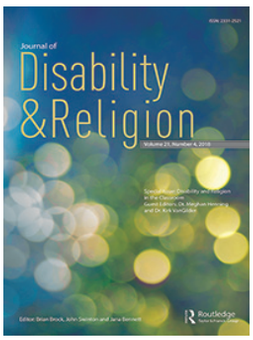

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Teaching Ancient Languages to Deaf Students

Noah D. Buchholz

Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA

ABSTRACT

Many seminarians and religion students study biblical and other ancient languages for their studies. Yet, many Deaf students significantly struggle in ancient language courses, especially because ancient language instruction tends to be auditory centered. The author proposes a whole new pedagogical approach for teaching ancient languages to Deaf students and also discusses how to teach Deaf students in a mainstream setting.

KEYWORDS

deaf; deaf culture; disability; foreign language; inclusive education; pedagogy

Historically, many seminaries and divinity schools are unwilling to accommodate Deaf[1] students by providing them interpreting or captioning services. However, in recent years, thanks to the increasing influence of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the growing awareness of disability, more and more seminaries are eager to admit and accommodate Deaf students. Although Deaf students are provided what they need for their studies, they find themselves significantly struggling in ancient language courses. This is an important issue to investigate because a number of seminaries and divinity schools require students to study the biblical languages. Even if a seminary does not require ancient languages, there are courses that require students to know one of the biblical languages beforehand, such as advanced exegetical courses. Also, specialized studies tend to require students to know additional ancient languages such as Latin and Aramaic. In addition, some denominations require candidates for ordination to demonstrate a certain degree of competency in reading biblical languages. As the Bible is being translated into more and more sign languages,[2] there is increasing demand for people who are familiar with both the target sign language and the original source languages.[3] Harry Harm, SIL Global Sign Languages Team's Training and Translation Coordinator, has confirmed that one of the greatest needs for sign language Bible translation right now is teaching Deaf translators the original source languages; he and other trainers have attempted teaching Deaf translators using

CONTACT Noah D. Buchholz noah.buchholz@ptsem.edu Princeton Theological Seminary, 64 Mercer St., SBN 180, Princeton, NJ 08542, USA.

different pedagogical approaches, but have not had any success yet (H. Harm, personal communication, October 25, 2016).

The foremost reason Deaf students struggle in ancient language courses is that ancient language courses tend to be essentially auditory centered. For example, when I was studying Hebrew in college, my Hebrew professor liked to use Hebrew songs to help students remember vocabulary and grasp the grammar better. Although I fingerspelled the songs ad nauseam, I remember none of them and it apparently did nothing to help me with my Hebrew. Granted, barely any effort is needed to find research that supports using auditory aids in teaching a second language. Many hearing people sound out words while they read, so ancient language students tend to depend on hearing new vocabulary and sentences in the target language to learn how to read and write in it, even though the ancient languages are dead and not spoken anywhere today. On the other hand, Deaf ancient language students miss out on learning tools while studying languages in an environment that heavily relies on auditory learning. Most of the time, they are limited to either studying independently or learning the languages through a sign language interpreter, one who usually who has never learned the target language themselves, and all in a mainstream setting that is primarily auditory centered. Even when, in very rare circumstances, they have a chance to study under a teacher who knows how to sign, they still find their teacher using curriculum that is influenced by some common pedagogical approaches that are auditory centered.

Thus, this leads me to the following question: Can Deaf students succeed in a learning environment that heavily relies on auditory learning? Is there any viable replacement for auditory learning that can help Deaf students with learning ancient languages? Do we need to create an entirely new pedagogical approach for Deaf ancient language students, or do we just need to make mainstream educational settings more accommodating for Deaf students? I have concluded that to better teach ancient languages to Deaf students, a new pedagogical approach is needed, one that incorporates foreign sign language in instruction and that is visually oriented. To understand this conclusion it is important to examine the relationship between sign language and written language acquisition in Deaf people, to analyze the benefits of incorporating foreign sign language in foreign language instruction for Deaf students, and to explore how grammar and translation instruction needs to include sign language and be more visually oriented.

