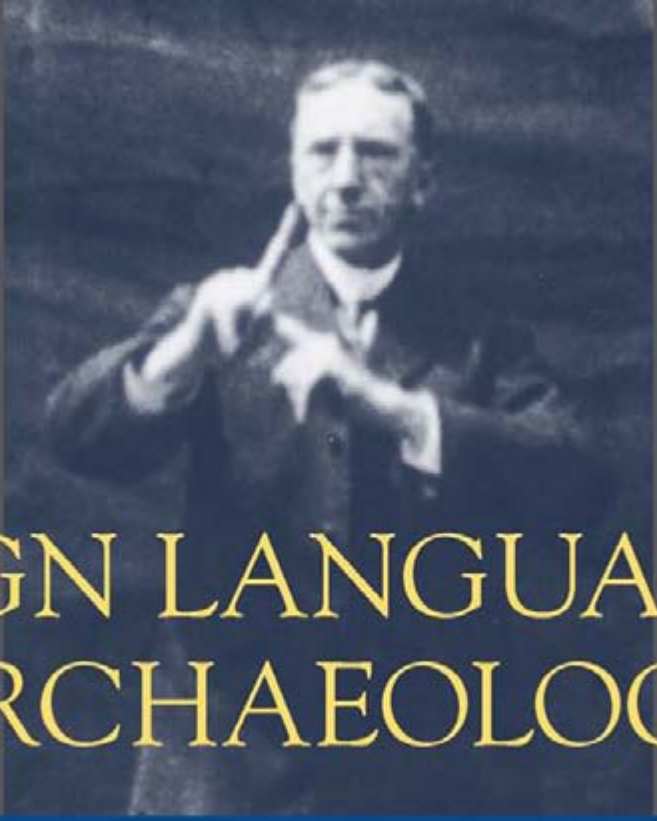
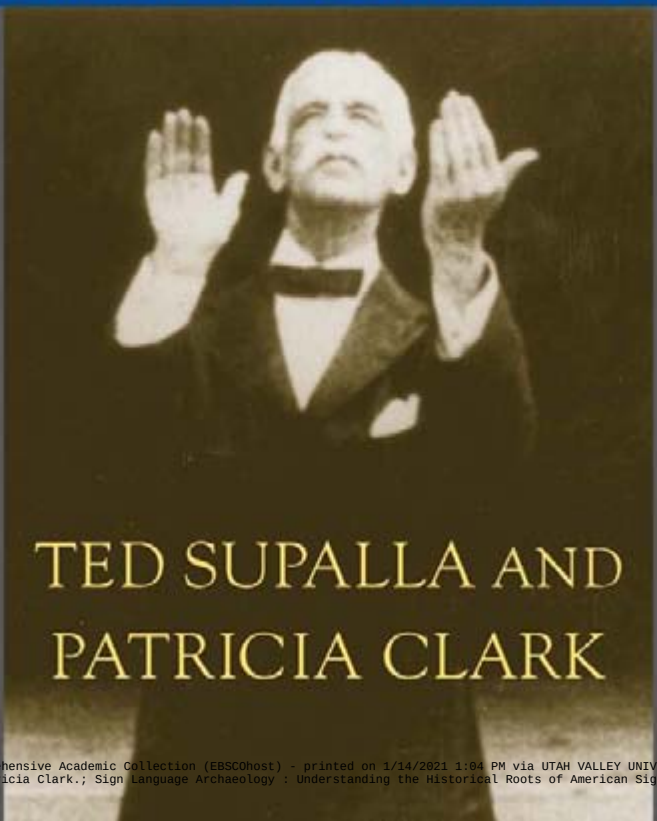


SIGN LANGUAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

Understanding the Historical Roots of American Sign Language



TED SUPALLA AND PATRICIA CLARK

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AN: 1179840 ; Ted Supalla, Patricia Clark.; Sign Language Archaeology : Understanding the Historical Roots of American Sign Language
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SIGN LANGUAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

Understanding the Historical Roots of American Sign Language

Ted Supalla and
Patricia Clark

Gallaudet University Press
Washington, DC

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Gallaudet University Press
Washington, DC 20002
http://gupress.gallaudet.edu
© 2015 by Gallaudet University

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Supalla, Ted.
Sign language archaeology : understanding the historical roots of American sign language / Ted Supalla, Patricia Clark.
pages cm
Summary: "This study investigates the origins of American Sign Language, its evolution from French Sign Language, and evidence about the word formation process of ASL, including data from the 19th and early 20th century dictionaries" as well as the Gallaudet Lecture Films — Provided by publisher.
ISBN 978-1-56368-493-7 (hardback) — ISBN 978-1-56368-494-4 (e-book)
1. American Sign Language—History. I. Title.
HV2474.S96298 2014
419'.7–dc23
2014019343

Front cover: top, George Veditz in "The Preservation of the Sign Language"; bottom, Amos G. Draper in "The Signing of the Charter of Gallaudet College." Both images are from *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

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PREFACE

First and foremost, we wish to thank our parents for the language and knowledge they imparted to us. Growing up in the Deaf community provided both of us a rich heritage. From our childhoods our parents and others told stories about where signs came from, which promoted our curiosity to find out the real story. We also thank all the sign language masters of the past for ensuring the posterity of American Sign Language (ASL) over the years. When the opportunity arose to do historical research on the language, we embarked on a journey of discovery that led to the writing of this book. Challenges in handling and interpreting the data that we were amassing led to the development of tools specially fitted to the study of the films, early dictionaries, and other documents that shed light on the history of ASL. Without our native language intuitions, the stories, and our communities, we would not have been able to uncover and interpret the rich information in the NAD film series, early dictionaries, and historical documents. As we worked through these challenges and developed these tools, we began to conceive of our research as akin to an archaeological dig, unearthing new findings and new revelations about the language and its predecessor, old French Sign Language. We invite the reader, through this book, to experience a small part of our journey into the history of ASL.

We also wish to acknowledge research support provided by NSF Research Grant BCS0925073 to Ted Supalla, NIH Research Grant DC00167

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to Elissa L. Newport and Ted Supalla, and by an NEH Fellowship Award to Ted Supalla. We want to thank Betsy Hicks McDonald, Catherine Chambers, and Elissa Newport for their significant roles in editing this book and for important discussion of the ideas. We would also like to thank Don Metlay for building the digital database; Valerie Nelson-Metlay for drawings of signs; and Guillaume Chastel, Fanny Limousin, and Eric Lawrin for help in comparing LSF and ASL. Thanks also to Lila Gleitman, Elissa Newport, Jenny Culberston, Susan Goldin-Meadow, Carol Padden, John Schuchman, Harlan Lane, Bill Moody, Louie Fant, Jr., and David Supalla for sharing their insights with us. It was our honor to work with fifth-generation Deaf community members from Colorado, who shared with us their experiences of some of the classical sign masters in notable schools for the Deaf. Thanks to Mike Olsen and Ulf Hedberg of the Gallaudet University Archives; Gary Waite of the American School for the Deaf Archives; Kathy Aguilar of the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind Archives, the Westchester Historical Society, and the California School for the Deaf Archives for their assistance in locating historical materials and making them available to us. Finally thanks to graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Rochester and Georgetown University for their assistance with the research project. Credits for the reproduced figures in the book go to: the National Association of the Deaf; Harper and Row; the Watson family; the International Visual Theatre, and Harvard University Press. Special credits to Sign Media, Inc., for allowing us to use images from *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.*

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1 SEMINAL WORK ON "SIGN LANGUAGE ARCHAEOLOGY"

In this book we investigate the infancy of American Sign Language (ASL), which, at one time, was called simply "the sign language," or the "natural language of signs." We highlight the major events of the history of ASL, revealing information that until now has not been clearly understood. In this chapter we look first at traditional accounts of the inception of sign language and then move on to look in-depth at the documents that are the focus of this book, a set of films produced by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) between 1910 and 1920. These films, which represent samples of "sign masters," the model signers of the time, provide a window through which we can view previously unknown characteristics of early ASL and better understand the relationship between the earliest and modern forms of the language.

We begin with the traditional timeline of the development of ASL (see figure 1.1), with its roots in eighteenth-century French Sign Language (Old LSF).

According to most historical accounts, the roots of ASL begin around 1760 with the establishment of the first public school for deaf people in France by the Abbé Charles Michel de l'Epée.[1] By the time Thomas

1. As related by John Burnet in his *Tales of the Deaf and Dumb* (1835), the popular anecdote shared at that time was that de l'Epée happened upon two deaf

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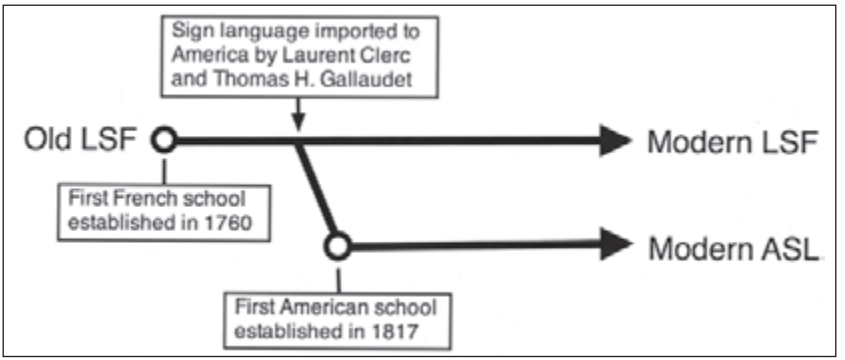

FIGURE 1.1. Traditional timeline for ASL.

Hopkins Gallaudet brought Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher from the French school, to North America to open such a school, the French educators had established a system of approximately sixteen schools for deaf people in Europe. Under this French system, teachers from the mother school in Paris were sent out to establish satellite schools throughout France and Europe. The American Asylum for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (now the American School for the Deaf, [ASD]) was established in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817 (Czech 1830; Eriksson 1993).[2]

French and later American educators engaged in pedagogical discussions, often publishing tools and materials that included descriptions of signs for their colleagues to use.[3] They believed that the natural language of signs was universal and therefore useful to all educators regardless of the spoken language used. Such discussions involve the *metalanguage* of that era—the way scholars and educators wrote and talked about the language

---

sisters one day in 1760 when calling upon their family home. They had been under the tutelage of a Father Vanin who had since passed away and were at that time "inconsolable," according to their mother. Observing their gestural communication with one another was the event that sparked his interest in restoring them and all deaf people to themselves and to society (69).

2. The count of schools is arrived at as a result of reviewing the charts contained in these two texts.

3. At the American School for the Deaf (ASD), for instance, books were collected in French, German, and English for faculty to read and use in their own teaching (personal communication, Gary Waite, archivist).

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of signs. Writings from that era also reflect a shared belief in the "natural" grammar of the sign language, with a few brief descriptions of this grammar. In this environment, ASL was born.

Where can we find evidence of the transitions from the early introduction of French Sign Language to the emergence of early ASL to modern ASL? To provide insight into the metalanguage of the signing community we have used early sign language dictionaries and the collection of films created by the NAD at the turn of the twentieth century to identify the differences in signs and grammar from early to contemporary ASL. Prior to these films, the only records were written text descriptions or drawings, as there was no capability to record signs on film.[4] Written records of individual signs and even some sentences have provided some insight into what "the sign language" might have been like at the beginning, but the static nature of these records has put researchers in the position of guessing what the original forms actually were, often obscuring possible linguistic explanations for the differences identified.

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL TREASURES IN A FILMED MEDIUM

The technology for creating motion pictures emerged just before the beginning of the twentieth century. Soon after, amateur filmmakers in the grassroots of Deaf America,[5] including Charles Krauel and Ernest Marshall, ventured into producing literary materials worthy of aesthetic appreciation by their target audiences, their deaf peers. To demonstrate and preserve "the sign language," the NAD undertook its first organized filming effort in the early part of the twentieth century with a set of films—the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series—featuring the most respected signers, or "sign masters," of the time. The NAD produced twenty-two films between 1910

4. De l'Epée and Sicard kept scrupulous records of their method of teaching and included extensive descriptions of methodical signs. However, since the prevailing belief was that natural signs were universal, detailed descriptions of the natural signs were rare.

5. The term *grassroots* refers here to members of the Deaf community at a local level who were not involved in the political centers located at the Hartford school and at Gallaudet College.

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and 1920, fifteen of which have survived.[6] This collection of oratorical literature, including speeches, poetry, and stories performed by fifteen sign masters, gives us a window into early ASL.

The Gallaudet Lecture Film Series project began as an attempt to preserve the language variety of the early sign masters. Although the project failed to maintain its initial momentum and broad support and the films were eventually shelved, they are significant today in providing us with invaluable information about the birth and evolution of the classical variety of "the sign language." The sign masters on film are of different ages and therefore provide a sample of three generations of ASL users. Each generation of ASL users from 1817 to today represents a different sociopolitical agenda; each has its own set of literary traditions and values that in turn reflect different language attitudes.

To determine the criteria that the NAD may have used in selecting the signers filmed for their preservation project, we carefully examined the biographical background of each signer and reviewed the NAD documents of committee work devoted to this preservation project. We also dissected the multigenerational odyssey of metalinguistic thought and captured the progression of scientific methodology over time. Studying the NAD's treasure trove of historical documents and the *American Annals of the Deaf,* we succeeded in bridging the gulf of a period of neglect of sign language metalinguistic discussion from the early 1930s to 1970, the "Dark Period,"[7] when proponents of oralism were undertaking efforts to "relegate sign language to the past" (referring to "the sign language"), as sign master J. Schuyler Long stated (1918, 10). We aimed instead to recapture the true nature of our past.

In order to reconstruct the literary history of ASL and the evolution of its grammar, we developed new research tools and methods, analyzing and interpreting the films' sign language content from the perspective of the people of the time. In previous approaches to such investigation, researchers located archaic forms in these film records and compared them to modern forms used today. Instead, we transcribed all of the films in their entirety

6. The original copies of the NAD films are stored in the archives of Gallaudet University and the Library of Congress. In 1997, Sign Media, Inc. produced a videotape copy of almost all of these films.

7. Other references to a "dark age" in terms of literary works in sign language support our use of the term "Dark Period." See Bauman, Nelson, and Rose (2006) and Brueggemann (2009).

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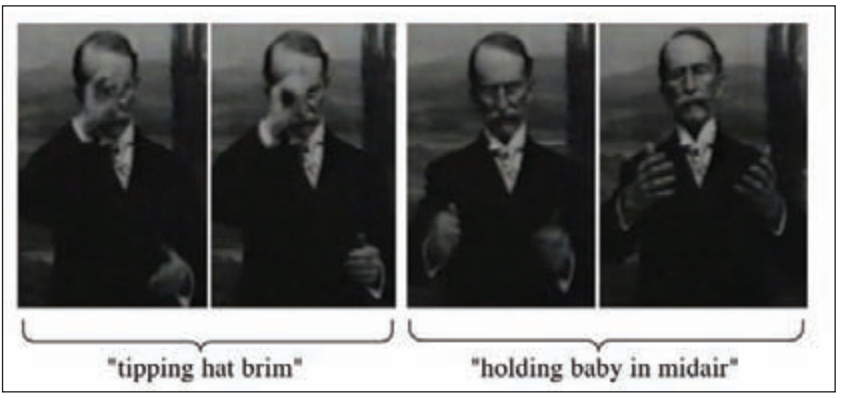

FIGURE 1.2. Lexical phrase variant expressing the concept of "father" in early ASL. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

and examined the full corpora, and discovered that the younger signers in the films used alternate forms that resemble modern signs—the contrast in forms was not just *diachronic* (across periods) but *synchronic* (within the same period) as well.

A brief sample from the historical film materials illustrates both the quality of data available and the differences that can be observed when comparing signers of different ages. In this example, three signers, representing three-generation cohorts, form the signs for the kinship concept of "father." While all three use kinship signs, the forms are articulated in different ways by members of the first compared with the second and third generations, who show a pattern of reduction. The archaic form is shown in figure 1.2, as E. M. Gallaudet collocates two separate signs in a lexical phrase to express the kinship concept of "father."

Signers in the subsequent generation produced kinship signs with prosodic reduction in the second sign (an attributor for signifying the kin relation), which we analyze as contraction with the preceding gender marker. Figure 1.3 shows how Robert MacGregor compresses the lexical phrase into a single flow of movement for the same word FATHER.

We observed that the younger signers produce kinship terms with even further reduction in both the first and second parts. Figure 1.4 shows FATHER as signed by Winfield Marshall, in his "Yankee Doodle" recitation.

This form for FATHER is similar to that used in modern ASL. The archaic form has nearly disappeared from the modern lexicon, remaining only in certain ritualized literary routines such as the Lord's Prayer.

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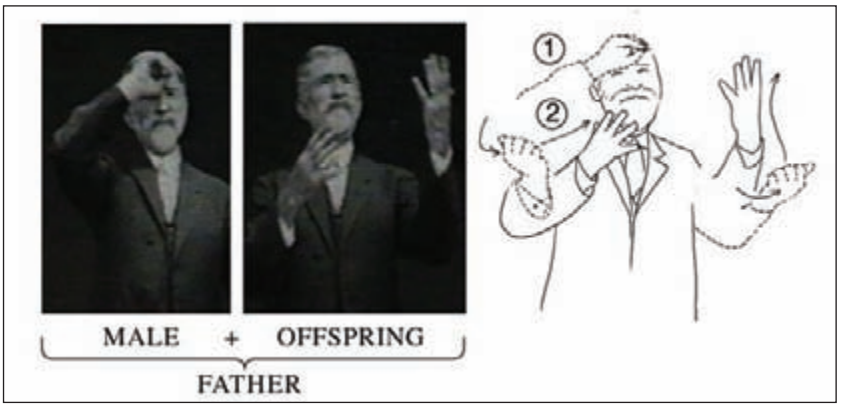

FIGURE 1.3. Variant showing compression of lexical phrase for "father." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

To relate the signs in the films to even earlier forms, we studied dictionaries from nineteenth-century France. In 1856, Pierre Pélissier published his dictionary of French Sign Language (LSF), which includes the description of male and female kinship terms shown in figure 1.5. Of all our materials, this dictionary presented the earliest information on the system for constructing kinship terms. Pélissier explained that the two signs in the first element pictured in figure 1.5 are those representing male and female genders, which must precede a second element, one of several signs indi-

FIGURE 1.4. Reduction of kinship term expressing the concept of "father." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay

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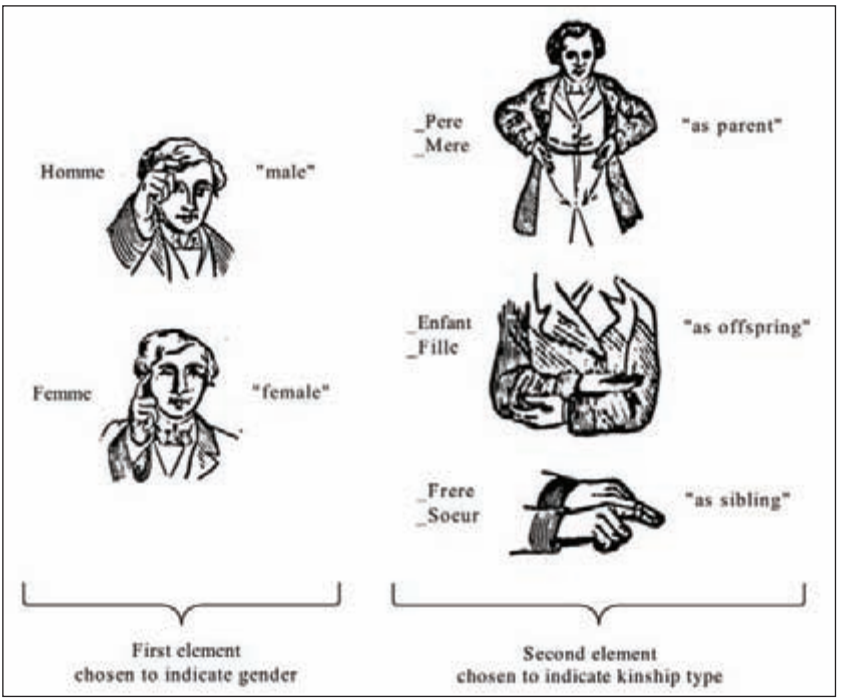

FIGURE 1.5. Male and female kinship terminology in LSF during the nineteenth century. Source: Pélissier (1856).

cating an attribute of the male or female. These attribute signs metonymically represent "giving birth," "rocking a baby," "symmetry or relatedness," and "formal dress." The combinations result in constructions that translate as kinship terms in the case of the first three attributes, namely, "father/mother," "son/daughter," and "brother/sister." Not shown in figure 1.5 is a construction containing a fourth attribute, "formal dress," which results in a marking of the social relationship via class status, and is often translated "gentleman/lady" or "man/woman" in ASL.

The LSF signs imported to America in 1817 by Clerc and Gallaudet were very similar to the forms in the Pélissier dictionary. Comparing Pélissier's forms with both historical and modern ASL forms reveals great similarity across the LSF and ASL data, as well as at least two steps of diachronic change in the lexical structure of ASL kinship terms across a span of 150 years. These first two steps can be seen in the NAD films of 1910–1920, which feature signers from three generations, each using slightly different forms.

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Analyzing these films enabled us to observe differences among the sign masters filmed, and with these data, along with other historical documents, we reconstructed the characteristics of ASL during the intermediate period between the emergence of early ASL and modern ASL, and we traced the progression of change from the early forms to their modern equivalents. To begin our examination, it was important to first identify generations of signers. At any point in time, a community will have members of at least three generations living together and interacting, equivalent to the "parents," the "children," and the "grandparents."

The chart in figure 1.6 depicts an approximation of the generations of sign language users in America. ASL is typically not passed down from birth parents to children, but from older to younger peers at residential schools and day programs. In our calculations, approximately thirty years constitutes a generation of signers. Using this framework, the lines across the time chart reflect the number of generations using ASL since its inception in 1817.

First-generation signers were the first groups of students, both children and adults, who attended the American Asylum in Hartford and learned directly from Clerc. The second generation were students who attended the school later and learned their sign language from the first generation. The second generation of signers became the language models for the third generation, with this pattern continuing to the present day. Internal and

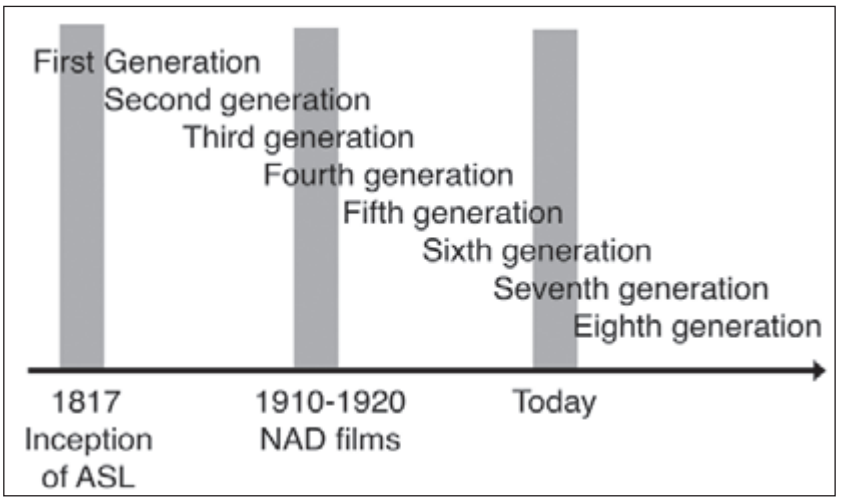

FIGURE 1.6. Generations of American signers.

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external linguistic and sociolinguistic factors (such as the spread of oralism in deaf education) affected the language change patterns seen across the generations; we address these factors in chapters 6, 7, and 8.

From records dating from the turn of the twentieth century, we can identify people representative of each of the different generations that were captured in the films. Based on this measure, the sign masters on film represent the second, third, and fourth generations of ASL users, and thus provide a historical cross-section of linguistic and literary ASL use as it existed in the middle of the period between 1910 and 1920. That period is indicated by the middle vertical bar in figure 1.6, which crosses three generations (the second, third, and fourth).

The youngest generation of signers in the films (the fourth generation) lived until the middle of the twentieth century. The current generation of signers in their eighties constitutes the fifth generation, and adults in middle age today constitute the sixth generation. Young adults and college students form the seventh generation, which began during the 1970s.

Our research with historical documents has led us to interpret the actions of the Deaf community in commissioning the NAD films in a different way than others have in the past. We believe that the films were produced in response to divisions within the community concerning the formal and colloquial uses of sign language. Polarization of the community was driven by changes in educational practices (Woodward 1976; Lane 1987). We found indications that as this situation evolved, the NAD films were eventually pulled out of circulation and archived.

In the 1946 committee report to the NAD, Roy Stewart, the chair of the Motion Picture Committee, wrote about the legacy of the films for future generations:

> It is the hope of the National Association of the Deaf that educators of the deaf and others interested in the educational progress of the deaf will be enabled by the use of copies made from these prints to study the progress of the sign language and note whether it is improving. If copies can be made, fifty or a hundred years hence they will be of great value and interest. (NAD 1946)

This was a reiteration of the goals of the committee as stated in the 1910 *NAD Proceedings*. Such written historical artifacts give powerful insight into the thoughts of the period when the films were made (Supalla 2004). Stewart's prophecy indicates a metalinguistic awareness of language change

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and at the same time reveals a hitch in the plan to preserve the sign language, as it was originally outlined by NAD President Veditz in his 1913 lecture. The forces in education that contributed to the removal of sign language from most classrooms also shaped its future. The classical register, as we will refer to the register used by educators and sign masters in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, gradually lost ground and finally disappeared during the Dark Period. The mandate to pass on the principles of the classical register also disappeared as classical signers—second- and third-generation sign masters and proponents—lost prestige after the 1920s. This loss of prestige and the diminishing number of proponents in schools for the deaf and within the NAD left a vacuum without a sign language register that was formal and widely used.

At Gallaudet College, however, incoming generations of Deaf college students were pressed to continue to emulate the classical signers' value system and sign language usage. Instead of such classical master signers as Laurent Clerc, Melville Ballard and John Hotchkiss, they had Elizabeth Peet monitoring and policing their sign language usage. For almost a century, the Peets were among the leading American families devoted to the tradition of teaching deaf children and enriching their intellectual and spiritual lives through the use of sign language (Veditz 1913). Initially trained at the American school in Hartford, Harvey Prindle Peet became the principal of the New York School for the Deaf in 1831. The school, also known as Fanwood, produced its own pool of successful professionals who went on to establish satellite schools. When the philanthropist Amos Kendall contacted Isaac Lewis Peet, Harvey's son and successor, to assist in his project of establishing a school for deaf children in Washington, DC, Peet suggested Edward Miner Gallaudet, who eventually established not only a school for the youngsters but a college program as well.

The Peet family tradition continued for another half-century when Gallaudet hired Isaac's daughter Elizabeth to be a teacher at Kendall School and Gallaudet College. Her mother was Mary Toles, a poet deafened at age eleven who attended the New York school as a young girl. Elizabeth served as the dean of women from 1910 until she retired in 1951. For her sign language authoritarian role, Elizabeth Peet was named by many the "last of the classical signers" (Gannon 1974, 242).

To this day, many elderly alumni recall their irritation at being admonished by Dean Peet for not using the proper formal register. Although Peet's nagging may have alienated many, she found a protégé in Martin Sternberg,

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who began learning sign language when hired as an English instructor by the college. Peet took Sternberg, a member of the fifth generation, under her wing and mentored him in the instruction of proper forms (Sternberg 1981). He joined her in work on her pet project of collecting signs and published it as *American Sign Language: A Comprehensive Dictionary* in 1981. Dr. Sternberg's modern ASL dictionary includes some archaic forms along with modern signs, such as FATHER and MOTHER as shown in figure 1.7. These signs contrast with more modern variants, which have the rough meaning of "mom" and "dad." The reduced forms have become standardized as basic lexemes in modern ASL for MOTHER and FATHER. In the hands of young children today, the signs may be further reduced to a mere index finger tapping the chin and forehead.[8] The prescriptive exhortation for purity on the part of Elizabeth Peet and her colleagues was and continues to be a common response to natural linguistic processes of change.

The purpose of this book is to unravel the mystery of our collective memory regarding details about the genesis and evolution of American Sign Language and its French predecessor. Thus far we have presented a brief overview of the varieties of "the sign language" as known to be in existence in the early days. Comparing these to the varieties as used today can help us begin to address this challenge. In chapter 2 we look at some of the twentieth-century metalinguistic assumptions that obscured modern researchers' ability to develop appropriate tools for conducting historical linguistic research, particularly in regard to the NAD films, called the Gallaudet Lecture Films produced by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Moving Pictures Committee.

With this understanding, we open chapter 3 with a description of the language plan conceived by NAD leaders to preserve the original form of signing that reflected the sign language of the founders. The factors precipitating the language plan reach well into the nineteenth century, so we look at the major metalinguistic ideas that shaped the NAD's plan. Selection criteria and a brief biographical sketch of each sign master are provided in chapter 4 to pave the way for understanding their contributions to the

8. It is interesting to note that this reduction occurred at an early phase of ASL development. It may have been triggered by limited developing articulation among the children of deaf adults, as a form of "childrenese," and the alternate glossing with informal words above reflects this register (Boyes Braem 1990; Chen Pichler 2012).

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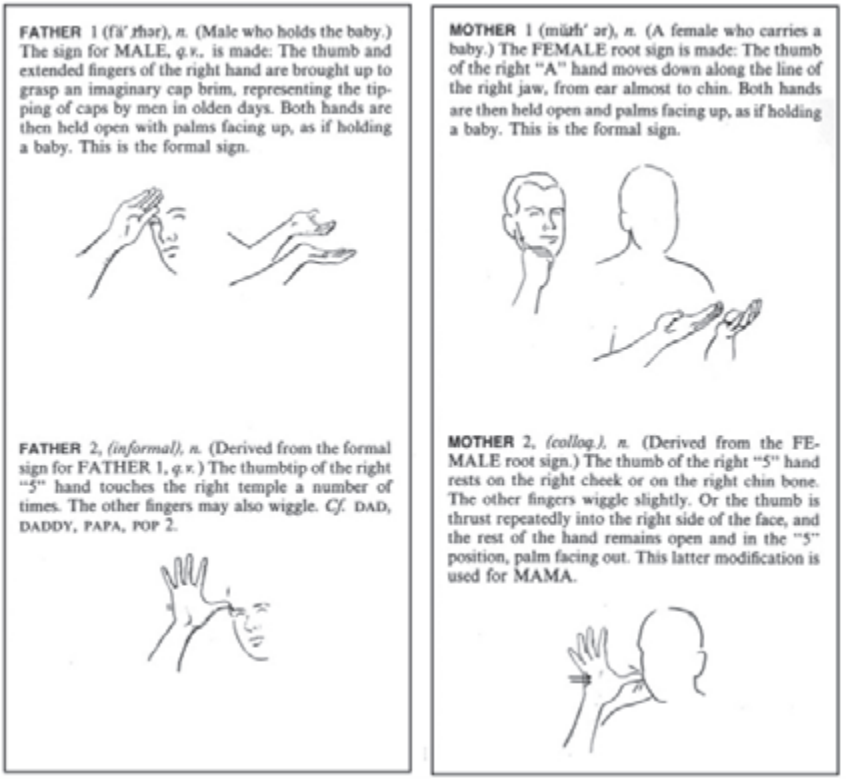

FATHER 1 (fä' ȴhər), *n.* (Male who holds the baby.) The sign for MALE, *q.v.*, is made: The thumb and extended fingers of the right hand are brought up to grasp an imaginary cap brim, representing the tipping of caps by men in olden days. Both hands are then held open with palms facing up, as if holding a baby. This is the formal sign.

FATHER 2, *(informal), n.* (Derived from the formal sign for FATHER 1, *q.v.*) The thumbtip of the right "5" hand touches the right temple a number of times. The other fingers may also wiggle. *Cf.* DAD, DADDY, PAPA, POP 2.

MOTHER 1 (mŭth' ər), *n.* (A female who carries a baby.) The FEMALE root sign is made: The thumb of the right "A" hand moves down along the line of the right jaw, from ear almost to chin. Both hands are then held open and palms facing up, as if holding a baby. This is the formal sign.

MOTHER 2, *(colloq.), n.* (Derived from the FEMALE root sign.) The thumb of the right "5" hand rests on the right cheek or on the right chin bone. The other fingers wiggle slightly. Or the thumb is thrust repeatedly into the right side of the face, and the rest of the hand remains open and in the "5" position, palm facing out. This latter modification is used for MAMA.

FIGURE 1.7. Dictionary descriptions of archaic and modern variants for FATHER and MOTHER. Source: Images and text of definitions from 139, 252 from AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE DICTIONARY by Martin L. A. STERNBERG. Copyright © 1981, 1987 by Martin L. A. Sternberg. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

rich aesthetic and literary value of the films. These two chapters provide additional insights into the NAD language plan as well as our understanding of language change.

After uncovering the socio-historical context for early ASL, we move into exploring the structure of sign language as used in the films. For readers interested in the lexicon and morphology of early ASL, chapter 5 describes how we developed a linguistic corpus and provides evidence about the word formation process of early ASL, based on the data collected from the films and from several dictionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Chapter 6 traces the history of dactylology (fingerspelling) first imported from the French school and adapted to the needs of the American Deaf community. We explore its role and influence in the ASL morphological system as well as the loan-sign and name-sign systems. Chapter 7 reconstructs the historical context for the grammar of early ASL, beginning with a description of the metalanguage of each century and how it changed through each period, by tracing the writings of selected individuals from those periods. With the historical context for the grammar of early ASL established, chapter 8 focuses on the literary legacy of the Deaf American voice rediscovered. We analyze and discuss the literary skills of Deaf sign masters as seen in public oratory and at banquets, especially in terms of how they are preserved in the NAD films. In describing tools for analyzing historical linguistic data, in chapter 9 the views and practices surrounding the use of sign language at the beginning of the Dark Period is discussed, which sets the stage for understanding the fate of the classical register, the films that preserved it, and the shift in metalinguistic discussion up to our modern period. In chapter 10 we draw a contrast between folk etymology and scientific etymology and thus see the history of ASL in the terms of historical linguistics. With the backdrop of historical linguistic discussion in chapter 10, we move into chapter 11 to review the evolution of morphological processes in ASL and wrap up in chapter 12 with a discussion of what varieties of ASL disappeared and what variety survived the onset of the Dark Period and the impact of these changes on ASL today.

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2 SEEKING APPROPRIATE TOOLS FOR STUDYING HISTORICAL CHANGE

Previous researchers examining the NAD films to understand historical change in ASL including Frishberg (1975), Woodward (1978), and their colleagues shared the conventional view of these films: that they comprise a collection of oratory literature with a homogeneous grammatical structure. These researchers had not considered the possibility of synchronic variation or diachronic change across signers in these films. Formational differences in ASL signs that they observed across time (from the era of the films to the present) were accounted for by external cognitive and social pressures, such as a preference of the visual modality for simultaneous structures and the importation of more unnatural sign language structures from contact with the surrounding spoken language, English. We explore an alternate proposal: that modern ASL signs have undergone reanalysis across generations of signers through the same types of processes that guide historical change in spoken languages of the world.

Our purpose in the book is to focus on the language of signs and the people and events directly tied to the development of the language. We discuss pedagogical issues, as far as they affected the language, and people, as far as they affected the language. Most importantly, however, we introduce writers whose voices were obscured because their views of the language did not conform to the nineteenth-century sociolinguistic ASL landscape as we understand it, yet these writers' views had an effect on the use of the collo-

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quial form in the evolution of the language. This book is a history of the language, *not* of pedagogy, the culture, or the sociopolitical climate, although it intersects these, and so we deliberately choose our material as it guides us in understanding the climate that led to the production of the NAD films.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF SIGN LANGUAGE VARIETIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEAF AMERICA

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many children grew up with the ability to hear and later lost their hearing, often through illness. For children who were deaf from birth, there was no systematic procedure for detecting hearing loss early in life, and many grew up with their deafness undetected until their parents noticed delays in social or academic progress. In both cases children often developed a rudimentary way to communicate with family members, using homemade gestures for expressing basic needs. Within the Deaf community, this type of gestural communication within the family is known as *home sign*.

The contribution of home sign systems to ASL was recognized in the twentieth century by William C. Stokoe in his seminal 1960 work.[1] He described the origin of ASL's lexicon and morphology as involving more than one source:

> Actually one might distinguish not two but three kinds of signs: "natural" signs whether "home" signs or the accepted signs of a sign language in use; "conventional" signs which are coinages with or without direct borrowing from another language; and "methodical" signs, which in origin at least were sign-like labels for grammatical features of another language and were used only in teaching that language. (1960, 11–14)

Records exist (Clerc 1818, 132–34) that describe the types of sign language in use in 1817, at the birth of ASL; the nature of the forms of sign language in use since the late 1960s is also well documented (Frishberg 1975; Woodward 1978). But little is known about the varieties of sign language

1. Stokoe's research was conducted with fourth- and fifth-generation signers; therefore the information about sign articulation and sign etymology he collected belongs to those generations.

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used during the less well-documented nineteenth century or about how they relate to the varieties in existence today.

In contrast to home sign, a conventionalized sign language has been regarded by educators as having the potential to reach deaf children and adults from a broad range of home backgrounds. Once exposed to its use by peers at school, deaf children would naturally acquire the more conventional or standardized form of sign language in use there. Historically, the signing community viewed this as an "improved" variety. John Burnet, a Deaf author in 1835 wrote:

> Those who, visiting an institution for the deaf and dumb, or witnessing the conversation of two intelligent mutes, have gazed bewildered on the thousand changing motions through which every thought of the mind flashes and disappears; or who, designing to study the language of signs in its improved form, have looked at the mass of signs flitting before them, with as much dismay as if they were to be compelled to count and individually recognize a swarm of bees. (18)

We know with certainty that during the earliest period of ASL there were three different varieties of sign language in use in America (Burnet 1835, 86; Stokoe 1960). Colloquial signs and methodical signs were used in France and brought to America by Clerc and Gallaudet. The deaf students who came from various parts of the United States combined these two varieties with the various home sign systems brought to the school. Stokoe in 1960 wrote,

> The present language of signs in general use among the American deaf stems from both the natural and methodical sign languages of l'Epée, but even the "natural" elements have become fixed by convention so that they are now as arbitrary as any, and users of the language today are disdainful of "home signs" as they call those signs that arise from precisely the same conditions that generate the "natural" signs but that have local and not national currency.

A split between colloquial interactions among children and adults outside the classroom and the formal interaction between teacher and child in the classroom may have created a linguistic dilemma for members of this new community. Stokoe and colleagues' observation revealed a dichotomy between registers among members in the American Deaf community. He referred to a scholarly report from 1854 by Rémi Valade about de l'Epée's

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1776 conspectus (summary) on the status of natural sign language as being "insufficient as a medium for teaching them French language and culture." This indicated that Stokoe recognized the ongoing issue any community faces in regards to high and low status varieties. Adaptation of natural signs led de l'Epée to fashion a bridge to French (for a modern discussion of these same issues, see Padden and Markowicz 1976).

In France, de l'Epée and his protégé, Abbé Roch-Ambroise Sicard, were careful to make a distinction between two types of sign constructions: (1) *colloquial signs* used naturally among fluent signers, and (2) *methodical signs* designed to represent words in the French language. The use of such signs was known as the "French method." To prepare the deaf child to be part of society, de l'Epée and Sicard acculturated the child first through the medium of natural or spontaneous sign language (colloquial signs), and then aimed to teach the child to read and write the societal language using methodical signs.

Early ASL history also included the transmission of methodical signs in its pedagogical system for a short period of time. We discuss throughout this book that a shift in metalinguistic knowledge occurred throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, obscuring the original contributions of natural signs and methodical signs to the developing language. The general belief during the Dark Period was that ASL was derived from English and LSF was derived from French. Educators and members of the signing community began to view sign language as a code for the surrounding spoken language.

By the end of the nineteenth century, American educators hailed de l'Epée as the father and inventor of the American system, taking a monogenetic perspective whereby "the sign language" was viewed as originating from a single source. This perspective named the Abbé de l'Epée as the inventor of "the sign language," or more accurately, of methodical signs, which then stood in an adversarial relationship with colloquial signs. Table 2.1 illustrates the dichotomy that occurred for sign language during

TABLE 2.1. Monolithic View of Sign Language Dichotomies.

View of sign	Nineteenth century	Twentieth & twenty-first centuries
High status	Methodical signs	Signed English
Low status	Colloquial signs	Colloquial ASL

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the nineteenth century as compared to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries according to a monolithic explanation today, which assumes that modern signed English is closely related to methodical signs.

A major gap in common knowledge has existed in regard to the variation and change in sign language usage during the Dark Period; filling this gap would help with the appropriate interpretation of historical documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Work on the films provides the tools to fill in the gap. Figure 1.6 shows that the historical NAD films were produced at the mid-point of the history of ASL. How the two varieties of sign language, colloquial signs and methodical signs, were documented in the films will become clear as we utilize the tools we have developed. Historical NAD documents were key to understanding the language in the films. These revealed that many actions of the Deaf community were responses to divided dynamics within the community toward elite and colloquial uses of sign language, driven by changes in educational practices.

During the Dark Period, the suppression of ASL and the demotion of sign language educators and professionals caused a break in the continuous transmission of metalinguistic knowledge and scholarship. This was a serious breach for the research community. As ASL gained respect and scholarship began again later in the twentieth century, researchers interpreted film data in the context of modern social and scientific assumptions and knowledge. One particularly powerful modern assumption was that the language in the films reflected societal pressure to conform to spoken language models, leading to manual forms of English being used in the films. As we will argue, this is not an accurate picture of the signing at the time.

Until recently, prevailing views of signed languages presumed that these languages were either nonlinguistic (like pantomime), organized by different principles than spoken languages, or linguistic but parasitic, relying on the surrounding spoken languages for their structure and existence. In 1992 in *The Evolution of Human Languages*, the prominent linguist Comrie wrote "ASL probably has its origin in a basic set of signs provided by an educator, although the subsequent development of the language is then carried out by the Deaf community, for all significant purposes independent of further input from the speaking community" (199). The common view in the 1970s, at the time the films were viewed, resembled the monogenetic view of Veditz in 1913.

Given this monogenetic perspective, the findings of new research on the emergence of grammar in home sign and young sign languages came

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as a surprise. In the last two decades, a huge expansion in studies of deaf communities and their languages has revealed aspects of human language that are found in both signed and spoken forms and may be truly universal. The integration of linguistic fieldwork tools, including intensive video documentation, has resulted in a scientifically informed analysis of the history of newly emerging languages such as Nicaraguan Sign Language and Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language (Kegl, Senghas, and Coppola 1999; Sandler et al. 2005). This research has revealed that these languages have naturally evolved, independent of the surrounding spoken languages. As we view natural processes in action today in young languages, we can use these insights to resolve gaps in the history of older sign languages.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS COMPLICATED BY THE DARK PERIOD

Questions abound for sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists about language structure and change during the Dark Period of ASL history. How are the three early varieties of sign linked to modern varieties? Do modern varieties descend from those brought to America in 1817 by Clerc and Gallaudet? Are any or all of these early varieties represented in the films made by the NAD? Figure 2.1 illustrates our current metalanguage about the genesis of ASL, reflecting an important gap in awareness of what occurred through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this period, not only was the language difficult to capture, but the pedagogical literature

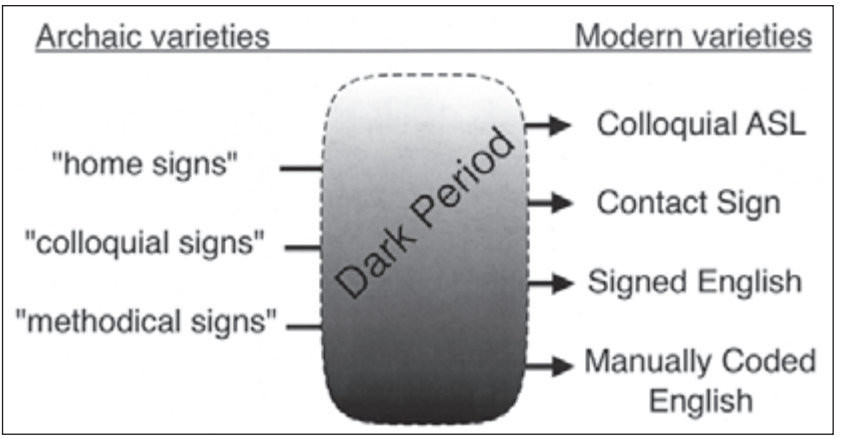

FIGURE 2.1. Timeline reflecting sign language varieties.

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promoting or utilizing signs was abandoned and in some cases destroyed. As a consequence, it has been difficult to trace the current repertoire of sign language registers to the original three varieties of sign.

The NAD Lecture films capture language usage immediately before the Dark Period. They also mark the halfway point in the development of ASL. In our study of how sign language varies and changes across time, we have considered the films a window to earlier times. Through this window, we believe we can examine the literary traditions and grammar of ASL in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We have also utilized the scientific methods that historical linguists use to reconstruct the history of sign language. Subsequent chapters of this book will view ASL evolution through three lenses:

1. The links between important events in the history of deaf people and the history of ASL;
2. Sociolinguistic explanations of social factors that may influence change in sign language;
3. Trends in metalanguage among scholars who studied the language during earlier time periods.

Our investigation reveals how such an approach helps us address the issue of the validity of the NAD films and supports the position that the films include genuine samples of early varieties of ASL as used during the nineteenth century. The historical documents of the NAD and the *American Annals of the Deaf* (among others) hold exciting potential for research. In our work, they have become a historical lens for analyzing and interpreting the contents of the NAD films. Viewed in this way, the films enable us to better understand the literary history of ASL and the evolution of its grammar.

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3 CONCEPTION OF THE LANGUAGE PLAN

So far we have assigned periods to the history of ASL dialects and registers, with each period reflecting a particular type of dichotomy in sign language usage (Stokoe 1969; Woodward 1973, 1982). We also see dynamic interactions between adjacent periods and generations of signers. Using this diachronic approach, we reconstructed the history of Deaf America and its language on the basis of cycles or periods of political and social movements, which affected diglossia (Ferguson 1959; Stokoe 1969; Woodward 1973, 1982) in a community of peers and shaped the way language was used in society.

To do so, we suspended our twenty-first-century mind-set for a while and entered the minds of the turn-of-the-century sign masters to see "the sign language" as they saw it, with their biases and the metalanguage they used. As we did that, we found that the data began to make sense in a way it never had under the assumption that the characteristics, motivations, and metalanguage in the second, third, and fourth generations remained unchanged. It was not until we discarded this bias that we could finally reconstruct the language during the Dark Period.

In response to Lane's concern regarding the risk of error sampling in language documentation (1987), it must be remembered that the signers in the films followed the tradition of promoting the use of *natural sign language*, a popular philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our investigation shows a consistently distinct pattern across the

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three generations of signers in the films. The second- and third-generation signers are consistent in using a more formal but now archaic type of oratorical register, what we have termed the *classical elite dialect.* The fourth-generation signers developed performances based on their conception of poetic or theatrical renditions. We believe the NAD promoted an elite register based on the grammar and lexicon of the natural language of signs, judged to be best suited to the expression of visual-gestural information and not the expression of correct English grammar. In fact, the care taken and emphasis on perspicuity suggests a deliberate plan for preserving the grammar of this natural language.

American and French planners envisioned creating a massive network of schools for deaf Americans (Talbot 1895; Jones 1918). In order to realize the vision, American educators emulated their French counterparts to develop a rigorous pedagogical tradition based on a mentor–student relationship that fostered the transmission of sign language skills across generations of teacher and students. In addition to this "master as curriculum" approach, they designed a teacher practicum, guided by a sophisticated sign master who was equipped with a theoretical metalanguage regarding the formal nature of sign language. This intellectually challenging language plan required an intensive learning curve and lifelong commitment from someone desiring to be a teacher of the deaf. The effort stimulated the growth of a literary and cultural infrastructure, enhancing the deaf experience with visual aesthetics and social interactions.

The establishment of Gallaudet College, which fashioned the use of sign language into a language of instruction and debate in pursuit of knowledge, was the pinnacle of this growth. An American system of teacher networks arose, extending outwardly from this flagship college, leading to a one-of-a-kind opportunity for the deaf individual to become a teacher and/or sign master and thus contribute to continuing the mentor–student cycle. Many deaf individuals in America were transformed into successful polyglots with a useful repertoire of skills in reading, writing, speaking, and signing. This infrastructure, which included a school of higher education, was the result of early American planning for sign language pedagogy and enrichment of cultural, intellectual, and spiritual life for deaf individuals.

However, the nineteenth-century language plan was largely lost as a result of the shift of deaf education philosophy toward oralism. The move to elusive oralism was due in part to technological advances in aural rehabilitation (Fay 1882, 1891, 1892; Adams 1902; Fay 1902), improving the

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science of articulation. Educators became increasingly receptive to the notion that the oral-only approach would be more practical and feasible for enriching the quality of life for deaf Americans (Fay 1923). The original sign-based pedagogical plan was also a victim of changing attitudes toward minority languages and "defective" individuals in society in general, a trend sometimes labeled *linguistic Darwinism* (Baynton 1996; Menand 2001).

Substantial evidence indicates that the NAD was dissatisfied with educational trends in the early twentieth century.[1] The NAD therefore committed to produce the Gallaudet Lecture Films as a sampler of "the sign language" used in the nineteenth century. In this chapter we examine the conception of the Gallaudet Lecture Films as representing the Deaf American voice, retrace the lost trail of the planners' decisions, and examine the literary and linguistic contents of the films.

The hole left by the disappearance of the classical register was eventually filled with a neo-elite register more constrained to follow English word order and leading to a new kind of diglossia that had not existed before; sociolinguist James Woodward (1973) coined the term "pidgin signed English (PSE)." The educated deaf class was now distinguished from the grassroots class by this neo-elite register, and the negative attitude toward the colloquial register in the modern era was born. The colloquial register remained strong outside of the classroom in the schools for the deaf, however, allowing its evolution to continue uninterrupted and leaving us footprints from which to reconstruct the history of ASL.

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD AND FIRST SIGN MASTER

The rapid expansion of sign language across America during the first half of the nineteenth century via the establishment of a network of schools for the deaf was an amazing feat of language planning. It may be difficult to comprehend how such a network could have been built by sending a single apprentice teacher who had received intensive training in classical signing to a new area to serve as a sign language model for subsequent generations of cohorts, but the attempt was made and for a time was relatively successful. Because the classical teachers were still alive and interacting

1. Papers and resolutions contained in the proceedings of the NAD conventions reiterated this dissatisfaction (Draper 1896; McGregor 1893; Hodgson, Cloud, and Hasenstab 1896; Mann et al. 1899).

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within the network, these traditional schools fulfilled their role as centers for dispersing classical sign language, building social bonds among cohorts of students in lifelong relationships, and facilitating the standardization of sign language.

During the mid-nineteenth century there was intense interest in public speaking and oratory in the United States. Public lectures and political events were well attended, and outstanding orators were the celebrities of the day (Holzer 2004). The emerging Deaf community in America mirrored this practice in its own events. Rooted in the banquet movement in France, the first generations of the educated deaf elite adopted a tradition of public lectures recognizing the most-respected orators of the day. These orators were referred to as "sign masters," with the inception of a long tradition in the Deaf community to refer to certain signers as sign masters rather than "storytellers," as they are today. Although the origin of the term *sign master* is unclear, it occasionally appears in historical documents, especially in deaf newspapers and the *American Annals of the Deaf* (Talbot 1872; Sicard 1818), and we know it was an honor in early times to be named as such. It is likely that the American School began the tradition through its practice of pairing novice teachers with a master teacher who taught them "the sign language." Laurent Clerc, the first master, prepared many new teachers, who themselves established new schools, perpetuating the relationship between master and apprentice in satellite schools. Thus an improved register of "the sign language" (the progenitor of modern ASL) appears within the first generation as the model register of the elite, the well educated, and the leaders of the community.

Clerc's reputation as a sign master and his insistence on perspicuity (clarity and transparency) remained intact through the nineteenth century. Louis C. Tuck, a retired teacher and librarian of the Minnesota School for the Deaf, attended the American Asylum while Clerc was still alive. He remembered "once meeting him [Clerc] returning home from town. He wore a tall silk hat and a long-tailed coat, walked slowly, and carried a cane" (1935). This description is strikingly similar in tone to John Hotchkiss's recollections of Clerc in the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series: "He always walked with a cane. He wore a long coat with black buttons down the front and a black stovepipe hat" (Hotchkiss 1913). Tuck provides insight into Clerc's concern for proper signing: "He stopped to speak to me and I have a very clear memory of the way he corrected my use of the

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sign for *mother*; he was very earnest and particular about it, explaining that it should be a combination of woman and 'baby,' not a thumbing of the cheek" (1935, 9).

As noted earlier, nineteenth-century literature is replete with references to the high expectation of quality in sign language usage. Even at the turn of the twentieth century, advocates of the use of the sign language in schools for the deaf continued to value quality in its use. Weston Jenkins, a hearing teacher in the Alabama school and principal in the New Jersey school, also set out a similar description of the nature of the sign language as practiced by "the best sign speakers" in a 1911 article, "The Sign Language: What Is It?" (Jenkins 1911). He made the following observation about the stylistic dichotomy in early oratorical practice:

> Any conjecture that I may hazard as to the probable future development of "the sign language" can be based only on my observation of its growth in the past. As I remember the style of the few survivors of the first generation of American sign makers whom I saw in my youth, their signs were deliberate, clear, exact, full of minute detail, lacking in expressions for general, comprehensive ideas.
>
> The generation which succeeded these pioneers developed with much study and practice, a style more compact and condensed; a style in which the individual sign, instead of aiming to be an exact delineation of a certain individual thing, became often a symbol of wide generalizing meaning. (467)

He also noted the switch in sign language prosody when these same elite signers engaged in spontaneous interactions among themselves outside of the public persona and off of the oratorical platform:

> In the use of signs in conversation among the educated deaf there seems to be a tendency to 'clip' them, dropping every movement not absolutely necessary for intelligibility, and to make the movements in smaller compass. The result is a certain loss of grace and of distinctness, but a gain in ease and rapidity of utterance. (467)

By the end of the nineteenth century, both deaf and hearing educators were concerned about the degradation of "the sign language" and the effects of this "degraded" form on the future of the language (Keep 1857; Long 1910; Talbot 1872). This new view of language change allows us to understand the unfamiliar nature of the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic

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forms in our glossed transcriptions of the historical period in which the films of sign language were made.

