

## Multiple viewpoints in American Sign Language

*Barbara Shaffer*

### 6.1 Introduction

This study looks at one of the many ways that speakers of signed languages can infuse their discourse with their viewpoint. As people speak, they convey information and simultaneously project their perspectives, opinions, and beliefs about what they say. Some strategies enable more speakers to contribute than others, and thus, warrant special consideration. One such adaptive linguistic device involves the use of what are known by Americans as *evidentiality markers*.<sup>1</sup> This research presents new contributions to the growing body of literature providing an analysis of the evidence and argumentation of signed languages from the perspective of Linguistic Discourse Analysis (Shaffer 2007; Wilcox 2002; Wilcox 2003; Wilcox 2006). In particular, this study extends the very promising path of ASL research toward a Mental Spaces Theory (Fauconnier 1985; Fauconnier and Turner 1992; Turner 1997). In his 2004 study of body part naming and sign form, Shaffer demonstrated that a Mental Spaces approach was particularly well-suited to signed languages that make use of various body parts to express concepts such as *body, body, body, Space and Time*.

In this study, I show how such an approach offers a useful descriptive tool for deaf native signers to indicate the source of their information, and the claims they make in their discourse. An *evidential* is any device or resource in a given language used to indicate the source information for a statement and, more broadly, how a speaker chooses to evaluate the relevance of that information (Gaskins and Nichols 1986).

In some languages, speakers indicate the source of their information with a grammatical marker called an *evidential*, usually realized as a grammaticalized evidential (Aikhenvald 2005). In English and many other languages, this information is often encoded through the use of words or phrases such as *I've heard* and *they say/said*, as in Examples 1 and 2.

(1) I've heard he takes steroids.

(2) They say she's really nice.

## 6 Reported speech as an evidentiality strategy in American Sign Language

Barbara Shaffer

### 6.1 Introduction

This study looks at one of the many ways that speakers of American Sign Language (ASL) infuse their discourse with their viewpoint. As people speak, they convey information and simultaneously impart their viewpoint, opinions, and beliefs about what they say. Some utterances convey more speaker perspective than others, and thus, warrant special consideration. One such subjective linguistic device involves the use of what are termed by Aikhenvald (2006) and others “evidentiality strategies.” The research presented here contributes to the growing body of literature providing an analysis of the function and structure of signed languages from the perspective of Cognitive Grammar (e.g. Janzen and Shaffer 2002; Wilcox 2002; Liddell 2003; Dudis 2004). In particular, this study extends the very promising path of ASL research using Conceptual Integration Theory (Fauconnier 1985; Fauconnier and Turner 1996; Dudis 2004). In his 2004 study of body partitioning and Real Space Blends, Dudis showed that a Mental Spaces approach was particularly useful to illustrate how signers make use of various body parts to convey complex concepts spanning both Space and Time.

In this study, I show how such an approach is also useful in describing how deaf native signers indicate the source of the evidence they have for claims they make in their discourse. An evidential is any of the set of devices in a given language used to indicate the nature of evidence for a statement, and, more broadly, how a speaker chooses to mark the veracity of that statement (Chafe and Nichols 1986).

In some languages, speakers indicate the source of their information with a grammatical marker called an evidential, sometimes referred to as a grammaticalized evidential (Aikhenvald 2006). In English, and many other languages, this information is often encoded through the use of words or phrases such as *I've heard* and *they say/said*, as in Examples (1) and (2).

- (1) I've heard he takes steroids.
- (2) They say she's really nice.

In (1) and (2) the speaker is simultaneously making a claim (“he uses steroids,” “she’s really nice”) and indicating that there is some (evidential) basis for this claim. The specific source of the evidence is not named, nor does the speaker explicitly state whether or not she believes the statement, though the choice of a particular evidential can, through invited inference, suggest much about the speaker’s own beliefs. It is common for such “hearsay” evidentials to cast some doubt on the truth of the proposition (see Travis 2006 for a description of one such evidential, *dizque*, in Spanish).

Aikhenvald (2006) prefers the term “reported evidential” for an evidential that is a “verbal” report, such as the English periphrastic *I’ve heard*. She suggests that “quotative evidential” should be reserved for reported evidentials where the identity of the “reporter” is specified. For the purposes of this chapter, “reported speech” and “reported evidential” will be used to describe those forms that function to index information to a spoken/signed/written source and to an interpreter of that source (typically the speaker) (Mushin 2001), whether the source is explicitly stated or left unspecified (as in “someone said”).

Another commonly studied type of evidential is the so-called inferential evidential. Its meaning and use differ in significant ways from reported evidentials. In (3), the periphrastic *I’ve heard* is used as a reported speech evidential to inform the listener that the speaker has heard, or read, or otherwise learned that rain is in the forecast. In (4), on the other hand, the speaker uses evidence available (clouds, wind, people walking by with umbrellas, etc.), on the basis of which an inferential conclusion is drawn.

- (3) I heard it’s going to rain today.
- (4) It looks like it’s going to rain today.