Before we delve into this topic, it is helpful to be aware of the current scholarship on second language acquisition (SLA). This topic is certainly not without controversy; there are several competing perspectives on how to teach second language learners the target language and how they process the language. SLA scholars analyze three different aspects in SLA: learning, knowledge, and instruction. For each aspect, they examine what is implicit and what is explicit. An example of implicit learning is a student attempting to communicate in the target language on their own. In contrast, explicit learning occurs when a student works through a workbook consisting of explicit grammar instruction. Moreover, implicit knowledge is

something that is internalized and reproduced subconsciously, and explicit knowledge is something that is not internalized but rather memorized and elicited consciously. Furthermore, when an instructor has students practice speaking in the target language without giving any explicit instruction or even having any established goals in mind it exemplifies implicit instruction. Explicit instruction, on the other hand, consists of explicit grammar instruction, an established learning agenda, and so on (R. Ellis, 2009).

The SLA debate boils down to the questions of whether explicit and implicit learning, knowledge, and instruction edify each other; whether explicit knowledge can be extracted from implicit knowledge; and whether explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge, the ultimate goal of anyone who desires to attain high proficiency in the language being studied. I only focus on the first and last questions for the sake of brevity. Rod Ellis (2009), an SLA expert, recapitulated the debate by categorizing the varied perspectives into three different positions: (a) the noninterface position, (b) the strong interface position, and (c) the weak interface position. The noninterface position insists that explicit knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge and thus SLA instruction should place an emphasis on implicit learning. A number of proponents of this position even indicate that SLA should emulate first language acquisition as closely as possible (Bialystok, 1994; Hulstijn, 2002; Krashen, 1987; Paradis, 1994). The strong interface position argues that explicit knowledge can indeed be converted into implicit knowledge. Although there are various opinions on what is the best method for effecting a transformation of explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge, advocates of this position suggest that it does not require a long, laborious process for such a transformation to take place (Dekeyser, 2007). Finally, the weak interface position states that while explicit knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge, it certainly edifies the learning process and helps learners acquire implicit knowledge of the language. Explicit instruction, along with implicit instruction, guides learners in their implicit learning as they attempt to internalize the language (N. Ellis, 1994; R. Ellis, 1994; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Smith, 1981).

Although SLA scholars differ on how second language learners process the target language and how they should be taught the target language, there is consensus among SLA scholars around the power of natural exposure to the target language. They strongly believe that SLA instruction, whether it is primarily implicit or explicit, should constantly expose second language learners to the target language naturally and promote immersion in the language. The American Classical League and American Philological Association, 2010 identified the three most common approaches used by ancient language instructors as "grammar-translation, reading in context, and oral-aural" (p. 11). For this reason, Robert Patrick (2010) objected:

> In the last century of Latin instruction in the US, the focus has largely been on language learning […] forcing students into the mode of "editing" a language that they have not had adequate time and experience acquiring. (p. 184)

Patrick (2010) also observed that "most Latin teachers were trained under grammar-translation approaches" which often included speed-parsing, "something intelligent, logical learners can learn to do rather easily, but most normal human beings cannot do easily" (p. 189). He ultimately argued that while the grammar-translation approach is valuable for advanced learners, it "largely hinders progress in acquiring the language for beginners" (Patrick, 2010, p. 187).[4]

Even if ancient language instructors start to effect more "natural" exposure to the target language, Deaf students are still unable to participate in immersive interaction through hearing and speaking. Even if immersive interaction mostly involves writing and reading, because the ancient languages are dead languages, and Deaf students may still lag behind their hearing peers because their peers still have the opportunity to hear the target language aurally, which helps them process the language more effectively as numerous research indicates. Some SLA scholars, as mentioned previously, even support the idea that second language learners should acquire the target language in a similar way to how children acquire their first language. However, the first language of Deaf students is a sign language, not a spoken language. They acquired their first language by eye, not ear. Ancient languages are spoken and written languages, a different kind of language than sign language, which is essentially visual-spatial. The first language of hearing students is a spoken language; thus, such an SLA approach is possible with hearing students. Research on the relationship between sign language and written language acquisition in Deaf people provides hints as to what is an effective way to teach Deaf students ancient languages.

Research indeed demonstrates a strong relationship between sign language and written language acquisition in Deaf people, and this suggests that a meaningful connection between sign language and written ancient language should be made in class. Carol Padden and Claire Ramsey conducted an experiment on the reading comprehension of Deaf children of Deaf parents who were exposed to ASL in their early years and Deaf children of hearing parents who were exposed to ASL late or not at all. The results of their experiment show "a strong correlation between deaf children of deaf parents and comparatively higher reading achievement scores" (Padden & Ramsey, 2000, p. 186). The experiment suggests that associations between sign language and written language are not "fortuitous or idiosyncratic discoveries by individual children, but result from systematic exposure to a culture of signers and adult deaf readers who are directly and indirectly teaching young singers how to make sense of written English text" (Padden & Ramsey, 2000, p. 168). While it is true that this study focuses on young Deaf children, those who concur with or lean toward the noninterface position might find this information critical for research on SLA in Deaf people.