In order to investigate sociopolitical dynamics driving sign language ideology, it is necessary to reconstruct events affecting the shifting divergence between a colloquial and formal register of ASL among deaf Americans. Such a shifting divergence is a phenomenon appearing not only in sign language, but in many human languages (McCrum, Cran, and MacNeil 1986). Moreover, according to universal principles of language evolution, accelerated change in language usage occurs whenever traumatic upheavals affect social stability (Pinker 1994). At the end of the nineteenth century America underwent a traumatic socioeconomic transformation from an agricultural to an industrial base, with westward expansion and a massive immigration of diverse peoples and cultures.

Deaf America also experienced the rapid expansion of sign language across the country via the establishment of a network of schools for the deaf during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, as time went on, language decline became an issue. Writing about sixty years after the arrival of Clerc, regarding the difference between master teachers and young teachers in the late nineteenth century, John Keep expressed his opinion on how to resolve the problem of the declining quality of sign language:

> The first generation of teachers, in the American Asylum, at Hartford, each paid his fee of fifty dollars to Mr. Clerc, and received from him a regular course of lessons, and they have never been equaled in the *skill and grace* with which they used signs. If young teachers of the present day would aspire to their excellence, they, too, must have assistance, and generous assistance, from the principal and older instructors in their respective institutions. (1871, 25; emphasis in original)

Many prescriptive solutions were put forward by other writers in the *Annals* during this period. James A. Jacobs in 1857 suggested the following to achieve ideal quality in producing signs:

> The first and most important quality of good signing is *perspicuity*. Signs should be made slowly and distinctly. *Avoid rapidity* and confusion. (1857, 131; emphasis in original)

As an example of a signer displaying this perspicuity, Jacobs named the Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, the eldest son of T. H. Gallaudet and the older

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brother of Edward Miner Gallaudet. The Rev. Gallaudet became an Episcopal priest and founded St. Ann's Church for the Deaf in New York City. In particular, Jacobs made an analogy between Thomas Gallaudet's sign language prosody and that of spoken language in the pulpit:

> Mr. Gallaudet used in prayer, pauses at the end of every sentence or paragraph, by folding or placing the hands together. . . . These pauses are as necessary to mark the termination of each sentence, as the cadence of the voice in vocal prayer, or the ordinary stops in reading. . . . Pauses in prayer enable the person praying to collect and arrange his ideas perspicuously and intelligibly. (1855, 131)

By using certain individuals as respectable models, classicists attempted to impose aesthetic attitudes and principles on others, encouraging them to adhere to established standards and values for proper use of language. As time went on however, a change in the mainstream ideology among signers themselves for defining the proper use of sign language could be detected.

By its establishment in 1864, Gallaudet College took over the flagship role for standardizing and disseminating ASL, not only in America but also in Canada and other parts of the world. In our review of nineteenth-century literature, we discovered a high expectation for quality in sign language usage. Sign masters were recognized for their oratorical skills and their use of paraphrases. Master teachers wrote about perspicuity of signing as an important asset for a good signer. Such values were promoted by the first group of Gallaudet faculty who had acquired them at the Hartford or Fanwood schools. Most of the hearing faculty was formally trained primarily at Yale (Talbot 1895; Baynton 1996). When deaf students from anywhere in the world wanted to pursue advanced education, Gallaudet College was, for a long time, the only option.

As we noted earlier, when such classically trained college students returned home, they were confronted with the local or regional dialect and often tried to correct "deviations." Such efforts came to the attention of the NAD (whose membership and leadership were primarily college graduates), who adopted a resolution in 1910 reflecting the late-nineteenth-century attitude regarding the decline of traditional sign language usage:

> Resolved, that we call upon schools for the deaf not only to *preserve*, but to *improve* on this sign language, and to give *systematic instruction* in the proper and correct use thereof. (NAD 1910; author's emphasis)

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This is reminiscent of our childhood experiences with our own deaf parents and deaf teachers, who used the term "lazy signing" to describe our casual use of sign language. Thus it was recognized early on that the grassroots community was changing the language used at school. Throughout the nineteenth century both deaf and hearing educators were concerned about the degradation of the language and its possible effects.

THE PEDAGOGY OF ACCOMMODATION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

The early American educators and planners of deaf education firmly believed in the French method of instruction. They had seen the benefits of using a conventional sign language to reach deaf children and adults from a broad range of home backgrounds and prepare them to be part of society.

T. H. Gallaudet, Mason Fitch Cogswell, and their backers had first familiarized themselves with the European debate on pedagogy by reading and hearing anecdotes before traveling abroad (Fay 1917). Gallaudet was unsatisfied with the unsubstantiated and inconsistent reports on the success of the oral method, and he had laid a path for importing and extending sign language pedagogy by bringing Laurent Clerc to Hartford and recruiting the best minds from Yale College, his alma mater, to build a comprehensive school network. Training in articulation was confined to those postlingually deafened individuals, whom educators termed semimutes, to preserve the speech already in use (Talbot 1895). The practice of incorporating articulation training in schools for the deaf had its roots in de l'Epée (Dupont 1898).

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, all schools for deaf children in the United States followed the example of the American Asylum in using sign language as the primary medium of instruction. The debate between proponents of the American (sign-based) and German (oral) methods began when a group in Boston led by Horace Mann, a leading educator in Massachusetts, and Samuel Gridley Howe, the director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind, returned from visiting the German schools in 1843 and began to advocate for the establishment of a school where spoken English would be used exclusively. The "German method," or oralism, initiated by Samuel Heinicke later, banned sign language from the classroom in the belief that it would inhibit the deaf child's progress in articulation, a belief that continues today among many proponents of the oral method. Many of

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the European schools had begun to adopt the oral method, but it took until 1867 for the first oral school to open in the United States (Van Cleve and Crouch 1989). Soon after, a group of parents in New England succeeded in establishing the Clarke Institution for Deaf Mutes in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Amid the controversy over methods at the end of the nineteenth century, educators and the Deaf community worldwide began to distinguish between what was happening in Europe and what was happening in America. While Europe quickly succumbed to the oral-only method of deaf education, removing the use of sign language in all settings and culminating with the Milan resolutions in 1880, America held out for the "Combined method," which focused on assessing the communication needs of the individual deaf child. At the 1886 Conference of American Instructors of the Deaf (CAID) convention in California, the Combined method was officially espoused in America (Talbot 1895). This soon became known as the "American system," and, while application of theory to practice was widely divergent in the schools for the deaf, the Deaf community recognized and touted the immense advantages of the combined system over the oral-only approach practiced in Europe. The threat of the oral-only method pushing out the combined system in America became more pronounced at the beginning of the twentieth century, when even more pressure was brought to bear on schools for the deaf to provide maximum exposure to speech training.

STRATEGY OF THE ORAL-ONLY MOVEMENT: RESTORING THE DEAF TO SOCIETY

In pedagogical literature, the goal of "restoring the deaf to society" remained a constant theme. This fueled the oral-only movement of the late-nineteenth century, especially during a time when the American public feared anything that was different or foreign (Baynton 1996). During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, society became fascinated by technological advances and business innovations. The unprecedented paradigm of progress and individualism during the Industrial Age fostered the rapid rise of oralism as *progress* for deaf people and allowed individual oral educators to have a huge impact on policy. In his book *Forbidden Signs* (1996), Douglas Baynton describes how Yale classicists such as Harvey and Isaac Peet lacked the political and social savvy to counter the campaign led by

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Alexander Graham Bell to suppress the use of sign language among deaf people.

Rather than try to convince the traditional establishment to convert the American system to oral-only instruction, a number of educators built an alternate network of private articulation schools where they could attract a more selective portion of the population, especially those middle-class families with more resources for supporting such intensive pedagogy. By the onset of the twentieth century, the trend of establishing alternate schools was well on its way, with Clarke School as the flagship. Rebecca Edwards (1997) in her doctoral dissertation suggests that the main purpose for schools such as Clarke was to minimize the distraction of sign language in the education of younger children, segregating them from older deaf children and adults in order to provide them with exclusive speech and lipreading training.

Two additional forces conspired to propel the success of the oral-only movement into the twentieth century (Baynton 1996). First, never-ending publicity on improved techniques and new knowledge in teaching speech and lipreading convinced many that the use of sign language had become obsolete, reflecting the impact of social Darwinism. Second, social uncertainties after the Civil War and the immigration of foreign speakers influenced many people to negatively interpret the natural tendencies of the Deaf community members to socialize with each other as evidence of "clannishness." This perceived unwillingness to learn to speak English promoted the efforts to eliminate its cause from society (Baynton 1996).

STRUGGLE AMONG PROMOTERS OF THE COMBINED METHOD IN REDEFINING PEDAGOGY

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the American network of schools for the deaf tried to accommodate the demands of this new oral movement by revising the curriculum to incorporate more articulation (i.e., the combined system), primarily in separate tracks of classes. One flaw in the combined system became evident: there was not yet a standard model or an efficient way of incorporating both sign language and spoken language within an educational program (Baynton 1996, 14). Oral educators were dissatisfied with the compromising efforts of the combined system advocates, resulting in the establishment of a Methods Committee composed of E. A. Fay, A. G. Bell, and B. Talbot. This is reflected in the fol-

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lowing definitions of instructional methods published in 1882, as accepted by the Conference of Superintendents and Principals:

Manual Method:
By the manual method is meant the course of instruction which employs the sign-language, the manual alphabet, and writing as the chief means in the education of the deaf, and has facility in the comprehension and use of written language as its principal object.

Oral Method:
By the oral method is meant that in which signs are used as little as possible: the manual alphabet is generally discarded altogether; and articulation and lip-reading, together with writing, are made the chief means as well as the end of instruction.

Combined Method:
The Combined method is not so easy to define, as the term is employed with reference to several distinct methods, such as (1) the free use of both signs and articulation, with the same pupils and by the same teachers, throughout the course of instruction; (2) the general instruction of all the pupils by means of the manual method, with the special training of a part of them in articulation and lip-reading as an accomplishment; (3) the instruction of some pupils by the manual method and others by the oral method in the same institution; (4)—though this is rather a combined system—the employment of the manual method and the oral method in separate schools under the same general management, pupils being sent to one establishment or the other as seems best with regard to each individual case. (Fay 1882, 32–33)

The same set of definitions was published in the first issue of each new volume of the *Annals* the following year and every year until at least 1925. The only change in the text was in the final paragraph, where a sentence was added in 1910: "Speech and speech-reading are taught where the measure of success seems likely to justify the labor expended, and in *most* of the schools some of the pupils are taught wholly or chiefly by the Oral method or by the Auricular method" (Fay 1910, 57). This trend was firmly in place by 1925, so that within 100 years of the birth of deaf education in America, the approach to deaf education using "the natural language of signs" as a vehicle to teach language was primarily reserved for pupils who demonstrated a lack of skill in the oral-only approach.

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While educators debated communication methods in the pedagogy for deaf children, implementation varied across schools. One extreme example was the policy at the Illinois School for the Deaf of separating 600 hard of hearing and profoundly deaf children into two separate and unequal curricular programs, the oral track and the manual track. Separation of children based on speech skills became a common practice in the schools for the deaf in America through most of the twentieth century, and it may have created the environment that led to the demise of classical sign language (Wright 1916, 137–141; 1918, 341).[2]

At the end of the nineteenth century, educators in America began to consider the feasibility of early language intervention as a strategy for introducing language training to the deaf child at a younger age (Jones 1918). The impact of such a policy change involved lowering the age of admission and expanding the school curriculum. In addition, newer technology came into use for supporting aural language training via electromagnetic induction for amplification of sound (Fay 1882b; 1891; 1902).

Through most of the nineteenth century, articulation training was struggling and flawed at best, but with improved scientific technology and techniques for teaching deaf children to speak, the pressure to keep up with these new advances made it more difficult for teachers to expend any remaining energy on the proper use of the language of signs. In addition, professional training instituted in the Normal schools became the accepted means to prepare teachers of the deaf. However, the Normal program at Gallaudet College did not admit deaf applicants until sometime in the twentieth century (Baynton 1996). Educated deaf leaders assumed that the Normal programs would include instruction on the language of signs (Monroe 1891), but, with the exception of Gallaudet College, this was not the case.

THREAT OF FRAGMENTATION OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Although the combined system appeared, to the Deaf community, to be a means for preserving the use of sign language in the schools for deaf chil-

2. In his 1918 article "Mixed or Combined," John D. Wright wrote: "I bespeak for these children at least, the highest available advantages in the acquisition of speech and speech-reading, and I know of no way by which these can be provided in a combined-system school except by establishing a *segregated oral department*, whether it be large or small" (341).

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dren, the elite, educated deaf leaders began to disagree on how the combined system should be implemented. The traditional American network competed with the new system of oral day programs established by private entrepreneurs. Such programs hired teachers and staff who did not bother to go through the extensive learning of a new language (Baynton 1996). Families often found this new option attractive, as they did not have to send their children to a state school that was often far away; however, leaders in the traditional Deaf community felt that small private schools would not be able to meet the needs of deaf children due to the lack of resources equivalent to those found in the large state schools. They feared that children who fell behind would suffer even further from language deprivation.

Deaf leaders also feared that the lack of access to full communication would result in fewer opportunities for children to be exposed to deaf adults, thus limiting their ability to learn the proper usage of sign language. Without access to a conventional sign language, the children were likely to develop an idiosyncratic use of sign language based on home sign systems. Deaf leaders found this to be the greatest threat to the stability of Deaf America.

The traditional residential school system did require more commitment from faculty and staff in accommodating to the communication needs of deaf children. By choosing an advanced education at the flagship training ground, Gallaudet College, deaf individuals who sought to follow in the footsteps of Clerc were also provided a secure economic and social base and landed a respectable career in the school network. However, the shift in policy in America away from the residential school system and toward oral day programs had another adverse effect for deaf adults: the loss of employment as teachers of deaf children, since the local private schools now primarily hired those who well-emulated the speech of hearing people. This shift triggered a decline in the number of deaf teachers in schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. To address the fragmentation of the American school network, leaders in the Deaf community made use of contacts with peers from their college days to build a new kind of nationwide empowerment network. In 1880 they organized the first National Convention of Deaf-Mutes (see photo in figure 3.1), which resulted in the establishment of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the NAD completed a successful fundraising drive to commission the series of films that is the focus of this book. Their motive can be traced to the nineteenth-century concerns shared among educators regarding the decline of sign language.

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FIGURE 3.1. First National Convention of Deaf Mutes in 1880. Source: *Silent Worker* 35, no. 10 (July 1923): 408.

At first, the combined system goals of the NAD and educated deaf people seemed clear, but as the pedagogical focus shifted to aural rehabilitation, three additional factors emerged that contributed to the divergence in the use of sign language. First, traditional tutoring in using sign language—private tutoring, as initiated by Clerc and T. H. Gallaudet, that required an intensive commitment of time and effort—was no longer part of the new procedure for training teachers of the deaf. Second, the modern trend of mass education for teachers also replaced the concept of interning or working under the guidance of experienced teachers in an established school. The Normal program at Gallaudet College (ca. 1892) replaced the Hartford and New York schools as training sites for future teachers who were recruited from Yale College. Finally, schools became increasingly negligent in monitoring the quality of sign language used by newer faculty.

These factors became worrisome to the NAD, whose leadership in the early 1900s was primarily college graduates. In 1910, they adopted a resolution that reflected the late-nineteenth-century attitude regarding the decline of traditional sign language usage (see resolution text on p. 27).

Could the NAD films thus have been created merely to promote a particular register that was considered superior to the natural variety of sign

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language? Early in our research, this possible motivation for documenting the use of sign language made many of us doubt the validity of the data recorded: Moreover, many of the individuals who were leaders in the NAD at the time the films were produced were late deafened—that is, they had acquired spoken English as their native language before they became deaf. Thus we wondered whether the signing in these films was actually a realistic sample of the way Deaf people actually signed at the time. Our subsequent research confirmed, however, that despite their nonnative sign language background, the signers were trying to reproduce on film the classical style of signing used among the earlier generations of signers, to ensure the "purity" of "the sign language" that Clerc brought to America.

RECONSTRUCTING THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE PLAN OF THE NAD

Within European schools for the deaf, a new trend in language policy for teaching deaf children gained broad acceptance at an international gathering of educators in Milan, Italy, in 1880. This group proclaimed that sign language was unnecessary and in fact was harmful to the instruction of deaf children, and they banned its use within the classroom. As a result, many deaf teachers in Europe lost their teaching jobs, and deaf children were forbidden to use sign language or to make contact with deaf adults. By the beginning of the twentieth century, deaf education in the United States had taken a similar turn, and many deaf teachers in this country lost their jobs. Such adverse circumstances internationally no doubt prompted the NAD to take a strong stance advocating for the use of sign language in education and for human language rights in general.

The NAD film project was part of the Deaf community's effort to counter the threat of the abolishment of sign language. As president of the NAD, George Veditz wrote about the war of methods in America. He identified the "chiefs" of the two hostile camps as Edward Miner Gallaudet, the champion of the Combined method, and Alexander Graham Bell, the "high priest of the Oral Method" (1910a, 29). His proposal and the respect he commanded among educators and the Deaf community prompted the NAD to make several resolutions supporting the Combined method during their conventions in Chicago (1893), Philadelphia (1896), St. Paul (1899), St. Louis (1904), and Norfolk (1907).

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At the 1893 International Congress of the Deaf, held in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, NAD President George Dougherty (one of the sign masters in the Gallaudet Lecture Films) gave the opening address, which focused on the "methods war." His fiery comments reflected well the sentiments of the international Deaf community and not only threatened the "ultra-oralists," but were prophetic as well. It took almost 100 years for his prophecy to be realized:

> Let the ultra-oralists be now warned that they will rue it; we will fight back and as an inevitable result of the conflict, the pure oral method will be strictly confined to private and insignificant schools, and its reputation or prestige badly discredited most effectively and permanently—perhaps more than we ourselves intended to bargain for, because we, in truth, are in favor of speech and lip-reading being taught in a limited way—only to those children capable of being benefited, but not to be forced down the throats of those found practically incapable at a great loss of time. (Dougherty 1893, 17–18)

At the same time the Deaf community sought to understand why A. G. Bell was not supportive of their cause. At the request of President Veditz, A. G. Bell wrote a letter responding to the NAD platform advocating the use of sign language in the classroom:

> I have nothing to urge against the use of this language by adult deaf persons in talking to one another if they so desire. That is a matter which concerns themselves alone; and they are certainly entitled to employ any language that they may prefer.
>
> My objections relate chiefly to the use of the language in the instruction of the young; and I look at the matter from the standpoint of a teacher pledged to do his best for the little pupils entrusted to his care.
>
> One thing is certain: Our pupils come to us to learn English not "the sign language"; and one great object of their education is to enable them to communicate with the people at home, and with the world of hearing and speaking people around them. (Bell 1910)

The correspondence was printed in the proceedings of the NAD and the World Congress of the Deaf in 1910. However, Bell resorted to age-old arguments in American politics for justifying the exclusion of sign language:

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> But when we come to the language of signs we are dealing with a different language altogether, not English at all, and it is certainly no part of our duty as instructors of the deaf, to encourage our pupils to employ a foreign language, not understood by the people at home, nor by the world of hearing and speaking people with whom we desire them to come into communication. It is no part of our duty to help them to become foreigners in their own country by permitting them to use, as a means of communication, a language that is not understood by the people of that country. (ibid.)

Bell said that signers were welcome to use natural sign language in their personal lives, but he exhorted educators of the deaf to use English as the language of instruction and to not encourage students to use the natural sign language in school. The NAD leaders were concerned about the future of these children in a world where they might never have contact with a deaf adult model. The Deaf community feared that this would lead to the decline of classical sign language as well as a decline in the quality of life for deaf citizens.

NAD leaders held influential positions at the 1910 World Congress of the Deaf, held in the United States.[3] During the congress, delegates discussed these issues in depth, with speaker after speaker advocating the use of the combined system in all schools for the deaf. The congress culminated in the passage of a resolution that zeroed in on the fundamental purpose of pedagogy:

> No. 2. Teach speech where practicable, not where impracticable.
>
> While we fully recognize the difficulty and even the impossibility of acquiring it by many of the deaf.
>
> Resolved, That we favor the best oral instruction for those deaf who can profit by it.
>
> Resolved, That where the attempt to acquire speech results in the sacrifice of mental development, we favor the employment of such methods as will secure the highest and broadest mental development.
>
> This is what the Combined System aims to do, and therefore we endorse the Combined System. (World Congress of the Deaf 1910, 408–409)

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3. This international network is a predecessor to the current World Federation of the Deaf, which was officially established in 1950.

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The publication of sign language lexicography was a second front in the language plan to preserve the classical register. J. Schuyler Long was a key proponent of the classical form of "the sign language" at the beginning of the twentieth century. He first published his dictionary, *The Sign Language*, as a series in the *Annals* in 1908 and 1909 and as a complete text with photographic plates in 1910. Dr. Long was a postlingually deaf educator at the Iowa School for the Deaf and a lifelong member of the NAD. The second edition of the dictionary (1918), included photographic plates representing over 20 percent of the signs in the book. In Long's introductory notes he emphasized two reasons for publishing the text: first, as an aid for hearing people interested in learning "the sign language" and communicating with deaf people, and second, as an aid for deaf people in learning the proper way to sign. In his introduction, Long (1918) referred to the inconsistencies in proper technique:

> As a result, pupils merely pick it up haphazard and often from those unfamiliar with it, and no attempt is made to see that it is learned and used correctly. Consequently this very useful and valuable language of pantomime has not been acquired by the rising generation in that purity and perfection attained by the deaf and their instructors during the early decades of its use in this country. It is believed, therefore, that the adult deaf on leaving school will find the manual of assistance in acquiring a more certain and accurate command of their natural language. (3)

This controversy about how to use sign language was overshadowed by a larger problem: Schools began to switch to the exclusive use of speech and speechreading for instruction to deaf children. Such a drastic shift in American Deaf education forced the traditional network of deaf professionals and alumni to unite as a counterforce to promote the use of sign language as part of instruction. Researchers, up to now have not known how to address the archaic language dichotomies because the tools for studying them have only recently been developed. This dichotomy between colloquial and "standard" or classical forms of "the sign language" among the old guard accounts for the use of the term in the George W. Veditz lecture "Preservation of The Sign Language," which was filmed in 1913 as part of the NAD moving pictures project.

Long (1918) nevertheless recognized natural language change and succinctly described the conditions under which colloquial signs appear, further alluding to the sublexical organization of signs:

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> Many signs, however, have been modified, until they appear more or less arbitrary and have lost their original connection and significance. They are, as a rule, made colloquially briefer when combined in a narrative than when made alone, and when several signs are rapidly made one after another they apparently lose their individuality, though to the experienced observer the essential part of the sign is preserved. For there are usually some essential movements of the hands or fingers in each sign and some that are not essential, and a one-armed man making the necessary part of the signs with one hand instead of two against his body or a near-by object is readily understood. (8)

He further described the manner in which this assimilation process occurred, referring to how the beginning position of a sign can change from its citation form position to the position of the immediately preceding sign.

Although the lexical and stylistic differences between the films and colloquial signing were in fact natural examples of language change (Frishberg 1975), many leaders of the time felt that these changes indicated that the younger generation of students was no longer exposed to the more perfect form of "the sign language" as passed down from Clerc.

Long, Veditz, and their colleagues (the "old guard") reflected the transitional era in which they were living. They were concerned with perspicuity and faithfulness to "the sign language" as inherited from Clerc, just as their predecessors had been, but they were also working to address the newer issues they faced, mainly the disuse of the language of signs in a hostile oral environment. Vested in the "proper" way to sign, the old guard wanted to preserve the best language of past generations and at the same time fight against the wholesale elimination of any form of the language that deaf people held dear. This distinguished the old guard from the generation of deaf leaders that followed, who emulated the new Gallaudet sign language in the order of English words and were no longer as concerned with perspicuity.

Outside the field of deaf education, contemporary anthropological research must also have inspired the old guard to think about preserving the classic register. Anthropologists in America were greatly interested in documenting declining languages: in their work with the tribes of Native Americans in the West, anthropologists witnessed the extinction of cultures and languages of the indigenous peoples in America. News reports circulated from the Gallaudet campus in the 1880s of Native American chiefs from the West being brought to the campus and using their own sign language with deaf students, who tried to communicate with them in

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the natural language of signs. Garrick Mallery, a prominent anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institute, was very interested in comparing the signed languages of various peoples. In one of his books, Mallery mentioned the role of Professor Edward Allen Fay in helping to organize these visits to the college campus (Mallery 1881, 408). Fay also wrote about his experience with such contacts made in sign language in his editorials for the *Annals*. Like Mallery, Fay and many other scholars were pondering the classic question of the origins of sign language.

THE EMERGENCE OF CLASSICAL DIGLOSSIA

According to universal principles of language change, regional divergence in language usage commonly occurs whenever there are geographic or social boundaries (Pinker 1994). This can be reduced by the mobility of people across boundaries. In nineteenth-century America, with limited mobility and more intense local interaction, one would predict divergence in ASL. This would be more common in remote areas where people have little exposure to the evolving standard form of sign language. As an example, Woodward (1976) reported that deaf people attending segregated schools for Black deaf children developed an independent variety of sign language. Woodward argued that in this circumstance of little contact with the outside, generations of children and adults were not exposed to alternate dialects or diglossic stigmatization, so language change was slow.

However, ASL diglossic emergence exemplifies a principle fundamental to diglossic shift within a minority group or community, that when a shift is triggered by a social change in the status quo and a subsequent stigmatization and stabilization, there is a move toward compromise if stigmatization is not balanced out. In the 1900s, when deaf college students returned home, they were likely confronted with the local or regional sign language dialect and may have tried to correct deviations they observed. These forces created a dichotomy between the two varieties: the local colloquial register and the formal register learned while attending college. As a consequence, the Deaf community began to attach a stigma to the local sign language.

THE MOTIVATION AND PLANNING OF THE NAD FILMS

Understanding the nature and role of the NAD films at the time they were produced is crucial in determining the value of the films for present-

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day research. Our investigation into these circumstances revealed much about the metalanguage of the nineteenth century, which contributed to the strategy the NAD employed in collecting the sign language samples for the films. For the bulk of the nineteenth century, *natural sign language* was the popular term, as educators and deaf leaders emphasized the distinction between spontaneous signed language and the mechanical style of signing often found among novice teachers.[4] Resolutions made at the NAD conventions prior to the films' production provide substantial documentation that leaders valued the sign language of the first generation and wanted to preserve that form.

The NAD responded to the shift of pedagogy and language planning toward exclusive oralism by starting a project that would preserve the classical register that had originated at the American School for the Deaf and was continued at Gallaudet College by the teachers who were recruited by founder E. M. Gallaudet. One way to interpret this action of the NAD is that it confirms the presence of a diglossic situation in which elite members tried to replace the local dialect with another type of language considered superior, Gallaudet Sign Language. A 1910 resolution was passed:

> Resolved, that we endorse and recommend the manual of signs recently published by Mr. J. S. Long, as a text-book to those hearing persons desiring to acquire a fair knowledge and correct use of the Gallaudet sign language. (NAD 1910)

This text includes the first mention of the term *Gallaudet Sign Language*. Based on this context and other documents from that era, we concluded that the term did not refer to Gallaudet as the name of the inventor of "the sign language," recalling that Veditz and others mentioned de l'Epée as the inventor of sign language. Instead, we believe the term refers to the place where this variety was used, the college and the faculty members who modeled it. Because of the historical connection of such people to the Hartford school, the name also represented "the sign language" of Clerc and T. H. Gallaudet.

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4. This "mechanical signing" referred to the rearrangement of signs in order to model the grammar of English (Jacobs 1856). It should not be misunderstood as the incorporation of methodical signs imported from France in 1817 by Clerc and T. H. Gallaudet.

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Further evidence for this motive to preserve "the sign language" of Clerc came from the introductory section of Long's dictionary, where Long pointed out that the book was intended for deaf people.

> It is believed, therefore, that the adult deaf on leaving school will find the manual of assistance in acquiring a more certain and accurate command of their natural language.
>
> Another hope of the author is that it will preserve this expressive language, to which the deaf owe so much, in its original purity and beauty, and that it will serve as a standard of comparison in different parts of the country, preserving its uniformity throughout. (Long 1910, 6)

For this reason, one of our fathers (Clark) purchased the book while a student at the California School for the Deaf in the early 1930s. We suggest that the NAD employed a cohesive strategy, using various media, to promote "the sign language" in the early twentieth century.

CHOOSING FILM AS MEDIUM FOR DEAF VOICE

The content and style of the NAD resolutions and films reveal a strategy among deaf leaders in communicating to deaf people and to others. In describing the internal political dynamics of the Deaf community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Padden and Humphries (2005, 59) suggested that deaf people's need to speak out and give "voice" to their concerns contributed to the production of the Gallaudet Lecture Films. In pursuit of these aims, and a scant fifteen years after the invention of cinema, the NAD undertook the production of "moving picture films" of their own that would be used to advance the goals of the organization, to promote sign language, and to spread the voice of deaf people throughout the United States and around the world. The enduring story of these films reflects the efforts of the Motion Picture Committee of the NAD to create films that would show that deaf people have something to say and that they could say it in their own language.

The question we faced time and again in studying the films and other descriptions of "the sign language" related to *whose* voice was being preserved. Our interest lay in investigating significant deaf voices. Not surprisingly, deaf education has played a pivotal role in forming and swaying the opinions and views of the Deaf community from its inception, if for

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no other reason than the fact that literacy provided the opportunity for the development and expression of literary and aesthetic values. From the outset of educational efforts, hearing educators impressed upon their pupils the importance of knowing the language of society at large. When it was believed that sign language could best foster this knowledge, the debate focused on which form of sign language best facilitated learning. In this climate, educators agreed that the perspicuous use of sign language was of prime importance. Several took the time to describe its characteristics leading to the NAD's desire to preserve the classical register as the best expression of the Deaf community's literary and aesthetic values. The nature of the colloquial register was not disputed; it was recognized as a natural part of the social intercourse of deaf people amongst themselves and on occasion was briefly described in comparison to the known principles governing the registers used in the classroom and in more formal settings such as was seen in the NAD films. These discussions about which sign language register to use provides evidence that even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries multiple voices were expressed through multiple registers.

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4 WHO'S WHO IN THE GALLAUDET LECTURE FILM SERIES

What were the literary and aesthetic criteria that the NAD used to select signers to portray the way signed language was used among the deaf in America? Obviously, the NAD preferred the sign masters, the best-known signers of the day. As described at the end of chapter 3, the films were originally part of a collection called the Gallaudet Lecture Films, which implies that the NAD planned to concentrate on filming those who participated in the elite society of deaf Americans. The genres ranged from personal recollections, poetic renditions, and sermons to political propaganda, with E. M. Gallaudet filmed as the first sign master in a pilot movie for the NAD series. The Moving Pictures Committee treasured the historical perspective of the older generation on the Deaf way of life, and accordingly asked them to share their personal stories. The NAD also felt it was critical to address social issues, so the committee requested that middle-aged deaf individuals who were prominent members of the Deaf community should be filmed.

In addition, the committee wanted to carry on the literary traditions first founded by Ballard and Hotchkiss. It was hoped that examples of literary work modeled in the films would inspire deaf students to join their school's literary society and read the classics. The Literary Society extended its network by establishing chapters in every state to allow members to continue with the literary traditions practiced by Cloud and Dougherty in

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their home states. Another promotional strategy was to send role models to display recited performances in sign language for deaf organizations and for the schools for the deaf, to encourage students to read articles and books. E. M. Gallaudet set an example for deaf students by reviewing the novel *Lorna Doone* in his film, encouraging them to also read classics.

Concerns have been raised about identifying the sign language on the films as an early form of ASL. The first concern relates to the age of onset of deafness, which today has an impact on the amount of English grammar seen in signers. However, this factor did not seem to have an impact on the grammatical structures seen consistently across signers in the films. Most of the third- and fourth-generation signers in the films were adventitiously deaf while the second generation consisted of two hearing professors and two deaf professors, one of whom was adventitiously deafened. The diglossic situation of the schism between the English-like signing of college graduates and the colloquial ASL of the rest of mainstream Deaf America is the second concern, since the signers on the Gallaudet Lecture Films were predominantly educated at Gallaudet College. Another consideration is discourse topic; like age of onset of deafness, we did not find this to be as informative in identifying or grouping the signers, although it offered important information about the genre. The older signers, all in their seventies, shared personal memoirs. These men were all Gallaudet faculty members approaching retirement. The middle-aged, third-generation signers were NAD officers, community leaders, or teachers in residential schools and focused on political and social issues in their lectures, while the younger generation, the college students, tended toward performance, preferring to do artistic renditions.

THE MOVING PICTURES COMMITTEE

The NAD appointed a Moving Pictures Committee in 1910 to implement the vast project of producing the Gallaudet Lecture Film collection. Two deaf individuals on the committee were largely responsible for carrying the project through two different phases: Oscar Henry Regensburg (figure 4.1) chaired the committee work during the fundraising drive and the film production process; upon Regensburg's unexpected demise, Roy Stewart (figure 4.2) took over in 1914 to supervise the circulation of films and subsequent preservation of the films for posterity.

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FIGURE 4.1. Oscar Regensburg. Source: *Silent Worker* 14, no. 7 (March 1902): 97.

Regensburg was an activist like Veditz, with whom he shared many interests. In 1894 he began publishing the *National Exponent*, which was described as a "bright, lively and fearless weekly paper published in the interests of the deaf" (Gannon 1981, 239–40). Based in Chicago, the newspaper was staffed by many of the people who were later involved in the NAD film project. Robert P. MacGregor was editor-in-chief, James H. Cloud and J. Schuyler Long were associate editors, and Veditz was the foreign editor. In 1896, after only two years, the *National Exponent* ceased publication and Regensburg moved to California.

President Veditz named Regensburg in his 1910 report to the NAD as responsible for the idea of using films in promoting the status of sign language. During Veditz's 1904–1910 term as NAD president, the organization sought a way to build a strong nationwide network and base for advocating the use of sign language. The NAD planned to sponsor a national train tour with Gallaudet College President E. M. Gallaudet. In this way, Veditz hoped to make the NAD more visible and influential nationwide, as well as to give opportunities for Deaf American citizens and the general public to see and meet President Gallaudet and the officers of the NAD who would

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FIGURE 4.2. Roy Stewart. Source: Courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives.

accompany him. Due to the extensive time and expense of such a venture, however, the plan was deemed not feasible and forward movement halted. Instead, Regensburg suggested that a film be made of E. M. Gallaudet giving a lecture of his own choosing. This lecture film was used as an exhibit piece in the national fundraising drive that Veditz appointed Regensburg to lead. Under Regensburg's leadership, the drive was successful in amassing a little over $5,000, estimated to be equivalent to roughly $100,000 today, in a very short time.

Regensburg played a vital role in the film project and probably had a hand in many important decisions regarding the development of the agenda and selection of signers for the Gallaudet Lecture Films. Upon Regensburg's death in 1914, the NAD officially recognized and thanked him for his twenty-five years of service on various committees and positions. Figure 4.3 shows the committee members sitting around a table while Chairman Regensburg introduces George Dougherty, one of the lecturers filmed.

After Regensburg's death, Roy Stewart took the leadership of the Motion Picture Committee. Stewart had graduated from Gallaudet College in 1899 and became a civil servant with a fifty-year career at the U.S. Census

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FIGURE 4.3. Oscar Regensburg, the chair of the Motion Picture Committee, introducing Dr. Dougherty (film still). Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

Bureau and Public Health Department in Washington, DC. He was active in the Gallaudet Alumni Association and maintained many contacts with both the Gallaudet College faculty and the alumni membership, and was thus a perfect replacement for the committee chairmanship.

THE SIGN MASTERS

Typically, an extended family is comprised of three generations—children, parents, and grandparents—and the people in the NAD films can be thought of in the same way.

Listing of NAD Text Corpora by Generation

We grouped the signers in the films based on their relationship to the first American Sign Language users. The oldest, or first-generation, signers had already passed away when the project began. These were the people who formed the first group of cohorts at the American School for the Deaf in

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TABLE 4.1. Members of the Gallaudet College Faculty as Second-Generation Cohorts.

Signer	Year	Title	Length	Signs
1. E. M. Gallaudet	1910	Lorna Doone	15 min.	879
2. J. B. Hotchkiss	1913	Memories of Old Hartford	16 min.	747
3. A. G. Draper	1915	The Signing of the Charter of Gallaudet College	5 min.	239
4. E. A. Fay	1913	Dom Pedro's Visit	5 min.	259

Hartford. We refer to the children that came later and learned from them, we refer to as the second generation. Four second-generation signers appear in the films and are listed in table 4.1. They were diverse in genealogy but they shared the same dialect and they were all professors at Gallaudet College. The third generation, which learned from the second, is represented by six signers, all either leaders or teachers who came from different parts of the country (listed in table 4.2). They learned the classic variety of sign language from the professors at Gallaudet College. The remaining signers in the films belonged to the fourth generation and are listed in table 4.3.

When assigning each master signer to a generation, we considered more than just the age of the individual. We discovered that the signers

TABLE 4.2. NAD Leaders and Educators from Various Parts of the United States as Third-Generation Cohorts.

Signer	Year	Title	Length	Signs
5. MacGregor 1	1913	Lay Sermon	16 min.	674
6. MacGregor 2	1912	The Irishman's Flea	2 min.	88
7. MacGregor 3	1912	The Lady and the Cake	2 min.	90
8. T. H. Fox	1915	Gettysburg Address	10 min.	362
9. G. T. Dougherty	1913	The Discovery of Chloroform	6 min.	360
10. G. W. Veditz	1913	The Preservation of the Sign Language	14 min	574
11. Cloud/McCarthy	1913	A Plea for a Statue of Epée in America	6 min.	284
12. W. Hubbard	1913	Address at the Tomb of Garfield	9 min.	356

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TABLE 4.3. Gallaudet Students and Alumni as Fourth-Generation Cohorts.

Signer	Year	Title	Length	Signs
14. H. D. Drake F. H. Hughes Ruth Knox	1914	Gallaudet Play	5 min.	407
13. Mary Erd	1913	The Death of Minnehaha	14 min.	402
15. W. E. Marshall	1920	Yankee Doodle	4 min.	219

could be grouped according to other factors, including their personal and professional background, the genre and content of their performance piece, their delivery style, and the grammar they used in their signing. In turn, we were able to use these categories to further examine the NAD films.

1. Signer Background. We collected supplementary materials, including biographies of the sign masters and historical background on the film collection from various sources, including the Gallaudet University Archives and the archives of the American School for the Deaf. We found occasional reports by the NAD Motion Picture Committee in the proceedings of the NAD conventions, from which we traced the motive for producing the films. As discussed in previous chapters, our supplementary materials also include historical documents written by educators about the use of ASL in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The intellectual climate among linguists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was also considered as such views potentially affected our interpretation of historical documents.

2. Literary Genre. The primary purpose of genre classification is to help us focus on what to look for in these examples of sign language and what possible differences there might be across genres. The genres we found were personal recollections, political satire, literary translations/renditions, and oratory.

3. Content. General content was consistent within each generation. Those in the second generation shared personal memories of their experiences. The third-generation signers dealt with political issues, not only within the Deaf community, but worldwide social issues as well. For example, Robert MacGregor discussed, for example, how men are to be brothers regardless of where they live. The fourth-generation signers were either students enrolled at Gallaudet College or alumni who had just left

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college. They were the younger generation, and were asked to be in the films because of their poetic or theatrical talents.

4. Delivery Style. The Gallaudet Lecture films portrayed formal oratorical presentations by leaders of the Deaf community who displayed literary assets most valued among signers during the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. However, as reported in Supalla (2004), we were at first unfamiliar with the literary tradition of their lectures, which led us to assume that the signers were relying on methodical signs to represent their written speeches.

5. Grammar. The grammar portrayed in the films reveals a young language evolving with each generation using it. Although the sign masters of the second and third generations were attempting to maintain the language of the first generation, as taught in America by Laurent Clerc, subtle changes were occurring as will be described in subsequent chapters.

THE SECOND GENERATION: SHOWCASE OF GALLAUDET FACULTY

Figure 4.4 is a photograph of the Gallaudet faculty and students that was shot in the early days of the college.[1] The populace was entirely male, which was common in colleges in the nineteenth century. Although there were a few women students during the first several years of its existence, women were not admitted to Gallaudet College on a permanent basis until 1887.

In the early 1900s, original faculty members such as Edward Miner Gallaudet, John Hotchkiss, Edward Allen Fay, and Amos Draper were nearing retirement. At this time the NAD invited them to give lectures in sign language to be filmed for posterity. The goal was to promote sign language as used in Gallaudet College in the nineteenth century as well as to preserve works of literature from that period.

Edward Miner Gallaudet (1837–1917)

After graduating from Trinity College in 1856, Edward Miner Gallaudet taught at the American Asylum in Hartford for eighteen months, whereupon

1. Although Edward M. Gallaudet wrote the year 1867 on the back of the photo, it was shot in 1866. Gallaudet brought this photo with him on a tour of the European schools for the deaf.

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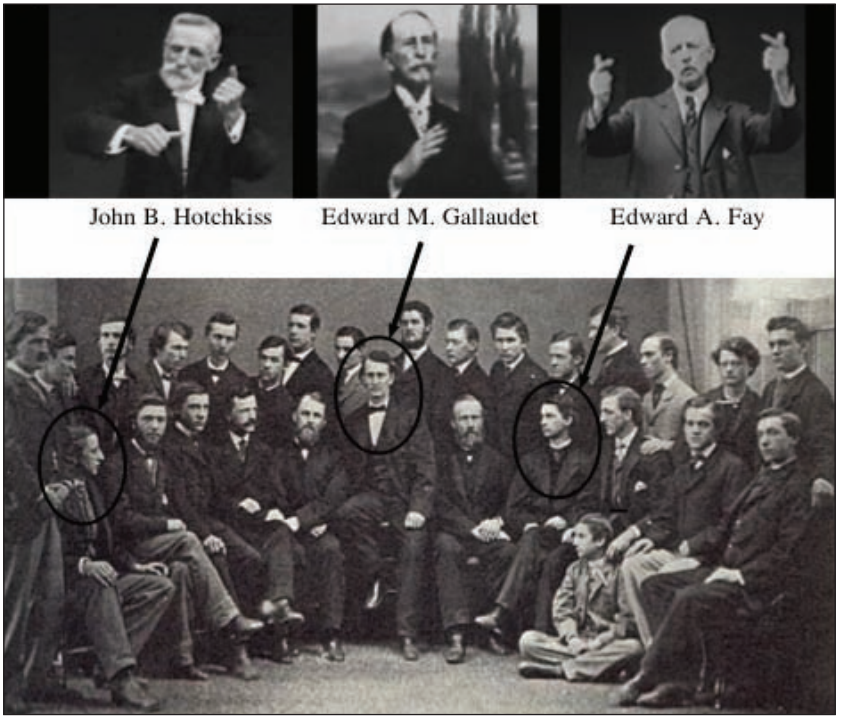

FIGURE 4.4. Faculty and students at Gallaudet in 1866. Sources: Top, *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission of Sign Media, Inc. Bottom, courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives.

he was asked to become the first superintendent of the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind (now Kendall Demonstration Elementary School for the Deaf) in 1857. He went on to establish and serve as the first president of the National Deaf-Mute College (now Gallaudet University) and was commissioned to sign in the pilot film of the NAD Moving Pictures project. It was hoped that key showings of such a well-known leader as Gallaudet on film would rally support for the project, both ideologically and financially. Edward Miner Gallaudet was just retiring from Gallaudet College when asked to be part of the NAD films in 1910. Gallaudet was seventy-two years old when he was filmed.

He was the son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the cofounder of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. Thomas Hopkins married Sophia Fowler, who was in the first class of deaf students enrolled when the American Asylum opened its doors in 1817. They had six children, all hearing, and Edward was their youngest. Thomas Hopkins and

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FIGURE 4.5. Edward Miner Gallaudet in 1913. Source: *Silent Worker* 26, no. 2 (October 1913): 21.

Sophia were first-generation users of "the sign language." Edward learned sign language both at home from his parents and on the campus of the Hartford school from deaf adults and school-aged peers, making him a native signer in the second generation of American signers ("Gallaudet, Edward M. The Gallaudet College Hall of Fame" 1974). The linguist William Dwight Whitney had occasion to visit the school in Hartford and made the following observation of the language environment of the hearing children living there:

> The fully endowed [i.e., hearing] children of the instructors in deaf-and-dumb asylums, brought up among those who employ both it and the spoken tongue, are accustomed to learn the former first, and to avail themselves of it in preference to the other, till long after the time when other children usually talk freely (Whitney 1867, 423)

Edward Gallaudet was one of these children, acquiring sign language as his native language as he interacted with others at the school, and he used it to communicate with his deaf mother. With his appointment as president

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of the college, he continued the tradition of using the Natural Language of Signs as the language of instruction, and he hired faculty who shared his philosophy and knowledge of sign language. The most logical place to find such people was the Hartford school. He recruited faculty there, many of whom had worked with his father and Clerc. He even brought his deaf mother to become the matron of the college, a post she served in for nine years. He also recruited several graduates whom he recalled from childhood days on the campus ("Gallaudet, Edward M. The Gallaudet College Hall of Fame" 1974). Professors John B. Hotchkiss and Amos G. Draper had both entered the college as students and then became faculty members. This hiring practice assured that the college faculty all used the same type of sign language they had learned at Hartford.

Edward Gallaudet was concerned about the changes he and other educators were seeing in the literacy of deaf pupils. Many were decrying the lack of perspicuity in the sign language used among the pupils and particularly among the new breed of teachers as part of the reason that literacy had deteriorated. Another reason proposed by Gallaudet, Peet, and others of their generation was the lack of emphasis on reading. Their claim was that schools were not fostering an interest on the part of the children to read and write as much as had been done in earlier times. Thus, Gallaudet, by the end of his tenure as president, was concerned about deaf people's literacy skills. In his filmed performance, Gallaudet talked about a novel that was a best seller at that time. He was so satisfied with his presentation that he declined the invitation from the Moving Pictures Committee for another filming session ten years later, citing this as the reason in a letter to Roy Stewart the chairman of the committee (May 29, 1911). At the end of the pilot, he confirmed the rumors of his retirement but added that he would continue to support the deaf. He spent his retirement years in Hartford, his childhood home.

John B. Hotchkiss (1845–1922)

John Burton Hotchkiss was a member of the second graduating class of Gallaudet College and began teaching at Gallaudet immediately after he graduated. He was referred to as the "last of his generation of instructors," having taught there for fifty years. He also distinguished himself by the fact that he was an alumnus of the American School for the Deaf—having been deafened at the age of nine—and knew the retired Laurent Clerc. One

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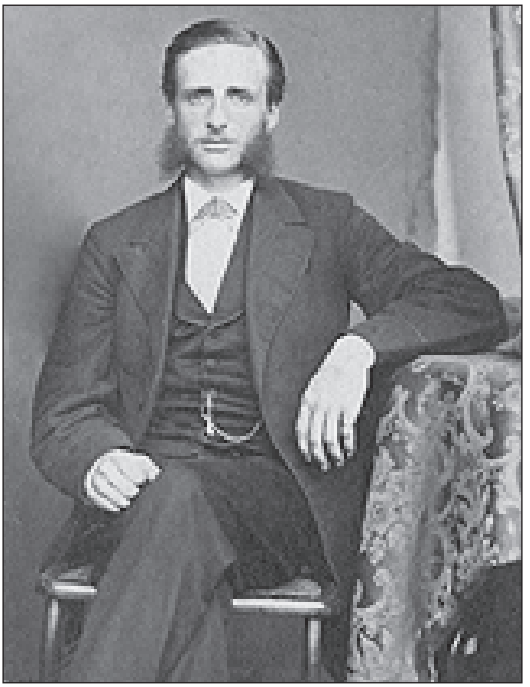

FIGURE 4.6. John Hotchkiss as a young student. Source: Courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives.

reason Hotchkiss was chosen by the NAD was that he could describe his childhood experiences at the Hartford school and his memories about other teachers, Laurent Clerc in particular, who often visited the campus after retiring from teaching (figure 4.6). Hotchkiss acquired "the sign language" firsthand from Clerc and his apprentices.

Hotchkiss reinforced the apprentice agenda of the early generations by using the genre of stories to promote it. His lecture "Memories of Old Hartford School" presents the legacy of a strong educational network among state-level elementary and high schools and a national college all led by master teachers who served as role models for new teacher apprentices. In addition to relating how Laurent Clerc spent his retirement years, Hotchkiss also mentioned Mr. Turner and Mr. Bartlett, two other master teachers he remembered primarily because of the way they used sign language at the school. He reproduced in detail the oratorical style of presentation he had seen them use. Hotchkiss cherished his learning experiences and valued oratory skills; he later taught public speaking at the college.

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A great man of literature and theater, Hotchkiss was revered for his facility in and defense of "the sign language." His play, "The Gallaudet Play" was included in the Gallaudet Lecture series. An avid supporter of all types of sporting endeavors, he endeared himself to students both in the classroom and on the field. The football field at Gallaudet University is named after him (Peet 1923; "Obituary [of John B. Hotchkiss]" 1937).

Edward Allen Fay (1843–1923)

Deafness itself, was not a criterion for inclusion in the NAD film series since hearing signers like Edward Miner Gallaudet and Edward Allen Fay were also filmed (figure 4.7). Professor Edward Allen Fay's parents were both hearing and his father, Barnabas, trained by Clerc and Harvey Peet, was a teacher at the New York School for the Deaf. In 1854, the elder Fay moved the family to Michigan, where he founded the Michigan School for the Deaf and was principal of the school. Edward Allen grew up on the Michigan school campus and developed his sign language skills through interacting with deaf children and adults there. While the elder Fay was a Yale graduate, the younger Fay was a graduate of the University of Michigan (Edward Allen Fay Papers).

Edward Allen Fay followed in his father's footsteps by teaching at the New York School for the Deaf. One of his colleagues was Thomas Gallaudet, the eldest son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and brother of Edward M. Gallaudet, who taught there for fourteen years. In 1865, Fay accepted Edward M. Gallaudet's offer to teach at the newly established Gallaudet College, teaching history and ancient languages (Latin and Greek) for more than fifty years. He became the editor of the *American Annals of the Deaf* in 1870, a position he also held for fifty years. The journal was an efficient vehicle for master teachers all over the country to share ideas on the structure and applications of sign language in instruction.

The second of only two hearing people selected for the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series, Fay was an outspoken advocate for the human rights of deaf people. Fay was also conversant in the scientific method which later allowed him to refute Alexander Graham Bell when he claimed that sign language and deaf intermarriage created adverse effects on deaf people. Fay conducted a national survey of deaf adults who demonstrated the ability to pursue happiness and achieve productive lives. He published the results of his research in *Marriages of the Deaf in America* in 1898.

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FIGURE 4.7. Professor Edward Allen Fay in 1912. Source: *Silent Worker* 24, no. 7 (April 1912): 121.

Dr. Fay selected from among his memories a visit to Gallaudet College by a royal visitor from Brazil for his filmed presentation. It was a common custom for the school to host visiting VIPs who were curious to see the "miracle" of educating deaf individuals. The practice can be traced back to the Paris School where de l'Epée and Sicard often displayed model students to royalty and the mass populace. Besides spreading the word about the need for special school programs for deaf children throughout the world, such events helped promote the status of sign language.

In the film, Fay talked about his role in organizing the logistics at the college for the visit of Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil in 1876, a ruler widely admired for his passion to learn new things and improve the quality of life in Brazil. In his narrative, Fay explained that E. M. Gallaudet had gone to Philadelphia because it was hosting the World's Fair, known as the Centennial Exposition, and so he had to assume a major role in the emperor's visit (Ely 1923).

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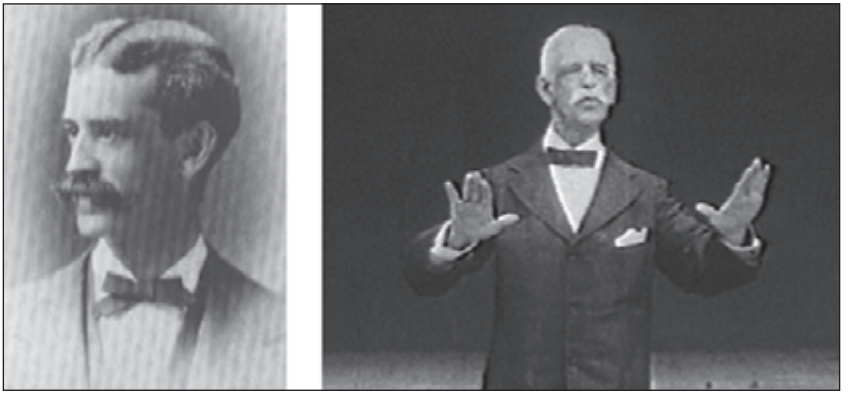

FIGURE 4.8. Amos G. Draper as college student in 1870 and when filmed in 1915. Source: Left, *Buff and Blue* (November 1917). Right, *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

Amos G. Draper (1845–1917)

In the mid-1800s as the infrastructure of the state school network began to stabilize and produce a steady flow of graduates, the need for a national institution offering higher education opportunities for deaf students became clear. Thus, Gallaudet College was established by federal charter through the U.S. Congress in 1864. Abraham Lincoln was the U.S. President who signed the charter. This event was viewed as a singularly significant event in the history of deaf people as Gallaudet College was the first of its kind serving deaf people. The filming of Professor Draper of Gallaudet College who told the story of how the charter was formed commemorated the significance of this event (figure 4.8).

Professor Draper was born hearing in 1845 and deafened at the age of eleven from typhus fever, which he caught after saving a drowning boy in icy cold water. He entered the Hartford School in 1860 and spent only two and a half years there before moving to Illinois with his parents. He entered Gallaudet College in 1868 and graduated with honors in 1872, whereupon he joined the faculty at Gallaudet to teach mathematics. Draper and MacGregor were both graduates of the Gallaudet class of 1872; however, whereas we identified MacGregor as belonging to the third generation of signers, we placed Draper in the second based on factors listed in earlier sections such as genre, grammar, signing stylistics, prosody, and so forth.

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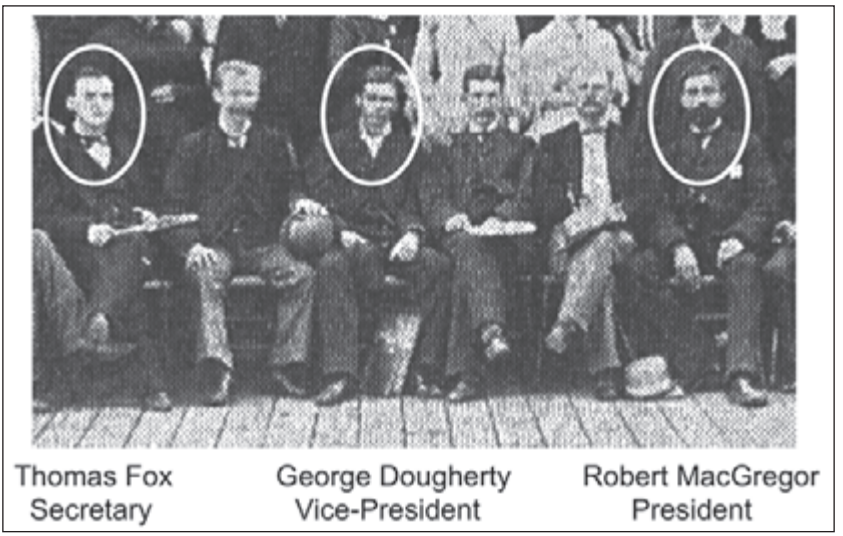

FIGURE 4.9. Close-up from figure 3.1 of three third-generation officers. Source: *Silent Worker* 35, no. 10 (July 1923): 408.

