UC Riverside
Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
"Ungraceful, Repulsive, Difficult to Comprehend": Sociolinguistic Consideration of Shifts in Signed Languages

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9fj6c05d

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 10(2)

ISSN
1050-4273

Author
Turner, Graham H.

Publication Date
1999-12-30

DOI
10.5070/L4102005019

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

"Ungraceful, Repulsive, Difficult to Comprehend": Sociolinguistic Consideration of Shifts in Signed Languages

Graham H. Turner
Department of Education & Social Science,
University of Central Lancashire, UK

INTRODUCTION

In two earlier papers (Turner, 1995; 1996), I have outlined a case for the possible relocation of the notion of *contact signing*[1] within the broad conceptual field of language shift. Deaf people have tremendous faith in the durability of signed languages (Taylor & Bishop, 1991; Lee, 1992), though the odds against them can seem insurmountable (Lane, 1992). However, many, if not all, signed languages exist in a kind of linguistic 'twilight zone', in the shadow of more powerful and widely-used spoken/written languages. The longer-term impact of the mixed[2] linguistic systems that have been seen (for instance, by Lucas & Valli, 1992 and by Schermer, 1990) to arise in these circumstances has been the focus of relatively little reflection. Though signing as a type of linguistic activity may endure, I have argued that Deaf people may consider it prudent to maintain a degree of concern as to the long-term prospects for their traditional or heritage signed languages. A possible framework for linguistic policy-making in this connection, drawing upon the work of Joshua Fishman (1991), is outlined in Turner (1995).

In the present paper, I wish to put under the microscope the very impulse to raise, even as a *possible* matter of concern, the issue of linguistic shift in a signed language under the influence of a spoken language. The view that changing patterns within signed languages are unwelcome is not new, but its articulation has to date been largely on aesthetic and intuitive grounds. Back in 1904, Dr James L. Smith issued a warning in such terms to Deaf people at the seventh convention of the US National Association of the Deaf: "The enemies of sign language are not confined to those who decry it and call for its abolition entirely. Its most dangerous enemies are in the camp of its friends, in the persons of those who maltreat it and abuse it by misuse. The sign language, properly used, is a language of grace, beauty, power. But through careless or ignorant use it may become ungraceful, repulsive, difficult to comprehend" (cited by Gannon, 1981, p. 363). This may not be the limit of the grounds for concern. The question, then, is this: Languages change – *so what*? The corollary: Can the *result* of change ever legitimately influence the first answer?

In order to explore this question, the structure of this paper will be as follows. Firstly in the background section , I will sketch in broad terms some of the research

Issues in Applied Linguistics
ISSN 1050-4273
© 1999, Regents of the University of California
Vol. 10 No. 2, 131-152

that suggests the presence of other-language influences on patterning within some signed languages. I do not consider this very brief review to be either comprehensive or in any way conclusive: the evidence simply does not exist to do more than indicate the possibility that the 'family' of signed languages is currently witnessing in places the effects of influence from neighbouring languages.[3] However, the data that *are* available lead me towards the view that a response to these changes may be appropriate in the short term, rather than too much later, when they may have become embedded. In three subsequent sections, I will address from three related perspectives - humanistic, social and cultural, and cognitive – the issue of what stands to be lost if this particular set of sociolinguistic circumstances do not receive attention. Finally, in the section entitled "Engagement of the Linguist", I face the argument that a traditional, non-prescriptive view of linguistics would still direct the scholar towards a dispassionate neutrality on questions of language change, as matters to be observed, recorded and interpreted, but in which intervention would inevitably be improper. I argue that, in this case, at least a limited form of intervention to raise *awareness* of language change processes and their consequences may in fact be appropriate.

BACKGROUND: SHIFTING PATTERNS

What types of phenomena have been recorded as occurring in situations where signed and spoken/written languages mix? Across a range of levels of structure, structural shifts show some marked parallels to those situations of contact between two spoken languages that have been described (Seliger & Vago, 1991) as constituting language *shift* or language *attrition*. I do not seek here comprehensively to review the literature on spoken/written language influences on signed language structure, but have identified that a number of broad regularities, as follows, seem evident in all cases across a range of key sources (Reilly & McIntire, 1980; Cokely, 1983; Schermer, 1990; Lucas & Valli, 1992).

As far as lexis is concerned, although the principal lexical articulators continue to be the signer's hands, there is reported to be an augmented role for the mouth at this level of structure. Elsewhere, non-manual information may be reduced or absent. Manually-produced distinctions tend to be lost in morphological structure (so that plurality, for instance, ceases to be marked), whilst fingerspelling is used across the lexical spectrum.[4] Lexical meaning and function tend towards reflecting spoken/written language structures. Word order tends to match the word order of the spoken/written language as much, if not more, than it matches the signed language (though it may match neither). Complex sentence constructions may tend to be modelled on spoken/written language patterns, but space continues to be used as an integral element of the grammar (although maintenance of referential loci, i.e., according grammatical functions to established parts of the signing space, may be less consistent).

Certain sociolinguistic factors have also been identified as characteristic of

shift/attrition situations. Julianne Maher (1991) has focused discussion of contact-leading-to-shift situations on so-called *enclave* communities. The essential characteristics of such a community are said to be that it is multilingual (in the broadest sense); that users of the shifting language constitute a minority of the polity (where this minority may be either numerical or socio-political or both); and that the community has been relatively isolated from other users of the language for 100 - 400 years (approximately).

Anne Schmidt's description (Schmidt, 1991) of language shift in Boumaa Fijian and Dyirbal identifies a number of pertinent sociolinguistic factors. The Fijian education system promotes and uses Standard Fijian: the all-English curriculum provides a negative force for Dyirbal, replacing Dyirbal with English and creating and reinforcing the impression that Dyirbal is unimportant. Thus both the very existence of a compulsory education policy and the precise nature of practices within the system are pertinent. Schmidt also identifies the media as a key element. Radio programmes are in Standard Fijian/English, while watching television, presented in an L2, also becomes a frequent pastime. In the Dyirbal case, Schmidt also notes (1991, p. 118) that "All-English literature not only confirms English as a prestigious language, but also glossy magazines and books create desires, images and expectations": these feelings are widely associated with the language in the context of which they are presented.

These analyses by Maher and Schmidt, I suggest (Turner, 1996, 1997), ring clear bells for those who care to consider the sociolinguistic circumstances of most of the world's Deaf communities. Both structural and social sets of information, then, may be seen to give some cause for attention to the matter of the *potential* impact of influences upon heritage signed languages.

