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# American Sign Language Advanced Studies Programs: Implementation Procedures and Identifying Empowering Practices

Amy June Rowley

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

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AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE ADVANCED STUDIES PROGRAMS:  
IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES AND IDENTIFYING EMPOWERING  
PRACTICES

by

Amy June Rowley

A Dissertation Submitted in  
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December 2014

ABSTRACT  
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE ADVANCED STUDIES PROGRAMS:  
IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES AND IDENTIFYING EMPOWERING  
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By

Amy June Rowley

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014  
Under the Supervision of Professor Amy Otis-Wilborn

This dissertation is a comprehensive analysis of three universities that have degree awarding American Sign Language programs. The overall theoretical approach was grounded in Freirean thought. For each of these programs, I collected various documents that allowed for an in-depth analysis of the structure, curriculum and program philosophies. A document review of the syllabi, course description, the courses required for graduation, and analysis of data collected through individual interviews with each program coordinator, helped answer research questions: (1) What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs? (2) What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs? (3) How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community? Two inquiry approaches were utilized to analyze data. Analytical inquiry was used to define the curriculum used at each of the universities. The process consisted of three stages, curriculum interpretation, curriculum development and identification of the structural model used in each program. Ampliative inquiry was used to identify program philosophies through itemizing implicit norms and assumptions then determining if those are appropriate which means that the

program celebrates and strives to empower ASL linguistically and culturally. This allowed for targeting practices that empower ASL. Practices that oppress ASL are also noted to serve as cautions for others who want to implement degree based ASL programs elsewhere.

*Keywords:* American Sign Language Programs, American Sign Language, Post-secondary institutions, ASL, ASL Curriculum, ASL Curricula, American Sign Language Curriculum, American Sign Language Curricula

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To my family-

Jeff, my husband

and my children, Janeva, Reza and Tavey

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The internal structure of colleges and departments within universities are designed to operate programs in specific ways. Without a systemic process to conform to, programs could not be effectively operated or established. Additionally, academic programs within these departments need to have a curriculum that allows students to successfully ascend through coursework and graduate with sufficient skills and knowledge. However, many variables can be present when trying to define curriculum or internal systemic structure. Not every academic institution operates in the same manner. American Sign Language (ASL) has gained popularity and recognition in the 21st century but the number of advanced offerings or degree options for ASL is still very low. For this reason, this dissertation focuses on a study of three universities and their successful implementation of ASL for advanced studies and as a degree option. This study is grounded in liberation theory and critical pedagogy which serves to position and guide the inquiry. In this case study, for three ASL programs in secondary institutions, I analyzed multiple aspects of the curriculum, its development, program infrastructure and identified how program curriculum, philosophy and practices served to oppress and/or liberate the language and culture of Deaf<sup>1</sup> individuals and the Deaf community. In this first introductory chapter, I review the history of American Sign Language, its evolution as a recognized and growing world language. Then, I explore the role of ASL in the Deaf Community and ASL as a developing language and cultural program of study in colleges and universities. In addition, this chapter explicates (a) the study's questions

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<sup>1</sup> As part of their ethnic revival, people in the Deaf community call themselves Deaf with a capital D just as a person identifies themselves with a capital "J" for Jewish or "W" for Welsh to signify their cultural identity. At the same time the lowercase d in deaf represents an opposing view; the audiological view that emphasizes a deaf person as not

and methodology (b) theoretical frameworks for analysis, and (c) Research Assumptions and my own positioning in the context of this study.

### **History of American Sign Language**

In 1690, 200 immigrants from Kent County England, an area known as the Weald, settled in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. A predominant fishing community, several members carried dominant and recessive genes for deafness. Fifty years after the immigrants arrived at Martha's Vineyard, a sign language had developed on the island, used by both Deaf and hearing islanders. Almost all inhabitants signed and town meetings were signed for all. Deaf islanders married, had families, worked, voted, held public office and were equal in every aspect of island life (Groce, 1985). At one point, the birth rate for deaf children was 1 in 155 on the island, and in the west side villages almost 25% of children were born deaf this was comparable with the deaf population off the island which showed that for every 1000 children, 1 child was born deaf.

In 1814 the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet had been approached by Mason Cogswell to help find a way to educate his deaf daughter, Alice Cogswell. Gallaudet tried communicating with Alice by writing H-A-T in the dirt with a stick and pointing to the hat on his head. Alice showed that she understood and Gallaudet became intrigued. So Gallaudet set off to Great Britain to find out more about educating deaf students. Upon arrival in Scotland, he went to the Braidwood Academy to learn more about Oral Deaf education but was turned away (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). By sheer fortune, he ran into French teachers of the deaf in England. He met Abbé Sicard from the Institution National des Sourds-Muets à Paris. Along with Abbé Sicard were two Deaf teachers, Laurent Clerc and Jean Massieu. These two men were former students of the Institution



National des Sourds-Muets à Paris. He traveled with them to France and saw how they taught deaf students using manual communication. Gallaudet started learning sign language and recruited Laurent Clerc to come with him to America to set up a school for the deaf. Clerc and Gallaudet traveled back to America by boat and Gallaudet learned to sign French from Clerc. Upon arrival in Connecticut, Alice Cogswell became the first deaf student and the American School for the Deaf was established in 1817. After that, island deaf children from Martha's Vineyard went to Hartford to be educated, bringing island signs with them and influencing French signs. Children from Deaf families also brought their "manual communication practices" (Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011). Also children from hearing families brought their home- signs that allowed them to communicate at home. The language that people used became known as manual communication (Lane et al., 2011; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989).

Over the next 100 years more than 30 schools for the Deaf were established by Deaf and hearing teachers from the American School for the Deaf and Gallaudet College, including schools in Indiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, Illinois, Georgia, South Carolina and Arkansas. In 1843, Indiana School for the Deaf was founded by William Willard. He was a graduate of ASD in Connecticut and taught at the Ohio School for the Deaf before becoming the first Deaf superintendent. This period of time was referred to as the "Golden Age of Deaf Education" because manual communication was widespread and access to Deaf teachers and role models was plentiful. Approximately 40% of teachers in these schools were deaf (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). During this time a charter signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1864 established Gallaudet College enabling deaf students to have access to higher education as well. Shortly afterwards in 1867 the first

oral school, where students were trained in spoken English with no sign communication being used, Clarke Oral School in Boston was set up.

The turning point in Deaf education happened in 1880. The International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) assembled in Milan, Italy and a few American proponents of oral education, including Alexander Graham Bell, attended and voted to abolish manual communication and use only oral methods in educating the deaf. This was devastating for many deaf teachers who were soon dismissed in huge numbers (Burch, 2002). After the transition was made from educating the deaf manually to orally, 22% of the teachers were deaf. That same year, National Association of the Deaf was founded to combat the rise of oralism and preserve manual communication (Baynton, 1996).

By 1927, oralism had peaked and only 15% of teachers were deaf. During World War II (1941-1945), the labor industry was in dire need of workers. Thus many deaf workers were hired to work in the defense industries. Many deaf people relocated to major industrial areas such as California, Ohio, New York and Washington, DC. This signified the first time the skills of deaf workers were noticed by employers (Burch, 2002). In the 1960s, the first linguistic foray into American Sign Language was initiated. William Stokoe, a professor at Gallaudet College, first became interested in ASL when he noticed that students in the classroom signed differently than they did out of the classroom. In the classroom students signed in English order while out of the classroom students were more colloquial and used a different grammatical structure to communicate. Students seemed to understand each other fine out of the classroom but Stokoe could not understand them thus piquing his interest in researching their manual

communication (Armstrong & Karchmer, 2002). After researching the linguistic principles of sign language, Stokoe developed the first ASL dictionary with two Deaf assistant researchers, Dorothy Casterline and Carl Croneberg. This was a significant accomplishment because not only did they detail the language of the Deaf community, they also linguistically validated that signs have parts just like other spoken languages. They were able to identify that each sign had three parts, location, movement and handshape. Based on this, the communication of the Deaf community was recognized by linguists to be a real language (Valli, Lucas, & Mulrooney, 2005).

Shortly afterwards, Congress investigated the state of deaf education with years of oralism in 1964 and the Babbidge report delivered news that deaf education was in a sorry state of affairs. Oralism was pronounced a dismal failure and alternative methods were recommended for teaching deaf children. A few years later, the Bilingual Education Act for spoken languages passed in 1968 but ASL was not included because it was not recognized as a language at that time. During the 1970s, many signed communication methods were invented because it was evident that the oral method of educating the deaf was not successful. Such methods were Total Communication, using every possible approach to communicate such as drawing, signing, talking, and pointing to English words (Lane, 1992). However, this evolved to speaking English and signing at the same time which usually meant English order as well. This is now known as Simultaneous Communication or SimCom. Signed English, Seeing Essential English (SEE) and Signing Exact English (SEE 2) were also invented to help support English development. Of all of these approaches, there was no clear support for using the language of the Deaf community which was still called manual communication. It was

thought that this was not a form of English so Deaf people could not learn English by using manual communication alone. In 1975, Congress passed public law 94-142 “Education for All Handicap Children Act,” which is currently known as IDEA. At this time, deaf children started to be mainstreamed with many different approaches to teaching English which did not include using manual communication (Lane, 1992). The number of deaf teachers working in the field reached its lowest point at 11% (Burch, 2002).

In 1979, Kilma and Bellugi undertook and reported on one of the first linguistic research studies of ASL and how it works in the brain. This started spreading the notion in the Deaf community that ASL could be a language. Even though Stokoe’s work accomplished that first, many members of the Deaf community did not accept this due to many years of oppression where English has been constructed to be more dynamic and powerful than ASL (Ladd, 2003). In 1980, Padden, Humphries and O’Rourke printed the first book for teaching sign language, *ABCs of ASL*, which followed the grammar translation approach used by many foreign language instructors (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996).

A big year for ASL was in 1988 with the release of two reports. “Unlocking the Curriculum” was printed by Gallaudet’s Linguistic Department and called for the return of American Sign Language in the curriculum of Deaf education. This proposed a return to ASL as the first method of instruction for deaf children. It refuted the Manually Coded English approaches, using speech and sign. The second report, "Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf," was disseminated by Congress. The report recommended that ASL be used as a primary medium of language instruction with English as a second

language. Also recommended was that ASL be included in the Bilingual Education Act. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) under the U.S. Department of Education investigated the possibility of adding ASL and Deaf children to the Bilingual Education Act, but again it was not approved because the majority of deaf children which have hearing parents and probably will not have bilingual access at home. Also questions regarding ASL as a foreign language were raised. Some questions that come up regarding this particular issue related with the validity of ASL as a “foreign” language if it was used in America (Lane, 1992).

In 1993, Congress reauthorized PL 94-142 and renamed it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The U.S. Department of Education established a Policy of Inclusion, giving all disabled students the right to attend neighborhood schools in a "least restrictive environment." Residential schools for the deaf were labeled as being a "most restrictive environment." The goal of IDEA at this time was to serve as a policy of assimilation into society. When this was passed, residential schools for the deaf in some states were forced to close because of decreasing enrollment, but the number of deaf teachers rose slightly (to 16%) as more teaching opportunities in the public schools and the desire for role models increased. With the closures of residential schools for the deaf and limited enrollment in these schools, the access for exposure to ASL is limited since many mainstreamed programs advocated for more English like approaches of educating the deaf (Jankowski, 1997). In spite of these “dark ages,” the death of ASL did not occur since Deaf people continued to use ASL socially. Deaf school children picked up ASL from older students who already learned the language and deaf role

models who worked within these areas served as resources for furthering the use of the language.

### **American Sign Language and the Deaf Community**

ASL is oppressed in the education of deaf students, as a foreign language, and as a language intrinsically. There is an ongoing faction between groups of educators and parents in the discipline of education of the deaf to figure out the best way to educate deaf children. These factions represent the three most popular ways to educate deaf students: by using ASL and written English, orally with spoken English only or using spoken English along with a signed system such as Signed English. Throughout the history of deaf education, there has never been a clear movement that supported the use of American Sign Language as a native language to be used in educating deaf children. Several communication modes were invented to be used as signed systems that were thought to be better for education deaf students. Many of these signed systems follow principles of English such as English word order or adding of English functional morphemes such as *is*, *the*, *and*, and so forth (Baynton, 1996).

American Sign Language has only begun to be recognized as a language of its own right within the last 40 years. In 1963, the first research was done to bring light on what deaf people used for their everyday form of communication, however it was not until the 1980s that linguists recognized ASL as an official language with complex visual and spatial linguistic properties (Stokoe, 2001). Now in 2014, one would expect that ASL is widely accepted and used throughout the Deaf community and in every aspect language portrays in the life of deaf individuals. However that is far from the truth as ASL is a symbol of oppression to members of the Deaf community who are still

indoctrinated that English is more powerful and crucial to success of deaf people. Due to the struggle that many deaf people endure to be able to use ASL, dichotomous representation of ASL as a language of oppression exists (Baynton, 1996). Deaf people are oppressed users of ASL when they accept themselves as part of a marginalized culture. In our modern day society, the Deaf community has a long history of oppression and the affect of relations of power have been burdensome. To be able to finally use a natural language of their own right can be bittersweet. Simultaneously, there are many individuals that use ASL and take on characteristics of an oppressor because they were trained to accept power relations which posit deaf people as the subaltern group (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005).

The majority (approximately 92%) of deaf people are born to hearing parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). When these parents find out that their child is deaf, oftentimes they venture down a medical route of attempting to fix the hearing loss. This leads to intensive speech lessons, auditory training and possibly surgery. With these approaches favored by the medical community, the focus is not on learning American Sign Language (Blackwell, 1993). If hearing parents learn signs, then they most likely are learning one of the combinations of methods invented by educators and not ASL. This leads to a large group of students not having access to ASL when they are born. All of these factors offer a negative view on ASL.

Furthermore, ASL is not deemed a language worthy of learning uniformly across the United States. Not all states recognize American Sign Language as a foreign language and offer their students credit for learning ASL. The fundamental debate lies with the word foreign. Critics say ASL, which is used only in the United States and parts

of Canada, can't be considered "foreign" since it doesn't give students a global perspective, as learning French or Russian would. One can't visit a country or even a city where everyone speaks ASL (Toppo, 2002). In the states that have legally defined ASL as a foreign language, most have no clear requirements about who can teach ASL. Jacobowitz (2005) discusses that many deaf people with no formal education in teaching ASL as a foreign language are teaching ASL as well as hearing people with minimal ASL skills. This leads to the development of an unqualified pool of ASL teachers who teach some mode of a signed system or rudimentary ASL. When ASL is offered as a foreign language option it often does not receive the same respect in the field of academia as other foreign languages.

### **ASL as a World Language: Formalizing Instruction**

ASL instruction only started in the 1970s (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980). At that time, it closely mimicked the behavior method by teaching more anglicized types of sign language. During that time it was not known that ASL was a bona-fide language and not taught using the language approaches of the foreign language professions. In the sixties, Stokoe found that ASL was unique and possessed characteristics such as universal grammar. He was able to break down signs into phonological parts which eventually led to the acceptance of ASL as a language by linguists in the eighties (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). After the recognition of ASL as a language, more resources and curricula were developed which paved the way for ASL instruction as we know it today.

**Grammar translation.** The first classes that taught sign language used the grammar translation method. Basically this approach taught students vocabulary and grammar rules. The students needed to memorize these rules and the vocabulary they



were taught. Heavy use of the source language was used and little attempt in the target language was actually attained (Brown, 2006). Grammar translation was used mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for spoken foreign languages. ASL instruction was not existent yet. When ASL was starting to be taught, using this method proved to be very difficult for ASL teachers because most of them were deaf and did not use the “source” language so to speak. This was used predominantly before ASL was recognized as a language (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997).

**Audiolingual method.** The first book developed for ASL teaching used this method. *A Basic Course in Manual Communication* developed by the Communication Skills Program of the National Association of the Deaf was widely used because so many people were desperate for a guide that would help them teach sign classes. This book was structured with pictures and practice sentences (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). The audiolingual method (or visuolingual method as used for sign classes) used the target language heavily and students were encouraged to make automatic and habit-forming responses through conditioned dialogue (Brown, 2007). “Students taught through this method are expected to see a signed word, then make a perfect reproduction of it without necessarily comprehending what they see” (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997, p. 82).

**Cognitive approach.** This method basically does away with the behaviorist notion of language learning and encompasses grammar and the ability to choose different grammatical forms and not be bound by one form all the time as the last two approaches have shown us. Wilcox and Wilcox (1992) discussed that in the 1950s linguists no longer believed in the behavior approach of language learning but that did not affect those teaching ASL until the eighties. At this time more and more ASL teachers started

using the cognitive approach. This method basically teaches by using a grammatical syllabus and allows for practical and meaningful use of language (Richards & Rogers, 1986). *A Basic Course in American Sign Language* was distributed with this progress in awareness of teaching ASL in 1980 by Humphries, Padden and O'Rourke. Shortly following this book, a series of other books were released such as the American Sign Language series by Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1991). These books included students' workbooks and videos which were very innovative for the time and quickly became popular in interpreting training programs because they covered so much material. These books are known as "the green books" for their bright green covers. Around this time, more and more teachers were learning that not "one size fits all" (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). This allowed for more and more individual teaching styles to emerge.

**Communicative methodology.** This approach does not lean towards the grammatical or functional approach of teaching instead it focuses on "chunks of content." There is no significant curriculum design for this type of teaching like with other methods discussed earlier. Teachers can choose whatever direction they want to guide their students in. Wilcox and Wilcox (1997) say that

although we are aware of no ASL program based exclusively on the communicative approach, we believe that many instructors have unwittingly made use of this dynamic approach at various times, particularly on days when Deaf consultants are invited into the classroom. The visible excitement generated when a friendly, dynamic user of ASL interacts freely with the students seems to boost the students' language production and comprehension tremendously. (p. 86)

**Total physical response/the natural approach.** Interestingly enough, Total Physical Response (TPR) was developed by Asher (Brown, 2006) who was interested in stimulating the right brain motor activity prior to the left brain language learning. He felt this method would loosen up the anxiety of language learning classes. One of the limitations of TPR is that it is more suitable for beginning levels of language classes and becomes increasingly more difficult to use as students advance into higher levels (Brown, 2006). It is suspected that one of the reasons why TPR has never really been utilized in ASL classes is because of its lack of response from students. In Deaf culture, it is very crucial to set up a rapport with the person with whom you are communicating. Research has shown that deaf people who use ASL from a young age use both language and general cognitive functions (left and right brain functions) while second language learners of ASL are almost always stuck on using the language (left brain) part of the brain when using ASL (Petitto, et al., 2002). So with this information one can assume that one of the benefits of using TPR in an ASL class would be that it addresses the right brain visuospatial recognition first before the left brain language awareness and encourages students to shift between both brain functions. Krashen and Terrell (Brown, 2007) followed similar ideology in their natural approach as Asher by delaying “speech” production in thinking that it will emerge on its own similar to that of children not talking until later on. Furthermore, they advocated for input + 1 (I +1) which meant that they would teach students at a level slightly ahead of what they currently knew and this would increase their skills gradually. The “I” level is currently where the student is at and the +1 would build on the student’s current level. This is very similar to Vygotsky’s (1986) scaffolding theory which has been widely applied in educational settings. This approach

is used more frequently in young children who are deaf but haven't learned sign language from home. Typically L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) instructors of ASL have differed in approaches and only recently are these two groups starting to merge in order to best maximize the resources available rather than developing many new materials for each discipline.

**Notional-functional.** After ASL became recognized as a language in the eighties more and more teachers became interested in linguistic applications of ASL and wanted to know more about how to better teach ASL. After this time people were sure that the typical methods of the past were not the only ones that could be used. As a result, three teachers, Cheri Smith, Ella Mae Lentz and Ken Mikos, from Vista College in Berkeley, California applied for and received a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant. From there they scoured resources and decided that a notional-functional approach was the best approach related with teaching ASL. They developed the very popular Vista College *Signing Naturally* series (Lentz, Mikos, & Smith, 1992; Mikos, Smith, & Lentz, 2003; Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 2008a; Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 2008b). These books have been by far the most popular books used for ASL courses to date. One of the reasons for their popularity is the use of the notional- functional curriculum (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). The notional-functional approach ties in nicely with ASL teaching because the notional approach looks at “domains in which we use language to express space and time” (Brown, 1997, p. 67). Space and time are a big part of our visuospatial language and addressing this in the curriculum certainly addresses some of the most difficult aspects of ASL first which means as students progress through their ASL studies they have adequate time to become accustomed to the “difficult” parts

of ASL as non-native sign speakers. In the functional part of this type of curriculum, students learn about routines and customs in the language they are learning (Brown, 1997). In the Deaf community, people always ask your name, where you grew up, the name of the school you attended. In the Vista curriculum, this was included under the introductions part. That way when an ASL student goes out in the Deaf community, they are equipped to have a conversation because they have learned all the necessary greetings and basic information that usually occurs in dialogues among community members (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). Several popular ASL textbooks for beginning level coursework follow a basic ideology which combines teaching ASL to align with the cultural needs of the Deaf community. Typically as a student is learning ASL, they learn basic conversational vocabulary and grammar that allows them to have conversations with Deaf people. The vocabulary and grammar learned correlate with the most likely questions and topics Deaf people would ask any person they meet who uses ASL.

