Something that I could enjoy watching, but never feel comfortable performing...Well now I find myself creating my own stories--though, I may still save the performance part for my Deaf friends :)

And as an educational tool, ABC stories are powerful. Our class was made up of students with different levels of language--some could not fingerspell their ABC's, but had no problem remembering the sequencing of the ABC stories!

The amount of expressive language generated through these discussions was terrific--it seemed like the equivalent to a group of hearing children making up rhyming songs or poems.

Glad to be able to share that experience. It was a memorable moment.

Take care. --Kim
As a CODA growing up, I saw them, but they were always told by Gallaudet alums, and almost always filthy (adult humor). I have seen maybe six or seven varieties, most were memorable, but not easily memorized (damn!).

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William,
...
I would guess that they are not particularly new, since I saw them first in the early '70's and they were familiar to deaf folks of many ages then. I went looking for folklore and this was one of the first forms I was shown.

When I worked at NTID in the mid-70's ABC stories (and the general principles for forming them) were part of the hazing that the oral deaf students who were just learning to sign were subjected to. If you lived in the dorms and were in the beginning sign classes for deaf students (and had at least some desire to socialize with the signing deaf crowd), you would have to learn to recognize your own name spelled out in a series of vulgar or suggestive or insulting signs.

If the folks doing the hazing were good, they could make this insult into a plausible narrative with appropriate intonational cues; if they were just performing the rite, the same sign would be used for the in everyone's name, and thus the value of the novelty or surprise factor was less. However, the important part of this ritual was that the whole of the deaf student population was included. I think even the well-liked and skilled-in-sign hearing students weren't included in this activity, but I could be corrected.

As for why a CODA might not have seen ABC stories before: I have two hypotheses which are not mutually exclusive.
1. Seems like it might spring from dorm culture, and having deaf parents doesn't give you access to all the literary arts.

2. Also, many of the themes are the late adolescent humor sort (ghost stories, poking fun at sex, religion, bodily functions, etc.)

Other hypotheses?

--

Nancy Frishberg
William Hay asks about alphabet stories.

When learning ASL and learning about/with the Deaf community, in Berkeley, Calif., ca. 1976-81, I learned about "ABC stories" as a common form of folk literature, often told at parties and in similar situations. Besides the alphabet stories proper, there are also sequences based on a person's name (usually slanderous and often bawdy, in a teasing or "roasting" sort of way).

I might be able to remember one or two of the latter, but I would not be able to repeat them without the permission of the person they refer to.

While I don't know any authentic ABC stories, I invented one that Deaf people have told me they enjoyed. [I can't tell you how much of that is just politeness. I am Hearing of Hearing parents and family; I would abbreviate that HCHP in my own notes, but here around Boston that means "Harvard Community Health Plan"!]

- Mark ;-) ;)

Mark A. Mandel
William --

"ABC"/"Number" stories, etc., are very common. I, too, am a coda and I remember many such stories/sign play. I have two Deaf brothers, and we (with other Deaf friends) would often retell and invent such stories. (It seems that now most of the sign play I see is taking the name of something like a state & making up a "short story" about that state/thing -- often to poke fun. Perhaps this is more common among adults.)

A great reference is Susan Rutherford's book (based on her dissertation) called (something like): *Folklore in the American Deaf Community* and is available from Sign Media, Inc. in Maryland.

Good luck!

--Jack Hoza
Date: Mon, 3 Apr 1995 20:53:43 -0400
Reply-To: Sign Language Linguistics List
<SLLING-L@yalevm.ycc.yale.edu>
Sender: Sign Language Linguistics List
<SLLING-L@yalevm.ycc.yale.edu>
From: "Joseph P. Riolo" <riolo@LYDIAN.SCRANTON.COM>
Subject: Re: Alphabet stories/jokes
To: Multiple recipients of list SLLING-L
<SLLING-L@yalevm.ycc.yale.edu>
In-Reply-To: <950402205646_69495393@aol.com>
Status: RO
X-Status:

On Sun, 2 Apr 1995, Jay Wolf wrote:
> I have seen maybe six or seven varieties, most were memorable, but not easily memorized (damn!).

On my list of projects to do (it is already long), it says to write alphabet stories on papers using any of writing systems (excluding glossing systems). I never am good at remembering such stories. Nor can I create stories. Yet, I am looking forward to the day when I can buy a book with a collection of stories written using a writing system and put it in my bookshelf. If I ever forget or if I wish to tell a story to my children, I will scan through the book and pick one and tell...you know the rest of the story.

But, other things must come first...deep sigh! If you are doing the above project, I want you to add my name to your list of people who want to buy your collection of stories!!!

Joseph Pietro

Riolo
Well, it depends. Actually, there are different forms and styles. Hmmmm. For example about the 48 states in 1950s. If one tells about the states of Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Colorado, she would tell them in the genre of poetry. Rhythm is included. (A 1962 Gallaudet student could do "Tennessee" musicsignally.) ASL poems like the forementioned states would be told by female students, never by male students -- aside from sissy students -- at residential schools for the deaf and Gallaudet University between 1920s and 1970s.

One of ABC stories for "New York" is picareque. It is told by both male and female students. The typical Western Cowboy ABC stories for the western states are usually told by male students. Sometimes, female students keep male students' original form. Romantically, a student would emulate a French king for "Louis I Ana" to make fun of residents of Louisiana. In 1950s, female students loved creating long ABC stories about states with long names such as California, New Hampshire, North Carolina. One would expand a story by adding wordsigns between C = Search, A = knock, L = listen, and so forth for "California".
My former students at NWC between 1983 and 1994 had never seen ABC poems or stories in ASL in mainstreamed schools.

Jean Boutcher -- deaf of deaf parents
I like your comments, Nancy. Very well narrated. Another reason children might not have seen them as much; adult material.
ABC stories and Handshape stories have fascinated me since I observed the deaf children of deaf families teach them to other deaf children at residential schools. From a developmental linguistic view the stories resemble children's tongue twisters such as "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" or "she sells sea shells down by the sea shore".

These are alliterative tongue twisters that help children practice the speech sounds of their particular language.

ABC stories (in young deaf children) also resemble what are called "add-on" stories in children's songs and stories. Old MacDonald had a list of animals on his farm. The effect is to provide memory practice in a sing-song pattern. Jump-rope songs are other examples of Add-on poems or songs which help children practice speech sounds and short-term and long-term memory. And who can forget the old woman who swallowed the fly, the cat, the dog, etc.

I suggest that ABC and Handshape stories for young deaf children serve a language development purpose similar to other forms in children's literature and informal language play.

Mike Ernest
Dont really think alphabet stories fit into limerick or haiku genres. Both have specific metric, prosodic, rhyming (in the case of limericks) and syntactic parameters that as far as I know aren't met by ABC stories. (I dont know them well; just remember seeing a couple of eg's when visiting the US; from Simon Carmel I think?)

I think I remember similar activities in the two-handed alphabet world from years ago. Havent seen any recently. Anyone on OZ, England or NZ got any info?

Des

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Professor Des Power
Tel: 617-875-5654
Director
Fax: 617-875-5924
Centre for Deafness Studies and Research and National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies Faculty of Education Griffith University, QLD 4111 Email: D.Power@edn.gu.edu.au Australia

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