Some of the most ethnographically well-attested accounts of language shift also stress that the diminishing language may become associated with a stigmatized identity (Dorian, 1981; Gal, 1979; Kulick, 1992; Schmidt, 1985). Taking seriously the advice given, for instance, by Gal (1992) and Woolard (1992) to maintain a healthy scepticism of claims about single, monolithic ideologies, I would want to highlight the contested nature of any such claim concerning the identity of users of British Sign Language (BSL). Modern history amply demonstrates that Deaf people have widely been considered – as are many disabled people – to be fundamentally 'abnormal' or 'disfunctional' (Davis, 1995) and signed languages have, partly by association, been similarly disparaged. There has been acknowledgement within the sociology of deafness of the stigmatized status of Deaf people as 'outsiders in a hearing world' (Higgins, 1980). This kind of view still appears to be present in the UK and can, at least by implication, be witnessed both in the continuing lack of parliamentary recognition for BSL and the recurring referral of arguments in support of recognition to the Department of Health (for instance by Home Secretary Jack Straw – one of a small handful of politicians at the Government's 'top table' – in his plenary address to the Federation of Deaf People's conference in November 1998).

Nevertheless, there has undoubtedly been a renaissance, of a kind, in the fortunes and status of the Deaf community, just as predicted by Brennan and Hayhurst (1980) in the early days of BSL research. Deaf pride has emerged within the community, and acceptance has developed in the wider society; "deaf people have made the existence of a positive deaf identity possible" (Brien, 1991, p.50). Yet the stigmatization of the past is not swift to disperse and appears at times to be re-emergent. Research with young deaf people suggests that Deaf identity is not highly valued by this group (Gregory et al., 1995). Pointed reference is made by deaf people who do not use BSL to the 'exoticization' of the language and of those who do use it (Corker, 1998a). A real sense of backlash is apparent in, for instance, the correspondence columns of magazines aimed at deaf readers: "Quite frankly, I have had enough of people talking glibly about 'deaf culture' and 'deaf identity' – trendy terms devoid of meaning, catering more to facile expressions of self-deluding fantasy... Personally, I hate being deaf... I cope, but that is without bigoted deaf snobs telling me 'how deafness is enjoyable and something to be proud of'" (Anonymous, 1996). All told, I am not convinced than any single perspective on the stigmatization of BSL users can currently be plainly recognised to be dominant.

Having said this much, it should be noted that it appears *not* to be the case that users of *all* signed languages need necessarily to cast around anxiously for signs of shift. For instance, we learn from accounts of the Swedish experience (Davies, 1991, 1994; Hyltenstam, 1994; Svartholm, 1993) – where the relatively early social and academic recognition of the place of signed languages has led to a high level of tolerance of signing and enviable standards of public service provision to meet the demands of signed language users and their families (Bergman, 1994; Wallin, 1994) – that the prospect of language shift away from the heritage signed language need not be an issue. Perhaps it is not surprising to find that factors contributing to the successful maintenance of Swedish Sign Language within bilingual programmes appear akin to the type of agenda for reversing language shift outlined by policy-making theorists like Joshua Fishman (e.g., Fishman, 1991) and those proposed for the development of sustainable bilingualism by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1984a), Hugo Baetens-Beardsmore (1986), Jim Cummins and Merrill Swain (1986) and others.

Where, though, do the preceding background notes lead? We do not yet have a case for paying particular attention to the possible long-term effects of influence from a spoken/written language upon a signed language. It is to this that I now wish to turn.

A key point to acknowledge in exploring the possibility of locating signed languages within the paradigm of language shift (hard to disentangle from "contraction", "loss", "obsolescence", "attrition", "endangerment", "death" and other terms used in closely related and even overlapping accounts within the field – see Dorian, 1989 for discussion[5]) is that sociolinguistic angst tends to arise only when languages are considered to be genuinely *endangered*. This territory is typically inhabited by discussions concerning languages whose user-pool is

shrinking rapidly towards what are felt to be alarmingly small numbers. The now widely-reported claim that half of the world's six thousand languages will be extinct in the next century has reached popular awareness within some circles in the UK (Charter, 1995; Coyne, 1995). By the more extreme estimates (e.g., Krauss, 1992), the number of living languages could be in the hundreds in as little as 100 years' time. Clearly, whatever else is being said about heritage signed languages in this paper, no directly equivalent statement is being made. The result of contact signing is not a community reduced to a mere handful of people who can sign. The suggestion here is, rather, that there appears to be a particular nature to the language changes in question with particular visible consequences to which possible responses are, as yet, under-explored.

The rhetoric of language shift is doubtless controversial (see especially the sharply focused exchange in Hale et al., 1992; Ladefoged, 1992; Dorian, 1993; plus Daniels, 1993). What validity, then, can this vector of analysis claim with regard to signed languages?

HUMANISTIC DIMENSIONS

In the wider field, Ken Hale has been a leading figure in arguing that matters of language shift and endangerment are of legitimate, and even urgent, concern, and that it is right and proper to act upon such concerns by focusing intellectual energy on these issues. "The basic argument," says Hale (1988, p. 3), "is a moral one, having to do with what might reasonably be considered the ultimate purpose of humanity. Assuming that there is such purpose, it seems reasonable to suppose that it implies a responsibility to achieve full and proper use of human intelligence, an endowment unique to the species and given to it in a measure far in excess of any required for pure survival as an animal".

One does not necessarily have to follow the rhetoric to this extent (talk of 'ultimate purposes' being guaranteed to alarm in some quarters) in order to believe, nevertheless, that the pursuit of knowledge of our own human natures has been one of the activities undertaken, to great and illuminating effect, throughout the span of *homo sapiens*. Humankind has used its distinctive biological heritage as best it can in the conceptualisation and creation of a wide range of cultural products. How do we ensure that we continue to stretch ourselves and our understanding of ourselves to the limits? Following Hale's line, the "enabling condition is linguistic and cultural diversity. Only with diversity can it be guaranteed that all avenues of human intellectual progress will be travelled" (Hale, 1988, p. 3-4).[6]

This humanistic argument, then, says that any contraction of our collective linguistic inheritance – of which the eclipse of a heritage signed language would be an instance, if it were shown to be occurring – is cause for concern. Some argue that this is essentially mere sentimentality. Within the confines of this paper, there are no knock-down arguments to settle that particular challenge: for what they are worth, my views tend, along with those of Nancy Dorian, to be that it "seems a

defensible intellectual as well as emotional position to hold that each loss in linguistic diversity is a diminution in an unusually powerful expression of human cultural life, given the nature of language" (Dorian, 1993, p. 578).

Such arguments are familiar when applied to the safeguarding of biodiversity: imperfect as the analogy may be, the underlying current runs along a nearby thread. If one is willing to accept the point, it follows then that even recording and cataloguing language patterns that stand to disappear remains insufficient - just as no archive video footage of the dodo could now fully compensate for the permanent absence of the bird itself. So it is that Hale argues: "While it is good and commendable to record and document fading traditions, and in some cases this is absolutely necessary to avert total loss of cultural wealth, the greater goal must be that of safeguarding diversity in the world of people. For that is the circumstance in which diverse and interesting intellectual traditions can grow" (Hale, 1992, p. 41).