**Eclectic curriculum.** From this knowledge from ASL linguistics and research about better curriculum ideology out there, other resource books sprung forward. One such example is *Learning American Sign Language* by Humphries and Padden (2004). This book offers similar types of dialogues as the *Signing Naturally* series (Lentz, et al., 1992; Mikos, et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008a; Smith, et al., 2008b;). At the same time it has ASL gloss, which is what ASL would look like if it was a written language, printed in the book for students to see the grammatical breakdown of ASL. This is very different from the Vista series which there is no gloss shown for students because these three people feel that ASL is not a written language and should not be construed as such. With the use of ASL gloss, it looks like written English with “bad” word order and students

could be led to believe that is what ASL represents. Learning ASL utilizes different methodology that has been proved to be successful over the years instead of focusing on one specific type of method (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997).

**Challenges towards foreign language education.** Foreign language is a general term that has been used over the years to address languages other than English being taught in American school classrooms. It is not only limited to languages from foreign countries but also includes languages used here in America such as ASL or Native American languages. Furthermore, it is not limited to languages that are currently spoken but also expands to include dead languages such as Latin (American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages, 1999). At the same time many departments are exploring terminology which best fits their program offerings such as foreign languages, world languages, modern languages and languages other than English (LOTE). An appropriate name can either include or exclude ASL.

Another problematic area of struggle for this profession is related to the respect for dialects and heritage languages used. Many classes are taught with one dialect and one “way” to teach those specific classes. This is obviously noticeable with a language such as Spanish. Many classes in Spanish are taught using Castilian Spanish and other forms of Spanish are given no regard. If a student is a bilingual Spanish-speaking student, but uses a different dialect than Castilian Spanish, no recognition for that dialect is given (Ortega, 1999). For this reason as well as others, foreign language education cannot remain apolitical. Often these types of courses are taught separate from politics and culture. Ortega (1999) challenges:

The belief systems of FL teachers and educators, as well as professional legitimization tensions within FL institutions, continue to perpetuate elitist views on foreign language education as the restricted realm of the elite, keeping minority students and minority teachers away from the FL profession. Without an explicit understanding of context and the politics of teaching languages, teachers are left without tools to resist hegemonic practices in language education that discriminate against minority language students. (p. 23)

With that said, it is appropriate to look at what the above-mentioned pedagogies don't accomplish for foreign language education.

**Need for pedagogical reform.** As emphasized by Ortega (1999), language teaching cannot occur separate from culture and from without perception of the oppression that the people of the language being studied go through. The case for ASL can be observed as such: There is oppression occurring when a hearing person with training takes over the ASL education because it means that a deaf person has lost their chance to teach their native language. The reason why hearing people often fill these positions is because they have received formal ASL training from an interpreter training program or a related program. However most of these people have no "foreign language teaching" background so they are not necessarily more qualified than the deaf person. The only thing that qualifies them more than a deaf person is that they may have received formal instruction in ASL grammar which allows them to be "educated in the language." Typically many native ASL users are a product of a dysfunctional deaf education system which prevents them from being able to successfully navigate the academic ascension towards teacher certification and advanced degrees. All states have minimum

requirements for any K-12 teacher and many colleges have expectations of having teachers who have attained MA degrees or higher (Jacobowitz, 2005). With these requirements, the system allows for more hearing people to be hired for ASL Education jobs. This is problematic because looking at Heining-Boynton's (1996) findings; it shows that this is synonymous for other languages as well. Many teachers are not qualified enough to speak the target language fluently. Looking at old methodology such as grammar translation, audiolingual and other methods, there is little requirement for the teacher to deflect from the curriculum and be able to handle spontaneous and interactive pedagogy in the target language. As a result, everything we have learned up to now influences the way we teach, but we need to unlearn all of that and look for practices that are not hegemonic and oppressive to the target language and culture.

**The National Standards.** As a result of the turmoil of foreign language education, the National Standards were developed to represent the best practices of the profession of foreign languages. The National Standards were developed by a collaborative effort of nine different organizations including American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as well as individual language organizations such as Chinese, Classical languages, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The National Standards focus on a framework of the Five C's. These Five C's are communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities (ACTFL, 1999). By following such standards set for other foreign languages, ASL can get equal recognition as a foreign language. One of the research questions will look at the underlying issues of ASL in different departments within the university. It will be interesting to see if there is any effect on the ASL program if it is housed in a department



related to education or communication instead of foreign languages. Does such an infrastructure impact the ASL program or not?

### **Oppression of American Sign Language within and outside of the Deaf Community**

The oppression of ASL continues amongst members of the Deaf community who degrade the language by communicating in other signed modalities or preferring to converse orally. Members who were raised with oppression towards ASL continue to reinforce the oppression today by affirming the beliefs that ASL is not worthy of being used as the language of instruction of deaf students (Emerton, 1996). Furthermore, members of the signing community who are deaf prefer not to work in fields related to ASL. These members don't hold respect for teachers of ASL, thinking that it is a task for the less fortunate members of the Deaf community.

However, ASL is currently in the forefront of an ethnic revival amongst members of the community. People in the Deaf community call themselves Deaf with a capital D just as a person identifies themselves with a capital "J" for Jewish or "W" for Welsh to signify their cultural identity. At the same time the lowercase d in deaf represents an opposing view; the audiological view that emphasizes a deaf person as not being able to hear instead of acknowledging their language and culture (Baker, 1999; Bauman, 2008). The community of users of American Sign Language is a proud group that is trying to embattle issues of audism and sort through experiences of Deafhood.

In 1975, Humphries took the Latin root *audire* (meaning "to hear") and coined the term *audism* to describe oppression related with hearing. He went on to define audism as "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears" (p. 11). The paper was unpublished and the term brought to light again

in 1982 with Lane's publication of *The Mask of Benevolence*. Now the term is making its way through Deaf community circles as members recognize oppression that is experienced daily and use associated terminology to talk about it. The oppression was external, from the mainstream community, and internal, such as how many deaf people are taught that they need to speak to fully fit into society. Parents and teachers encouraging and praising deaf children's oral skills created an environment where deaf people with good oral skills would look down on other deaf people without those oral speaking abilities. This resulted in a systemic internal oppression within the Deaf community and caused divisions that continue to this day (Bauman, 2008; Rowley, Multra Kraft, & Dyce, 2008).

Furthermore, to understand the audism that Deaf people experience, Ladd (2003) delved into the experiences of Deaf people in England and France during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. From a lens of colonialism and resistance theory, Ladd was able to show the experiences of Deaf people were analogous to those who had been colonized. What was even more powerful to many Deaf studies scholars reading Ladd's work was that Deaf people today continue to experience the same kind of oppression that Deaf people worldwide experienced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most American scholars were used to looking at Deaf community issues within our own country, without considering the experiences of deaf people in other countries. Ladd also made it clear that the experiences of oppression were not unique to our linguistic minority group but to that of others who had endured the colonialization of British and other empires around the world. This helped solidify the thinking of many Deaf studies scholars, giving them a

paradigm and body of research on which to base their community analysis and discussions (Rowley et al., 2008).

### **American Sign Language Programs of Study in Higher Education**

While it seems that issues of oppression and discrimination may plague the field of American Sign Language because Deaf people experience this daily, research shows the popularity of American Sign Language is skyrocketing. In 2002, the Modern Language Association published a survey that showed students enrolling in ASL classes from 1997 to 2002 had increased by 435% (Welles, 2004). In 2002, ASL was the fifth most offered language course at four-year institutions. In 2006, ASL surpassed Italian and became the 4<sup>th</sup> most offered class in four-year institutions (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2007). In two-year colleges, since 2002, ASL has been the second most offered language class following Spanish. However this seems to be the trend mostly for introductory level courses, the survey showed that in 2006 introductory enrollments tallied at 72,694 students while advanced enrollments were counted at 5,249 students. This accounts for the lowest number of advanced offerings taken in any foreign language with 14 other languages offering more advanced offerings than ASL even though the number of students taking ASL ranks high (Furman et al., 2007).

These statistics back up Cagle's (2008) findings that only a small number of colleges/universities have advanced offerings of ASL. In his research he found 13 four-year colleges that have a major in ASL. It is from that list that this study investigated to see if three colleges or universities could be selected that offer a degree in ASL to study.

### **Research Questions and Methodology for this Study**

The focus for this study was on the following questions: What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing ASL degree programs? What are the philosophies within the ASL degree programs? How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community?

Working from the list of 13 four-year colleges that Cagle found to have a major in ASL, all the programs from this list were investigated. Colleges were selected that differed in location, exact program offerings as well as where they were housed. From there, each program coordinator was contacted and informed of intent to study their program for this dissertation.

These universities represent different departments which could “host” ASL. The departments include world languages, special education, and ASL. With a wide range of systemic structures operationalized, this pool should cover a variety of academic bureaucratic channels which one may encounter when trying to establish an ASL program with advanced offerings.

I proposed to do a case study in which to collect documents which will find out what the process of establishing a major entailed. All of the documents collected served as a roadmap for other colleges that currently have ASL programs but with no additional advanced offerings or a degree option. With these documents, I looked to see how the program strives to deal with the oppressive baggage that has been long tied with ASL. This was followed up by clarifying information as needed with ASL program coordinators through interviews on videophone or through email correspondences. With

this information, a list of best practices was developed which is most beneficial for those who are interested in expanding or establishing an ASL degree program.

Post-secondary environments offer the largest collection of ASL courses taught as a foreign language either for credit or not for credit. Quantitative studies such as Wilcox and Wilcox (1997) have shown that ASL continues to be one of the fastest growing foreign languages offered which allows for opportune conditions to study how ASL programs are constructed and how they perceive ASL as a language of oppression or of liberation. Also post-secondary environments allow the employment of adjunct or ad-hoc lecturers, which allow for hiring of individuals without necessity of teacher training or certification. Post-secondary settings also allow the critical observer to examine political structure to see where the ASL program is housed; with other foreign languages, with communication disorders or speech and language studies or with another area of academia.

### **Research Frameworks**

For this project, qualitative research methods were implemented because the nature of this inquiry deals with curriculum and this is not quantitative by design. Yet, the evidence available does not provide sufficient information to assist other colleges/universities in their design and implementation of advanced course and program offerings in ASL. For this reason, I collected a variety of documents that show the assemblage of the curriculum. Analysis of these curricular documents was conducted using curriculum inquiry because it allows for multiple perspectives in the analysis process. The focus of this process is on discovering and interpreting curriculum policies, developing curriculum programs and enacting policies and programs (Short, 1991).

Curriculum inquiry does not mean utilizing any one specific method but using a method or methods which are relevant to the information which is desired to be found.

Curriculum inquiry allows for shifts in perspectives by allowing for examination of material and beliefs from interviews as data. When data is analyzed, the focus is on theoretical and practical approaches to the curriculum (Short & Burke, 2001). For this research, significant contributions came from analytical, and ampliative curriculum inquiry approaches.

**Analytical inquiry.** Analytical inquiry (Coombs & Daniels, 1991) addresses questions such as what is the curriculum made up of? It should not be limited to the courses themselves, but also the program philosophy and what the teachers incorporate in the individual courses that make the curriculum unique. In using analytical inquiry, three areas are examined; (a) conceptual interpretation, (b) conceptual development, and (c) conceptual structure assessment. In using this tool, a definition was formulated which defines ASL Studies. Then this tool verified if the curriculum used was an appropriate fit for that specific program. This helped us recognize what are successful components and identified best practices. This was the primary tool to identify the first research question; What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs?

**Ampliative inquiry.** Ampliative inquiry was also utilized for this curriculum essay. In using ampliative inquiry, I identified what assumptions and norms are underlying in the arguments in support of a particular education program and determine how appropriate these assumptions and norms are (Haggerson, 1991). This tool not only allowed us to see what is evident, it also allowed for a critical lens which helps go beyond

the norms. This tool was engaged to serve as the fundamental grounding in understanding the second research question: What are the philosophies within the ASL degree programs?

For the final research question on program structures, philosophies and curricula empowering or oppressing the linguistics and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community the work of three different forward thinking curricula scholars was utilized.

**Multicultural education.** Banks (1994) categorized curricula by four different groups. A curriculum that is contributive is one that mentions diversity or in the case for this particular inquiry, the role of audism and Deaf culture in ASL studies. A contributive curriculum doesn't have a mission to educate students about diversity but will mention it when necessary. An additive curriculum approaches multicultural education with more weight so this approach is on top of the regular curriculum. Teachers are expected to teach everything in the original curriculum and add to the existing curriculum what is missing. A transformative curriculum is where the original curriculum is done away with and a new one is used that integrates diversity throughout the curriculum. The last type of curriculum that Banks (1994) identifies is a curriculum of social action where reactions and actions towards a social justice platform are included in the regular curriculum. For the purpose of this study, the programs were categorized under one of these labels.

**Cultural epistemology.** Many people grow up with a way of thinking that is taught by parents, schools and society. Once this thinking is established then it needs to be deconstructed in a way that allows the individual to shift their thinking to understand something from a new way of thinking. Agada (1998) uses knowledge deconstruction to

lead the way to a paradigm shift that results in cultural epistemology. This is crucial to understanding Deaf people from a non-disability perspective and as a community of users who embrace their language and culture. Since ASL is viewed as a language to be celebrated by Deaf community members, acknowledging the process of this paradigm shift for students is crucial. For this particular study I verified that this process was a part of the students' education process at their program prior to their graduation.

**Oppression and liberation theories.** The ideology that this research study originally stemmed from is supported by Freire (Freire, 2005) thought in critical consciousness. In order to attain critical consciousness one must transcend from the “magic thinking” which continues to oppress them. This “magic thinking” prevents people from fully understanding their situation and how things operate within their situation. Once a person understands all of the components of their situation then they can be at praxis where they have equal footing to engage in discourse about their situation. The ultimate liberation from the oppressive practices of superiors is to be engaged in dialogics by the minority group. When the minority group then decides to take action to prevent from being oppressed further, they have reached the ultimate conscientização—critical consciousness of one's being and the praxis it is at. At this point in American Deaf society, many people are at their peak of critical consciousness yet many are not. In this study, the relationship between the department and the ASL program was explored. The relationship was evaluated by the opposing matrices provided by Freire (2005) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The matrices look at the opposing theories of dialogics and antialogics which liberate and continue to oppress. The antialogic instruments are conquest, manipulation, and cultural invasion, while the



dialogic instruments are cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis. With this theoretical framework, the liberative and oppressive elements of the program and curriculum was identified.

### **Positionality**

It is important to acknowledge my personal positioning in this study. Currently, I work in an ASL program in a university setting. Previously, I designed, developed and implemented an ASL program in an urban university. Many experiences in this urban university perked my interest in this topic. I have coordinated two ASL programs; one in the Midwest and one in the West. Additionally, at the two universities where I have worked, the ASL programs were located in two different departments which further piqued my interest regarding how different systemic structures impact the overall program model.

As a Deaf adult who is fluent in ASL and English, this research was conducted in both languages as appropriate. The follow up interviews with the ASL program coordinator were conducted in ASL through videophone while the documentation collection and analysis was done in English. ASL has no written form so documentation in English is a frequent alternative when it is not feasible to document through video. Since birth, my parents have exposed me simultaneously to both ASL and English so I am equally fluent with both languages, which minimizes the possibility of incorrect translation. Yet this is still a possibility since there are some things in ASL, as with any other language, that do not translate exactly as conveyed. However, I did my best to find an equivalent translation through documentation and notes that provided further explanation and interpretation in depth.

### **Research Assumptions.**

As a user of ASL, I can feel the oppression towards using ASL, yet simultaneously I feel liberated to have complete freedom to express ideas and thoughts that can only be done in my native language. This inspired me to explore the ideas of oppression and liberation and how they interface to cognize what ASL represents. It was my objective to explore post-secondary environments where ASL is taught as a foreign language and to determine if ASL is taught as a language of oppression or as a language of liberation. With this in mind, I wanted to see if the curricula in place at various institutions addresses or ignores the issue of embracing ASL and Deaf culture.

Since there is oppression that is intertwined into the everyday experience of a Deaf person, a look at these experiences in ASL programs is warranted to see if encumbering acts are being taught unconsciously and being passed on to ASL students. An example of such an act that is not internalized but being systemically rendered would be requiring all ASL students to also take a course in Signed English. This would devalue the status of ASL as a language and raise the value of Signed English as equivalent language while it has already been found that Signed English is not a real language but merely an invented signed code for spoken English (Lane, 1999).

The ontological assumption is similar to the previous example. If the curriculum or infrastructure of the ASL program perpetuates the oppression of ASL, then recognizing it could lead to teachers and administrators changing the curriculum and infrastructure to allow for an equitable learning environment that liberates ASL.

The axiological assumption grounded in this study is the value of multiple perspectives of the Deaf community, of ASL and of academic expectations and norms.

As a Deaf person, my own values are grounded in this study and influence my desire for an ASL program that empowers ASL and the Deaf community. Conflicting views and expectations on an administrative level in an academic environment can keep this empowerment of ASL from flourishing.

The epistemological assumption is that students in ASL programs will graduate fluent in ASL. There is no research which analyzes the type of knowledge students in ASL will graduate with. Therefore I wanted to investigate the program philosophy and determine what knowledge was gleaned resulting from the ASL program. Following the thinking of Agada (1998) I wanted to see if knowledge was being deconstructed as students progressed through the program. Was there a new paradigm shift occurring in which knowledge of Deaf culture and ASL differs from that of a white Eurocentric view?

In this study, the humanistic issue pertains to the knowledge of the researcher. As I serve as the apparatus of knowledge, I asked the reader to experience the research with me through the process of theorizing, finding, analyzing and speculating on the synthesis of information amassed from bodies of knowledge and theory. I wished to provide the reader with maps and guides of best practices to establishing an ASL program with advanced offerings and degree options.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Traditional university structure has several levels that function on a hierarchical scale. With this in mind, searching for articles showed that the hierarchical structure continues to be strong along with many new models and ideas being encompassed due to influencing factors. The community influences some of these factors while programs are influenced by the changing demands on a particular field. In this review of the literature, there will be a discussion on university infrastructure which allows for further understanding what setting up a program entails. Following that, a review of what is known about ASL and other signed systems ties in with understanding of the history of ASL. This will lead to the oppression of ASL and the Deaf community. Oppression is then discussed from a larger lens which impacts ethnic and minority groups. Direct experiences of those groups allow for parallel connections to be made with the Deaf community. All of this will lead to the motivation of identifying strengths and weaknesses in ASL degree programs to enable more programs to establish ASL degrees that are not oppressive and are liberating to ASL as a language and to the community of Deaf people who use ASL daily.

### **University Infrastructure**

Many academic disciplines are well established and have been in place many years. For example, the medical field is well established and internationally widespread. In 2005, professionals from all over the world published an article explaining how to develop the role of a department in the field of medical education. The need for such an article arose after more and more medical schools added a medical education department to their infrastructure. The need for such a department resulted from “various pressures,

expectations, and changes in society, education and medicine” (Davis, Karunathilake, & Harden, 2005, p. 665). With the information age explosion, many people have access to more medical information thus have swamped medical curricula and raised the need to examine current medical school practice. Doing this addresses new needs which are continued education, and re-accreditation as well as clear learning outcomes for all doctors (Davis et al., 2005). With these immediate concerns, the focus and scope of a department of medical education has now evolved to address the specific requirements of research, teaching, service as well as nurturing the careers of academic staff. Research, teaching and service are general expectations for professors in other disciplines and it has spread to the medical discipline as well. In promoting research, professors need to create a culture of educational research which makes explicit the impact that research will have on the educational process of students studying to become doctors (Davis et al., 2005; Harden, Grant, Buckley, & Hart, 1999). Also professors need to communicate about research and use current literature to keep abreast of information and publications and communication needs to be a tool in medical education programs.

To teach effectively, the authors emphasize that several aspects of teaching must be addressed; (a) teaching and facilitation of learning which addresses a variety of settings like large-group, small group and independent learning, (b) design and preparation of instructional materials and study guides, (c) learning technologies such as e-learning, (d) trainee assessments and selection issues, (e) curriculum development, evaluation and course design as well as (f) research in medical education. This list is comparable to such a list specific for evaluating ASL programs which looks at (a) personnel selection, (b) curriculum, (c) placement interviews, (d) media utilization, (e)

teachers' performance evaluation, (f) environmental aspects of a classroom, (g) supervisor's effectiveness, and (h) budget (Kemp, 1998a).