Inferential evidentials are frequent in ASL discourse. In (5), a bystander has previously seen a married couple arguing, has heard that the husband has moved to a hotel, and now notices that the husband is no longer wearing his wedding band. He makes the following statement of deduction using SEEM:

- (5) [TIM, JENNIFER DIVORCE]-TOPIC  
[SEEM]-HEAD NOD/BROW FURROW
- It appears that Tim and Jennifer are going to get a divorce.

As in (5), the evidential marker is often seen in the comment of a topic-marked construction. Shaffer (2004) noted that the speaker’s subjective stance is often found in the comment of such constructions.

Evidentials that report the statements and stances of others – what Aikhenvald would call reported evidentials and the related “quotatives,” which explicitly name the source – are also a frequent and interesting phenomenon in ASL discourse. They are also quite complex, and little, if anything, has been written

about them in the literature. As such, they will be the primary focus of this chapter. In the following sections I will describe this interesting use of reported speech in ASL and introduce some elements of the conceptual integration framework to illustrate how signers create blends where constructed discourse is used to manifest reported speech evidentials.

## 6.2 Conceptual Integration Theory

Drawing on Conceptual Integration theory, as outlined in Fauconnier (1985) and Fauconnier and Turner (1996), and applied to signed languages by Dudis (2004, 2007), I will describe how signers make use of the space around them in the expression of reported evidentials in ASL. In these constructions, the signer creates a blend where he uses constructed, yet compressed, prior discourse (see Dudis 2007) to recreate a segment of a conversation he shared with another speaker. It is in that constructed discourse that he shares his evidential stance.

Liddell (2003), Dudis (2004), Wulf and Dudis (2005), and others have described how ASL signers manifest conceptual blends. They use the conceptual integration framework described by Fauconnier and Turner (1996, 1998). Dudis (2004: 226) introduces essential elements of the approach below.

[F]our interconnected mental spaces are involved in the blending process. Two of these mental spaces serve as inputs to another mental space, the blend. . . . [O]ne of the inputs is real space which, as Liddell (1995: 21–23) describes, is a mental space built via perceptual processes. This is distinct from the other input in that elements in the former are understood by the conceptualizer as being part of his or her immediate environment; Liddell (1995) uses the term “grounded” to label this particular property of real space. In signed discourse, the real space of the addressee would consist of her conceptualization of the signer via visual input. That is, the signer in the addressee’s real space is a mental space element. Other objects that are visually accessible are also potentially real-space elements. The empty physical space is also a real-space element.

The other input is referred to as a non-grounded mental space. Dudis calls this a narrative space, containing elements introduced during a given narrative. Of significance to the discussion here are the unique ways that signers can partition their bodies (such as their hands and eyes) to show the actions, and reactions, of someone else. When the signer is part of the blend a visible |actor| results (Dudis 2004). To illustrate this, Dudis describes how a signer might make use of body partitioning in a narrative about riding a motorcycle up a hill. The signer may create a Real Space Blend in which parts of his own body are understood to be those of the |motorcyclist| in the narrative. He notes that “the signer’s body contributes a great deal of information about the |motorcyclist|—the way he moves, his facial expression, how he responds to events, and so forth” (Dudis 2004: 224).

In this chapter, I will describe how signers use conceptual blending as an evidentiality strategy. In such blends (for simplicity, called “what I heard” blends here), a past discourse context is activated with two or more discourse participants, referred to as the [informer] and the [past self]. Many blends of this type make use of body partitioning, where one of the signer’s hands is understood to be the signing hand of the [informer], a discourse partner from some past conversation. Other parts of the signer’s body are understood to be the signer’s ([past self]) in that same past discourse event. When such a blend is activated, the [informer] relates some piece of important (and possibly controversial) information, and the [past self] reacts to it. This is typically done via constructed dialogue. It is the conveyance of the constructed dialogue that is evidential in nature, as shown in (6). All the examples below come from a larger set of data consisting of dyads of native ASL users engaging in natural conversations. Filming took place in both the United States and Canada.

(6) YES YES AND PRO.1 HEARD (gaze right) 3SIGN.TO1 (leans forward) #WHAT\*\*

(gaze center) V-R-S (nod) START CUT (left hand)  
 CUT (right hand) CUT (left hand)  
 [HAPPEN SEE NAME]-TOP  
 [KNOW WHO]-TOP  
 CUT REFUSE ANSWER  
 [WHY]-TOP SOMETIMES SIT NAKED BODY SECOND BAD  
 SWEARING  
 [TRUE]-Y/N

Yes, and I heard, well, I was told, and was shocked to hear, that the VRS (companies) are starting to disconnect calls. If they see a name that they know they don’t answer, because sometimes people have answered naked, or used profanity. Is that true?

In (6), the signer and her addressee are discussing the use of video relay services (VRS). She says “I heard,” then pauses, shifts her eye gaze from the addressee and gazes to the right, activating the blend. Next she signs, “I was told” (literally: “it is signed to me”), and then responds (to the past discourse partner) to what she was told with a look of surprise and the reply “what?!” She then returns her eye gaze to her addressee, thus deactivating the blend, and only then relates what she was told in the past discourse event and invites her addressee to comment on it.