We can therefore see an argument for language maintenance being, at the very least, on the agenda for the most global-scale of reasons, i.e. in the interests of humankind. John Edwards (1984b, p. 281) carefully sums up the broad position with the comment that "it is not easy to deny the claim that complete submersion or homogenisation is a bad thing – bad in the sense of erasing diversity of world perspectives, of eradicating realities which enrich us all." Closely linked to this is the more local humanistic view that communities ought to have the human right to self-determination in matters of language. Fishman explicitly makes this link in writing of "the right and ability of small cultures to live and inform life for their own members as well as to contribute thereby to the enrichment of humankind as a whole" (Fishman, 1991, p. 35).

It is not clear that Deaf communities, afforded this kind of self-determination, would opt in favour of maintaining heritage signed languages. Can it honestly be said that there is solid consensus within Deaf communities concerning matters linguistic? As far as the UK goes, I suspect not.[7] I am aware, for instance, that there is growing pressure in some quarters for a formal, recognised structure of qualification and certification for interpreters who specialise in working between UK contact signing and English. It remains the case that many Deaf people here are ill-informed about the status and capacities of their heritage signed language, BSL. So the first thing required to happen would be for a consensus to be reached that a non-mixed form of signing would be sufficiently desirable to be worth the undoubted effort required to promote it, or at least that the spread of a mixed form should not be allowed to go unquestioned. However, the issue is, I suggest, more complex than has yet been displayed.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Agreeing that language choice is a matter of human rights is one thing; the actual making of the choices can be quite another. Much of the rhetoric surrounding

these issues, even when they are discussed in fora in which strenuous efforts are made to maintain a dispassionate position wherever possible, is powerful and seductive. For instance, when Hale (1988, p. 4) writes that minority language communities must be permitted to develop "in accordance with the directions of progress which the communities involved define for themselves," it is not always easy to keep pushing the reasoning to its conclusions. In this case, the 'directions of progress' are no simpler, more readily visible or more linear than are the communities themselves.

On language, as on many other issues, anyone would be hard pressed to proclaim baldly 'what the UK Deaf community thinks'. The community is not monolithic (see Turner, 1994b, 1994c), but rather lives out the implications of internal and external tensions in the fluidity and fluctuation of just such matters as the choice of language made by any participant in community life at any particular moment of engagement or praxis. In this context, acts of identity (in the sense of Le Page &Tabouret-Keller, 1985) are being made at every turn, and the sense of community is constantly constituted and reconstituted in and through linguistic exchange. Shifts in the linguistic patterning play an important symbolic role. Analysis of these shifts is an integral part of the overall analysis of each signed language as a social phenomenon (cf. Branson & Miller, 1992).

An important area for any linguist to consider, therefore, in looking to reach conclusions on the real point of raising concerns about heritage signing is the socio-cultural implication of shifts in language usage. It is striking, for instance, that Deaf writers seem to be identifying the rise of Deaf professionals or a Deaf 'middle class' in recent times (Padden, 1994; Redfern, 1995). Perhaps it becomes more important to keep the distinctive and identity-conferring benefits of heritage signing as this kind of augmented professional role in the wider society expands and the bond with the wider Deaf community stands to be weakened. Alternatively, perhaps the aspiration to be seen as joining such a professional cadre will itself provide pressure to distance oneself linguistically from the 'old-fashioned', 'ill-educated', 'grass-roots' community. With more hearing people to interact with every day, Deaf people may in any case find themselves more often using some form of contact signing (Grosjean, 1982, describes this as tending to occur).[8] It is likely that both pressures will be in evidence. How is any linguist to respond? What is the responsible thing to do?

Changes in language, then, are linked to changes in society and it is imperative that a responsibly applied linguistics take the social context into consideration. Ultimately, as Rob Pensalfini (personal communication, 1995) notes, "there are no languages whose situations demand attention for purely *linguistic* reasons. There are, however, endangered speech communities. What we seem to find, all over the world, is that when a speech community loses its language, it ceases to be a community, and the associated lifestyles and cultural reality also disappear. I'm not claiming that this link is a causal one, but that language may be in a sense a 'thermometer' of cultural vitality, which is otherwise very difficult to measure." If

Pensalfini is right, then one should be aware that comments made about the maintenance of heritage signing also carry implications concerning Deaf cultural choices.

The link between language and culture is inevitably a contentious one, not least because linearity of cause and effect is so hard to come by. Nevertheless it does appear to be the case that shifts in language of the type foreseen in this paper will inevitably have cultural consequences. Fishman (1994, p. 86-87) argues (a) that language is indexical of culture, i.e. that the heritage language is best able to express the objects and abstractions of concern to that culture, (b) that much of the cultural make-up is inherently linguistic (folktales, jokes, songs, riddles, blessings, curses) and a great deal of this cannot be fully transferred into another code in the event of language shift, and (c) that language is symbolic of culture and of members of the community who share that culture.

On this basis, a move away from heritage BSL, for instance, would endanger the vocabulary evolved precisely to express issues of common interest to members of the British Deaf community. It would also threaten to undermine the linguistic inheritance of stories, jokes and BSL artistic signing, and, as Nancy Dorian puts it, "one does not have to be of the Whorfian persuasion to believe that any language ... is the repository of an extraordinary historical accumulation of cultural material, couched in a structure the individuality of which lends a genuinely inimitable flavour to it" (Dorian, 1994a, p. 115).

The symbolic value of heritage BSL is more complex. From outside the community, it is very unlikely that anyone will understand the cause for concern at a shift between BSL and contact signing. What matters and is distinctive to outsiders is that this is all 'signing'. The people who sign now will continue to sign and they will therefore still be seen as Deaf. For Deaf people themselves, the picture is rather more finely calibrated. The difference between heritage BSL and signing that is identified with English structures is highly significant and carries major implications for interpersonal relations and the perception of personal identities (Corker, 1998b). Again, the impact of the possible collapsing together of these two positions must be considered in reaching conclusions about signed language shift.

For all of this careful deliberation and focus upon pitfalls, it must be appreciated that there is ample evidence to suggest that structural compromise in the use of a language may actually *enhance* the chances of its survival, at least insofar as "movement away from conservative norms may be a price to be exacted in return for the emergence of young native speakers" (Dorian, 1994b, p. 490). We have only to look at the present state of the English language and to remember the radical changes that have occurred throughout its history - but especially in the post-Norman French period - to recognise this as an extremely powerful argument. (A 20th century situation with intriguing similarities is described in Huffines, 1991). The issue, as clearly identified by Maguire (1991, p.191), becomes how to maintain "a firm grasp on the reality of what constitutes healthy, inevitable change within a particular set of circumstances."