Draper's affiliation as faculty of Gallaudet College may be a major factor in distinguishing his signing style from third-generation signers and aligning it with the second generation (Hotchkiss 1917; Hill 1917).

THE THIRD GENERATION: THE NAD LEADERSHIP

While the second generation of signers in the films were distinguished senior faculty members at Gallaudet College, the third-generation signers included the original leaders of the NAD. Many of them were graduates of Gallaudet College, and a number of them were among the first officers of the NAD (see figure 4.9).

The third-generation signers were not all affiliated with the Hartford or New York schools. Most were born hearing, learned to speak English as their first language, and were subsequently deafened between eight and twelve years of age, yet they identified themselves either as "deaf-mutes" or "semi-mutes." Regardless of their nonnative sign language background, the goal of their presentations was to reproduce the classical style of signing as used among the earlier generations of signers, assuring purity of the natural sign language as brought to America by Laurent Clerc in 1817. This is shown most clearly in Veditz's oration "Preservation of the Sign Language."

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One other distinction between second- and third-generation signers was subject matter for the films. The third generation focused on contemporary issues whereas the second generation shared memories of their past, stories of their roots. The old guard of the NAD hoped the upcoming generations of deaf students would continue to emulate the classic style of sign language usage. To expose them to this style and provide practice in the proper way of signing, students would participate in activities of literary societies throughout America.

ROBERT P. MACGREGOR (1849–1926)

The first president of the NAD, MacGregor's concern for political activism was evidenced in the three film clips produced in the Gallaudet Lecture series. Deafened at the age of eight, Robert MacGregor was a third-generation signer who attended the Ohio School for the Deaf and went on to Gallaudet College, graduating in 1872 and receiving a master's degree in 1892 (see figure 4.10). Although he taught in several schools for brief periods, he always returned to his home and so spent most of his teaching years at the Ohio School for the Deaf. MacGregor was most concerned with advocating for the right of deaf people to have a voice in the education of the deaf and articulately fought for it in any forum afforded to him. On the international stage in 1910, MacGregor addressed the World Congress of the Deaf on the "Social Side of Oralism" to discuss the illusive "restored to society" deaf person, referring to this as a standing joke among the deaf (MacGregor 1910, 403–4). MacGregor's three texts captured on film, "A Lay Sermon," "The Irishman's Flea," and "The Lady and the Cake" are classic pieces focused on social and political issues of the day.

In his longest text, "A Lay Sermon," MacGregor effectively argues for the "brotherhood of man" by appealing to the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, "our Father" and moving on to provide example after example of the importance of this philosophy in society.

In his two other lectures, MacGregor created political satire that addressed contemporary issues. In the first, he addresses the familiar issue of how deaf people were often told about an excellent deaf lip-reader and wished to come face to face with such a person, but this deaf figure proved elusive. In the second short film, MacGregor comments on the analogy between the alleged infamous incident in Paris where Marie Antoinette suggested that the poor eat cake, and the situation in America where deaf

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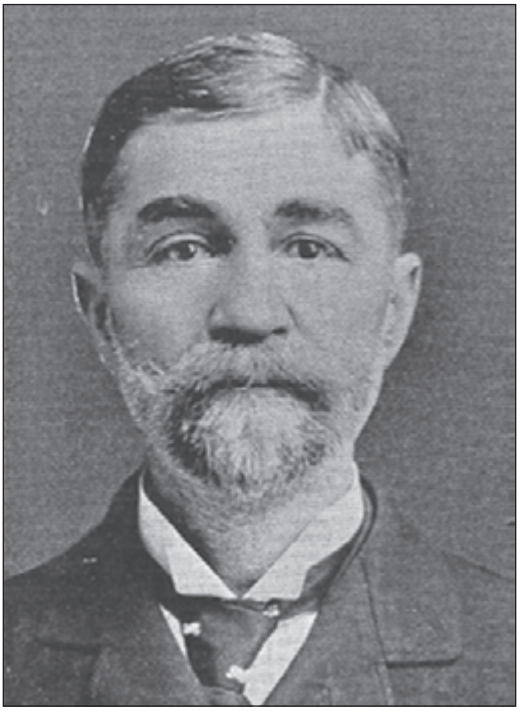

FIGURE 4.10. Robert MacGregor in 1927. Source: *Silent Worker* 39, no. 5 (February 1927): 142.

children were being promised happiness from the purported success of the oral method ("Robert P. MacGregor" 1927; Stewart, Fox, and Veditz 1927).

Thomas Fox (1859–1944)

Thomas Fox was the youngest participant at the first NAD convention in 1880 and became its first elected secretary and eventually its fourth president (see figure 4.11). Deafened when he was ten years old, he attended the New York School for the Deaf and went on to graduate from Gallaudet College in 1883. Fox first tried to land a job as a reporter for the daily newspapers of New York City but then became a teacher of the deaf. Fox taught at the New York School for the Deaf for over fifty years; his final position was as principal of the academic department.

Dr. Fox's concern was to demonstrate that intellectual pursuits and the use of sign language were not mutually exclusive, and his rendition of

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FIGURE 4.11. Thomas Fox in 1923. Source: *Silent Worker* 35, no. 10 (July 1923): 410.

the Gettysburg Address demonstrated how classical oratory worked when translating historically significant texts.

The film begins with an introduction of the Gettysburg site by Rev. Arthur D. Bryant (shown in figure 4.12), himself deaf and a teacher of arts at Gallaudet College following his graduation in 1880 until 1916. He was well versed in Civil War history as well as the history surrounding the memorial grounds upon which Lincoln delivered his famed Gettysburg Address (Fox 1934; "Obituary" 1937).

George Dougherty (1860–1934)

George Dougherty (figure 4.13) was elected the first treasurer of the NAD in 1880, as well as presiding officer for the World Congress of the Deaf in 1889. Deafened at the age of two, George Dougherty attended the Missouri School for the Deaf, but before he graduated, he entered Gallaudet College.

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FIGURE 4.12. Arthur Bryant presenting the brief introduction in the 1913 film. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

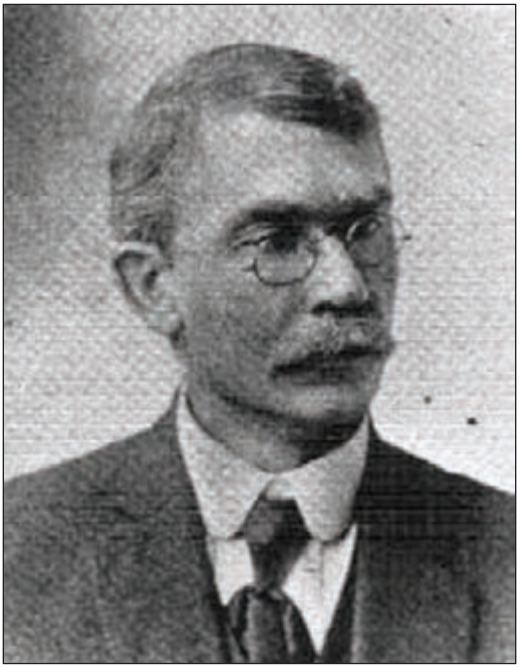

FIGURE 4.13. George T. Dougherty in 1924. Source: *Silent Worker* 36, no. 8 (May 1924): 360.

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He was a well-respected scientist with advanced training in chemistry from Washington University in St. Louis, which may explain why his presentation focused on how chloroform came to be used in the field of medicine.

Other than his reputation as an orator and political activist, we suspect that the NAD chose to showcase Dougherty to emphasize the contributions that deaf people who signed made to society at large. He was a prime example of a deaf signer able to navigate in the hearing world. Dougherty graduated from Gallaudet College with a bachelor of science degree in 1882. His scientific interests led him to advanced courses in chemistry at Washington University in St. Louis, and he became a master chemist for the Sargent Company in Chicago, Illinois. Known for his oratorical ability, Dr. Dougherty's text was a distinctive expression of scientific thought ("Dr. George T. Dougherty" 1934).

George William Veditz (1861–1937)

George William Veditz of Colorado Springs, Colorado, was the president of the NAD during the years 1904–1910 and a key figure in the moving picture films project. He was filmed in 1913 giving a lecture entitled "Preservation of the Sign Language." In one segment he described why the film project was so important:

> Many of us have learned the language from them. These men know the language in its finest form. We wish to preserve our sign language in the form in which these masters use it for coming generations. The only way in which this can be done is by means of moving picture films.[2]

Born to German immigrants, he had learned to speak German at home and English in the neighborhood. After becoming deaf at the age of eight, Veditz entered the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) in 1875, and served as bookkeeper and secretary to the principal for four years before entering Gallaudet College in 1880. Upon graduating with honors as valedictorian, Veditz returned to MSD to teach for four years before moving to Colorado to join the faculty at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind in 1888.

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2. George Veditz's English rendition was written after he produced the sign language version on film.

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FIGURE 4.14. George W. Veditz as president of NAD. Source: Courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives.

Perhaps because of his ethnic and cultural background, Veditz took opportunities to travel abroad, in particular, to Germany, the homeland of his ancestors. He sent reports to the American Annals of the Deaf and other newspapers of the deaf describing his visits to German schools for the deaf and his experiences of meeting Deaf Europeans from whom he heard stories of sign language oppression. He was instrumental in the genesis of the Gallaudet Lecture Series project.

Veditz and other leaders valued hearing people who could be viewed as true "friends of the Deaf." Similar to the roles of de l'Epée and his protégé, Abbé Sicard at the Paris "flagship" school for the European school network, Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc and their protégés built many schools around the United States. Many educators from these schools then produced offspring who grew up associating with deaf children and adults and chose to continue the family tradition of teaching the deaf. Veditz mentioned the names of a few of these families in his lecture on film. In his lecture, Veditz explained that one reason for the NAD film project was to promote the value of the work done by people whom he

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FIGURE 4.15. Veditz with colleagues at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (1892–1893 school photograph). Source: Courtesy of the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, Colorado Springs.

called "giants in Deaf education," such as the Tillinghasts and the Dudleys. Two members from these families were Veditz's colleagues at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. In a photograph of the school faculty (figure 4.15), these three young men posed by forming the initial handshape of their last names, performing a tradition of posing for portraits with initial handshapes that could be traced to the portrait of Laurent Clerc's wife and child. Dudley and Tillinghast each produced children who carried on the tradition of teaching deaf children, in much the same way as the Gallaudets in Hartford and the Peets in New York.

George Veditz was an unswerving proponent of "the sign language" and the use of the Combined method in the education of the deaf, but he did not limit his political aspirations to education. He fought tirelessly for employment rights for the deaf, specifically, in fighting to change the way the Civil Service Commission classified deaf people. The deaf and hearing organizations that George Veditz established, belonged to, and presided over are too numerous to mention. Perhaps the most notable was his service to the NAD as vice president, member of the Executive Committee, and finally president. George Veditz was a visionary whose dauntless effort to establish the NAD Motion Picture Fund was the force behind the production of this Gallaudet Lecture Series ("Preserving a Famous Film" 1912).

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Two other third-generation sign masters, James Cloud and Willis Hubbard, represented a genre of oratory used at that time to honor those who made significant contributions to promoting the welfare of deaf people. Memorial speeches were an important part of society, and of the Deaf community, so it is not surprising that the NAD sought to capture on film examples of this aspect of their organization's life as well (Brown 1937; Veditz 1924).

Rev. James H. Cloud (1862–1926)

James H. Cloud (figure 4.16) progressively lost his hearing from the age of seven. He attended the Illinois School for the Deaf for four years and then went on to receive his bachelor's and master's degrees from Gallaudet College. His graduate studies culminated in a conferred doctorate of

FIGURE 4.16. James H. Cloud in 1923. Source: *Silent Worker* 35, no. 10 (July 1923): 408.

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divinity from Gallaudet College in 1914; he served as an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church for thirty-seven years. He taught at the Illinois School for the Deaf from 1886–1890 and founded a Literary Society there. He then moved on to become principal of the St. Louis Day School for the Deaf (also known as the Gallaudet School for the Deaf), where he stayed until his retirement in 1922. While at the St. Louis School, he established the St. Thomas Mission for the Deaf and took special interest in ministering to the "colored deaf." Cloud served two terms as president of the NAD from 1917 to 1923. In each sphere of involvement, Cloud was known as an outspoken and eloquent proponent of the combined system of education and vocational training for deaf people ("Our Memorial Issue" 1927).

In 1913, Cloud and Michael McCarthy teamed up to jointly sign and read aloud from a written address entitled "A Plea for a Statue of Epée in America" (see figure 4.17). The goal of the presentation was to garner fundraising support for a second NAD-sponsored statue, a follow-up to the successful drive funding a monument to memorialize Thomas H. Gallaudet.

During the address, Cloud stood beside McCarthy and translated the text into sign language while the other read the address from print. The

FIGURE 4.17. Cloud and McCarthy on the funding of a memorial for de l'Epée. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

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efforts of the fundraising drive culminated in 1930, when 3,000 educators from around the globe gathered in Buffalo, New York, and celebrated the unveiling of a bronze monument of the Abbé de l'Epée, which stands in front of St. Mary's School for the Deaf.

Reverend Michael McCarthy's ministry to Deaf parishioners began when he studied sign language while working at Holy Cross and Fordham University ("Michael McCarthy Obituary" 1916; Pach 1907). Ordained as a Jesuit priest in July 1897, Reverend McCarthy served in New York City at the College of St. Francis Xavier as treasurer and conducted masses for the deaf there, and in Brooklyn, New York, Jersey City, New Jersey, and at St. Joseph's Institute in Westchester, New York. His work was also recognized and appreciated among deaf students at Fanwood and Lexington schools for the deaf. Deaf people who knew him remembered him as "frank and openhanded (in his) dealings with those not of his faith" and that he treated all fairly regardless of race or color.

Willis Hubbard (1845–1926)

Deafened at the age of 10 by "brain fever," Willis Hubbard entered the New York School for the Deaf in 1856 where he was trained by Harvey and Isaac Peet. As valedictorian and member of the high class at Fanwood, Mr. Hubbard so impressed Harvey Peet that he recommended that Barnabas Fay of Michigan School for the Deaf hire him as a teacher. Hubbard began teaching at the Michigan school in November of 1863, a few months following graduation. During his fifty-two years there, he taught the high class of high school students so well that Gallaudet College conferred on him the Bachelor of Pedagogy degree in 1911.

Hubbard's address in his role as the treasurer of the NAD Endowment Fund is an example of an oratorical-style speech prepared for the dedication of a monument to honor a patron of deaf people, U.S. President James Garfield (see figure 4.18). Hubbard's film is unique in that while he was presenting, there was a crowd of people standing behind him, which we believe included many other activists from the time.[3] NAD president Olof Hanson hosted the ceremony (Stewart 1926; "Obituaries" 1926; Terrell 1890).

3. James Meagher, a writer for *The Silent Worker*, and Alexander Pach, a well-known Deaf photographer, were standing on the right and left, respectively, in the crowd during the filming of Willis Hubbard.

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FIGURE 4.18. Willis Hubbard on film presenting at a gathering. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

The Old Guard's Agenda

This third generation of signers invested conceptually and financially in the production of the Gallaudet Lecture Films. Their strategy was to promote the classic dialect and to demonstrate its usefulness as a vehicle of oratorical expression as well as to demonstrate its literacy potential in deaf education. However, as times changed and the agenda of the NAD evolved, a division arose. The next generation of leaders wanted to transfer the remaining funds to the NAD Endowment Fund for other purposes. Indeed, the original group of NAD leaders began to be known as the "old guard" for their insistence on keeping the motion picture funds for the purpose of producing more films.

A significant shift in values began to emerge during the era occupied by fourth-generation signers. In particular, views about the appropriate time and place for using "the sign language" were changing. During the classical period, perspicuity in signing had the greatest impact on the guiding principles identified for proper use of sign language. Regardless of what stance was taken for instruction in English, all educators agreed that the guiding

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FIGURE 4.19. 1910 NAD Convention, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Source: Alexander Pach, *Silent Worker* 23, no. 1: 12.

principles of perspicuity must be maintained. As sign language began to take a backseat in the education of deaf children at the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the last remaining genres for acceptable use was theater. It is fortunate that the NAD films include examples that illustrate how the shift in educational values affected the classical dialect.[4] By filming the performances of fourth-generation signers, the NAD provided a glimpse into how the classical dialect was changing.

THE FOURTH GENERATION: ENHANCEMENT OF SIGN LANGUAGE AS AN ART FORM

The fourth-generation signers represent the transitional era. There are three films in this series, a theatrical production and two recitations of English poetic texts from the Gilded Age. Rather than literally recite the poems, the two signers exhibit creative use of sign language, costuming, and setting, thus representing something akin to a modern version of theatrical style. In mainstream America, the way of life was undergoing many transformations as well. Perhaps because of their youth, both Mary Williamson Erd and Winfield Marshall experimented with new forms of expression in sign language.

4. Although today we would not consider the classical dialect a dialect, but a register, at that time, based on how it was used and how scholars wrote about it, it was a dialect.

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The Gallaudet Players: Harley Drake, Frederick Hughes, and Ruth Knox

Another unusual film in the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series included undergraduate students attending Gallaudet College. Instead of presenting formal lectures like the professors, they appeared as characters in a play about the Gallaudet family. Historical records indicate that John B. Hotchkiss, one of their professors, was responsible for this theatrical production and the NAD Motion Picture Committee in 1914 commissioned the shooting of this play. This film was made in time for the centennial of the establishment of the first school for the deaf in America in Hartford.

To commemorate the achievements of the Gallaudet family in the field of deaf education, Professor Hotchkiss wrote a script for a brief dramatic scene entitled "The Story of Gallaudet" and recruited a cast of three college students (figure 4.20). The play depicts a fictitious scene in the life of the family wherein Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the father, talks to his son Edward Miner in sign language about his vision for a college for the deaf where a deaf person could achieve a full education and become a first-class citizen. His son, Edward Miner, made the dream come true. The play also showed how father and son used sign language when interacting with

FIGURE 4.20. Cast of Gallaudet college students performing in the 1914 film. Left to right: Ruth Knox, Frederick Hughes, and Harley Drake. Source: Courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives.

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Sophia Fowler Gallaudet, Edward's deaf mother. We assume that Hotchkiss wrote the play to demonstrate how the use of sign language at home would permit equal as well as full participation for deaf people in society.

Hotchkiss directed the play, and it is likely that he coached the cast to depict generational differences in their signing styles. Hughes portrayed the young E. M. Gallaudet, and his signing style is smooth, very much like ASL today. In contrast, Drake, as T. H. Gallaudet, uses a signing style that resembles the classical form used among the older generation. Thus it appears that even in 1914 signers understood the dichotomy in sign language style and prosody (stress and intonation patterns) based on generational differences. The following few lines of dialogue, translated in English sentences, illustrate this point.

> FATHER: I've often dreamed of establishing a college for deaf people. How would you like to be president of such a college?
>
> SON: A college for deaf people?! Deaf people can't go to college! They're not smart enough.
>
> FATHER: Your mother is not stupid.
>
> SON: Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot. Forgive me, Mother.
>
> MOTHER: It's all right.

It is no surprise that Hotchkiss makes an issue of the intelligence of deaf individuals who do not speak. It has always been a critical issue in the field of pedagogy. The establishment of a college curriculum based on the use of sign language as the medium of instruction was indeed an historic action.

One of the play's beginning scenes shows Edward's mother teaching him about humanity by releasing a housefly outdoors. Hotchkiss may have intended this scene to symbolize the value of humanity and freedom for deaf people as a worthwhile cause comparable to the emancipation of slaves, a controversial topic in the nineteenth century.

Harley D. Drake (1882–1962)

Deafened at nine, Harley Drake attended the Ohio School for the Deaf and then continued his schooling, graduating with a bachelor's degree from Gallaudet College and a master of science degree from the University of Maryland. After several years working at the California School for the Deaf

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and the Nebraska School for the Deaf, he returned to Ohio to farm. In 1911, then-president Gallaudet College Percival Hall urged him to move to Kendall Green to manage their farm and teach part time. In 1925, Drake became full-time faculty and devoted the rest of his working career to teaching English and agriculture (Gallaudet College 1962).

Frederick F. Hughes (1892–1956)

Born in Pennsylvania, Frederick Hughes was deafened by spinal meningitis at the age of seven. After graduating from the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, he attended Gallaudet College and graduated with the class of 1913, thereafter continuing on to receive his master of arts degree in 1914. He taught at the Alabama School for the Deaf for only one year before returning to Gallaudet College to embark on a forty-one-year career of teaching, coaching, and directing for which he was honored in 1955 with an honorary doctor of letters degree. His presence made its mark also on the drama department, where his talents for directing and inspiring the students to excellence led to a Broadway performance of the college production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" (*Gallaudet Alumni Bulletin* 1956; Gallaudet College 1956).

Ruth Knox (Birck) (1892?–1961)

Ruth Knox Birck was born in Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1892 and attended the Ohio School for the Deaf, thereafter graduating from Gallaudet College in 1914. She was a Gallaudet student at the time that "The Story of the Gallaudets" was filmed. She played the character of Sophia Gallaudet. A few days after graduation, she married Vernon Birck and they shared a life of service as dorm supervisors in Missouri and later at the California School for the Deaf at Berkeley beginning in 1928. Ruth Birck served as dean of women for over twenty-eight years until her retirement in 1957 ("Ruth Knox Birck" 1961; Berg 1944).

Mary Williamson Erd (1880–1926)

Mary (Williamson) Erd was the only female presenter performing solo in the NAD film series (Ruth Knox performed in the ensemble cast for the play "The Story of the Gallaudets"). Deafened at the age of seven from scarlet fever, Mary Erd graduated from the Michigan School for the Deaf

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FIGURE 4.21. Still shot of Mary Erd in costume for the 1913 film. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

as one of the brightest students of the school. Entering Gallaudet College in 1897, she was unable to complete her degree due to ill health, and returned to Michigan where she was hired to teach in the primary department of her alma mater in 1900. She performed during the NAD convention in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1913 but the film was made on the estate of the John Rockefeller family who had invited the convention members to the estate. After leaving the teaching profession in 1914, Mary Erd continued to be actively involved in activities of the Deaf community and was well known for her literary and dramatic prowess, which was captured on film in her creative rendition of "The Death of Minnehaha" (figure 4.21; "Mary Williamson Erd" 1926; "Mrs. Robert L. Erd" 1926; "Williamson-Erd Wedding" 1911).

Comments about the films sent to Roy Stewart, the chair of the Moving Pictures Committee, are very informative about the transition in literary values occurring at the time. After viewing Mary Erd's film, George Veditz wrote, "The Minnehaha film I regard as a failure. . . . The declamation as filmed lacks in great measure the charm of her living personality. Besides it was not 'the' sign language. Too much gyration for our purpose" (G. Veditz, personal correspondence, March 29, 1915). Yet, from a community perspective, Oscar Regensburg, chair of the original Moving Pictures

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Committee, described the response to a showing of the films in Chicago in 1913: "Erd film made the biggest hit. It was a new departure and the background contributed to the beauty of the film." The clash between Veditz's literary criticism on modernistic style and public opinion is evidence that classical signing was reaching a plateau by the 1920s.

Winfield Marshall (1880–1957)

Winfield Marshall was born deaf into a deaf family. He attended both the American School for the Deaf in Hartford and the New York School for the Deaf in Rome, New York. He graduated from Gallaudet College in 1904 and settled in New York City for a time before returning to Washington, DC, where he gained employment in the government as a postal clerk. He performed at the 1913 NAD convention and again in 1920. Marshall was the only sign master selected for the film series by a vote of the NAD membership (NAD 1910).[5]

Marshall credited his rendition of the well-known song, "Yankee Doodle," to his former teacher, J. H. Eddy of Arkansas, who first taught him this rendition at the Central New York Institution at Rome (figure 4.22). Later renditions of the song retained many of the creative linguistic features first devised for the chorus.

This rendition became so popular that other people imitated it at various events. Evidence of Marshall's influence appeared in another film recorded in Kansas City, Missouri, by Charles Krauel in 1935. In this film the same sequence of signs was reproduced in two recitations of "Yankee Doodle."

> …Yankee Doodle dandy,
> Mind the music and the step,
> And with the girls be handy.

In these recitations different performers rendered every movement of Marshall's filmed rendition of this chorus. This case of literary transmission from one performer to another is evidence for how literary work in sign

5. Ernest Marshall, the famed deaf filmmaker of the 1950s and 1960s, was the nephew of Winfield Marshall, and in a personal interview he shared with us that he never saw any of the NAD films himself but did see his uncle's famed performance of "Yankee Doodle" in sign language.

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FIGURE 4.22. Still shot of Winfield Marshall in costume for the 1920 film. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

language can become a tradition in the Deaf community (Supalla 1994). Krauel recorded several other literary forms, ranging from rhythmic percussion to literal translations of the national anthem (Reider 1912).

LOST FILMS

Some of the reels are missing from the original Gallaudet Lecture Films.[6] One of those is by the author of the "Manual of the Sign Language,"

6. List of film titles published in the *Proceedings of the Tenth Convention of the National Association of the Deaf* (1913) and the *Silent Worker* 37, no. 5 (1928); "Motion Pictures Committee Report" in NAD (1910). Several other film titles were mentioned in NAD committee reports during the 1920s, although these are not relevant to the theme of sign language preservation which was the purpose of the film series. One was the recitation of the "Lord's Prayer" by Rev. Mr. Flick of Chicago. This film was donated to the NAD, and therefore we did not consider it an example of the philosophy and practices of the NAD Motion Pictures Committee. Other films were panoramic views of the Gallaudet campus and conventions off campus.

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FIGURE 4.23. J. Schuyler Long. Source: *Silent Worker* 24, no. 5 (February 1912): 90.

J. Schuyler Long (figure 4.23). The only reference we found that provided any insight into the contents of the Long film, entitled "Sign of Sign," was from Henri Gaillard of France, who came to the United States in 1917 to attend the one-hundred-year celebration of the American School for the Deaf and to visit other schools and organizations serving deaf people. In Gaillard's memoirs of the journey, he stated

> Then there passed across the screen a sequence of speeches signed by hearing and deaf teachers: Hotchkiss, Schuyler Long (who spoke against the abuse of imaginative admixtures to sign language and promoted signing in the classical style), Fay, and Edward Miner Gallaudet. (1917, 35)

It is interesting to note that in the records of the NAD, tremendous appreciation to Long was expressed for his contribution in disseminating the correct form of sign language through his book. The NAD records also indicate that the original reels were unsalvageable. This may reflect

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the film's popularity, with widespread use and circulation making it more subject to deterioration than the other historical films.

Also lost are film records of two other Deaf leaders. The Motion Pictures Committee commissioned the filming of James L. Smith in 1913, for which the subsequent committee reports listed a 400-foot reel entitled "The Escape of Abbé Sicard." Smith was a deaf activist from Minnesota and shared the position of sixth president of the NAD with Jay C. Howard, who was also from Minnesota.[7] His presentation might have talked about the incident at the Paris School during the French Revolution when students went to the Tribunal and appealed for the life of the schoolmaster Abbé Sicard, thus saving him from the guillotine. Unfortunately, the film was of poor quality and the film reel was eventually discarded. Also missing is a brief film prelude to the 1913 "Minnehaha" film, in which Jay C. Howard introduced the performer Mary Erd (1913).

LEGACY OF THE NAD FILM SERIES

With the increasing stigmatization of sign language in the 1930s and 1940s, the demand for film exhibition dropped to almost zero by the 1950s. Under the advice of Roy Stewart and his committee, the NAD decided to have the films stored for posterity in the archives of Gallaudet College and the Library of Congress.

In following the cohort generations and the periods they outline, our archaeological investigation has revealed an archaic lexicon and morphology distinct from modern ASL and signed English. What did these nineteenth-century signers know about language; what was their metalanguage? They knew about lexical phrases, but not spatial grammar, facial grammar, and so forth. They focused on language processes of the time used by philologists, reflected in terms such as *metaphor, compounding,* and *reduction*. They used these descriptions and processes to argue for a preservation of the classical register in the NAD films. Despite language intervention policies and social and economic transformations that threatened to obliterate ASL during the intervening Dark Period, ASL survived with its culture intact.

7. The Moving Picture Committee filmed Jay C. Howard presenting a talk entitled "Imposters." The only record of the film was that no bill was submitted for it (NAD 1913, 99).

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5 SEEKING HISTORICAL LINKS FOR AN ASL LEXICON

ASL does not possess a written form. Deaf people who use ASL as their primary language, if they are literate, write in English. The literature of ASL is therefore in the "oral" tradition, capturable today thanks to film and video technology. There are no materials documenting the forms of ASL prior to the use of film technology, except written descriptions of signs. Thus, we grappled with the question of how to represent the forms of signs and their meanings in a historical database.

Until recently, the most common method of recording ASL has been by *glosses,* or English words selected to represent and approximate the meaning of the sign in question. The gloss for the modern ASL sign HAT represents a form articulated at the top of the head, using an open flat handshape, and with a certain repeated contacting movement, which has the same meaning as the English word *hat*. However, glossing as a means of "writing" ASL presents a number of limitations. If one knows the meaning and form of a sign but not the gloss conventionally used for it, looking up the sign in a dictionary or database organized by glosses is impossible.

At the same time, retaining the use of glosses was critical in our historical database project, not only because it is the transcription system most commonly used today. The practice has a unique history that can be traced to European documents of sign language in the seventeenth century (see Bulwer 1644). In these documents, illustrations of signs were labeled

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FIGURE 5.1. Example of cataloging platform. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

with written-word equivalents from spoken languages. The ongoing use of such glosses thus allows us access to lexical signs across time. In this book, glossed transcriptions are used primarily to provide a means for cross-referencing film data with old dictionaries, all of which made use of glosses to index their signs. Figure 5.1 shows an example of our ideal full platform for representing the correspondence between the film data and the glosses.

Originally produced in 35-mm nitrate film and converted in the 1940s to 16-mm celluloid-based safety film to better preserve them, the NAD films were stored in the Gallaudet University Archives. Of the twenty-two films produced between 1910 and 1920, fifteen survived the decades and were converted to videotape in the early 1970s.[1] Our research is based on copies of these videotapes.

The process used for transcribing and organizing the film data into a form usable for research involved several steps. We first viewed a film to comprehend the gist of the text, then undertook a rough glossing of each sign. Gloss selection was based on current, generally recognizable glosses for most signs. For signs that seemed to be precursors to several current forms, a more generic gloss was selected. The idiosyncrasies of a particular sign or concept, or a form variation between the early version and the modern version, were noted. Finally, a translation was completed for each sentence. In this way, transcription and translation were completed for the more than 5,500 early ASL signs in the films.

We took care that the language in the films be accessible on a number of levels. The film database is completely transcribed, using English

1. These videos were originally created at 16 frames per second (fps).

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literal glosses and full translations into English as well. To provide access to supplementary historical linguistic information, we co-referenced each sign gloss with entries from three sign language dictionaries of the time: Long (1918), Higgins (1923), and Michaels (1923). The co-reference includes the name of the dictionary, the page number of the entry, and whether the dictionary shows a variant form of the sign. Tokens of individual concepts can thus be cross-referenced both within and across the film and print dictionary corpora.

Glossing Conventions and Sign Language Etymology

ASL today is still a "language of action" in the way Barnard first labeled it in 1834. For example, the generic form for *hat* as used today has the handshape simply open to indicate overall shape of the hat as an object to be handled while the movement resembles the action of putting the hat on the head. This would either be supplemented or replaced by a more specific detailed description like in the case of a stovepipe hat. The latter is illustrated in Hotchkiss's description in his filmed lecture about the appearance of Laurent Clerc wearing his hat: first, Hotchkiss spells out the word H-A-T, then he outlines the brim, the height, and the texture of the fabric in order.[2] This hierarchical presentation resembles those constructions we found in home signs as well as in Michaels's (1923) description of putting the index finger to the right temple, moving the finger in a semicircle around to the left temple, and then making the motion of taking hold of a cap brim in front of the forehead. These possible alternate forms indicate a particular type of headgear. In contrast, the generic form we first described earlier denoted in Michaels's 1923 dictionary and articulated in the 1921 film by Winfield Marshall is indeed the appropriate modern citation form whenever the gloss HAT occurs.

The science of etymology involves the study of word origins and subsequent changes to word forms and meanings. Research on the etymology of specific signs in ASL can also provide us with the tools to link the history

2. Incidentally, Hotchkiss continued his role as a teacher by remarking how we name this object via fingerspelling out the word S-T-O-V-E-P-I-P-E. This polyglottic custom of matching of signs with spelling out English word counterparts is still used today as part of our sign language pedagogy (Humphries and MacDougall 1999).

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FIGURE 5.2. The sign HAT in reference to the headgear used by men in the early eighteenth century. Source: Czech (1836), table 2.

of ASL to early French Sign Language (LSF), to which it is related, and also to modern LSF. In examining ASL cases of historical change for specific lexical items, the complexity of etymological development becomes clear. Moreover, the actual perception of a word's etymology can itself change and adds an additional dimension to our studies. This phenomenon is known as "folk etymology," and will be addressed further in chapter 9.

Let us return to the "hat" example. When T. H. Gallaudet returned to the United States with Clerc, Alice would learn a new symbol for HAT in sign language. It is likely that she also learned that the action of putting on the hat would also refer to male individuals. Early records of MALE and FEMALE forms are found in Czech (1836).[3] In fact, Czech's illustration of the sign for HAT is identical to the sign for MALE (see figure 5.2).

3. Czech received his training at the Paris school; he then helped to establish a satellite school at Wein or Vienna, Austria. Many signs illustrated in his 1836 text were similar to the LSF dictionaries published in the 1850s. Czech's and other LSF dictionaries are not included in the current database.

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It might seem that language users would prefer distinct language forms for distinct meanings. However, one form can often "take on" another meaning in a different context, particularly when there is a need in the language for more general terms, with the general and the more specific meanings diverging, while the forms remain identical. The term for the more specific content can continue to exist and be used in a language concurrent with the identical form for the more general content. Such a set of circumstances in language is called *polysemy.*

Gender is a grammatical classification system that can be used to categorize members of the human population according to whether they are male or female. LSF and ASL used to share a representational mechanism with which an action unique to each group was extended to mark gender, thus distinguishing between male and female humans.[4] The general meaning representing maleness was based on the action of tipping the hat whereas that of femaleness was based on the action of "fondling the earring, hair or bonnet ribbon." Czech illustrated the distinction in his 1836 book as seen in figure 5.3.

The form indicating the action of putting on the hat has become polysemous, representing both the specific meaning, HAT, and the more general meaning, MALE. Educators at that time were not concerned about whether students such as Alice would be confused by the homonymy. It was well accepted in early nineteenth-century writings that the meaning for a particular gestural form could extend from a specific association to some object to a more general category. Today this semantic generalization is known as *metaphorical extension.* In other cases, a particular form undertook a metonymic function where a specific part of the object referred to the whole. This was what made it possible for the action of tipping the hat to be extended to the male human.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those who described signs and used glosses to represent them held a monogenetic view that included the belief that natural signs were universal. However, since glosses do not encode any information about the articulatory form of the sign, the glosses were not able to represent regional or idiosyncratic variations in the "pronunciation" of the sign. In early literature Bébian (1825) recognized this and proposed to remedy the issue of recording the form of

4. Modern LSF retained a similar form for *female* but diverged in their current representation of *male* with a form that is akin to representing a moustache.

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FIGURE 5.3. The contrast in action for distinguishing human gender. Source: Czech (1836), table 7.

the sign by his own system of representation, which decomposed the sign's form into movement and location features and assigned symbols to each feature. Bébian did not represent handshape in his system, reflecting what we discovered in the early ASL database—handshape was the most fluid part of the sign, varying from signer to signer. Handshape took on a more significant role as dactylology's role in pedagogy became more popular (see chapter 6).

In the early 1960s, William Stokoe showed that all signs can be decomposed into a finite set of small units of form: a location, a handshape, and a movement component. These formational features are the equivalent of "phonemes" (basic sounds) in spoken languages. Stokoe developed symbols for each formational feature, which were then combined to represent the form of any sign. A number of transcription systems have since been developed for encoding the forms of ASL signs, based on Stokoe's concept of formational features. However, like the systems of old, none of these has been adopted by the signing community to serve as a writing system for ASL, and most signers are not familiar with these notation systems, which are used almost exclusively by researchers.

Knowing exactly what sign is intended by a given gloss is also a problem, as there may be more than one ASL sign that corresponds to the meaning of the gloss. It is a challenge to try to document such data for study of variation and change in sign language.

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Developing Glossing Conventions for the Database

It was critical that we take care in assigning unique glosses to historical data. If glossing was performed carelessly, we might have chosen an English gloss based on current ASL meaning, but an earlier sign may have had a different meaning—as indeed was the case with regard to the early sign for FACE, which has migrated to having the contemporary meaning "who," as shown in figure 10.8.

Instead of assigning a gloss to a sign whose meaning we could not immediately discern, we instead, assigned a placeholder for that sign. For instance, in one of the NAD films, E. M. Gallaudet forms a sign that looks like clapping hands. Although the context indicates that the sign has something to do with time, we had no idea of the specific meaning, so we annotated it in a descriptive way rather than assign a gloss. During a careful review of each formational description in the Long dictionary, we discovered the specific meaning of the sign was "week." This research additionally uncovered in the same dictionary, the original meaning for our modern variant of WEEK associated with the meaning PERIOD-OF-TIME, proving a significant lexical and semantic change in communicating this concept over time. Early ASL, like spoken languages, underwent *relexicalization,* in which an original lexical form falls into disuse and is replaced with another lexeme related in meaning.

In organizing the morphemes (units of meaning) in the database, we also found it difficult to identify lexical and grammatical categories for glosses. We suspected that this was due to the dual function of the same linguistic forms (polysemy). In modern ASL, one form is a primary/content word in one context (e.g., BOY/GIRL) and a grammatical word or particle in another (e.g., BOY/GIRL paired with an animal sign such as CAT or HORSE—in this case, the form serves as an adjective). In addition, we found periphrastic (lexical phrase) constructions equivalent to single lexemes in modern ASL throughout the film and dictionary data. For instance, figure 5.4 shows how E. M. Gallaudet produced a phrasal sequence with the sequence of signs: BREAKi, BREAKj, BREAKk, ALL, WIPE-AWAY to express how a house was now in ruins. In another film, Francis Fox used only WIPE-AWAY as an equivalent to the English word *perish* in his recitation of the Gettysburg Address.

To express the concept of destruction in the modern single-sign version (glossed as DESTROY), multiple segments of handshapes and movements

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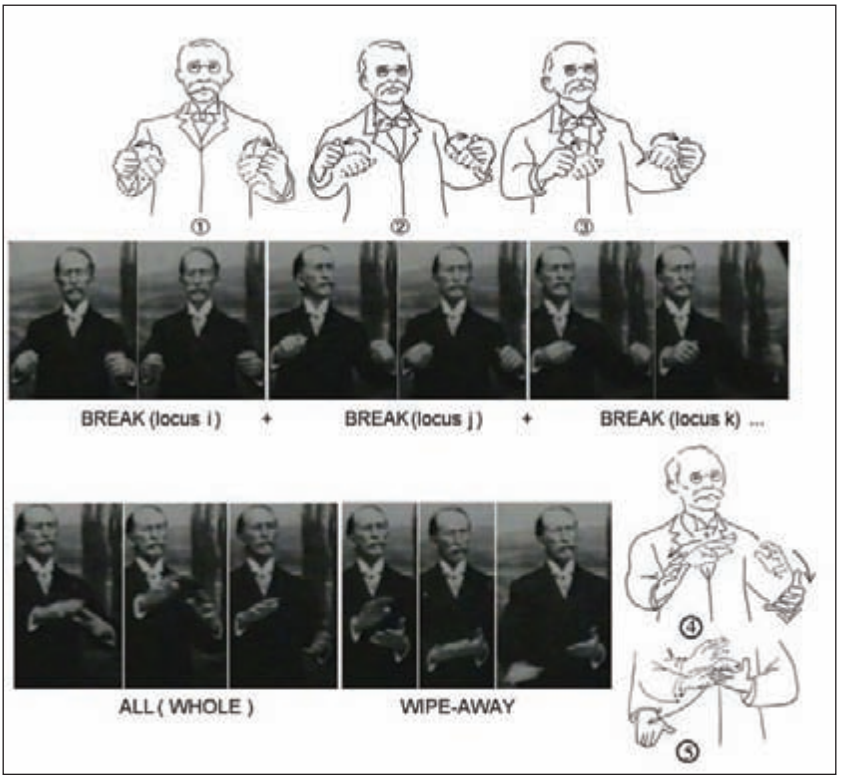

FIGURE 5.4. Lexical phrase expressing the concept of "destruction." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

are involved. This is an example of a modern *polyword:* a mono-morphemic form derived originally from lexical phrase constructions. As shown in figure 5.5, elements in the modern version are remnants of various components of the classic lexical phrase illustrated in figure 5.4. Changes even extend to a reversal in the ordering of handshape features, such that the closed fists appear in final position in the modern version.

This opaque polyword example presents a challenge in glossing. Should we transcribe the classical phrase as CRUMBLED-RUINS ALL WIPE-AWAY, without an indication of the historical relationship to the current sign DESTROY? Such cases reveal the importance of the periphrastic origins of modern single lexemes and emphasize the fact that one cannot restrict the study of language history to isolated lexemes extracted from syntactic context.

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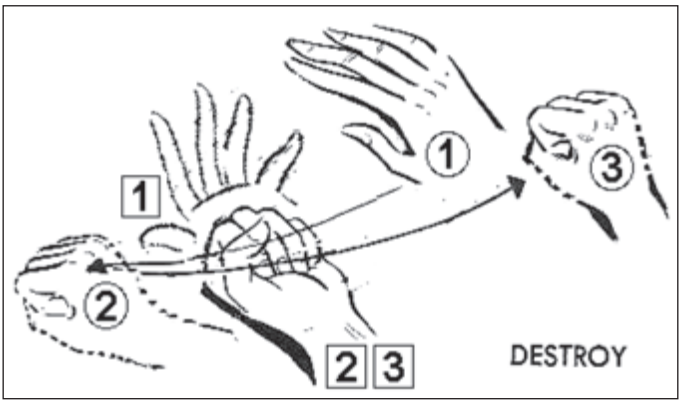

FIGURE 5.5. Modern polyword representing the concept of "destruction." Source: Watson (1964, 144).

To corroborate our interpretation of the film text, we referred to the contemporaneous lexicographies as much as possible. For example, the description for the sign DESTROY provided by J. Schuyler Long in his dictionary of *The Sign Language* in 1910 was as follows:

> Hold out both "5" hands, one above the other in front, palms facing; bring the hands together, closing them as if grasping something, so when they come together they meet closed fingers against fingers; rub the top hand across the lower as if grinding or mashing whatever was between to atoms, bring hand back across and finally open both hands directly. (66)

Linguists who are familiar with the modern ASL form for DESTROY should easily understand the Long description and conclude that the sign is virtually unchanged. However, the form rendered on film in 1910 reveals additional formational information that can only be captured by observing the movements of the sign: that DESTROY is actually the combination of two concepts, that of crushing and that of wiping away. Variation in form can be derived from each part of the original sign phrase. E. M. Gallaudet articulates a series of BREAKS for the crushing while Long refers to the act of "chewing" the atoms. Here film and text evidence provide insight into both the formational and grammatical properties of the early language, and serves as an admonition to take care when approaching old documents.

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EARLY LEXICAL STUDY

Neglect of these filmed records as sources of historical linguistic information is largely due to the belief that there was no language science regarding sign language worthy of the name in the nineteenth century and that the educators and other scholars during that period were naïve or biased when describing sign language as used at the time. In the seminal study of the NAD Film Series in the 1970s, researchers studied lexical items in isolation, overlooking the lexicographic craft of the earlier period as well as aspects of period-appropriate morphology. In his investigation of the protogrammar of ASL, Woodward (1978) applied a lexico-statistical comparison of the modern ASL and LSF lexicons and classified highly similar forms as cognates. Figure 5.6 shows examples of cognate and non-cognate pairs.

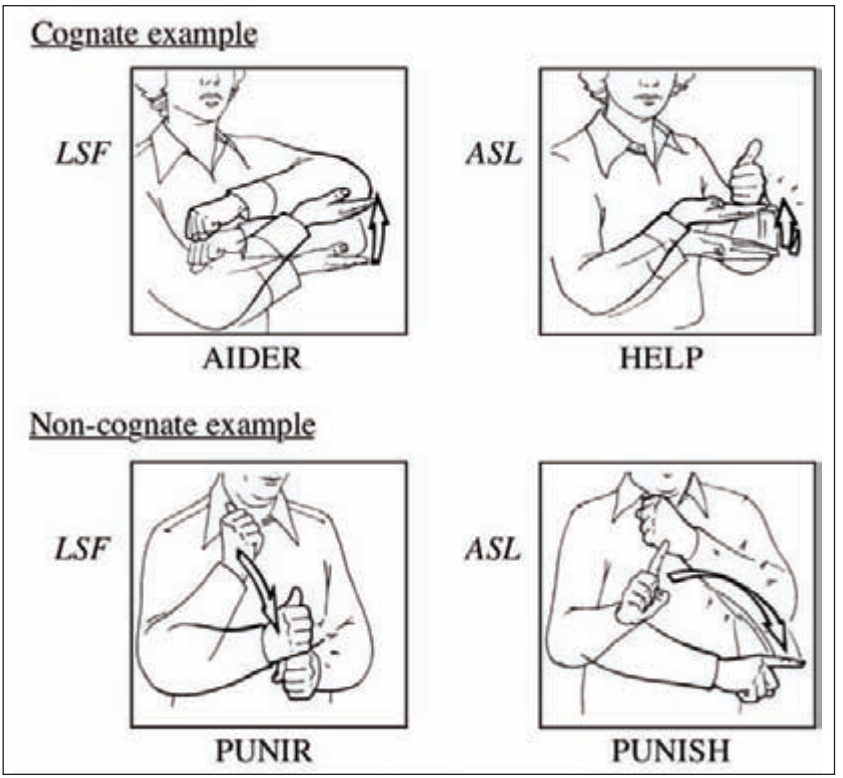

FIGURE 5.6. Sample of cognate and non-cognate pairs in LSF and ASL. Source: Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980, 51, 52).

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While the non-cognate example shows little resemblance in form for the sign meaning "punish," the cognate example does not show identical forms. To determine a cognate relationship, researchers make an informed decision with the help of either folk etymology or additional scientific excavation for evidence of historical relatedness between the current LSF form and the modern ASL form. In this particular case, the form of HELP in the film of E. M. Gallaudet (1910) is similar to the LSF example, but in the film of Cloud (1913) the form is the modern ASL sign. Based on this, Woodward made an informed decision to consider the two signs cognates. Woodward selected the lexical entries in his database by finding matches between English glosses representing ASL lexemes and French glosses representing LSF lexemes. This single-item lexical approach is limited, relying as it does upon the current metalanguage, already compromised by circumstances of the Dark Period. A particular weakness of this approach is that it does not consider the possibility of relexicalization among forms existing at a particular point in time.

Scholars writing for the *American Annals of the Deaf* throughout the nineteenth century evidenced a metalinguistic awareness that paraphrase was useful in the natural sign language development process. These scholars not only thought about sign language, but they recognized *how* the signers formed concepts and expressions by conjoining sign phrases to create new signs (Brown 1856; Peet 1868; Keep 1869; Keep 1871; Tylor 1878). Film and historical document sources allow us to detect periphrastic constructions in the context of the syntax for original paradigm formations along with the transfer of particular items from the Old French Sign Language lexicon into the early ASL lexicon. Cross-referencing linguistic data from different periods in the history of ASL (a diachronic study), we identified aspects of early ASL grammar that differ in degree of complexity from ASL grammar today. With these strategies we hoped to overcome a tendency to limit historical grammatical investigations to a one-to-one sign comparison. The dictionary published in 1856 by James Brown, *A Vocabulary of Mute Signs,* also provides evidence that scholars understood the forces at work to reduce and modify new "signs" (see chapter 7 for Brown's notes on word formation).

Early scholars recognized that gesture was reorganized into sign language by means of "reduction" (Ayres 1848; Stone 1869; Peet 1868), which Lane refers to as "condensation and short cuts" or "abridgement" (1987, 55). Such a process is relevant to the development of a colloquial register,

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in which natural reduction in articulation is essential for effective transmission of information. The impact of reduction as a force of change on sign language structure was already recognized in early metalanguage:

> As early as 1827 De Gerando discussed at length the contrast between the elaborate mimetic signs prescribed by Epée and Sicard and the "reduced" counterparts actually used by deaf signers. A decade later Harvey Peet made the same distinction and added that as new signs were introduced into the residential schools by the pupils they rapidly underwent this type of "abridgment." The resulting signs were simpler, were more arbitrary, and allowed a much wider range of conversation than their mimetic precursors. (Lane 1987, 55)

Sicard had already mentioned "reduction of sign" in his writings, although we believe he also recognized semantic change (Jacobs 1856): he and de l'Epée themselves adopted natural signs and adapted them into methodical signs by metaphorical extension. De l'Epée even described how two signs are merged for the concept "for" (1860). Sign language linguistic research in the modern era has focused on how the linguistic system could motivate and enable reduction; the study of reduction thus introduced discussion on the nature of cognition among signers, revealing the psychological reality of sublexical encoding via a language faculty and the innateness of linguistic notions beyond the spoken modality. This led to research on more theoretical aspects of sign language syntax and phonology. Seminal psycholinguistic research in the 1970s posited that cognitive pressures imposed an ideal rate of transmission of propositions leading to the simultaneous combination of morphemes (Bellugi and Fischer 1972) seen in ASL today. Such research led to an overreliance on the concept of simultaneity as a modality-specific preference in sign language morphology, and as an explanation for certain linguistic structures. Particular sociolinguistic conditions, such as the social demand for clarity in interpersonal communication (Washabaugh 1986) and social mobility in triggering rapid change (Woodward 1978) were seen to account for much of the linguistic change observed in signed languages.

RELEXICALIZATION

Our analysis of the NAD films and contemporaneous texts revealed patterns of change parallel to those described for spoken languages. In particular, the

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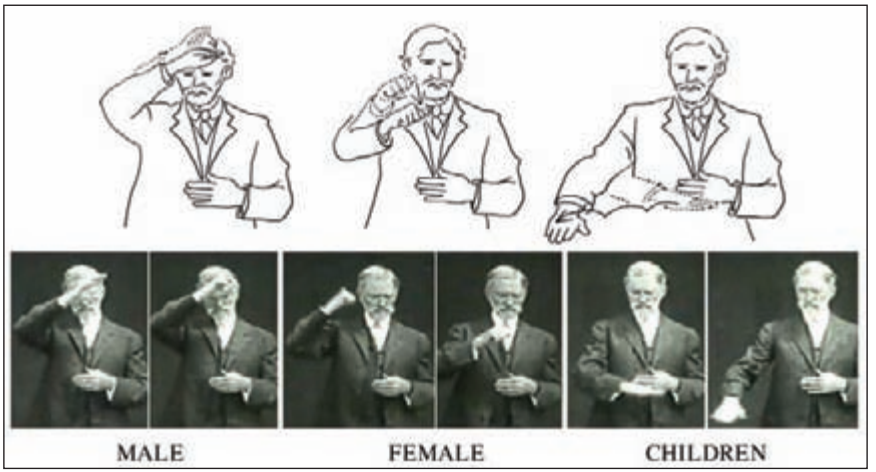

FIGURE 5.7. Robert MacGregor 1913 lexical phrase expressing concept of "children." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

shortening or clipping process results in the replacement of independent lexemes with collocations, polywords, and blends via morphophonemic processes, seen in, for example, the linguistic system for forming human kinship terms in ASL. Thus, the typological character of the language can be seen to have shifted from concatenation of forms to more tightly fused, synthetic structures that often contain polysemous forms.

The process of relexicalization can be observed in the films in the case of gender markers fused with collective plurals for the concept of "people," "adults," and "children." The first example in figure 5.7 shows MacGregor expressing the concept of "children."

We later noticed the same pattern of fusing the two gender markers for other human terms, especially for mass plurals. In our initial analysis, we glossed identical forms used by E. M. Gallaudet and Fox for the concept of people as MALE FEMALE PEOPLE, as we assumed they were talking about both children and adults (see figure 5.8).

Further study of examples at this stage of development in the language showed that the technique served to express "humanness." The relexicalization of the MALE and FEMALE forms to communicate the concepts of "boy" and "girl" evolved at a later time. The original phrase communicating the latter concepts required a collocation of either gender marker

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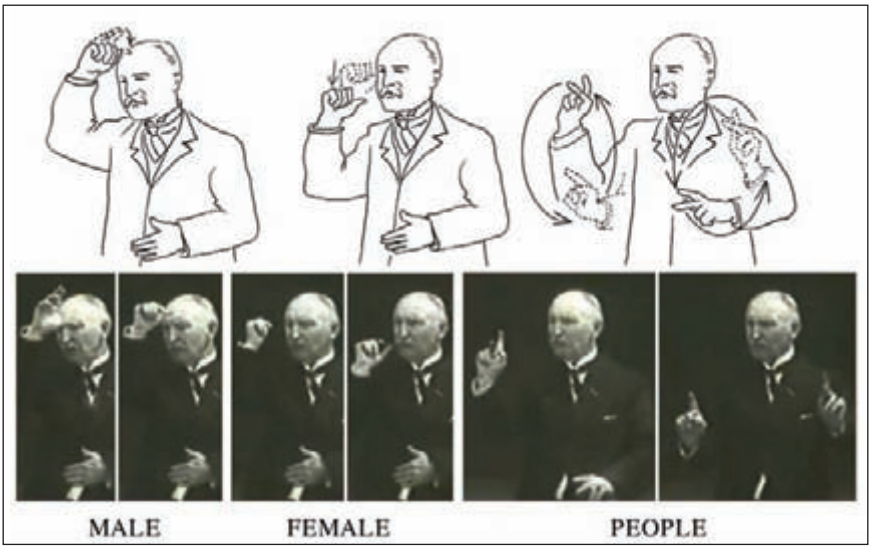

FIGURE 5.8. Thomas Fox 1913 lexical phrase expressing concept of "people." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

with the SMALL-HEIGHT attributor, thus denoting "boy" or "girl." Figure 5.9 shows the archaic phrasal lexical forms as recorded in Sternberg's dictionary.