Two other studies are more applicable to all three SLA positions. First, Jill Morford and a group of researchers conducted an experiment on adult Deaf bilinguals with ASL as their first language and English as their second language. They showed different pairs of English words and some of them were

phonologically related in ASL. For instance, horse and uncle are phonologically related in ASL, because the location and handshape of these signs are similar. The researchers asked Deaf bilinguals to tell whether the pair of English words shown to them was semantically related or not. For example, bird and duck are semantically related. They found that Deaf bilinguals responded slower when they encountered a pair of English words that were phonologically related in ASL. The study "show[s] that deaf ASL-English bilinguals activate the ASL translations of written words in English even when the task does not explicitly require the use of ASL" (Morford, Wilkinson, Villwock, Piñar, & Kroll, 2011, p. 291). Apparently, the brain of a Deaf ASL-English bilingual naturally constructs a strong relationship between sign language and written language, even though these languages are completely different kinds of language.

Second, Robert Hoffmeister (2000) examined the effectiveness of Manually Coded English (MCE) and ASL in Deaf education. MCE designates any mode of communicating in English manually. Signing Essential English (SEE1) and Signing Exact English (SEE2) are examples of MCE. MCE systems are not natural languages, but rather artificial systems of communication developed by educators for the Deaf as part of their attempt to better teach Deaf children written English. Hoffemister compared MCE comprehension in Deaf children with more intensive exposure to ASL growing up with Deaf children who are primarily exposed to MCE itself growing up. Surprisingly, he found that "the more intensive exposure to ASL was accompanied by higher mean scores on the measures of MCE comprehension as well as on the [Stanford Achievement Test] reading comprehension test" (Hoffmeister, 2000, p. 157). There are many possible explanations for these results, including the fact that those who have more intensive exposure to ASL are also those who are more likely to be exposed to language at an earlier age than those who are not exposed to ASL. Nevertheless, this research substantiates that sign language does not impede a Deaf person's learning of written language but rather facilitates the process.

Evidently, research demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between sign language acquisition and written language acquisition, and that the ability of Deaf children (and Deaf adults) to associate written English with sign language is not accidental. A large-scale experiment on Deaf students and foreign language acquisition conducted at Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts college for the Deaf in the world, further supports the aforementioned evidence of the strong relationship between sign language and written language and thus confirms the importance of employing sign language in SLA instruction for Deaf students. As it is shown that "an effective strategy for developing literacy skills is to establish links between the spoken and the written language via phonological coding," Pilar Piñar and a group of foreign language professors decided to see whether it was possible for foreign sign language to replace foreign spoken language for acquiring foreign written language (Piñar, Ammons, & Montengero, 2008, p. 139). They divided first-year Spanish students, all Deaf, into two groups, one group of students utilized

Costa Rican Sign Language (LESCO) in class, the other did not utilize a foreign sign language in class. The results of the experiment showed that the students that utilized LESCO in class scored significantly higher on Spanish reading and writing comprehension assessments than the students who did not utilize any foreign sign language. These results should not be a surprise, because "sign language, to which Deaf learners have direct, natural access, provides a linguistic context that helps them decipher the vocabulary and grammar of the spoken language" (Piñar et–al., 2008, p. 140). One may ask why one should not simply use ASL to teach Spanish or any other foreign written language. Deaf students have already developed a firm link between ASL and written English, so when they see words in ASL they may have a hard time thinking of the vocabulary of the foreign language rather than English vocabulary (Piñar et–al., 2008). For this reason, the Gallaudet foreign language professors suggest that a different foreign sign language should be employed for each foreign written language.