### 6.3 The complex problem of evidentiality

Evidentiality and related discourse phenomena have been the subject of numerous studies. Unfortunately, little consensus exists as to the nature of the category or its natural, logical limits. It seems to be a case of “we know it when we see it,”

but beyond that, much is left to the linguist attempting to describe it. This is due, in large part, to the fact that evidentiality is a discourse strategy that is expressed in different ways depending on language type and use. In the introduction to their well-known book, *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*, Chafe and Nichols (1986: vii) somewhat whimsically describe evidentiality as “the ways in which ordinary people unhampered by philosophical traditions, naturally regard the source and reliability of their knowledge.”

A second complicating factor has to do with the variability in functioning of evidentials, perhaps confounded by the first issue of delimiting the category. While most researchers agree that evidentiality is best considered distinct from modality (but cf Palmer 1986), little else is clearly agreed on. For example, Mithun (1986: 89) states that evidential markers “specify the source of evidence on which statements are based as well as their degree of precision, their probability, and expectations concerning their probability.” She goes on to say that the specification of the source allows the speaker to “abdicate” some of the responsibility for the reliability or truth of the proposition, and allows the listener to come to his or her own conclusions regarding the truth of the statement. As Mithun also notes, the reliability of a statement can be qualified by specifying the probability of its truth. Evidentials are often used as a hedge whereby the speaker can again abdicate responsibility for truth. If the speaker turns out to be wrong, the hedging has guarded against a violation of the Gricean maxim of truthfulness.

De Haan (1999b: 7–8), on the other hand, states that evidentials are “*a priori* unmarked with respect to a commitment to the truth of the speech utterance on the part of the speaker. Evidentials merely assert that there is evidence to back up the speaker’s utterance.” While de Haan acknowledges that an evidential may invite a particular inference by the listener, he believes that such connections are secondary.

With respect to discourse function, de Haan (2005) states that the role of an evidential is to denote the relative distance between the speaker and the action. An indirect evidential (which Lazard [2001] and others aptly refer to as a “mediative”) will be chosen when the speaker wishes to state that the action took place outside his or her deictic sphere, whereas the choice of a direct evidential indicates that the action took place within that deictic sphere. I will return to the deictic notion of evidentiality in a moment. Here, however, I will provide a quote from Lazard to contrast with de Haan’s description of evidentials in order to illustrate the variability among researchers’ discussions of the function of an evidential.

The opposition is not direct vs. indirect knowledge, old vs. new knowledge, or assimilated vs. unassimilated knowledge. Rather, it is an opposition at the morphosyntactic level between forms indicating nothing about the source of the information and forms referring to the source of the information without specifying it. “Ordinary”, non-evidential forms state the facts purely and simply. Evidential forms, on the other hand,

point to the speaker's *becoming aware* of the facts. In the case of inference it implies "as I infer"; in the case of unexpected perception it implies "as I see". The speaker is somehow split into two persons, the one speaking and the one who has heard, inferred, or perceived. (Lazard 2001: 362)

From these descriptions of evidential use a common theme emerges. An evidential indexes a certain distance and relationship between the speaker and the proposition, as de Haan suggests, or perhaps more succinctly: "between the speaker and his or her own discourse, or between the speaker as the person acquiring evidence and the person expressing it" (Lazard 2001: 362). In essence, evidentials function to reduce the speaker's responsibility for the information they convey.

Because evidentials point to the time a speaker "becomes aware" of facts, a conceptual blending analysis of them is extremely illustrative. And, because evidentials are deictic in nature, pointing both to a propositional content and to a source of evidence, it seems logical that in a signed language, that deictic relationship would be spatially marked. I return to the deictic nature of evidentials in the next section, but first will provide several more examples of reported speech evidential blends.

#### 6.4 The construction of reported speech evidential blends

Before going further, let me describe in more detail how signers use their bodies and the space around them to express reported speech evidentials. I will use Example (6) from above. Figure 6.1 shows the positioning of the interlocutors and the discourse space between them that they use to construct their utterances.

The signer on the right is relating something she previously heard about a video relay service provider.<sup>1</sup> She has heard that relay providers keep a log of users' names and numbers and will not provide service to individuals who misuse the service. To share (and frame) this information, the signer activates a "what I heard" blend. Here she shifts her eye gaze to a locus to the right of the central signing space she and her interlocutor share. Figure 6.2a shows the signer's eye gaze towards her interlocutor and the discourse space between them. Figure 6.2b shows her eye gaze shift to the right (activating the blend), as she begins the report of what has been said previously. She begins by saying "I heard" (while looking at her addressee), shifts her gaze to the right, then states "it is told to me" (literally, "it is signed to me"), and then relates her reaction to what she has been told. Her reaction is translated here as "what!?" She then returns her eye gaze to the addressee and relates what she has heard.