The benefits of a good relationship with the local community through service and national medical field through research only serve to strengthen the relationship of the medical education program with the local and national communities. Thus, the service provision is crucial to building up a strong relationship with the local community that the program is situated in (Davis et al., 2005).

When students are in the program they are training to become medical professionals. During their time at the medical education program, they should be considered academic staff who will become the future program professionals. As such, they will continue to work in the medical education fields carrying on the work already started by their predecessors. Medical education is needed in all environs and not just at the academic level. For this reason, research, teaching, service and nurturing careers of academic staff all have important contributions to this profession (Davis et al., 2005). All of these aspects are true for any program including an ASL program. Following this structure lends credibility and shows that the role of the professor in the department will show if that person is equivalent to a professor and if they are in a position to make curriculum decisions (Davis et al., 2005).

Advice for setting up a medical education department are also listed, but for the purpose of setting up an ASL department, listed are advice that are not medical school specific. They are as follows:

- (1) Enlist the support of the dean and other powerful advocates within the college or school.

- (2) Appoint a qualified director.
- (3) Demonstrate practical ways the department can help the school early in the planning phase.
- (4) Ensure that the process is non-threatening and non-judgmental.
- (5) Establish effective lines of reporting and communication with the school.
- (6) Employ appropriate staff.
- (7) Create enthusiasm for teaching.
- (8) Obtain a funding source guarantee until program become self-sustainable within a few years.
- (9) Gain recognition for the development of scholarship.
- (10) Gain contact with other groups on a local/national scale.

This list allows for more careful understanding of the fundamental process of establishing an academic program and this will allow for a lens to view the establishment process.

With the explosion of the information age, science and technology are experiencing a lot of new challenges and demands, no different than the demands on the medical profession to make changes and adapt to the current needs of the population. However with science and technology, the demand is not to create a new program, but to become multi-disciplinary and create opportunities for collaboration within many fields. Woods (2004) explains that one such university established a multi-disciplinary program to remain at the forefront of their field. This approach involved merging departments and restructuring to offer expertise in many areas. This particular situation warranted the

establishment of the Sonic Arts Research Center which involved faculty from music, computer science, electrical and electronics engineering, psychology and chemical engineering. The most interesting thing about this is it challenges the status quo of the university structure to allow for acceleration in their particular field. Is such a multi-discipline approach warranted for ASL? That remains to be seen from the research.

Another additional challenge from the information age is the rise of a “global university.” At the forefront of this approach is a new way of seeing the function of a university. This brings initiatives in building successful cross-disciplinary programs and pushes for cutting-edge research to successfully recruit students, funding while simultaneously building a prestigious name for the institution involved with this (Frost & Chopp, 2004). The biggest challenge with undertaking a project of this scale is the ambiguity how to enact a project of this scope. Originally many universities started out like cities and evolved to bigger campuses and bigger institutions thus becoming metropolises. Within these metropolises structure for favoring teaching or research dominated the university and structures became designed to support the philosophy of the university as a research institution or as a teaching institution. By the 1980s practices from the business world started being adopted into the university infrastructure changing the face of university protocol and politics (Frost & Chopp, 2004). With the emergence of permeable boundaries, the opportunities for academic globalization is imminent but the business structure of the university system is rigid and not flexible nor fluid, flexible, open-ended structures that can react to constantly changing conditions which govern the demands of the academic institutions. Does this impact the future of the academic



structure of the university? If so, how will it affect ASL as well? Is the research to support ASL as a language enough to get an appropriate allocation in academia?

### **Understanding of ASL and the Other Signed Systems**

ASL has experienced a lot of turmoil in being oppressed as a language and finally being recognized by linguists and eventually gaining acceptance of the Deaf community as their natural language. What exactly does natural language mean? Lyons' (1991) research looks at the operational definitions of natural language and universal grammar. He explains that operationally speaking, natural language is what is humanistic and acquired from birth. In contrast, artificial language is one that has been developed by a person such as Esperanto which was developed in hopes of having a standardized international language. It is interesting to note that Esperanto has no first language users and is a language that was entirely used by second language users only.

This leads Lyons to further elaborate on his theoretical claim on what is natural language. He supports this with popular Chomskyan theory of universal grammar as being innate (Chomsky, 1957). The best way to explain this is to look at how fast children acquire language and their ability to make sense of specific grammatical principles. Children make the same type of grammatical errors in language as a way of testing what is grammatically acceptable. At the same time, children will never make other kinds of grammatical mistakes that lead Chomsky and other cognitive psychologists to rationalize that grammar must be innate rather than learned. When looking at how much grammar one knows, it is easy to see that the wealth of grammatical structures is not known by every person yet many people master their language by innately knowing the grammatical structure that is allowed and is not allowed. This is true for ASL as well

because most deaf people pick up ASL here and there with no formal instruction and most do not learn it from their parents yet grammatically the language is not very different from another deaf person using ASL (Baker, 1999).

Chomsky (1957) further stresses that the universal grammar that exists allows for infinite possibilities of sentences even sentences that have never been uttered before. A popular example is “colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” The sentence is meaningless and contradictory which is why we haven’t seen it before and it is safe to assume it has never been stated before Chomsky brought it up. Yet looking at the sentence we accept the grammar that it uses. We don’t feel that it is grammatically incorrect even though it doesn’t make sense.

Lyons further asserts that the operational definition of natural language has been overused and has become a loose terminology in linguistic circles and attempts to rectify this by offering more stringent descriptions of what consists as natural language. In the field of deaf education we have many communication systems in place to educate deaf children such as Signed Exact English (SEE) which were made up by individuals for the purpose of “seeing English” as a language. These sign systems do not have their own grammatical rules; instead they follow English grammar and structure. Many of the sign systems will try to follow some sort of American Sign Language (ASL) signs but make up new signs for words in English that can’t be correctly translated. An example of this lies with tense markers. ASL handles tense differently than English which has a suffix and will not differentiate between words such as like, liking, and liked. ASL shows time differently than English so people who invented English signing systems also invented many new signs to “replace ASL” (Lane, 1992). Following Lyons theoretical proposal

about what constitutes as natural language, it can be argued that these artificial sign systems are not equivalent to language. American Sign Language is a natural language, which can be acquired from birth and is constantly evolving throughout language transition. There are a multitude of first language users for American Sign Language (Valli, Lucas, & Mulrooney, 2005). These same authors also justify why additional signed communication systems are not to be classified as signed languages. Two tracks exist for “communication methods of deaf people.” One being the natural language, which meets linguistic principles as, set forth by linguists such as Lyons (1991) and has its own unique grammatical structure. And the other track being one that consists of artificial, man-made signed systems such as Signed Exact English (SEE 1), Signing Essential English (SEE 2), Manually Coded English (MCE), Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE) and so on. For these systems, the grammar used is English and not unique to each of the individual systems.

Now looking at Chomsky’s thoughts about natural language acquisition in children it would appear that these artificial systems would not be acquired easily because they don’t have their own grammatical structure. That raises a question; is there any value in these sign systems? Do they have communicative value?

To guide this inquiry, I turn to Ellis (1999) to understand what communication means. Other disciplines have asserted that communication is the use of language to interact with other human beings. Ellis explains that communication is the function of language but does not exist as an area of study within the linguistic branches of science. This is significant because in teaching ASL, we need to look at what is being taught, language or communication? Often linguists do not concern themselves with

communication but “in fact, traditional linguistic inquiry is driven by a set of assumptions that removes communication from consideration” (Ellis, 1999, p. 33). Furthermore linguists prefer to study areas like phonology or morphology which are more scientific-driven. Communication involves more complex ideas such as meaning, context and individual cognitive and perceptive ideas through the use of language. Environmental factors come into play in understanding how communication works as well. For example a person may say, “I like my apple.” If prior to that comment another person was talking about a computer, we might assume that apple represents a name of a computer rather than the fruit. Additionally the word like is hard to measure scientifically speaking. It could mean a wide range of satisfaction to different people. It might not mean the same thing when used in a variety of situations and can be interpreted differently by different people. All of these examples represent the convolution of communication.

### **Oppression of American Sign Language and the Deaf Community**

With all of the stress on the language of the Deaf community, a look at the oppression of the Deaf community is warranted. Oppression is an act which puts the oppressor on a higher status while the oppressed is lower on this same hierarchy scale. This is done to determine class and to separate different groups of people. This is a very standard practice and is done within all groups of people (Freire, 2005). However, people who are oppressed do not always recognize that they are being clearly discriminated against.

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (2002) discusses a Spanish worker in Germany and his experience with pulling together a group of people to take political action because they went to the card games to spread awareness of their political agendas. This story

clearly supports Freire's encouragement for finding out what people want and go from there instead of claiming to know what they want and establishing agendas without involving the people they are meant to target. This happens frequently in the deaf community. Many people want to do things for deaf people but never strive to ask what we want to do in order to involve us. There are several groups that "work to empower" parents with deaf children. Much of this work is done by hearing people with no desire to include members of the Deaf community. These groups want to support parents and want them to accept their children as deaf but do not give parents any indication of the Deaf community their child will grow up to be a part of (Jankowski, 1997).

This particular type of oppression that affects the Deaf community is called audism. Audism is most powerful when it humiliates deaf people by making them look "futile, obsolete, and powerless" (Lane, 1992, p. 27). Examples of how deaf people have been oppressed and treated by audists are outlined in Lane (1992) by having the most important things taken away from them. Deaf people have suffered by losing their dignity because otologists and audiologists look at deafness as an infirmity and make every effort possible to correct the infirm condition and eradicate deafness. The language is not immune either as hearing educators have tampered with ASL and tried to eliminate it and focus on English or prohibiting any type of signs and denying any recognition of ASL as a natural language. Deaf people have had their history stolen from them. If any history is taught to deaf people, it is slanted to praise the hearing people involved in deaf education such as Thomas Gallaudet. However when Deaf teachers teach history, the focus is more inclusive of looking at successful deaf role models in our history. Gallaudet was able to teach a deaf girl to sign after he learned signs from a Deaf teacher

in France, named Laurent Clerc. Often Gallaudet is mentioned before Clerc. Where is the focus on the Deaf teacher himself? Deaf culture is very much alive and a part of the modern Deaf community but educators and medical professionals deem the culture to be inappropriate and obsolete. Deaf people are politically active but hearing experts disempower Deaf in areas that are important to the Deaf community (Lane, 1992).

Audism produces information and passes it down academically through schools that train deaf education teachers, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, educational psychologists as well as many other professionals. The students who have learned the audist perception become audists themselves and perpetuate the cycle of oppression. “The audist establishment is so constituted that a great many hearing people write a great many articles about deaf people. It would be unthinkable today for black studies programs to be composed entirely of white people who published articles about black people in professional journals; nor could there be an all-male women’s studies program that published antifeminist literature” (Lane, 1992, p. 69). Anyone can be an audist, including deaf people themselves. Gertz (2008) discusses dysconscious audism a concept in which people who accept the regular oppression of deaf people in society as the norm have impaired consciousness. This is termed dysconscious because Deaf people may have an inkling what they are accepting is not right as opposed to being totally unconscious about the act of audism that is present (Gertz, 2008). In this case, the members of the Deaf community who accept and abide by other hearing audists are perpetuating the cycle of oppression and allowing for hegemony to occur between the Deaf and hearing communities.

### **The Bigger Picture of Oppression and How Deaf People Fit In**

The possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006) is mainly a historical documentation of white supremacy which squelches rights and power of other minority groups. Lipsitz uses the terms possessive investment of whiteness from multiple perspectives. He uses investment as both a “literal and figurative” (2006, p. vii) meaning because sometimes the actions of whiteness result in monetary gain for white people and fiscal loss for others. Some of these examples of what the possessive investment of whiteness are: slavery, segregation, “Indian” extermination, immigrant restriction, conquest and colonialism (Lipsitz, 2006). These examples give an idea of the power of white people to force minority groups to experience the oppression that they have experienced here in America. Constant possessive investment in whiteness has continued to deny opportunities to members of minority groups that white people have had access to and continue to have access to.

The possessive investment in whiteness does not mean that all white people here in America are racists or have racial tendencies. However, the ability to prolong white dynamism here in America has historically played on people’s fears and encourages them to go along with acts to relieve those fears that might not have otherwise happened if they were not afraid to begin with.

Not only is the possessive investment in whiteness entrenched in our society by preying on people’s fears, it is also successful because it utilizes our ignorance to further the mission of white supremacy. The view that there are problems is primarily a white-initiated spin on issues. Richard Wright flips the perspective of the “Negro problem” by asserting that there is no Negro problem-only a white problem (Lipsitz, 2006). Wright forces us to look at our ignorance of how we treated the Negro people and this allows us

to see that our practices of whiteness have become discriminatory for blacks. This captures the ambitions of whites who feel they are giving back to the community and doing a service when in fact they are furthering the possessive investment in whiteness by persisting that there is a problem.

When politics and educational practices collide we have situations where the possessive investment of whiteness continues to discriminate and oppress minority groups. Garan (2004) opinionates that the government expects that most people who will read research will just accept it and not challenge it because they are busy and do not have time to carefully analyze what is presented. When those in power are allowed to get away with our ignorance, it just replicates and recycles itself over and over again. When issues that are really crucial arise, we have no backbone because we have not challenged the system up until now. This is significant in the Deaf community because they have struggled for so long to have ASL recognized as one of the languages under the Bilingual Education Act. In 1968 it was passed without any notion that ASL should be included. When it came up for reauthorization in 1990, ASL was pushed aside again. There are two arguments which prevented the passage of ASL as a bilingual language. The first is that the government prescribes to a medical model of deaf people so their money is better used to fund cures and research on how to become hearing. Another reason is because ASL is different than other languages. The visual-spatial mode that ASL uses is difficult to categorize deeming it better to leave alone. These actions by politicians and people in power have continued to oppress us as a community (Lane, 1992). With the exclusion of American Sign Language in the Bilingual Education Act, there is no support for hearing



children from homes with deaf parents. If they were from Spanish or Chinese speaking homes, they would get more educational support.

Valenzuela (1999) studies the oppressive academic experience for minority students in a Houston school. What she finds resonates with what other critical analysts have said about white power. The possessive investment of whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006) allows teachers to replicate the status quo and deliver education in the way they have received it. However this type of education does not always work for everyone. What is so dismally obvious in Valenzuela's research is that students who are not Mexican-born, reject the notion of how they are schooled since it is subtractive for them rather than adding on to their education. If these teachers were able to acknowledge that the pedagogy they employed was subtractive to their students' education, would they continue to use it?

This rings true for the quality of deaf education. Many people cannot agree on what is the best way to educate a deaf child. Many hold on to the ways they learned when they were trained. These are the most oppressive ways to educate a deaf child because they prohibit the natural language of the Deaf community from being used and they advocate for assimilation of deaf people into a hearing society that does not make an equal effort to communicate with deaf people (Lane, 1992).

What is unfortunate is that most people are stuck with the myth that the way they were educated when they grew up is the appropriate way to educate therefore they continue the status quo of replicating oppressive and subtractive forms of education on our minority students. Valenzuela (1999) also mentions that the education experience for Mexican-born immigrants is not the same as it is for those U.S.-born Latinos. It would

be easy to assume that the methods utilized by the teachers do work for some therefore they don't need to be changed. This would be once again an ignorant assumption which would lead to continued oppression in the education that minority immigrants receive. Valenzuela is careful to identify the reason why foreign-born immigrants in her research fare better than those U.S.-born Latinos. She contributes that foreign-born students are successful products of the educational systems in their native countries which enable them to persevere in the educational settings here in the U.S. This is surprisingly similar to the thinking that occurs for many teachers who are products of suburban schools. They feel that because they received a good education, then it is appropriate to replicate that education for others. When educational settings are not ideal, they try their best to bear with the current status of the program. This statement could be construed as the reason why teachers continue to teach the way they do, or why foreign-born immigrants continue to accept the education they are given here in America. This can be a dangerous thinking for people who teach about Deaf people or ASL. If a person learns about Deaf community as a medically deficient population who can't hear, then the knowledge will be passed on to students this way in the classroom.

Lipsitz (2006) often refers to the oppressive practices that restrict money to some groups and reserve money for whites as part of the possessive investment in whiteness. Those in power are those with the money and to ensure that they continue to stay in power they make the politics accessible for those with money and not those without money. Those with access to money are more likely to be in control of the politics and set up policy influencing the poor. Usually these policies continue to keep poor people in poverty levels and increase income for those with the wealth. Anyon (2005) details how

federal policies maintain urban poverty. The policies that oppress the poor originally oppressed those that were immigrants. Many of these policies continue to oppress immigrants because these people continue to live in urban settings. A good example is that how much people earn is comparable with the type of education and the racial and gender status of that person. It is no secret that women earn less than men, African Americans earn less than whites and so forth. As mentioned earlier when the status quo is not challenged, the system maintains its white power then they cannot be successful when hot issues arise. Some people successfully challenge the discrimination within the pay scale however most accept it as is. Those that successfully challenge the scale and earn more money than their white male counterparts usually have to work harder to get to where they are. That is the work of the possessive investment of whiteness, one can only join the white boys club if they transition into that club by believing they can be the same as them. When this happens they become oppressors themselves and become a part of the cycle that continues to perpetuate hegemonic practices. Anyon's (1995) article on "Race, Social Class, and Educational Reform in an Inner-city School" discusses minority group members themselves who joined the ranks of the oppressors. Black teachers working in the urban school district who grew up with urban education distanced themselves from the urban community by living out in suburban areas. In fact, these teachers had joined the "white boys club" because they wanted what the "white boys" represented such as money, a nice house, a good education for their children. These black teachers believed that these lifestyle changes were for the better and became instruments of oppression for members of their own racial group. This is the powerful force of the possessive investment of whiteness as the rewards of joining the elite group are more attractive and

encourage minority group members to abandon their group in exchange for the rewards. The possessive investment in whiteness continues to recruit members and allows for more success in the system when minority group members join the “cause” as well (Lipsitz, 2006).

Actions that are perpetuated by the group in power are usually hidden forms of oppression. What this means is that the people engaging in this type of act do not realize the oppressive behavior they condone. Government dominance is one of the most supreme acts of possession of the white investment by allowing those in power to stay in power and restricts the rise in power to those who have already “bought into the system” by converting their beliefs to be in line with those who are already considered white supremacists. Many deaf people work in the mainstream in government positions or other positions of high caliber. Many of these deaf people arrived at these positions by “buying into the hearing system” and they tell other deaf people in the community that they have to follow the hearing way to be successful in the hearing world. These same people are oppressed by the system they support because they don’t always get equal access to communication (Jankowski, 1997).

The possessive investment of whiteness serves as a barrier to all sorts of problems including education. A brief look at the politics of whiteness has shown to be troublesome to education. The politics of whiteness allow for classism and racism to happen which effect educational environments as well as beliefs of white people who become teachers. Their beliefs serve as a predictor of how they will teach.

These problems are not to be blamed on people of different ethnicity, gender or class, but on themselves as white or hearing people because if the Deaf community did

not allow for hidden acts of oppression to occur in the first place, they could halt the system more easily. But halting such a massive system now is nearly impossible without total and coordinated reform from all parties involved. Knowing about these issues is part of the solution rather than being part of the system that allows and condones the possessive investment of whiteness.

Deaf people who have experienced years of oppression towards their language and culture by audists are wary of the infrastructure designed by white hearing males that serves in the best interests of creating hegemony between the Deaf community and the hearing community. In a huge bureaucratic system such as a university, Deaf people are considered the minority and can easily be oppressed by an audist or by systemic oppression. Are current university structures sensitive enough to adapt to the needs of minority groups that run a department such as members of the Deaf community running an ASL program? How does the infrastructure of the university impact the ASL program? Does it encourage dialogue and cooperation or does it manipulate and prevent dialogue? Understanding this literature allows for a thorough analysis into the program, department and university infrastructure and determining the type of hierarchy that is existent. Furthermore, there is adequate support for careful consideration of curricula, and philosophies that allow for empowerment of ASL so that the language of Deaf people is celebrated and appreciated.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This curriculum study is driven by the research questions: What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs? What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs? How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community?

#### **Postsecondary Institutions for the Study**

The universities for study have both small and large populations to reflect a variety of possible structures of ASL programs. Additionally, the programs studied represent different geographic regions. The most important criterion for this selection process was that the university had an ASL program where students can earn a degree in ASL. Many places offer ASL classes but not advanced course offerings or a degree option in ASL (Cagle, 2008). This limited the options of colleges/universities that could be selected. Since a degree in ASL is a requirement, the focus was on four-year colleges/universities only. This study examined the whole curriculum of the program as well as the individual classes in isolation. Also I wanted to study institutions that were located in differing departments to see what their influences were from their departments. Programs in various structural locations within the university were not plentiful. The size of my sample needed to be large enough so that saturation was met. I suspected three to four universities would yield enough results to show consistency throughout the curriculum and program design. By consistency I believed the programs would have similar course offerings and degree roadmaps for graduation. If each of the programs

studied offered different course offerings, then saturation would not be met with three to four programs (Charmaz, 2000; Flick, 2002; Morse & Richards, 2002).