In the two sections considering the humanistic and the social & cultural dimensions, I have tried to set out some of the arguments adduced by scholars who believe it to be vital that we address situations of language endangerment as a matter of some priority. I have tried to show where these arguments seem to be appropriately made, too, in the context of sociolinguistic concerns about heritage signed languages. Recognition must nevertheless be given to the strong claim that such a position will always be weak and unconvincing for practical purposes: "It is simply not possible to bring about widespread language shift when the appeal is made on the basis of abstractions like culture, heritage and tradition; these are not, of course, trivial or ignoble aspects of life but they are not conscious priorities for most people" (Edwards, 1984b, p. 288). In the next section entitled Cognitive Dimensions, I will argue that the imperative cuts a little more sharply in our field, and that there is a further and atypical set of reasons for suggesting that the 'healthiness' of the changes arising in relation to signed language shifts may be uncertain.

COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS

Understanding our humanity may or may not be a moral imperative, but attempting to get to grips with the insides of our minds has been a major site of human industry. We use our intelligence to understand nature, and the study of humankind itself is one of the most exciting areas of such study. Knowledge of language is seen as a crucial aspect of this quest for understanding, and the fact that signed languages are produced in an entirely different modality, using a different set of articulators and receptors, than those languages upon which the vast majority of scientific theorising has been constructed is certainly one valid reason for hoping that these aspects of structure will persist. It is a fact that has been fundamental to countless research proposals in the sign linguistics field, since it explicitly puts the insights generated into a framework wherein they play an important part in expanding our understanding of what the mind can do: "While it is a tenet of modern scientific linguistics that knowledge of language stems from a specific universal capacity possessed by human beings by virtue of their genetic heritage, there is within the field an exciting and productive tension between the essential unity of human linguistic knowledge, on the one hand, and the rich diversity of human languages, on the other. Without knowledge of the latter, we cannot hope to know the former" (Hale, 1988, p. 5)

So for every language scientist who has 'bought into' the paradigm that has been so dominant within the field since Chomsky explicitly made the quest for knowledge of the mind the ultimate goal of his linguistic research, here is one clear reason to see the benefits of language maintenance in this context. One of the reasons for studying languages is that the less we know about our languages, the less we know about ourselves. They give us an unparalleled window into the mind.

Although I have separated 'cultural' and 'cognitive' dimensions in this paper,

it will be evident that this is extremely artificial. The two are intimately intertwined, with the way we *think* about the world being part of what we use in order to *be* enculturated members of the communities, nations, and the human race. I now want to go on to suggest here that the possible prospect of a shift away from fully vision-based signed languages has repercussions in relation to vision-based cultures and vision-based cognition – and therefore our understanding of what it can mean to be human.

In considering the extent of loss to the cultural repertoire of stories, jokes and the like entailed by shifts in language usage, Anthony Woodbury makes the significant comment that: "At issue really is *any situation where the arbitrary forms and patterns of a language are harnessed to constitute, shape, or model communicative purpose or content,* for in such situations, the loss of the language would render automatically lost some part of the cultural tradition. We can label this situation or phenomenon as FORM-DEPENDENT EXPRESSION," (1993, p. 7: italics and capitals in the original). Here I think we do see a major difference between spoken and signed languages and a specific and crucial reason for believing that the issue of shift away from heritage signing is not trivial. For by virtue of the visual-gestural modality being used to the full, heritage signed languages – such as BSL – are shot through at all levels of structure with a comprehensive visuality that entails form-meaning correspondences *everywhere one looks* due to the 'motivated' nature of the relationships expressed within the stuff of the language (see Brennan, 1990, 1992).

I say this notwithstanding the fact that what continues typically to excite and impress mainstream linguists is the claim they feel able to draw from sign linguistic research that work in languages like BSL and American Sign Language (ASL) "serves to emphasize the *abstractness* of linguistic organisation – its independence from sensorimotor modality" (Jackendoff, 1994, p. 98). It is harder to think of examples of BSL that *do not* contain form-dependent expression than those that *do.* Even an utterance as simple as "they crossed the road" is liable to contain visual information about how many people crossed the road, in which directions they were heading, the manner and method of movement, the point of view of the narrator, and so on.

Thus recognition of the fact that signing is produced in a visual-gestural modality – i.e. its visual nature – is fundamental to an understanding of signed languages as linguistic systems. One might point out that we are not used to talking about 'the pervasive nature of the sonic features of spoken languages', but it wouldn't take people long to notice their significance if they started to go missing. In fact, the very idea is so implausible that it tends to cause mirth. Yet the parallel situation with reference to signed languages is equally simple. Just because they are produced in four dimensions, signed languages are able to use space, shape and movement as an integral part of their structural systems (Poizner, Klima & Bellugi, 1987; Engberg-Pedersen, 1993; Emmorey & Reilly, 1995). And because they can, they do.[9] It would, after all, be hugely counter-intuitive to see, for instance,

a finger pointing towards the ground and be expected to understand that the signer intends to mean 'up'. Signed languages *embody* the world, breathe life into it, in a way that no spoken language ever has or could. Signers make use of these visible features of their languages because it is *natural* to do so. Similarly, it is natural for spoken languages to make use of pitch variation because we have vocal apparatus capable of doing so and are able to create more elegant, efficient and expressive systems for ourselves by taking advantage of the potential therein. We concatenate elements of spoken language production in linear strings through time for the same kinds of reasons. What is extraordinary about signed languages – giving them a uniquely powerful quality of expression – is that the form that the language takes and the world they describe bear such a close relationship to each other in terms of our whole structure for and perception of our engagement as human beings in our surroundings.

Ernst Thoutenhoofd, speaking from a perspective in the sociology of perception, has pointed in particular to that aspect of sign linguistic structure commonly known as *role-shift* as a feature underlining both the significant naturalness of visualisation within signed languages and the cognitive complexity which is required. Role-shift is a term relating to the signer taking on different roles – indicated by eye-gaze and body shift – within a discourse. Once a shift has been made, everything that is signed is produced as if it were from the other party's perspective. The fluent signer may also take on salient aspects of the other's character, as portrayed in the discourse. Thoutenhoofd comments: "We should not judge this ability for role-shift lightly: role-shift also involves a shift *in viewpoint*. The virtual spatial location of the signer changes according to the spatial placement of each character. Only enhanced visual ability can incorporate such a complex and fast perspectival computation" (Thoutenhoofd, 1995). This is not some trick that signers have invented to impress. It is an integral structural feature of the language, and it arises because it makes sense within the visual-gestural linguistic and cognitive framework.

Cognition and culture are here wrapped tightly together – Thoutenhoofd (1995) refers to the "shared cultural visuality" of Deaf people as *ocularcentrism* – and the combination is such as to raise serious questions about the loss incurred were signed languages to undergo a devisualizing shift (potentially a major element, I suggest, of the envisaged spread of contact systems). Heritage signed languages have evolved, in the hands of visual people, to be visual and to inhabit this domain to the full. The use that is made of space and of the many available articulators permits a layering simultaneity of structure which, in fluent signers, results in a visceral visual inevitability that gives these languages a *logic* and an *integrity* unmatched among spoken languages. As the Deaf writers Carol Padden and Tom Humphries have pointed out, the cultures and languages of Deaf people, just like those of hearing people, have evolved over generations to fit the group's biological characteristics; hence the resulting linguistic and cultural products have deep biological (cognitive, neurological) roots. The deep fear of Deaf people is "that

they may be forced to use a language intended for people with different biological characteristics" (Padden and Humphries, 1988, p. 110).