In such a construction, the signer creates a blend where the original discourse, now being reported, occurred. She reconstructs the act of being told, and her

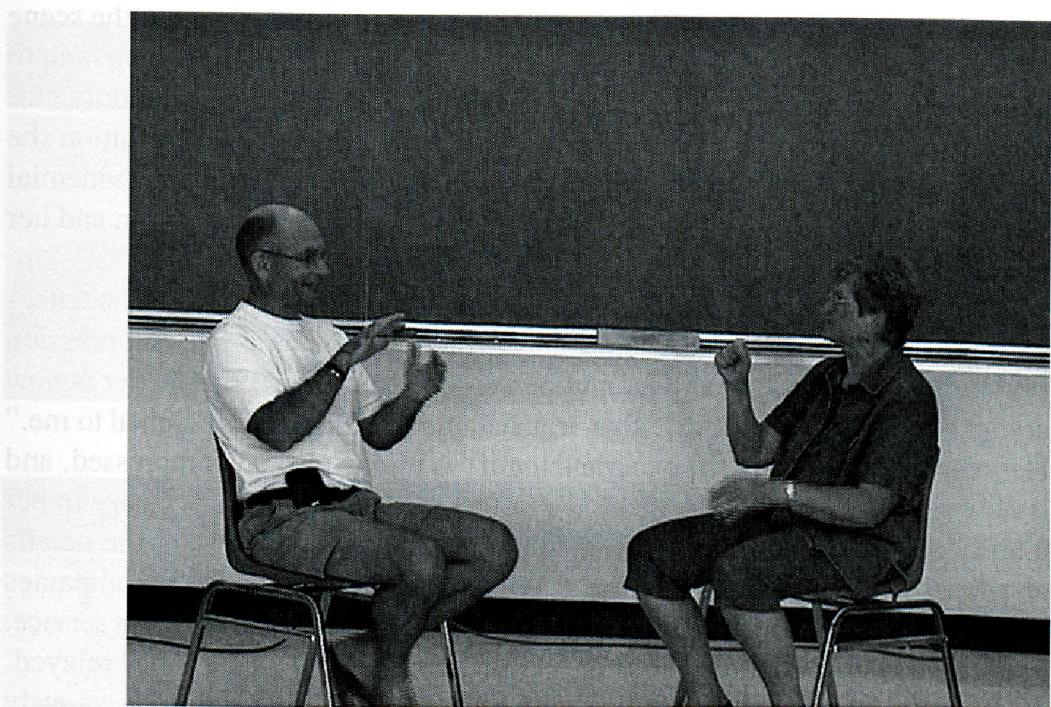


Figure 6.1 Discourse setting for Example (6)

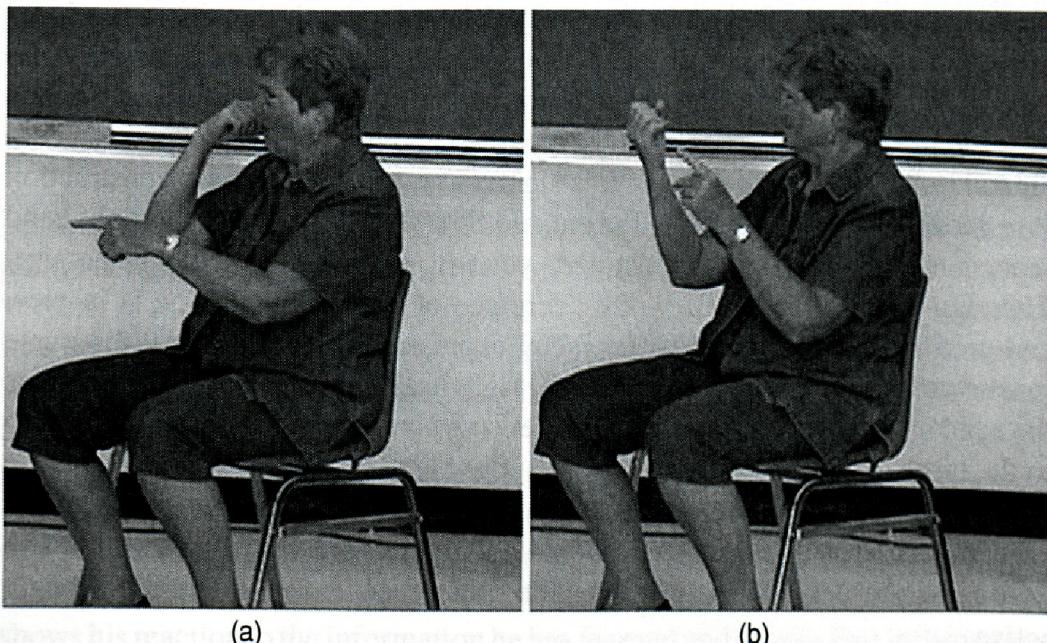


Figure 6.2 "I hear." The blended space where "it is signed to me" is produced

reaction to the information. She visually creates, for the interlocutor, the scene where the prior conversation occurred. She shifts her gaze to that scene (and to a distinct physical space), thus temporarily disengaging from her interlocutor and cueing him to follow her into the Event Space (where the conversation she is relating took place) that she has created. She literally *points* to the evidential source (with her eye gaze) in the blend, as she relates the conversation and her reactions to it.

The signer takes an entire discourse segment, presumably several sentences in length, and shortens it, what Dudis would call a temporal compression (Dudis 2007). What the unidentified person (the |informer|) said to her is now compressed into a single ASL sign, translatable into English as “signed to me.” Her response (as |past self| experiencing it) to it may also be compressed, and is now simply “what!?” She then deactivates the blend, returns her gaze to her interlocutor, and goes on to report, in the present discourse event, the details of what she has heard. In (6), for example, she reports that VRS companies are now denying certain customers access based on prior misuse of the service. Finally, she invites her discourse partner to comment on what she has relayed.