It was my intent to gather documentation to show the process of establishing the program as well as understanding the relationship of the ASL program with the rest of the department, college or school. See Appendix A for a list of documents that were requested from each program. During this collection process, comparisons were done to see what students at each program needed to have accomplished prior to graduation in order to complete their advanced ASL degree. Such things included courses taken, GPA required and skills evaluated.

With these criteria in mind, I selected and contacted the specific institutions to participate. Based on Cagle's (2008) information, there were 13 possible institutions that could be contacted. Two universities were eliminated from the list because they served a primarily deaf student population and I felt that was more unique than standard. Other schools were grouped into three categories: by the departments they were located in, the size of the school and the regional location of the school. The first step required that I identify institutions that were in different areas of the country, represented different departments and institution sizes. There were two categories for the institution sizes: small and large. The small schools had under 10,000 students while the larger schools had over 10,000 students. There were also two categories for the departments identified as well. All of the programs were either located within an education environment or a foreign language department or another department that was uncommon. None of the BA degree programs were associated with communication or speech.

From the programs identified, seven were located within a language or humanities related department, two were in education disciplines and two were in other departments that didn't meet the humanities or education categories. See Table 1. Six programs were located at institutions with 10,000 or more students.

Table 1

<i>Departments where ASL Programs are Located</i>	
Department	Number of programs
Foreign Language/Humanities related departments (including stand alone departments within Humanities Colleges)	7
Education Departments or Colleges	2
Linguistics	1
Behavioral Science	1

Five programs were at institutions with less than 10,000 students. See Table 2.

Table 2

<i>ASL Programs by Institution Size</i>	
Size of Institution	
>10,000 students	<10,000 students
6 programs	5 programs

From this identification process, I determined that I wanted to select at least one program in an education environment and two programs in foreign language or humanities environments since that is where the majority of the programs seem to be. I elected not to study "other departments" because it didn't allow for a consistent environment to study. I also wanted to study a program within a university environment



of at least 10,000 students and a program in a university environment with fewer than 10,000. With these criteria identified, I selected three programs located in different parts of the United States and within cities or towns of various sizes to allow for the maximum variation possible.

From the three universities that I selected, I contacted each coordinator. If the schools had not agreed to participate, then I would have continued to contact other institutions. This step was not necessary since my primary selections agreed to participate.

**Recruitment issues.** As a program coordinator myself I already knew many other program coordinators and I continue to have connections with many of these universities. The Deaf community is a tight knit community and many of the ASL program coordinators at these universities are part of that community which makes them easier to collaborate with. I personally have met either the coordinator or a faculty member from nine of these universities. Additionally, as a former program coordinator at University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, I was able to determine which documents were the most valuable and informative to this research. This experience at University of Wisconsin Milwaukee has helped critically frame my views as a deaf person and as a researcher. It is with this lens that everything was scrutinized.

Program coordinators are often asked for curricula and program development materials to a point where it becomes time consuming to provide this information to everyone who wants it. My goal was to perform mostly a document inquiry with follow up questioning to the ASL program coordinator, if warranted. I also wanted to engage in dialogue with the coordinators to have them identify what parts of their curricula they

were proud of. By engaging them, I was able to follow participatory strategies used by Freire involving the subjects of the research (in this case, the ASL program coordinators) as partners in the research and allowing myself as a researcher to be immersed in their ways of thinking and their perceptions. Once this was accomplished, I was able to encourage these research partners to think about their ways of thinking (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). However, an assumption I had was that some program coordinators may not be able to identify practices that allow for the empowerment of ASL. I was prepared to engage in dialogic practices to help draw out this information in stimulating their thinking process similar to what Freire did.

I am aware of the awkwardness in researching too close to one's community. For that reason, I looked to Christians (2003) regarding the codes of ethics of researchers while engaged in a study. These codes of ethics are all covered by Institutional Review Boards involvement in academic research. The codes of ethics cover (a) informed consent, (b) deception, (c) privacy and confidentiality, and (d) accuracy. Deception is one such category I needed to examine because of the research questions I have engaged for this study take a critical stance. As a researcher, I see the value of this work as a method of social or cultural criticism which strives to empower ASL and the Deaf community. This study was not deceptive in gathering information on critical questions. However, I did prompt disclosures and revelations from ASL program coordinators that would help view the establishment of ASL programs from a critical lens. If there are underlying issues, I looked for them during the normal inquiry process. These issues helped me uncover and clarify empowering and oppressing practices.

Another concern I had was that with only a small number of high caliber programs in the United States right now, it would be easy to determine a program's identity. For that reason, I was careful in sharing data that would allow for personal identity to remain neutral. So, most of my data collection focused heavily on the documentation of programming and supplemented this by follow up questions. I used the questions to help me understand the documentation I reviewed. Furthermore, I used the questions as tool to understand what the philosophy was of the ASL program which is supported by this literature. "Ontology must be rescued from submersion in things by being thought out entirely from the viewpoint of the person and thus of Being" (Lotz, 1963, p. 294). With this process I could understand the framework from which the coordinators viewed their program. Individual worldviews are unique and help the reader understand the experience within individual institutions. The personal views and experiences from the people within these programs shared in this research serve to help us understand specific situations and make comparisons with other institutional contexts. I developed preliminary questions elicited from the document review. I followed up with interviews when the document review was not sufficient in answering questions. (See Appendix B for a list of the questions that were addressed from both the document review and interview.)

### **Case Study**

I focused on compiling data to make up a collective of case studies. The cases are the universities and I made sure that the sample was purposive in variety which means each sample represented a variable which allowed for comparison where the department was located, the size of the university and the part of the country where the institution

was located. Each case allowed for opportunities in intensive studying (Stake, 2000). A collective case study compiles a wealth of data rather than focusing on a specific item to investigate.

Each university was asked to supply documents which allowed me to record what the process of establishing the ASL program at each university required (see Appendix A for a list of documents requested from each institution). With the documents gathered, a comparison was done to focus attention on key attributes to determine if location, programming infrastructure and college size have any impacts on establishing an ASL program. Comparison studies conflict with Geertz's (1973) "thick description" because "thick description" could lead to conflicting descriptions (Stake, 2000). In utilizing a comparison type of study, the focus is not on the case as the study, but on the other issues such as university size, department affiliate or location. These issues are noteworthy but should not be the primary focus of the study. The program establishment process and requirements which include the process for establishing a program, the goals of the program, as well as the curricula model utilized were the main focuses for the study.

### **Data Sources**

I asked to look at any documents that the programs developed such as program descriptions, program policies, and course descriptions. Once the research was approved, I contacted each program and requested the list of the documents in Appendix A as a major source of information. I accepted the documents as email attachments. Not all of the programs had all of the documents requested. Some had different documents but with the information requested.

Altogether the majority of the documents requested were successfully collected with the exception of program implementation files such as the program proposal and the curriculum committee minutes. For a comprehensive list of what was received from each program see Appendix C. From each university, I received syllabi for every course within the major. The syllabi served as another major source for the document review. Online searches at each university resulted in catalog descriptions of the programs, program sequence, course requirements, course descriptions, schedules and university policies related to those courses. Additionally I received an advising document from one program which matched the program sequence found online. One program provided a student handbook. This handbook clarified policies related to transfers, retroactive credit, employment opportunities and other information not usually found online. These data provided direct and indirect information on dependent variables.

### **Follow-up Interviews**

I developed a rapport with the program coordinators and continued this collaboration through the research process. After the document review, any issues that were not addressed in the documents were addressed in follow-up interviews. I used the data to develop follow-up questions that I posed to the program coordinator. I was interested in the standard practices that occurred but were not written but considered policy or part of the curriculum. For instance, when students transfer into an ASL program with existing skills, how does that program place them in ASL courses? Do they depend on where they learned ASL? What level of ASL they already had? What curriculum they were exposed to? The name of their instructor? Or does the program have a formal system in place to evaluate students? This is the type of practice usually

isn't written in a policy paper but is often common practice in language programs. However, in my review of documents, I noticed that programs address this issue in their bulletins. I was interested in such instances of underlying practices because Wilcox (1982) explains that ethnographers who work in the area of cultural transmission often find that these practices impact the information being taught as well as the culture of the classroom. Wilcox and Wilcox (1997) support this by emphasizing that the support of the community is necessary in having a successful ASL program and that the community can influence the policies, practices and curriculum of the program. Other issues that I addressed in follow-up questions explored the relationship between the ASL program and the department it is in to understand levels of cooperation and organization.

**Interview questions.** To help direct my interview, questions formulated by Kemp (1998a) in his book *Fundamentals of Evaluating Sign Language Programs* is especially useful. This book covers many details in the whole program evaluation process. For overall program assessment, Kemp (1998a) looks at several factors: (a) personnel selection, (b) curriculum, (c) placement interview, (d) media utilization, (e) teachers' performance evaluation, (f) environmental aspects of a classroom, (g) supervisory effectiveness, and (h) budget. While all of these are important, in doing all of these, I effectively would be doing a whole program evaluation and this was not the intent of my research question. Instead of focusing on all of these in depth, the majority of my follow-up interview questions focused on the curriculum component. Nevertheless, I asked questions about each component to ensure that the overall program ideology was uncovered.

The questions specific to curriculum addressed how the curriculum was developed and covered a wide range of issues regarding the curriculum. Even though each question elicited a yes/no answer, additional information about the process of curriculum development was solicited during the interview. The questions were:

- Was the program developed with a content specialist and curriculum specialist's input? If so, how? If not, how come?
- Does the curriculum address both program goals as well as student's achievement levels? How do you use the program goals? How about the student's goals?
- Does the curriculum address each course's specific performance objectives? How are these objectives used?
- Are measurable outcomes listed in the performance objectives? Give me examples.
- How does the curriculum handle periodic revisions?
- Is there any flexibility in the curriculum? Such as adding content related with an upcoming holiday or event?
- Can last minute changes be made by a teacher? What kind of leeway does the teacher have?
- If so, is the teacher expected to inform others about last minute changes?
- If a teacher makes last minute changes and informs the program director/supervisor about the changes, are other teachers made aware of these curriculum changes?
- Is the curriculum available for teachers to readily review?
- What format is the curriculum available, if any? Electronic or hard copy format?

- If electronic, can teachers access it to review and make changes?
- Are syllabi distributed during the first day of class to students? If so, how are these distributed? Who develops and maintains syllabi?
- Are program materials evaluated to determine effectiveness?
- The materials used are in place for how long?
- Are they changed or replaced periodically?

Since these questions dealt primarily with evaluation, there were other questions that were more in line with program development. I looked for the answers that could be extracted from the document review. Then follow up questions were asked of this nature if not already addressed in the documents:

- How long has the ASL degree option been in place?
- What is the degree in?
- How long did it take to implement the degree?
- Why is ASL located in that specific department?
- Is this department an appropriate place, why or why not?
- Were there any obstacles in program implementation?
- If so, how did you get around these obstacles?
- Who pushed the program through the proper channels?
- How was the curriculum put together/developed?
- How do your program requirements compare with university requirements (ie: minimum/maximum number of credits required compared with ASL program's requirements)?



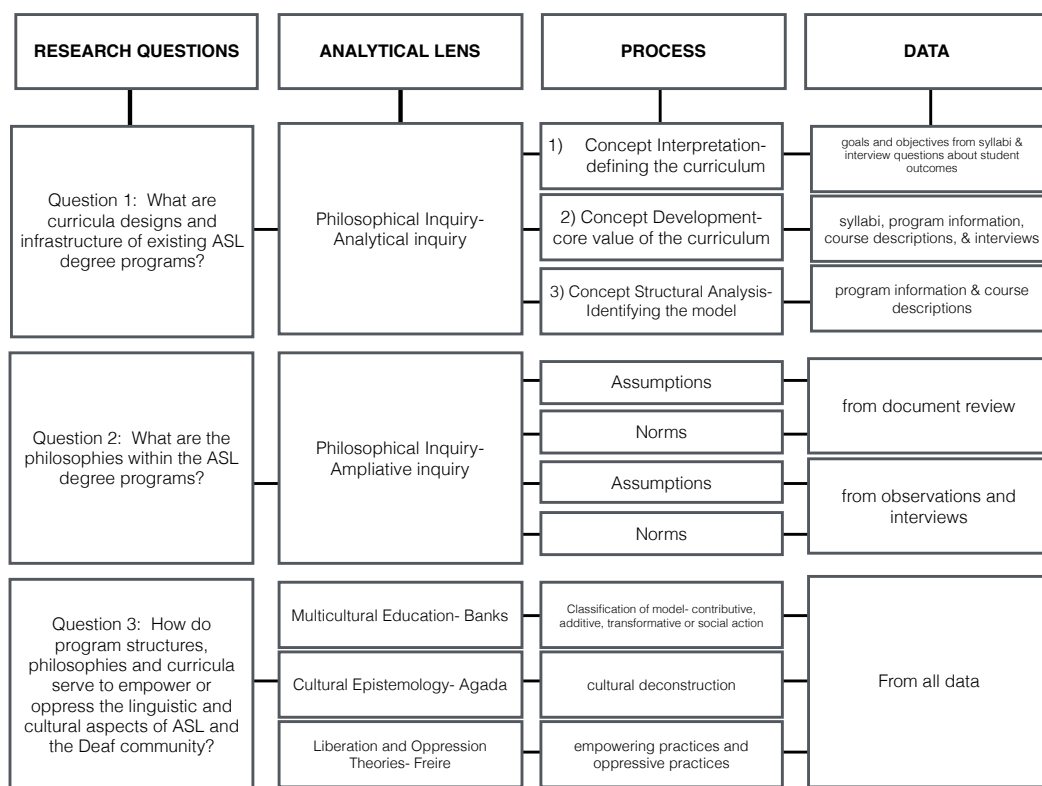
Based on initial contact, information from follow-up interviews with each program coordinator and the results of the document analysis led to a curriculum design framework that will allow others to implement programs elsewhere. This was a major outcome of this study.

**Interview and transcription process.** The main point of interviewing was to see what the overall feeling towards ASL is. The primary purpose of employing observation techniques was to use it to help the interview process: “Even studies based on direct interviews employ observational techniques to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed” (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, p. 673). Interview questions started with demographic information and progressed to the root of the interview by asking questions about the documents read and to get a clear history of the ASL program development and implementation issue. I interviewed the ASL program coordinator or the person closest to the curriculum development. I interviewed each participant once, however, I had contact with all of them more than once. For two institutions, I interviewed the ASL program coordinator. For another institution, I interviewed the department chair who implemented the ASL program. I also had contact with the program coordinator at that institution regarding clarifications. All of the interviews occurred with the primary point of contact. After transcription of the data to allow for clarifications or additional information gathering, I followed up with the participant or a teacher at that school for a second look. The interview was done through videophone which is visual and almost the same as a face-to-face interview.

All of the interviews were recorded on videotape by using a camcorder. The interviews were transcribed from video to written English. However, the majority of the interviews were transcribed into outline form instead of full sentences since there is no exact translation for the majority of full sentences used in ASL. After this was done, to assure reliability of translation, a colleague of similar language proficiency viewed all the transcriptions to make sure that they were accurate portrayals of the source language used during the interview.

### **Research Frameworks for Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In soliciting answers to the research questions, I scrutinized the data from a variety of curriculum inquisition perspectives. Since there are several research questions that were to be answered, different approaches were used to help frame the analytical process for each question. See Figure 1 for a flow chart of the research process.



*Figure 1.* Research methodology and process.

**Examination of philosophical inquiry: Conceptual analysis.** To ground the research, the first inquiry process was a philosophical inquiry. In curriculum inquiry there are several different types of philosophical inquiries. Two different types are utilized in this study. The first type is conceptual analysis which provided the research with a definition for curriculum. This allowed for the line of exploration and unpacking of all aspects of the curriculum including the obvious and hidden curriculum. The primary function of this process is to answer the first research question. Adoption of this line of inquisition required understanding the materials provided by the different institutions to allow for comparison as part of the analysis to making sure data were complete (Merriam, 2002). In analytical inquiry which is also referred to as conceptual

analysis, a branch of philosophical inquiry, there are three main areas that are addressed: concept interpretation (CI), conception development (CD) and conceptual structure assessment (CSA) (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). For each of these areas, there are basic guidelines to follow.

To achieve concept interpretation, the guidelines suggest that the extent of the analysis depends on the complexity of the item studied. An important step is to compare and contrast the environments where the term “curriculum” comes into play. In this case, identification of situations where the term is used is necessary to help clarify how this term is used and which cases “make the use of the term appropriate, inappropriate or uncertain” (Coombs & Daniels, 1991, p. 31).

Once concept interpretation has been achieved, conception development is worked on next. In this instance, prior to development, determining what needs to be accomplished is necessary. In order to be useful, the concept needs to preserve core meanings and determine what people believe to be the core value of curriculum. It is not useful to develop a concept that differs from what people believe to be the real meaning of the curriculum is (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). Furthermore, looking into what other people have already found out about the meaning of curriculum is crucial to see if the meanings are consistent or if they reflect different or new concepts. Once the concept is developed, the last step is to determine the adequacy and use of such a theory or model in curriculum research (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). In this case, determining if a clear definition or model of what a curriculum entails is appropriate for helping with this study, then it should be thus defined. If current conceptions are vague, then new ones are developed to make information more precise. Development of conceptions depends on

the purpose. In this particular study, the purpose is to identify the core value or the concluding program expectations. Subsequently, this process concludes with conceptual structure assessment which doesn't only help us understand the model used, but allows for determination of adequacy in curriculum inquiry (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). In this particular case, I am evaluating the program model and if it is a model that should be replicated elsewhere.

**Examination of philosophical inquiry: Ampliative criticism.** Another philosophical inquiry employed for this study is ampliative criticism which is critical by nature and look into the school and the curriculum as an institution. Additionally, the policies, conventions and customs in educational settings all have their own sets of “values, rationale, and even rationality” (Haggerson, 1991, p. 43). This method is used to answer the second research question posed in this study. In engaging ampliative inquiry, one goes beyond the norms governing institutions and seeks to find new ways of doing and proposing alternatives. Through this methodology, we can see the variety of practices and approaches implemented to successfully establish an ASL degree program.

In conducting this inquiry, I delved into different post-secondary institutions and tried to understand their stance towards ASL and where ASL was situated within the institutional structure.

**Examination of liberation and oppression of ASL.** A theoretical framework related to defining urban curricula has been proposed by Banks (1994). His model of multicultural curriculum and pedagogy consist of four approaches which he labels “contributions,” “additive,” “transformative,” and “social action.” Contributions address specific parts of multiculturalism across the curriculum but does not necessarily have

diversity and multicultural frames infused throughout the curriculum. An example of this would be Black History Month as indicated before for the liberal multicultural curriculum. Banks (1994) compares this approach to being a merely cosmetic patch on the curriculum.

An additive curriculum has added the multicultural aspect onto a curriculum that lacked that component. Jenks, Lee and Kanpol (2001) suggest that additive means there is more to teach rather than less. However “the danger is that if the material becomes an important part of the curriculum, it may be given short shrift—or not be taught at all—by teachers who fail to accept its importance, thinly disguising their feelings by claiming there is not enough time in the year to teach everything required” (p. 97).

Unlike adding onto an existing curriculum, the transformative curriculum requires that the internal structure of the existing curriculum be dismantled and constructed again to incorporate diversity experiences and perspectives into the curriculum. This approach does not require as much action towards social justice as the next approach does but more of an understanding of the operation of knowledge and power in society. A beginning understanding of how to bring about social justice is examined in this approach.

The concluding approach pertains to social action. However, this is considered to be a very threatening approach because of the very nature of challenging the hegemonic institutions that perpetuate the status quo of an oppressive nature that they tend to uphold (Banks, 1994). An example of a curriculum that involves social action is one that allows students to not only have the knowledge but also take action on issues. One example of social action occurred at Gallaudet University, a predominately Deaf university, in 1988. At that time, the university never had a Deaf president and out of three candidates, one

was a hearing woman and the other two were Deaf men. The Board of Trustees selected the hearing woman to run the University much to the behest of the Deaf community. The students, faculty and staff were in an uproar and united to overturn the Board's decision. This is a large-scale example of social action. In a program that embraces a social action type of curriculum, students are encouraged to be the change agents themselves and unify to fight oppression instead of working towards change individually.

Agada (1998) discusses the emerging paradigm of cultural epistemology. From a view of a cultural epistemology lens, knowledge is deconstructed as is predominately taught from a white Eurocentric perspective. Other knowledge is addressed which may or may not contradict with existing knowledge filtered through the school system. If conflicting knowledges occur then this will lead to a paradigm shift which requires the observer to come up with a new way to interpret reality (Kuhn, 1991).

Using the work of Freire (2002, 2005) the practices in place at each university were divided into liberative and oppressive practices.