But is it really significant, in such deeply cultural and cognitive terms, that signed languages should have developed in ways that are so thoroughly visual and three-dimensional? The relationships between vision, gestures, signs and space are increasingly being recognised to be pervasive and intricate (see Emmorey and Reilly, 1995). What else do we know that might lead to the conclusion that visuality in language and culture is fundamental to *being* Deaf and to seeing the world through a glass Deafly?

Well, first and foremost, we have Deaf people's own compelling accounts of lives that are lived with the eyes predominant (see papers in Wilcox, 1989; Padden & Humphries, 1988). For outsiders, perhaps it is only in being taken back to the first principles of a deaf childhood by guides as perceptive as Padden and Humphries that some kind of appreciation of the profundity of the difference in experiences can be reached.

We also know, thanks to Deaf writers like Clayton Valli (1990, 1992), that the artistic constructions native to Deaf people are both fundamentally visual in nature and take the expression of the impact of the visible world as a core component. The power and grace of Deaf poetry is embedded within the language's ability to communicate with an immediacy and vitality that brings images to life: the viewer can, quite literally, see what the poet has seen and *share that vision*. Related to this use of language in poetry is the use of metaphorical language in every day interaction. When we stop and consider our language, it is astonishing to recognise just how much of it is metaphorical in some way: these metaphors are so deeply-rooted in our world-view that we simply take them for granted. In a number of examinations of the metaphors by which Deaf people live, Mary Brennan has shown (Brennan, 1990, 1993) how comprehensively visual the Deaf metaphorical base is.

At least four kinds of neurolinguistic studies also give evidence that the river of visuality runs deep.[10] Firstly, much evidence has been collected (Klima & Bellugi, 1979; Kyle & Woll, 1985) demonstrating that Deaf people use visual cues and strategies in the storing and processing of information in the memory. Secondly, we know from studies of slips of the hands that on-line processing of language is handled using visual patterns of constraint and organisation (Klima & Bellugi, 1979). Thirdly, we know from studies of aphasic sign language users that the manifestation of language disruption from such causes takes place along lines drawn out by the effects of vision-based cognitive and linguistic structures (Poizner et al., 1987). Fourthly, work on the development of cognition in deaf children suggests the very early and therefore radical emergence of a distinctively visuo-spatial cognition (Bellugi et al., 1989).

I lay out all of the above, then, by way of suggesting that what stands to be lost if there were to be a shift away from heritage signing is not simply equivalent to the kind of shift that English underwent in contact with French. The profound

part that vision and the envisioning of the world play in heritage signed languages means that a devisualising shift (i.e. one that broke the link between signed form and meaning, between linguistic structures and the world brought to us by our senses and experiences) would not – salient as that may be – replace one set of lexemes and one tradition of grammatical patterning with another, but that a major modality-altering exercise would take place. The implications for Deaf cultural ways, particularly but not exclusively as expressed and transmitted in language, are such as to suggest that such a shift must be seen as different *in kind* and therefore warranting more careful attention before concerns are dismissed as trivial or sentimental.

ENGAGEMENT OF THE LINGUIST

When I have raised these issues in public fora, many people – and especially professional linguists – back off or raise their eyebrows. Why should this be? Not much doubt about that: as linguists, we are trained to remember that *description* and not *prescription* are what the craft is essentially all about. Any discussion of pro-actively interventionist language policy-making in such a context has to be wary of the charge of confounding an academic stance with more subjective advocacy (cf. Edwards, 1980, 1984b), and there are those who say that linguists have absolutely no business to be addressing such matters. There is a fairly systematic ambiguity as to whether claims about language maintenance and shift are intended to be scientific conclusions or ideological stances. In consequence, a diagnosis that 'perhaps something should be done', no matter how principled it be, may, as Woodbury has said, "be taken to be politically presumptuous, or, at least, a renouncement of any claim to political neutrality" (1993, p.5). Were we to reach the conclusion that the issue is essentially one of linguistic human rights – and here one might note that Tove Skutnabb-Kangas has recently written that "deaf minority children need linguistic rights to an even higher extent than oral minority children" (1994, p.143) – then we would be making such a renouncement a *fait accompli.*

I am aware of this, and others have long since expressed similar concerns within the sign language studies field about negotiating the tension between 'scientific detachment' and political engagement (see Brennan, 1986). However, I also believe, as Krauss strikingly puts it, that "it behoves us as scientists and as human beings to work responsibly both for the future of our science and for the future of our languages, not so much for reward according to the fashion of the day, but for the sake of posterity ... If we do not act, we should be cursed by future generations for Neronically fiddling while Rome burned" (1992, p.8; see also the positions developed by Heller et al., 1999). So just what kind of engagement is professionally appropriate for the linguist who sees this issue as a real one? There is no shortage of spurs to take actions, not the least of which is knowing that later generations – to the point of this becoming a cliched reaction[11] – often look to

recover heritage languages sloughed off by the parents and grandparents: "The generation who do not transmit an ethnic language are usually actively in search of a social betterment that they believe they can only achieve by abandoning, among other identifying behaviours, a stigmatising language. The first generation secure as to social position is often also the first generation to yearn after the lost language, which by their time is no longer regarded as particularly stigmatising" (Dorian, 1993, p. 576-7). It would not surprise me to see evidence of this phenomenon in Deaf communities in years to come.

Nevertheless, the arguments against engagement are not petty. A short but powerful statement from Peter Ladefoged (1992) is typical:

> Let me now challenge directly the assumption ... that different languages, and even different cultures, always ought to be preserved. It is paternalistic of linguists to assume that they know what is best for the community ... The case for studying endangered languages is very strong on linguistic grounds. It is often enormously strong on humanitarian grounds as well. But it would be self-serving of linguists to pretend that this is always the case. We must be wary of arguments based on political considerations. Of course I am no more in favour of genocide or repression of minorities than I am of people dying of tuberculosis or starving through ignorance. We should always be sensitive to the concerns of the people whose language we are studying. But we should not assume that we know what is best for them. (p. 810)

The point being made needs little amplification. Language users perform a kind of cost-benefit analysis in assessing linguistic relationships with the surrounding society (Edwards, 1984b, 1985, 1994). Consciously or sub-consciously, we all attempt to work through the equations, weighing up the pros and cons in our heads, when making language choices of the most mundane kind. Here we are talking about major choices, and the energy devoted to the analysis is probably therefore the greater. Do Deaf people not think in terms of costs and benefits? After all, it's probably economically wiser, is it not, to be able to understand your interpreter at the job interview, the Deaf presenter on TV, your teacher, your (most often hearing) parents and your hearing colleagues? Thus, if taking a stand for heritage signing is not going to help, and may well hinder, in these relationships, one has a considerable argument against maintenance.