Of particular interest in this blend is the body partitioning feature previously described in detail by Dudis (2004: 223): again, these are “the partitionable zones of the body available to ASL signers. These zones are the body subparts that can participate in mappings that create blends (Fauconnier and Turner 1996) that have as one input Real Space, a mental space built by perceptual processes (Liddell 1995).” In the “what I heard” blend, the signer produces “it is signed to me” with her right hand. We easily understand her right hand at this point to represent her past interlocutor’s hand. We also know that the past interlocutor actually told her something, and did not simply say, “you are signed to.” Of note, the phrase “it is signed to me” is in a passive construction (see Janzen *et al.* 2000, 2001; Janzen and Shaffer 2007), where the right hand represents the hand of the demoted, yet still present, agent of the passive. The signer (the |past self|) is the addressee of the utterance. She is in view and profiled in the utterance. Her facial expressions depict her past discourse reaction to what she was told. Next, her right hand (which no longer represents the hand of her interlocutor, but rather her own hand) signs her own past reaction to the information she was (just) given. The blend is then deactivated, and she returns her eye gaze to her interlocutor and continues her discourse. The entire sequence is seen in Figure 6.3, including Figure 6.3e, which shows her eye gaze return to her interlocutor, signaling that the blended space is no longer active.

On returning her eye gaze to her interlocutor, the signer reports what she has heard. She does not quote her source, but rather paraphrases, and elaborates on it as needed, in order to provide enough information and thus accomplish her communicative goals. Her reference to the unidentified interlocutor (the

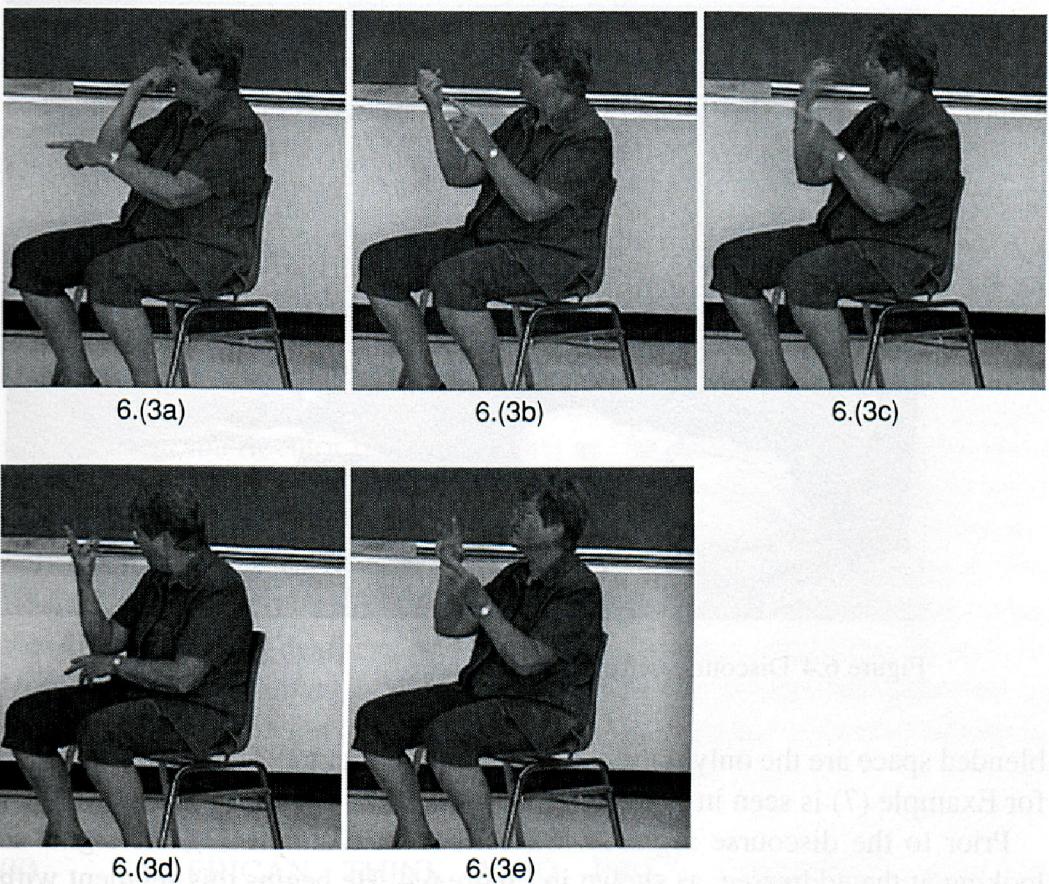


Figure 6.3 (6.3a): “I heard”; (6.3b) and (6.3c): “it is signed to me”; (6.3d): “I said ‘what?!’” and (6.3e): VRS

[informer]) in the blended past space does not introduce a new discourse participant, but rather provides information about *the signer’s* judgment regarding the veracity of the truth of her own proposition. In essence, the signer can prime her interlocutor with her reaction and thoughts before relaying what she has heard. The blended space could be interpreted as a hedge, as Mithun (1986) describes it, serving to distance the signer from what she is saying, and abdicating her responsibility for the truth of the proposition.