The Sternberg dictionary also documents that the height attributor in the lexical phrase would be modified to denote an adult. To denote a woman, a separate entry in the dictionary explains that the hand would be raised above the level of the head, rather than positioned at the waist (see figure 5.10).

Lehmann (1995) posits the principle of elimination driven by redundancy to account for the pattern he calls "paradigm clipping," whereby abbreviated forms continue to represent the same set of concepts. The resultant forms become prone to the next phase of relexicalization. In this case, the forms for MALE/FEMALE have become the modern signs for BOY/GIRL, and the form for SMALL-HEIGHT has become the sign for CHILD.

Today we use WE BOYS to express the same concept as in figure 5.11. Likewise the descriptive form (small-height + plural) is now relexicalized to denote "children," regardless of gender. Of course we can be more specific by conjoining BOY CHILDREN as a phrase as needed.

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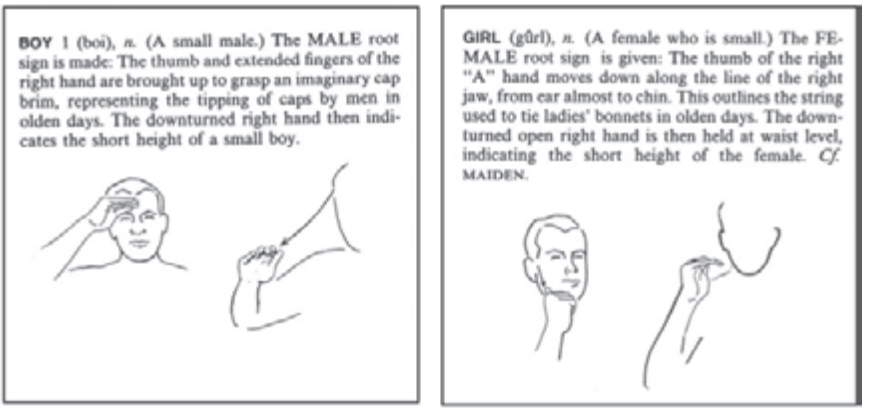
BOY 1 (boi), *n.* (A small male.) The MALE root sign is made: The thumb and extended fingers of the right hand are brought up to grasp an imaginary cap brim, representing the tipping of caps by men in olden days. The downturned right hand then indicates the short height of a small boy.

GIRL (gûrl), *n.* (A female who is small.) The FEMALE root sign is given: The thumb of the right "A" hand moves down along the line of the right jaw, from ear almost to chin. This outlines the string used to tie ladies' bonnets in olden days. The downturned open right hand is then held at waist level, indicating the short height of the female. *Cf.* MAIDEN.

FIGURE 5.9. Dictionary descriptions for archaic phrasal forms expressing concepts of "boy" and "girl." Source: Images and text of definitions from pp. 99, 354 from AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE DICTIONARY by Martin L. A. STERNBERG. Copyright © 1981, 1987 by Martin L. A. Sternberg. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

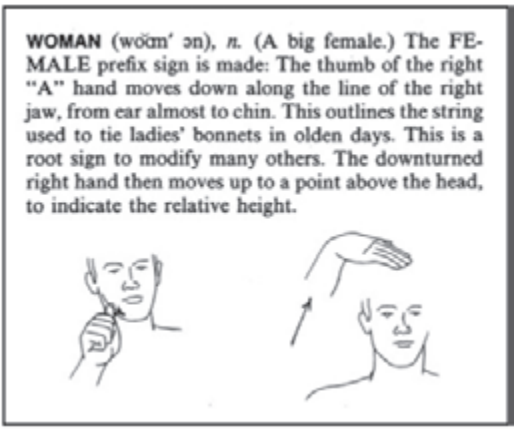
WOMAN (wo͝om′ ən), *n.* (A big female.) The FEMALE prefix sign is made: The thumb of the right "A" hand moves down along the line of the right jaw, from ear almost to chin. This outlines the string used to tie ladies' bonnets in olden days. This is a root sign to modify many others. The downturned right hand then moves up to a point above the head, to indicate the relative height.

FIGURE 5.10. Dictionary description for archaic phrasal form expressing the concept of "woman." Source: Images and text of definitions from p. 970 from AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE DICTIONARY by Martin L. A. STERNBERG. Copyright © 1981, 1987 by Martin L.A. Sternberg. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

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FIGURE 5.11. Lexical phrase expressing concept of "we boys." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

COMPETING VIEWS ON THE FORCES AFFECTING HISTORICAL CHANGE

Sign formation processes then and now are not the same, and if one assumes a monolithic perspective, such processes can be missed. The evidence for systematic historical change in ASL mirrors what has been found in spoken languages and in recent studies of emerging signed languages that have no contact with conventional signed languages. This is certainly an exciting finding. Research in our lab on emerging sign languages and home signers has provided additional supporting evidence that grammaticalization in young sign languages stems from syntactic sign-phrases (Coppola, Senghas, Newport, and Supalla 1997; Osugi, Supalla, and Webb 1999; Senghas, Coppola, Newport, and Supalla 1997).

Within the field of sign language acquisition, we have only recently begun to study how ASL has been transmitted across generations and the effect of age of exposure to the language in determining the competence of a signer. The Deaf community includes a small proportion of native signers who learned ASL as a first language during infancy and others who learned it at various ages in life as a first language, depending on opportunity for ASL exposure through peers or a school where it is used. Still others learned it as a second language after becoming deaf due to illness. Historically, there has been a long tradition among educators to distinguish postlingual and prelingual Deaf people, but this distinction was of interest only as it affected the age of exposure to the English language and the resultant

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English skills (Bornstein 1990; Marschark and Spencer 2003; Ramsey 1989; Scouten 1984).

Another perspective in the field of sign language research considers the phenomenon of synchronic variation in the ASL community to be a result of sign language deprivation followed by exposure at varying ages (Mayberry and Eichen 1991; Meier and Newport 1990; Newport and Supalla 1980). Researchers have recently begun to study the role of innate grammatical principles in driving creolization of late-learned ASL input by successive generations of ASL signers (Singleton 1989). The phenomenon of *nativization*—the process of taking the form from another language and changing it to make it "feel" natural in one's own language—has persistently occurred among children who were exposed to a manually coded English system (Hoffmeister and Goodhart 1978; Mounty 1986; S. Supalla 1989). Natural ASL-like features replace artificially created manual devices, even in circumstances where there is no opportunity for exposure to ASL, thus suggesting the presence of innate principles for ideal grammar in the visual mode.

As the NAD films are recognized as a valuable source of information about the evolution of ASL, the database can become a rich resource for further lexical and grammatical inquiry. It is important to remember that although glosses were carefully chosen to represent the signed forms of the master signers, glosses, by nature, cannot be seen as permanent. As any language evolves, the meanings assigned to words and phrases also evolve; therefore, the glosses also will evolve as each subsequent generation develops its own unique folk etymology and its own unique meanings for those forms. The goal of our annotation process was to cross-reference older forms and their glosses with modern glosses in order for modern readers to trace language change across time. Changes in glossing conventions are also a rich source for study of language evolution.

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6 REVISITING DACTYLOLOGY

The NAD and the alumni of the Hartford School and Gallaudet College had commissioned Samuel French to sculpt a statue as part of their plans for celebrating 100 years of American Deaf education. Recalling the legend of how T. H. Gallaudet and Alice first communicated by sketching H-A-T on the ground, the statue shows Alice practicing the letter *A* from the manual alphabet imported from France. In her other hand, she is holding a book that has the alphabet running across the page. Gallaudet is sitting beside her demonstrating the letter *A*. The sculptor seemed to capture the moment when T. H. Gallaudet taught Alice how to say her name. We can assume that Alice was exposed to various ways of expressing concepts visually prior to Gallaudet's visit to Europe; it is important to note that the image of T. H. Gallaudet and Alice reflects the shift of value from natural signs to manual code, especially *dactylology,* the means for forming the alphabet and numerals on the hand.

Initialization today is the substitution of the original handshape of a sign with a handshape from the manual alphabet, which represents typically the first letter of the English word equivalent for that sign. For example, the modern sign for CLASS originally referred to any type of group formed, a plural marker in early ASL used at the end of sign-phrases such as [MALE + FEMALE + CLASS] (modern gloss). Eventually other signs were added to the ASL lexicon by this initial handshape substitution process yielding

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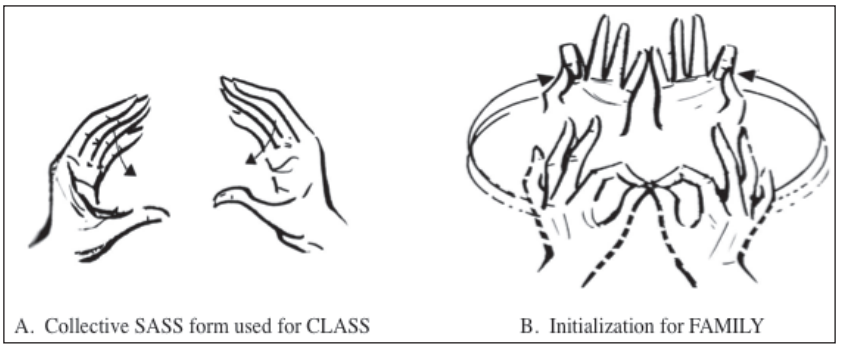

FIGURE 6.1. Examples of modern period initialized forms from the 1970s. Source: Watson (1973, 353, 45).

FAMILY by substituting the [F] handshape and GROUP by substituting the [G] handshape. Thus these three modern signs contrast minimally—they are produced with the same movement in the same location but with different handshapes. The development of Manually Coded English (MCE) took initialization to an entirely new level. Prior to 1970, the overall usage of initialization was quite limited; after 1970 MCE systems exploited initialization as *the* major means of adding English words to the sign language lexicon. The limited use of initialization in the collective quantifier was expanded by substituting [S] for SOCIETY and [T] for TEAM. See figure 6.1 for David Watson's 1973 illustrations for CLASS and FAMILY.

ROOTS AND FUNCTIONS OF DACTYLOLOGY

Dactylology presents an interesting example of historical change. The manual alphabet was originally invented in Spain in the sixteenth century as a form of assistive technology. Clerics and teachers devised manual alphabets and word-signs for communicating with deaf people of the day, thus impressing society at large and challenging existing legal barriers to full citizenship that had been established on the basis of ability to speak and hear.

The manual forms adopted for this kind of assistive technology have been recognized as distinctive from the spectrum of natural gesture and thus classified as "codified gestures" (Crystal 1987; McNeill 2000; Singleton, Goldin-Meadow, and McNeill 1995). Such techniques originally aimed for a one-to-one correspondence with text as a means of teaching reading and writing. However, public demonstrations of accuracy and ef-

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ficiency in two-way communication were often used to prove the efficacy of the approach. Under such rigorous testing, oral communication would not be a viable alternate for reliable communication with the deaf. Being practical, the pioneering group of American educators chose to emulate the French technique and infrastructure for instruction of the deaf in their new country.

Even within the history of methodical techniques, distinct eras existed. Early scholars and educators of the deaf also recognized the potential of natural sign language for lexical expansion via metaphorization and polysemy (see chapter 5). As reflected by de l'Epée's seminal work on the methodical approach (de l'Epée 1860), the general scope of analysis operated at the semantic level. The manual alphabet existed as well, but served as a supplementary tool for distinguishing certain classes of signs in France (Pélissier 1856) and in America (I. Peet 1868). Through the nineteenth century individuals promoting the use of sign language, especially in America, shifted from translational approaches that faithfully rendered the message of English concepts via paraphrases in sign language, to a study of dactylology.

In the subsequent history of deaf education in America, some educators have undertaken promotion of a single communication technique as an absolute solution to pedagogical problems. Signers reanalyzed patterns in their language and devised new morphological rules, contributing new ways of generating words in sign language, which again were not recognized by these same educators. Meanwhile, deaf signers continually engaged the writing system of the larger society. It is likely that the process of fingerspelling became an integral part of ASL via this nativization process and has become a tool in bilingual language use. Successive generations of single-focused educators overlooked the fact that there were likely to be new bilingual generations of signers, especially the hearing and deaf children of deaf parents.

Some researchers and native signers have viewed the use of the manual alphabet for initialization as the intrusion of English on the natural language (Crystal 1987; McNeill 2000; Singleton, Goldin-Meadow, and McNeill 1995), a view underscored by history. In the Rochester Method, fingerspelling replaced sign language, forcing sign language underground. The development of MCE approximately forty years ago repeated the intrusion using different devices.

MCE inventors intervened by overextending the natural initialization processes in ASL as seen in kinship terms referring to extended family

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FIGURE 6.2. Sample of initialized forms as shown in Watson. Source: Watson (1973), 17.

members such as AUNT, UNCLE, and COUSIN. It is ironic that these inventors borrowed the gender contrast from ASL and made the feature of locus forehead area versus chin area distinctive in the development of artificial signs in their pronoun system. In Watson's version of MCE, initial handshapes [H] and [S] were fused to the forehead and chin/cheek loci to form new lexemes signaling "he" and "she." Additional initials were added within the same ASL configurational paradigm for pronoun forms contrasting in case as well, such as "him"(H-M), "her"(H-R). In a later 1973 edition of the Watson dictionary,[1] we see the listing of such initialized forms that were absent from his 1964 edition (see figure 6.2).

Thus, a mechanism already part of modern ASL grammar was extended by system developers in the creation of modern artificial signs. In this process of borrowing from ASL, initialization of handshape has been exploited beyond its original domain in MCE innovation, for the sake of resembling English. Thus, the original paradigm formed for kinship terminology has been replaced with a new paradigm utilizing dactylology to form collateral terms as well as other new words such as PARENTS and SEX/GENDER.

While borrowing from ASL, these inventors of artificially created forms did not envision that the forms, once introduced, would inevitably be subject to nativization and natural forces including reduction and loss of redundancy. Handshape contrasts will be eliminated whenever there is redundancy across the paradigm. Since ASL has optimized the gender con-

1. Watson represented one version or variation of initialization of kinship terms among the MCE systems.

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trast through the use of location, subsequent reanalyses determine how new forms are created and reshaped. Artificial (hence grammatically incongruent) innovation is likely to have only a very limited impact, ranging across perhaps only a few lexical items. This raises a question as to the advisability of such "language planning."

To justify converting natural sign language into a pedagogical tool, developers of MCE systems pointed out the potential benefits to the deaf child in acquiring the English language in the same way that a hearing child learns language, since an invented form of sign language seemingly affords a direct mapping between form and meaning that is accessible to the child (e.g., Gustason 1990). Educators also assume deaf children are capable of becoming multi-modal polyglots, fluent in communicating manually and via English print. When efforts with their artificial system do not show the desired results, they often point to lack of motivation in children or improper implementation by adult models. In such experiments, it is clear that the goal is to give the child an already-packaged communication system that will hopefully render written English recognizable. The functions of language, and the traditions of polyglottic language use in the Deaf community, are much wider and deeper than this goal. Disappointed developers of such systems seem unaware of these traditions and forget that they are placing their artificial tool in the hands of children with the inherent instincts for forging a natural language when the input is impoverished or unnatural.

The single-minded devotion among educators for pursuing success with artificial English-like signing at the cost of the natural human creativity of their students was first depicted dramatically in 1973 through Gil Eastman's play *Sign Me Alice*, an adaptation of the musical play and feature film *My Fair Lady* (1964). In those works, the character of Eliza Doolittle is trained to behave "properly" and speak in the tones and inflections of upper-class society by Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics. Professor Higgins's efforts to teach articulation to hearing people who wish to speak like individuals in upper-class society has parallels in the visible speech technology used in Deaf education. *My Fair Lady* was based on George Bernard Shaw's 1916 play *Pygmalion;* in his preface to *Pygmalion,* Shaw mentions the work of Alexander Melville Bell (1819–1905). Bell invented Visible Speech, a system of visual symbols that represented every sound of the human voice, in order to teach deaf and hearing people to articulate all the sounds of a language. Bell's son, Alexander Graham Bell, carried on the

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family tradition and devoted much of his life to implementing his father's Visible Speech system in the instruction of deaf children. Gil Eastman drew on the polarization within the Deaf community in these matters to poke gentle fun at all involved. In *Sign Me Alice*, Professor Zeno has invented a new sign language for the purpose of replacing the natural sign language, and his student, Alice, is promised the reward of upward social mobility if she learns the new ways of using sign language. She ultimately rejects this reward, choosing instead to learn to trust her own natural linguistic instincts.

The current intrusive use of dactylology does not adequately reflect its use at the turn of the twentieth century and earlier. The manual alphabet was originally invented in Spain in the sixteenth century as a form of assistive technology. ASL signers in many situations will first fingerspell a word in English and then produce a sign that will be used for that meaning. More generally, fluent ASL signing commonly includes interspersing sign with fingerspelling that represents written English, with switching and integration principles that have been studied only by a few investigators (Humphries and MacDougall 1999, 84–94; Battison 1974; Padden 1991, 2006). Such simultaneous and/or interleaved transmission of information in different codes can be viewed under the basic concept of polyglot.

Each polyglot may have a preference for one of the modes or may develop a distinct processing strategy for assimilation of all the information. Within the United States—a strongly monolingual country—features of this integration and switching among languages may appear only within the Deaf culture, through code switching and integration. Polyglottism also occurs in Spanish–English and other bilingual communities and is much more widespread in spoken language communities in other parts of the world. What may be unique to Deaf communities is the integration of codes that represent the written as well as surrounding spoken (and signed) languages.

CONTRASTING DACTYLOLOGY AND THE FRENCH METHOD

Both de l'Epée and Sicard kept scrupulous records of their method of teaching and included extensive descriptions of methodical signs. However, since the prevailing belief at the time was that natural signs were universal, detailed descriptions of these natural signs were rare, and thus researchers had to infer the natural roots of evolved signs from wide-ranging data. It

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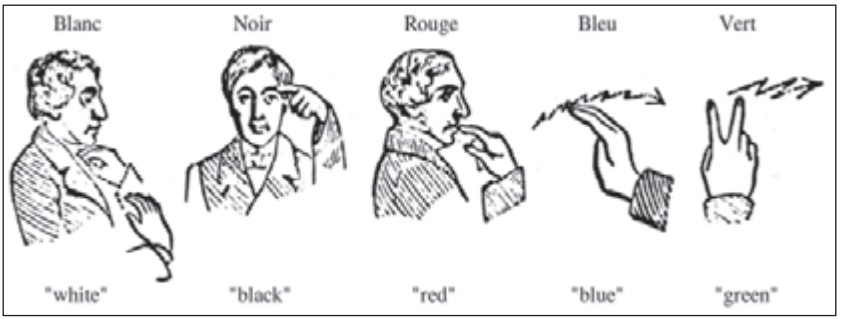

FIGURE 6.3. 1856 LSF color signs. Source: Pélissier (1856).

is not clear whether there was methodical and systematic intention among French educators to use dactylology as a pedagogical tool as had happened in middle of the nineteenth century in America. This particular perspective is not taken by many modern scholars, who, in our view, assume that the process of word-coining via initialization as we currently know it is uniform across time.

The signs for colors present an example of the initialized signs in LSF and their influence on ASL. An illustration from Pélissier (1856) lists five color signs: WHITE, BLACK, RED, BLUE, and GREEN. The first three signs are based on depiction of body or clothing features, but the latter two words, BLEU (blue) and VERT (green), are composed as initialized signs where the handshape indicates the manual letters [B] and [V], respectively (see figure 6.3).

These forms, still used in modern LSF, were adopted into ASL, with the same descriptive and initialized signs; the forms for the signs for "blue" and "green" also use the handshapes denoting initial letters, with [G] replacing [V] in English—among the speculations made to account for its prevalence in the grammar of ASL was the role of Laurent Clerc in replacing French initializations with those matching English orthography. Isaac Lewis Peet's influential role in its expanded use in his seminal paper, "Initial Signs," (1868) during the classical period cannot be overlooked either. The development of MCE in the 1970s also expanded the use of this word-formation device. In modern times, initialization takes place via the substitution of the original handshape of a sign with a handshape from the manual alphabet that represents, typically, the first letter of the English word translation for that sign.

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DACTYLOLOGY AND NUMBER SIGNS

Dactylology also included a numeral system. Stokoe's 1960 approach for investigating morphology also viewed the ASL numeral system in this same way. This can be demonstrated by comparing the basic numeral system in LSF and ASL. Figure 6.4 shows the configuration of hand(s) for counting 1–10 in LSF. This is still used today in modern LSF. Figure 6.5 shows the modern ASL numbers.

In general, the aspect, tense, and number particles involved in calendar terminology appear to have originated in France and been brought to America by Clerc and Gallaudet. Preliminary analysis suggests there was a sudden transition from the LSF signs incorporating numeral handshapes in order to accommodate the American counting system. See the illustrations from Pélissier (1856) (figure 6.6) for a sampler.

Note that the French numeral ONE co-occurred with the movement in most of these terms (YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW, and MONTH). The French numeral SEVEN is used in WEEK. The other two terms DAY and YEAR have the handshape formed as size and shape specifiers to indicate location and shape of the cosmic objects (the sun and the earth). Many of these forms have survived intact in modern ASL. Figure 6.7 illustrates the range of difference as found in ASL versions for DAY, WEEK, and MONTH.

The most noticeable change among these words is the shift of handshape to the index finger signaling ONE in ASL. The LSF version for WEEK

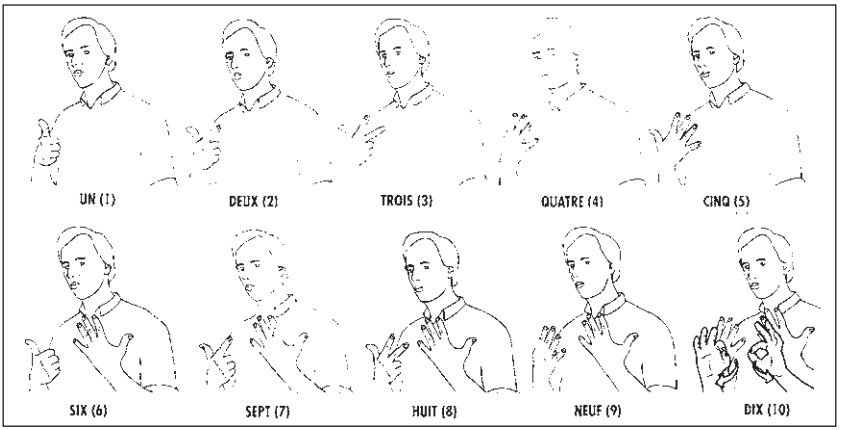

FIGURE 6.4. Numerals 1–10 in LSF. Source: Moody (1989), 186–87. Used by permission.

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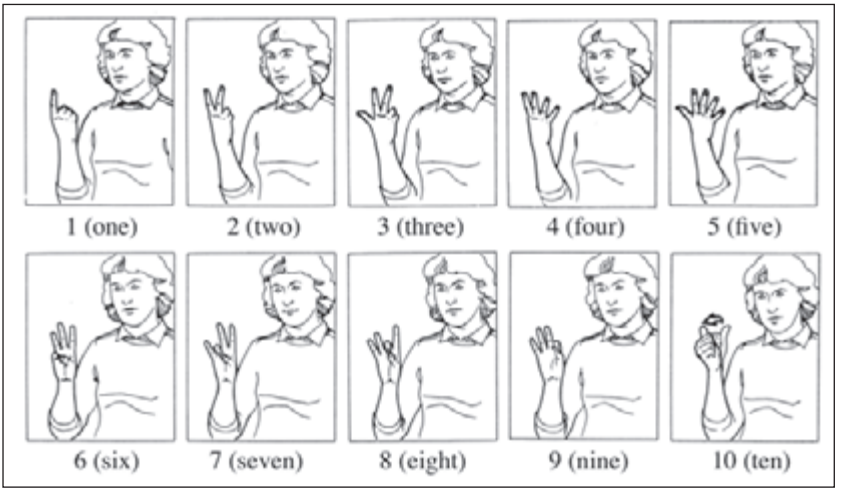

FIGURE 6.5. Modern ASL numerals, 1–10. Source: Newell (1983), 125–26. Used by permission of the NAD.

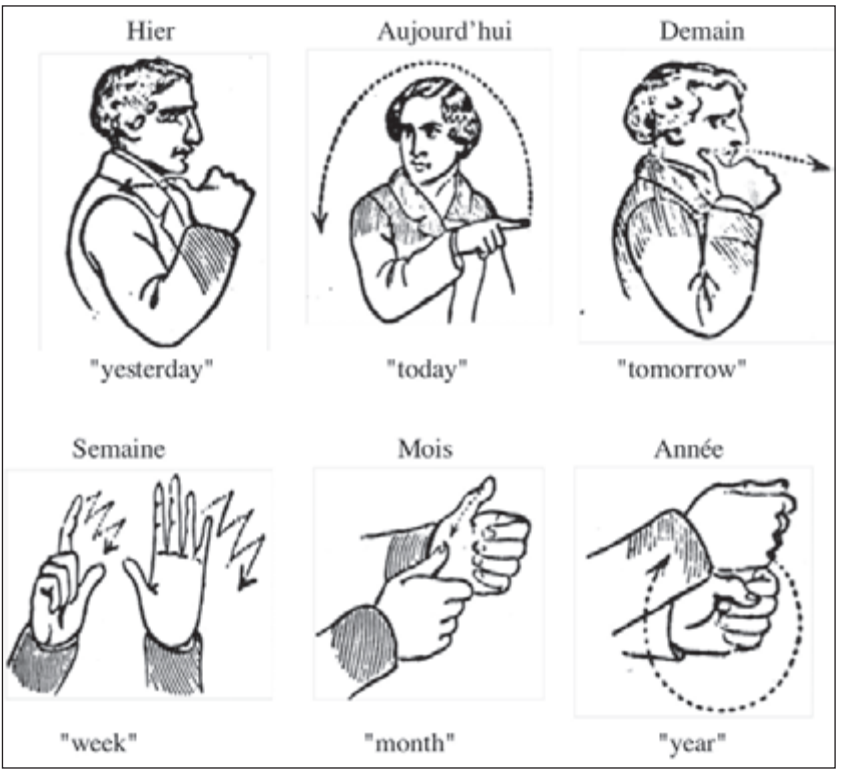

FIGURE 6.6. Left to right beginning at top row: yesterday, today, tomorrow, week, month, year. Source: Pélissier (1856).

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FIGURE 6.7. Modern ASL signs for day, week, month. Source: Newell (1983), 30, 116, 71. Used by permission of the NAD.

is completely replaced in other formational parameters, thus making the ASL version an unrelated form. Nevertheless, the morphology imported from LSF to ASL included dactylology, enabling lexical borrowing from spoken language through words incorporating numeral handshapes as well as alphabetical handshapes.

Complex temporal expressions are made in ASL by combining the time line with the number. That is, the movement moves forward for the future tense in the case of TOMORROW or backward for the past tense in the case of YESTERDAY. In addition, either form may be inflected with plural number to denote "in a few days" (see figure 6.8). The films also provide evidence of these inflectional processes at work in the young language. To

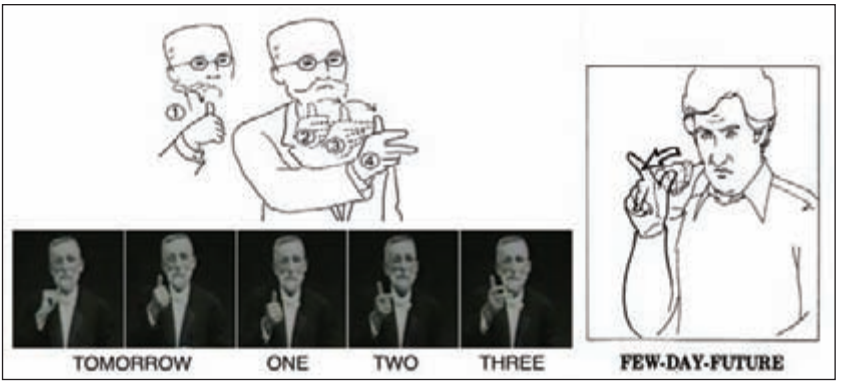

FIGURE 6.8. Tracing origins of "in a few days" from Hotchkiss. Source: Left, *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Top left, illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay. Right, Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 177.

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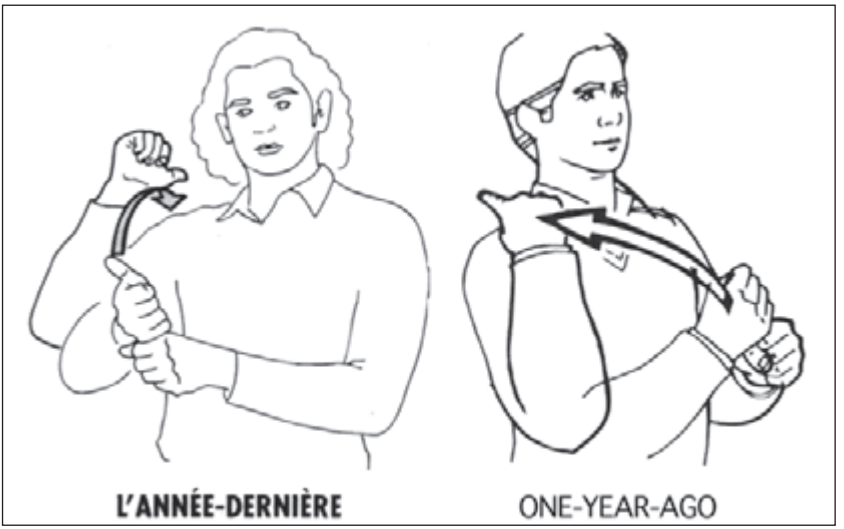

FIGURE 6.9. Left, "last year" in modern LSF. Source: Moody (1998), 183. Used by permission of IVT; Right, modern ASL. Source: Newell (1983), 121. Used by permission of the NAD.

express certain meanings, the younger generation of signers in the films inflected signs in ways similar to those found in modern ASL while the older signers relied on word order instead.

We can see in figure 6.8 that Hotchkiss's TOMORROW plus 1–2–3 uses the French version for the numerals. These handshapes are still part of the modern sign (although there is some dialectal variation where the American numerals are used instead), proving that some of the earlier borrowings of dactylology from the French system are preserved in modern ASL among unwitting American signers. These patterns of change indicate a shift from an analytic tendency to a synthetic typology for some aspects of morphology in both modern ASL and LSF. Thus we see some lexical and grammatical convergence for both offspring from the precedent LSF as shown in the signs in figure 6.9.

We do not know if numeral incorporation was imported from old LSF or developed independently. Lexicographers did not include such information in archaic dictionaries for either language. However, the feasibility of historical linguistic analysis of the evolution of the interaction of dactylology and morphology is no longer in doubt. The research also illustrates the quality of reconstruction data available in historical LSF and ASL materials, and reveals the close grammatical relationship of the two languages.

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LOAN SIGNS AND NAME SIGNS

As time passed and transmission expanded outward from the source, the manual alphabet system was adopted into ASL as a natural polyglottic device for supplementing noun categorization, with borrowings unique to this sign language. In addition, the ASL community also incorporated the fingerspelling of proper names for people and places or newly introduced technical terms as an alternative to constructing a paraphrase. Over time, common fingerspelled words evolved into rapid patterns of movement that required sophisticated comprehension skills. It is not surprising that such forms often became even further reduced (and enhanced) to loan signs. N-O is one instance of a loan sign where absolutely no feature resembles the [N] and [O] handshapes in the manual alphabetic system. This form also allows verbal agreement for subject and object as well as for number (see forms in figure 6.10).

There are several instances of the loan word #NO in the NAD films, suggesting that its development as a loan word was completed by the start of the twentieth century. Figures 6.11 and 6.12 show MacGregor and Veditz producing the form. MacGregor imposed prosodic stress every time he articulated the individual handshape.

The version made by MacGregor, the older signer, is sequential, with both letters [N] and [O] appearing fully formed, while Veditz's form is condensed and similar to the way the loan word is articulated today. The name-sign system of ASL, on the other hand, although also fed from the same dactylological and morphological roots as the loan-sign system, shows minimal movement and location contrasts. Giving a proper name in sign

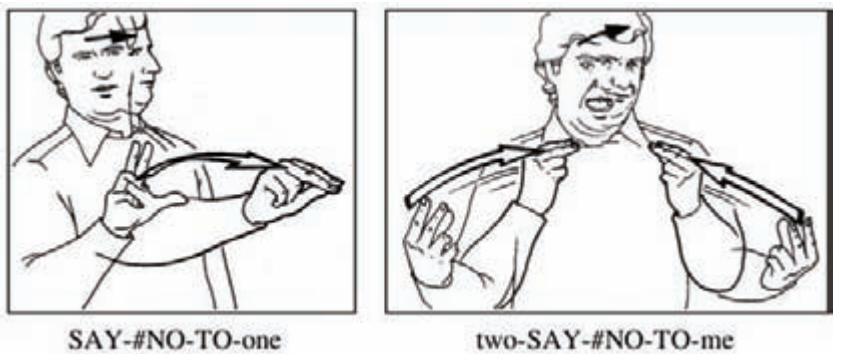

FIGURE 6.10. Loan sign and its inflected version. Source: Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 385.

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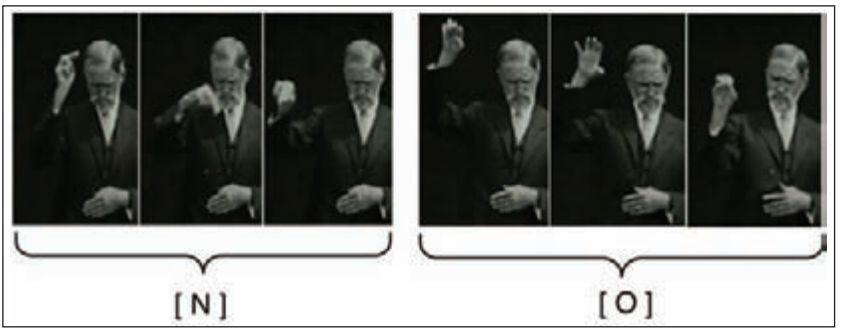

FIGURE 6.11. Instance of fingerspelled word as produced by MacGregor in 1913. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

language has been a tradition in the American Deaf community (S. Supalla 1992) since the early nineteenth century. When the first American school was established in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817, each teacher and student had a name sign. Clerc acquired his name sign in France where description of one's appearance plays a significant role in the formation of a name sign. Clerc had a scar on his cheek and his name sign, depicted in figure 6.13, refers to this. A descriptive name sign was also given to T. H. Gallaudet, referring to his use of glasses (figure 6.14).

In modern times, when a deaf child enters a traditional school for the deaf, peers may give the child a name sign. When children have Deaf parents, name signs are given at birth. It is common for the original name sign

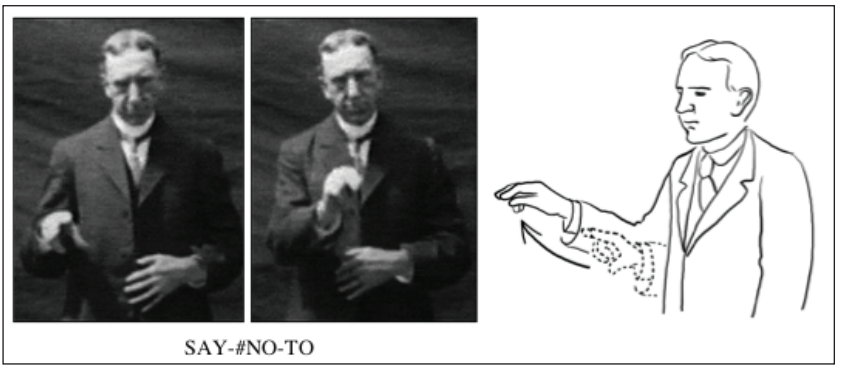

FIGURE 6.12. Instance of loan sign as produced by Veditz in 1913. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

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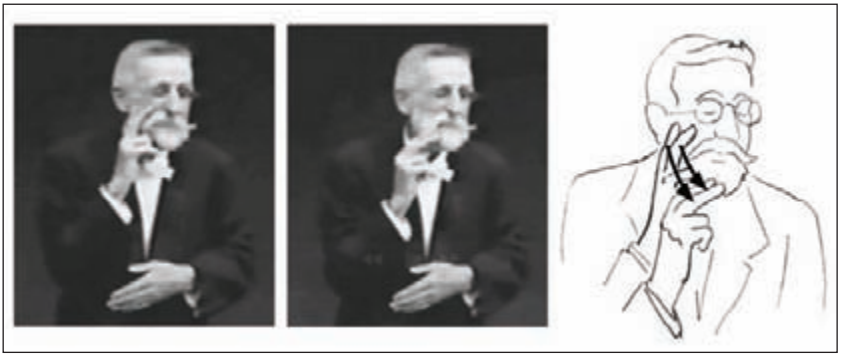

FIGURE 6.13. Descriptive name sign for Laurent Clerc. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Ted Supalla.

to be kept throughout one's life. However, this tradition is not practiced everywhere; one may instead fingerspell the name or choose to develop an idiosyncratic form that may involve initialization or description of some attribute. In contrast, a more arbitrary form may be given to a child whose appearance or behavior may not be helpful for distinguishing one from another.

As ASL evolved, name signs began to be constructed in accordance with a set of formational rules, not reflecting any physical feature or characteristic of the person. These are called arbitrary name signs (S. Supalla

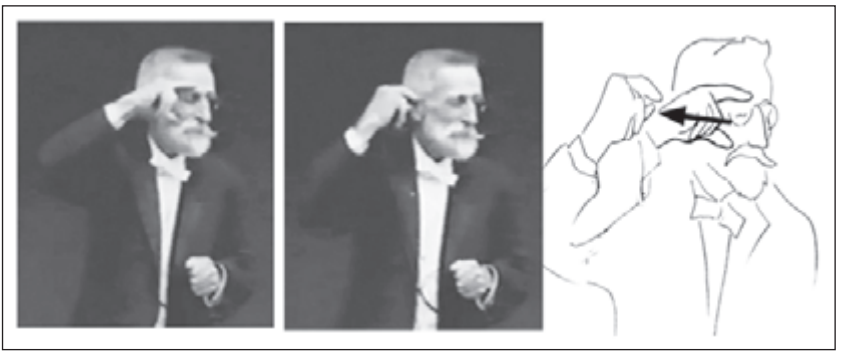

FIGURE 6.14. Descriptive name sign for Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Ted Supalla.

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1992). According to the polyglottic rules of ASL for borrowing from English, arbitrary name signs are made up of an alphabetic handshape, one of two possible movements, and one of a limited set of possible locations on the body. The handshape is the manual alphabet form of the individual's initials: the first letter of the first or last name, or both. This system is uniquely found in the United States.

The American Deaf community has typically publicized the name signs for famous people from both within the community and American society. NAD President George Veditz demonstrated these name signs for the most prominent individuals in the films (see figure 6.15).

The discovery of grammatical rules in the creation of a name sign for a particular individual is a recent event. However, the tradition has existed among Deaf Americans for many generations. The continuity of the tradition has given rise to collective intuitions among signers on the well-formedness of name-signs. The name sign practice is evidence of systematic patterning, in that manual alphabet handshape formation is enhanced and reshaped to serve a particular function in the language. Thus a mechanism originally intended for representation of forms from a different language has given rise to a system that fits the grammar of the borrowing language. In this sense, we may say that the name-sign system in ASL is a result of polyglottic nativization.

LSF DACTYLOLOGY AND MODERN ASL

The etymological relationship between American and French signs is a popular area of study in modern times. As mentioned earlier, dactylology is often used to determine whether American signs are related to French signs. Stedt and Moores (1990), for example, relied upon this technique in their argument for the historical relatedness of ASL to LSF. However, such claims for earlier initialization of a sign can be shown to be more folk etymology than scientific method. For instance, KEEP is regarded as being initialized with [K] without in-depth investigation of possible alternative historical paths for the form of the sign (see the left side of figure 6.16). However, once we compare this with the form to the right side in figure 6.16, which demonstrates LOOK-OUT-FOR (or WATCH), we are immediately struck by the physical resemblance of the forms as well as the semantic relatedness. Furthermore, the pattern can be seen in another sign glossed as CAREFUL,

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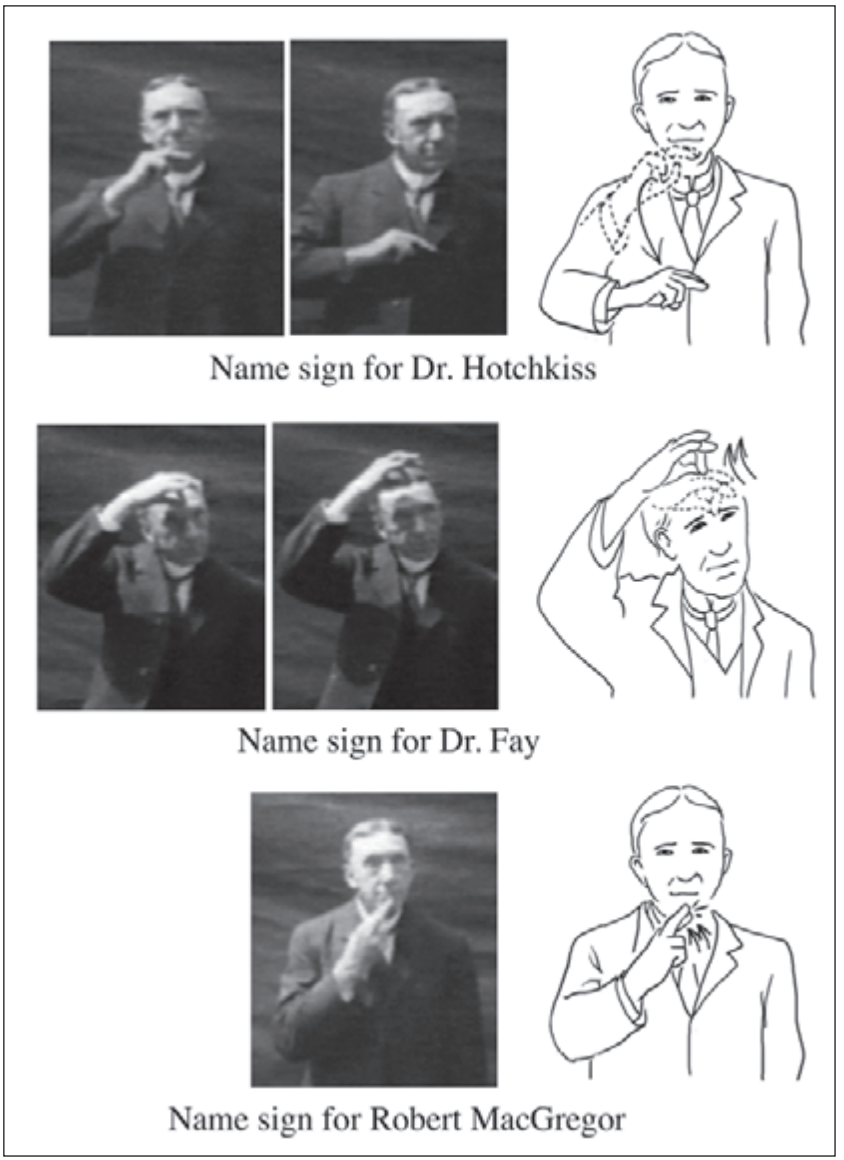

FIGURE 6.15. Arbitrary name signs. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

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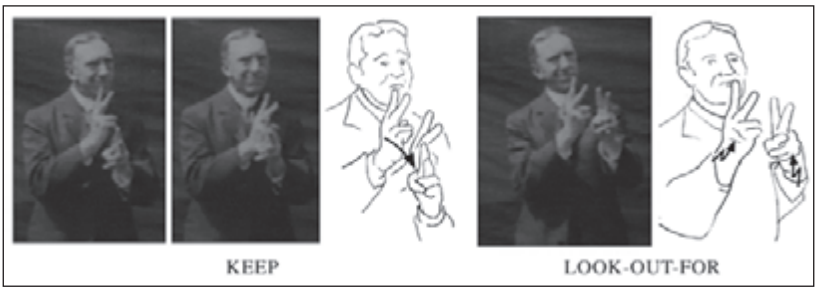

FIGURE 6.16. Related pair of signs (George Veditz in 1913). Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Ted Supalla.

which has the same handshapes but with a circular motion to represent the temporal aspect of prolongation. Figure 6.17 shows the modern form CAREFUL (left), and the stressed variant with a restrained bouncing motion for which a different gloss BE-CAREFUL (right), has been assigned.

From this we can infer that the sign LOOK-OUT-FOR is a root that has become a morpheme that originally meant "keeping eyes on someone." This root morpheme consists of the two hands attached to each other with one hand on top of the other. The generality of the pattern is confirmed by another sign glossed as SUPERVISE, which has the same handshape with a circular motion across the horizontal plane. This form can be seen

FIGURE 6.17. Left: Citation form for "careful." Right: Inflected, restrained "be careful" form. Source: Newell (1983), 22. Used by permission of the NAD.

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FIGURE 6.18. Complex phrase expressing concept of "security." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

in figure 6.18, in which E. M. Gallaudet expresses the concept of security by first signing SEE, then repeating the LOOK-OUT-FOR form along a horizontal track, and completing the concept with the sign FREE.

If we recognize the sideways sweeping motion to represent "keeping eyes around," then we can assume a chain of metaphorical extensions along with formational changes driven by morphological derivation. Proceeding from these extensions back to the original sign SEE, we note that its [V] handshape is often attributed historically to the initialization of the French word VOIR. With analysis of a wider range of data, such as that shown above, one can see that the [V] handshape is simply referring to two eyes. Additional lexical spinoffs from this original form exist which we now realize may have nothing to do with initialization. For instance, the modern sign VISIT may seem to be notable for its use of a [V] handshape but this form is actually traced to the inflection of the ASL sign SEE with allocative reduplication for syntactic agreement with the pluralization of the object (see figure 6.19). E. M. Gallaudet produced a phrase starting with a singular form for SEE, followed by allocative reduplication using two [V] handshapes as shown in figure 6.20.

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FIGURE 6.19. Modern ASL form for "visit." Source: Newell (1983), 113. Used by permission of the NAD.

These examples raise questions about the validity of the folk etymological method that has been used in determining the historical relationship between ASL and polyglottic influences, including the modern MCE systems. Thus, dactylology is better viewed in the context of historical change, rather than as a static system established at a single point in time by an intentional intervention.

FIGURE 6.20. Lexical phrase expressing concept of "visit." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

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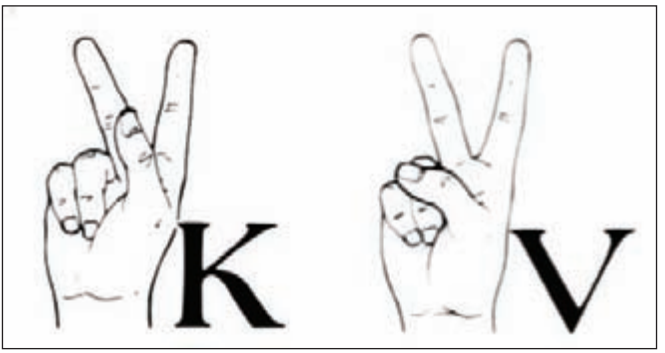

FIGURE 6.21. ASL manual alphabet forms for [K] and [V]. Source: Newell (1983), 60, 113. Used by permission of the NAD.

One possible explanation is the process of reanalysis utilizing analogy, a common mechanism for capturing common patterns among a data set of related words to trigger morphological change. An analogy of the [V] handshape to the initial letter in the word "keep," for example, could be made by signers who seek an etymological link to the domain of dactylology even if there was no original dactylological intent in the form of the sign. Figure 6.21 shows how these two handshapes contrast.

We see evidence of the impact of dactylological analogy in lexical morphology to the extent that modern ASL dialects diverge in degree of how far the [K] handshape can replace the [V] handshape for certain members of the related set of signs discussed above. The illustrations in figure 6.22 show just two variants of the sign BORROW, one with the [K] and the other with the [V] instead.

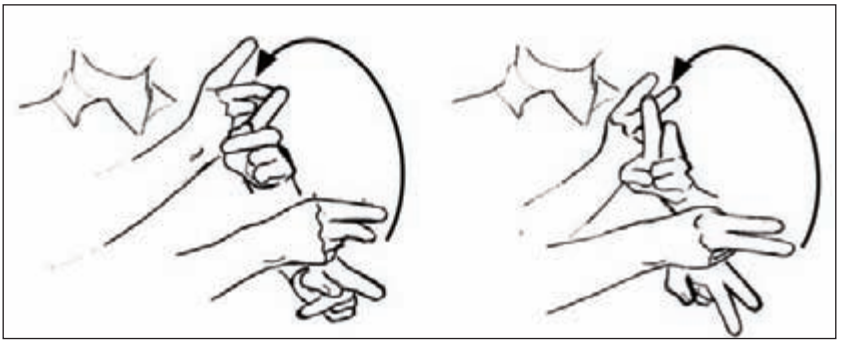

FIGURE 6.22. Modern ASL variants of "borrow." Left: [K]. Right: [V]. Sources: Supalla 2014 and Newell (1983), inside cover. Used by permission of the NAD.

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TRACING ETYMOLOGY THROUGH HANDSHAPE

In Stokoe's 1960 notation system identifying nineteen different configurational types with handshape variants for each type, these two handshapes are categorized as belonging to one type. We look at this moment as representing the state of the art for the field of American dactylology in the mid-twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, Auguste Bébian, an instructor at the Paris Institution under Sicard and a colleague of Clerc, also developed a notation system for the sign language. However, while handshape was fundamental in Stokoe's system, Bébian's system focused on location and movement.

The information contained in handshape became a critical part of both lexical expansion and the study of sign language etymology. Bébian's 1825 mimography has no notation for handshape, as mentioned above, reflecting that handshape was still fluid and had not yet attained a significant role at that stage in the evolution of the language.[2] It is interesting to see how the eventual popularization of dactylology affects the Stokoe notation. Earlier lexicographers (Pélissier 1856; Lambert 1856) relied on illustrations of signs. However, the propagation of dactylology in the second half of the nineteenth century eventually influenced how authors in the early twentieth century switched to written text descriptions of signs (Long 1910, 1918; Higgins 1923; Michaels 1923). These authors adopted conventions distinguishing handshapes and thus played a role in promoting dactylology.

Other relevant material is drawn from the *Dictionary of American Sign Language* (*DASL*; Stokoe, Casterline, and Croneberg 1965). This dictionary lists extensive information, both historical and contemporary. In its discussion of ASL grammar, the *DASL* lists systems for name signs and numeral incorporation, reflecting the influence of dactylology on sign language metalanguage.

We also see the collective memory of nineteenth-century metalanguage carried on in the *DASL* etymology and morphology. One example dating back to early LSF can be seen in the [A] handshape. Pélissier's dictionary includes many examples of older LSF signs with the same [A] handshape as the ASL comparative and superlative suffix. These signs range from a static

2. Sandler, Meir, Padden, and Aronoff's (2005) paper on Al Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language, an emerging village sign language, also supports this claim that handshape in the early stages of a language is fluid.

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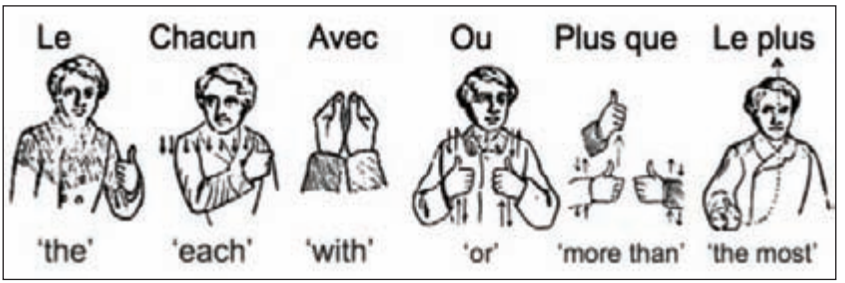

FIGURE 6.23. [A] Handshape in 1856 Pélissier dictionary.

one-handed sign serving as a definite article (like English "the") to a moving one-handed sign meaning "each," two-handed signs meaning "with" or "or," and even two-sign constructions meaning "more than" (see figure 6.23).

Many of these signs have retained their forms and meanings in modern ASL. The distinction between the intensified ASL *-est* form and the contrasting shorter, softer movement of the ASL *–er* also existed in early LSF. Thus, we can safely determine from a comparison of forms recorded in 1856 and 1965 that the modern ASL comparative and superlative constructions are derived from a much earlier LSF morphology. It is interesting to note that modern LSF morphology no longer relies on this mechanism for comparative and superlative expressions (Chastel and Limousin, personal communication, 2011).

One entry is listed for the comparative and superlative form as a suffix in the 1965 *DASL,* the [A] handshape with an upward movement. It was appended to adjective signs, such as LARGE, PRETTY, and GOOD. As

FIGURE 6.24. Vestiges of early LSF [A] handshape in modern ASL comparative and superlative. Source: Newell (1983). Left: 16, 105; Center: 16; Right: 16. Used by permission of the NAD.

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FIGURE 6.25. Other vestiges of early LSF: [A] handshape in modern ASL. Sources: Left, Newell (1983) 40. Used by permission of the NAD. Center and right, Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 363.

shown in the gradience of excellence (figure 6.24), it seems to have become more clitic-like in modern ASL.

The [A] handshape now serves many functions in modern ASL, whereas its etymological link to LSF is based on its original use as a singular marker wherein it either indicated the number "one" or the grammatical category "single." The remnants discussed above imply semantic change that shows bleaching of meaning (i.e., reduction or loss of semantic content) for the original handshape once it was transferred to ASL.

Like other sign languages, ASL has a large set of handshapes that serve as morphemes indicating noun class or providing adjectival information about a particular entity. These handshapes co-occur with location and movement, composing a complete sign form. Such constructions are considered *polymorphemic* or *polycomponential*[3] (Emmorey 2003; Supalla 1986, 1990) in contrast to lexical signs. The illustrations in figure 6.25 demonstrate how the [A] handshape has now evolved to take part in the polymorphemic part of modern ASL and now may be combined with other parameters to express locative relations.