Nancy Dorian has argued (1987) that language maintenance efforts may be valuable even when usage of the minority language still does not greatly increase.[12] Raising the profile of a language can in itself help to mitigate negative attitudes towards users of the language: promotion of the language may help to transmit ethnic histories that might otherwise be threatened: and economic benefits – most obviously, in the form of jobs for language teachers – may emerge.

So it is not the case, surely, that there is too much to lose and nothing to be gained from taking a stand. Look again at the Swedish experience. Brita Bergman made major inroads into sign linguistics when she went through the process of

writing an early book on Signed Swedish (Bergman, 1979). Her conclusions from this exercise led her directly to advocating for the use of the heritage signed language - and we have seen the results for Swedish Deaf people. There may be a question of short term costs and long term benefits, but Swedish Deaf life stands as a very different, and more optimistic, scenario. In a follow-up to Ladefoged's comments, Daniels (1993, p. 587) makes the sharp point that Ladefoged "fails to make an important distinction: some, or many, of the dying languages are dying precisely because of metropolitan influence (...): imperialism, to use a word little heard these days. How many of the communities who choose to abandon their language ... do so only because they are left with no choice?" If a Deaf community shifts to the point of abandoning the heritage signed language, might it not be fair to wonder whether educational, social and service-provision policies have in effect left little choice (and, to take engagement a step further, if so, why?).[13] The challenge, then, lies in trying to figure out what action to take – and how urgently – to ensure that there continues to *be* a choice.

Ladefoged (1992) also argues that recording and documentation are the real legitimate pursuits for the professional linguist. Again, the rejoinder is swift and incisive: "In actuality, linguistic salvage work, which consists solely of 'record(ing) for posterity' certain structural features of a threatened small language is inevitably a political act, just as any other act touching that language would be" (Dorian, 1993, p. 575). It is arguable, too, that the recording and documentation work will proceed best (i.e., with the most satisfactory scientific results) if the native users of the languages in question are engaged directly in the activity. This, of course, is only likely to happen if they receive training that will enable their work to be accepted as properly empirical and objective analysis. Where is such training to come from? It is argued by Krauss (1992) and England (1992), and I would agree, that professional linguists who have an interest in seeing this work carried out effectively should also see it as their responsibility, at least in part, to transmit knowledge of their craft to others in the interests of both good science and of linguistic policy. Given this context, there is much to commend the view that "Priority should be given to the documentation of endangered languages, for the intrinsic scientific value of the knowledge encapsulated in those languages, for the human value of their role in cultural identity, for the scientific interest in the process of attribution of which language death is a case, for what aspects of human cognition are reflected in language structure" (Craig, 1997, p. 270).

Still, perhaps the strongest argument for the value of bringing out into the open concerns about the future of heritage signed languages is that, in performing their cost-benefit analysis, many, many members of Deaf communities are not well informed about their own language, its relationship to other languages, and the sociolinguistic cause-and-effect patterns that they are living in (and living out). Although the situation has changed in the last twenty years, there are still many deaf people who are not entirely convinced that their heritage languages – rich and efficient visual-gestural languages, evolved for and from the stuff of their modality

– actually are 'real and proper languages' at all.

This too, I believe, means that there is a vital responsibility for the linguist to become engaged at least far enough to enable communities to achieve their self-determination on the basis of the fullest possible knowledge of the issues at hand. When discussing bilingualism and biculturalism, people are counselled (e.g., Grosjean, 1992) to think of the ability to make informed choices regarding identification and usage as pivotal. In essence, the suggestion here is no more than a proposal that choices involving *mixed* language codes should be dealt with similarly. In the UK, Deaf people who use English-influenced signing tend, at least in part – and probably largely subconsciously – to do so because it is perceived as 'educated' by other Deaf people, and by many hearing people (if only because the hearing people can understand it better). Most Deaf people here have had it drummed into them throughout their education that the ultimate goal is the development English language skills: these are the keys to life's doors. Perhaps that is the main reason for the engagement of the linguist where one can level the playing field a little by informing Deaf people (and others) of fundamental facts about heritage signed languages and their relationship to other language varieties. Can we as applied linguists not have a role in engaging with communities in order that they *can develop* the ideology to support language maintenance if they so wish?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes gratefully to acknowledge the advice and comments in particular of the Editors and reviewers of this paper. Earlier drafts received feedback of many kinds, especially from Ceil Lucas and Leila Monaghan, and also David Adger, Inger Ahlgren, Brita Bergman, Mary Brennan, David Brien, Mike Byram, Karen Corrigan, Patrick Griffiths, Ken Hale, Adam Jaworski, Adam Kendon, Bob Le Page, Greg Myers, Rob Pensalfini, Kyra Pollitt, Trude Schermer, Mark Sebba, Ronnie Wilbur and Anthony Woodbury. Responsibility for the finished paper nevertheless remains solely with the author.

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Graham H Turner
Department of Education & Social Science
University of Central Lancashire
Preston GB-PR1 2HE
UK
E-mail: g.h.turner@uclan.ac.uk

NOTES

[1] Ceil Lucas and Clayton Valli's influential work on contact signing (1989, 1991, 1992) arrives at the conclusion that contact signing is a predictable, consistent system, mutually intelligible between users, resulting from the contact between ASL and English and consisting of features from both languages. ASL-English contact signing is one possible form of the phenomenon which is, for instance, also present mutatis mutandis in the UK and the Netherlands: the two major elements are a natural signed language and a co-occuring spoken language.

[2] I use the term 'mixed' to describe natural language systems that are perceived by users to combine in significant proportion elements of two or more other natural language systems.

[3] It happens that my own interaction over 15 years with Deaf people in the UK leads me to believe that this issue is, in fact, a very real one in this country. I have been asked many times to provide conclusive evidence of this: I cannot. An extensive, longitudinal study would provide the kind of data necessary. Such data does not at present exist for BSL nor for any other signed language of which I am aware. In its absence, several colleagues – particularly those in the USA – have argued that their signed languages are, if anything, becoming *more,* not less, strongly positioned. They cite, for instance, government grants for researchers as evidence. It is not at all impossible that we are both right as regards our respective national circumstances. We have equal need of a great deal more solid data if we plan to reach a conclusion on that issue. But the concern of *this* paper is the response of a language community (including its public intellectuals) to the evidence of potential language shift.

[4] The extent to which finger spelling is properly seen as an embedded or an attached part of signed language is currently an issue of fascinating contention (see Branson et al., 1995). For present purposes, however, the salient point is that finger spelling is more widely used in contact signing discourse.

[5] There are certainly, though, those who find it legitimate to describe a range of language change situations - including those where well-established national languages stand to be lost only in very small geographical pockets – using the more dramatic term language *death*, since "the context and consequences of language shift and obsolesence seem much the same regardless of whether an entire language or a residual or immigrant variety outside the indigenous area is involved" (McMahon, 1994, p. 292).

[6] An extended, compelling and well-grounded case for linguistics and cultural diversity can be found in Fishman, 1982.