This is why I propose that ancient language instruction for Deaf students utilize foreign sign languages. Unfortunately, even if there were any to begin with, sign languages from the eras when the ancient languages were spoken have not been preserved.[5] However, I believe that using Israeli Sign Language for teaching Biblical Hebrew, Italian Sign Language for teaching Latin, and Greek Sign Language for teaching Classical/Koine Greek would still be effective. It is imperative to understand that these modern sign languages are not direct descendants of any forms of ancient sign languages. The roots of Israeli Sign Language are in German Sign Language, because during the early 1900s, German missionaries came to Israel and taught Deaf children using the German Sign Language they had learned in their home country along with some signs and home signs already developed in different areas in Israel (see Meir & Sandler, 2007, p. 218ff). Greek and Italian Sign Languages are mostly influenced by French Sign Language, the mother of many modern sign languages. Nevertheless, all of these modern sign languages are still influenced by Modern Hebrew, Italian, and Greek, which themselves are descendants of ancient Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, respectively. This is no different than the example of ASL, whose roots are in French Sign Language rather than the sign language of a country whose spoken language is a descendant of Germanic languages. Yet, AS is still inevitably influenced by spoken English. This shows that successful phonological coding between modern sign languages and written ancient languages can still take place much like it does for Deaf children and adults with ASL and English as shown in the studies discussed previously.

In fact, some educators for the Deaf in Israel use Manually Coded Hebrew to teach written Hebrew to Deaf children. One should not jump to the conclusion, though, that this method should be used to teach Deaf students. As discussed previously, Hoffmeister's (2000) experiment showed that Deaf children who were intensively exposed to ASL were able to understand MCE better than did Deaf children who were intensively exposed to MCE itself. This suggests that ASL is a very effective link that connects Deaf children to written English. Moreover, Piñar

et–al.'s (2008) experiment was based on a foreign sign language, not a manually coded foreign sign language.[6]

Naturally, though, a curriculum that incorporates these modern sign languages possesses a few glitches similar to any other curriculum. First, it would be problematic if Deaf students were to study both written Italian and Latin. It would not be as problematic with Ancient Hebrew and Greek because the ancient forms are a lot more similar to their modern equivalents. If a Deaf student were to study both Italian and Latin, then he or she should either try to learn written Italian and Latin through Italian Sign Language or to associate Latin with a different foreign sign language, preferably a sign language of a country that speaks a romance language. Second, ancient language instructors that work with Deaf students—be they Deaf or hearing—would have to study and become conversationally proficient in the necessary modern sign languages to be able to effectively execute such a curriculum. The number of Deaf communities in America that use these foreign sign languages is meager, so instructors probably would have to study these languages abroad. Deaf Italians, Israelis, and Greeks are developing sign language instructional materials; however, they may not be sufficient. I would encourage instructors to first study these sign languages abroad, then use sign language instructional materials to keep up with their signing skills while they teach ancient languages to Deaf students in America.

Additionally, Patrick (2010) pointed out that "for acquisition to take place, the Latin teacher must be ready, willing and able to speak Latin with his/her student, at every level" (p. 184). For this approach to be successful, it is essential for instructors to be able to communicate in these foreign sign languages at every level. This would be difficult for them to do so unless they were to immerse themselves in these sign languages by interacting with sign language users abroad (or in America if they found such a community). This may be a significant obstacle for some ancient language instructors, but with the right resources it could be an exciting opportunity to learn new languages and make ancient languages more interactive and accessible for Deaf students. In actuality, the foreign language curriculum at Gallaudet does not expect Deaf students to become highly proficient in the target foreign sign language. Instead, they use the target foreign sign language to help beginning students to start acquiring the target foreign written language. When students have already acquired a lot of the foreign written language, the use of the foreign sign language starts to decrease gradually to the point they stop using it and focus on reading and writing. Since ancient language students' focus is reading and writing, maybe instructors just need to be able to converse in the foreign sign languages at the intermediate level.

Besides helping Deaf students acquire ancient languages through sign language, this pedagogical approach offers some other vital benefits. As Piñar et–al., 2008 explained,

> Because a considerable number of American Deaf students have struggled with English throughout their school years, they do not always welcome the task of learning a written

> foreign language. Skepticism about the practicality of teaching foreign language to Deaf students often evokes a defeatist attitude even among students themselves. In contrast to this, Deaf students do not demonstrate the same negative attitude toward foreign sign languages. Combining foreign signs with the target language makes the students more optimistic and interested in learning the foreign written language. (p. 147)

One must understand that many Deaf students struggle with reading and writing in English not because their hearing loss automatically impedes their learning ability, but because many of them are not being provided equal access to education as hearing children enjoy. While we need to fervently press on for changes in education for Deaf children, we also need to think about those older Deaf students who struggle with reading and writing. If Deaf students graduate high school at an elementary reading level, then they probably will not be able to learn written foreign languages at a high level. However, education for Deaf children has immensely improved in recent years, so more Deaf students are graduating at an average or above average reading level, but still, many are not very comfortable with their reading and writing abilities. Using foreign sign language in the curriculum may thus provide Deaf students a less stressful environment and make materials more interesting, which is critical for SLA (see Krashen, 1987). Such a curriculum is even beneficial for Deaf students who are highly skilled in reading and writing, because their heart language is still sign language and they are visually oriented.