The [A] handshape in these contexts represents an object, while the movement indicates its relation to other entities in discourse as well as conveying information about the action among these entities. An individual entity in this case would be represented with only one hand. The other hand can be used to represent another noun. Movement is reduplicated to indicate plural. Movement is also used for repositioning these classifiers in

3. Polymorphemic or polycomponential forms are better known as *classifier predicates.*

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relation to each other. Much research has been done to examine the grammatical status for this type of word formation (Emmorey 2003; Supalla 1986, 1990), which is beyond the scope of the book. However, we point out the fact that the [A] handshape is unique to ASL, simply because it was derived and then transformed from the French numeral "one." Hence historical change in dactylology occurs in this case by reassigning the function of the handshape from representing a simple numeral to a singular classifier morpheme.

There is a great need for further scientific inquiry to uncover the historical roots of current forms in the ASL lexicon and morphology. In general, it has been popular to assume a direct historical relationship between French and American counterparts, accounting for the current form with a process of formational reduction from the original form imported from France to the more synthetic form now used. One example of this sort of analysis is the case of the ASL sign glossed HELP. The original form had been regarded as inefficient and, thus, it seemed to make sense that it would undergo a natural process of reduction. However, the lexeme remains unchanged in modern LSF (see figure 6.26). This fact has led us to reconsider the popular account of natural reduction as the primary motivation for lexical change, especially if we accept the original LSF as the source for the original ASL lexeme.

We offer two possible routes for lexical change in the ASL version of HELP. Along with the popular account, we suggest the possibility of lexical competition in which the original French form is replaced with an indigenous American innovation. The latter involves a classifier predicate construction wherein the [A] handshape is combined with a second hand indicating an instrumental action of "uplifting one's status quo." In fact, the [A] handshape recurs predictably as a productive morpheme across a related set of ASL lexemes (i.e., FAR, CHASE, FOLLOW, ESTABLISH, UNDER, HELP), serving as a classifier morpheme denoting an individual entity. See figure 6.27 for some signs sharing this handshape morpheme.

Word innovation in ASL has often involved such classifier predicate constructions, in which each hand serves as a noun argument marker while interacting with the other hand for predicative or locative functions (Supalla 1990). In these constructions, the second hand in this morphological context undertakes a semantic role in regard to the other noun in the clause. In the case of the verb HELP, the second hand incorporates a handling classifier morpheme for pushing or lifting something. The

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HELP (archaic variant) HELP (modern variant)

FIGURE 6.26. [A] handshape provides alternate explanation for origin of "help." Source: Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 87.

FIGURE 6.27. Sample of signs sharing common properties. Source: Newell (1983). Top row, left to right, pp. 44, 24, 46; Bottom row, left to right, pp. 40, 112, 54. Used by permission of the NAD.

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physical form shows spatial transitivity providing one motive for favoring the predicate classifier construction over the mimetic role-prominence of "supporting the arm of the helpless person." In other words, to optimize this kind of creative innovation, it is more practical to replace a physically limited verb with a polymorphemic kind, triggering lexical competition and a subsequent elimination of the inefficient competitor. The options available in morphemic concatenation allow subsequent reanalysis of the form, leading to the transitive variant of HELP with directional movement for expression of concepts such as "helping people in other lands," signed by Robert MacGregor in figure 6.28.

As reported earlier, the grammatical mechanism of marking subject and object agreement appeared early in the history of ASL and has remained unchanged to the present time. It is interesting to note that verb agreement and adjacent number and aspect inflections are common in other signed languages as well. Furthermore, they also appear in International Sign (Supalla and Webb 1995). Therefore, it is likely that they are naturally available for lexical and grammatical mechanisms for signed language at the onset of development. One may attribute this to natural iconicity.

However, the concept of iconicity cannot account for how the distinction between related noun and verb sets has remained unchanged across time (e.g., NAME vs. BE-NAMED). There are two mechanisms involved in the original formation of the noun NAME as expressed by E. M. Gallaudet. First, the motion of overlapping index fingers indicates metonymic reference to the custom of writing a two-stroke x on paper as a signature. The second mechanism is a repetition, or reduplication, of this motion, thus marking grammatical nominalization for the sign. This

FIGURE 6.28. Transitive variant of HELP. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

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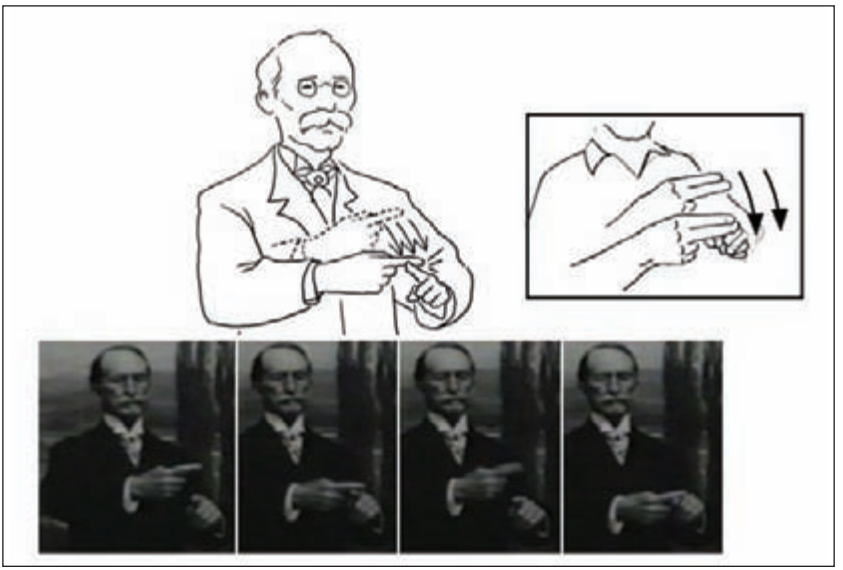

FIGURE 6.29. Archaic and modern versions for NAME. Sources: Top left, illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay. Top right, illustration by Ted Supalla. Bottom, *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

nominalized form recurred synchronically in lecture texts presented by two additional second-generation signers, Draper and Fay, along with several third-generation signers, Cloud, Dougherty, and MacGregor. In modern times, the only distinction from the classical form is the initialization of the handshape with the manual alphabetic letter [N]. A modern version for NAME is shown on the right in figure 6.29. The early variant is shown on the left.

This change must have occurred sometime in the early twentieth century, as Long's 1918 dictionary mentions the use of either handshape whereas the two slightly later dictionaries (Higgins 1923; Michaels 1923) list only the initialized form. The Long dictionary also lists a predicate version, glossed NAMED. In this derivative form, a directional path replaces reduplication. Figure 6.30 shows E. M. Gallaudet's use of the verb form and depicts the modern version as well. As with the nominal form, this verb form recurs across other second and third generation lecturers. Initialization appears in the modern verb variant, as with the modern nominalization.

We can infer from these diachronic and synchronic comparisons that there is a certain chronological pattern, whereby the noun-verb distinction

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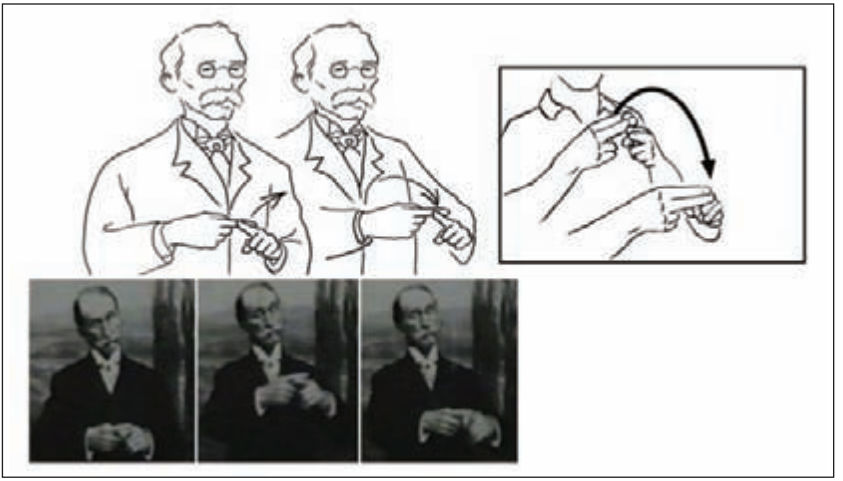

FIGURE 6.30. Archaic and modern versions for BE-NAMED. Top left, illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay. Top right, illustration by Ted Supalla. Bottom, *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

is first made and maintained for several generations before the process of initialization is applied to the concept. Current methods used among linguists and educators will overlook these patterns of change, since our current language model does not consider the possibility of diachronic development unique to ASL.

Another instance of a handshape developed to fill a need in ASL for noun classification is the classifier denoting the class "vehicles." This morpheme originated as part of the form indicating the shape of the hull of a ship with the two masts on top to depict a schooner. Based on observations by Stokoe, Casterline, and Croneberg (1965), Supalla (1982), and Fox (2007), figure 6.31 illustrates the evolution of the vehicle morpheme as proposed in Supalla (1990).

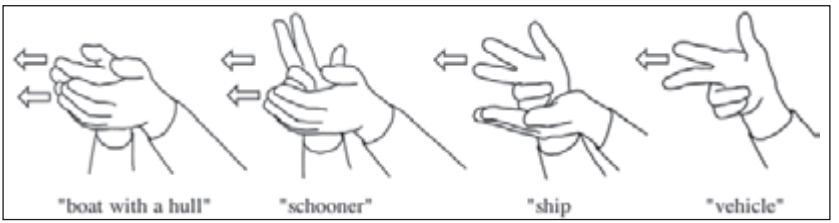

FIGURE 6.31. Illustration of the evolution of the vehicle morpheme as described in Supalla (1990). Illustrations by Ted Supalla.

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RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF DACTYLOLOGY IN SIGN LANGUAGE METALANGUAGE

In the early twentieth century, classical metalinguistic thinking became obscured as earlier stigmatization of sign language plunged the Deaf community and professionals working with the deaf into a Dark Period. Collective metalinguistic terms and practices utilizing both ASL and English in natural ways were suppressed, and cultural links to the past regarding literary arts of the time and traditional metalanguage were lost. Educators involved in developing modern MCE systems considered themselves first on the scene with the idea, overlooking the fact that the concept of developing methodical signs to emulate spoken language structure was first invented and refined in France before spreading across Europe and America 150 years before the advent of MCE systems (Stedt and Moores 1990). Remnants of collective knowledge remained, however, particularly the technological use of the manual alphabet for linking sign language to written text. This historical fact becomes relevant regarding the role of initialization and fingerspelling in the array of polyglottic techniques in LSF and ASL.

The extent and scope of manual alphabet use in sign language is not a universal phenomenon, in spite of its early existence as part of the French method. Although the manual alphabet was indeed brought from Spain through France to America and other parts of the world, modern LSF and many of its daughter sign languages do not rely on this system to the extent that ASL does. Dactylology has been viewed by some as an English intrusion upon the natural language and by others as a pedagogical tool essential as a substitute for a deficient sign language lexicon. From a linguistic perspective, an intriguing third view is possible, the interaction of initialization with cross-language borrowing and whether this leads to nativization.

The current process of initialization (Supalla 2004) is not an adequate representation of how words were formed at the turn of the century and earlier. Second-generation signers used initialization to form sign phrases, but the word-formation rules illustrate a second process at work, wherein the manual alphabet handshape was not combined simultaneously with the location and movement of an existing sign to form a new word. Instead, the handshape was expressed as a separate "sign," fully formed with its own internal movement located in neutral space. Based on data from the NAD films, the letter handshape acquired a new grammatical function of

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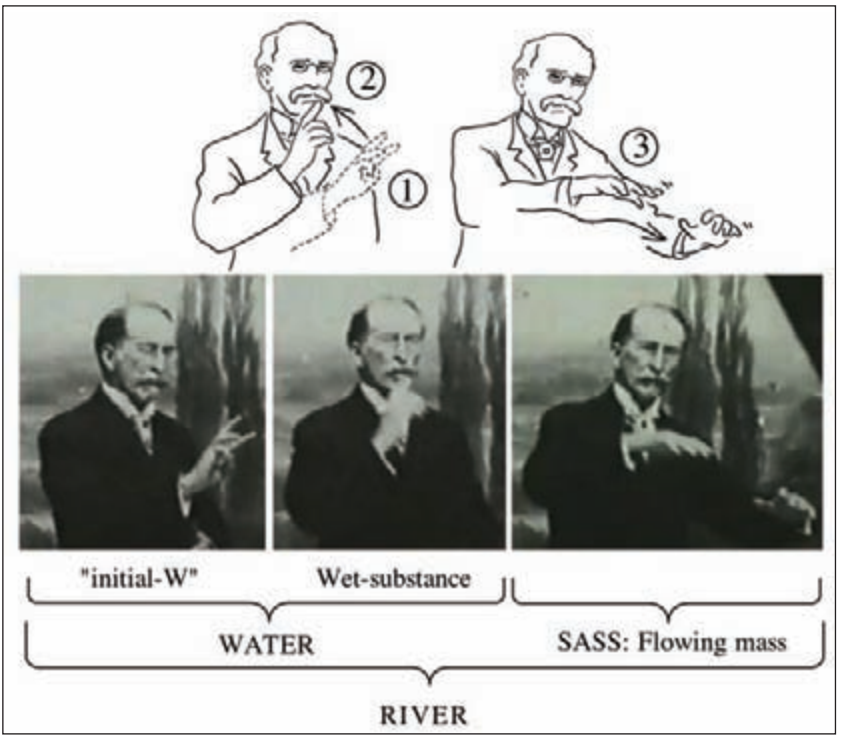

FIGURE 6.32. 1910 lexical phrase for concept "river." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

marking a noun class (e.g., WET-SUBSTANCE). It was then followed by a size-and-shape specifier (SASS). E. M. Gallaudet provides examples of this process in his film text for sign phrases such as "ocean," "waterfall" and "river." Figure 6.32 shows the sign phrase for "river."

Peet's description of two processes for initial signs in 1868 substantiates that these are two concurrent processes. In the first process, which is still in use today, the initial is incorporated into the lexical sign, which he called the *radical.* The second process is exemplified by E. M. Gallaudet wherein the initial is the radical combined simultaneously with an internal movement (e.g., shaking back and forth) and then placed in a sign phrase (Supalla 2004). On some occasions E. M. Gallaudet reversed the sequence, starting with the WET-SUBSTANCE, then moving the hand to the [W] posture in midair. Mary Erd uses this sequence in her recitation of Longfellow's poem (see figure 6.33).

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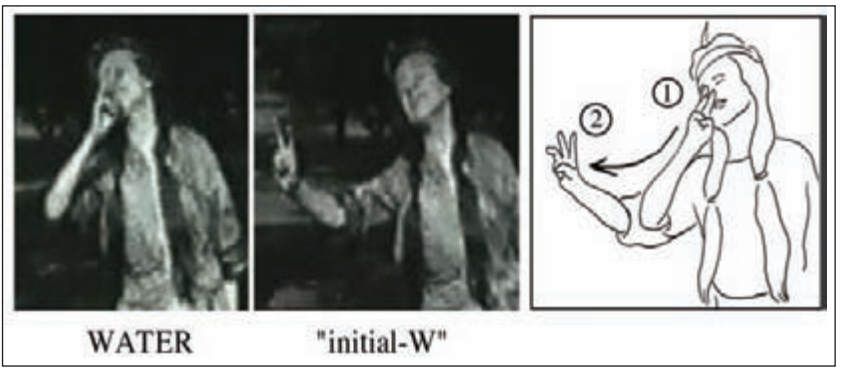

FIGURE 6.33. 1913 lexical phrase for concept of "water." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD.* Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

Table 6.1 lists ASL compounds or polywords sharing this paradigm although the WATER particle is often reduced to a simple touch on the lip and then followed by a sign indicating the shape or action involving water.

It is evident that to understand the grammar of early ASL, the first place to begin is to study ASL's early word formation processes in the NAD films and era dictionaries. Once these and the metalinguistic knowledge

TABLE 6.1. Early ASL Book Tokens with Compounds including WATER Particle.

# Token	Ad-hoc Description of Construction	Source	Author Gloss
1.	WATER + BAPTIZE	Long 1918	BAPTIZE, BAPTIST
2.	WATER + BAPTIZE	Higgins 1923	BAPTIST
3.	WATER + BATHING	Michaels 1923	BATH
4.	WATER + FLOWING-MASS	Long 1918	RIVER
5.	WATER + ROUND-TRACE	Michaels 1923	LAKE
6.	WATER + ROUND-SHAPE	Michaels 1923	POOL
7.	WATER + FLOWING UP	Long 1918	SPRING
8.	WATER + FALLING	Long 1918	RAIN
9.	WATER + FALLING	Higgins 1923	RAIN
10.	WATER + WASHING	Michaels 1923	WASH
11.	WATER + WET	Long 1918	WET

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of the time are better understood, the roles of natural linguistic mechanisms and grammatical transfer of English may become clearer and place in proper perspective the role of the methodical signs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in shaping modern ASL. Stedt and Moores's (1990) claim that MCE reinvented methodical signs is not quite accurate. Instead, methodical signs influenced the path of evolution of ASL in several systems, both natural and conventional, including dactylology, noun class development via handshape, and polyword constructions. The end result was a nativization of all of these influences on the language by ASL users in each subsequent generation which allowed us to view the influences of MCE's intrusive forms and compare them to the influences of the methodical signs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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7 RECONSTRUCTING THE HISTORY OF IDEAS ABOUT SIGN LANGUAGE

In our investigation of historical documents on sign language and deaf education, we found that although many of the same terms were used across the centuries and periods, the meanings of these terms did not always remain constant. While modern writings often strive to explain the history of deaf education and its effect on the development of ASL, many of them assume that these pedagogical and metalinguistic definitions remain constant. This has led to misunderstanding about many aspects of the history of ASL.

While the establishment of a school infrastructure helps provide a center for a common sign language, philosophical and pedagogical beliefs of the educational system may often provide much of the prescriptive context in which the language is born. It is equally important to identify and understand similarities and differences in beliefs regarding competence in ASL that existed among community members during this time. The metalanguage used in the films and other historical records referenced in other sections of this book create a picture of the evolution of perspectives regarding sign language throughout the nineteenth century. In order to reconstruct the changing trend in the history of ideas reflecting period-sensitive sign language metalanguage and pedagogy, we will briefly review the nature of these earlier ideas briefly before proceeding to the dialogues of scholars during the classical period in the history of ASL.

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Defining the term *language* in the nineteenth century is one such example that requires revisiting the original context. In historical documents, two definitions of *language* are found and are clearly distinguished from one another by context. When writers discussed the nature of human interaction, *language* referred to both spoken and signed forms of communication. When writers discussed the education of deaf children, *language* referred specifically to the relevant spoken or written forms of the language used by people who could hear (Stone 1869; Jacobs 1853, 1858; H. P. Peet 1851, 1858, 1859; E. M. Gallaudet 1868; Porter 1868; Fay 1890; Ashley 1890; Schneider 1910; McClure 1923; Brill 1925).

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE ON LANGUAGE VARIATION

The July 1848 edition of the *American Annals of the Deaf* included Luzerne Ray's piece "Historical Sketch of the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb," Ray described how the instruction of deaf individuals proceeded from teaching an understanding of language and then relating it first to the written word and then, for some students, to articulation of speech. Jerome Giralamo Cardano of Italy (1501–1576) "maintained that the deaf and dumb could be made to 'hear by reading, and speak by writing.'" Ray commented that the seventeenth-century method of instruction developed by Juan Pablo Bonet of Spain did not differ from that used in the American system except in "the prominence which he gave to articulation" (Ray 1848). Ray further describes this approach as follows:

> Much use was made by Bonet of the manual alphabet, and the natural language of signs was also employed as the interpreter of written or spoken words. But as soon as these words were well understood by the pupil, the signs which explained them were laid aside, as being of no further use. (200)

This reference to the use of the "natural language of signs" or "natural signs" represents the predominant view of educators, even those who taught *articulation,* the term used in the nineteenth century for instruction in speaking (oral training). For centuries, philosophers believed that signs made by the hands were natural and readily understood by anyone, and that mothers used this natural language with their hearing infants before they were capable of articulation. In the seventeenth century, John Bulwer reflected this philosophy in a treatise on oratory. In his *Chirologia; or the*

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Naturall Language of the Hand, whereunto is added Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoricke (1644), he developed an argument for the proper use of natural signs in public oratory. Bulwer's treatise included descriptions of many natural signs or gestures to be used and explained how their meanings, or "significations," were a critical part of the effective execution of a public lecture. Other references can be found that refer to the universal nature of natural signs as well as to the ability of deaf people to invent signs to express themselves. A few years later, Sibscota (1859) penned his observations about the signs used by deaf-mutes.[1]

> Now the significations of those mutes (which is as it were their speech) are not like the languages, which vary among several nations, nor are so absolutely different.
> And as the mutes do by their gestures exactly and distinctly understand one another, and those persons also that use such a kind of analogous speech among them; so they conceive many things by the gestures, motion of the lips, and such like things in those that really do speak; and sometimes understand a great part of their conceptions by such outward things. (110)

Many historical documents make mention of the use of natural signs, frequently noting that the natural signs were often "improved upon" and expanded by their users sometimes to the point of no longer being intelligible to the uninitiated. Ray (1848) also mentioned Arnoldi, a German contemporary of de l'Epée and Heinicke, who taught the son of a German nobleman predominantly using pictures, but also used and expanded upon natural signs:

> To these, he added the language of pantomime, reading, writing and articulation. But the only signs which he allowed himself to use were those which his pupils supplied; either such as they had been accustomed to employ before their instruction commenced, or those which they afterward invented to give expression to the new ideas which they were constantly acquiring. In this way, the teacher, so far as the use of signs was concerned, became in fact the pupil. (205)

1. Terms such as *deaf-mute* and *deaf and dumb* are used in the text to preserve the tone of historical writings. These terms were not used derogatorily until recently and should not be construed as such here.

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Educators of deaf children, then, knew that these deaf children, unable to access the language of hearing society, simply continued the use of this natural language in their interactions at home and in their communities. Thus, for the Abbé de l'Epée, who opened the first public institution for deaf children in France, as with those before him, it seemed only sensible to exploit this natural language and improve upon it to bring deaf pupils into the world of the enlightened, the world of written language. What de l'Epée did that was distinct from instructors of the past and from his contemporaries was to focus the improvement of natural signs toward representing the words and grammar of written language. As mentioned in chapter 2, de l'Epée and his protégé, Abbé Sicard, were careful in making a distinction between two types of sign constructions: (1) *colloquial signs* used naturally among fluent signers and (2) *methodical signs* designed to depict the structure of words in the French language. Such distinction among signs was vital to the understanding of the French method.

There is evidence that from the inception of the French system of deaf education in France and continuing until oralism had a firm grasp on education in Europe and the United States, methodical signs were used in a clearly circumscribed way—to teach language (primarily written), whereas natural signs were used for teaching other subjects such as science or math. De l'Epée (1772, reprinted in English 1861) later described how he used *natural signs* to explain concepts conveyed by the methodical signs he used.

De l'Epée's formal training was in the classics and he was familiar with the morphology of Latin, in which word roots are conjugated with particle elements for expressing additional meanings. It is no surprise, then, that he devised a system in which methodical signs were arranged in similar fashion and accomplished the same semiotic function of linking signifiers (morphemes) to their significant meanings. Such a semiotic system had the potential to be powerful in that it was capable of representing the grammar of different languages, which could attract educators from all over Europe to his school in Paris. Gallaudet, traveling through England, was advised by a prominent Scottish philosopher, Dugald Stewart (Boatner 1959) to consider the method of de l'Epée. By chance, Sicard, de l'Epée's successor, was also in England at the same time, showcasing his pupils. Gallaudet took the opportunity to observe the demonstration, and the rest is history.

For de l'Epée, methodical signs made sense because they too, were based on the iconic meanings inherent in natural signs and so were natural in that sense. De l'Epée planned to publish a comprehensive description of his methodical signs along with a dictionary of conventional signs, but

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he never completed this project.[2] Sicard went on to published his *Theorie des Signes, ou Introduction a l'Etude des Langes* or *Theory of Signs* in 1808 to accomplish what de l'Epée was unable to do. This two-volume treatise was primarily a description of signs used in the schools for the deaf and contained descriptions of both conventional and methodical signs.

Sicard's method of education quickly achieved notice in America. The *North American Review* was the major scientific and literary journal in circulation when the American Asylum was established in the United States in 1817, and articles about deaf education occasionally appeared in it. In 1818, a Rev. Wainwright authored a paper for the journal on the instruction of the deaf and dumb. He included a personal letter from Laurent Clerc describing Sicard's method of instruction when Clerc attended the school in Paris. It is well documented that Laurent Clerc was one of Sicard's star pupils, and upon completion of his educational program Clerc became a part of the instructional staff at the school in Paris. As an educator, Sicard used every means available to create understanding, including using "natural signs, which the deaf and dumb employ, or invent themselves, or understand with an equal facility" (Clerc 1818), along with body language, facial expressions, pictures, fingerspelling, and writing. Clerc reported that Sicard's key to success was in systematically progressing from the known to the unknown: whenever student progress was arrested, Sicard backed up to the last information that he knew the deaf pupil had understood and built again from that foundation. Clerc's references to Sicard's use of methodical signs indicate that Sicard focused on the relationship between meaning and universal grammatical relations, which he believed transcended any individual language (Clerc, 1818, 1822).

Even the annual reports of the first schools for the deaf included information about Sicard's methods and methodical signs. Particularly in the first twenty years of the schools' existence, these reports discussed educational methods, which included explanations of the sign languages used for educating deaf pupils. The following description of Sicard's method of instruction was published in 1833 in the Fifteenth Annual Report of the New York Institution:

2. We are left with a partial record of de l'Epée's version of methodical signs as adapted translated in the 1860 *Annals,* since he never completed the writing of a full text. Lane, in *The Deaf Experience* (2006), includes a translation of de l'Epée's preface and first five chapters.

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> The method of Sicard in constructing his system of methodical signs, was, first, to define or illustrate each new word, by means of a group of colloquial, or natural signs, (as they are, not very properly, called,) constituting something like a circumlocution in speech; and from a consideration of this group, to devise some brief sign, named a sign of reduction[3], to stand as the representative of the whole. (29)

This description distinguishes between natural signs, which, like gesture, required the use of several signs combined to describe a single concept, and conventional signs, which became the single sign representation for a concept. This is probably the reason Sicard referred to them as signs of reduction, although it is still unclear as to whether he viewed signs of reduction as natural or methodical. Nevertheless, since a substantial part of the school day was taken up with instruction in language, at least at the beginning of a pupil's education, methodical signs were used extensively in the French system but not to the exclusion[4] of natural or colloquial signs.[5]

THE INCEPTION OF ASL

In the first years following the establishment of the American Asylum in Hartford, Laurent Clerc presented remarks about the instruction of deaf children at various venues. At a public examination of pupils conducted before the governor and state legislature of Connecticut in 1818, he said,

> The language of signs, then, ought to fix the attention of every enlightened man who makes it his study to improve the various parts of public instruction; this language, as simple as nature, is capable of extending itself like her, and of attaining the furthest limits of human thought. (Clerc 1818)[6]

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3. Sicard's "signs of reduction" were translated into the American system of deaf education in a slightly different way. This is discussed more fully in Peet in an article in the *Annals* (1853) in which he covers the nature of signs in the classical era.

4. See de l'Epée (1860, 5).

5. The terms *natural* and *colloquial* referred to the same form of sign language.

6. An Address written by Mr. Clerc, and read by his request at a public examination of the pupils in the Connecticut Asylum before the Governour [*sic*] and both Houses of the Legislature, 28 May 1818.

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When Clerc, with T. H. Gallaudet, traveled to America and established the American Asylum in 1817, he brought the methods of his mentor, Sicard. Clerc asserted this himself when he wrote to T. Robert Vaux of the Philadelphia school in 1822:

> I think that no one should undertake the education of the Deaf and Dumb, who has not been trained to it by a long and intimate acquaintance with them, since it is necessary for a Teacher, in order to become familiar with the singular peculiarities of their minds and characters, to learn all their various modes of making known their ideas by those natural signs which they themselves have invented, and to acquire that simplicity of thought in the communication of knowledge to such uncultivated minds, and that inevitability of manner in intercourse with them, which will be accommodated to the different aspects, under which their native genius, or acquired habits, may present themselves. In addition to all this, he should not only make himself master of that Methodical System of Signs, which the combined talents and experience of the European instructors have been for years maturing, but should also know how to explain to the Deaf and Dumb the construction of sentences by analyzing and resolving a composition into its simple parts. (1822)

Based on these and other records from the nineteenth century, William Stokoe's (1960) assessment below of the history of ASL describes in today's terms, the varieties/types of sign language that comingled to form ASL:

> Actually these two sign languages must have tended to become one from the first. The advantages of having, instead of the "home made" gestures of the uninstructed deaf-mute, a sign language similarly executed but expressly designed to translate the French language and the culture to which that was the key must have impressed every signer who knew of it even in the eighteenth century. One may guess that some notion of the French system had preceded Gallaudet's formal introduction of it to the United States. How else explain the rapid flourishing of the language and the schools using this method to the point where a national college for the deaf was deemed necessary and established by Act of Congress in 1864 for the higher education of the graduates of these schools? (13)

Stokoe reflects the twentieth-century understanding of the varieties of sign language that existed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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The relationships between these varieties seem to still be misunderstood in that conventional signs are seen as separate from natural signs.

In the nineteenth century and the centuries preceding, a continuum of sign varieties was recognized. These included the natural signs or pantomime universally understood by all human beings—referred to today as natural gesture. Signs that are developed by the consent of a group of individuals, such as deaf people, were later referred to as conventional or improved signs. These signs were invented or "reduced" in form to the point that the iconic connection was lost and thus they became unrecognizable to the uninitiated. But even within conventional signs, some signs were seen as closer to their iconic roots and recoverable while others were seen as "artificial," being arbitrary,[7] and not having their roots in nature.[8]

LANGUAGE REGISTERS AND METALANGUAGE

Twentieth-century researchers on ASL suggested that the varieties of language use that they were observing within the Deaf community were examples of diglossia as described by Ferguson for spoken languages (1959). Stokoe maintained instead that diglossia was an incomplete description of the sign language situation in the United States. He stated, "diglossia refers to differential use of two varieties of the same language, but ASL and English are different languages, and it is important to realize that the community whose language is ASL lives in a bilingual as well as a diglossic situation" (Stokoe 1978, 78). In diglossia, differential use includes the use of a high (H) and low (L) register of a language in clearly defined situations. Valli and Lucas (2000) subsequently suggest, referring to Lee's (1982) work, that since the register variations seen in ASL are determined by "other factors mostly determined by the characteristics of the participants involved in the interaction" (433), diglossia may not be the appropriate characterization of these variations. For our description of the linguistic environment of the nineteenth century we will use the term *language registers.*

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7. Spoken languages in nineteenth-century vernacular were considered artificial because of this arbitrary characteristic.

8. Nineteenth-century sources discussing the nature of conventional signs include New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb 1834, 1845; Turner 1851; Peet 1853; Jacobs 1856; Keep 1869; Hutton 1869; Tylor 1878; Baynton 1996.

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During the mid-nineteenth century, sign language registers underwent a transition in both America and France.[9] We have traced the use of the terms *methodical signs* and *colloquial signs* to articles published in the *Annals* beginning with the first issue in 1847. In the beginning, it was quite obvious that the term *methodical* was principally used to refer to the work initiated by de l'Epée in eighteenth-century France and brought to America in 1817 by Clerc and Gallaudet as part of the French method of instruction of deaf children. However, the French method was short-lived in the schools in both France and America. Playing an important role in the fate of the French method, Roch-Ambroise Bébian was an apprentice of Sicard as well as his godson; he had acquired native-like sign language competence from mingling with deaf students while schooling in Paris. He first became a well-respected instructor in the Paris school but was later ostracized by fellow educators for his views (Berthier 1839): he published a series of articles about the problems of imposing an artificial system like methodical signs—his argument resembled the twentieth-century revelations of flaws with the MCE systems here in America. By the 1830s, Bébian was successful in his campaign to "tear down the scaffolding on the sign language erected by Epée and Sicard" (Lane 1984, 54).

The New York Institution was the first to abandon methodical signs in the United States in 1833 (1833, 29).[10] F. A. P. Barnard (1834) wrote that the American Asylum also discarded the "unwieldy and cumbersome machine." After 1833, other American schools also began to eliminate the use of methodical signs, preferring to keep instruction using natural signs and articulation in their proper places.

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9. We did not investigate whether these changes occurred in other countries where the French system was practiced, but because of extensive networking cross-continentally, the same situation is likely for them as well.

10. In the same report announcing its disuse, it was stated that the school in Paris had already also abandoned it for articulation. This may have been the pivotal point where America and France diverged in their methods of instruction:

"The use of methodical signs is discontinued in the very school in which they had their origin; the Institution of Paris has entirely changed its ground, and articulation is taught in all its classes. Even religious exercises are there no longer conducted by signs; but public prayers are daily articulated in presence of the pupils" (New York Institution 1833, 295).

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DEVELOPMENT OF SIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY AND METALANGUAGE IN AMERICA

The consensus among American educators for elimination of methodical signs was brief, however. Throughout the middle of the nineteenth century this pool of educators tried to develop pedagogical tools to expand the sign language lexicon and the minds of deaf students. Writers often referred to the strategy of using *paraphrases* to introduce new ideas to deaf students. Several scholars, including James A. Jacobs, principal of the Kentucky School for the Deaf, were attempting to extend the potential of the interface between gestural iconicity and semantic associations across multiple gestures (or paraphrases) to build a vocabulary of conventional signs that could be used as equivalents to English words.[11] Discussion of systematic lexical expansion included initialization of signs as described in 1868 by Isaac Peet, the son of Harvey Peet, and referred to as *initial signs*. Jacobs and Isaac Peet shared the assumption that the Natural Language of Signs, in its unimproved state, was insufficient for expressing abstract words, but only in the lack of one-to-one mapping between sign and word. However, Jacobs and the Peets used different approaches to teaching language.

In 1856 Jacobs wrote a series of controversial articles in the *Annals* in which he seemed to promote the reintroduction of methodical signs to further expand the lexicon of the sign language. Jacobs conceived of methodical signs as redefined by F. A. P. Barnard in the *Proceedings of the Second Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf and Dumb.* Barnard "did not regard the system of methodical signs as a new system, but as an enlarged and cultivated style of natural language. It is not like learning a new language, but extending the vocabulary of the old" (Barnard 1852, 26). Jacobs (1856) noticed a pattern emerging among his students when they expressed concepts, which he attributed to the sign-for-English word mapping. From his students' tendencies, he developed the following pedagogical technique for teaching English:

1. Use natural sign language to explain the meaning of a written English sentence.

11. In one such article, Jacobs coined new terms for the contrasting function of two sign types: "signifying signs" for specific terms and "general signs" for those terms referring to abstract or super-ordinate concepts.

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2. Record a gloss for every English word.
3. Have students read out the English sentence in signs.

Jacobs tried to clarify that this was *not* the French method, but was somehow based on the knowledge students have of their indigenous sign language. He argued that students needed representations for certain abstract English words (e.g., *gender*) for which sign language would rely on *paraphrase* (his term). Today we can interpret his goal as identifying a pedagogical method to make use of *polysemy* in signs. That is, a particular sign could acquire new meaning depending on the syntactic context, thus filling gaps in the sign–word correspondence. Jacobs tried to clarify the difference between the newly constituted methodical signs and natural signs:

> By Natural Signs, I mean signs used in the order in which ideas arise in the minds of the deaf and dumb, however some of them may be conventional or even artificial; by Methodical Signs, I mean signs following the order of written language, with the necessary grammatical symbols and inflections; although most of them be natural, that is, are naturally significant of the words which they are employed to communicate. (Jacobs 1853, 95)

For Jacobs, word order and a sign for each English word were the keys to successful development of English literacy in deaf children. Jacobs's definition of methodical signs was not the only definition extant in the mid-nineteenth century.[12] In his efforts, however, he was an outsider in the field.

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12. In fact, there was general confusion about what methodical signs really were as evidenced in the following review by Jacobs from the 1853 *Annals*:

> But what is meant by methodical signs? Mr. Weld says: "Methodical signs are those simple natural signs which admit of no variation, but in their application to the teaching of words, should be made essentially alike under all circumstances." "It should be distinctly understood that methodical signs are founded on the natural and become properly established and methodized under the culture of those who possess good taste, judgment and discrimination." Mr. Stone says: "Methodical signs represent words, and not ideas. The methodical sign can be correctly translated only by the specific word for which it stands. These signs are fundamentally distinguished, in this particular, from what are termed natural signs, which express general ideas or the meaning of a number of words taken together." "The sign is not intended to define, explain

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Several other educators, John Burnet in particular, responded by mocking Jacobs's endeavor and calling him the "l'Epée of Kentucky" (Burnet 1835). H. P. Peet even levied the accusation that Jacobs never attended the conventions of educators and therefore was not as well informed on the issues (Peet 1858). After years of proposals and rebuttals, Jacobs's efforts to convince his colleagues to use methodical signs as he described them failed, and those who said they used methodical signs were referring to the use of improved signs in English word order and were promoting a system that we refer to today as signed English.

H. P. Peet (1859), on the other hand, viewed one-to-one mapping of signs to words as a waste of time,[13] an unnecessary step in developing lit-

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or illustrate the meaning of the word, but simply to represent or recall the word itself. There may be in the sign, some intimation, more or less distinct, of the meaning of the word for which it stands and there may be no such intimation whatever. The pupil may therefore learn the sign for every word in the language, and yet have his active knowledge comprised in the fact that a particular sign represents a certain number of letters arranged in a certain order." Dr. Peet says: "Methodical and natural signs are not unfrequently [*sic*] identical;" but Mr. Stone "considers an important distinction should be made between methodical and natural signs. Methodical signs were designed to recall words, not to explain their meaning." Mr. Turner says: "Both natural and arbitrary signs are used in teaching, and when arranged in the order of the words in a sentence, combined with signs to express the grammatical modifications and relations of those words, we have what are termed methodical or systematic signs." You, Mr. Editor, state that "the theory of methodical signs is, that they represent words; whereas I conceive it to be the true theory of signs that they represent not words, but ideas and things."

13. Peet continued: "Indeed it seems reasonable that it should be easier to remember the order of words, than of methodical signs. The latter is a forced and unnatural order, the more so the nearer Mr. Jacob's signs for words approach the significancy and spirit of colloquial signs. The order of words may seem natural; or at least, appropriate to them. The arrangement of his signs in the order of English words must always seem unnatural to the deaf-mute. He may become accustomed to it by repetition; but the experience of many teachers who reject methodical signs, shows that he equally at least becomes accustomed to the order of words by repetition. What then is the gain by the use of methodical signs, in this respect, to balance the immense labor of inventing or learning signs for so many thousand words?" (1859, 5–6).

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eracy. Instead, he favored the use of *translation*[14] between natural signs and written English, in which circumlocution (referring to paraphrase during the translation process) and illustration would support the interpreting process (1853, 84). Once the child understood the meanings of words and sentences learned, the natural signs were no longer needed in language class, and instruction in written language could be conducted in written language. It is not clear if in Peet's method methodical signs were dropped once the deaf children were able to understand through written language alone.

We propose an alternate interpretation of what American educators toward the end of the nineteenth century meant by *methodical signs*. This term began to be used as a means of describing what was naturally occurring in the classroom when sign language changed through metaphorical extension and relexicalization under the controlled context of language instruction. Signs were reduced from a lexical phrase to a single sign; the same sign took on a new function by metaphorical extension. This analysis was not proffered by Jacobs and H. P. Peet alone. Mgr. De Haerne (1875) and J. S. Brown (1856) both described their practice of innovating new terms by taking advantage of metaphorical extension within the natural language of signs, recognizing the "inverted" order of signs in this process.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF ASL GRAMMAR

In 1856, J. S. Brown[15] published a dictionary of signs based on T. H. Gallaudet and Horace Hooker's (1842) *The School and Family Dictionary,* which was roughly akin to a study guide for taking the SATs today. Gallaudet wrote that the dictionary contained the meanings and contextual examples of words students needed to know in order to successfully attend college. Brown's dictionary provided a description of how to produce the signs for the English words in Gallaudet's dictionary. In his explanatory

14. "No doubt the language of signs, as used in our institutions, is capable of interpreting, with more or less of circumlocution and illustration, every word in the English language, copious and refined though the latter has become by the improvements of many centuries, and notwithstanding that the former is of much more recent growth" (H. P. Peet 1858, 175).

15. J. S. Brown was trained by Laurent Clerc (Van Cleve 1987).

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notes, he outlined the natural methods for creating new signs via compounding and subsequent abridging of those compounds.

In his sign dictionary, J. S. Brown (1856) explained the types of changes that signs had undergone. His list of processes related the changes to natural processes philologists and linguists observed in spoken languages, and he provided other teachers with the tools he thought were necessary for the promotion of a standard dialect. Although he stated that complete standardization was not possible due to the variation in the particular gestures selected to represent *simple* signs, he did believe that the processes that led to the creation of these simple signs was one step toward a standard, recognizable form, at least within the local dialect. One such example comes from his third and fourth principles:

> III. A tendency exists in all spoken languages, to contract the elements of compound words, so that such compound words are often much shorter than their different parts, when separated. The same tendency exists in the sign language, and should be encouraged, when it does not interfere with precision and perspicuity.
>
> IV. In the sign language this tendency proceeds even farther, and often drops an element of the compound sign. This tendency should not be interfered with, except in the case above specified.

Thus, he observed that in spoken languages, "compound words" are often made up of shorter versions of their constituent parts, this held true in the sign language as well. Brown intended students to apply his principles when using his sign language companion dictionary as a companion resource for the *School and Family Dictionary* of English words for the college-bound. For example, the English entry *academy* is expressed by the following gloss: SCHOOL SUPERIOR. These two signs were used to introduce the concept. Once understood, it was expected that the combination would be reduced in the number of signs used to express it as well as in the time it took to execute the entire concept. Today the opaque compound sign is glossed as COLLEGE. While this exemplifies only one way to innovate signs, Brown and those like him, were recognizing the central role that natural progression from discourse composition into the lexicon played in the development of morphology for sign language.

DeHearne (1875), of Belgium, classified natural signs into four contrasting sets: (1) developed signs versus abridged signs, (2) radical versus derivative signs, (3) indicative versus imitative versus operative versus ex-

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pressive signs, and (4) simple versus compound signs. He contrasted these divisions of natural signs with his definition of methodical signs:

> Methodical signs, as they are generally called, but to which the more precise name of artificial signs is also applied, differ from natural signs in this: that they are founded upon spoken languages, and adapt themselves to the words and grammatical forms of these languages, while the natural signs have nothing in common with verbal expressions. (138)

DeHearne's detailed description of the classes of natural signs and their use in expanding the lexicon spanned four issues of the *Annals,* from 1875–1876.

These scholars had a simplified idea of other aspects of ASL grammar and regarded differences only in terms of whatever was more natural for a particular modality.[16] In this framework, nineteenth-century educators attempted to determine whether a particular device was natural for the visual-gestural modality and, thus, should be employed as part of sign language pedagogy. Two characteristics of sign language on which they seemed to agree was that ASL involved inversion of word order and that it used paraphrase, or sign phrases to express concepts. These two characteristics of natural signs were consistently identified in documents from the inception of the French method in the eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century. Whatever changes occurred in the definition of methodical signs, educators agreed that methodical signs represented the word order of spoken languages, and natural signs represented a different word order, the order of nature, which they referred to as "inverted order."

Nineteenth-century scholars were also aware that natural sign language made use of space, which affected the ordering of signs. Keep (1869) used the following English narrative to illustrate his point:

> A bear killed my father's geese; this made him mad. He shouldered his gun and went to look for the bear. When he discovered it, he took a good position, fired and killed the bear. The family were all very glad.

---

16. The observation about the nature of change in ASL as used in the cognitive explanation of the first linguists in the 1970s, is a rediscovery of nineteenth-century scholars' discussion of what is natural based on modality.

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In order to render the same narrative in the natural language of signs, he described them in this way:

> In beginning the sign version, we make the sign for past time. Then, since signs require that the mode of killing shall be true to nature and fact, we say "catch and eat" instead of kill. The story as rendered in signs will be: "Bear, geese father my his catch eat. Father angry very. Gun shoulder on, go look for bear. Discover. Place good stand. Fire! Bear die. Father, mother, children all glad very." (Keep 1869, 95)

Although the inverted word order was acknowledged by many nineteenth-century writers to be universally used among deaf people, it was not clear to educators whether the "natural" inverted order could be unlearned in favor of the arbitrary order of words. At the end of the nineteenth century, these two opposing views of sign use in deaf education remained, leaving twentieth-century scholars to ponder how much influence a signed form of English and even more, a combined system of communication, had on the modern forms of sign language in use today.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS RESULTING FROM THE SWITCH TO THE COMBINED METHOD

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, articles appearing in the *Annals* began to turn discussion away from the debate about which variety of sign language to use in language class, instead focusing on the famed "methods debate" between articulation (oral) and manual education. It was at this point that a new term was coined for the old approach: the *combined system*. In *Forbidden Signs*, Douglas Baynton (1996) describes the post–Civil War era in deaf education. Teacher-training, or *normal,* schools became popular and women began to enter the instructional workforce. Practical education became more valued than the classics, reflected in the later issues of the *Annals*. According to Baynton,

> While manualists had published on a wide variety of topics, embracing philology, psychology, philosophy, history, and theology, oralists focused their writing on educational practices—the technical aspects of teaching speech and lip-reading, classroom management, and pedagogical technique. (1996, 95)

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To counter the insurgence of the new oral-only approach, manualists claimed that their combined approach was vastly more effective in educating deaf children whose greatest need was knowledge including the knowledge of the spoken or written language of society. But what was the nature of the combined system? In 1872, O. F. Kruse, a deaf teacher in Germany wrote "The Combined Method of Instruction for the Deaf and Dumb," in which he outlined the differences between the German and French methods of instruction. He emphasized that at that time, most schools in Germany still recognized the value of using the language of signs for language instruction and believed it was an "absolutely necessary bridge" to spoken language. He clearly explained that the combined system incorporated the use of natural signs, dactylology, methodical signs, writing, pictures and props, and articulation. The appropriate use of these devices was the key to a well-rounded education for the deaf child and his successful use of spoken language, according to Kruse. Kruse was merely labeling the approach manualists and oralists had been using for years. It is important to note that Kruse's description of the combined system did *not* include the idea of speaking while signing and that word order was an integral part of the definitions of natural versus methodical signs (Kruse 1872).

GROWING AMBIVALENCE ON ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

This was the intellectual climate surrounding use of sign language in the nineteenth century. Natural signs referred to a continuum of sign language forms ranging from natural gesture or home signs (for deaf children) by which anyone could make himself/herself readily understood, to conventional signs more iconic in nature, to conventional signs less tied to their iconic roots, to initial signs that allowed the lexicon to expand in a way more parallel to the words of spoken language, but did not necessarily change word order. The use of methodical signs as grammatical markers of spoken language alongside conventionalized natural signs ranged from extensive to very limited. In both cases, signs were produced in the order of the spoken or written language.

W. D. Whitney, a linguist, was well acquainted with Thomas H. Gallaudet and had occasion to observe the natural sign language at the American Asylum. In his 1867 text *Language and the Study of Language,* he observed:

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> Those human beings whose vocal powers are rendered useless by the deadness of their ears learn a pantomimic language which answers their needs, both of communication and of mental training, in no stinted measure. It has, indeed, its limitations and defects; but what it might be made, if it were the only means of communication attainable by men, and were elaborated by the consenting labour of generations, as spoken speech has been, we perhaps are slow to realize. (422)

Consistent with Whitney's 1867 prediction, the natural language used among the deaf students in their daily intercourse expanded rapidly to incorporate conventionalized signs. Harvey Peet noted, "Deaf-mutes generally prefer signs, if graceful and convenient, but for want of such they will accept words as the direct signs of ideas, and use them as such in their colloquial dialect, and even in their private meditations" (1858, 132). Others also recognized the capacity for the natural language of signs to grow and to change to meet the intellectual needs of the deaf people who used them. John R. Keep and B. D. Pettengill were among those who noted that signs that were conventionalized for more efficient intercourse were no longer recognizable to the uninitiated. From a linguist's perspective, Whitney wrote of sign language,

> I do not doubt that it might far exceed, both in wealth of resources and in distinct apprehensibility, many an existing spoken language, might ally itself with a mode of writing, and become an efficient means and aid of human progress. (422)

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DEAF WRITERS TO THE HISTORY OF IDEAS ABOUT SIGN LANGUAGE

Deaf education certainly defined and redefined the varieties of sign language that existed in the nineteenth century and set the stage for deaf leaders to begin to speak up about language use. At the end of the century, two volumes of the *Annals* were devoted to the deaf view of the language debate. In addition, the National Association of the Deaf was formed in 1880 and by 1890 was expressing concern about the perspicuity and aesthetics of the Language of Signs. In chapter 8, we will look at the Deaf perspective and its impact on the language varieties at the turn of the twentieth century.

To address the indigenous perspective concerning the nature and function of the sign language, we investigated significant Deaf community in-

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volvement in the seminal study of the sign language. Scientific analyses of sign language were conducted primarily by hearing people; however, there are a few records of such analyses written by deaf people. Pierre Desloges (1779) may have been one of the first deaf people to contribute to the history of ideas about sign language (Fischer 2002). In *Observations of a Deaf Mute,* Desloges described the Parisian Deaf community and the language its members used:

> But things are quite different for the deaf who live in a great city, in Paris for example, which could be justly called the epitome of all the marvels of the universe. In such a theater our ideas develop and when the isolated deaf man arrives he learns to polish and organize his signing, which was formerly without order and linkage. Dealing with his comrades he quickly learns the supposedly difficult art of portraying all his thoughts, even the most abstract. (Lane 1989, 10)

Desloges was a contemporary of de l'Epée but did not attend the Paris Institution. He had learned to read and write before becoming deaf at the age of seven and he continued to educate himself long after he became deaf. He ended up in Paris years later, learned sign language from a deaf servant to an Italian actor, and became a part of the Deaf community, which he regarded as rich in knowledge and culture. In response to criticisms leveled against the use of sign language in education by the Abbé Deschamps, a hearing philosopher of the time, Desloges stated: "There is no event in Paris, in France, and in the four corners of the world that is not a topic of our conversations. We express ourselves on all topics with as much orderliness, precision, and speed as if we enjoyed the faculties of speech and hearing" (Barnard 1834; Lane 1989). Desloges was familiar with de l'Epée's method of instruction and argued in support of it, and against Deschamps's articulation approach. Desloges also indicated in his writings an awareness of the existence of the two registers, methodical signs and the natural sign language of the Deaf community. Ferdinand Berthier, another deaf writer of the mid-nineteenth century also indicated in his publications an understanding of the difference between and uses for these two registers in France during the times of de l'Epée and Sicard (Henry 2009).

Laurent Clerc was the first deaf individual to write about the nature of sign language in America. In a written address to the governor and legislature of Connecticut in 1818, he described the instructional approach using de l'Epée and Sicard's methodical signs. He explained that Sicard had

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initiated his pupils in the knowledge of the rules of universal grammar and then applied these rules to enhance the expression of home or natural signs, which helped improve the students' sign language via methodical signs.

In addition, Clerc asserted that the instructor must be well versed in methodical signs "but should also know how to explain to the Deaf & Dumb the construction of sentences by analyzing & resolving a composition into its simple parts" (Clerc 1822). In this particular letter, Clerc referred to the instructional qualifications of a Mr. Dillingham at the Philadelphia Institution: "I consider him as well initiated in the science of universal grammar, applicable to the primitive expression of signs as well as to spoken & written languages." The extent of Clerc's linguistic analysis was smaller than Desloges, perhaps because his interest was in its direct and narrower application to deaf education while Desloges sought to describe his observations of its use in the French Deaf community at large.[17]

John Burnet can be considered among the generation of deaf educators following Clerc in America. Burnet was born in 1808 and became deaf at the age of eight. Burnet, like Desloges, did not receive a formal education at a school for the deaf. Instead, he was tutored in reading and writing by his older sister. When he was twenty-one, he visited the New York Institution and was hired as an instructor on a temporary basis while he learned sign language. In 1833, he resigned his teaching position and began working as an editor for *The People's Friend*, a newspaper run by his uncle. Burnet began publishing his own articles primarily in the *Annals* and the *North American Review*. In 1835, John Burnet wrote *Tales of the Deaf and Dumb,* in which he completed T. H. Gallaudet's dream of writing an instructional manual for parents with deaf children living at home who were not yet old enough to attend a school for the deaf.

Tales of the Deaf and Dumb included a collection of Burnet's musings on various topics in addition to short stories and poems by other deaf authors. The beginning of the book contained an extensive description

17. Laurent Clerc's son, Frances, upon finding that a monument was to be erected in honor of his father, wrote: "He was 'a walking dictionary' of the signs then in use, & quite capable of inventing signs in harmony with those already received, whenever occasion might demand them" (1890). This clearly showed that Laurent Clerc had an extensive lexicon and understood the principles for creating new signs.

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of the natural language of signs, demonstrating the era's metalinguistic understanding of how signs are composed and produced, and the philosophical and scientific thought of the day. For example, Burnet stated that the language of signs is natural and universal, and he provided examples of universally intelligible signs. He described the principles for inventing new signs, illustrating the process of *improving* upon these universal forms and establishing the sign language used by deaf people, which then became unintelligible to the general public.

Providing numerous examples and using the jargon of his day, Burnet demonstrated the process of *improvement*. In this process, signs moved from specific descriptions of concrete concepts to extensions of these descriptions to figurative and arbitrary representations of abstract concepts.[18] Burnet provided perhaps one of the most complete descriptions of the process of *metonymy*, the use of one term or phrase to represent a related concept. He also discussed semantically related signs that share a single phonological feature, such as location in space. As examples, he noted that signs for cognitive concepts are produced at the forehead and signs for emotions are produced near the heart. It is also clear from Burnet's writings that the metalinguistic understanding of that time was that language was a medium by which ideas were conveyed from one mind to another.

In support of this view, F. A. P. Barnard, wrote the following in 1834:

> Two things seem to be necessary to intellectual development, viz. the observation of objects, actions, facts and phenomena, and the intercourse of mind with mind. If neither of these conditions exist, the human being remains a mere animal. (25)

Barnard began to lose his hearing after he graduated from Yale College, and he decided to become a teacher at Hartford school, then at Fanwood. His later career took him away from deaf education, and he excelled as an inventor and scientist and held the record for the longest term as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1860–1866, Davenport 1938). In deaf education, he was best known for writing an "Analytic Grammar, with Symbolic Illustrations," in 1836, but his 1834 publication for the *North American Review* provides a profound insight into sign language pedagogy and metalanguage. While he called sign language

18. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox in her thesis on metaphor in ASL (1993) rediscovered these principles that were well understood by nineteenth-century scientists.