**Data organization.** The data from the observations and the interviews were recorded separately then triangulation of the data took place. In this case, the triangulation process employed was the comparison of multiple sets of data: interviews, transcripts, observations and documents (Merriam, 2002). The data from the observations and the interview were systematically converted into naturally occurring units of meaning. This was accomplished by careful review of the data to find constructs, themes and patterns such as how hearing teachers and deaf teachers taught classes. Were these similar or not? Themes were easily divided into classes or groups of classes such as language courses and theory courses. This was useful for describing and explaining

participants' thoughts and beliefs as well as what was observed in interviews (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The analysis of behaviors was entered as observed which also included an interpretation of behavior observed and why that behavior was noted.

**Analytical process.** The analysis process was started by sorting the curriculum information into categories that aligned with answering the research questions: (1) What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs? (2) What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs? (3) How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community?

With the first category of data analytical inquiry for question 1 was used to divide the information into the three parts: (1) concept interpretation of the ASL Curriculum- What is the definition of the curriculum? (2) concept development of the ASL Curriculum- What core value does this curriculum meet? (3) conceptual structure assessment- Does this curriculum follow a particular model, if yes, which model? In identifying a model, I asked program coordinators how they would label their program. This is the model used and then based on other data sources, I determined if these programs were appropriately defined. An example of a model used was an ACTFL based program. This label reflected the curriculum and core value of the program as reported by the program coordinator. Then I looked sorted the supporting data to evaluate the appropriateness of the self-assigned labels and identification.

For the other data which addresses the second research question regarding the program philosophies in place at the three universities, all the data were divided into



assumptions and norms from the document review and assumptions and norms from the interviews and observations.

For the third research question, I looked to three different scholars, Banks (1994) Agada (1998) and Freire (2002, 2005). With Banks' work, I tried to have the program coordinators tell me about the success and challenges of their programs. I also looked at the documents to see if the type of program could be identified using Banks' classification. I also used the curriculum frameworks by Banks to help identify whether their program was oppressive or liberating. The additive and contributive approaches are more oppressive in nature while the transformative and social action approaches are more liberating.

I also used Agada's knowledge deconstruct to discuss the outcomes of the program in terms of student success upon graduation. I asked program coordinators what they expected their students to do with their degrees. I wanted to see if the program coordinators considered that these outcomes were ideal or not. This was also an effort to help with identification of core values within conception development. Then I used the work of Freire to help sort practices which were identified as norms into two separate parcels, oppressive practices or liberating practices.

### **Scientific Rigor**

The research questions direct the focus of any study and this one is no different. The research questions posed in this paper complement a qualitative study design (Merriam, 2002). With this in mind I was prepared to carefully proceed through this research study with several measurements in place to ensure that proper research techniques are followed such as working with another peer to check translations of

transcriptions, member checks, and triangulation. Furthermore, I employed reflexivity procedures to minimize the gap between researcher and subject as stated by deLaine (2000) that “the gap between researcher and subject has to be closed if there is to be communion with methods, analysis, interpretation, ‘writing-it-up,’ and with social relationships” (p. 2). With this in mind, I explained who I am and my motivation to program coordinators at the same time I did not push myself on the interviewee and the process by trying to more of a recorder than a person with an opinion. In following the essence of Freire, what I did is probe the program coordinators to help them question and explore their thoughts regarding best practices at their universities. Glesne (1999) explains that after you give up your authoritative stance, being the expert is no longer possible yet you can still know some things. This helps me understand that while I gave up my authoritative stance I came in with questions and curiosity that was guided by my previous knowledge but that previous knowledge did not commandeer the interaction with the program coordinator.

In ensuring credibility of the documentation of the interview, I utilized mixed methods to validate my data. Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) equate credibility with interval validity; transferability equates with external validity; dependability equates with reliability; and confirmability equates with objectivity. When the transcript of the interview was completed, I shared it with colleagues to make sure I translated from American Sign Language to English with the same register and the same intent as the original message in ASL did. For the member check I shared the results of my findings with my contact at each university. To further ensure credibility, I used a neutral peer

reviewer who reviewed documents, assessed the process of data analysis and discussed the logic and conclusions of the findings (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995).

Another type of rigor has emerged in recent literature (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) related to interpretation of data. When we refer to rigor it usually means how we frame and bound our research and how it is presented. In the case of this new type of rigor, it asserts that I need to be interpretatively rigorous. This is important to this kind of research because any research with ASL is considered new and fertile. This is even truer for research that strives to delve into the unknown and bring oppression to the forefront of this cutting-edge project.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations but there are many measures in place to minimize the impact of any of these limitations that are posed before us. This study is related with people and as with any study involving the deaf, communication issues using ASL should not be a limitation, but when engaging in transcription and alternating between written text in English and signed text in ASL, translation issues may occur. Furthermore any study that requires translation from one language to another will have difficulty expressing exact meaning, so we must strive to find an English equivalent. Even though I transcribed the data into English, for the analysis process I found myself reviewing the original video more often than the transcribed work. I had hoped to capture the equivalent essence of the meaning that was portrayed for us in ASL but I did not find this to be an issue since I used the video more. Additionally, to make sure translation issues were not a major issue, translation specialists were called upon to look

over transcriptions and videotapes to make sure what was recorded is an equivalent representation of the source discourse.

In taking on this project, I assumed that there will be a cultural bias adopted by people involved in this study which may have affected the ability of the interview to progress naturally and effectively. This is true for me as a researcher, I am naturally inclined to favor a critical stance because I strive to improve the quality of life for deaf people. This can happen with an activist mentality instilled in ASL students. Sometimes deaf people or hearing people involved with ASL programs have no awareness of Deaf culture and reject anything related to deafness in a desire to assimilate with the hearing population as a hearing individual instead of standing out as a deaf individual (Higgins & Nash, 1996).

The final limitation of this study is the plethora of definitions that exist related to deafness. Definitions are influenced by different models or perspectives favored such as the medical model of deafness which looks at hearing loss in terms of decibels while the cultural model looks at deafness by how much a person is entrenched in the culture of the Deaf community. For the purpose of this study I decided to break free from these definitions and use terminology that students can understand and relate to without having to give them a lesson on the cultural and medical dynamics that govern deaf people. In breaking free from this, I allowed the essence of what each program identifies as deaf to emerge in the results of the research.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The data collected primarily yields significant descriptions of a similar framework for all three programs studied. The programs studied all have three years of language courses and additional theory and skills courses. The findings are presented based on data analysis for each research question. Related to curricula design and infrastructure, the analysis utilized the concept analysis framework which addressed three domains: defining the curriculum, identifying the core value of the curriculum and identifying the model of the curriculum (Coombs & Daniels, 1991). With the second question focusing on program philosophies, the ampliative criticism framework helped redirect the data analysis to focus on assumptions and norms related to the documents gathered, as well as assumptions and norms from the interviews and observations (Haggerson, 1991). Regarding the final research question how program structures and philosophies empower and oppress ASL, definitions provided by Banks (1994) and Agada (1998) were used to determine practices that were empowering and oppressive. Based on the data from three university programs where students can graduate with a degree in ASL, there is enough support for a curriculum of consensus due to the overlapping and huge similarities available.

### **General Data on ASL Courses and Programs**

Of the three programs studied, University 1 has a student population of approximately 30,000 students. University 2 has about 27,000 students. The third program, University 3, has 4,300 students. Each of these universities represents a different type of academic institution. One is a state-supported university while the other two are private. Of the two private universities, University 2 is a research-based

university while University 3 focuses primarily on teaching. The universities are also located in various parts of the country. University 2 is in a large metropolitan area while the other two are located in small to mid-sized cities. The number of ASL courses offered seem to be in proportion to the student population of the university as well. University 1, with 30,000 students, has eight sections of ASL 1 every semester with an extensive waiting list. The course caps for that particular program are at 25 students per course. This particular program is under a state-run institution which impacts the amount of control that the ASL Program Coordinator had related to student enrollment numbers. University 2, with 27,000 students, has eight sections of ASL 1 each semester, as well. However, the caps for each course are at 15 students per course. University 3, with 4,300 students, offers two sections of ASL 1 each semester with classes capped at 20 students. The two university programs with smaller course enrollments seem to have more manageable numbers due to two separate factors. Both are private institutions and both programs are located within language departments. See Table 3 below.

Table 3

<i>University student enrollments and ASL class offerings</i>			
	University 1	University 2	University 3
Students	30,000	27,000	4,300
ASL 1 and ASL 2	8 sections every semester (25 students)	8 sections every semester (15 students)	2 sections every semester (20 students)
ASL 3 and ASL 4	4 to 5 sections once a year (25 students)	4 to 5 sections once a year (15 students)	1 section once a year (20 students)
ASL 5 and ASL 6	1 section once a year (25 students)	1 section once a year (15 students)	1 section once a year (20 students)

First year courses have approximately the same numbers in both semesters. For the second year courses, ASL 3 and 4 courses were usually between four to five sections

each and both were only offered once a year for the two larger universities. For the smaller university, one section was offered once a year. For ASL 5 and 6, one section of each was offered once a year for all three universities. The general consensus by program coordinators across the three university programs was that all courses were full or almost full and the numbers required for advanced courses were lower than the beginning level courses.

Each of the programs that is the focus of this research represents a different type of program. The type of program is primarily distinguished by its location within the university structure and their degree options. For the purpose of the presentation, analysis and later, discussion of the results, each university program is labeled based upon these key structural characteristics to assist in building an overall understanding of the program and how the factors presented in each analysis relate. Table 4, provides this basic information and a label that will be associated with the university program from this point on.

Table 4

<i>Characteristics of University Programs Studied</i>			
Program Details	University 1: Stand Alone Major/Minor	University 2: Combined Major	University 3: Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor
Location	Education Department	Foreign Language	Foreign Language
Major	Stand alone, 4-year ASL Studies Major	Combined Majors- ASL Studies/ Psychology	ASL Studies Major
Minor	ASL Minor	None	Minors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpreting</li> <li>• Professional Education</li> </ul>

Other options (separate from major/minor)	Interpreting Degree Post Baccalaureate Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASL Teacher Certification</li> <li>• Deaf Education</li> </ul>	ASL/English Interpreting Degree	ASL Teacher Certification
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The labels used for the three types of programs studied for this research are University 1: Stand Alone Major, University 2: Combined Major, and University 3: Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor. A detailed description of the program structures will be presented in the curriculum conceptual analysis for research question one which examines curricula designs and infrastructure for each of the American Sign Language degree programs.

Across the three programs, course titles were mostly consistent. To assist in organizing and sharing analysis of the curriculum courses across each of the university programs, first year, first semester courses will be referred to as ASL 1, first year, second semester courses will be referred to as ASL 2, second year, first semester courses will be called ASL 3, second year, second semester courses are ASL 4 while third year, first and second semester courses are called ASL 5 and 6 respectively. Each of the universities studied had different labels for their courses such as Elementary 1, 2; Intermediate 1, 2 and Advanced 1 & 2 but based on syllabus review, the content of the courses were very similar thus selecting a generic name to identify the courses seemed appropriate for this case. Regarding the language courses, there is no distinction made between the three programs because all three programs offer the same amount of language skills courses. Pertaining to the theory courses and advanced courses, the information is reviewed by the type of program that the course belongs to.



The data driven qualitative analysis focuses on the research questions: What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs? What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs? How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community?

### **Question 1: What are Curricula Designs and Infrastructure of Existing American Sign Language Degree Programs?**

**Conceptual interpretation: Defining the curriculum.** The primary data source for defining the curriculum came from the goals and objectives located within syllabi from all courses as well as interview responses related to student expectations upon program completion.

**Course descriptions.** Two universities, University 1 and 2, identified ASL as the language of the Deaf community and within the course description they stated that students will learn basic conversational skills and cultural behaviors. The third university focused on conversational skills in their course description and breaks it down to expressive and receptive skills. There was no mention of culture in the course description for that university.

**Goals and objectives.** It is under this heading that the greatest variation is evident. From this part of the syllabus, one can glean the curriculum philosophy of each of the programs it is tied with. Listed below are the different objectives presented for ASL 1 for University 1.

Students will:

- Comprehend and express in one-on-one conversations and through electronic means.

- Engage in interpersonal one-on-one conversations and share basic information related to specific instructor-led common topics.
- Engage in one-on-one conversations to discuss other disciplines and to compare Deaf culture with one's own.
- Acquire information and viewpoints of Deaf people through one-on-one conversation.
- Identify the beliefs, values, and attitudes within Deaf culture.
- Become familiar with basic products related to Deaf culture and used by Deaf people.
- Discuss difference between ASL and English languages
- Develop non-classroom conversational experiences with the Deaf community.
- Use ASL to access information about Deaf culture that will lead to lifelong learning experiences.

Students will perform grammatical ASL skills such as:

- Recognize and show appropriate vocabulary sign production through the five parameters.
- Use of appropriate Non-Manual Signals (NMS) for grammar, emphasis, and emotional purposes.
- Perform structure of ASL grammar correctly (University 1 ASL 1 Syllabus, 2012).

For this university, University 1, the first group of objectives are based on American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) which developed National Standards for Foreign Language Education. The standards follow a format of the Five C's: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The second group of objectives are skill based and focus on expressive behavior primarily. The receptive behaviors are included in the first group of objectives.

The objectives below are from University 2 which state:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Demonstrate conversational skills in ASL on a beginner level with specific attention to the understanding and use of targeted grammatical features and appropriate cultural behavior.

- Demonstrate levels of visual perception and discrimination as required by ASL.
- Gain an understanding of Deaf people as a cultural and linguistic minority.
- Utilize a sound and flexible expressive and receptive vocabulary.
- Understand how to discuss past, present and future events.
- Begin to use space creatively for the description of physical objects and situations (University 2 ASL 1 Syllabus, 2013).

At University 2, the syllabus addresses skills, both receptive and expressive, behaviors, both cultural and linguistic plus general expectations of growth as well as specific expectations such as how to discuss when events occurred or will occur and use of space as a linguistic feature in ASL.

**Goal 1:** A student will develop his/her ASL receptive skills primarily, expressive, and conversational skills secondarily.

**Objective 1:** A student will be able to comprehend approximately 400-500 learned ASL signs, fingerspelling, non-manual signals, numbers and linguistic features in both isolation and sentences, signed by the professor through tests and the final exam (receptive skills).

**Objective 2:** A student will be able to produce (signing) learned ASL vocabulary, fingerspelling, non-manual signals, numbers, and linguistic features in a grammatically correct manner. A student will take his/her signing test to measure his/her strength and need of improvement on his/her linguistic acquisition. A student will have a rubric on his/her expressive performance and meet with the professor during the class on his/her performance feedback

(expressive skills).

**Objective 3:** A student will demonstrate an ability to use turn-taking skills and listener feedback in his/her conversational skill as a technique which makes communication with Deaf people more effective (conversational skills).

**Goal 2:** A student will understand basic ASL linguistic features.

**Objective 1:** A student will be able to comprehend the ASL linguistic features both in isolation and sentences as signed by the professor during tests and final exam (knowledge).

**Goal 3:** A student will gain basic understanding about Deaf Community and Culture.

**Objective 1:** A student will demonstrate a basic understanding about Deaf Community and Culture through the written portion of tests and the final exam (knowledge).

**Objective 2:** A student will read a book, “Laurent Clerc: The Story of His Early Years” focusing on important issues on Deaf Culture and how Deaf people lived and acquired education during that time. A student will have a list of questions to write a book report and a rubric to follow the guideline for grading. After turning in a book report, there will be a few questions on a test on the book report (knowledge).

**Objective 3:** A student will attend at least six different Deaf Community events (at least 6 hours) to observe and interact with Deaf people and write a summary about each event in a journal explaining briefly about his / her learning experience from this interaction. NOTE: The Deaf Community events such as ASL Nights, Homecoming are those that occur **off** campus earn **1 whole hour for**

**the length of your visit**, and on campus such as ASL Clubs, Deaf Events on campus earn  $\frac{1}{2}$  **hour**. Announcements on the Deaf Events will be posted on student's blackboard throughout the semester. A Deaf Event rubric will guide the student to know what to write on his/her journal during attendance of events. A student is strongly encouraged to attend more than six different events to enhance his/her signing and receptive performances (knowledge and skills).

**Objective 4:** A student will attend at least two ASL Table gatherings in the Cafeteria (**at least one hour each to count for an  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour**) to interact with the ASL and Deaf students. A student is responsible for his/her sign-up sheet and will ask any faculty or deaf member to sign the sheet after attending ASL Table. A student will write his/her journal about the experience on signing performances and Deaf Event rubric will guide student how to write on his/her journals. A student is strongly encouraged to attend ASL Table more than two hours to enhance his/her signing and receptive performances (knowledge and skills).

**Objective 5:** Upon entering the Library is considered American Sign Language Zone. Student is required to sign or write the message at all times. The professor will observe the communication mode and grade accordingly (University 3 ASL 1 Syllabus, 2013).

University 3 takes on a more in-depth format with its goals and objectives. The three goals are similar to that of University 2 in expecting students to develop conversational and cultural behaviors. Their language skills will be developed expressively and receptively. The style here has explicit objectives that support general

goals which required fewer details regarding assignments details in other parts of the syllabus.

**Analysis of concept interpretation.** Even though these three syllabi formats for identifying goals are very different, the common goals seem to be very similar. They all expect students to learn about Deaf culture and develop basic conversational skills. The second university does not show a clear program philosophy in the course description and objectives while the first university clearly incorporates a standards-based curriculum from ACTFL. The program with in-depth goals and objectives, University 3, offers some discussion about the importance of an “ASL Zone” and how ASL or writing are the only forms of communication that can be used at the library. This provides support for an immersion philosophy incorporated at this particular university. Based on this and other similarities, the overarching curriculum can be defined as mostly an immersion type curriculum whereas culture and history are included as a key part of the language instruction. The distinct emphases in each program can be summarized as such:

***University 1.*** This is primarily a conversational level course. The focus is on one-on-one conversational development. Vocabulary development as well as knowledge and applications of grammar and non-manual signals (NMS) are covered. Students are directed to analyzing the differences between ASL and English based on what they learn in this course. Beliefs, values and attitudes in Deaf culture are also intertwined in the course curriculum.

***University 2.*** This course focuses on conversational ASL including grammar and culture. Culture is focused on Deaf people as a linguistic minority group. Vocabulary

development is expected and linguistic features such as timing and space are embedded in the curriculum.

**University 3.** This is a heavily vocabulary based course in both expressive and receptive ASL. Additional areas of focus include Deaf culture, grammar, linguistic features and conversational skills such as turn taking. Student are expected to attend six events and two ASL table socials as well as using only ASL or written English in the library which is dedicated as an ASL Zone.

Based on these three analyses, all are engaged in a process where each program has expectations of what skills students will accomplish in each course. Expectations focus on developing conversational skills including vocabulary, grammar and linguistic features. Equally important is a developing understanding and application of Deaf culture. Differences deal with individual focuses such as one program is more explicit with making connections based on their adoption of the ACTFL curriculum, or a heavier focus on events than the other two programs.

**Conceptual development: Core value of the curriculum.** Based on the curricula provided for this research, themes emerged that signify common threads among the three institutions studied. The themes that were consistent in the syllabi of the language courses include the role of immersion and attendance as well as focus of the courses on academics and skills. Additionally, assessment of student learning was based on and aligned with the values that program's reflected in curricular requirements.

**Immersion.** The concept of immersion is very significant in this case because it shows up on all language syllabi. On the syllabi of ASL 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 at University 2, there is a half page discussion about the immersion philosophy and the benefits of it

and how students are expected to adhere to this in class by not using their voices and sign or write only. In the language courses syllabi at University 1 there is a category called “Creating Our Deaf Space.” In that description, there are four things discussed: visual accessibility, oppression free environment, use of English and use of technology. On those same syllabi under a different heading, there is mention of the courses being taught by an ASL native signer which could mean a person who grew up signing; thus, the courses will be conducted only in ASL with support from written English, as needed. At University 3, the discussion of immersion was heavily emphasized on the beginning and advanced language syllabi. The intermediate courses, which are taught by a hearing teacher, have no mention of immersion. However, under course policies, it states that the teaching method of this course requires that students not talk with their voice and are encouraged to use ASL with their teacher outside of class as well. When interviewed about this, the hearing teacher said she will use her voice if needed for clarification, but usually did not.

***Attendance.*** All three programs discussed attendance extensively. Two programs emphasized that it was the policy of the program or the department to require routine attendance and active participation. One program clearly states that students who don’t show up on the first day of class will be dropped. If there are more than six absences in a semester, the student will be administratively dropped as well. Another program explains that after three absences, the grade will be dropped one letter and eight absences automatically results in an automatic failure of the course. One program does not have its own policy but refers to the university attendance policy which states that when absences



exceed more than 25% the student will automatically receive an administrative F. That same program also detailed attendance requirements for lab work as well.