Another benefit of this pedagogical approach is that it enables Deaf students to acquire the target language through natural exposure, the importance of which is discussed above. This allows Deaf students to practice conversing in the target languages through role play, interviews, games, and so on. While the foreign sign languages are different than the ancient languages, Deaf students will still be able to think in written ancient languages while signing in foreign sign languages. Such a phenomenon is buttressed by the studies discussed previously, which demonstrate a strong link between sign language and written language, especially Morford et–al.'s (2001) experiment. For this kind of approach to be effective, instructors must be ready, willing, and able to sign in foreign sign languages in the classroom early and often (Patrick, 2010). In this way, Deaf students will start learning the foreign sign language and be able to start the natural language learning process early. Additionally, teachers who are conversationally proficient in foreign sign languages will be able to continue raising the bar for Deaf ancient language students by increasing the level of difficulty in conversations. Of course, they will also be able to correct students better.

Still, the study of grammar and the practice of translation of ancient languages are both fundamentally vital for studying ancient languages. Most students study ancient languages to be able to analyze ancient writings syntactically, to exegete them, and to translate them into a modern language. Thus, generally speaking, ancient language curricula should have a good balance of both grammar and translation instruction and interactive activities. I propose that to better teach grammar

and translation to Deaf ancient language students, one should use ASL grammar examples along with English grammar examples. For example, some intermediate New Testament Greek students use Brooks and Winbery's (1979) *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (1979). The book includes an English sentence next to each Greek sentence to help students better understand new concepts. Of course, Deaf students are capable of understanding through English examples, but it would even more beneficial to add examples in their native sign language. This is especially helpful for sign language Bible translation students because they will be exposed to different sign language translation examples bit by bit before turning to a full sign language translation of the Bible. For obvious reasons, this also helps Deaf ancient language students who struggle with written languages. In fact, as far as syntax is concerned, ASL is much more similar to Latin, Hebrew, and Greek than to English. Thus, it would not be surprising if Deaf students picked up the grammar of the ancient languages quicker than their hearing peers if they had resources for learning the grammar through sign language. A video consisting of signers signing ASL grammar examples as supplementary material for grammar manuals such as Brooks and Winbery's is needed. Of course, this does not have to be limited to intermediate-level grammar manuals. A simple guide to New Testament Greek grammar in ASL similar to Lamerson's (2004) *English Grammar to Ace New Testament Greek* is a good idea as well. Perhaps there can be a special edition of a popular Greek textbook that incorporates ASL comparisons for Deaf students.

In addition, Deaf ancient language students should still practice translating ancient languages into English because doing so is a way for instructors to check whether they are comprehending grammatical details such as tense and agreement. However, using MCE, fingerspelling, or writing out the translation on the board may not be ideal. MCE may cause confusion, because sometimes one sign can mean several different English words and vice versa. Also, teachers and peers would not be able to evaluate the student's translation work in that way. Fingerspelling obviously takes a lot of time and causes headaches. Writing out translations on the board also consumes time, especially with texts. I suggest that in the classroom, Deaf students and their instructor each use a keyboard connected to one computer that is projected onto a screen, so that everyone can see one another typing their translation. This teacher also can type corrections and show them to the students at the same time.

Without question, implementing foreign sign language in the curriculum is an arduous task. Nevertheless, the results would be tremendous and the effects would be long lasting: more Deaf students would be motivated to learn ancient languages, the learning process would be less stressful and more attainable for Deaf students, and Deaf students would be able to better internalize the target language. This pedagogical approach probably would help boost the number of Deaf ministry leaders, Bible translators, and scholars who are able to work with biblical languages. This will definitely help raise the standards and quality of education for Deaf seminarians and religion students. Also, with more Deaf scholars who are able to work

with the biblical languages, we would see more works that critically examine scripture through a Deaf lens. As of now, works that utilize "Deaf critical mode" in theology and biblical studies are scarce, and "scarce" is an understatement.[7] Such works would shed new light on a myriad of issues in both cultural and disability studies.[8] This would ultimately lead to more recognition of Deaf people and culture in academia. Last, such a curriculum would of course help elevate the quality of sign language bible translations. Having the entire Bible translated into a sign language leads to more recognition and respect for the sign language as a bona-fide, sophisticated language, something that many sign language communities struggle to receive.