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a "language of action," he described how it could outstrip the slowness of pantomime and become more abstract in expression. As a result of reduction, signs would be "singularly elliptical" as well as "figurative" for many functions. Furthermore, he wrote:

> The natural consequence of this disposition to abbreviate, is the tendency to institute purely arbitrary signs; but with the uneducated dumb, the number of these is very limited. They will have their application, first, to individual objects, which it is desirable to distinguish from the rest of their class; and will correspond, therefore, to the proper names of spoken language.
>
> Signs denoting persons are, usually, derived from some trifling peculiarities of physical conformation, of manner or of dress, which arrest the attention of the deaf and dumb at first sight. These peculiarities may be purely transient, but the sign is retained, after the circumstance in which it originated has passed away. The deaf and dumb are particularly expert in detecting distinctive circumstances, which would escape ordinary observation. When President Monroe visited the Asylum at Hartford, he wore a cocked hat of the old fashion; and it was by reference to this article of dress, that he was ever after designated among the pupils. The same sign has since become generalized; and is now indiscriminately applied to all presidents, whether their functions be political or otherwise. (Barnard 1834, 20)

Here we see that the metalinguistic descriptions of natural and methodological signs were part of the discussions of the sign language pedagogy of the early nineteenth century, and that educated deaf people participated in these discussions. They also recognized an additional key element that subsequent generations overlooked—that sign languages can evolve on their own into languages fully capable of expressing everything that spoken languages can express and, more significantly, that children are the major vehicles for change. Burnet noted,

> The language of signs which a deaf and dumb child shall devise for the expression of its own ideas, will be, at the beginning, circumscribed as the narrow circle of ideas of which it is the expression. But precisely in proportion as the ideas of the child become more extended, more just, or clearer, its language of signs, if any one will attend to them, will become more copious, significant, and precise. (Burnet 1835, 19)

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Creolization was recognized by educators as a crucial element in the process by which a deaf child develops sign language into an autonomous linguistic system. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a number of hearing educators had provided formal descriptions of the *improved* sign language, in addition to the deaf scholars mentioned here. As long as sign language was viewed as the most efficacious vehicle for instruction, the study of its structure and improvement was informative for the teacher who worked with deaf children. Educators agreed that to understand the nature and evolution of the deaf child's sign language was to understand how the deaf child thought and learned. It is likely that both deaf and hearing scholars in the latter half of the nineteenth century, educated in the scientific knowledge of "the sign language" by their learned predecessors, deemed it unnecessary to repeat what was already generally accepted knowledge.

EMERGENT LEXICOGRAPHIES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

David Crystal's description of trends in lexicography projects during the nineteenth century helps us to understand the nature of the lexicographies found of LSF and ASL from that time (Crystal 1987). Large-scale projects were embarked upon and specialized dictionaries were produced during this century, such as the Larousse series, with pictures and an encyclopedic character. In America, this corresponds to Gallaudet and Hooker's *School and Family Dictionary* (1842), as well as Brown's sign language version of that dictionary (1856). Crystal described twentieth-century lexicography development as a move into scholarly study garnering the interest primarily of linguists and academic societies. It is no surprise that Wiliam Stokoe, trained in descriptive and structural linguistics, would first embark on developing a lexicography of ASL.

Stokoe was not the first linguist to develop a scientific lexicography based on formational features of signs. Bébian invented his "Mimography" in 1825, and Stokoe described how it worked as well in his seminal manuscript.[19] In addition, Stokoe named several other lexicographic works of the time. We do not know whether he mentioned these because of their worthiness or because of the impact of the Dark Period on the collective memory

19. As discussed in chapter 6, Stokoe's lexicon was based on handshape while Bébian's Mimography (not a lexicon per se) was based on location and movement.

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of his mentors and colleagues at Gallaudet College. We assume the latter since he treated the nineteenth-century discussions as merely pedagogical and the eighteenth-century as more philosophical.

In 1856, Pierre Pélissier published his *Iconographie des Signes, avec Des Notes Explicatives*, a basic dictionary of French signs in France. Deaf from a young age, Pélissier was a pupil of Laurent Clerc and became a professor in the Paris Institution. He stated that the authority to publish such a dictionary lay in the fact that he himself was a deaf-mute. Pélissier organized signs into semantic categories such as food and table implements, writing objects, and people and professions, and into grammatical categories such as adjectives, verbs, adverbs, interjections, and questions.

Pélissier subscribed to the mid-nineteenth-century ideas about the nature of the Language of Signs, which is reflected in his explanatory notes at the beginning of each chapter about how to correctly combine the signs to *define* the intended meaning. His chapter-by-chapter sign phrase descriptions accompanied by drawings of each sign constitute the clearest illustration of the basic sign formation rules of that time. For example, in the chapter on food and table implements, the first note on the sign for FOOD states, "This is also the sign for MEAL.[20] If it precedes the sign for *morning*, it means BREAKFAST; before *noon*, it means LUNCH; before *evening* it means SUPPER"[21] (1856, plate II). Pélissier's text included specific sign-ordering instructions, although in his introduction he claimed that the Language of Signs was grammar-free and originated from the natural stream of thought, the common claim of that day. However, what scientists meant by the term *grammar* at the time appears to have been more circumscribed than today, referring to the type of inflectional morphology seen in Latin (see chapters 5 and 6 for further discussion of the nature of grammatical descriptions).

Modern lexicography approaches utilize glosses in alphabetical order along with photographic or video examples of signs. Reliance on gloss is

20. This is also an example of polysemy, one common means used to expand the lexicon.

21. The ASL forms for "breakfast," "lunch," and "supper" utilizing the French lexical phrase paradigm described by Pélissier lasted well into the twentieth century with no competing forms. In the 1970s, when the initialization principle of the MCE systems were introduced, the initialized versions began to compete with the original French paradigm and supplant it among younger generations of signers.

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not unique to nineteenth-century pedagogy; matching signs to written words is a common polyglottic technique. Indeed literacy is often measured based on one's ability to read and write. In Pélissier's dictionary every sign illustration is paired with a French gloss.

In 1865, nine years after Pélissier's dictionary appeared, M. l'Abbé Lambert, a hearing instructor at the Paris Institution wrote *Le Langage De La Physionomie et Du Geste*, a comprehensive dictionary of the Language of Signs. It was more extensive than Pélissier's dictionary, organized alphabetically according to the sign's written French equivalent, and contained plates of drawings of a limited number of signs described in the dictionary. Lambert stated that his dictionary did not include the methodical signs of de l'Epée. He published it as a text for teachers of the deaf and included pedagogical issues to consider in deaf education.

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8 REDISCOVERING A LITERARY LEGACY FOR THE DEAF AMERICAN VOICE

The sign language seen in the Gallaudet Lecture Films represents the elite variety as formalized for certain social uses during the nineteenth century. The strategy of the NAD was to promote this elite register as an ideal dialect representing the purity of "the sign language" as used by Laurent Clerc. As a result of the NAD's efforts, the elite register used for most of the nineteenth century was preserved for posterity. Despite the fact that filming was limited to the period between 1910 and 1920, it is possible to link this elite register to the historic Hartford dialect, allowing the reconstruction of the classical dialect of ASL that originated at the Hartford school.

In producing the film series, the formal activity that the NAD undertook for documenting and promoting the use of sign language, particularly the elite register, raised concerns among researchers as to whether the films provide an accurate historical record of sign language. A number of factors contributed to this skepticism, including the age of onset of deafness of the master signers, and the artificial circumstances created through the activity of filming a performance. During the period of production of the films, the leaders of the NAD were all individuals who were late deafened, and hence had acquired spoken English as their native language before becoming Deaf; in fact, two of the master signers were hearing individuals. However, the historical evidence indicates that these leaders valued the original sign language of the first generation and wanted to preserve that register in

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the films. In addition, while it is true that diverse sociolinguistic settings can influence code switching, and an individual who is not at ease in the language being used for filming may deviate from a natural style of presentation, it is important to remember that most of the signers appearing in the films were faculty members or students at Gallaudet College, and many had either direct experience with or roots in the Hartford school; thus, they shared the sociolinguistic setting. Furthermore, the very existence of what we have termed "generational" differences among the master signers seems to confirm the preservation of elements of their personal signing style.

It is also true that the particular time and place in which people interact will exercise its influence on the linguistic register used. The NAD films were originally called the Gallaudet Lecture Films, the name of which implies a desire on the part of the NAD to exhibit the culture of learning and recreation through a "public lecture format" in sign language for all to see and appreciate. This social tradition had also been practiced earlier in Europe; for example, beginning in 1834, annual banquets were held to celebrate the birthday of de l'Epée, for which deaf Americans traveled to Paris (Moody 1989). Moreover, late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, the World Congress of the Deaf provided an international setting for dialogue among deaf activists in Europe and America. Several of the old guard members chosen as models for the NAD films attended these events (figure 8.1).

Beginning with the tradition of the annual banquets in Paris (Berthier 1850), deaf people from all parts of the world communicated with each other in sign language. This kind of sign language "lingua franca" continues to be used among participants attending conventions of the contemporary World Federation of the Deaf. Commonly termed "International Sign," this register has been studied in some detail recently as a kind of pidgin language (Supalla and Webb 1995). Adapting to such a lingua franca situation is a very challenging skill for a signer, the mastery of which requires competence in maximizing one's range of polyglottism. A contributing factor that makes this possible is the historical relatedness of many sign languages to the LSF proto-grammar.

To fully understand the potential implications of such polyglottic accommodation skills among the elite circles of sign masters in America, we propose to apply the framework of a lingua franca situation to the development of sign language literacy (i.e., individual knowledge of the

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FIGURE 8.1. First World Congress of the Deaf in Paris, 1889. Source: *Silent Worker* 23, no. 9 (June 1911): 165.

metalanguage and polyglottic language choices and varieties) in nineteenth-century America. Such a situation would entail sign language communication between two interlocutors in a very basic setting, with one individual serving as a mentor and the other a student knowing only a rudimentary grammar. As noted in chapter 3, nineteenth-century literature emphasized high standards of quality and competence in sign language in this situation.

The skill of signers to modify their sign language register to accommodate to various situations was also highly prized. In 1907 Albert Ballin shared his perspective on International Sign with readers of *The Silent Worker*. Ballin had gained experience associating with a wide variety of signers while traveling abroad in Europe through the first decade of the twentieth century. He contrasted the formal protocol for sign language interpretation commonly used in international settings and the practical feasibility of using International Sign to accommodate audiences of sign language users from around the globe. He referred in particular to the 1889 reception British deaf people arranged in London for the American delegation to the first World Congress of the Deaf. Interpretation was

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necessary, since British Sign Language had evolved separately from ASL. E. M. Gallaudet recited the content signed by deaf American delegates in spoken English for the hearing people in the audience; at the same time, a hearing British colleague interpreted Gallaudet's translation into British Sign Language for the deaf British audience members. It is likely that the American delegation was using ASL in this situation, given that, when it was his turn to take the floor, Ballin asked E. M. Gallaudet and the British interpreter to leave the stage as their interpretation was no longer necessary. In his account, Ballin describes using a code-switching strategy blending occasional use of the two-handed British manual alphabet with what he called "natural signs." Such an account details ad hoc accommodation by shifting to a "lingua franca" register. Ballin remarked on its efficiency by noting the change in the attention of the British deaf members of the audience who had formerly resembled "wooden cigar stand Indians" (Ballin 1907) during earlier presentations, which they had difficulty understanding.

The impetus among educators to promote an "improved" variety of sign language with conventionalized lexical phrases may have been reinforced by experiences among educators who likely encountered a local "lingua franca" situation on a daily basis while building new schools and enrolling deaf children with no conventional sign language knowledge. In order to provide a bridge for transition from a rudimentary home sign system to an improved system, it is not surprising that these educators came to idealize perspicuity and paraphrase for the expression of ideas, thus minimizing vagueness or misunderstanding. In time, this natural phenomenon of "lingua franca" accommodation must have evolved and standardized into a significant sociolinguistic trait among those promoting a proper register of sign language in the nineteenth century. Thus, the local and international dialogues as well as individual intellectual enrichment through sign language at Gallaudet College impressed upon the leadership of the NAD the importance of promoting literacy through perspicuity and purity in use of "the sign language" by showcasing the French-based classical sign language dialect on film.

GENRE AND TRANSLATION CONSIDERATIONS IN TEXT CATEGORIZATION

The NAD materials have been used to trace the path by which ASL—a relatively mature and quite complex sign language—has developed its linguistic

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complexity over generations of users and through historical change. The films include three generations of signers who, remarkably, were able to maintain their use of the elite register in a time of great social and educational upheaval. By the 1960s, performance environments represented one of the last refuges of ASL as oralism spread and sign language was banished from the majority of classrooms in the United States.

THE SIGNERS IN THE LECTURE FILMS

The signers in the films were categorized using a number of characteristics. They were grouped by age into three generations, using thirty years as an approximate standard for defining a generation; the signers represent the second, third, and fourth generation of signers in the United States, with Clerc and T. H. Gallaudet considered the first generation. Background information included each signer's identity and education, such as when and where they went to school. Interestingly, generational affiliation, professional background and type of discourse used by each signer were the most helpful factors in identifying the type of sign language used (see table 8.1).

Comparison of Composition across Late-Classical Period Texts

Two types of texts appear on film. The term *original text* refers to any text composed and expressed by the sign masters in the films using signs. *Recitation* refers to those texts composed originally in English and expressed on film through translation into "the sign language." These recitations were

TABLE 8.1. Genres of Signed Text and Their Signers.

Genre	Personal memories	Social issues	Performing arts
Signers	Members of the Gallaudet College faculty	NAD leaders and educators from various parts of America	Gallaudet students and alumni
Generation	Second generation	Third generation	Fourth generation

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compared with original ASL texts to determine whether the discourse structure of text in the recitations was qualitatively different from the original ASL texts; the signing of the prepared recitations did not differ qualitatively from the original texts and were found to be representative of early polyglottism in ASL.

Two types of translation were used for poetry and prose. While the recitations of the poetic texts are lexically idiomatic for the sign language, they are constrained by English verse structure at the discourse level. In contrast, the prose texts appear to be modified transliterations, employing English-based phrasal particle features at the sentence level but natural word-formation processes of sign language at the lexical level.

Influence of Classical-Era Polyglottism on Text Structure

During the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the classical trend in translation work was to preserve form (Young 1941), so it is no surprise that the sign masters emulated this practice in their translations. In addition to this classical trend toward preservation of form, within deaf education, sociolinguistic pressures for literacy in English prevailed, further motivating the signers in their translation decisions.

The forms of the texts chosen for the Gallaudet Lecture Films were influenced by the need to balance form and meaning in the texts that were translations. The *form* refers to the external structure of the text. If form is the focus of a translation, the translator transforms words from the source text into equivalent words and maintains word order and overall discourse organization of the original. If *meaning* is the primary consideration, the translator no longer focuses on the specific words or the sequence or number of words in a sentence but instead on the author's intent and how to convey that in such a way as to elicit an audience response in the target language similar to that experienced in the original language.

THE GALLAUDET LECTURE FILMS AS THE ROSETTA STONE OF EARLY ASL

Certain lectures in the Gallaudet Lecture Films are renditions of English texts; these facilitate analyses of the literary tradition of that period and ways in which the sign masters distinguished between nontranslated and

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translated texts. In addition, the text corpus was parsed into clauses and phrases in accord with guidelines outlined in Larson (1984). This made it possible to interpret intention and discourse function as well as to identify the grammar used in each clause.

Just as the Rosetta Stone was the key to unlocking the previously undecipherable texts of ancient Egypt, we find the Gallaudet Lecture Films are instrumental in unlocking the processes that shaped the evolution of American Sign Language. Within prepared recitations, a careful study of the genres recited and how they were translated has revealed interesting insights into the philosophy of the day. Although there are only two texts each of prose and poetry, they represent the work of well-respected sign masters of that era. The prose texts were produced by two third-generation signers, Robert MacGregor and Thomas Fox, who recited the "Lord's Prayer" and "The Gettysburg Address," respectively. The poetic texts were produced by two fourth-generation signers, Mary Erd and Winfield Marshall, who recited "The Death of Minnehaha" and "Yankee Doodle," respectively. These recitations illustrate how the sign masters perceived the sign language and its relationship to English. When combined with information gleaned from personal journals, professional publications, and an understanding of the philosophic view of translation prevalent at that time, these recitations provide insight into the significant role of polyglottism in the history of ASL.

Analyses of these recitations involved comparing the texts in several ways. For each recitation, the linguistic characteristics of word-level translation were examined to determine whether the process of translation allowed transfer of grammar from the original English text to the signed recitation. The discourse-level compositional devices used in each original written English text were identified and compared with corresponding devices in the original ASL texts composed and performed by the same sign master. An analysis of each recited text also included identification of propositional clusters, discourse paragraphs, and episodes (Larson 1984). Finally, texts of different genres were compared to confirm the translation approach that was used to render the original texts.

Prose Recitations

The two prose recitations by MacGregor and Fox are embedded in larger original texts. "The Lord's Prayer" (MacGregor) and "The Gettysburg Address" (Fox), like the poetic renditions, maintain the discourse level and even sentence level structure of the original English texts. However, these

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renditions do provide additional evidence that the current means of parsing signs does not adequately capture the structure or lexicon of the sign language used in that day. Lexical phrases that clearly identify the classical register are used in each rendition. In "The Lord's Prayer," MacGregor renders the English word *deliver* as GRAB-HAND FREE; and in "The Gettysburg Address," Fox renders the English word *men* (in "all men are created equal") as MALE FEMALE PEOPLE. Both MacGregor and Fox show evidence through lexical phrase constructions and the prosody they used that the grammatical principles governing the classical register of "the sign language" influenced how they thought about translations of English texts.

Poetic Recitations

Mary Erd renders Longfellow's "The Death of Minnehaha" maintaining the verse structure of the original English text. Within each verse Erd often renders the meaning in a different structure and even changes the focus to highlight visual features of the poem. While the original English text centers on noun phrase (NP) structures, Erd's rendition shifts the center to specific predicate constructions emphasizing the description or action of an event. Winfield Marshall follows a similar pattern in his rendition of "Yankee Doodle," shifting from nominal constructions to descriptive predicate constructions that highlight the visual nature of the song.

The mood of each poetic rendition maintains the mood of the original. Mary Erd expresses deep swings in emotion as she shifts from character to character in the poem. Marshall, on the other hand, expresses the lighthearted, musical nature of the song through his cadence and nonmanual behavior in his face and body. The political undertones of "Yankee Doodle" are maintained primarily through Marshall's choices in signs and in the sublexical devices used in classifiers to create parallel nonsensical equivalents to the chorus of "Yankee Doodle." So, although the verse structure of the original English text is maintained in both renditions, Erd and Marshall restructured the text within each verse or line to conform to the grammatical principles governing the sign language.

LANGUAGE "DECLINE" AS A MOTIVE FOR THE NAD PROJECT

Although the lexical changes we have noticed in the films were actually natural examples of language change according to Frishberg (1975), many of the early twentieth-century leaders felt that these changes were indicative of the

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fact that the younger generation of students was no longer exposed to the more perfect form of "the sign language" as passed down from Laurent Clerc. They also realized that the sign masters, who had learned their language from Clerc or from his first students, were quickly dying off. Thus, in order that the pure form of "the sign language" would remain vital, the NAD embarked on a race against time to produce as many films of these sign masters as they could. The NAD chose only those sign masters who would use a proper register for the films. Indeed NAD President Veditz noted in his lecture that the purpose of the project was to preserve the pure form. The original name of this dialect was "Gallaudet sign language" and it was regarded in one resolution printed in the 1910 convention proceedings of the NAD[1] to be an ideal medium of communication for schools to adopt in teaching deaf children. Further archaeological investigation convinced us that this elite register was not based on English grammar but was a direct ancestor of the original language first appearing in the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817, when the French sign language brought to America by Laurent Clerc was blended with indigenous home signs.

The old guard of the NAD clearly hoped that the incoming generations would continue to emulate the classical style of sign language usage. To develop literacy in sign language, the students participated in activities of the Literary Society at Gallaudet, first founded by Hotchkiss and Ballard as mentioned in chapter 3. Yet the classical elite register was replaced in the middle of the twentieth century by another register that can be characterized by its attempt to approximate English word order.

With the passing of the first generation of classical signers, there arose a sudden void in the keepers of the elite register. This was replaced not by a new kind of natural sign language but rather by an extension of one particular skill the orators had demonstrated on film: the ability to do a literal translation from English text to a signed version that closely followed English word order or, in other words, a form of signed English.

Examining the Function of Fingerspelling within the Gallaudet Lecture Films

One aspect of sign language that is highly sensitive to the distinction between literal and "free" translations is the use of the manual alphabet to

1. See the quote and reference in chapter 3, p. 68.

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render English orthographic forms letter by letter. The practice of fingerspelling in the Gallaudet Lecture Films varied widely, depending on the literary content and source of the lecture material. It is only recently that sign language scholars (e.g., Padden 1996) have seriously considered the dynamics of fingerspelling as playing a significant role in bilingualism and literacy among sign language users today. The study of historical and ongoing practices involving the manual alphabet, therefore, is another essential part of sign language archaeology. The Lecture Films provide a historical benchmark that can be used to measure changes in sign language across the intervening century of additional contact and influence from the English language. Diverse factors may influence the choice to fingerspell English words in sign language text. Analysis of the fingerspelling of several sign masters reveals meaningful correlations across discourse contexts.

The first film, Edward M. Gallaudet's text "The Lorna Doone Country," contains extensive fingerspelling; this is one of the factors that led early researchers to believe his signing was based in English. Early transcription and translation of this film was challenging for several reasons: (1) no translation existed to provide clues to the meaning of individual signs; (2) E. M. Gallaudet was a rapid signer who incorporated a substantial number of fingerspelled words; and (3) the subject matter initially seemed inconsistent because the narrative alternated between two lines of thought. Subsequent research into the English text referred to in his narrative, the novel *Lorna Doone,* resolved most transcription questions. Several of the signs' meanings were deduced by reference to their use in other contexts, such as additional filmed lectures and historical dictionaries. It is clear that the grammatical structures seen in E. M. Gallaudet's text represent the oldest forms of the language, preserving the periphrastic structures discussed in earlier chapters. Moreover, Gallaudet used fingerspelling to specify the English names of places from his travels and the names of characters from the novel.

Some of the other sign masters used fingerspelling to promote the goal of polyglottic literacy. Full access to English printed text is ensured by fingerspelling every word letter by letter. Thus, written quotations, which required transliteration, were rendered in fingerspelling. When referring to English quotations, for example, Hotchkiss used the classical device of fingerspelling phrases, similar to Veditz fingerspelling of an excerpt from the opening of the biblical book of Exodus. On film, Hotchkiss recalls the retired Laurent Clerc visiting the school and addressing the class on a

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lesson in life. Hotchkiss fingerspelled, as Clerc did, two phrases on which the lesson was centered: E-A-T T-O L-I-V-E and L-I-V-E T-O E-A-T.

As part of Veditz's political rhetoric, he spells out long English phrases—an unusual practice from the perspective of the modern signer. Unlike a classical biblical quotation, which is spelled out for the benefit of the audience who may be familiar with such a passage, Veditz chose to spell out English words for which common expressive devices existed in sign language. One example, the fingerspelled M-O-V-I-N-G P-I-C-T-U-R-E-S, represents Veditz's use of a newly coined phrase in the English language. The choice of fingerspelling is unusual, since ASL allows one to construct a series of classifier predicates to describe the mechanics of this technology. Moreover, since Veditz uses this technique in his description of the wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of de l'Epée, he was aware of and capable of using it. Thus, it is likely that Veditz's oft-seen style of fingerspelling English words with a classical cadence served as emphasis, as noted by Padden (2004) in her literary analysis of the Veditz film. The practice among mid-twentieth-century officials at civic meetings of fingerspelling the entire text of minutes of the proceedings lends support to the view that fingerspelling was used to add emphasis to the English text.[2]

While their motivations for fingerspelling may have varied, the lecturers largely shared the practice of slow fingerspelling with a particular cadence. This style may have arisen with the oratorical tradition that has been lost today, but it is also possible that the NAD committee had instructed these orators on fingerspelling clarity and speed after viewing the film of E. M. Gallaudet made in 1910; this first film served as a test case for the NAD film project. And in it, E. M. Gallaudet fingerspells at a rapid pace. Adjustments may have been made in the filming protocol to accommodate the limits of motion picture technology and viewer understanding.

Other Examples of Polyglottic Accommodation

A number of the films provide instances of other forms of polyglottic accommodation beyond fingerspelling, including the use of bilingual translation, rhetorical style, and metaphor. The rendition of "Plea for a Statue of Abbé de l'Epée in America" provides an outstanding example of bilingual

2. These observations are based on the authors' personal observations in attending numerous civic meetings.

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translation. In this film, Rev. McCarthy reads a prepared English text while Rev. Cloud extemporaneously translates into the sign language. By showing a deaf and a hearing speaker side by side, this particular film seems to provide an example of a typical practice of that era that is not seen today.

The films also demonstrate that the signers had knowledge of sophisticated rhetorical technique. In his oration, "A Lay Sermon on the Brotherhood of Man," MacGregor demonstrates a clear command of the larger discourse structure of the classical register. He constructs his arguments using parallel rhetorical question constructions at the beginning of his sermon and then moves into parallel episodic structures throughout the remainder of his sermon, to continue to build his argument for the brotherhood of man that culminates in his recitation of the "Lord's Prayer."

In addition to the use of rhetorical technique, Veditz's lecture provides examples of both bilingual and stylistic technique. Two translations of Veditz's lecture, "Preservation of the Sign Language," are now available, the one by Veditz himself on film and one by Carol Padden and Eric Malzkuhn.[3] Padden (2004) explains:

> Veditz did not write his English version as a literal interpretation of his signed speech. He understood the power of the two languages and recognized that a sign-for-word, or word-for-sign, version would weaken the impact of his writing. He wrote while imagining large audiences and took care to write well. For example, in the signed sentence BUT FOR THIRTY-THREE YEARS THEIR TEACHERS HAVE CAST THEM ASIDE AND REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THEIR PLEAS, Veditz signs *CAST ASIDE* using the sign GRAB-HOLD-FORCEFULLY-PUSH-DOWN, moving the arm across the body to the side. In the English version of the same sentence, Veditz writes: "For thirty-three years their teachers have held them off *with a hand of steel*," using imagery that is at once both English and ASL. (246–47)

Veditz's mastery of both ASL and English is evident first in the mimetic depiction of grabbing someone and holding the person down to make a political point in sign language and second in choosing the English idiom

3. In Padden (2004), the author also describes the discovery of Veditz's translation as well as Padden's and Eric Malzkuhn's translation methods. We commend them for their authentic and dependable work of transcribing the speech given by Veditz.

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"held them off with a hand of steel" for a similar effect in the English language. Padden's choice of the phrase "cast them aside" as the English translation fits our current polyglottic understanding for the metaphorical use of the signs GRAB and PUSH-DOWN. However, it is not clear if this polyglottic process in the glossing reflects our metalinguistic awareness of literal roots among glossing idiosyncrasies. In the appropriate context, the internal structure of GRAB-HOLD-FORCEFULLY-PUSH-DOWN would be treated as being a conjoined phrase of two verbs, GRAB and HOLD-DOWN, with a range of possible handshapes for this verbal construction. In modern ASL, a metaphorical polyword denotes "putting someone in a trap." However, the lexicalization of the truncation of this verb phrase would have evolved over time, yet the Veditz film provides concrete evidence that this metaphorical use was in effect almost a century ago. Indeed, like Padden, we are intrigued that Veditz selects English words to express his sign language metaphor in a figurative way, rather than a more literal expression such as, for example, "isolating (or marginalizing) the deaf teachers." It seems that Veditz intentionally drew on the polyglottic process of translation in addition to making made rhetorical use of an English metaphor as well!

Stylistic Trends

Veditz's lecture is perhaps the most popular of the NAD films for viewing today, and his style has been considered prototypical of the classical form of ASL. There are a number of reasons for this. Padden (2004) concluded that Veditz represented the way men and women of his generation signed; that his large signs appeared formal and precise; that the modern audience could understand him; and that his tight-lipped, no-mouthing style also represented that of all oratorical signers. In addition, she noted that his signing was animated and forceful, building steadily toward his conclusions, and that the emotion in the signed lecture was palpable. However, there are two other reasons that Veditz's film might have become popular among modern audiences: (1) the appeal of his political rhetoric and (2) the familiarity of his monotonic style and prosody. Thus, it is important to look beyond popularity to get a more complete picture of linguistic history.

In this archaeological work, distinguishing various styles and literary genres with no tradition of investigating contemporaneous colloquial register form for most of the time period has been challenging. Despite all the

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merits of Veditz's presentation, his performance does not capture the entire nature of sign language as it was used in the nineteenth century. For example, MacGregor's rhetorical style portrays cleverly varied prosodic pacing and construction. Hotchkiss provides another good example of style and morphology that are much richer than Veditz's. All three signers maintain the oratorical style with the classical register principles of a slower pace, an absence of co-articulation even in fingerspelling, and a stretching out of paragraph-final pauses. To describe linguistic and prosodic aspects of sign language as used in that particular period of time, we have three separate sets of evidence:

1. Public demonstrations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,
2. Written comments on formal signing style, and
3. Film records of contrasts between formal and colloquial signing registers.

Early Twentieth-Century Colloquial Register

In contrast with the principles and characteristics of the classical register, the colloquial register exhibits assimilated forms and an overall faster pace. Although the films were not explicitly made to capture examples of the colloquial register, several sources of evidence indicate that colloquial signing was alive and well at the turn of the twentieth century. First, Hubbard's dedication speech for the Garfield Memorial was produced with an audience standing behind him while he signed. Several brief conversations can be seen in the audience, and the overall pace mirrors that of modern colloquial ASL. Second, in "The Gallaudet Play," the actor portraying Edward Gallaudet, the son, signs in a manner more rapid and more fluid and smooth than that of the actor portraying the father, T. H. Gallaudet. As mentioned in chapter 1, this provides evidence that classical signers possessed a metalinguistic knowledge of the devices available in sign language to distinguish registers as well as generations of signers. Finally, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Veditz's criticism of Mary Erd's rendition of "The Death of Minnehaha,"[4] versus the popularity of her performance displays a difference in literary value between the classical signers and the younger signers who may have struggled with the classical register.

4. See chapter 4.

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ANALYSES OF COMPOSITIONAL AND RHYTHMIC PATTERNS FOR TEXT-LEVEL PROSODY

Prosody is a variable that makes the signed performances in the 1910–1920 period distinctive as compared to signed performances today. Prosodic variations exist across different time periods as well as across signers within each time period. Thus, grammatical features of ASL interact with the skill of the signer to produce the desired stylistic effect on prose or poetic text.

Variation in stylistics across third-generation signers can be seen primarily in the use of nonmanual signals, in the beat used by each signer, and in clause-final pausing. Veditz's style may be akin to the modern monotone speech pattern in which his rhythmic beats are flattened out and made regular within clauses. MacGregor, on the other hand, varies his tempo depending on the topic and the point he wants to make. In addition, MacGregor makes extensive use of facial nonmanual signals to mark rhetorical questions and to negate propositions.

Rhetorical Techniques

Three signers, MacGregor, Fox, and Hotchkiss, produced more than one discourse type, allowing the comparison of prosodic and stylistic features performed by a single signer across discourse types. In "A Lay Sermon," Robert MacGregor provides the richest source of comparison by producing three distinctive text types: oratory, story, and narrative, in addition to a rendition from English verse. In two additional texts, "The Irishman's Flea" and "The Lady and the Cake," he also provides examples of political satire. Each of these discourse types displays distinctive characteristics. Each genre/discourse type also interacts with the specific content to create a text that includes varying numbers of classifier constructions and other grammatical features such as plural, negation, and aspect. In "The Lord's Prayer," MacGregor maintains the most consistent, even cadence and exhibits the additional feature of framing each line with PRAY at the beginning and a bow at the end, a device mentioned by James Jacobs as one used by Reverend Thomas Gallaudet[5] when rendering public prayers. MacGregor also maintains a relatively even cadence in the oratorical part of his sermon. He

5. Reverend Thomas Gallaudet was the oldest son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

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breaks cadence during the story he tells to match the mood and affect of the story, but his rate of signing remains relatively stable. In "The Irishman's Flea" MacGregor displays a drastic break in the rhythmic pattern of the classical oratorical style, as he changes the rate of his signing in accordance with the rate of travel he describes. His posture and demeanor in both the story and the political jokes reflect more pronounced perspective shifts than in the oratorical part of his sermon.

In a related comparison, Fox's style is relatively smooth while that of Hotchkiss is more dramatic. Fox's prosodic patterns do not change noticeably between the oratorical background text and his rendition of "The Gettysburg Address." In "Memories of Old Hartford," Hotchkiss also portrays the prosodic patterns of classical oratory, until his rendition of "The Death of Christ," which he modeled after one of his former teachers, Mr. Bartlett. In this story/narrative, Hotchkiss changes the rate of signing speed in accordance with the mood of each segment. Notably, he uses a poetic device, reiteration (reduplication), to maintain balance between parallel segments of the story. This device is also used in the poetic renditions of Erd and Marshall.

Possible Divergence in Literary Traditions

While the generations of signers were fairly cohesive as cohorts, there were a number of instances of signers using very unusual techniques. Two signers from Michigan—Erd (fourth generation) and Hubbard (third generation)—use a specific, uncommon literary technique, alliteration, although their deliveries were made in different genres (one being a lecture honoring a Friend of the Deaf and the other being a recitation of a Longfellow poem). Applied to a particular lexical item, the purpose seems to be to intensify the articulatory path of the word, resulting in a split of the path into a two-beat unit (e.g., SEE in Erd's poetic rendition). Veditz wrote a letter to Roy Stewart criticizing the style of Erd's rendition of the Longfellow poem (Padden 2004). This suggests there may have been generational or regional differences in aesthetic opinion on style in rendering literary works, which should not be surprising as, once literary traditions appear, local flavor contributes to stylistic diversity. However, it is unclear if such diversity was tolerated among those promoting classical traditions.

Hubbard was difficult to classify in generational terms. By age and grammar used, he could be considered a contemporary of second-generation

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signers; however, according to genre and style in a dedication speech, he aligns more with third-generation signers. His text for the Garfield Memorial ceremony shows evidence that Hubbard memorized his speech and was concerned about delivering it in the classical register. This is apparent at two points in his text: one in which he produces a false start and backs up to begin the sentence again, and the other in which he pauses for a longer length of time, looks down, and then begins the next sentence. His grammar is more like that of the second generation, but he was grouped with third-generation signers for the sake of coherence in geographical and occupational categories. Although Hubbard attended the school at Fanwood as a youth, he did not attend college; he went directly to the Michigan School for the Deaf to become a teacher, thus missing the opportunity for oratorical training from sign masters at Gallaudet College.

In another instance of possible divergence from generational cohort, Amos Draper was a signer whose composition of oratory text was difficult to analyze, primarily due to incomplete expression of sentences and unclear prosody. The 1915 filming of Draper's "The Signing of the Charter of Gallaudet College" was the last in the lecture film series, save the filming of Winfield Marshall's recitation of the Yankee Doodle song in 1920. In Draper's case, we relied on our familiarity with the context for clarifying points in his presentation. Due to inconsistency difficulties with his lecture, his work was not included in the literary analysis of sign language rhetoric.

SAMPLE ANALYSIS

The NAD films hold incredible promise for reconstruction of sign language rhetoric as used in the nineteenth century (where there is no written documentation of sign language). This part of the chapter provides a framework of data and background materials for examining literary and historical aspects of sign language usage in such materials. The following analysis is at the syntactic and textual or discourse levels. It is at these levels that the major distinctions in syntactic typology as well as more general language use can be seen.

MacGregor's original text, "A Lay Sermon," contains the most sophisticated oratory at this level of composition. In this recitation, MacGregor's facial configuration to express rhetorical questions is identical to the expression signers currently employ in modern ASL. In this syntactic marker, the eyebrows raise and the head tilts subtly backward (Baker-Shenk and Cokely

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1980). This signal initially appears with MacGregor still in his role as the narrator looking at the audience while signing the first clause (see figure 8.2). He maintains this facial signal throughout the remainder of the segment, even as he turns his body to one side, taking on the role of questioner and posing a series of questions about the color of skin among peoples in trouble. The sign QUESTION-MARK appears as a marker to signal questions that will come in the discourse segment. The rhetorical question facial expression and body posture end when MacGregor returns to the role of narrator and provides the audience the answer to the rhetorical question as to whether questions of color would enter into the spirit and acts of brotherhood. In giving the answer, MacGregor's head will either shake or nod while articulating the words of the answer in sign language, demonstrating the way to complete a clause that involves rhetorical questions. Robert MacGregor demonstrates an orator's command of such complex structures by effectively conjoining them to discourse markers to make his point. Thus, the signer's overt questions are conceptually and linguistically embedded within a global rhetorical question, each signaled by different grammatical techniques. Figure 8.2 includes the literal transcription and English translation for this text segment.

The presence of such sentence structure is a crucial piece of evidence for the nature of syntax in early ASL and for "benchmarking" syntactic changes across time. Further progress in historical research results from a study of the prosodic reflection of such syntactic structure as well as the effect of choice in rhetorical expression on lexical and syntactic structure in texts.

The films themselves feature little metalinguistic discussion of sign language pedagogy. The film by J. Schuyler Long (see chapter 4) contained a demonstration of the contents of his 1910 dictionary, but this film has been lost. Aside from Veditz's argument for preserving the purity of sign language through the film technology and Hotchkiss's emulation of certain sign masters of the nineteenth century, insight into the minds of the old guard is limited. However, it is clear that the Gallaudet Lecture Films reflects traditional sign language rhetoric in the art of persuasion. The extant lectures included oratory, prose, or recitation, with some transliterations supplemented by explanatory discourse. The old guard of the NAD perceived moving picture technology as a tool in their public campaign to overcome the threat of language death (NAD 1910). Far from being passive in this turbulent time, Deaf people responded vigorously to the forces of

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FIGURE 8.2. Literal transcription and English translation for a segment of MacGregor's lecture. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

social change. Their rhetoric continued to serve an important function in public life of the time.

The film series also concerned itself with literacy levels for Deaf Americans and how the ideal topics for literary discourse changed over time. Thus, while the films as a whole reveal changes in the form and use of sign language since the 1910s, it is possible to make stylistic and linguistic comparisons within the analyses. The relative distribution of filmed genres across time was not uniform, and this unequal representation had the potential to skew our analysis of stylistic variation. For instance, the genre of oratory presentation declined with time while the genre of poetic performances increased in distribution. Furthermore, there was variation in the quality of formal stylistics across lecturers and performers in the films. Thus it has proven important and revealing to identify sociolinguistic variables

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and to construct criteria in analyzing stylistic variations and identifying varieties as, say, formal or colloquial. Moreover, it was necessary to identify and quantify grammatical features of ASL and English in these signed text corpora. Archaeological analysis using these heuristics has revealed an archaic literary dialect with a lexicon and morphology distinct from modern ASL and signed English. This research represents a step forward in the unification of the linguistic knowledge of sign language structure and ultimately contributes to an understanding of evolutionary processes of human language as a whole. Despite language intervention policies and social and economic transformations that threatened to obliterate ASL during the oral-only movement, ASL survived with its culture irrepressible.

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9 FATE OF THE NAD LANGUAGE PLAN AND SUBSEQUENT REVIVAL OF ASL

In making the Gallaudet Lecture Films classicists attempted to preserve a particular register of "the sign language" on film that was based on early ASL grammar. The forces in education that contributed to the removal of sign language from the classroom except in rare cases shaped its future, as the classical register gradually lost ground and finally disappeared during the Dark Period. The mandate to pass on the principles of the classical register also disappeared as classical signers lost prestige. It is still unclear, however, how the preserved artifacts of this register, namely the sign language documents from the nineteenth century and the film records made during the 1910–1920 period, fell into such disrepute that researchers would come to regard them with skepticism.

CACOPHONY OF VOICES THROUGHOUT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

While the NAD leadership exercised activism in confronting social injustice and promoting the welfare of the deaf citizenry, the emerging neo-elite attitude regarding the use of sign language mirrored the practice seen in the culture at large in America. Educators and policymakers who adhered to the philosophy of social Darwinism imposed their values on those people they viewed as outside the mainstream of American life. For example, Native

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Americans were prohibited from using their native languages while attending government schools, and European and Asian immigrants were discouraged from maintaining their languages and ethnic traditions.

Social Darwinism had a great impact on deaf education as well (Baynton 1996). However, scientific advances throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both writing technology and in sound technology had the greatest impact on educational change. As these advances improved educators' ability to make speech visible and audible, educators religious and secular, manual and oral, hearing and deaf, jumped on board and supported the changes. Scientific advances in learning and cognition also made their way into deaf education. The deaf voice has consistently been influenced by the agenda of each era with regard to social and language planning policies. When educators embarked upon the effort to enlighten the minds of young uneducated deaf people, they also influenced the mature deaf minds of the day with ideological values and biases, as reflected in promotional claims by advocates for better pedagogy and technology.

After 1880, professional conventions for educators, especially those held in Europe, separated members into deaf and hearing sections.[1] Even interpretation from spoken to signed language was not allowed during their proceedings. American educators first encountered this policy while attending the 1900 convention of the Congress for the Instructors of the Deaf in Paris.[2] This policy accelerated the collapse of the infrastructure for intellectual and cultural exchanges concerning the theory of sign language and its role in pedagogy.

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1. The Association for the Promotion of Speech to the Deaf (later changed to the Alexander Graham Bell Association) adopted a similar policy of segregation for its Oral Deaf Section. Intolerance of social and cultural diversity soon became so extreme that a taboo developed against the use of sign language among professionals working with deaf students or with each other. The NAD's film of the 1921 American Conference of Principals at Scranton, Pennsylvania, portrayed various scenes of people gathering and chatting with each other without signing.

2. We know this from a report in *The Silent Worker* on E. M. Gallaudet's 1901 speech to the Literary Society at Gallaudet College, in which he recalled the division of hearing and deaf sections at the 1900 Congress for the Instructors of the Deaf in Paris (F. C. W. 1901).

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Deaf people produced numerous film records across various decades of the twentieth century. The NAD circulated the films, including those made for the Gallaudet Lecture Films project, around the nation at the cost of five dollars for the rental of three or four reels. Roy Stewart and his committee submitted reports for the NAD convention proceedings that listed the individuals, schools, church groups, and Deaf clubs who had rented the films. Some films, like Long's, were popular, which explains their abuse and eventual loss. However, the nineteenth-century traditions and literature of the old guard differed from those of the advocates of modern views. While the NAD Moving Pictures committee continued to produce films after 1920, the goals and nature of the later films varied widely from the earlier films; later films focused on major events of the organization, especially ceremonies at the conventions. Film circulation declined and finally ended in the 1940s, effectively preventing new generations of signers from seeing the films; on the advice of Roy Stewart and the committee, the films were put into storage (Stewart 1925). While the films were neglected, they were not discarded.

REASSESSING THE FATE OF THE GALLAUDET LECTURE FILMS

The NAD's overarching goal in establishing the Gallaudet Lecture Films project was, as Veditz expressed it, "preserving the sign language." It is difficult to say whether this goal was achieved. It is true that the majority of the films have been preserved for more than a century and can be analyzed and appreciated in a new light. However, a conflict of interest among the membership compromised its strategy for promoting the use of the elite register of the sign language and the value of perspicuity. This opened the way for a new kind of sign language register based on English, a trend that distracted the membership from the original project. Although ASL did not disappear with the great diglossic shift, the old guard lost its battle to preserve the classical elite register. The fourth- and fifth-generation signers interviewed for this project, lacked awareness of NAD's efforts, and grassroots deaf filmmakers reported that the original NAD project had no influence on subsequent productions of sign language films.

Even at the time they were produced, the films had minimal impact on the lives of deaf Americans. Outside of NAD proceedings, there was sparse publicity of NAD's Gallaudet Lecture Film Series project, or even of publications of the mainstream Deaf community. In 1920, J. F. Meagher

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questioned the judgment of the NAD. He wrote, "The N.A.D. once raised thousands [of dollars] for moving pictures that some claim have served no good purpose." The project may have been deemed a disaster from the perspective of other Deaf leaders as well. The only record of supportive reactions from actual viewers were several remarks in personal letters written to Roy Stewart by those who borrowed the films (see Padden 2004). The Moving Pictures Project lost all support; in 1917 the NAD membership decided to transfer $1,000, a considerable sum at that time, out of the committee fund to support other projects (Gannon 1981).

The last living member of the old guard reappeared on film in 1940. In the film, recorded at the 1940 NAD convention in San Francisco, Thomas Fox is standing with a new generation of NAD leaders as Marcus Kenner, the NAD president, introduces him. Fox then gives a brief description of how he was enjoying attending the convention. He is still the same graceful classical orator. His natural prose is still based on use of paraphrase and word order inversion. In contrast, NAD leaders on the same film use a signed form of English, the new version of Gallaudet sign language. Here the split can be seen clearly between the original Gallaudet sign language and the new Gallaudet sign language, a different kind of high-status register characterized by English word order that was used among NAD leaders at that time. It is clear that between 1920, the date of the final classical-era film, and the 1940 film, a transition had occurred.

Whereas the previous diglossic conflict was between the colloquial variety and the classical register, the new diglossic conflict for the twentieth century was this tension between the colloquial variety and the new Gallaudet sign language. The classical prescriptive ideology during the early period of Deaf America was relevant only to the traditional relationship between sign master as teacher and student as apprentice. The apprenticeship model was eliminated in the twentieth century by the rise of oralism. Concurrent with the twentieth-century diglossic shift, the high-status position of the naturalistic continuum of sign language registers was replaced by more English-based structures in sign language. In the twentieth century people no longer needed to possess oratorical skills, and few were capable of signing in the classical style.

In the mid-1920s, a schism appeared between those deaf teachers and civic leaders who were concerned about preservation of the classical form and those who merely wanted to ensure the survival of sign language in any form. The old guard considered that a move away from the promotion of

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classical sign language toward a version of sign language adopting English structure for the sake of integration would constitute a capitulation to the political pressure of the oral-only movement. The voice of the old guard lingered until the 1930s but it was steadily drowned out by a new deaf voice that had acquiesced to the grand claims of oral training. This younger group focused their entire energies on issues relevant to deaf adults only, such as access to vocational opportunities. The little time spent on educational or communication issues was invested in pleas to school administrators to allow the use of sign language in chapel and public lectures. Through the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, very few were left to champion the classical dialect.

Jay Cooke Howard, president of the NAD from 1913 to 1917, was a contemporary of the old guard within the NAD. Born in 1872 and deafened after acquiring English, Howard attended the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault and went on to graduate from Gallaudet College in 1895. In his departing presidential address to the NAD Convention in July of 1917, Howard focused on educational issues and made a plea for giving the oral-only method a try. In his plea, Howard maintained the need for a Combined System philosophy in order to quickly adapt communication approaches to the individual deaf child who did not show progress through the oral method. He did not push for the abandonment of the manual alphabet or the sign language completely, but he did place the support of the NAD squarely on the oral method and postponed use of the sign language until after the introduction of oral training. Even within the NAD, no consensus existed regarding use of sign language. Howard's position demonstrated how even deaf leaders capitulated to the popular pressure exerted by the oral-only regime, hastening the disuse of the classical register.

SHIFT IN DYNAMICS OF SIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

It is clear that the NAD film project did not succeed in preventing or delaying the death of the classical elite dialect. With the demise of the sign master/apprentice practice, the classical sign language metalanguage also fell into disuse and was not replaced. The early twentieth century, then, was a transitional period in the history of ASL, in which the character of ASL and English usage and codes for these languages in Deaf America changed drastically.

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At the same time, a new interpretation of the term *Combined method* appeared, indicating accompanying speech with fingerspelling and augmenting this approach, when necessary, with signed paraphrases and explanations (Fay 1899). A rudimentary understanding of how to use *natural signs,* now defined simply as those gestures that all people would understand, was considered adequate for teaching. Knowledge of the improved language of signs, with its rich lexical phrase construction (including word-order inversion), was viewed as extraneous in the combined system classroom. With the death of the classical signers, there was a sudden void in the area of an elite register. This was resolved not by a new kind of natural sign language but rather by an extension of one particular skill the orators had demonstrated on film: the ability to translate literally from English text to a signed version of English (that is, signed English). A very different neo-elite register appeared shortly thereafter, ushered in by the pressure exerted from the oral-only language policy shift.

Meanwhile, Deaf adults once exposed to the American method of instruction developed their own folk life and continued socializing with each other using colloquial ASL. Throughout the twentieth century they passed on ASL as an underground language. Social and economic transformations provided no motive for preserving the classical tradition of metalinguistic terms or practices. Furthermore, the taboo on using ASL in public and in professional circles ushered in the Dark Period. Ultimately the signing community lost the skills and knowledge of the sign masters and master teachers in the teaching of sign language literacy to both deaf children and hearing people.

In depicting parallel events and their impact in the Deaf and pedagogical communities, we found it helpful to amplify a sociolinguistic model, originally proposed by James Woodward (1982), to include elements that illustrate the relationship between the formal structure of a naturally developing and evolving sign language, and the practical pedagogical use of sign language systems. Woodward's diglossic model was useful for explaining the social friction within the community using different registers of sign language at a particular point in time. However, it lacked adequate elements and categories to depict the historical objectives and structure of varieties of ASL, both natural and externally imposed. Historical films and documents from the early twentieth century indicate that the American Deaf community confronted a series of sociolinguistic polarities,

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beginning with a distinction between the colloquial variety of the sign language and Gallaudet sign language. Later in the twentieth century, they faced a different kind of dichotomy with the development of sign language methods imported from beyond the natural dynamics of language change, and not reflected in traditional metalanguage. Through the second half of the twentieth century, sign language pedagogy split into separate factions, each advocating a different philosophy and approach to the use of manual communication. This has played a significant role in fragmenting the political cohesiveness of the sign language community. As in the past, a modern-day struggle exists to determine the form and destiny of the Deaf American voice (Padden and Humphries 2005).

In the late 1960s the pioneering work by Tervoort (1961), Vernon and Koh (1970), and Meadow (1966), revealed higher likelihood of success in mastery of written language and other academic skills among deaf children from homes in which deaf parents use sign language. While some educators were content with interpreting such findings as reflecting the role of self-esteem, thus focusing on the need for deaf role models, other educators began to experiment with novel forms of sign language designed to display aspects of English grammar. They reanalyzed, reformed, and reordered sign language, using ASL forms as raw material for new manual systems implemented under the assumption that deaf children had to see a signed form of English in order to acquire English-language skills (Hoffmeister 1990). While this sounds like the methodical-signs approaches of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, twentieth-century educators ignored the morphological foundations of the natural language and borrowed only the later developed polyglottic forms. Johnson, Liddell, and Erting (1989) termed such systems "sign-supported speech," to reflect their exploitation of polyglottic resources from ASL in support of new technology for restoring the "Combined method." The perspective of developers of sign-supported speech is reflected in a 1990 edited collection (Bornstein 1990) that surveyed the field of manual communication and provided a platform for the designers of these different methods to rationalize their approaches and explain their selection of certain aspects of sign language structure to best fit with spoken language structure. These authors also offer solutions to resolve the limited effectiveness of their technologies. Notably absent from these discussions is mention of natural polyglottic devices for borrowing concepts from English, successfully used in sign language pedagogy for the first one-hundred years of sign language use.

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It is possible to explain why modern educators overlook historic pedagogical tools such as paraphrase and subsequent reanalysis by considering the widespread unfamiliarity with natural sign language mechanisms during the reign of oralism. The only hint of familiarity was related to the polyglottic practice of using dactylology. The analogy between orthographic print and the manual alphabet provided the illusion of resemblance to spoken language, which played a significant role in convincing educators, hearing parents, and others unfamiliar with sign language to feel comfortable using this technique.

We extended Baker and Cokely's chart, which was based on Woodward's diglossic model (1973) to reflect mechanisms that manipulate sign language to emulate English form, structure and meaning. Sign-supported speech designers and advocates have relied on several types of analogy for devising an English-like sign system; the illustration shows the positioning of these mechanisms along the diglossic continuum for ASL-like or English-like features (see table 9.1). Not all mechanisms draw on devices from sign language form or structure to relate the manual modality to English (Bornstein 1990). In cued speech, for example, a minimal set of arbitrary handshape, movement, and location contrasts are mapped without any reference to ASL. Here the intention of its inventor was to design a manual code to meet the goal of making invisible articulatory contrasts of speech visible, thus serving as cueing supplements to speechreading. Since this device, unlike others, carries no hint of resemblance to even written English literacy, it appears in the Supalla and Clark chart at the English extreme of the continuum ranging between resemblance to spoken versus signed language structure.

TABLE 9.1. Extension of Baker and Cokely's 1980 Diglossic Continuum.

More like ASL ———————— More like English		
Indigenous word-formation process	Structural resemblance to written English word	Phonetic supplement
Also using natural paraphrase if needed to match meaning of English word	Location and movement parameters borrowed from ASL while replacing handshape in accord to initialization	Arbitrary use of handshape, location, and movement as manual cues to invisible articulations

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This framework allows comparison of the relative acceptability of such mechanisms for reanalysis in the medium of sign language. At one end is codification, where natural reanalysis is minimized, while the other end features natural processes of grammaticalization or lexicalization. This chart provides a better understanding of the dynamics of word formation processes in relation to language pedagogy. In addition, it allows consideration of users' relative grammatical competence and metalinguistic awareness and perspective. An optimal device would reflect multilinguistic competence in the natural sign language medium. Indeed there are limitations in the learn-ability of MCE pedagogy, in particular the placement of morphemes in accord with rules of English (S. Supalla 1989).

An overlooked aspect of language planning is the polarization that intrusive technology causes between the Deaf and educational communities. The more extreme the process chosen for codification and the more strongly it is promoted as the answer in developing language skills, the more extreme the indigenous language community's polarization becomes. In developing MCE, educators chose to focus on a single type of word formation process and bring its use to an entirely new level, although the overall use of initialization was quite limited prior to 1970. MCE systems seized upon initialization as the major means of tying English words to the sign language lexicon and disregarded the likelihood of a natural process of reanalysis, which is essential for grammaticalization or creolization of language. Thus, the existing ecology of ASL processes was ignored.

THE LAST VESTIGES OF CLASSICISM

Generations of deaf leaders subsequent to the old guard in the NAD films included those who remained obsessive about the portrayal of deaf people's use of language. Tom Anderson was one of those last, lonely deaf voices that sought to maintain the classical form of the sign language as passed down by the masters—in fact, Anderson was known as an "old guard campaigner." Deafened at the age of twelve, he first attended the Colorado School for the Deaf and then Gallaudet College. Anderson met E. M. Gallaudet, had frequent interactions with E. A. Fay, and was known as Elizabeth Peet's pet student. He had a close association with Long during the twelve years that he taught at the Iowa School for the Deaf. He was also intensely active in the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf and was highly respected by colleagues for his expertise in industrial training.