Unlike other classes that can be made up if missed, through notes or discussion with other classmates, the visual and spatial aspects of ASL don't allow for it to be written down easily. Also, when learning any language, the best way to learn it is to use it and practice it with other language users. Not being present in class takes away from students potential to learn and practice. During an interview, the Program Coordinator at University 1 stated, “ASL is not a class that students can miss and make up easily. Students can ask other students what they missed but it is not the same as coming to class.”

**Assignments.** Each program has different expectations of how students turn in written and signed assignments. The assignments themselves differed as well.

For University 1, the assignments required are grouped into two parts. Part one is ASL performances or work samples. There are five required performances that need to be filmed and recorded onto a public video service such as YouTube or Vimeo and the link needs to be shared with the teacher. These assignments are all based on vocabulary or performances found in *Signing Naturally Level 1* (Smith et al., 2008a) textbook. The content of the ASL assignments is either information about the student such as where they grew up, where they live, where they go to school or ASL performances of stories such as Timber.

For the written assignments, there are two related to Deaf culture and community and two for Deaf event attendance. Students are expected to write a paper about their reactions to the American Deaf Culture quiz that is typically given out during the first

day of class. It is a pre-test type of quiz and then after learning the answers, students formulate a reaction based on what they learned. A second paper required focuses on “The World According to Deaf People.” This specific project involves three parts in sequence. Students must view a TV show without sound and depend on captions only, then they must view an ASL video assigned by the teacher with no written transcript provided. Then, they must investigate about videophones and video relay services. For the third part, students must view “Through Deaf Eyes” video and write a three-page reaction paper to the three parts of the assignment. This same program also requires two attendances at a Deaf event. The events need to be reported following an interaction template located on that university’s learning management system (LMS) such as BlackBoard, WebCT, Moodle, D2L, and so forth.

University 2 also includes written assignments. Students are to interview a Deaf person about their personal information, family, and daily living. This covers vocabulary typically covered in the first few chapters of *Signing Naturally Level 1* (Smith et al., 2008a) textbook. Students are expected to summarize the interview onto video and upload it onto the university’s learning management system (LMS). Another written assignment is that students will be paired up to come up with three questions related to beliefs, values, attitudes and/or behaviors of Deaf culture to ask a guest presenter when they come to class. The questions must be typed up and the final grade for this assignment is based on the question itself, teamwork with the partner, and effort in using ASL to ask the questions. A rubric is used to grade this specific assignment.

University 3 has several written assignments. Some are collected through the LMS, some are discussed in class. For the assignments that are collected through the

LMS, students need to watch videotapes called “Fingerspelling,” “Laurent Clerc,” and “A Sign of Respect: Strategies for Effective Deaf/Hearing Interactions.” Each of these requires a one page reaction to be uploaded to the LMS. Additionally, students are required to read a book about Laurent Clerc and submit answers to a questionnaire about him as well as submit a book report. The other written homework includes students reading about different Deaf people and answering questionnaires about the readings and bringing it to class to discuss. This portion is not submitted online through the LMS. This program also requires six community event attendances and two ASL table attendances at their local cafeteria. All of these are documented in a journal to be shared with the teacher.

Based on the analysis and summary of these data, I determined that the assignments fell into categories: 1) Deaf events, 2) performance-based assignments, 3) reflections about history, culture or people, and 4) research and presentations. The Deaf events requirement showed up in every course in the language series in all three university programs. The number of Performance-based assignments increased in the intermediate and advanced classes and served as part of the assessment process in some cases, eliminating the need for exams. Reflections about history, culture or people were more predominate in the beginning level courses at all three institutions; for University 3, these were incorporated into all the courses. At University 1, a number of research type of assignments were required and the format tended to lead to presentations, especially as the level of language use increased. The research was synthesized with the use of the ACTFL curriculum serving as the framework. The program adopted the Five C’s, communication, cultures, communities, comparisons and connections. Each of the

assignments make connections, comparisons, explores communities and cultures or focuses on communication.

***Assessment of student learning and performance.*** All three programs give both written and expressive exams. Sometimes written and expressive skills exams are given together, sometimes they are given separately.

University 1 has four different exams. There are two different components for the midterm and final exam. There are receptive and interview parts. The receptive part focuses on phrases and vocabulary students have learned to recognize and understand in class. The interview part is based on the philosophy of the textbook used in class *Learning ASL*, by Humphries and Padden. Based on what students have already learned they should be able to have scripted conversations. The exam focuses on vocabulary, grammar and non-manual signals within a script. The final exam also follows the same format, a receptive exam and an interview exam.

For University 2, there are quizzes as well as midterm and final exams. The quizzes are both announced and unannounced. The midterm and finals both have receptive and expressive components.

University 3 gives tests after every unit studied. This particular program uses *Signing Naturally Level 1* (Smith et al., 2008a) and gives a test after each of the units from 1-5. There is a final exam, as well.

Based on these general assessment approaches, and after reviewing all of the assessment types implemented by all three programs, three different types or categories of assessments were identified, including:

1) knowledge-based assessments focusing on language, culture, grammar and history, 2) receptive based assessments which include vocabulary and grammar and 3) expressive based assessments which include practiced dialogues or unscripted prompts. Frequently, exams were divided into expressive and receptive components which allowed for students to practice their expressive portions for the assessment purposes more thoroughly. Exams which combined receptive and expressive and knowledge skills together often required more extemporaneous knowledge and use of vocabulary. These were the most challenging for students.

***Overall focus on academics and skills.*** In order to examine the relative value of the expectations of student learning, the types of assessment were re-examined as academics and skills categories. Items included under academics were assignments, homework, events, and participation. For skills, the category included any quiz or exam. These two categories were identified to indicate a program's commitment to written work, cultural studies compared with expressive/receptive language skills.

*ASL 1.* Based on this categorization, the three university programs showed large differences in the weight given to academics and skills for ASL 1 classes (Table 5).

Table 5

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 1 Classes</i>		
University	Academics	Skills
University 1	7.5%	92.5%
University 2	30%	70%
University 3	50%	50%

The weight on academics correlated with the amount and number of assignments required by each program. The more assignments there were, the heavier the weight was related to academics. For the skills component, two universities made a distinction between receptive and expressive weight. One program weighed the expressive skills by 25% while the receptive skills were based on 75% of the midterm or final grades. Another university based both midterm and final receptive grades, 20% of the final grade, while the expressive grades were weighted heavier at 22.5%, and 30% for midterm and final exams. Regardless of textbook used, the content is generally the same. The topics covered in this class include introductions, background information, discussing where one lives and talking about family.

*ASL 2.* In this course the variety of texts used by programs is more widespread. The texts used include *Signing Naturally Level 1* (Smith et al., 2008a), *Signing Naturally Level 1—Units 7-12* (Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 2008b), *Learning ASL* (Humphries & Padden, 2004), and *American Sign Language: A Student Text, The Green Book* (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991). Another variety is with the hours of Deaf events required. University 1 requires two hours, University 2 requires six hours and University 3 requires 10 hours. The final difference between ASL 1 and ASL 2 syllabi is the assignments themselves. University 1 requires students to compare and contrast three ASL signs with other signs in the world. The project will result in a presentation to the class. University 2 has an assignment that requires students to view a movie, “Through Deaf Eyes,” and work in a group to develop a presentation about a specific topic assigned by the teacher such as cochlear implants, Deaf residential schools, Deaf community events etc. University 3 requires a book report on “Deaf Again” (Drolsbaugh, 2008). The academic

and skills breakdown for these courses is almost identical (Table 6). Likewise with ASL 1, the content covered is very similar. Topics include, talking about employment, personalities, describing people and time.

Table 6

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 2 Classes</i>		
University	Academics	Skills
University 1	30%	70%
University 2	35%	65%
University 3	35%	65%

*ASL 3.* For this particular course, the primary text required is the same for all three programs. However, there are several secondary texts used, as well. The primary text is *Signing Naturally Level 2* (Lentz et al., 1992). Secondary texts include *American Sign Language: A Student Text*, *The Green Book* (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991), *American Sign Language Video Dictionary and Inflection Guide* (RIT, 2002) and *Movers and Shakers: Deaf People Who Changed the World* (Carroll & Mather, 1997). The primary text is the same but the units taught are different. Two programs focus on Units 13, 14 and 15. University 1 focuses on Units 14, 16 and 17. Units 13-15 cover room/house layouts, complaints and illnesses and family history. Units 16-17 deal with describing what things look like and how they work as well as explanations about special events like vacations, holidays and weekend plans.

University 3 offers two separate goals that support the type of work that is required in the course. One goal illustrates how this particular course satisfies a general education requirement by providing students an opportunity to gain an intermediate level

understanding and comprehension of the language of choice as well as helping students understand and experience the challenges of learning a second language. Another goal is designed to show how this same course satisfies a requirement for a major or minor in ASL by producing graduates who are proficient in signing, reading and writing the specific language and familiarizing students with the culture, literature and history associated with the language of choice. These goals illustrate the value of the course toward multiple university-type requirements

The assignments for ASL 3 show increasing difficulty. The events required are now increased as well. University 1 requires two events, University 3 requires four events and the last requires 15 hours, half of which can be done on campus. University 2 requires four Deaf events as well. The program requiring two events doesn't allow either of those events to be done on campus. This same program requires students to submit a video explaining their experience while the other two programs continue to accept written submissions; an illustration of how academic and skill assignments are coordinated.

One assignment by University 3 requires students to write a five to six page paper on a famous Deaf person using the *Movers and Shakers* (Carroll & Mather, 1997) book as well as other sources available at the local library on their campus. University 1 requires students to do several assignments. The first assignment is to do a group presentation using PowerPoint about an article or a topic for group discussion. Another project is to do a language/cultural comparisons project. For the language comparisons, students need to come up with three different sentence structures in which the non-manual signals changes the meaning. They will submit this and present it to the class. For the cultural comparisons project, students need to come up with three behaviors that



are different within hearing and Deaf individuals. This needs to be typed, submitted and presented as well. University 2 has several assignments related to *Signing Naturally* (Lentz et al., 1992) units covered in the curriculum. Additionally, a biography presentation about a Deaf person must be done. Also, students need to do a mini research project about a Deaf organization and prepare a 3-5 minute presentation about that organization. The amount of written assignments required is limited in favor of performance-based assignments.

For the academic and skills breakdown for ASL 3, the relative focus is similar across programs. Still using the rationale as before, the academics component includes the homework, assignments and attendance. However, the data reflect the fact that some of the assignments are now collected through videos and not written. Some of the assignments are now graded based on an integration of skills and knowledge (Table 7).

Table 7

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 3 Classes</i>		
University	Academics	Skills
University 1	35%	65%
University 2	25%	75%
University 3	40%	60%

*ASL 4.* The largest variant in ASL 4 is with the amount of work assigned. Some programs are consistent with the types of assignments with a significant increase in the overall workload. Workload for each program is from least to most, University 3, 2 and then 1 with significant academic and skill requirements. For University 3, there are now three tests, lab work, 20 hours of Deaf events, a book report and two expressive exams

and a final exam. For University 2, there are five presentations, five Deaf community events or 15 hours of fieldwork, both of which are to be submitted through video and not through written paperwork. Additionally, there are midterm and final exams. For University 1, there are four projects, visiting the museum at a local deaf school and doing interviews there and reporting on that through video; student needs to research either Deaf vlogs (similar to blogs but done in ASL) or sites that requires ASL to be used in the workplace and reporting that through video as well. The third project is a Deaf community project where students need to describe elements of Deaf culture and make connections with a person they will interview at a later time. Both of these needed to be reported through video as well. The final project focuses on International Sign Language or Gestuno<sup>2</sup> (Andersson, 2001) and the research will yield a one-page summary as well as a list of resources and websites. On top of these projects, there will be three exams and several videos for homework.

The units taught for these programs follow the units not covered in ASL 3. University 3 focuses on Units 16 and 17 (Lentz et al., 1992) which deal with describing what things look like and how they work and explaining about trips, vacations, and so forth. University 2 focuses on 16, 17 and 18. Unit 18 deals with narrating unforgettable moments. While University 1 covers Units 15, 13 and 18 (in that order). Unit 15 covers family heritage while Unit 13 discusses room layouts and home floor plans. It is important to note that Units 13-17 are in the *Signing Naturally Level 2* book while Unit

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<sup>2</sup> The term Gestuno was created by the Unification of Signs Commission of the World Federation of the Deaf. The first part, “gest,” means gesture, and the second part, “uno,” one. The purpose was to facilitate communication between sign language users from various countries at international meetings.

18 is in the *Signing Naturally Level 3* book (Lentz et al., 1992; Mikos et al., 2003). See Appendix E for the full listing of the *Signing Naturally* chapters.

The knowledge and skill breakdown for this group of ASL 4 courses is shown in Table 8.

Table 8

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 4 Classes</i>		
University	Academics	Skills
University 1	25%	75%
University 2	40%	60%
University 3	50%	50%

As with ASL 3, a portion of academic work is now submitted through video, thus becoming integrated academic and skills-based projects. Therefore, the percentages reflecting the focus reflect this shift.

*ASL 5.* For this specific part of the ASL sequence, the programs use *Signing Naturally Level 3* (Mikos et al., 2003) book from Units 19-21. Unit 19 covers statistical information and other techniques on how to explain interesting facts. Unit 20 explains rules while Unit 21 tells about accidents. University 3 did not cover Unit 18 in ASL 4 so that program covers it in this course. University 2 no longer uses exams for this advanced level of ASL. University 3 added extra topics to cover in their course such as writing in ASL and mouth morphemes. There are several assignments based on the material covered in the textbook. Additional assignments include Deaf community events at 20 hours which are reported in a journal as well as a midterm and final exam

focusing on both receptive and expressive portions. This same program continues to require a book report which is reported on through written English.

University 1 has an exam for each unit taught, however, all the exams are expressive only. One project is aligned with the material taught in the text. One of the projects required asks students to visit three different schools including a deaf school, a mainstream program and a regular education program and make a video explaining their observations and findings. Another project students are expected to do is volunteer work instead of Deaf community events for at least four hours and report on it in video. The homework is extensive as well and fully focuses on signing parts that are taught in each of the units covered.

University 2 has seven events or 25 hours of fieldwork required. Either of these needs to be reported on and that report needs to be submitted via video. This particular class adds a new focus on ASL semantics and requires students to develop a lesson to teach about how one English word can have several signs in ASL depending on the meaning. Other assignments include finding statistical information and presenting on it, development of a narrative, storytelling and a rebuttal against an author's position, all of which align with material taught in the textbook. In lieu of exams, there is a final presentation lasting about 10 minutes which students need to generate persuasive or procedural discourse. For the course academic and skill breakdown for this level, one can see that the numbers continue to be similar. And, there are clear increases in the focus on skills.

Table 9

*Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 5 Classes*

University	Academics	Skills
University 1	40%	60%
University 2	20%	80%
University 3	25%	75%

However, in examining the homework, one might identify signed homework as focusing on skills. With this perspective, all of the focus would shift to skills because there is not one item that is collected in English. Furthermore, University 2 (20/80) could be viewed 0/100 as well because the 20% is solely attributed to attendance/participation which was originally assigned to the Academics category. Therefore, it is at this higher level of the language curriculum that academics and skills begins to converge or overlap.

*ASL 6.* For this course, Universities 1 and 2 focus on Units 22-24 from *Signing Naturally Level 3* (Mikos et al., 2003) which covers money, major decisions and health conditions. University 3 completes the book by adding Unit 25 which focuses on storytelling.

The homework component of University 1 focuses on production of ASL skills of work covered in the units taught plus delivering a movie critique. The movie critique must be presented by two students who need to watch two movies related to Deaf people and follow a rubric in order to give a critical analysis which is submitted via video which is assessed for skills and quality of critique done. In class, students will participate in a group discussion about movie comparisons. For Deaf events, students are required three different activities, to visit the local deaf school and observe a health-related class or one where major decisions or money is discussed. For the second event, students need to host

a workshop that they present either for the Deaf community in town or for the ASL student population on campus. The final event is a volunteering experience one on one and not volunteering for an event or a group of people. Each of these requires a reflection done through video and uploaded to the students' LMS which again is assessed for skill as well as quality of reflection done. There are also individual unit exams for this particular course. Again, however, they are focused on skill development.

University 3 has several homework assignments and presentations that correlate with the material taught. There are 20 hours of events required which is reported on through video. There are two presentations and a debate in addition to receptive and expressive midterm and final exams.

University 2 has assignments and two presentations, all of which complement the material covered. To look at the grade breakdown, it is significant to note that not one assignment is submitted in print and all are done in video or live ASL.

With this in mind, the academic based component still includes participation and homework; however, the balance of the assignments focus on the development and evaluation of students' skills in ASL across a variety of purposes. See Table 10.

Table 10

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components for ASL 6 Classes</i>		
University	Academics	Skills
University 1	15%	85%
University 2	20%	80%
University 3	45%	55%

While overlap between academic and skill components increases as the language course level increases, it is conclusive that the programs all put more weight on skills especially as students progress to higher levels. One issue not reflected in these percentages is the content of the ASL skills being emphasized. The skills could include both social and academic aspects of language in signed form. While the academic category focuses more on English written assignments.

**Comparison across university programs.** Looking at the overall analysis of the three universities, we can see that Universities 1 and 2 have very similar philosophies regarding the value that they place on developing and evaluating skills compared with academic performance. Skills are highly valued by those programs. University 3 requires more skills than academic performance. However, the weight of academic skills is considerably higher than the other two programs. During the interview with the coordinator at University 3, this factor was discussed and was explained based on the history of the program. The University program determined it was not as successful as a skills based program that focused primarily on interpreter training which led to the redesign of this format. Typically, many programs struggle to produce student graduates ready to work as ASL Interpreters so this phenomenon is not unusual. However, what is unusual is the redesign of the program to allow for more realistic expectations of students capability at graduation. With this current focus, students are either interested in continuing their studies post-graduation in either interpreting or teaching ASL. The program, therefore, encourages students to continue their study of ASL in technical training programs after graduation.

Table 11

<i>Weight of Academic and Skills Components with Means for Three Universities</i>						
ASL Course	University 1		University 2		University 3	
	Academics	Skills	Academics	Skills	Academics	Skills
1	7.5	92.5	30	70	50	50
2	30	70	35	65	35	65
3	35	65	25	75	40	60
4	25	75	40	60	50	50
5	40	60	20	80	25	75
6	15	85	20	80	45	55
Mean	25	75	28	72	41	59

Looking at the overall language courses, Universities 2 and 3 offer very similar curricular foci and processes. These two institutions use the *Signing Naturally* series (Smith et al., 2008a; Smith et al., 2008b; Lentz et al., 1992; Mikos et al., 2003) from start to finish. When asked about this, the ease of continuing through whole language series with one textbook company was discussed. University 2 supplemented their courses with a grammar textbook while University 3 supplemented their courses with various autobiographies and other books written about Deaf people. University 1 stood apart with using the *Learning ASL* (Humphries & Padden, 2004) textbook for their first year ASL courses. The use of this textbook also impacted how their assessments were done for these classes. The rationale for using this particular text was that they had more success in diverse student retention while using this text instead of the *Signing Naturally* series. However, they converted back to the *Signing Naturally* series in the intermediate and advanced classes due to limited textbooks to use in these levels.



Other than language courses, theory courses are also offered which offer the majority of content related coursework in ASL studies. These types of courses include culture, history and linguistics type of coursework.

***Deaf community/Deaf culture/Deaf history.*** The three programs agree that this specific topic is necessary to be taught amongst all students. Universities 2 and 3 focused on introduction to the Deaf community. Both of these courses are open to any student regardless of sign language skills or not. If there is a Deaf instructor, the courses also have an interpreter. University 3 has their course taught by a Deaf faculty member while University 2 has their course co-taught by both a Deaf and hearing faculty member and interpreters are retained for the courses. Each of the three programs has at least two courses related to Deaf community or Deaf culture. University 1 focuses only on Deaf culture and has a separate course on Deaf history. Community is discussed within the Deaf culture course. Both of these courses are open to all students for general education credit and taught by a Deaf faculty member along with interpreters. The other two programs also have Deaf culture courses. University 2 combines Deaf history and Deaf culture. The course focuses on 1/3 Deaf history and 2/3 on Deaf culture. This course is also team taught with a Deaf and hearing faculty member and an interpreter is used. At University 3, the Deaf culture course is significantly different than the other two programs in that it is offered to ASL majors after they have taken ASL 3. The course is taught in ASL only and also requires Deaf event attendance while the other courses are strictly theory courses with the majority of the assignments being in paper, discussion, report or project format as well as tests and quizzes.