In contrast to Example (6), where the signer partitions her body to indicate that someone is signing to her and to depict her responses to what is said, in Example (7) (and others like it), the signer constructs a blend where he only shows his reaction to the information he has learned and relates that information. We do not see any compressed segment of the “evidence.” In some examples the source of evidence is named, while in others it is just referred to generally (such as “someone said”). The signer’s eye-gaze towards the conceptualized location of that past discourse event conversant and his reaction towards the



Figure 6.4 Discourse setting for Example (7)

blended space are the only traces of the other interlocutor. The discourse space for Example (7) is seen in Figure 6.4.

Prior to the discourse segment, transcribed in Example (7), the signer is looking at the addressee, as shown in Figure 6.4. He begins this segment with “someone said,” and then shifts his gaze to the right.

- (7)     **(eye gaze right) SOMEONE SAY**  
**PRO.1 OH.I.SEE GOOD IDEA**  
**(eye gaze to addressee) SUPPOSE PRO.1 N.C. CALL VRS index**  
**left CHARLOTTE**  
**GO.TO OTHER STATE**  
**LESS CONFLICT INTEREST**  
**KNOW EACH.OTHER**  
**LESS CONFLICT INTEREST**  
**(eye gaze right) PRO.1 OH.I.SEE**  
 Someone told me something interesting. I thought it was a good idea. If I'm in North Carolina and call the video relay service I won't get the one in Charlotte, I'll get one in another state. There's less conflict of interest that way, because we don't know each other. So there's less conflict of interest. Interesting.

Here, the signer says “someone told me,” and then activates the blend. He shifts his eye gaze right, and signs his reaction (OH.I.SEE, translated as “interesting”) to what he was told in the previous discourse setting. However, there is no

constructed discourse from his conversant, only a constructed discourse space where the signer looks, and where he reacts to what he was previously told. He then returns his eye gaze to his interlocutor, deactivating the reported speech blend, while simultaneously signing “good idea,” and then begins to convey the reported information.

Interestingly, at the end of the reported segment, he returns his eye gaze to the previously active blend space, thus reactivating it, and again signs OH.I.SEE “interesting.” Figure 6.5 illustrates the shift in his eye gaze and deictic indexing of the previous Event Space.

Similarly, in Example (8) (from the conversation shown in Figure 6.1), a “what I heard” blend is activated, as the (Canadian) signer introduces his past speech event interlocutor (the |informer|) as “an American, I can’t remember who.” The signer shifts his eye gaze to the Past Event Space and we understand his eyes to be his |past self| eyes as he is viewing and reacting to the |informer|. The |past self| addressee shows his surprised response to what he learned. The blend is deactivated and only then does the signer convey what he learned from the American about deafness, and the grieving process parents go through on learning that their infant is deaf. Again, the signer primes his addressee to consider the information in the same manner with respect to its truthfulness as he has.

- (8) [AMERICAN THINK WHO PRO.3 COMMENT]-TOPIC [I  
LOOK.AT]-BACKWARDS HEAD LEAN  
RESEARCH FIND MOTHER.FATHER FIND DEAF 48H-R-S LESS  
GRIEF

I saw someone, an American I think, say, and thought “huh, interesting,” that if parents find out their child is deaf in the first 48 hours they experience less grieving.

In Example (9), also from the discourse setting seen in Figure 6.1 above, the male signer is again relating the “evidence” presented to him by another American scholar (also about deafness, and the grieving process), along with his reaction to it. Here, the individual is specifically named, and he states that he learned the information via a lecture. Other than the naming of the source, Example (9) is essentially identical to (8). There is no physical trace of the evidential source. We are not intended to believe that the verb “LECTURE” is a depicting verb (Dudis 2007) showing how someone made a presentation, or that it is part of the blended space. The only blended element seen is the signer (the |past self|) and his reaction. And, of course, we understand that Arlene Kelly and all elements of her presentation are part of the blend as well.