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He served as president of the NAD from 1940–1946. In 1938, Anderson wrote in the *Annals*:

> During the past decade, my attention repeatedly has been drawn to evidence that something is happening to the sign language as it was handed down to my generation. It is apparent to me that we have lost many of the influences which formerly tended to standardize the manual language. I am led to the conclusion that the loss of these influences, and the substitution of several more or less unwholesome influences, is tending to bring forward an inferior sign language which we refer to as "a sign language" more correctly than as "the sign language." (120)

Albert Ballin, a contemporary of Anderson, authored *The Deaf Mute Howls* in 1930 attempting to remedy the plight of deaf-mutes by urging all hearing people to learn the international language—"the sign language." Born in 1861, he became deaf at age three and attended the New York Institution; he was trained as an artist and became a lithographer in his father's business. Ballin advocated for the complete integration of deaf people into society as equal partners, and he believed that this could not be done in *segregated* schools for the deaf or with pure oral training. He thought that if all children learned the sign language as children, communication and interaction problems would be eliminated, allowing deaf children full access to the information in their environment that would lead to improved literacy in English (Ballin 1930; Jenkins 1904).

Other than scant remarks and a few positive reviews of the Indian sign language and the universal language used at international conferences, Ballin (1930) provided no analysis of the nature of the sign language. Although Ballin wrote primarily about social and educational issues, he did allude to the existence of different registers of sign language, agreeing with some of his contemporaries that the form used by the "uncultured" was "too slovenly, even loathsome" and an abuse of the language. His view of the sign language used by the majority of deaf people in general mirrors the old guard's concern with the changes in sign language.

> The deaf people use it in a *conversational style* and each individual fits it to his taste without caring whether his gestures are graceful or ugly. He is satisfied with making himself understood with little effort—a habit that retards progress toward beauty and poetry in the use of signs. Such is the status of "the sign language" today.

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> Quite different from what it was in the days of the pioneers in the education of the deaf-mutes—before the advent of pure oralism. (author's emphasis, 1930, 48)

In 1974, Leo Jacobs published *A Deaf Adult Speaks Out*, a memoir reminiscent in tone of Ballin's text. Leo Jacobs was born deaf to deaf parents and attended the California School for the Deaf at Berkeley.[3] Jacobs graduated from Gallaudet College and taught for many years at the California school. Like Ballin, Jacobs was concerned about conveying the message to hearing people that oralism had failed deaf people and that deaf people needed a public voice. Both Ballin and Jacobs valued sign language and emphasized to their respective generations that the Combined method was the best approach to educating deaf children. The only descriptive statement about sign language in Jacobs's book reflects the battle the Deaf community of his generation enjoined, as oral education had squelched the use of sign language in the schools for the deaf and had effectively inhibited the formal acquisition of the language:

> The deaf pupils at the schools using the "Combined method" picked up their sign language haphazardly outside the classroom, hence starting with a bastard mixture of conventional, homemade, and slang signs. Eventually, as they grew up and achieved their own spheres of friends, they developed systems of signs which were used for the remainder of their lives. Thus, the more educated youngsters would use more formal signs and a greater amount of fingerspelling while the less educated students would be content with a more elementary form of the sign language, using fingerspelling less. (44)

Leo Jacobs was a member of the fifth generation; deaf individuals of this cohort who were concerned about the use of sign language had lost the mission of the old guard. Only fleeting comments were made about the competent use of sign language and the few examples offered emphasized the status difference between the well-educated deaf person and the *grassroots* deaf person. Fingerspelling was cited by Anderson, Ballin, and Jacobs as one component that characterized *improved* signing as opposed to the haphazard signing seen amongst less educated deaf people. It is no

3. In fact, he was a classmate of author Clark's parents in the 1930s.

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surprise that Percival Hall, the successor to E. M. Gallaudet as president of Gallaudet College, chose to promote the use of fingerspelling as a possible alternative. The Rochester School for the Deaf in upstate New York portrayed the extreme of excluding sign language and incorporating the exclusive use of fingerspelling into its curriculum.

THE RISE OF THE COLLOQUIAL REGISTER

During the early modern period, when the classical signing tradition was no longer part of formal instruction in schools or in the tutorship between sign master and apprentice, the elite register fell into disuse. The stigmatization of sign language may have begun with the establishment of the dichotomy between the colloquial and methodical signs imported by Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet as part of the French method. The demise of the formal register of the sign language from the classical period was filled by the natural colloquial register that survived the Dark Period as an underground language, to be used not in public but in private settings.

The transition to the modern period has produced a renaissance of ASL; colloquial dialect is used in public and it is popularized by the institution of sign language classes in colleges and universities. The process of polyglottism remains an ongoing actor in sign language metalinguistic discussions, in choices such as fingerspelling for spelling out written words, lexical signs for word matching in transliteration, and semantic analogy for holistic translation of discourse text or lexical metaphor. This provides the base for efficient transliteration of the English language by a modern sign master. This base also provides support for a natural contact register. In fact, contact signing is so automatic today that some people seem to code-switch based on audience, without effort or possibly even conscious choice (Lucas and Valli 1992).

A natural outcome of the twenty-first-century shift of standards was the revival of interest in literary history related to signed performances within the Deaf community. At the same time, the use of the term "sign master" (Talbot 1872; Sicard 1818), a significant honor in the early days, changed in meaning to adapt to the shift of values in the next period of sign language. The term today, used among the members of the National Theatre of the Deaf, names a person in the group who serves as an in-house expert on sign language translation (Mow 1987). In other circles, "sign master" signifies

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"storyteller," which may have originated with the circumscribed social scope of ASL in the Dark Period, relegated to a "carnival" setting (Peters 2000) such as in the performance of skits or storytelling in Deaf clubs and in the dorms of residential schools. At this point, the definitional criteria for a sign master have shifted from mastery of oratory stylistics to literary translation. The following list describes how "sign master" evolved as it was passed on across generations of sign language artists and performers.

1. "Teacher of apprentices," with Laurent Clerc and his cohorts as models
2. "Orator" in NAD films if an older signer, but "translator-performer" if a younger signer
3. "Translator of English materials" for dramatic presentation on the stage
4. "Storyteller" or "poet" today

As part of the current ASL revival, ASL is now recognized as appropriate for use in public settings (Bauman, Nelson, and Rose 2006; Brueggemann 2009), and ASL training for interpreters now includes different ways to facilitate communication among ASL users and non-ASL users depending on whether the situation is colloquial or formal. However, ASL users today, for the most part, are completely unaware that an earlier formal register ever existed.

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10 EMERGENT METHODOLOGY FOR SIGN LANGUAGE ETYMOLOGY

The archaeological process of uncovering and reconstructing the grammar and lexicon of early ASL has drawn heavily on historical documents and text corpora, which are necessary for verifying the statistical distributions of lexical and grammatical features diachronically and synchronically across generations of ASL users. This process also requires effective methods for identifying, comparing, and interpreting lexical and stylistic differences between the early sign language data and modern ASL.

REDUCTION AND SEMANTIC CHANGE

When F. A. P. Barnard traced the etymological root for the ASL sign PRESIDENT to a particular event at the Hartford school, he used the process of "reduction" (see chapters 1 and 5). The ASL form that is still used today to denote PRESIDENT originated when U.S. President Monroe visited the school, wearing the cocked hat for which he was renowned. Barnard noted that collective memory in the sign language community was particularly important in this case. Barnard's etymology started with Hartford students signing President Monroe's proper name, establishing reference to him by reciting the shape of his cocked hat. Eventually this form was generalized to other persons occupying the same office. Further semantic change occurred when the community extended its use to others

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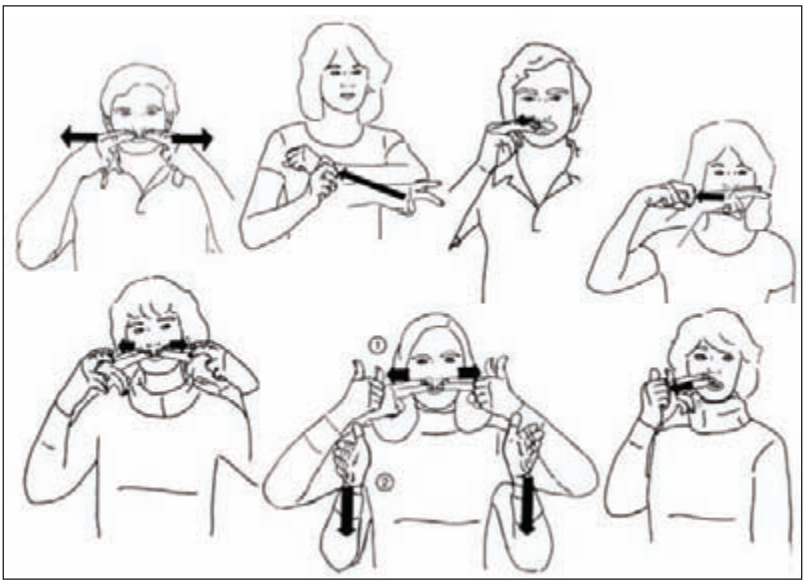

FIGURE 10.1. Modern regional variants for "thief." Source: Shroyer and Shroyer (1984) 249–51.

being appointed to a similar position in any organization. The link to the sign's original meaning is now opaque, since collective memory is often shared only within a few cohort generations; thus, it is often not possible to rely solely on collective memory to uncover a sign's etymology.

Relying on a sign's gloss for its etymology can be misleading, too. For example, the gloss THIEF can today refer to a variety of single and compound sign forms, illustrated in figure 10.1.

The sign language of the early twentieth century often required the combination of several signs together into phrases to convey a concept. The word formation process of early ASL relied upon syntax. Figure 10.2 illustrates E. M. Gallaudet's rendition of the entire concept of "thief," which makes use of the lexical phrase [TRACE-MOUSTACHE STEAL TRACE-BODY].[1]

Several signs composing a lexical phrase are required to render this one concept. The glosses chosen can be misleading because the sign for one of the modern variants of the concept "thief" is glossed using the same

1. Brackets indicate a *sign phrase,* a phrase conveying a single concept or word.

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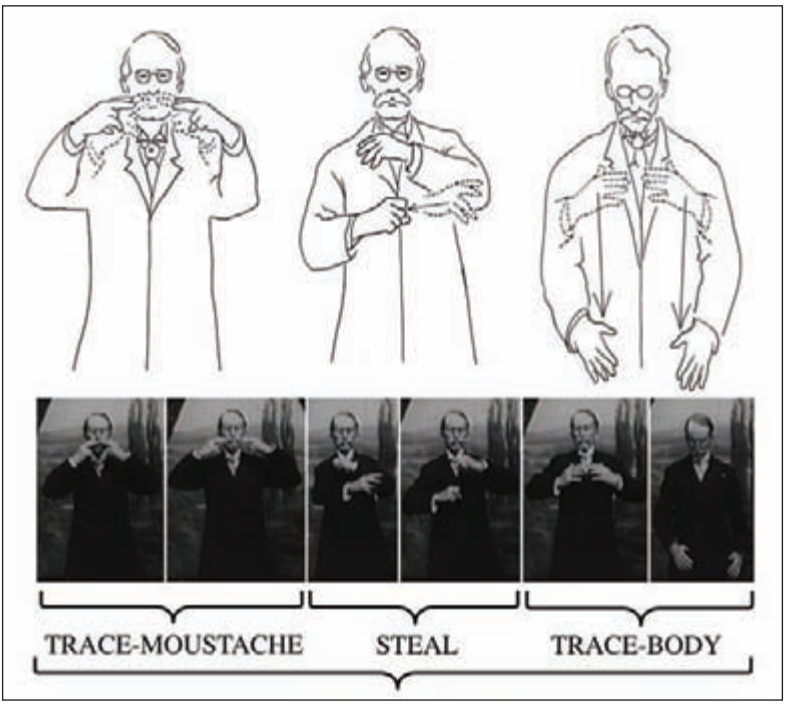

FIGURE 10.2. E. M. Gallaudet's 1910 rendition of lexical phrase for "thief." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

term as is used for one piece of E. M. Gallaudet's lexical phrase. The NAD films illustrate that the modern single form often glossed as THIEF did not originally stand alone; furthermore, one or two of the signs from the original phrase were combined in different ways to produce most of the variants seen today (see figure 10.2). The use of glosses to record signs has contributed to the erroneous assumption by many that one gloss is equivalent to one signed form. Instead, the gloss may only hint at the original sign phrase, which became standardized, then reduced to the compound or single sign in modern ASL.

"Semantic bleaching," on the other hand, goes a step further than reduction. Bernd Heine (2003) describes semantic bleaching as the loss of discrete aspects of meaning. He provides an example of the process that occurs in many world languages. Semantic content is bleached out when nouns and verbs lose most or all of their lexical meaning and demonstratives

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lose their deictic meaning. In the case of the quantifying component of a numeral, "one" is bleached out once it is reanalyzed as an indefinite article (Heine 2003). Similarly, semantic bleaching occurs in sign language as well. For example, the early LSF sign for ONE composed of the [A] handshape was imported into early ASL and subsequently underwent the same bleaching process; the original meaning of the LSF sign for ONE became lost over time (see figures 6.23 through 6.28).

FOLK ETYMOLOGIES

A popular approach to etymology involves relying on the apparent transparency of the sign form to explain its origin. For instance, signers have linked the sign for PRESIDENT to the shape of buffalo horns as attached to headwear worn by spirit men in North Plains tribes, as well as to the red, white, and blue inaugural material draped over windows and balconies (especially among those who articulated the sign in midair away from the body). These theories are "folk etymologies," stories about where signs have come from that are not substantiated by history or fact.

Folk etymologies arise when there is a gap in knowledge about the true history of a word; in sign languages, they are based on iconic resemblance of the form of a sign to objects and ideas of its period. One sees folk etymology particularly when historical documentation of a sign does not exist or has been lost, and the original components of the sign have reduced, rendering the sign opaque; the contemporary analysis often stems from a belief that a sign's origin is likely a form of mimetic or visual depiction. Folk etymologies vary according to the individual who tries to make sense from the apparent transparency of a sign's form. Some folk etymologies spread widely, become part of the collective memory, and are transmitted across generations as part of sign language culture.

AMERICA is a classic example: The National Theatre of the Deaf production of *My Third Eye* (1971) offers three popular etymological explanations. ASL users at different times traced the sign for "America" to a "melting pot," the log cabins of the New World, and the split rail fences of the frontier. Watson made the latter etymological link in the 1964 volume of his dictionary (see figure 10.3).

The "melting pot" seems to be the most popular etymology today; it seems to better fit with the political agenda for promoting integration into society. In this folk etymology, the intertwining of the fingers depicts

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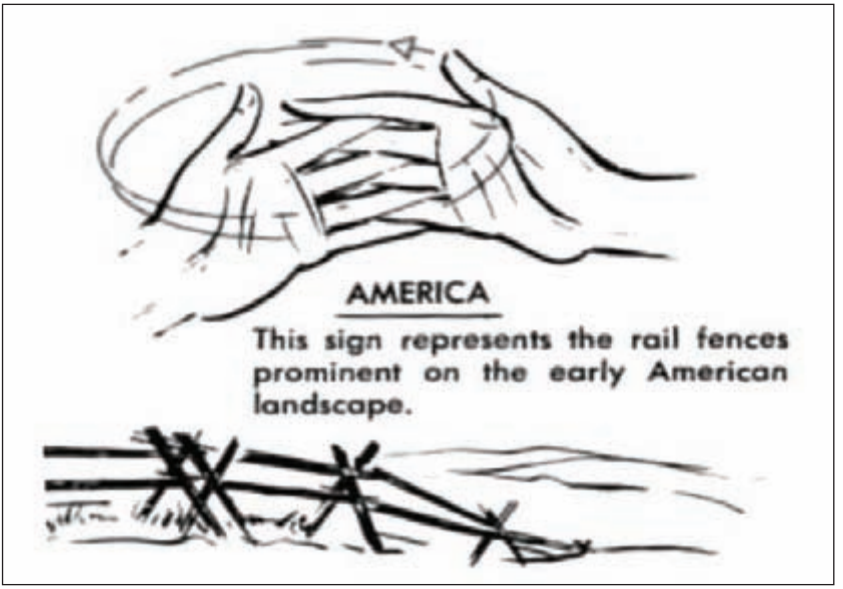

FIGURE 10.3. Watson folk etymology for the sign AMERICA. Source: Watson (1964) 153. Used by permission of the Watson family.

the coming together of immigrants and indigenous people. Massive immigration to America started in the mid-nineteenth century, so one may speculate that the other two folk etymologies may date to Clerc's and T. H. Gallaudet's founding of the Hartford school. The earliest evidence for the log construction etymology comes from an interview with one alumnus at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, who traced the sign's derivation to an anecdote explaining that Indians named the Europeans by the way they built houses (Hemingway and James 2007).

We may trace origins of signs on the basis of visible evidence, identifying two sign parts in a sign as verification that it is a compound. An example of this is seen in Stokoe et al. (1965), and Watson (1964) presented both archaic and modern forms in their dictionaries, thus making it possible to ascribe the origin of HOME to a straightforward compound of EAT + SLEEP. Yet lexicographers were not consistent in providing etymological links, leaving some opacity in the current lexicon and morphology of ASL.

A discrepancy exists between folk etymology and diachronic study. Folk wisdom holds that the origin of the sign for "star" is a mimetic depiction of the how a star sparkles. For his dictionary, Watson (1964) focused on the rubbing action between the two hands as a depiction of friction and

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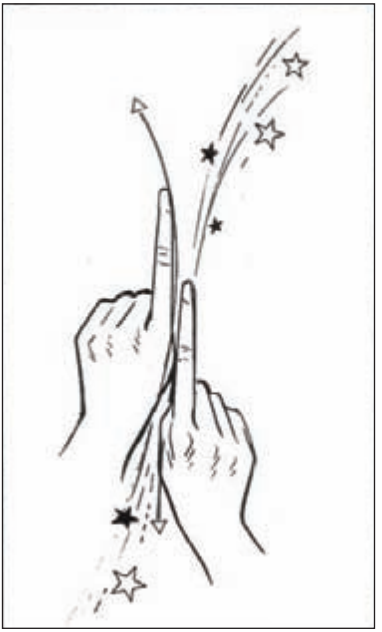

FIGURE 10.4. Modern form for expressing concept of "star." Source: Watson (1964), 141. Used by permission of the Watson family.

rationalized that the sign came from the salient attribute of sparkling, an etymology motivated by an iconicity assumption (see figure 10.4).

However, the NAD films reveal that the etymology of the current form of STAR is actually opaque, quite arbitrary, and linguistically motivated. In 1913, a signer indicated STAR with a string of repetitive pointing signs made with both hands, alternating movement to various parts of space above the head. This pointing sequence signaled a collection of stars across the sky.

Three synchronic variants appear in the films, correlating with two separate generational cohorts. Robert MacGregor, a third-generation signer, points to different locations overhead to indicate an arrangement of many stars (figure 10.5). Willis Hubbard, another third-generation signer, instead moves the two hands vertically in an alternating manner at each side of the body (figure 10.6). Further articulatory reduction occurs in the next generation; the spatial feature of separating the two hands is discontinued. Mary Erd, a fourth-generation signer, places the two hands close so that they rub each other while moving up and down, in a form similar to the modern version (figure 10.7).

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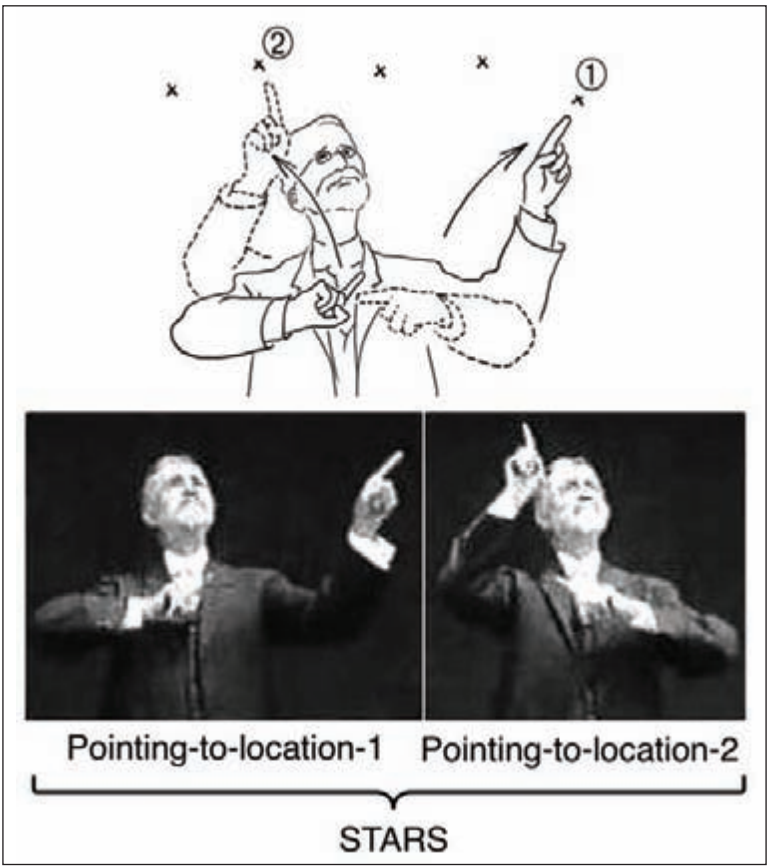

FIGURE 10.5. Robert MacGregor's 1913 rendition of "star." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

In the film Erd places this repeated brushing form at several locations to inflect for plural. The ultimate result of the progressive reduction is a more concise lexical word, or lexeme, consisting of a rubbing of the hands against each other while moving. Yet the variants shown in figures 10.5 and 10.7 were documented by Higgins in his 1923 dictionary where he included both the periphrastic and reduced forms.

RE-EXAMINING ASL ETYMOLOGY

These historical contrasts suggest, at least for many of the analyzed constructions, that ASL has undergone the historical processes characteristic of

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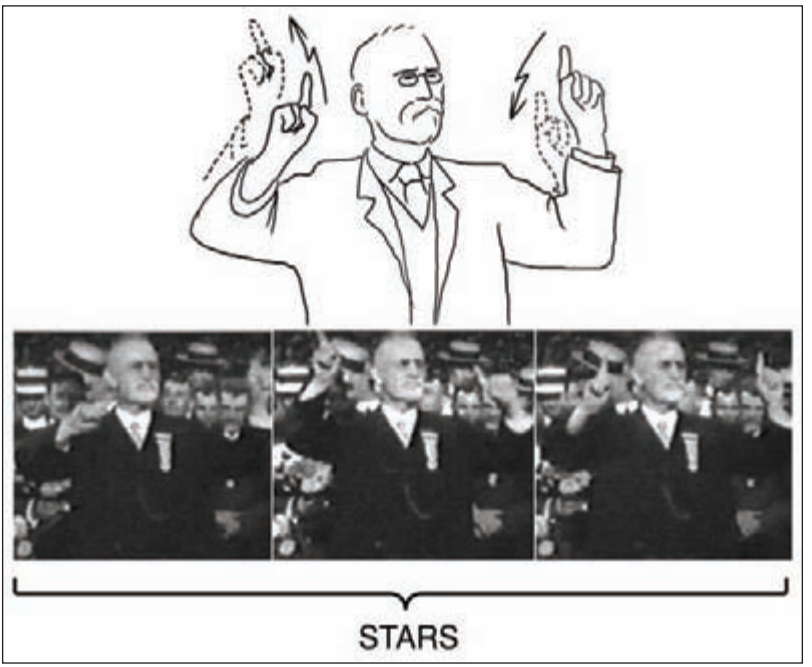

FIGURE 10.6. Willis Hubbard's 1913 rendition of "star." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD* used with permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

grammaticalization in spoken languages whereby sequential syntax becomes morphology (Hopper and Traugott 1993). Through these processes, we can accurately trace the full linguistic and historical context of specific related expressions, forms, and paradigms across time, revealing the overall patterns guiding linguistic change in ASL.

Such change flows in a predictable path when the form involves the use of an isolated gesture. Natural gesture is often transparent in meaning if its function is to transmit content information in a direct way. For instance, when someone draws an outline of a round shape in midair, any viewer will grasp the meaning of this gesture. However, some ambiguity can be expected in such a single gestural form made in isolation: one may not be certain of whether it refers to a path movement made by a rotating object or to the shape of a round object. To disambiguate this gestural form, a signer may supplement it with additional gestures, each providing some contextual information. As a consequence, the intended form may under-

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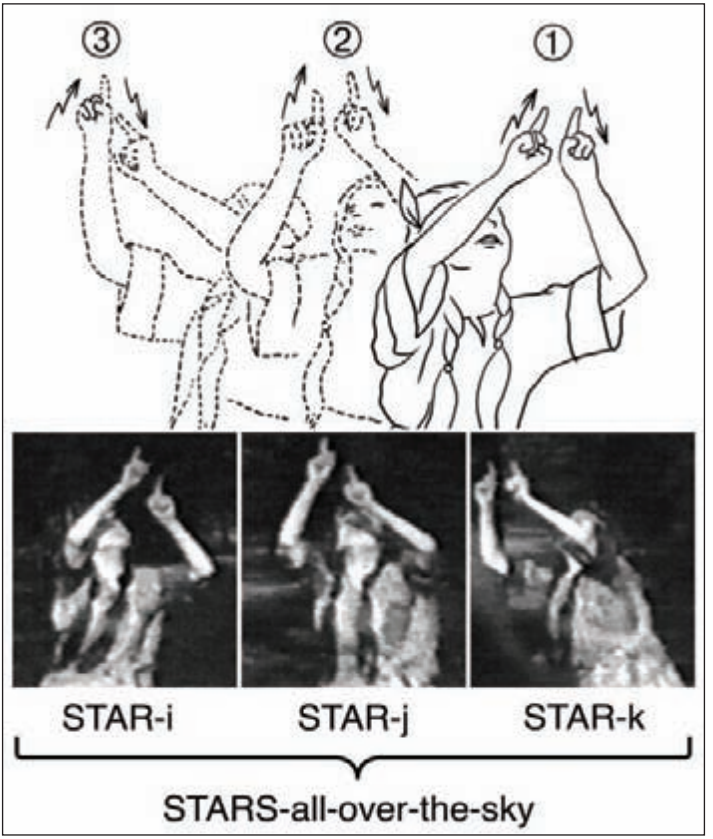

FIGURE 10.7. Mary Erd's 1913 rendition of "star." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay.

take a particular linguistic function, allowing it to become grammatical in relation to adjacent forms.

An important contextual factor supporting the process of reanalysis is structural adjacency, the interaction within and across signed sequences and linguistic forces such as assimilation and morphological contrast. Signs are produced in sequence with different signs preceding and following. Adjacent signs exert their influence upon a sign and may alter its form through assimilation.

One example of this in ASL history involves the etymology for the interrogative form WHO. In his 1913 film, John Hotchkiss produces a sign outlining his face to express the notion "who" in this context. As illustrated

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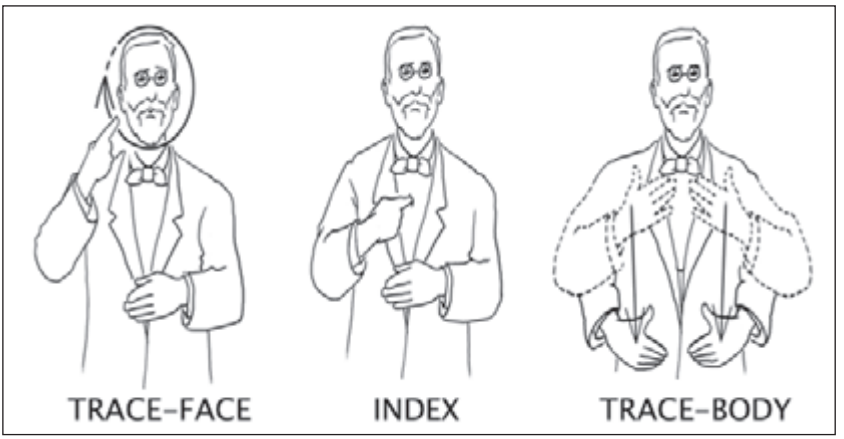

FIGURE 10.8. Drawing of John Hotchkiss's 1913 rendition of "who I am." Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

in figure 10.8, Hotchkiss makes a very large, full circular motion for the sign TRACE-FACE, along with the prosody of a sign phrase for the signs TRACE-FACE INDEX TRACE-BODY. This makes it clear that Hotchkiss is not referring to his own actual face, but to a more general concept of a person, an individual. This sign phrase is a constructed meaning "who" and does not refer to the more specific concept of "face." In this case, it is not possible to construct an etymology studying single signs alone; one would misinterpret the function of the sign and its abstract meaning. Only through a study of the context of this sign token can we assign it a meaning of "who," recognizing that the original meaning of "trace-face" has been metaphorically extended. It is notable that we see the use of metaphor appears at an early stage in the history of ASL.

Metaphorical extension has played a large role in expansion of the sign language lexicon, capitalizing on the form of existing signs to create needed concepts with functions and meanings distinct from the original signs. This has created polysemy in certain cases, wherein a single form diverges in its meaning across linguistic contexts, presenting certain problems for lexicographers, who must make judgments about the number of dictionary entries for a single form. At one time, the signs for the concepts "who" and "trace-face" were polysemous in ASL; following the sign's use to the modern era, it has become the sign for the concept "face."

Over time, the phenomenon of adjacency can affect the polysemous forms in different ways, so that the forms begin to diverge as well. In

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FIGURE 10.9. Contextual/adjacency influences on reanalysis. Left and right, 42; center, 118. Newell (1983), used by permission of the NAD.

such cases, reanalysis in context provokes metaphorical use. The different morphological pattern of the linguistic context leads to separate paths of reduction and paradigm development, diverging from our reconstructed development of FACE. In the modern sign variants for the concept "who," the sign has undergone assimilation to adjacent signs in common syntactic contexts, and has taken on a more abstract meaning. As we have seen so far, the original size and shape specifier form has been retained for the sign FACE. Yet the concept of "face" is used extensively in ASL history to express the concept "resemble." In this construction, the sign FACE is paired with IDENTICAL (figure 10.9).

The modern form for "resemble," RESEMBLANCE, is a sign with a single touch to the nose followed by a shaking motion to the Y handshape for IDENTICAL. Yet there is an alternate for RESEMBLANCE, which is indeed a full compound still used today, where the first part has the FACE articulated around the signer's face, followed by the same second part IDENTICAL. The touch to the nose is significant in the contracted variant, in that it maintains a contrast with related signs, such as TASTE+IDENTICAL (a touch to the lips) and SOUND+IDENTICAL (a touch to the ear). The pressures of maintaining this contrast have led to the diverging development of a sign very different from the development of WHO. In this diverging development for WHO, FACE, and RESEMBLANCE, it is possible to see the forces of language change at work in ASL history. For example, it is a simple process of reduction from FACE to the "look" component for this paradigm. This change is made by generalizing the initial paradigmatic operation for the RESEMBLANCE family. Movement would simply be

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deleted while placement would be retained, although the segment would be reduced to a brief hold at nose region.

However, the concept "who" can be expressed with a great variety of signs, a number of which appear to be regional variations. For example, one of these is a reduced form of the earlier sign, with the circular motion at the mouth only. The NAD Gallaudet Lecture films includes a number of cotemporaneous signers from different regions of the country; in the films, these signers produce variety of signs for the concept "who." This indicates that historical variation, change, and reduction in the sign were in process at this stage of ASL history. Furthermore, the process of semantic reduction seems to be part of the universal properties for signed languages (Emmorey 2003). This leads to the question of why and how signers maintained the original full form and meaning for the sign FACE.

We suggest that the maintenance of the full form and meaning for FACE is tied to its status as a size and shape specifier (SASS), a category of classifier in ASL. Tied as it is to depicting the size of a human face, it resisted reduction over time. Since the nominal form here would also inherently carry the adjectival function of "roundness" by default, it would be necessary to disassociate this by means of adding a modifier to provide detail on the type of face. For instance, the expression of a "long narrow-shaped face" would have a periphrastic construction beginning with the conventional FACE sign, followed by a SASS construction indicating the particular shape. What this example shows is that while ASL continues using the periphrastic strategy for detailed descriptions, some apparently iconic classifier morphemes have been consistently converted in specific ways, making them more arbitrary.

In the case of the "who" construction, however, the link between the meaning and the form used to represent a human face weakened. The sign no longer depicted a category of items (e.g., large, round shapes) and, over time, became an abstract concept. As such, the handshape, movement, location, and orientation of the sign were less resistant to phonological change and reduction. This fact accounts for the many variants of "who" seen today.[2] Figure 10.10 illustrates seven such variants.

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2. In this sampler (figure 10.10) there are several variants requiring some consideration of the role of dactylology. Here one variant has the three letters W-H-O spelled out in space. This sequence can be compressed and displaced to the mouth region once it adopts a location feature from the competing form WHO. The

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FIGURE 10.10. Modern variants for the sign WHO. Source: Shroyer and Shroyer (1984), 280–81.

The forms of the variants of "who" in modern ASL are not random articulatory deviations; they are a result of the forces of assimilation from the interaction of adjacent forms. In figure 10.11, the sign WHO is produced with a bending index finger while the thumb contacts the chin. This can be explained by assimilation in the oft-produced sequence of the signed phrase: ASK WHO, in which the sign ASK ends with a bending index finger. In the case of the thumb contact of this sign, it is possible that this is an assimilation from the frequent combination of WHO with the preceding sign regarding a person's identity and familial relationships, which all have thumb contact with the face and are often adjacent to this kind of inquiry. In addition to physical ease of production, reduction lessens the cognitive

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process of blending competing words is called amalgamation. In this case, further reduction ends with a simple repeated open and close of the hand on the mouth. Yet there is another possible etymological explanation involving clipping of the sign PRETTY, as if one is referring to "who is the prettiest." This latter explanation would be more convincing if we found historical indication of its appearance before the fingerspelled W-H-O.

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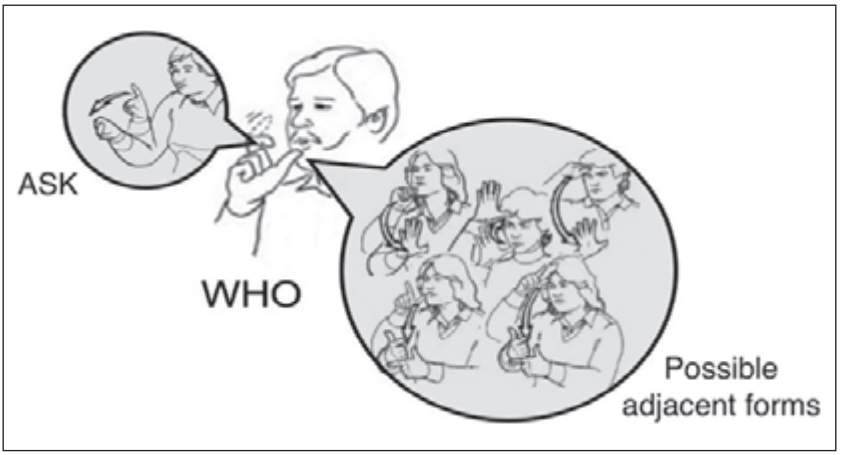

FIGURE 10.11. Co-articulation effects of signs adjacent to WHO. Source: Newell (1983), 13, 120, 80, 67, 95, 20. Used by permission of the NAD.

load in language perception (Frishberg 1975; Klima and Bellugi 1979; Siple 1978).

A third phenomenon occurs in a polysemous situation where a multi-sign paradigmatic alternation pattern emerges within one particular linguistic context. The function of this sort of construction is often to further specify the meaning of the more specific sign to distinguish related concepts (e.g., TRACE-BODY → TRACE-BODY/PERSON → TRACE-BODY/PERSON/AGENT). In turn, this diverging of a word's meanings in specific linguistic contexts while maintaining its form can trigger the process of relexicalization. As a consequence, signers can eventually assign a new gloss for such relexicalized forms (i.e., PERSON or AGENT instead of TRACE-BODY).

Thus, the lexical morphology of the language can be used to further differentiate similar items in etymological research. The correlation between the use of glossing and the process of relexicalization is indeed an interesting historical linguistic phenomenon. The tagging of a new gloss to a particular form may signal the lexical salience of the same form, regardless of its previous use. The case of THIEF is one instance where there is a trend of semantic shift from direct denotation to a "body part" (i.e., TRACE-MOUSTACHE) to the metonymic reference to a class of individuals.

In the following sample analysis of morphological divergence, the etymology for the concept "thief" demonstrates the value of modern-day

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variation. Meanwhile, semantic bleaching proceeds in the same fashion in separate dialects, regardless of how the lexical phrase is structurally reduced to a polyword variant unique to a particular dialect. Different parts would be deleted, thus contributing to lexical divergence. In some dialects the final part BODY would be retained along with either TRACE-MOUSTACHE or STEAL, whereas in other dialects this would be completely dropped. Meanwhile, TRACE-MOUSTACHE and STEAL may either be merged in varying degree or be part of the elimination process, resulting in a single sign segment.

This crucial stage in reanalysis—a common result of linguistic change—has been perceived in the past in ASL as random variation of form; instead, this variation in usage or divergence across dialects provides us with data to reconstruct missing etymological links. In addition, the presence of opacity and polysemy provide an important clue to historical processes and etymological relationships.

TRACING SOURCES OF CHANGE IN MORPHOLOGY

The current consensus in the sign language research community is that ASL makes use of a "rich simultaneous morphology." The simultaneous morphology has often been attributed to natural cognitive preferences in the visual-gestural modality for simultaneous structures, in order to overcome the slower rate of transmission (Bellugi and Fischer 1972). This position may have created a bias among contemporary scholars, many of whom have observed sign language in historical films and suggested that the profuse sequencing of morphemes in the films must be interference from the colonial language (i.e., English-like structures). We consider this trend in the modern theoretical approach a consequence of the ignorance of natural language change and unfamiliarity with precursor structures.

Instead, we attribute the presence of a rich morphology in modern ASL to historical grammaticalization that converted original phrase constructions through reanalysis into current lexical and grammatical morphemes. The grammar of ASL, then, would contain more polysemous and opaque forms as well as particles, compounds, and inflections in its later versions. Several breakthrough discoveries in our archaeological work support this perspective as listed:

1. The usage of phrasal and prosodic cues to confirm a unidirectional trend of change in ASL morphology and lexicon

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2. The ability to trace a unidirectional shift from early ASL syntax to modern morphology
3. The presence of a correlation between patterns of reanalysis named in 1 and 2 and the generations of signers living in a particular period

ACCOUNTABILITY OF UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES

Grammaticalization most often begins with a content word (i.e., noun argument or predicative relation) taking on new meaning in a new context. Eventually, over time, the same form may be reanalyzed to serve a different function in the grammar, such as a function word or particle, which would take on some grammatical information while its original meaning is bleached out. Furthermore, the structural change in the form and function of a linguistic symbol has been shown to be made only in one direction (unidirectional) across successive cycles of reanalysis. Reanalysis often involves systematic elimination of redundant articulatory features and, thus, eventually reduces the word form (originally a free morpheme) into a bound morpheme.

To determine whether a continuous trend of recurrent reanalysis occurs in a particular direction requires a historic context for a family of related and contrasting phrases—a paradigm. In the present example the signs MALE and FEMALE, used across a number of kinship phrases, have become regular affixes in the modern kinship signs. Our analysis thus reveals an evolutionary pattern of ASL linguistic forms, which parallels historical change described for spoken languages. The early form of ASL as recorded on the NAD historical films provide a crucial link between archaic LSF signs and modern ASL signs, making it possible to see the grammaticalization processes that have taken place over ASL's history.

The position of fused morphemes is particularly important for paradigm formation in early ASL. ASL morphology illustrates that the words used in a family of related and contrasting phrases—a paradigm—usually become the affixes. For example, the signs MALE and FEMALE, used across a number of kinship phrases, have become gender affixes in the modern kinship signs. The masculine/feminine contrast for gender marking begins as separate words of attribute in early ASL, which become clitics whose forms become simply the location for the sign. The new clitic comprised of a location feature is bound to a kinship word, such as COUSIN, in modern ASL.

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Paradigm formation is required for the conversion of bodypart SASSes into systematic, affix-like morphemes, which appear either before or after the host stem. In the derivation for the AGENT term (discussed earlier in this chapter), the singular person quantifier conversion into the productive agent suffix retained the same position in relation to the host word (i.e., verb of action). By contrast, other human terms required a paradigm involving choice of a gender marker (i.e., MALE versus FEMALE prefixes) in the first position preceding the word stem or host (i.e., kinship). Originally, the paradigm required a collocation of two lexical words; the first being a full sign distinguishing human gender and the second signaled the attributor. Over time, the collocation became reduced to a paradigmatic set of two minimally contrastive elements in sequence for human kinship terms. The extent that the merge varies across these three types of grammatical function is shown in figure 10.12. In addition, the difference in position of the clitic morpheme is determined by the dependent relation of the particle word to the host word in the original paradigm.

Table 10.1 also compares degree of productivity in the bound morphology in ASL. The rule for attaching the agent morpheme in an appropriate syntactic context is not as regular as the rule for the gender morpheme in

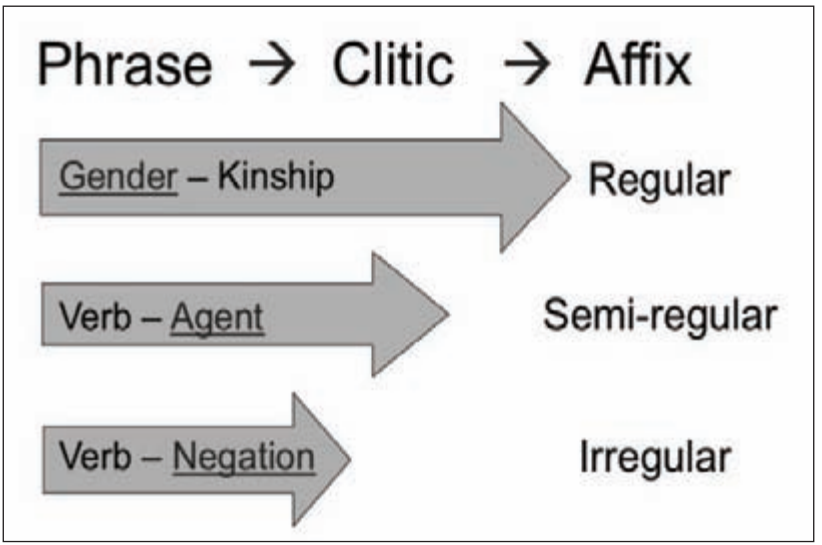

FIGURE 10.12. Development of bound morphology in ASL.

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TABLE 10.1. Correlation of Morphological Type to Process of Grammaticalization.

(free morpheme type) . . .(syntactically bound type). . . (regularly bound type)
Content word > grammatical word particle > clitic to a particular host > affix

ASL kinship terms. In comparison, the rule for replacing the lexical negator with the cliticized form is not regular at all.

The impact of reanalysis on a morphemic form may extend in correlation with the process of grammaticalization. A particular form may either remain a free morpheme or become bound to a host in some degree of regularity (see the bottom row in table 10.1).

Once the particle is set in a regular position adjacent to the host lexeme, the next step of language change involves co-articulation to fuse the isolated particle to the host. Regularity of this co-occurrence is necessary to trigger reanalysis, which leads to the process of cliticization.

Eventually this leads to the establishment of a paradigm for a lexical phrase to express a range of grammatical categories such as aspect, person, and number. This pattern is found among the terms describing human kinship and calendar units (time signs in ASL) as well. For such categories, clause-external modifiers are often used at the outset of this evolution, followed by paradigmatic reduction unless another phenomenon appears affecting morphemic ordering in the paradigm (e.g., a shift from post-clausal negators to pre-verbal types such as NOT). This process should not be confused with conventional articulatory reduction, which has been well described in the literature through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (i.e., Barnard 1834; Brown 1856; De Haerne 1875; Frishberg 1975; Klima and Bellugi 1979; Liddell and Johnson 1986; Padden and Perlmutter 1987).

The following example from the NAD films concerns the irregular negative condition. The illustration (figure 10.13) shows the comparison of the current polyword with the classical lexical phrase for NEVER as produced by E. M. Gallaudet. In another film, Robert MacGregor produced an identical phrase for NEVER.

Features of unidirectional language change discussed earlier are seen clearly in this example where the post-verbal position of the negator influenced the prosodic movement of the modern form of the sign as it became a clitic or bound morpheme, that is, a subpart of the word which cannot appear alone but is attached to other words. This example is also a case in

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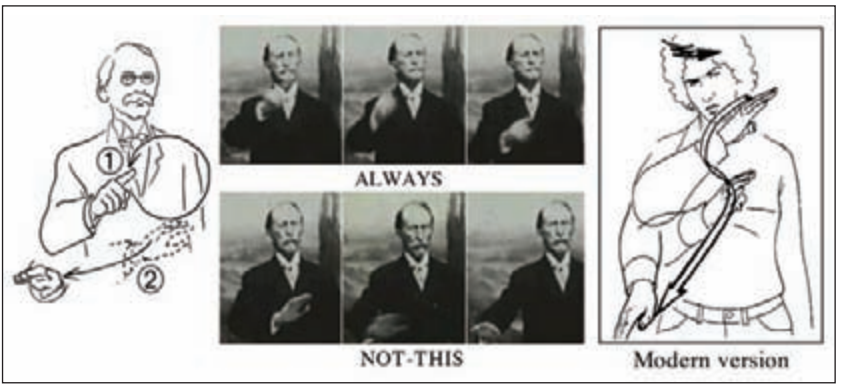

FIGURE 10.13. Middle: Edward Miner Gallaudet's 1913 lexical phrase origin of modern NEVER. Right: Modern NEVER. Source: Left illustration by Val Nelson-Metlay. Right, Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 151.

which semantic change has occurred to such an extent that the meaning from the original lexical phrase is now opaque.

OPACITY AS EVIDENCE FOR LOSS OF HISTORICAL LINK

Grammatical opacity is most likely to occur when a morphological process is no longer productive. Within the same post-negator paradigm as ALWAYS NEGATIVE –> NEVER, the set of three irregular verb forms shown in figure 10.14 is an example of an isolated pattern of negative contraction in modern ASL. This process is no longer productive due to the introduction of the pre-verbal NOT, which eventually replaced the post-verbal form in modern ASL.

The process of cliticization of the negator has been observed in the NAD films only with the contraction DON'T KNOW signed by John Hotchkiss in *Memories of Old Hartford*. Other contracted forms have been found in the Long and Higgins dictionaries.[3] The data are unclear as to whether negative contractions were considered by the sign masters to be primarily colloquial or whether they were accepted in the classical dialect.

3. The signs DON'T-KNOW, DON'T-WANT, and NEVER occur respectively in Long on pages 34, 29, and 82. They occur in Higgins on pages 83, 44, and 98.

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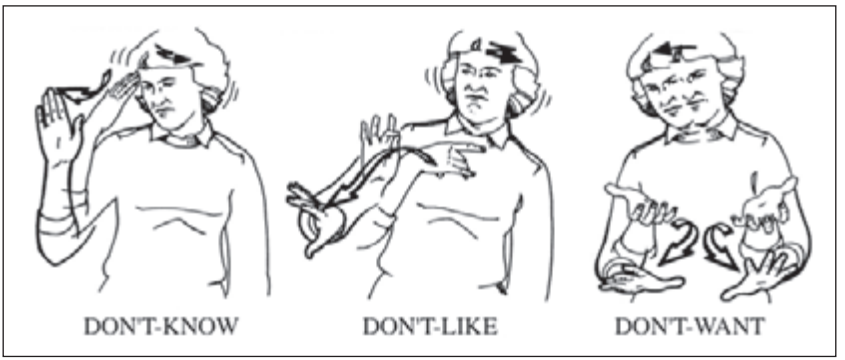

FIGURE 10.14. Vestiges of nonproductive negative clitic. Source: Newell (1983), 35. Used by permission of the NAD.

For example, the negative contraction also provides insight into LSF. As shown in figure 10.15, there is a strong resemblance between the current LSF negator to that of the early ASL negator. Both forms include a sweeping movement to one side. The handshape difference may be due to the process of initialization, which began in France and was imported to America along with the lexicon. It is not surprising that the natural gestural handshape has been replaced with a manual alphabetic form reflecting the initial letter of the French word *jamais* (NEVER).

It seems likely that the polyglottic practice of initialization emerged early in LSF, though it is unclear whether it was by design or a natural linguistic process. Nevertheless the initial handshape seemed to be already extant as part of the negator in early LSF as documented in Pélissier (1856). While handshape similarity is less prominent in the ASL/LSF comparison, one may speculate that the LSF form actually originated as a similar construction to the one found in early ASL. Interestingly, modern LSF allows further contraction of this movement and attachment to the verb stem (Chastel, personal communication).

Our archaeological investigation indicates a general pattern of evolution for historically related signed languages, wherein grammatical devices converge at earlier stages and diverge at later stages as language-specific devices become more systematic. The NAD films are a rich source of data for studying historical change in ASL as they include samples of structures for both the concatenative and nonconcatenative types of grammar. Concatenative samples as modeled by older generational cohorts are part of

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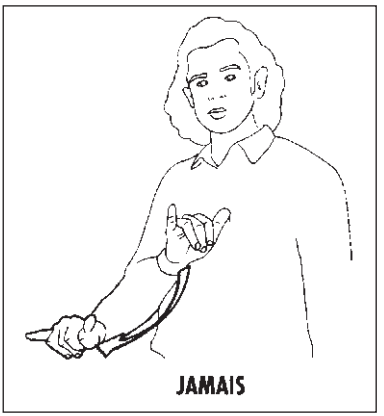

FIGURE 10.15. Modern LSF negator. Source: Girod (1997), 189. Used by permission of IVT—International Visual Theatre, 7 Cité Chaptal 75009 Paris, FRANCE, www.ivt.fr.

the idealized elite variety of early ASL and the nonconcatenative samples portray a transitional phase leading to a more synthetic form of grammar as found in modern ASL today.

These data sources (early ASL dictionaries and NAD films) form the core of our analyses on the expression of kinship and gender, agent, time/aspect/number, and negation, each of which undergoes extremely interesting changes through the historical films to modern ASL. These diachronic/synchronic analyses show that the sub-processes that form grammaticalization—such as reduction, cliticization, and paradigm formation, as well as polysemy and reanalysis—are forces shaping modern lexical and grammatical form and meaning in ASL as well.

This approach is also appealing as a model for examining other parameters in ASL syntax with their own sets of little-understood constituent structures. For instance, the rich morphology for generating classifier predicates, adjectival predicates, and serial verbs has been shown to be fundamental to ASL grammar in their capacity to generate poly-morphemic forms that are eventually lexicalized (or fossilized) into conventional signs (Supalla 1978; Supalla 1990). Similar structures have been reported in other sign languages, both young and mature (Singleton, Goldin-Meadow, and McNeill 1995; Osugi, Supalla, and Webb 2000). Moreover, this sort of mechanism plays a significant role in modern ASL for generating neologisms (Lillo-Martin

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1988; Bellugi and Newkirk 1981) as well as in early ASL for generating paraphrases such as those collected by Brown (1856) for his dictionary.

Our historical linguistic model presents a hypothesis for a pattern of evolution of ASL lexical forms and shows, for the first time, patterns of grammatical reanalysis parallel to those described for spoken languages. In rule-governed sign phrases, consistent word order provided an environment for the process of paradigm formation throughout the language. Language change typically reduces the phrase but maintains the original element order. These vestiges of syntactic structure are evident in modern synthetic polyword paradigms and in cliticized forms that are relics of the original periphrases.

In the first part of this chapter we presented several case studies that helped fill gaps in field methodology, leading to an etymological approach for understanding the process of reanalysis of ASL discourse. Further study of historical ASL sources has revealed cycles of reanalysis under particular contexts for shaping the form and function of individual signs. As mentioned, one contributing factor is the adjacency effect, whereby the etymological development of signs is influenced by the surrounding linguistic context. In such paradigms, signs are produced in sequence with certain signs that precede and other signs that follow them. The adjacent signs exert their influence upon a sign, which may alter its form through assimilation. This is one form of context important to consider in an etymology. In cases where the form of the sign remains constant in a variety of linguistic contexts, polysemy can develop, with a sign's meaning and/or function shifting in one or more of the contexts, diverging from the meaning of the form in other contexts. As time goes on, the phenomenon of adjacency can affect the polysemous forms in different ways, so that the forms begin to diverge as well. Thus it is possible to see identical signs with meanings that differ according to context, as described in chapter 5.

While it might seem that differentiating polysemous forms according to morphological context would lead to a great deal of confusion, this is not the case. In most cases, the pattern is systematic, with regular patterning in terms of word order and co-occurring lexical items. In this process, we may note reduction of the first sign, or alternating signs in a sequence, leading to a series of bound forms cliticized to the adjacent sign. Attention to this paradigmatic dimension of a sign's context is also crucial. These productive patterns help to identify the assimilative processes and morphology associ-

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ated with the etymology of the sign in that context. Allomorphy is another example of the regular process of language change we found in ASL. The allomorphy for a particular morphemic alternant can be determined by the distributional contrast among fillers of the same slot. Specifically, the distribution as found in the paradigm of RESEMBLANCE predicts the pattern of reduction for LOOK, as compared to the reduction of the same root FACE in the context of expressing the concept of "who."

The historical relationship between LSF and ASL and the degree of relatedness of historical and modern signs between these two languages is a rich area for etymological study. In previous research, James Woodward (1978) used a list of common concepts to elicit signs from members of each sign language community. The comparison of these signs revealed a striking 60 percent level of cognate forms—that is, 60 percent of the signs he examined across the two languages had a clear similarity in form, suggesting that they were historically related. For example, the forms for the concept "keep" differ in many aspects and also have quite different folk etymologies in each community. These forms would not likely be considered cognates. However, an examination of related forms, such as SUPERVISE, and the older forms from the historical Gallaudet Lecture Films for LOOK-AFTER and KEEP lead us to reconstruct a single antecedent form for both languages. It appears that once LSF signs were borrowed and used in America, independent processes of historical change and reanalysis led to the divergence in the sign forms in the two languages.

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11 DEVELOPMENT OF MORPHOLOGY UNIQUE TO ASL

The data contained in the NAD films provides a rare opportunity to perform historical analysis of grammatical morphology for a young developing language. This chapter presents sample data for lexical and semantic changes in ASL, and discusses how constituency could constrain the way the lexical phrase was lexically reconfigured. It then goes on to cover the subsequent development of grammatical morphology.