***ASL linguistics.*** Two programs both have two linguistic courses. University 1 is a one year course and offers both Linguistics 1 and 2 while University 3 has linguistics then another course in sociolinguistics. However, this program has both of the linguistics courses offered as electives meaning students need to satisfy nine credits out of a possible 12 credit choices. It is possible that students will take only one linguistic course option and then satisfy their requirements with either an ASL literature course or a Teaching ASL course. For the linguistics courses, both follow the textbook developed by Valli, Lucas and Mulrooney (2005) in *Linguistics of ASL*. The courses are taught by a Deaf faculty member in ASL only and are taken after ASL 6. For University 2, the linguistics course is taught by a hearing professor in spoken English and no sign language proficiency is required. Frequently this course has students from other majors such as linguistics or English.

***ASL literature.*** At Universities 1 and 3, ASL Literature is offered. Both programs require students to have taken ASL 5 or ASL 6 (depending on the program) prior to taking this class. This course demands students to not only learn and understand the theories behind the body of ASL Literature, it also requires students contribute to the literature as well by making their own works.

***Classifiers, fingerspelling and numbers.*** Two programs offer these courses and both have different goals. The first university, University 1, offers Fingerspelling & Numbers for students who have completed ASL 4 while Classifiers is offered for students who have completed ASL 5. In these courses students are expected to understand the linguistic principles behind these techniques as well as show competency in use of Classifiers or Fingerspelling & Numbers. For University 2, the courses are not required

but are usually frequented by the students majoring in ASL/English interpreting. The courses are not required for those students because interpreting students are encouraged to acquire a breadth of knowledge which will allow them to interpret a variety of topics after graduation. For students who are majoring in ASL in addition to another major, there is a limited number of courses that can be required thus, these have become electives. The only difference between the courses at different universities is that University 2 offers the courses for more basic signers. The Classifiers course has a prerequisite of ASL 1 while the Fingerspelling & Numbers course has a prerequisite of ASL 2. At University 3, the techniques of Classifiers and Fingerspelling & Numbers are immersed into the ASL Language courses instead of offering them separately thus, requiring a higher level of skills before teaching these techniques.

***Single course offerings.*** University 1 offers a course in Semantics. This particular course is similar to some of the content covered in sociolinguistics and the special topics course in a specialized study. This course can be taken after ASL 4 and covers inflections, colloquialisms, discourse as well as non-manual signals.

University 3 offers a course in Introduction to Teaching ASL. This covers the basics in becoming an ASL teacher such as syllabus development, lesson planning, selection of teacher/student textbooks, class activities, evaluation techniques and professionalism within the ASL teacher's field.

University 2 requires all students to take two interpreting courses: The Interpreting Profession is required for all students while Interpreting Inquiry Texts is required for students majoring in ASL in addition to psychology or human services. This particular course focuses on specific areas of translation and can be considered similar to

Semantics offered by the first program. The rationale for requiring all students to take introductory interpreting courses is that all the students in these programs are hearing and many of them may be considering a career working with Deaf people. After they take the interpreting courses, they support the academic learning of ASL and they understand the clarity in the roles of a hearing person as a community member versus that of a trained interpreter. In other words, this particular program informs their students of possible career outcomes depending on their specific area of study.

**Overall analysis of conceptual development.** The overarching content and themes presented in all of the language courses, as well as the course offerings in theory and skill development within the three programs help to clarify the core values that the curriculum represents. Looking at the individual courses and seeing what they all have in common, there is a curriculum of consensus that emerges.

In the curriculum of consensus there is large-scale ideology as well as small-scale ideology present. The large-scale ideology deals with raising language skills and expectations. All students will have at least three years of ASL coursework. Additional coursework is offered to continue emphasizing development of language skills such as Semantics, Interpreting Text Inquiry, Introduction to Teaching ASL, Classifiers, Fingerspelling and Numbers and ASL Literature. Students are also expected to develop and apply knowledge about the community of people that use ASL. Deaf Culture, Deaf Community and Deaf History are knowledge courses all students take.

On the small-scale, looking inside the theory and language courses, there are values reflected in the curriculum that are similar but also different. For the language courses, immersion, attendance, assignments such as Deaf events and assessment are all

embedded continuously throughout the language courses. In the theory courses, these are evident as well but only if the course is intended to be more of a skills course than a theory course. An example of a skills course is ASL Literature. All of the assignments and assessments are done in ASL and Deaf events are required at University 3.

Additionally on the small-scale is the focus of academics over skills. In each language course, there is significant focus on skills; more so than academics and knowledge.

Students cannot perform well if they don't have the necessary skills to progress through the language curriculum. However, this is not a requirement in theory courses such as history, community and culture courses. The majority of the history, culture, and community courses are taught by a Deaf teacher and students who do not know ASL can use an interpreter. At University 2, a community course is taught by a Deaf/hearing team with interpreters present, as well. Immersion, attendance and Deaf events are not factors for theory classes as well. Exams are not receptive or expressive and are knowledge-based only. To understand the core values presented by each institution; we need to understand the model used and how this particular model affects the core values of each program.

**Concept structural analysis: Identifying the model.** For this process, conceptual structural assessment was used to identify curriculum models in place for each of the three university programs. The courses required vary somewhat depending on the ultimate focus of the program. All of the programs have the same language base and many other overlapping courses. The biggest difference is related to the focus and goals of the program which defined what type of program each represented. As well, structures

in some cases are related to other structures or programs that promote technical career training that builds on the ASL Studies program.

***University 1: Stand Alone Major.*** For this particular institution, University 1, students could graduate with a major in American Sign Language which means the program stands alone and is not part of another program or doesn't require students to have a minor. This program also offers a minor in ASL as well as an Interpreting major but the two programs are not combined and function as two separate entities. The Interpreting Program requires two years of ASL coursework and Semantics course as well as Linguistics. Otherwise, other courses are not required.

***University 2: Combined Major.*** University 2 doesn't allow students to graduate with a degree in ASL only but offers either a combined major (ASL/Human Service, ASL/Psychology, or ASL/Theater) or ASL/English Interpreting major. The majority of students are ASL/English Interpreting students with a quite a few combined major students also taking introductory interpreting courses.

***University 3: Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor.*** At University 3, the minor will determine the coursework taken. The major area of studies remains very similar to the stand alone institution with additional courses for a minor in ASL Teaching or Interpreting. Very few students, if any, graduate with ASL as a stand-alone option. Most students complete one of the other professional programs that use ASL as a base.

***Courses required for ASL majors.*** For these advanced course offerings other than the language courses, the types of courses required are listed in Table 12. There are several other courses offered, but not required. There are more courses required for the

stand alone program. With the other two options, the course credits even out when students take other courses not required for the major.

Table 12

*Courses Required for ASL Majors and the Model They Represent*

Stand Alone Major	Combined Program	Stand Alone/Technical
American Deaf Culture	Deaf People in Society	Intro to the Deaf Community
Deaf History	Deaf History and Culture	Deaf Culture
ASL Linguistics 1 & 2	Linguistics of ASL	Sociolinguistics of Sign Language #
Semantics	The Interpreting Profession	ASL Linguistics #
ASL Literature	Interpreting Inquiry Texts*	ASL Literature and Folklore #
Fingerspelling & Numbers	Performance Interpreting- for Theater*	Introduction to Teaching ASL #
Classifiers		

Note. \* = Depends on combined major, either may be required. # = Any three of these.

courses are required.

For the Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor, other course work that can be taken includes one of the remaining electives as well as a special topics course which focuses on specialized terminology and can be related to any of the following fields: educational, medical, legal, scientific terminology, computer, rehabilitation, mathematical or religion. For the not stand alone program Dynamics of the DeafBlind Community, Classifiers and Fingerspelling and Numbers are elective courses as well as a variety of topics offered frequently. The popular courses become permanent electives.

*Analysis of concept structural analysis.* Based on the three university programs, a student's ability to graduate with a degree major in ASL Studies is determined the program type. At University 1, students are able to progress through a stand-alone program and earn a degree major in ASL Studies. At University 2, students progress through a program that does not offer an ASL major. However, they are able to earn degrees majors in ASL/Human Services, ASL/Psychology or ASL/Theater. At University 3, students have a stand-alone ASL major in ASL Studies, which allows for a minor in either Interpreting or Teaching ASL. These various models represent different values established by each program. University 1 expects all students to have an ASL foundation. Students can continue on to get a double-major in Interpreting/ASL, or continue their studies as a post-baccalaureate certification or master's degree with ASL studies as the foundation. For University 2, students who do not want to become interpreters but want to continue working within the Deaf communities and connecting their study of ASL with a focus in psychology, human services or theater. University 3 has a very similar value compared with University 1 which expects students to master ASL as a language first, then continue their studies in either Interpreting or Teaching ASL. These values support the belief that even in a full bachelor's degree program in ASL, students will still need to continue their studies to become more fluent in ASL.

**Conclusions of philosophical inquiry: Analytical inquiry.** For this part of the research, the focus was on curricula designs and infrastructures of the existing ASL programs. The intent was to see what grounds the curriculum in terms of the whole program. Assumptions were made that educational objectives ground the curriculum and this inquiry assessed that. Programs were analyzed based on three conceptual structures:



defining the curriculum, the core value of the curriculum and identifying the model. The overall findings inform us of the curricula designs and infrastructure in place at these Universities.

***University 1: Stand Alone Major.*** Based on the curriculum analysis, this particular University aligns their instruction with their educational objectives. Students are engaged in the Five C's of language learning: community, culture, connections, communication and comparisons. This is embedded throughout the language courses and the academic and skills components reflect the motives of the program to focus primarily on language. As a result, this drives the fundamental framework of the program as a language-based model.

There were conflicting issues within the core values of the curriculum because of the department placement of this program. This program desires to produce students qualified enough to be fluent in ASL yet the placement of the program in an education-related department expects students to complete their studies with more career-based skills such as interpreting, teaching ASL or teaching Deaf students. This seems to be more controversial at this particular institution than the other two because this particular department has technical expectations of their students such as teaching credential or interpreter licensure for K-12 or community based interpreting after graduation. The ASL program does not align with this type of credential expectation. While the other two programs directed their students towards more specialized areas of study. Of the three programs studied, this was the only one with a Deaf coordinator and the program embraced the cultural aspects of Deaf space and the value of ASL as a language that empowers the Deaf community. It seems that having a Deaf coordinator enabled this

particular program to embrace this concept more thoroughly than other programs where immersion, inclusion and similar concepts were addressed in the majority of the classes rather than the entire program.

***University 2: Combined Major.*** This particular institution presents multiple facets in terms of curriculum inquiry. No obvious model is identified other than the eclectic curriculum of using multiple resources and approaches to language learning. The courses offered consisted only of language courses and theory courses which can be taken by a wide variety of students. The core values of this program reflects two distinct branches. The first branch is the production of Deaf community allies to work with members in a culturally empowering fashion. This does not require in-depth language exposure but allows for students to obtain necessary tools to work with the Deaf community in an empowering manner. This was identified in two data sources. In the interview with the coordinator, it was discovered that the programs were tailored to work with departments or programs that were supportive of combined majors in ASL and their discipline. Due to the motivation and support, the combination of the majors allows students to experience the best of both programs and bring this optimism to the Deaf community within their field. The second branch, the interpreting program, was established through a unique curriculum design which allowed the coordinator to establish the program based on community demands rather than following a more traditional framework of teaching voicing to signing and vice versa. The first branch (production of Deaf community allies), feeds the interpreting program and results in much more intensive language fluency and produces certified sign language interpreters within 1-2 years, however, after graduation. In this case, the ASL is in place with a primary focus on serving students

who do not want to be interpreters yet want to work with Deaf people. The infrastructure of the language department is more language driven due to the fact that it is located in a world language department. However, the ASL programs are designed very differently than the other language programs. There is a stand alone major in Spanish and a combined major in Language, Learning and Culture and International Affairs in either Spanish or French as well as Language, Learning and Culture and Cinema Studies in Spanish or French.

***University 3: Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor.*** At this University, the curriculum was originally designed with two major goals, preparing teachers of ASL and interpreters. So, while an ASL major is possible, students are encouraged to add a minor in Interpreting or ASL Teaching. It is noted that while this program was a two-year interpreting program, the redesign led to a four-year ASL program with either an emphasis in teaching ASL or interpreting, if the student chooses to add a minor. In this case, the ASL major is the only program in the department that prepares students for a specific occupation if students select to add on a minor. This program is embedded in a department with multiple other languages and it is the only one that produces teachers or interpreters instead of language learners.

Even though language curriculum and programmatic goals are similar, each particular university program strives to produce different student outcomes. At University 2, the requirement of a combined major will produce different learning outcomes, with the addition of a course with an emphasis in interpreting theatrical text (ideal for ASL/Theater majors). Most of the differences between the programs are relegated to one or two courses. Otherwise, the university programs have a strong

consensus around coursework, a consensus that seems to evolved across the programs. However, while the titles and often the textbooks for courses are the same, there are obvious differences are in the content of the courses. For example, students attending University 1 are fully engaged in a curriculum that allows them to make meaningful connections, comparisons, connections with communities, engaged in understanding culture and become immersed in the communication of the language being studied. This approach is multi-faceted and allows students to have a broad-based ASL education experience. Due to capitalizing on this particular framework, the end result is that students have a similar approach to language learning as other languages and institutions that utilize this framework. What makes this program stand out, is that traditionally ASL has followed a technical, career-track mentality, only being taught as a language component as a two year program which is similar to community colleges offering an associates degree in a technical field, which is not the case at University 1.

University 2 and 3 still have a grasp on the technical, career-track approach with University 3 being less stringent than University 2. At University 3, students major in ASL and are encouraged to minor in a interpreting or teaching. The coordinator of University 3 stated during her interview that, “students rarely don't have a minor in Interpreting or Teaching ASL. Both of these minors give students ideas what they can do with their major after graduation.” The coordinator emphasized that all students are not ready to work in these respective fields and if they wanted to do so, they need more education.

Overarching goals do affect the student learning outcomes because each course is designed with these outcomes in mind, regardless of the fact that many of these courses

cover the same material. The curriculum analysis demonstrates how the different community requirements, approaches to assignments, and relationships with various communities (within and outside of the university) are aligned with program goals and in many cases help students see what roles related to ASL are open and acceptable for them to partake in after graduation.

### **Question 2: What are the Philosophies within the American Sign Language Degree Programs?**

To address the second research question regarding the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs, ampliative inquiry was used. For the ampliative inquiry, assumptions and norms were identified from the documents and interviews. Based on these data, there were four themes that emerged during the analysis process: program identity, role of English in the classroom, teacher qualifications and assessment/placement of students. In the developing the interview questions, I asked a variety of questions covering a variety of ideology. Some of these were questions adapted from other curriculum investigation guides while others were based on variations of issues I had seen in this field over the years. Based on the variety of questions, these four themes emerged.

**Influences on program identity.** One of the questions that coordinators were asked touched on the relationship between their program, their department and the other programs within that department. Each of the programs identified that they were operationally different than all of the other programs within their department. The coordinators indicated that his/her program struggled with its identity and expectations in this context. Paradoxically, the program within the education department (University 1)

reflected the strongest language-based program compared with the other two programs housed within language departments. One might expect the opposite. This may be influenced by other factors that influence identity, beyond just location.

Based upon the fact that each of the ASL programs were preceded by an interpreting program, I explored the significance of this and its impact on a program's identity. Two of the programs, Universities 2 (Combined Program) and 3 (ASL Major/Technical Minor), were already in a language department and when their ASL programs were founded, they weren't stand alone programs and served only to provide supplemental courses to support the interpreting program or a different focus for the combined majors. University 2 offered a new program of combined majors and after careful research with what types of positions were needed related with sign language, the three combined majors were founded: ASL/Psychology, ASL/Human Services and ASL/Theater. Based on interviewing the coordinator, it was discovered that the Interpreting program was also revamped to reflect a different philosophy of teaching. The traditional approach to teaching interpreting includes processing courses such as simultaneous interpretation, consecutive interpretation, translation or sign to voice, voice to sign. After researching the use of interpreters in the local community, it was determined that all of the work focused primarily in one-on-one situations, then small group interactions and finally large group interactions. The processing coursework do not address these types of interactions thus the curriculum was looked at to best fit needs of students. Four courses were developed to cover the variety of interactions students will be involved in after they become professional interpreters. The coursework focused on workplace data (inquiry) interactions, narrative interactions, expository interactions

and persuasive interactions. Within each of these courses, the processing material such as consecutive, simultaneous and translation were embedded. Since the implementation of the program, the director has been able to track student success in employment after graduation and the high number of gainful employments or further schooling lead to the success of this program as a career track program. The career track, however, is not solely focused on interpreting but on a variety of career paths.

During the interview, it was identified that University 3 (Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor) had an interpretation program as an associate's degree. Subsequently, a BA degree was established, changing the interpretation focus to a minor as well as adding a focus in ASL Teaching as another minor. This program remains the only program in that state to offer a major in ASL Studies as well as training as an ASL teacher. Due to the focus of the minors on interpreting and teaching, these programs are designed to be geared primarily toward supporting students' career training in either interpreting or Teaching ASL; most students complete these minors. As a result, the amount of practicum and internship the students receive from their minors help pave the way to careers or further training after graduation.

Similar to University 3, University 1 (Stand Alone Major), based upon a need ASL teachers in its state, was asked to develop an ASL teacher certification program. This program was incorporated into the School of Education's World Languages teacher certification program. Students may also complete this program as a minor area of study. Upon interviewing the program coordinator for the stand-alone program, it was viewed that due to the education focus of the department which is usually very technical/career oriented, it felt that the ASL Major was not a good fit for that

department. If the program was redesigned to have more of a technical/career-oriented approach, it might be a better fit. For this program, therefore, while ASL Studies is a major, the focus has also had to be on technical career-track training and implements a focus on language training to prepare students for employment. This is similar to most of the foreign language programs. The only significant difference between the stand alone ASL program and other foreign language degree programs is that many of them have several cultural and literature courses. It is typical to see different literature courses offered for different types of genre, time periods, authors, countries of origin and so forth. This is not the case for ASL which has shown to have usually only one class if any course at all.

Universities 2 and 3, both, have strong student expectations in terms of a career-based track. This seems to be influenced by the relationship with the interpreting program within their departments. Both programs were developed to serve as some kind of feeder or alternative for students not becoming interpreters. For University 1, the establishment of the program served to co-exist with the Interpreter Training Program and eventually feed an ASL Teacher Education Program therefore producing different goals than the other two programs. Finally, it is also possible that all of the programs were all founded fairly recently and when compared with other world/foreign language programs, the shift towards more career opportunities significantly impacted program's goals to produce ready-to work students with skills.

**Role of English in the classroom.** From the syllabi and program descriptions, similar descriptions of immersion, Deaf space and role of English in the classroom emerged. Therefore, I inquired with the program coordinators about the significance of



this. The scope of this topic doesn't only focus on what happens in the classroom but the value of ASL as opposed to English. The coordinators were questioned as to see if there was a language hierarchy? If so, how was this evident? Additionally, a review of documents revealed policies that directly related to the role of English.

Based on the document review, there is evidence of voicing policies throughout the programs. Upon closer inquiry, this is a crucial component to the development of the student as an ally for the Deaf. When students are taught to respect Deaf space and to not oppress Deaf teachers by using their voices in the classroom, this leads students to incorporate Deaf culture into their everyday practice. When asked about when spoken English was used, program coordinators indicated that spoken English was used in courses that were open to all students where interpreters were used. Each of these courses were taught by either a Deaf faculty member or a Deaf/hearing team. It is significant that none of the culture, community and history courses were taught by a hearing person only. All of the language courses from ASL 1-6 were taught by a majority of Deaf teachers. If there was a hearing teacher teaching a language course, there was no language policy emphasized. This leads to two possible conclusions, either the teacher voiced occasionally or the teacher is able to control the students from speaking out as opposed to a class with a Deaf teacher. Coordinators reported that the Deaf teachers that were employed never use voicing for any of the classes taught. The voicing policies in place expect teachers and students to respect that ASL is not a spoken language and that it should not be treated as such.

Based on the syllabi for each course, it was interesting to note that University 3 continued to expect students to submit written work in English in the upper ASL skills

courses while Universities 1 and 2 expected all work in ASL through video submission as students progressed to advanced levels. Using this particular example, it seems University 3 views English as the language of all homework and ASL is used for social conversations only therefore ranking the value of English as opposed to ASL.

Another aspect of the inquiry turned up views related to spoken English and written English. Two coordinators agreed that the courses with Deaf teachers were clearly immersion environments which indicated that the presence of written English was used minimally or not at all to aid the instruction of ASL in class. Those specific classes do not allow for students to use their voice as well. Coordinators stated that students were educated about respecting Deaf people and their culture by not using spoken English and oppressing Deaf teachers when they can't understand spoken English. Only University 1 had all of their classes taught by Deaf faculty and lecturers. Therefore, this program had the most stringent expectations in terms of spoken and written English.