It is thus critical for institutions to seriously pursue implementing such a curriculum. One idea for making this feasible is having one school offer a special summer language program every year for Deaf students from different schools so that other schools do not have to struggle finding qualified instructors who are able to execute the curriculum for only a small number of students. Schools could allocate the money they would spend on interpreting and other accommodations services for their Deaf students to support them studying in the summer language program. Also, a large number of Deaf students would make it more possible for them to learn the target language through natural exposure and immersion. Another idea is to publish a "self-study" textbook that integrates the foreign sign languages and written ancient language courses or for their independent studies to be under the supervision of an on-site instructor. The textbook could include different videos of Deaf signers signing particular texts in the target foreign sign languages accompanied by the subtitles in target written languages. For example, a Deaf Israeli signs an excerpt from the Book of Ruth in Israeli Sign Language and the subtitles in Hebrew appears on the screen.[9] This allows Deaf students to make a connection between Israeli Sign Language and Hebrew. Other study aid materials that are designed specifically for Deaf students, such as a book on New Testament Greek Grammar that uses ASL grammar examples, would help Deaf students to study independently as well.

If providing Deaf students access to such a curriculum is absolutely not possible, then the institution must make sure the Deaf student has maximal access to instruction in the mainstream setting. The evidence that substantiates the need for implementing foreign sign language and ASL in the curriculum ought to help the instructor realize how much harder the Deaf student has to work compared with their hearing peers in a mainstream, auditory setting. Also, it ought to motivate them to adapt their instruction to meet the Deaf student's needs. Most importantly, they need to make their classroom more visually accessible for the Deaf student. Some suggestions are as follows:

- Give the Deaf student copies of the PowerPoint, lecture notes, texts, and so on ahead of time.
- Use a document camera to project the text being discussed onto the screen for the Deaf student to see.

- When you want to discuss a specific word, phrase, or sentence in the projected text, point to it so that the Deaf student may now what is being discussed.
- If you want to discuss something specific that is not being projected on the screen, write it down on the board.
- If you want the Deaf student to respond in the target language, have the Deaf student either write it down on an individual sized whiteboard or type it on the keyboard connected to the computer that is hooked to the projector (the latter allows the whole class to see the Deaf student's response and thus makes it more interactive and inclusive for the Deaf student). A collaborative writing platform such as Google Docs may be helpful; it obviates the need for writing down notes (Deaf students have a harder time writing down notes than do their hearing peers because they have to look at the interpreter as well).
- If you want the Deaf student to give homework answers or share their translation works, the Deaf student may either speak through the interpreter or type down the answer (typing down translations in English instead of signing them through the interpreter prevents lost in translation).
- The UbiDuo (sComm, Raytown, MO) may be useful in the classroom. The Deaf student may type down homework answers and translations on the UbiDuo and have the interpreter to voice as he or she types. The Deaf Student may also use the UbiDuo to communicate with others in the target language.

Instructors need to make sure that they work with the Deaf student and interpreter. The interpreter may help give ideas about how to adapt the curriculum, but the instructor should work with the Deaf student directly, and, should a question arise, approach the Deaf student first before the interpreter. I tend to email the instructor a few months before the class to discuss how I can engage in the classroom, but sometimes the instructor beats me to it and has emailed me about it first, which I really appreciate. Of course, it is also a good idea for the instructor to check in with the Deaf student from time to time to make sure the instructor is doing everything possible to make the classroom accessible. Moreover, it is critical to ensure that the Deaf student is being provided with a highly qualified interpreter, preferably one who is familiar with the target language. Contrary to the common misconception, not all certified interpreters are highly skilled; being certified simply verifies one is minimally qualified. For more information on how to better work with Deaf students in a mainstream setting, I highly recommend Ian Sutherland's (2008) *Everybody Wins: Teaching Deaf and Hearing Students Together*. On a side note, many of these suggestions may benefit hearing students as well. Not all hearing students are auditory learners; many of them depend on visual aids for learning. In fact, adapting the classroom to accommodate the Deaf student's needs might in turn accommodate the mélange of different types of learners in the classroom.