To understand the historical evolution of bound morphology in ASL, it is important to note that language users do not typically innovate grammatical particles. Rather, grammatical forms like suffixes arise through frequent use of multiword constructions, which are cyclically reanalyzed and ultimately grammaticized, displaying a reduced or compressed pronunciation in the final stage of change. In the case of the comparative/superlative ASL suffix, Stokoe, Casterline, and Croneberg's 1965 *Dictionary of American Sign Language* (DASL) provides a partial etymology, referring to the use of the definite article in the French language to distinguish objective from subjective case via use of contrast in handedness (i.e., left hand for object case versus right hand for subject case or vice versa, depending on discourse).

The DASL entry, identifying this as an "older" sign, called into question the relationship of this sign to the modern ASL comparative/superlative paradigm. In the NAD historical films this construction is used in ways that are very different from modern signs, such as *both* [A] handshapes

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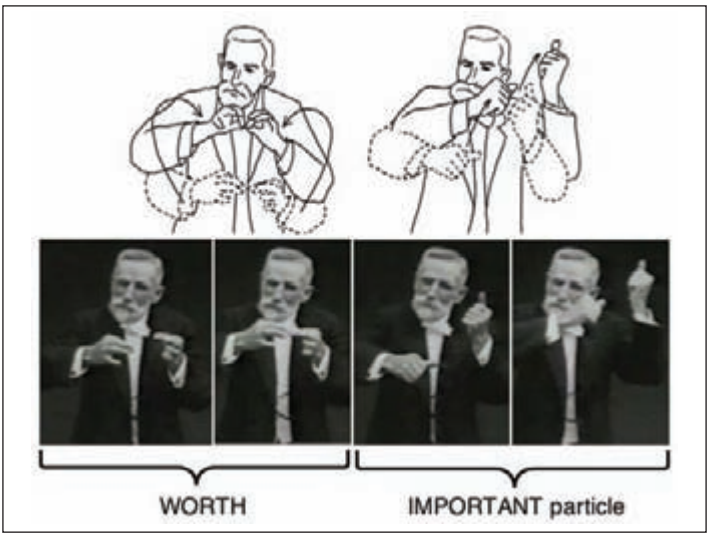

FIGURE 11.1. Hotchkiss's 1913 rendition for the concept "important." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission of Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Val Nelson-Metlay.

moving upward. Considering the various uses of older compared with modern forms reveals the role of prosodic cadence in lexical versus grammatical morphology.

Figure 11.1 depicts Hotchkiss signing the concept "important." In his rendition, the host sign WORTH is followed by the two [A] handshapes, one shadowing the upward motion of the other. The latter form was glossed in the Long 1910 dictionary as IMPORTANT. This example illustrates the interface of two morphological devices: the [A] handshape and the amplification of energy from co-articulation of the two hands. Amplification with two hands is not part of grammatical morphology in modern ASL, but there are remnants in the ASL lexicon. Certain lexical pairings contrast in number of hands (e.g., TELL [one hand] versus ANNOUNCE [two hands], LOOK versus LOOK-AROUND, THANK versus THANKFUL, and HAPPY versus OVERJOYED). Indeed, the process of relexicalization changed the original two-handed form WORTH to IMPORTANT, as long as the latter variant incorporates the prosodic amplification. Hence the original intensifying particle is no longer needed.

Lehmann (1995) posits the principle of elimination driven by redundancy to account for the pattern he calls "paradigm clipping," whereby

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abbreviated forms continue to represent the same set of concepts. The historical texts include numerous tokens of such lexical phrases, reflecting the nature of concatenative morphology of early ASL in the nineteenth century. Contemporary signers viewing these archaic texts might become sidetracked while processing lexical phrases unless they pay attention to prosodic clues. Otherwise, errors can be made in parsing lexical phrases as separate and unrelated words according to the way the modern grammar has reorganized these word elements. For example, former phrasal attributors are now used as independent words for CHILD, PEOPLE, and CHILDREN, and the MALE and FEMALE prefix signs are now relexicalized as BOY and GIRL, respectively.

Historical sources make it possible to compare correlates and cognates for modern signs. Such sources reveal that cliticization can become extreme under certain conditions, converting certain parts of a paradigm into a bound morpheme that cannot appear in isolation. The gender contrast in modern ASL is based on an arbitrary contrast of the locus feature: forehead area versus chin area. Since this arbitrary gender contrast has evolved over time, it would be unreasonable to expect it to be part of the original French system. In point of fact, however, the divergence between LSF and ASL seems to start with the loss of the systematic gender and kinship paradigm in LSF sometime after the language was exported to America. This can be seen in the modern LSF lexical roots for FATHER and MOTHER (figure 11.2), which, adjoined with OLD, form the signs for GRANDFATHER and GRANDMOTHER (figure 11.3).

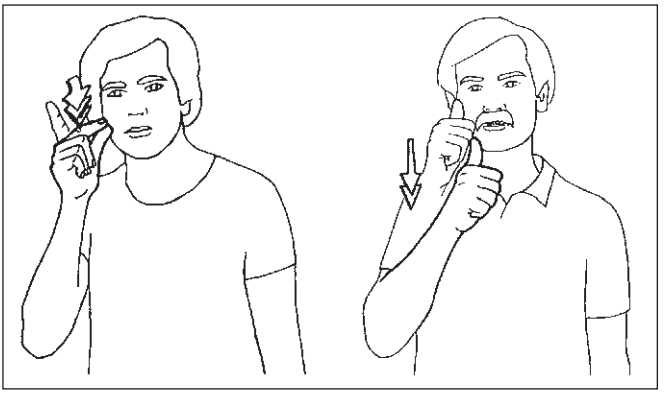

FIGURE 11.2. Basic lexical roots for FATHER and MOTHER in LSF. Source: Girod (1997), 204. Used by permission of IVT—International Visual Theatre, 7 Cité Chaptal 75009 Paris, FRANCE www.ivt.fr.

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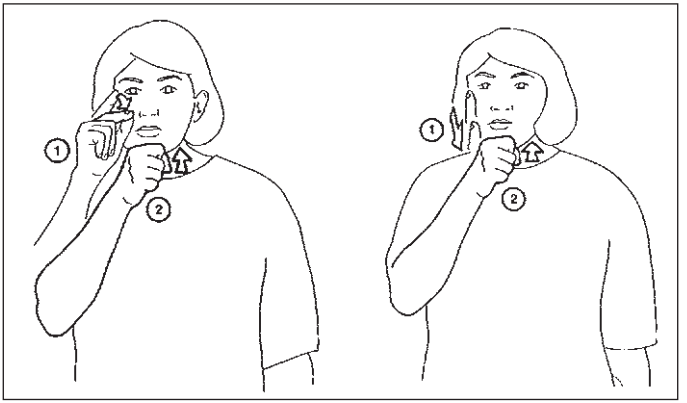

FIGURE 11.3. Adjoining with OLD for GRANDFATHER and GRANDMOTHER in LSF. Source: Girod (1997), 204. Used by permission of IVT—International Visual Theatre, 7 Cité Chaptal 75009 Paris, FRANCE www.ivt.fr.

Modern LSF has its own morphological system for marking gender and kinship contrast. In comparison, the ASL construction for GRANDFATHER and GRANDMOTHER has a clitic-like movement affixed to the PARENT particle to express the concept of "ancestor" (see figure 11.4).

Our proposed historical linguistic position assumes that there would be no concentration of bound morphemes in the early stages of any new signed language. New morphemes emerge as isolated lexemes, and natural discourse determines meaning when collocating these elements in sequence.

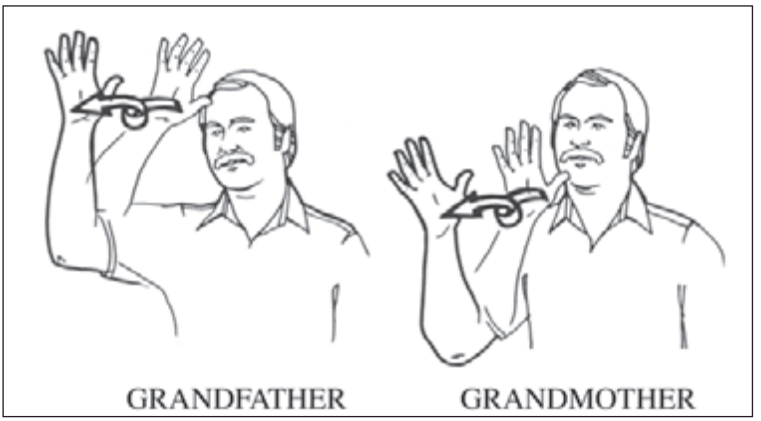

FIGURE 11.4. Modern ASL for GRANDFATHER and GRANDMOTHER. Source: Newell (1983), 51. Used by permission of the NAD.

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They eventually merge as regular paradigms with asymmetrical positioning for each element. Some morphemes become hosts whereas other morphemes become dependent by nature of their secondary positions. This kind of syntax functions as a trigger for subsequent reanalysis of lexical phrases, but the purpose of syntax can change through time. Within the same sequence of morphemes, the natural process of phonological reduction eventually converts the dependent word elements into clitic forms.

Changes that have taken place over time within the ASL language community include development of the following aspects of grammar:

1. Formalization and standardization of the interaction of syntax and prosody to govern a new kind of prosody for the compounding process as found in modern ASL;
2. The creation of particles by adapting the use of content words or modifiers (e.g., gender and agentive adjunctions); and
3. Followed by systematic reduction into gender prefixes and agentive suffixes for bound morphology.

To evaluate our analyses of early versus modern ASL, we used techniques discussed in the theoretical literature on historical change in spoken languages. For example, we conducted a test set of linguistic analyses to evaluate homogeneity among the signers in the films in their use of grammatical devices across morphosyntactic domains of ASL grammar. The Gallaudet Lecture Film Series and early ASL dictionaries capture structural changes in morphological processes as listed above, as well as the aspects of ASL morphology that remained unchanged over time as listed below.

1. Fundamental use of spatial contrast for person agreement for subject and object
2. Fundamental use of spatial and temporal patterning for number and aspect inflections
3. Fundamental use of nonmanual features for sentential type

The manipulation of movement trajectory creates patterns that allow such grammatical mechanisms as marking subject and object agreement in person and number and marking verb aspect. However, there is a historical trend for reconstitution of the verb's structure to incorporate person agreement. For example, Fay used an auxiliary path to supplement the verb TELEGRAPH in 1913 (figure 11.5). This sequence was eventually fused and reappeared in a sequence documented as TELEGRAPH, WIRE (figure 11.6) in Watson (1964). Further reanalysis relexicalized the form as an

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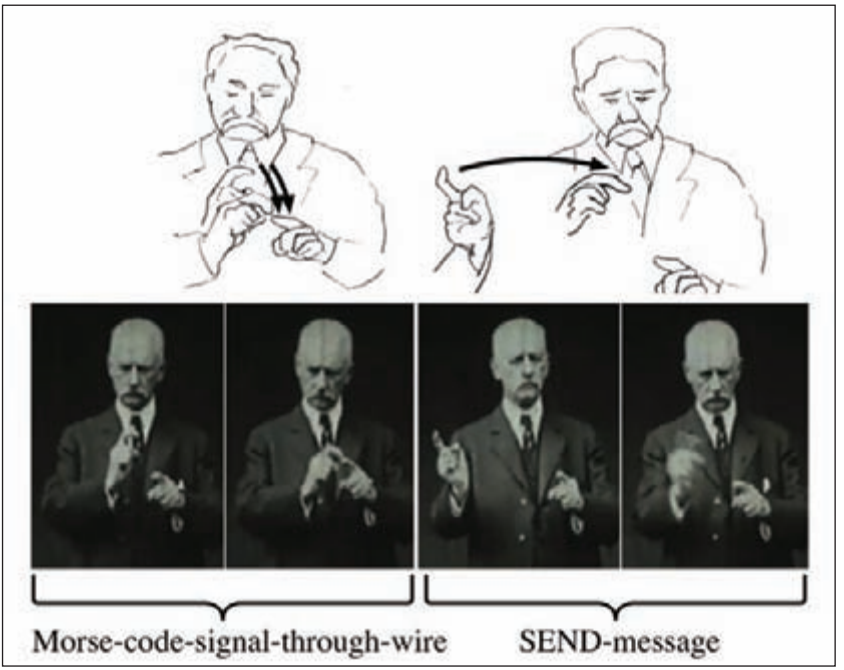

FIGURE 11.5. Fay's 1913 lexical phrase for "send a telegram." Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc. Illustrations by Ted Supalla.

independent verb MAKE-A-CALL, allowing person agreement for subject and object today.

As the language has evolved, temporal-spatial patterning seems to have fused into the word host for certain concepts relating to aspect, number, and time. The process of reanalysis is not intrinsically motivated by a need

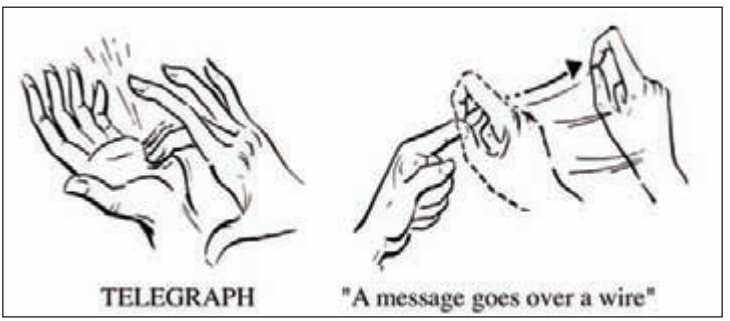

FIGURE 11.6. Watson's 1964 forms for "telegram" (150). Used by permission of the Watson family.

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to preserve iconicity in the lexical form (especially in marking plural), challenging the iconically motivated folk etymology explanation for the modern sign STAR as found in Watson's 1964 text (see figure 10.4). The earlier etymological description by Higgins (1923) refers specifically to the collection of entities spreading across the multiple locations in the air; for this reason, the gloss STARS is appropriate. In our analysis of the signing by MacGregor, Hubbard, and Erd in the films, we conclude that the "allocative distributive" meaning is dropped in the subsequent phase, as the random and independent pattern of moving the hands upward is replaced with a simple alternating manner of movement vertically.

Historical linguists have proposed that speakers made use of grammatical iconicity in introducing grammar into human speech (Hopper and Traugott 1993). In signed languages, iconicity plays a role in grammaticalization and language change, whereby a content word and the process of reanalysis work to produce a clitic or affix. It is interesting to note that grammatical iconicity seems to exploit the use of multiple locations in space to represent the concept of distributive aspect, and this seems to remain the same across time. Yet a parametric shift can be explained by a cognitive model in which multiple channels of information are eventually optimized to overcome the cognitive overload for articulation and perception of such information. Wilbur, Klima, and Bellugi (1983) proposed that separate channels in the gestural medium are eventually reassigned to specialize in marking grammatical categories. Facial postures are reserved for adverbial and sentential modifiers while lexical content is concentrated to the hands only. This account can explain the historical change for the sign COMPARE; figure 11.7 demonstrates how the lexical function of head movement (left images) transferred to the movement of the hands (right image).

The same thing is true for fusing/attaching nonmanual patterning of facial postures to multiple lexical items within and across clauses. This is not surprising, since even today morphophonemics for verb agreement, number, and aspect inflections, and nonmanual signals are common in other signed languages as well. These structures are also observed in emerging signed languages such as Nicaraguan Sign Language (Senghas, Coppola, Newport, and Supalla 1997) and also in ad hoc lingua franca systems, such as International Sign, created for international contact between deaf signers sharing no mutual sign language (Webb and Supalla 1994; Supalla and Webb 1995). It is likely, then, that these synthetic devices are naturally part

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FIGURE 11.7. Cognitive account for historical change in the sign COMPARE. Source: Reprinted by permission of the publisher from THE SIGNS OF LANGUAGE by Edward Klima and Ursula Bellugi p. 72. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

of lexical and grammatical mechanisms available for sign language at the onset of development. Subsequent generations of signers seem to follow the historic divergence between grammatical and lexical morphology as the role of lexical iconicity is no longer needed in a language once a particular process is established to form words in that language.

Early Deaf educators were aware of these linguistic processes at work on the natural language of signs. Their study of these processes often provided the basis for discussion of methods of education, and led to the publishing of dictionaries (Brown 1856; T. H. Gallaudet 1848; Jacobs 1855; Long 1918; Syle 1860).

LOOKING BACK: WHAT LED TO THE NEGLECT OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS ABOUT SIGN LANGUAGE?

This research illuminates the connections and interdependencies of linguistic and sociopolitical factors in sign language genesis and evolution. The effort to investigate the validity of the Gallaudet Lecture Films has led to a conceptual framework of philosophical periods reflecting the types of dichotomies in sign language methodology used in deaf education: *French method* → *Classical pedagogy* → *Combined method* → *Speech-supported pedagogy* → *Bilingual approach*

Our model has also allowed us to consider the impact of pedagogical innovation on sign language during its inception as well as its influence

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on language change during subsequent periods as seen in the following processes discussed previously in the book:

1. Methodical use of signs
2. Reduction of signs
3. Lexical phrase constructions and subsequent prosodic process for phrasal contraction, lexical compounding or parametric cliticization
4. Adaptation of polyglottic technology: dactylology, initialization, and loan words

Such paradigmatic patterns can be seen in natural alternations in indigenous sign language as well, such as inflections in the form of handshape, location, and movement alternations to further specify a concept. By considering the phenomenon of intrusive pedagogical intervention as a potential factor for determining direction of change, it is possible to examine the morphology of the language to further differentiate similar lexical items in etymological research. With this emergent methodology for the reconstruction and comparative analyses of signed forms throughout the history of any given signed language, missing links in sign language genesis and evolution can be re-forged, and observations on sign language typological variation and universals will naturally emerge.

Our analyses of early versus modern ASL to date have suggested that the very same types of historical processes as spoken languages have occurred in many constructions of ASL: whereas modern ASL has a complex inflectional and derivational morphology, many comparable constructions in early ASL were analytic and sequential. This would suggest that sign languages do not always contain complex nonconcatenative or simultaneous morphology—and that modern ASL does not include such morphology solely because of modality or iconicity.

Specific rules and processes can be generated to explain and predict these changes, resulting in a confirmation of the distinct typology of early ASL as compared to that of modern ASL. We presented some samples of our historical linguistic analyses using the diachronic method in an effort to determine whether comparable typological phenomena were observed in modern ASL and the early ASL used in the 1910 to 1920 materials. These sample analyses showed how we determined and identified trends where language change occurred in specifiable directions. Aspects of our findings included generalizations on the mechanisms of word formation in early ASL. Our analysis also employed methods effective for identifying,

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comparing, and interpreting prosodic and stylistic differences between the early sign language data and modern ASL. The diachronic approach we adopted allowed us to capture distinctive phases of development in sign language grammar.

Research into the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series has revealed a rich vein of historical data on ASL. Mining such data required a procedure that necessitated returning to source materials to verify assumptions and consider alternate explanations. Our twenty-first-century metalinguistic perceptions had the potential to mislead us in our research, had we not pursued adequate grounding in the understanding of the period. In our construction of a cataloguing platform, we have provided devices that will enable researchers to refer to data and additional historical materials of the period.

To facilitate access to the historical materials we organized for our database, the cataloguing platform provides basic search ability linking films, dictionaries, and transcriptions to allow scholars to use the data in various ways. This database architecture focuses on historical linguistic work and ways that it might reveal new insights into modern morphological processes in mature signed languages as well as provide predictive power in the study of emerging signed languages.

Historical indexes have provided us with a rich source for tracing linguistic forms, literary practices, and metalanguage of the time. The sign language literary canon can now be studied and documented or "excavated." With this historical database, we have begun the development of the infrastructure for broad-based humanities research on indigenous sign language communities and their language.

Sharing sign language resources for research and teaching requires that we build an infrastructure for documenting, archiving, and sharing sign language. Yet it is important to minimize inherent methodological flaws. This can be done by becoming familiar with typology and histories of indigenous sign languages around the world and their potential contacts with other languages, and cross-sectioning the metalinguistic, pedagogical, and language policy-making practices to reflect the potential frame of mind of a signer. In other words, it is important to identify determining factors affecting the signer's attitude or behavior when using sign language or analyzing its use.

The linguistic discussions of the nineteenth century have shown that word formation processes for ASL then and now are not the same. We have conducted diachronic and synchronic linguistic comparisons, both

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within the era of the films and with subsequent and earlier periods, and have interpreted the metalanguage of various periods in light of this new understanding. Finally, we re-forged a link in the chain of ASL history by considering the proto-grammar of ASL as a dynamic form incorporating contact with LSF and home signs. Our new broadened research model has enabled us to widen the scope of inquiry and to reinterpret existing historical documentation.

NATURAL PROCESS FOR GENERATING BOUND MORPHEMES

Both construction and compression of sign phrases are also rule-governed. When word order is consistent in sign phrases, paradigm formation throughout the language is possible. Future generations may then reduce the phrase while maintaining the original word order. These vestiges of word order or syntactic structure will be evident in modern forms as a result of the paradigms that were formed in earlier stages of the language.

In addition, unidirectional trends for successive change are essential for shaping the emergence of bound morphology that go deeper than the processes observed for compound constructions. One common approach to the analysis of morphological processes that has touched on historical foundations has been the study of compound structures in signed languages. There has been some understanding of the contributions of original lexical components in the formation of compounds and of the subsequent processes that have reduced and lexicalized these compound constructions (Liddell and Johnson 1986). This is evident from our historical database of early ASL in which narrative sources revealed patterns linking modern paradigms with their discourse roots.

All of the evolving processes we have described above show a pattern of change consistent with historical linguistic theory, thus validating the use of the literature on language universals in variation and change in spoken languages for comparison to our analyses of early versus modern ASL (Joseph and Janda 2003; Hock 1991; Hopper and Traugott 1993). As mentioned before, some signs in the database seemed to be a primary or content word in one context and a particle in another. One example is the diachronic pattern for the development of the AGENT affix as a nominalizer. In modern ASL, this dual function of a particular sign, exists for the form meaning both the modern adjectival predicate TRACE-BODY and the modern AGENT affix. Linguistic change, a result of reanalysis, has led

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to the conversion from the two open hands moving down across the torso with palms facing the body, denoting TRACE-BODY to an affix glossed as AGENT.

This polysemy and semantic alternation is also found diachronically across the generations represented in the films in the ways the signers incorporate these particular forms as either free or bound morphemes. When combining two or three signs in a phrase, all of the signers maintained each sign in a consistent position with respect to other concepts. Thus, the agent sign (the person who does something) always appeared at the end of a combination of several signs. In the older generation, the agent sign appeared as an independent sign in the multi-sign sequence. To express the concepts of a thief or an emperor, it seems that the second-generation signers required a combination of three signs. In the example TRACE-MOUSTACHE STEAL TRACE-BODY as produced by Edward M. Gallaudet and the example EMPEROR OVER-ALL TRACE-BODY as produced by Edward A. Fay, the sign which can be glossed as TRACE-BODY or AGENT always appears at the end of the lexical phrase.

The third-generation signers began to fuse the signs together by compressing the manner in which they produced the sequence, and the phrase began to take on a form approximating the characteristics of a single sign, although not quite like those found in modern ASL. If a signer wanted to say "interpreter," he or she produced the verb characterizing the action or profession and followed this with the affix AGENT.

While TRACE-BODY has retained the same general form and meaning across time, the affix AGENT began as a quantifier, representing a single individual, in early ASL. In modern ASL, it has become a nominalizer, representing the person performing the action, and has also changed in form.[1] From this example of morphologization, it is clear that prosodic patterns in combining signs vary across generations, and signal ongoing language change. Meanwhile, the lexical morphology expands by exploiting prosodic divergence; in this case, the modern form for the anatomical term BODY is derived from TRACE-BODY by means of replacing the steady contacting movement along the signer's body contour with dual contact. In the modern form, the hands would instead contact the top of the torso and move

1. The modern AGENT affix has undergone further change in its articulation with the dropping of one hand (deletion). This phenomenon relies on the coarticulation effect of the preceding segment or host word.

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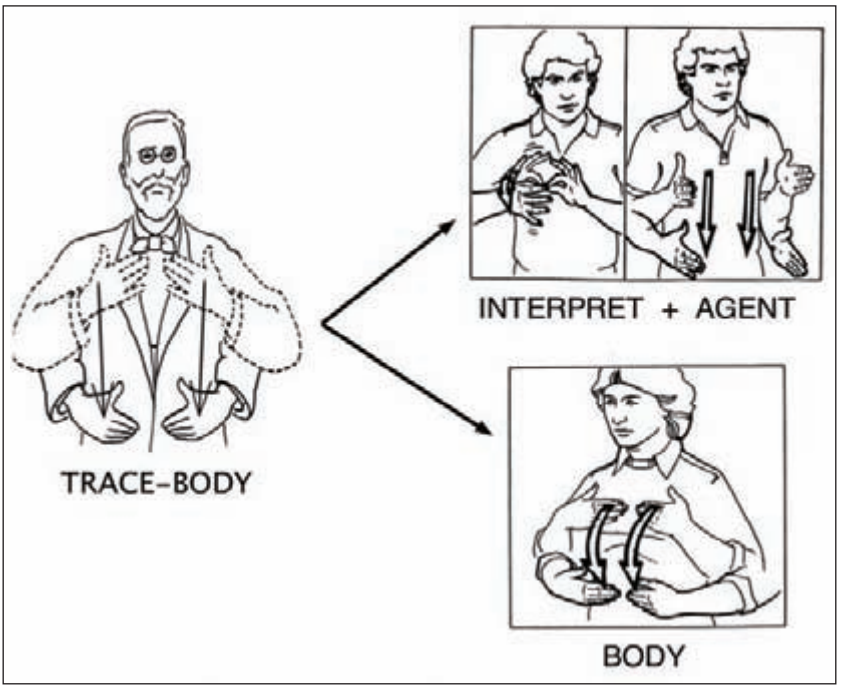

FIGURE 11.8. Modern derivatives from TRACE-BODY. Source: Newell (1983). INTERPRET+AGENT: 59; BODY: 17. Used by permission of the NAD.

down for a second contact at the bottom of the torso. Figure 11.8 illustrates these modern derivatives of TRACE-BODY.

Studying early ASL prosody has revealed that prosodic variation and change have occurred in particular specifiable directions. By carefully identifying generations of users in the films and comparing sign used among signers of these generations to modern form and style, we were able to trace synchronic variations in word formation processes through the signing of presenters. For instance the trend toward prosodic ellipsis or reduction often occurs when a single noun phrase is repeated by a signer within a single performance. This kind of change should not be confused with generational changes as seen across signers producing the same concept. Figure 11.9 shows the comparison of two tokens of TEACH+AGENT as produced by Hotchkiss in his 1913 lecture.

Figure 11.9A shows how Hotchkiss produces the first token for the lexical phrase, TEACH TRACE-BODY in his lecture. The number of frames occupied by TEACH in this first token shows how the fully formed lexical

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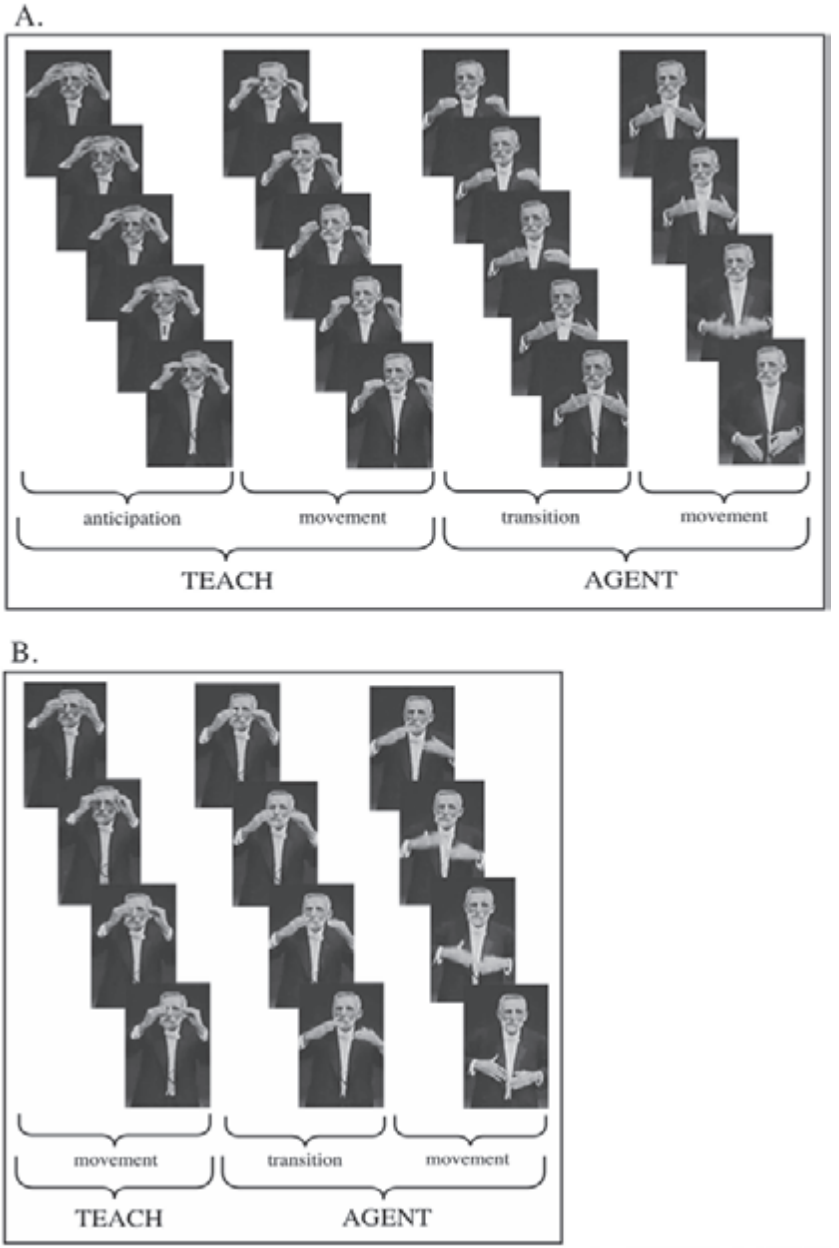

FIGURE 11.9. Two separate productions of TEACH+AGENT by John Hotchkiss, 1913. Source: *The Preservation of American Sign Language: The Complete Historical Collection DVD*. Used by permission from Sign Media, Inc.

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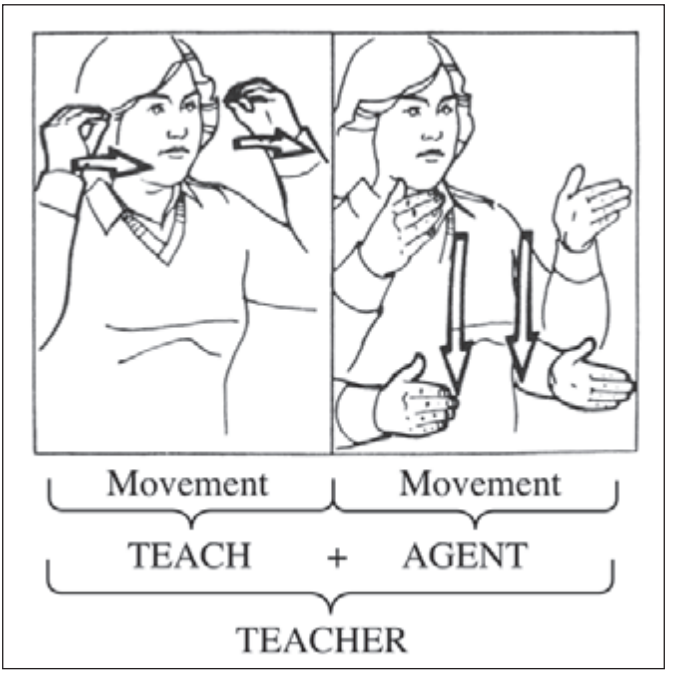

FIGURE 11.10. Modern citation form for TEACHER. Source: Newell (1983), 104. Used by permission of the NAD.

phrase was expressed at that time. Figure 11.9b shows how, in repetitions of this lexical phrase in subsequent sentences, TEACH occupies fewer frames, as Hotchkiss applies processes of reduction. The deletion of the initial anticipation segment for posing the hand articulators followed by the overall shortening of movement-transition-movement segments along with a critical deletion of the initial hold for the last movement path depicts the lack of pausing in Hotchkiss's articulation within the phrase. These operations create prosodic ellipsis when the phrase is repeated later in the Hotchkiss text. The blurred image in figure 11.9B depicts this lack of pausing and prosodic ellipsis. Such reductions eventually became lexicalized as evident in the modern citation form for TEACHER as shown in figure 11.10, an illustration from a current resource book on ASL lexicon and grammar.

The current citation form shows little resemblance to the root verb TEACH, which requires repetition of the movement. This suggests that the phrasal prosody in modern ASL is different from that of Hotchkiss's period of time. Furthermore, the colloquial form used today for the compound

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FIGURE 11.11. Colloquial variant for TEACHER. Source: Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980), 109.

phrase is even more compressed with movement reduced to a single downward path (see figure 11.11).

Diachronic change accompanied by drastic reduction in a compound lexeme is predictable when one has information on how the full phrase is articulated, how rules for prosodic reduction interact with each other, and how certain reduced forms can be lexicalized repeatedly across different periods of time. Explanations of motives for such changes came from cognitive constraints such as motoric pressures (Battison 1974) and visual pressures (Siple 1978), as well as from sociolinguistic conditions including social pressures to disambiguate (Washabaugh 1986), and social mobility triggering rapid change (Woodward 1976). Only recently have researchers looked at the effects of by successive generations on ASL structure. Besides natural effects of reduction, most research focused on the cognition of signers, including the psychological reality of sublexical encoding in a language faculty (i.e., Klima and Bellugi 1979), as well as theoretical aspects of sign language syntax and phonology (i.e., Battison 1974; Liddell 1980; Liddell and Johnson 1986; Padden and Perlmutter 1987; Sandler and Lillo-Martin 2006). However, the process of reduction was already acknowledged as a natural essence in nineteenth-century literature (Brown 1856). Sicard's signs of reduction then would be considered part of lexical morphology.

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DIVERGENCE OF GRAMMATICAL MORPHOLOGY

The evolution of grammatical morphology, on the other hand, appears to follow the same process found in the formation of clitics and affixes in spoken language (Givon 1971; Lehmann 1995). As in spoken languages, early forms consisting of separate words in a phrase may change over time to become gender clitics remaining in the same position in relation to the host. The host in our gender analysis serves as a bound particle indicating type of kin. The relation is maintained by the paradigm; it originated as a lexical phrase, but it has been reduced to a cliticized polyword. The position of a clitic is determined by the internal syntax.

The list of devices shown below includes types of modern ASL morphology which we found to be absent in the early ASL database and thus have evolved since that time.

1. Cliticization of gender marker in attributive kinship constructions (i.e., kin-terms)
2. Conversion of singular person marker (i.e., BODY) into agentive affix
3. Incorporation of number and tense in post-clausal adverbs
4. In other cases, re-assignment of Aspect, Tense, and Number (ATN) particles as pre-verbal tense and modal words

The trend of these changes show that there is only one direction into which morphemes can evolve. This viewpoint presents new challenges in reconstructing the grammar of early ASL beyond the pioneering work of Frishberg (1975), Woodward and Erting (1975), and Woodward (1976, 1978). The notion of grammaticalization, established by historical linguists, appears to describe the process of change in spoken languages most efficiently, appears to also describe changes in signed languages.

This new, richly informed perception of ASL genesis and evolution allowed us to attribute the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic unfamiliarities in our glossed transcriptions to a dead elite register whose origin can be historically traced to the Hartford school. What was particularly interesting about this timeframe was that the death of the classical dialect occurred at approximately the halfway mark in the development of modern ASL.

By framing the evolution and history for an emerging sign language, missing links in sign language genesis and evolution can be re-created, and observations on sign language typological variation and universals of

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sign language change will naturally emerge (Supalla 2013). It is hoped that consideration of this approach will stimulate thought into how researchers can collaborate in the design of their respective methodology in order to support reconstructive work in any sign language at any point in its evolution. We are confident that such research will ultimately link sign language research with the broader research on human gesture, language origins, and species capability for language.

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12 THE IMPACT OF THEORY AND PRACTICE ON THE DEAF COMMUNITY

The nature of our understanding of sign languages of the world rests on our specific history of sign language research. The forty-year history of modern sign language research includes both impressive achievements that have advanced our knowledge, and research agendas that have narrowed our focus and limited our knowledge. This book project is a beginning attempt to locate and re-forge links in the chain of linguistic knowledge and skills comprising the collective wisdom of generations of Deaf community members in the use and perfecting of sign language and its literature. To recover and build on their metalinguistic perceptions and practices in the use of ASL and English, we are challenged to:

1. Reconstruct the ASL of 100, 150, and 200 years ago
2. Position the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series appropriately within the ASL literary canon
3. Establish cultural links to the past with current literary arts and folk etymology
4. Convert the films into a user-friendly text corpus database for general language study[1]

1. The historical database is now available online at http://hsldb.georgetown.edu.

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Our archaeological research represents a step forward in the unification of our linguistic knowledge of sign language structure and, ultimately, contributes to a greater understanding of evolutionary processes for human language as a whole. One complication evident in the literature concerns the conditions surrounding sign language evolution. Synchronic analyses of modern sign languages can often mislead investigators about the structure of the language and the origins of its constructions, leading them to assume a "universality" of particular types of forms and processes and causing them to overlook the "particular genius" of a given sign language. Many signed languages in the world have indeed emerged in the context of the school for the deaf with intervention from educators, which raises questions about the true source of the grammar. Another indication of monogenetism in current research is the obsession with the adverse effects of language contact or colonialism. While our study of word order in early ASL cannot rule out the influence of the surrounding spoken language, it does highlight ways that early ASL morphology differed from English and French and instead exhibited the very features found in the earlier phases in the process of grammaticalization and lexicalization.

Our model of ASL history provides a new framework for the periodization of history via language-planning policies as well as stigmatization of sign language among peers within the Deaf community. Due to the disappearance of the classical elite register and the suppression and underground use of ASL during the Dark Period, researchers of the modern era had very little information upon which to base their assessments of the Gallaudet Lecture Films. It thus makes sense that for years the value of these films was doubted. As noted in Supalla (2004), this model of the history of ASL also supports the reinterpretation of historical documents from the nineteenth century on sign language usage as written by educators. For those sociolinguists who are interested in sociopolitical aspects of language change, accessing such content gives insight into the thought-world of each period. In our case, such work has led to an interpretation of the actions of the Deaf community as responses to the diglossic dynamics within the community toward formal and colloquial uses of sign language. In this context, shifts in polarization within the community are driven by changes in pedagogical practices.

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SURVIVING THE STIGMATIZATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE DURING THE DARK PERIOD

It is clear that the film project did not succeed in preventing or delaying the death of the classical elite dialect. With the demise of the sign master/apprentice practice, the classical sign language metalanguage also fell into disuse and was not replaced.[2] Thus Deaf America plunged into the Dark Period. The early twentieth century, then, was a transitional period in the history of ASL and the character of ASL and English usage and codes for these languages in Deaf America changed drastically.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a new interpretation of the term *Combined method* (Fay 1899) appeared with a focus on accompanying speech with fingerspelling and then augmenting this approach, when necessary, with signed periphrases and explanations. A rudimentary understanding of how to use "natural" signs was considered adequate for teaching and knowledge of the "improved" language of signs was quickly viewed as a luxury.

With the death of the classical signers, there was a sudden void in the area of an elite register. This was resolved not by a new kind of sign language but rather by an extension of one particular skill the orators had demonstrated on film: the ability to translate literally from English text to a signed version (that is, signed English). A very different neo-elite register appeared shortly thereafter, ushered in by the pressure exerted from the oral-only language policy shift.

Meanwhile, Deaf adults once exposed to the American method of instruction developed their own folklife and continued socializing with each other by using colloquial ASL. Throughout the twentieth century Deaf Americans passed on ASL as an underground language while social and economic transformations provided no motive for preserving the classical tradition of metalinguistic terms or practices. Furthermore, the taboo on

2. In 1923 Edward Allen Fay, longtime editor of the *Annals*, retired and died within a few months of his retirement. Although hearing, Fay was a strong proponent of including the Deaf voice in the journal, and he actively encouraged educated deaf individuals to submit papers. Interestingly, an overview of authors after 1925 showed a sharp decrease in the number of articles in the *Annals* written by deaf individuals as well as a decrease in articles by hearing scholars on the topic of sign language and its merits.

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using ASL in public and in professional circles ushered in the Dark Period. Ultimately the signing community lost the skills and knowledge of the sign masters in the teaching of sign language literacy to both deaf children and hearing people.

The spread of the Combined method gave rise to a new value system regarding proper use of sign language, replacing the classical elite register with a variety akin to the modern neo-elite register as proposed by our model of ASL history. Such signing came to be called Signed English or, Pidgin Signed English (PSE) by sociolinguist James Woodward in 1972. This ideological trend peaked in the late twentieth century with the promotion of manually coded sign systems (MCE) that depicted the morphological structure of the English language with catchy acronyms such as Seeing Essential English (SEE), Signing Exact English (SEE2), and the Linguistics of Visual English (LOVE). The revival of the Combined method also came with a trendy new name, Total Communication.

The philosophy behind Total Communication changed from the goal to keep sign language in schools while expanding the curriculum to include lessons for articulating speech and utilizing residual hearing skills, to the new goal of using spoken English as the language of instruction. The modern era has seen the emergence of the ideology of Simultaneous Communication, the awkward task of signing and speaking at the same time. As the authors pointed out in "Unlocking the Curriculum" (Johnson, Liddell, and Erting 1989), this ideology invested the entire resources of the industry of deaf pedagogy into constructing an environment with a hodgepodge of linguistic inputs that bombarded the deaf child. Marmor and Petitto (1979) assessed whether or not what was signed and spoken simultaneously was equivalent and found that much of the information was missing in the signed channel. Unlike the discussions of educators of the nineteenth century who pursued new approaches with an eye to experimenting with the approach's scientific efficacy, modern educators seem willing to try a variety of intricate and expensive approaches to solve the "problem" of deaf education as long as each approach meet the criterion of a sign supported speech system. This policy has effectively precluded the use of a natural sign language in deaf education. As for the visual component of such a system, new pedagogical tools have been fashioned by adopting lexical roots from ASL and devising arbitrary manual devices to represent the morphology of the English language without the natural gestural forms used in the earliest forms of methodical signs.

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In spite of the zealousness among Total Communication advocates and MCE users, deaf children have maintained (or even reinvented) the colloquial variety when socializing with their peers (S. Supalla, 1989, 1991). Once adults, they have been left free to "chart their own language course," which invariably included the use of a contact signing register to accommodate those less familiar with colloquial ASL (Valli and Lucas 2000). The use of these manually coded sign systems involved an initial swing toward an English grammar base, followed by an increased use of the natural ASL grammar base for the contact register now a part of modern ASL. These diglossic shifts affected the Deaf community's use of sign language. As a consequence, the Deaf American community fostered its own sign language stigma by creating a dichotomy between two varieties: the natural register versus the artificial code learned while attending school.

One powerful indicator of this transition was the change in the sociopolitical dynamics at Gallaudet College in terms of new faculty. As second-generation signers retired, a different set of priorities was emphasized in hiring practices that did not reflect consummate skill in switching between colloquial or natural sign language and a classical elite register. Through most of the twentieth century, Deaf college students accommodated to these new faculty members by shifting, in their presence, to more English-based signing (Graybill 1996; Lang 2007). Thus, students who wished to pursue higher educational opportunities encountered a new situation and contributed to the mixing of two disparate language syntaxes into a pidgin. This skill became the standard for the formation of a new elite class of signers. Contact sign became the language of prestige for Deaf college students. Stigmatization then readily developed when this elite class began to dissociate themselves from grassroots deaf people, based on their ability to switch from the colloquial ASL to an English-based register in formal situations. Charles Krauel, the chronicler of community events on film, is an example of one who did not attend college, retaining his colloquial form of the language while exploiting his ability in film technology to insert English subtitles whenever necessary.

MAINTAINING THE COLLOQUIAL REGISTER IN THE DARK PERIOD THROUGH DEAF FOLKLIFE FILMS

The Gallaudet Lecture Films are an important part of the Veditz Film Collection at the archives of Gallaudet University as are home-movie materials

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filmed by Deaf community members from more recent generations. Thus, it is possible to use historic film materials from time periods subsequent to the 1920s in assessing the transformation from early ASL to modern ASL. Among the memorable examples are the Deaf folklife films made by Charles Krauel.

Krauel was a fourth-generation signer who did not appear in the NAD films or see the NAD films but he did record the folklife of the fifth and sixth generations of the Deaf community from 1925 to 1940 (Supalla 1994). The first of Krauel's films was made in 1925 when he was the same age as the Gallaudet students who performed in Professor Hotchkiss's play. While two of those performers (Hughes and Drake) became professors at the college and were members of the deaf "elite," Krauel worked as a printer in Chicago. Even so, Krauel had access to a wide range of members of the Deaf community. For example, Krauel's 1927 recording of a Deaf gathering at the Indiana School for the Deaf captures at least one member of the community using multiple registers. In one shot an older man, whom Krauel apparently asked to give an introductory remark about the event, is shown signing in the classical formal style to the camera. In another shot the same man converses with several other individuals in the crowd, this time using the colloquial variety.

With his access and exposure to dramatic Deaf clubs in Chicago (where Dougherty played a significant leadership role), Krauel gained an appreciation for both the aesthetics of sign language and how to promote it during the years when most schools suppressed the teaching and use of sign language. One genre filmed by Krauel was the performance of signed songs. His recordings of both original and translated songs have preserved for us the rhythmic variety used and enjoyed within the grassroots Deaf community at that time. Among the songs translated from English texts were "The National Anthem," "Whispering Hope," and "Yankee Doodle." The long, drawn-out rhythm of the first two songs approximates the slow pace when they are performed vocally but the beat is based on sign language prosody as is the beat of "Yankee Doodle." "Yankee Doodle" is of particular interest because the lines of the chorus of at least two performances Krauel filmed are very similar to the chorus conceived and performed by Winfield Marshall in the final film of the Gallaudet Lecture Film Series.

Also popular during the Dark Period were original songs conceived in sign language such as "Voices of Animals" and songs improvised to fit into the 1-2, 1-2-3 beat of the "percussion" style. These songs reflected strong

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rhythmic beats that especially resonated with Deaf audiences who were drawn into the performance by clapping their hands to help maintain the beat for the performers. George Kannapell was well-known for his ability to improvise "percussion" songs for audiences to enjoy at various gatherings and was captured on film by Krauel giving one such performance. The particular rhythmic character of this era remains only in "Hail to the Mighty Bison," the Gallaudet University cheer,[3] and in the performances of Deaf signers who remember and cherish the "percussion" style (Supalla 1994). It is all the more remarkable that this literary work has been transmitted across generations in a language that has no writing system.

In all of the on-camera signing by grassroots deaf people captured by filmmakers such as Krauel and his collaborator, Charles Yanzito, no evidence of classical elite signing or code-switching is found. Both Krauel and Yanzito consistently used the colloquial register throughout the series of films they produced. Amazingly, when interviewed for a documentary at age ninety-two in 1982, Krauel showed no discomfort in front of the camera, which would have been present had he been aware of the diglossic standards of either the classical period or the Dark Period.

When we interviewed Krauel, he was one of the last of the generation of signers who grew up through the classical period of the nineteenth century. To understand Krauel better, we need to look at his background. He attended the Illinois School for the Deaf at the outset of the twentieth century so it is likely that he associated with sign masters using the classical sign language variety. At the age of ninety-two, he signed with his mouth shut tight like the classical signers.[4] Nevertheless, Krauel's use of his natural sign medium for self-expression shows little effect of stigmatization. This may be accounted for by assuming that the emerging new dichotomy in sign language behavior had a polarizing effect within the Deaf community over time, but that this was not instantaneous.

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3. Originally written in English by Bob Panara, the Bison cheer is performed at rallying events of Gallaudet University by leaders selected each year for that honor.

4. This was one criterion we used to identify Deaf people of the earlier generations, and found mentioned by Tom Anderson, then president of NAD, in his 1938 article "What about the Sign Language?"

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At the peak of the Dark Period, emerging social values in the Deaf community regarded it as socially inappropriate for Deaf signers to use sign language in public. Sign was allowed only in private settings such as at home with a deaf spouse or sibling and at the Deaf club with intimate friends. In the 1960s and 1970s, members of the Deaf community experienced diglossic conflict between colloquial sign expression and the more formal register promoted by adult educators and Deaf alumni of the college, referred to as "Gallaudet signing" because of its connection to alumni of the college. This conflict was felt community-wide and made its way into literature. A classical scenario of such a conflict was included in the script written by Bernard Bragg and Eugene Bergman for their play *Tales from a Clubroom.* In one scene, the authors featured a character performing a parody of a snobbish character using the English signing of Gallaudet graduates. This play was performed in 1980 at the NAD convention in Cincinnati during its centennial.

The concept behind the phrase "Gallaudet signing" in the 1980s was not the same as the denotation of the phrase one hundred years earlier. While the 1980 play showed an instance of a common conflict within the Deaf community when a Deaf professional entered the social center of grassroots Deaf people, it is interesting to note how the meaning of the phrase "Gallaudet signing" changed across time from the nineteenth-century reference to classical signing to the twentieth-century reference to snobbish signing.

This diglossic character was reinforced by individuals' experience growing up in the grassroots culture. People who were considered snobs among us were identified as Gallaudet graduates who, for the most part, looked down upon any who did not sign as they did, in English word order, the new Gallaudet elite dialect. The Deaf community in America continued to experience a split between the grassroots and the elite, as did many other ethnic groups. Padden and Markowicz (1982) studied the dynamics of an elite network of Deaf individuals living in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area in the 1970s. They found that the membership was often determined by whether the individual had attended Gallaudet College, but the best predictor was the ability to code-switch between varieties of ASL. Paul Higgins also found this ability to be important for elite membership in the Chicago Deaf community (1980).

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SIGN LANGUAGE ARCHAEOLOGY REVITALIZING THE LEGACY OF THE DEAF VOICE

The concept of a human who uses sign language, as opposed to spoken or written, is a new idea in the humanities. In order to think of a signed language as a *language*, it is necessary to consider that while deafness and muteness may challenge the notion of human-ness, they do not preclude communication: after all, humans rely on their eyes for survival, so why should they not use a form of visual communication?

Trying to understand how the Deaf world works can seem like opening a can of worms. To get a more balanced view, parents might make use of a team of experts to provide an early intervention plan for language development. To minimize risk of failure for a chosen track, the family may be offered a Total Communication approach to ensure that the child becomes a polygot in a least restrictive environment. For some reason, an expert may take a dim view of exposing the child to sign language. Furthermore the process of learning sign language may overwhelm the parents and might overwhelm the growing child as well.

There are good, bad, and ugly side effects from growing up in this kind of situation. In trying to share his or her perspective in making a difference for this deaf child, a culturally Deaf person who has chosen the path of being a signer might feel like a Don Quixote facing the windmill of opinions and challenges. The dichotomy between Hearing and Deaf worlds has captured worldwide interest, likely through media coverage of the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University, and seems to strike a common chord as another example of human struggle.

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) production *Through Deaf Eyes,* which was broadcast nationwide in 2007, revealed this historic struggle with communication between the Hearing and Deaf worlds and that the Deaf world comes with a cultural and linguistic history of its own (Brueggemann 2009). One motive for forming a distinct community is for the members to pursue happiness and independence as viewed through their own eyes, with sign language as the most natural medium to deaf people. Such a social infrastructure can be affected by polarization across competing signed and spoken linguistic forces. In addition, the nexus and negotiation of the mix of cultural-linguistic and disability identities within Deaf individuals and in relation to the larger mainstream society is unique, finding expression in community literature and discourse (Kannapell 1985; Ladd 2003).

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Indeed, the PBS program characterizes a Deaf voice, springing from a community that shares a common sign language and values reflected in its social and literary history (Padden and Humphries 1988, 2005). However, historically, this way of life has been viewed by some organizations as promoting clannishness, a claim that has allowed such groups to resort to an ideology they termed "Restoration of the Deaf into the Society," instead of recognizing their own intolerance of the natural ways of the sign language community.

In 2010, NAD President Veditz's lecture, "Preservation of the Sign Language" was recognized as an example of classic American literature to be preserved by the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress. At the present time, however, most traditional humanities researchers face two fundamental challenges in studying and incorporating the results of such research in mainstream humanities: the lack of sign language fluency and cultural membership in the Deaf community. Thus, they are limited to studying the community in the following ways: from the outside, in the present era, and drawing on materials largely written in English. Conversely, for indigenous Deaf community members, especially Deaf scholars, the challenges arise because training and scholarly discussion in humanities research is offered in English, through less-effective interpreted mechanisms, and abstracted from the context of the community language and history under study. At the same time, the use of digital technology to publish scholarly work (such as the *Deaf Studies Digital Journal* that began in 2009), and to archive and catalog materials and data in sign language, offers exciting prospects for all scholars.

Studies of Deaf communities and their language[5] have much to contribute to the understanding of human ecologies, shedding light on, for example, aspects of language that are seen in both signed and spoken forms and may be truly universal.[6] Study of the perspectives of deaf people internationally has undergone a paradigm shift, from a focus on deficiency

5. Research into the cultural history of Deaf people is an emerging field. The community's current organizations, indigenous practices, signed language, and civil and economic concerns are being described and incorporated into research presented in many humanities and social science journals and at mainstream and specialized conferences.

6. Current journals publishing this research include *Sign Language Studies*, *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, and *Deaf Worlds*.

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and rehabilitation, to humanistic and linguistic research. Fields such as Deaf studies and Deaf history have arisen, contributing scholarship such as individual biographies and the social dynamics of particular groups[7] (Padden and Humphries 1988; Gannon 1981; Gannon, Beatty, and Louie 1989; Wilcox 1989; Buchanan 2002; Christensen and Barnartt 1995; Bauman 2008). The infrastructure/foundation for humanities research in sign language communities will require broad bases of information and data about sign language ecology and the odyssey for a signer in general society.

The odyssey of the society seen in this research belies the traditional notion of a passive disabled group deprived of access to spoken language. Instead, it reveals the efforts of Deaf and Hearing Americans to build a bilingual and multicultural center across almost two centuries while enormous socioeconomic and cultural shifts were taking place. What is preserved in these historical documents is a unique and viable Deaf culture with vibrant individuals voicing opinions and playing an active role in the sociopolitical ecology of America. This archaeological journey through the history of American Sign Language has provided the tools necessary to not only unearth its history, but also to understand the future of ASL and the odyssey of its community of signers, which will continue to contribute to its evolution.

7. Conferences such as "Revolutions in Sign Language Studies: Linguistics, Literature, Literacy" in 2006, the first and second ASL Literature Conference in 1991 and 1996, and the biennial Deaf Studies Conference Series, which began in 1991.

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