[7] I am led to believe – for instance by Carol Padden's discussion (1994) of the USA situation – that the UK does not stand alone in this respect.

[8] Commenting on the symbolic power represented by such switches, Branson and Miller (1992, p. 20) note that, in Australia, most of Deaf people tend to move into signing that follows English word order "even when the skills of the hearing signer do not require such switching."

[9] Visual-spatial expressions of meaning are not the special province of signers, of course (see, for instance, McNeill, 1992). The same cognitive underpinnings are at work when hearing people use gesture in communication, although it is not grammaticized as in signed languages.

[10] An excellent synthesis of fundamental psycholinguistic studies can be found in Grosjean, (1980).

[11] It is also a reaction which has been described as romanticised rather than realistic (e.g., Edwards, 1984b).

REFERENCES

Anonymous (1996). Enough glib talk. *See Hear!* February. 25.

Baetens-Beardsmore, H. (1986). *Bilingualism: Basic principles* (Second Edition). Clevedon, Philadelphia and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Bellugi, U., O'Grady, L., Lillo-Martin, D., O'Grady, M., Van Hoek, K. And Corina, D. (1989). Enhancement of spatial cognition in hearing and deaf children. In V. Volterra & C. Erting (Eds.), *From gesture to language in hearing and deaf children* (pp. 278-298). Berlin and New York: Springer Verlag.

Bergman, B. (1978). *Signed Swedish.* National Swedish Board of Education.

Bergman, B. (1994). The study of sign language in society: Part One. In C. Erting et al. (Eds.), *The Deaf way: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture.* (pp. 309-317). Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Branson, J., & Miller, D. (1992). Linguistics, symbolic violence - and the search for word order in sign languages. *Signpost,* 5, 2, 14-28.

Branson, J., Toms, J., Bernal, B., & Miller, D. (1995). The history and role of fingerspelling in Auslan. In H. Bos & T. Schermer (Eds.), *Sign language research 1994: Proceedings of the Fourth European Congress on Sign Language Research in Munich.* Hamburg: Signum.

Brennan, M. (1986). Linguistic perspectives. In B. Tervoort (Ed.), *Signs of life: Proceedings of the Second European Congress on Sign Language Research* (pp. 1-16). Amsterdam: The Dutch Foundation for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Child; The Institute of General Linguistics of the University of Amsterdam; The Dutch Council of the Deaf.

Brennan, M. (1990). *Word formation in British Sign Language.* Stockholm: University of Stockholm.

Brennan, M. (1992). The visual world of BSL: An introduction. In D. Brien (Ed.), *Dictionary of British Sign Language/English.* London: Faber and Faber.

Brennan, M. (1993). Review article: Semi-semiotics for the semi-conscious. *Signpost, 6,* 1, 47-54.

Brennan, M. and Hayhurst, A. (1980). The Renaissance of British Sign Language. Supplement to *British Deaf News*, October.

Brien, D. (1991). Is there a Deaf culture? In S. Gregory & G. Hartley (Eds.), *Constructing deafness* (pp. 46-52).

Charter, D. (1995). Mind your language. *Times higher educational supplement, 1772* (21 April 1995). 14.

Cokely, D. (1983). When is a pidgin not a pidgin? An alternative analysis of the ASL - English contact situation. *Sign Language Studies, 38,* 1-24.

Corker, M. (1998a). Différance and diaspora: An emerging sociolinguistics of disabled identities. Paper presented at *Sociolinguistics Symposium 12*, London: Institute of Education, Mar. 1998.

Corker, M. (1998b). *Deaf and disabled, or deafness disabled?* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Coyne, P. (1995). Dialectrics. *New Statesman & Society*, 8(344), (17 March 1995). 30.
Craig, C. (1997). Language Contact and Language Degeneration. In Coulmas, F. (Ed.) *The handbook of sociolinguistics*. (pp. 257-270). Oxford: Blackwell.
Cummins, J., and Swain, M. (1986). *Bilingualism in education: Aspects of theory, research and practice*. London: Longman.
Daniels, P. T. (1993). Review of Robert H. Robins & Eugenius M. Uhlenbeck (Ed.) "Endangered Languages". *Language in Society*, 22 (4), 585-588.
Davies, S. (1991). Bilingual Education for Deaf Children in Sweden & Denmark: Strategies for Transition & Implementation. *Sign Language Studies*, 71, 169-195.
Davies, S. (1994). Attributes for success. Attitudes and practices that facilitate the transition towards bilingualism in the education of deaf children. In Ahlgren, I., & Hyltenstam, K. (Eds.) *Bilingualism in deaf education*. (pp. 103-121). Hamburg: Signum.
Davis, L. (1995). *Enforcing normalcy: Disability, deafness and the body*. London: Verso.
Dorian, N. (1981). *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Dorian, N. (1987). The value of language-maintenance efforts which are unlikely to succeed. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 68, 57-67.
Dorian, N. (Ed.) (1989). *Investigating language obsolescence*. Cambridge: CUP.
Dorian, N. (1993). Choices and values in language shift and its study. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 110, 113-124.
Dorian, N. (1994b). Purism vs. compromise in language revitalization and language revival. *Language in Society*, 23, 479-494.
Edwards, J. (1980). Critics and criticisms of bilingual education. *Modern Language Journal,* 64, 409-415.
Edwards, J. (1984a). Introduction. In Edwards, J., (Ed.) *Linguistic minorities, policies and pluralism*. (pp. 1-16). London, etc: Academic Press.
Edwards, J. (1984b). Language, diversity and identity. In Edwards, J., (Ed.) *Linguistic minorities, policies and pluralism*. (pp. 277-310). London: Academic Press.
Edwards, J. (1985). *Language, society and identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Edwards, J. (1994). Ethnolinguistic pluralism and its discontents: a Canadian study, and some general observations. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* 110, 5-85.
Emmorey, K. and Reilly, J. (Eds.) (1995). *Language, gesture and space*. NJ and Hove, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale.
England, N. (1992). Doing Mayan linguistics in Guatemala. *Language,* 68, 29-35.
Engberg-Pedersen, E. (1993). *Space in Danish Sign Language*. Hamburg: Signum.
Fishman, J. (1972). *The sociology of language*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
Fishman, J. (1982). Whorfianism of the Third Kind: Ethnolinguistic Diverstiy as a Worldwide Societal Asset. *Language in Society*, 11, 1-4.
Fishman, J. (1989). *Language & ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective*. Clevedon, Philadelphia & Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.
Fishman, J. (1991). *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon, Philadelphia & Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.
Fishman, J. (1994). The truth about language and culture. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 109, 83-96.
Gal, S. (1979). *Language shift*. New York: Academic Press.
Gal, S. (1992) Multiplicity and contention among ideologies: A commentary. *Pragmatics*,