Evidently, a whole new pedagogical approach to teaching ancient languages to Deaf students is needed. I have met a number of Deaf students who struggle with

studying ancient languages. Many of them, even though they are very intelligent and capable, end up inches away from failing out of their language courses. They try to work hard, but they cannot benefit from an auditory centered curriculum as much as their hearing peers. After about two years of studying ancient languages, when they are done, they forget most of what they have learned because they did not receive enough visual aids for internalizing the target language. Piñar et–al.'s (2008) experiment, as supported by other experiments that prove the strong link between sign language and written language, demonstrates that perhaps the best way to teach second language to Deaf students is to incorporate foreign sign language in the curriculum. Deaf ancient language students, who are naturally visual and acquire their first written language by eye, need to be exposed to ancient languages visually. Such an approach requires a lot of collaborative work among ancient language scholars and teachers who are also skilled in ASL to develop ancient language instructional materials for Deaf students. I believe that there is no ancient language instructional material that uses foreign sign languages nor that uses ASL grammar examples. Likewise, I have not learned of any ancient language class that has incorporated foreign sign language yet. So, in the coming years, Deaf ancient language students will continue to have to study ancient languages via auditory centered, traditional curriculum. But, once ideas are put together and visually oriented ancient language curriculum for Deaf students is developed and supplemented with well-constructed instructional materials, then we will be able to provide Deaf students unprecedentedly equal access to ancient language instruction, which they certainly deserve. Ultimately, this will lead to an increased recognition of Deaf people in the fields of ministry, theology, and biblical studies and in turn expand the continuum of methodologies and perspectives in the scholarship of religion.

Notes

1. Throughout this article *Deaf* refers to prelingually (and postlingually) Deaf individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary form of communication. Generally, *Deaf* with a capital *D* refers to culturally Deaf people who primarily use sign language to communicate, are involved in the Deaf community, and consider their deafness a sign of cultural identity.
2. Contrary to popular belief, ASL is not universal. In fact, there are more than 300 sign languages around the world. International Deaf conferences do tend to use International Sign (IS); however, it is rather a pidgin, not a full-fledged language.
3. The entire Bible translated into a sign language has yet to happen. An ASL New Testament from Deaf Missions in Iowa is the only sign language translation of the New Testament. For this reason, Freddie Boswell, former Executive Director of SIL International, called sign language Bible translation as the last frontier of Bible translation.
4. Biblical Language Center promotes immersion in the biblical languages through natural exposure and interactive activities (www.biblicallanguagecenter.com). The Jerusalem Center for Bible Translators also finds it effective to teach students Biblical Hebrew through immersion in Modern Hebrew.

5. It is not certain that there were any fully developed sign languages during ancient times. One may assume, though, that where there was a community of Deaf people, they had a sign language. In fact, in Plato's *Cratylus*, Socrates and his friends, while discussing the origins of language, mention a group of Deaf people signing. However, one may also assume that many Deaf people, because there were no Deaf schools during ancient times, were isolated and used home signs they developed with their hearing family members, friends, and, if there were any, a few other Deaf people. The situation in Nicaragua in the last decades supports this assumption. For a long time in Nicaragua there was no nationwide Deaf school, but, when one was established, many Deaf children from all over the country were gathered together and developed a new sign language using some home signs they had already developed and some new signs. For more information on Nicaraguan Sign Language, see Kegl, Senghas, and Coppola (1999).
6. A discussion of using Manually Coded Hebrew would require a different article that includes research regarding the effectiveness of MCE and Hebrew, because here I focus on Deaf students whose primary form of communication is ASL and who learn English through sign language.
7. Rebecca Raphael (2008) discussed what one can learn from works that utilize "deaf critical mode" in her book *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature*. See also *Deaf Liberation Theology* (Lewis, 2007) and *The Gospel Preached by the Deaf* (Broesterhuizen, 2007).
8. Deaf Studies consists of a complex overlap of disability studies and cultural studies. One cannot, as often is done, look to only disability studies for understanding Deaf people; one must also apply methodological tools and knowledge of cultural studies to discussions of Deaf culture and Deaf people in general.
9. I am indebted to Harry Harm for this idea.

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