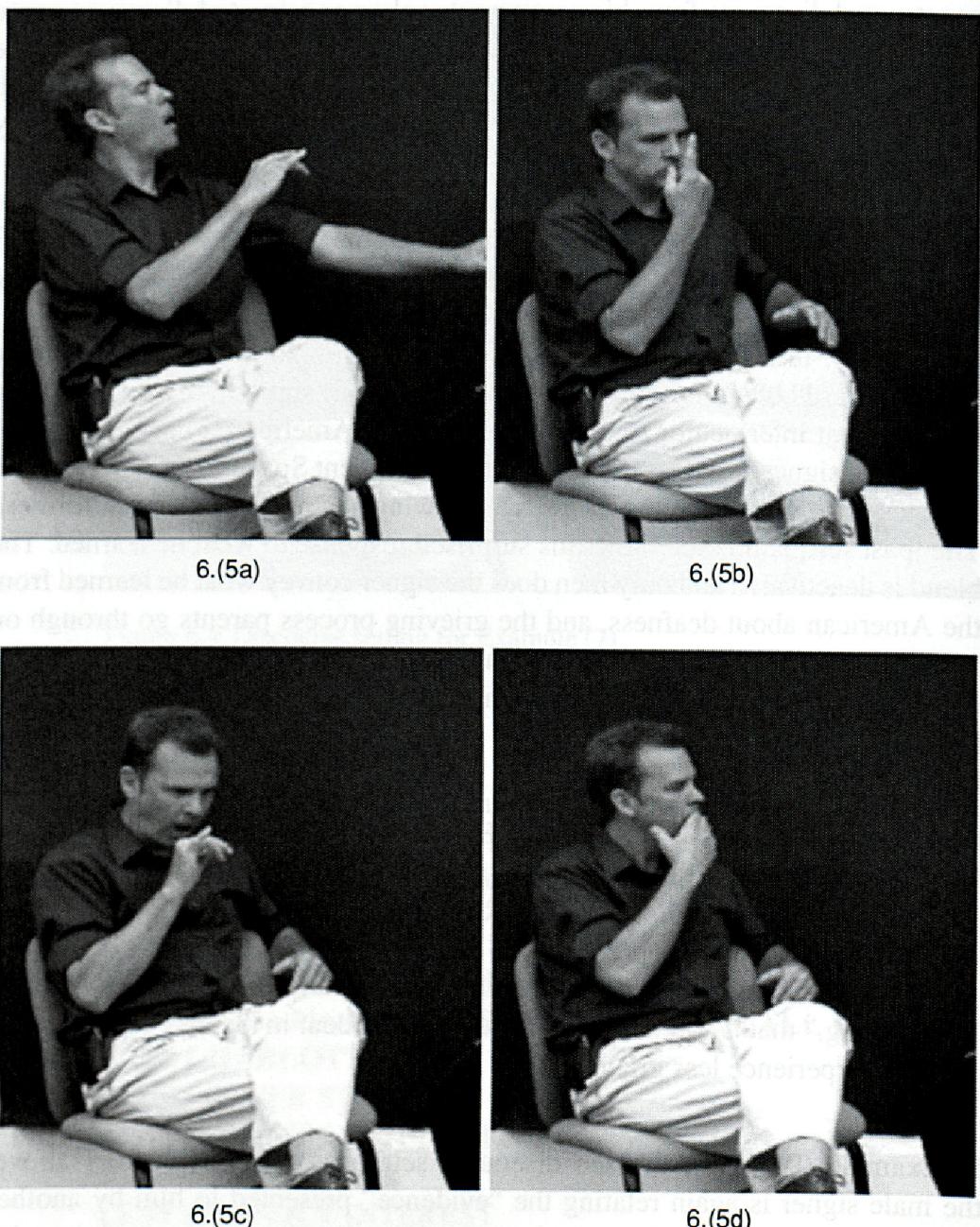


Figure 6.5 (6.5a): discourse segment begins; (6.5b): "someone said" (eye gaze toward constructed discourse space); (6.5c): "interesting" (with eye gaze to constructed space); (6.5d): eye gaze returns to interlocutor and signer resumes discourse with "good idea"

- (9) [YOU KNOW ARLENE KELLY DR. COME LECTURE]-TOP  
**PRO.3 COMMENT ME LOOK (head bob)**  
**IF GO INTERNET CLICK LIST**  
 OH.I.SEE NAME,  
 ME FORGET QUOTE NAME PUBLICATION VIDEOTAPE  
 NO NOT VIDEOTAPE CD ROM DVD WHATEVER DISC ADVER-  
 TISE  
**PARENTS ORDER GET**  
**[PARENTS BIRTH DEAF]-TOP**  
**[FIND FREE]-YES/NO QUESTION**  
**[PUBLICATION FREE]-YES/NO QUESTION**  
**[INFORMATION]-YES/NO QUESTION**  
**GET FREE**

You know Dr. Arlene Kelly. The one who came and presented. She said, and I thought "huh, interesting," if you look on the internet, there's a site. I forget the name of the publication and videotape. Well, no, it's not a videotape it's a CD-ROM, or a DVD. A disc anyway. It's an advertisement for a free disc. That way, if parents have a deaf child they can order this free publication. They can get this information (about deafness) free.

Example (10) is also from the ongoing conversation about deaf education. It has just been stated that people believe that if a deaf child is allowed to sign, he or she will not learn to speak. The signer believes this is not the case. He reports the "evidence" while stating that he cannot remember who said it. The signer still breaks his eye gaze with the interlocutor, and looks to a past discourse space. However, in Example (10), he quickly shifts his gaze back to his interlocutor. No reaction to the information from the previous discourse setting is provided. Further investigation is warranted here, to determine if utterances with unnamed sources of evidence are consistently structured like (10).

- (10) NOT TRUE  
 (eye gaze right) **[WHO COMMENT]-WH QUESTION**  
 (eye gaze center) SAY MANY PARENTS PRO.3 DEAF (child)  
 ALLOW SIGN

SPEECH DEVELOP FINE

That's not true. I don't remember who said it, but they said that many parents of deaf children allow their kids to sign and their speech develops well.