2(3), 445-449.
Gannon, J. (1981). *Deaf Heritage: A narrative history of deaf America.* Silver Spring, MD: National Association of the Deaf.
Gregory, S., Bishop, J. and Sheldon, L. (1995). *Deaf young people and their families.* Cambridge: CUP.
Gromes, B. (Ed.). (1988). *Ethnologue: Guide to the world's languages.* 11th edition. Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc.
Grosjean, F. (1980). Psycholinguistics of sign language. In H. Lane & F. Grosjean (Eds.), *Recent perspectives on American Sign Language* (pp. 33-59). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
Grosjean, F. (1992). The bilingual & the bicultural person in the hearing & in the deaf world. *Sign Language Studies, 77,* 307-320.
Hale, K. (1988). *The human value of local language.* Unpublished manuscript, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Hale, K. (1992). Language endangerment and the human value of linguistic diversity. *Languages,* 68 (1), 35-42.
Hale, K., Krauss, M. Watahomigie, L. J., Yamamoto, A. Y., Craig, C., Jeanne, L. M., & England, N. C. (1992). Endangered languages. *Language,* 68 (1), 1-42.
Heller, M., Rickford, J., Laforest, M., & Cyr, D. (1999) Sociolinguistics and public debate. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 3,* 2, 260-288.
Higgins, P. (1980). *Outsiders in a hearing world.* Sage, Newbury Park.
Huffines, M. (1991). Pennsylvania German: Convergence and change as strategies of discourse. In H. Seliger & R. Vago (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 125-137). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hyltenstam, K. (1994). Factors influencing the social role and status of minority languages. In I. Alhlgren & K. Hyltenstam (Eds.), *Bilingualism in deaf education* (pp. 297-310). Hamburg: Signum.
Jackendoff, R. (1994). *Patterns in the mind: Language and human nature.* New York, NY: Basic Books.
Klima, E. and Bellugi, U. (1979). *The signs of language.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
Krauss, M. (1992). The World's Languages in Crisis. *Language, 68,* 4-10.
Kulick, D. (1992). *Language shift and cultural reproduction: Socialization, self and syncretism in a Papua New Guinean village.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kyle, J., & Woll, B. (1985). *Sign language: The study of deaf people and their language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ladefoged, P. (1992). Another view of endangered languages. *Language, 68* , 4, 809-811.
Lane, H. (1992). *The mask of benevolence.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Lee, R. (Ed.) (1992). *Deaf liberation.* Middlesex: National Union of the Deaf.
Le Page, R., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of identity; Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity.* Cambridge: CUP.
Lucas, C., & Valli, C. (1989). Language contact in the American deaf community. In C. Lucas (Ed.), *The sociolinguistics of the deaf community* (pp. 11-40). San Diego: Academic Press.
Lucas, C., & Valli, C. (1991). ASL or contact signing: Issues of judgement. *Language in Society, 20,* 201-216.

Lucas, C., & Valli, C. (1992). *Language contact in the American deaf community.* San Diego: Academic Press.

Maguire, G. (1991). *Our own language: An Irish initiative.* Clevedon, Philadelphia & Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Maher, J. (1991). A crosslinguistic study of language contact and language attrition. In H. Seliger & R. Vago (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 67-84). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McMahon, A. (1994). *Understanding language change.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Padden, C. (1994). Squibble - The bicultural. *Signpost, 7*, 4, 218-224.

Padden, C., & Humphries, T. (1988). *Deaf in America: Voices from a culture.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Pensalfini, R. (1995). Personal communication.

Poizner, H., Klima, E., & Bellugi, U. (1987). *What the hands reveal about the brain.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Redfern, P. (1995). Deaf professionals - A growing stream. *Deafness*, 11(1), 8-10.

Reilly, J., & McIntire, M. (1980). American Sign Language and Pidgin Sign English: What's the difference? *Sign Language Studies*, *27*, 151-192.

Schermer, T. (1990). *In search of a language.* Delft: Eburon.

Schmidt, A. (1985) *Young people's Dyirbal: An example of language death from Australia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmidt, A. (1991). Language attrition in Boumaa Fijian and Dyirbal. In H. Seliger & Vago (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 113-124). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seliger, H., & Vigo, R. (1991). The study of first language attrition: an overview. In H. Seliger & R. Vigo (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 3-16). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1984a). *Bilingualism or not: The education of minorities.* Clevedon, Philadelphia and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1984b). Children of guest workers and immigrants: Linguistic and educational issues. In J. Edwards (Ed.), *Linguistic minorities, policies and pluralism* (pp. 17-48). London: Academic Press.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1994). Linguistic human rights: A prerequisite for bilingualism. In I. Ahlgren & K. Hyltenstam (Eds.), *Bilingualism in deaf education* (pp. 139-159). Hamburg: Signum.

Svartholm, K. (1993). Bilingual education for the Deaf in Sweden. *Sign Language Studies. 81.* 291-332.

Taylor, G., & Bishop, J. (Eds.). (1991) *Being deaf.* Pinter Publishers in association with the Open University, Milton Keynes.

Thoutenhoofd, E. (1995). How Descartes drew hearing people only. Paper given at *Body Matters Conference*, UK: University of Hull.

Turner, G. H. (1994a). How is Deaf culture? *Sign Language Studies*, *83*, 103-126.

Turner, G. H. (1994b). Response to four commentators. *Sign Language Studies*, *83*, 149-154.

Turner, G. H. (1994c). Response to Bahan, Montgomery, Ladd and further discussion. *Sign Language Studies*, *85*, 337-366.

Turner, G. H. (1995). Contact signing and language shift. In H. Bos & T. Schermer (Eds.), *Sign Language Research 1994: Proceedings of the Fourth European Congress*

on Sign Language Research in Munich (pp. 211-229). Hamburg: Signum.

Turner, G. H. (1996). Language change at the British Sign Language/English interface. In H. Coleman & L. Cameron (Eds.), *Change and language* (pp. 64-72). Clevedon, Avon: British Association for Applied Linguistics/Multilingual Matters.

Turner, G. H. (1997). The silence of the limbs? Paper presented to the Linguistics Circle Lancaster University, England.

Valli, C. (1990). The nature of a line in ASL poetry. In W. Edmondson & F. Karlsson (Eds.), SLR '87: *Papers from the Fourth International Symposium on Sign Language Research* (pp. 171-182). Hamburg: Signum.

Valli, C. (1992). Linguistic features of ASL Poetry. Paper presented at the *5th International Symposium on Sign language Research*, Spain: Salamanca.

Wallin, L. (1994). The study of sign language in society: Part two. In C. Erting et al. (Eds.), *The Deaf way: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture* (pp. 318-330). Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Wilcox, S. (Ed.) (1989). *American deaf culture: An anthology*. Burtonsville MD: Linstok Press.

Woodbury, A. (1993). A defense of the proposition, 'When a language dies, a culture dies'. Paper given at the *First Annual Symposium on Language in Society*, Austin, TX, USA.

Woolard, K. (1992). Language ideology: Issues and approaches. *Pragmatics*, *2*, 3, 235-249.