## 6.5 Evidentiality and deixis

As we have seen, reported speech as an evidentiality strategy in ASL has several related characteristics. First, it functions to report information. Second, because the speaker shows his or her reaction to the reported information before (and sometimes after) making the statement, the listener is primed to react to the information in the manner the speaker wishes – that is, if the speaker wants his listener to believe the report, he indicates his affirmation of what he is about to say. If the signer is unsure of the veracity of the statement, he indicates that accordingly. And, finally, depending on the speaker's goal, he can choose to make the [informer] more or less prominent in his discourse, giving the source increased or decreased status, thereby strengthening (or not) the status of the utterance.

Also note that reported speech evidentials in ASL deictically index the source of the information. Regardless of the language under investigation, a reported speech evidential could easily be argued to index a prior speech act. In fact, Schlichter (1986: 58) argues exactly this: "Wintu employs evidential deixis to place an event in the context of the other events" that are entailed by it. Just as deictic terms for place, time, and person are shorter terms standing for longer descriptions, so too are evidentials. However, in ASL, the "pointing" happens quite literally and iconically. The speaker suspends his discourse and indexes, with his eyes, the physical and mental space in which he reconstructs a previous discourse segment. He points to the prior speech act, and to the source of the evidence he is relying on. As Schlichter (1986: 57) aptly notes (for Wintu):

Deixis . . . has two components: a locating component in which the speaker places the event under discussion in time and space relative to the speech act; and an interpreting component in which it is up to the addressee to correctly interpret what he hears by reversing the first and second person pronominal reference and making all the adjustments necessitated by his own identity, individuality, and position in time and space as different from that of the speaker. When the speaker uses deictic expressions he organizes the information he gives with respect to himself as the referent, although he may occasionally, for purposes of politeness, take the point of view of the addressee.

In fact, de Haan (1999a) notes that direct evidentials typically arise from one of two primary sources: (1) deictic or demonstrative morphemes; or (2) tense or aspect markers (and, of course, tense itself is a deictic category). De Haan (1999a) suggests that when a speaker uses a visual evidential (developed from a demonstrative marker), he or she is saying that the action was witnessed personally because it occurred in the same deictic sphere as the location of the speaker.

ASL discourse participants utilize the spatial cues available to them to signal to their interlocutors that a previous discourse setting is being constructed, and

that the utterances and emotional reactions to what is said belong to that previous discourse. Their interlocutors correctly interpret the dialogue and emotional responses entailed as displaced from the moment of speech. Fleischman (1989) and others have argued for an egocentric view of languages, where the speaker is understood to be the center of all language use (de Haan 1999a). It seems clear that the displaced nature of ASL reported speech evidentials and deictic reference to that dialogue fit with such a conceptualization.

## 6.6 Summary and conclusions

Clearly, this chapter represents the mere tip of the iceberg for what I believe will be an interesting and fruitful area of investigation. As researchers such as Dudis (2004) and Janzen (this volume) have shown, signers make constant use of their bodies and the space around them as they construct their discourse. They are able to partition their own bodies to represent the bodies and actions of themselves and others as they construe them. This line of research is still in its infancy, but we do know that body partitioning and simultaneous constructions can be quite complex. In fact, Janzen (this volume) shows us that in some blends, signers are able to use body partitioning in extremely complex ways, representing at least two third person referents. In other words, the signer may not be represented in the body partitioning in certain blends.

This study describes what this looks like when signers use reported speech as an evidentiality strategy. Typically, here, the signer creates a blend where his |past self| becomes aware of new information and reacts to the new knowledge. As Schlichter (1986) noted for Wintu, ASL discourse partners are able to make all the necessary adjustments to correctly interpret pronouns, directional verbs, passives, and other deictic referents in such constructions, and have no difficulty understanding what is being said or the viewpoint being conveyed. In addition, interlocutors easily know that when someone signs “it is signed to me” in a past discourse space, that much more was said, and that, logically, the words “it is signed to me” were never said at all. In other words, they understand that “it is signed to me” is a compression (Dudis 2007) of the relevant parts of conversation that will soon be conveyed.

It is of note that in all examples in this data set, the |informer| is always at roughly the same height as the signer. That is, while “the American scholar,” while in the same room as the signer, was likely quite far away, and likely elevated relative to the signer during the described event in the blended space, the |informer| in the blend is positioned at the same height in the signing space as the |past self|. This could be evidence of some early grammaticalization of these constructions. Of course, more research is clearly warranted to investigate the many possible uses of reported speech evidential blends by ASL signers, both

those that utilize body partitioning to represent other signers in past discourse settings, and those that only depict the signer's "past self" reactions.

The grammaticalization processes noted here involve the expected physical reduction of form; as just mentioned, the imagined past communicative scene is not only abstracted away from the actual words used in it, but is "compressed" to the extent that it does not show height or distance of communicator. They also involve classic semantics of subjectification, in that the ground of the communicative act – here, a past act of communication – becomes less objectively expressed and profiled, and more implicit (Traugott 1982, 1989, 1995; Langacker 1990; Traugott and Dasher 2002; Ferrari and Sweetser [this volume]). The visual nature of ASL allows mental space structure, and degrees of elaboration of mental space structure, to be accessible to the analyst in ways that they might not be in a spoken or written language text. As Narayan (this volume) points out, spoken language is often very ambiguous about location in a space network – a good reason for spoken language analysts to attend to gesture. In ASL, the signer's gaze is present for us to see, with all that it tells us about space structure.

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