**Teacher qualifications.** For this particular category, respondents had identical expectations for minimum qualifications for hiring ASL teachers. All three university programs indicated through interviews that the minimum requirement desired by the university and the program is a master's degree in order to teach. At Universities 2 (Combined Major) and 3 (Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor), the program coordinators had PhDs so the need to hire faculty with PhDs did not seem to pose an issue. At University 1 (Stand Alone Major), the coordinator had a master's degree and felt that she did not have the same leeway to run her program that she would have had if she had a PhD. At University 2, I inquired about hiring procedures and practices of other language faculty since the coordinator was also the department chair. The ASL program

was not unique in hiring master's level teachers, other languages such as Spanish and German hired master's level teachers, as well. I inquired if there was any distinction between faculty and lecturers. There were none. For the language department, master's was a sufficient degree requirement. Only one program stated that there was difficulty in finding qualified teachers. Two programs indicated they were able to hire Deaf ASL teachers with master's degrees due to networking capabilities or being located in a larger city. Another program indicated finding someone for a full-time position with master's degree was more difficult than finding an adjunct lecturer. This particular institution often trains and produces their own teachers from the community based on mentoring and workshops. The program director was able to use her discretion to hire teachers as needed regardless of academic credentials.

Since the only Master of Arts in Sign Language Teaching degree is operating at Gallaudet University for the third year, the availability of qualified teachers with degrees should slowly start to expand. None of the programs could justify hiring a PhD position due to not having a terminal degree in ASL studies anywhere in the United States even though several current job postings are searching for PhD applicants for ASL faculty positions.

**Assessment and placement of students.** During the interview, this showed up as a marked area of interest for each coordinator. Coordinators reflected program beliefs in training their students in the majority of the courses; that is, students should take the full sequence of ASL courses. For students coming in from other ASL programs, the common consensus of coordinators was that most students ended up in ASL 3 if they already had two years of ASL. Many students frequently had skills that were comparable

with ASL 3 students and programs were more streamlined and basic than those offered at four year programs. The majority of students were assessed through interview methods similar to Oral Proficiency Interview (ACTFL, n.d.). One institution developed their own interview based on ACTFL's Oral Proficiency Interview (n.d.), another used American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (Gallaudet University, n.d.) and a third used Sign Language Proficiency Interview (RIT, n.d.). The only compelling difference between the interviews are the rating systems. OPI and ASLPI have the same rating system with five levels and SCPI has eight levels. Each of these assessments is a recognized standardized procedure tool that uses qualified/trained assessors. Students can get university credit for courses for which they meet proficiency, based on the interviews, and this helps them meet required language credits toward graduation.

Programs had significant tools in place to do such an assessment, additionally, programs also recommended students to progress through at least two years of ASL to pursue their majors. The fact that they had formalized assessment in place indicated that they were well prepared to deal with transfer students and that students normally did not satisfy language expectations and had to take the full complement of coursework. This assessment process reflects a quality and caliber in these programs that is not typical in most programs.

**Conclusions of philosophical inquiry: Ampliative inquiry.** This particular inquiry is driven by motivation to identify the program philosophies and factors that reflect a program's identity. Not only does this approach identify assumptions and norms that are implicit in the program, it also helps to determine whether or not these assumptions and norms are a good fit with the ASL field. In addition, because of my

identity as a Deaf person, part of this final analysis considered the fit of assumptions and norms that empower ASL and raise the bar for higher ASL standards.

A major philosophical inquiry point of entry for analysis is the comparison between the ASL programs studied here and other foreign language program models. Similarities were noted with hiring procedures. However, many institutions that have degrees in a specific language recruit PhD's from literature disciplines which supports language and literature programs. Since PhD's are required for most disciplines, it seems that it would be expected of ASL or other languages as well. From the perspective of Deaf empowerment, this discrepancy needs to be looked at more thoroughly as it serves to diminish ASL in the face of other foreign language programs.

Another area of similarity between ASL and foreign language fields pertains to language proficiency assessment. Many programs have significant assessment or exams in place that students are allowed to take for receiving language credit. Only at University 1 (Stand Alone Major) are students who take the ASLPI awarded credit for courses for which they show proficiency. At University 2, having an exam in place was used solely for making an appropriate placement in language courses. At University 3, the SLPI was used for admission to the major. Students could not take the fourth course in the language sequence without achieving an Advanced rating or higher. Significant differences, however, were found in practices between ASL and other foreign language fields with respect to the role of English in the classroom. From a Deaf person's perspective, this is tightly related with identity. Many foreign language programs do not have a clear policy related to the role of English possibly because teachers are usually fluent in both languages. However, students are expected to produce responses in the

target language, thus minimizing the use of English in written form. In spoken form, current foreign language trends indicate English is used minimally, if at all.

Finally, typical foreign language models produce fluent language users within two years of intensive study with no clear occupational direction upon graduation. Students can choose to continue their academic careers or use their language skills in positions that require minimal training such as retail. This type of approach has both pros and cons. The assumptions are that a two-year language program model of romance languages can be applied to ASL studies as well, while the norms show that each university is offering more the two year model. This indicates that each of these programs, when implemented, knew that a regular foreign language curriculum would not suffice. As well, foreign language programs do not lead to specific careers unless the program has a certification process built in, in addition to the degree (e.g., translation). In contrast, the university programs in ASL had structures in place for technical, career training (e.g. interpreting, teaching).

### **Question 3: How do Program Structures, Philosophies and Curricula Serve to Empower or Oppress the Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of ASL and the Deaf Community?**

This third research question uses two frameworks to deconstruct and examine programs to determine oppressive and empowering stances toward ASL. First, Banks' (1994) classification system is used to examine philosophies and related key practices in the curriculum that reflect each of Banks' four levels: contributive, additive, transformative or one of social action. Programs are not evaluated individual as promoting one model or the other, but specific examples are drawn from the data that

help to identify if and how programs are approaching curricula that move beyond contributive and additive experiences and move toward transformative and social action.

Second, Agada (1998) offers a separation from a traditional curriculum perspective and allows for examining the extent to which practices support student success and program outcomes that are mutually beneficial for students and the program, and in this case the Deaf community.

An example of this deconstruction process is to examine how students are introduced to Deaf culture and the Deaf experience. Are they able to learn from a model that views Deaf people as people with a disability and comprehend that Deaf people often view themselves more similar to other minority groups rather than disability groups? Students who have separated from traditional paternalistic views have deconstructed their knowledge and altered to a mindset that embraces cultural epistemology.

Finally, after deconstruction of key philosophies and practices, an analysis through a Freirian (Freire, 2002, 2005) lens which put practices into two categories; empowering practices and oppressive practices.

**Framework: Multicultural education.** Since the ASL programs studied did not show cultural epistemology from an ethnicity and minority lens, the framework for Banks (1994) was used only to determine what type of program was encompassed in terms of the role of Deaf culture into the ASL curricula. The original intent was to ask program coordinators to identify their programs. However from the assumptions based on the document review there was no indication of multiculturalism being employed.

Each of Banks' approaches to curriculum was represented in program assignments. Book reports, prominent in University 3 reflects an additive approach

because the goal was to increase students' overall knowledge through reading and report writing. Each language class, with the exception of ASL 6, required a book report. Each semester, books were assigned that focused on the life and experience of one Deaf person. The focus was not on Deaf culture as a whole, but on Deaf people individually.

University 1 redesigned their curricula to reflect on a Five C's approach. The program reflected a more transformative approach since many assignments encouraged students to make connections and comparisons related to hearing and Deaf cultures. One such example of how this approach resulted in a transformative curriculum for this particular university lies with one of the connections standards: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures (ACTFL, 1999). At University 1, students were encouraged to make connections with other disciplines by reading articles and discussing the different topics in class. The allowed for a twofold approach, to develop vocabulary to discuss a wide variety of topics from social to academic discourses as well as learning about new information and making connections. Additionally, students were allowed to make comparisons within the community and languages. They made comparisons about language use such as deaf children learning ASL and spoken English. The program coordinator emphasized that students were not to make judgments but to see how deaf children learn languages differently with different resources and accommodations. Throughout the whole process, students are becoming critical thinkers and learning to connect the various deaf experiences they come into contact with to see the diversity of d/Deaf people throughout the population. It is through this personal dissection, students are developing the skills and knowledge that allow them to become Deaf allies.



University 2 offered a variety of assignments that reflected Banks' curriculum approaches. For example students were required to submit community interaction reports only (additive), while other assignments encouraged students to synthesize multiple experiences: experiencing what is like to be Deaf, immersing themselves in a situation where they don't understand or have access to information in the environment, learning about video relay, viewing a historical compilation of various Deaf experiences, then formulating a report that encourages students to develop a more critical awareness of the Deaf experience. This veered more closely with a transformative approach. This program also encouraged students to work in professions that could lead to social action. While social action didn't occur in the classroom, students were trained for it by learning how to be Deaf allies and could possibly engage in it in the future. One example that was gleaned from the interview with University 2 was that students were required to do community service and in this service they were educated about appropriate attitudes and appropriate venues they could volunteer in that fit their skill level. They understood that they were not interpreters and should not behave like such. This established that they could participate in the Deaf community in various ways and did not need to only be interpreters. As a result, this is mutually beneficial for the Deaf community as they have more members who can serve as Deaf allies and these people are not oppressive because they are not subjecting Deaf people to a lower quality of interpretation.

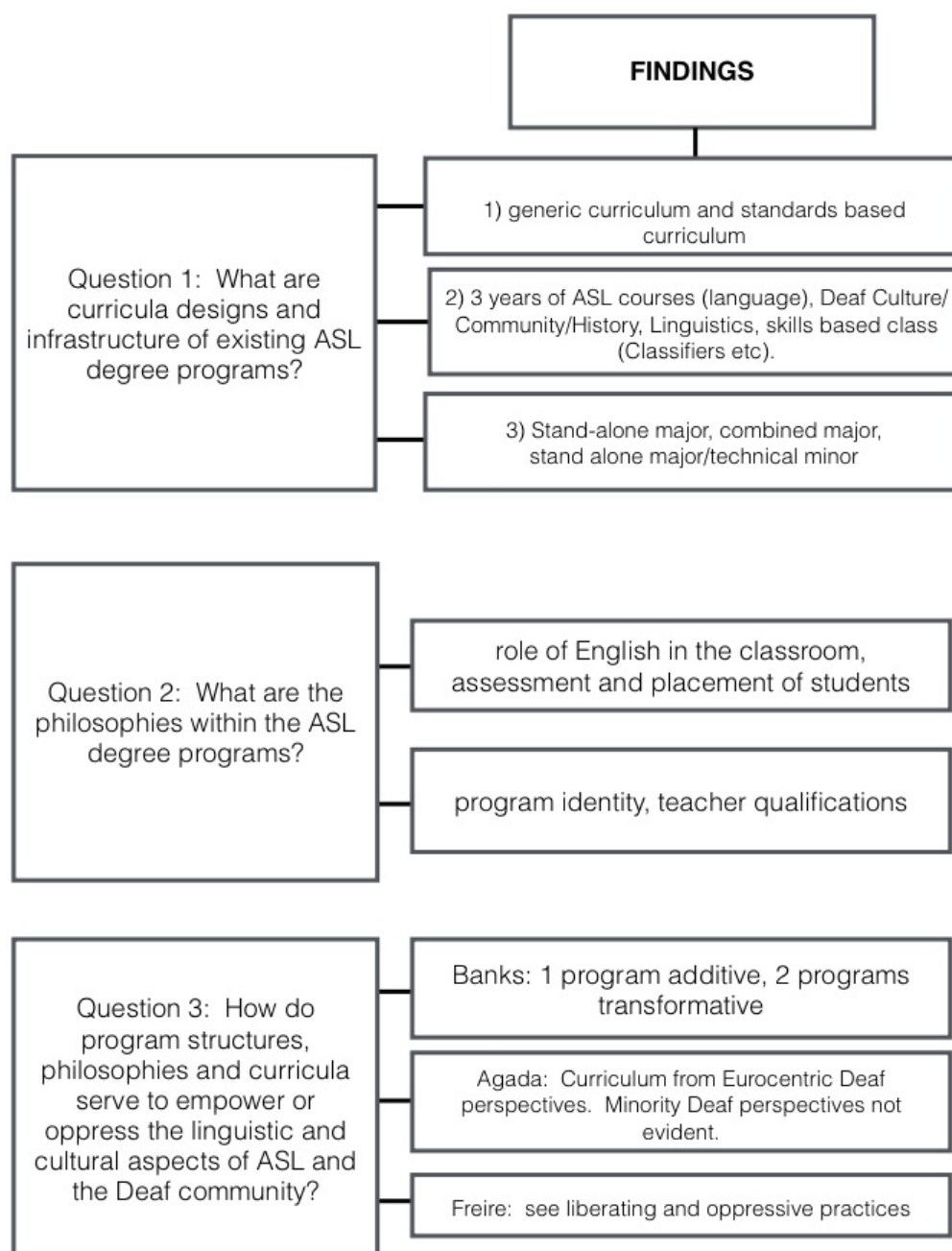
Since I did not find any examples of contributive approach, this leads me to believe that each of the programs understands the value of curriculum reform that braces this field and allows for more empowering practices and knowledge deconstruction. While some programs were at different phases of curriculum reform, I could anticipate

eventual progression towards a curriculum that advocates for social action through transformative approaches.

One area of concern related to diversity. Deaf culture scholars have posited that diversity within the Deaf community pertains to age of enculturation, language use and self-identity (Holcomb, 2012) thus, doing away with minimal focus on the role of race and ethnicity within the Deaf community. Any mention of Deaf people of color reflected a contributive approach. For example, the textbooks used for classes such as *Learning ASL* (Humphries & Padden, 2004) and *Signing Naturally* (Smith, et al., 2008a) have sign models who include Deaf people of color so students can see that Deaf people represent a variety of races and ethnic groups. However, where is the discussion that Deaf people of color often experience oppression on two fronts, from hearing people of color and from Deaf whites? Any curriculum that deals with a marginalized group should also be inclusive in that it includes all members of that group and does not further marginalize.

**Framework: cultural epistemology.** All three programs taught that Deaf people are members of a community with full linguistic and cultural human rights like any other citizens and as a group of people who consider their experiences more similar to those of other minorities rather than disabilities. Utilizing this theorem, it is clear that all of the curricula focus on cultural epistemology of the Deaf. However, there is little or no evidence of cultural epistemology of Deaf people of color, that is, Deaf community members have other racial identities from racial minority groups. The curricula taught incorporated Deaf culture but still perpetuated histories and teachings from a Eurocentric perspective. One coordinator stated that she worked hard to bring diverse teachers to her

program. This was the only significant contribution identified. Other coordinators did not identify diversity or multicultural education as an area they wanted to work on or explore thus did not come up in the interviews. See Figure 2 for a flow chart describing the findings for each question.



*Figure 2.* Research questions and pertinent findings.

**Framework: oppressive and liberating practices.** The review of the data to identify these practices resulted in a long list of themes. Significant themes included length of language coursework required, expectations of students upon graduation, attitudes towards ASL program, incorporation of Deaf role models and Deaf space.

***Length of language courses.*** Each of the three programs studied understood the significance of requiring more language courses than other typical languages, thus requiring at least three years of language only coursework. There is also focus on the unique visual/spatial grammatical principles of ASL such as classifiers, fingerspelling and numbers, discourse, and linguistics to name a few. Other languages do not typically cover language features in depth like ASL does possibly because language learners are already programmed to draw upon their auditory/oral experience to learn the language whereas, learning ASL requires a shift to visual/spatial language for which they have no background thus requiring more directed attention towards components of visual/spatial language. One area of language focus that was prominent in all of the programs was classifiers. Since the English language rarely uses classifiers, most students are not familiar with its purpose or function. Therefore several courses touch this in depth to allow students to successfully master this important part of ASL.

One assumption is that the more specialized coursework will produce greater language proficiency. According to Jacobs (1996) languages like ASL which are more complicated require eight years of study to reach similar fluency as Spanish or French learners in two years of study. For this reason, academic programs where two years of ASL learning is offered will not lead to similar outcomes as compared to French or Spanish language users. The positive aspect of this is that more than two years are

offered. However, for ASL, the disadvantage is that opportunities for language exposure and immersion, important to building language fluency, is not available. There is not country to visit that uses ASL therefore immersion experiences are rare for ASL students. This can be oppressive because programs are charged with creating immersion-type experiences for students and this usually goes beyond the scope of their jobs. It is also oppressive because this very fact reflects the academic institution's lack of understanding the academic field and study of ASL.

***Student expectations upon graduation.*** Since there a multitude of obstacles preventing ASL from being comparable to Spanish and French programs, the alternatives in place present parallel objectives that are attainable within normal academic program constraints. Looking at these parallel objectives helps determine if situations are empowering or oppressive. Expectations for achieving fluency in ASL are lower than other languages because of the length of time and intensity required to become fluent is longer and this is not attainable during a normal post-secondary career. For individuals who are combining ASL with other majors (as in University 2, Combined Major), while students do not reach fluency before graduation, it is believed that their professional work with Deaf individuals will continue to increase their fluency. And, while this may be true, the lack of fluency inhibits and creates barriers to work within the Deaf community. For example, as human service workers (e.g., social workers), the lack of fluent communication inhibits the quality of services that Deaf individuals receive.

This is not a strategy for empowering the Deaf community. As with interpreting students upon graduation, many are sorely in need of professional mentorship before they are ready to do minimal interpreting. The school to work gap is expansive and needs to

be addressed so that students are not venturing into situations that do not give sufficient support to Deaf people. This limits their full participation at a level that is equal to hearing individuals, which is the purpose of interpreting. The same is true for ASL students from all programs. University 3 (ASL Major/Technical Minor), is engaged in empowering practices because their students are expected to continue their education upon graduation. Students can continue on to an interpreting program or to an ASL teaching program. But, they have a foundation on which to build in their undergraduate ASL major.

Another example of this type of practice is in preparation of individuals to teach ASL as a world language. This is not uncommon with many foreign language professions, employing teachers who were once students themselves and who are not a member of the cultural/linguistic group. In the Deaf community, this practice is viewed as potentially taking away employment of Deaf individuals for whom ASL is their native language. It could be argued that it is easier for hearing people to find jobs than Deaf people and every effort should be taken to be sure each ASL position is employed by a qualified Deaf person. In the case of one institution, the program director was motivated to hire Deaf people to be ASL teachers but they often did not meet the minimal academic qualifications, a barrier to these efforts. However, as indicated by one program director, while the priority should be to hire native speakers (regardless of the language), without adequate academic background, while they are fluent in ASL, their knowledge and experience in teaching the language to others is insufficient. While the preference is there to hire native speakers/signers, it might not always be possible. However, the

practice of hiring non-native ASL signers as instructors impacts the quality of instruction and inhibits raising the bar to more advanced language performance standards.

*Attitudes towards ASL programs.* From the data collection and analysis process, it became evident that expectations of ASL students were not the same as expectations of interpreting students. The focus of this research was not on analyzing interpreter training programs or students enrolled in these programs. However, during interviews each coordinator discussed the type of relationship that existed between the interpreting and the ASL programs. Each ASL program was predated by their interpreting program. The need for an ASL program was largely influenced by the existing interpreter program; there needed to be language programs to develop students' ASL knowledge and skills for the interpreting program. In the meantime, it was discovered that ASL was a language that students were drawn to and that could be used to meet university foreign language requirements. It is possible that this development created a hierarchal relationship between students in the ASL Studies program and students in the interpreting program.

The structural organization of various programs in ASL promotes this hierarchy. At one institution, the focus of the ASL program was intended for students who wanted to be involved in the Deaf community but not become interpreters. At another program, the focus was originally an interpreter program. However, the program was not successful at producing qualified interpreters upon graduation. Therefore, created an ASL program that led to an emphasis in Teaching ASL or Interpreting. Both of these focuses are added to an ASL minor. In University 1, the ASL program was established to feed potential students into an ASL teacher's education program. However, that did not materialize so the existing relationship is solely between the ASL and interpreting

programs. The structural organization of the ASL and Interpreting programs shows that there should be no ranking between two programs, however, the interpreting program does not advocate for more ASL courses for students, thus displaying a supercilious stance towards the ASL program. Students in the interpreting program pick up on these subtle underpinnings and replicate oppressive attitudes towards Deaf people when they complete their studies.

To further support that there is a hierarchy between interpreting and ASL programs, the interpreting programs do not expect their students to continue with the language sequence. Two years of ASL (instead of three) are required. The interpreting programs often address their own instruction of language within their programs. At the first and second universities, this is the case. This is troublesome because more language courses mean more exposure and to and practice with the language which will continue to raise fluency levels of students. When students are not required to take a full complement of ASL courses, the message is that it is not important to the profession and the consumers of the professional services, Deaf individuals will be negatively impacted. It allows students to see that there is a type of hierarchy in play at the institution and students will incorporate this attitude into their future as interpreters as well. This can be concerning if the attitude becomes one in which interpreters take on a patronizing perspective. Potential relationship red flags like this should be looked at more carefully to make sure there is no hierarchy between the two programs; and, if there is, professional services to the Deaf community should hold higher standards.

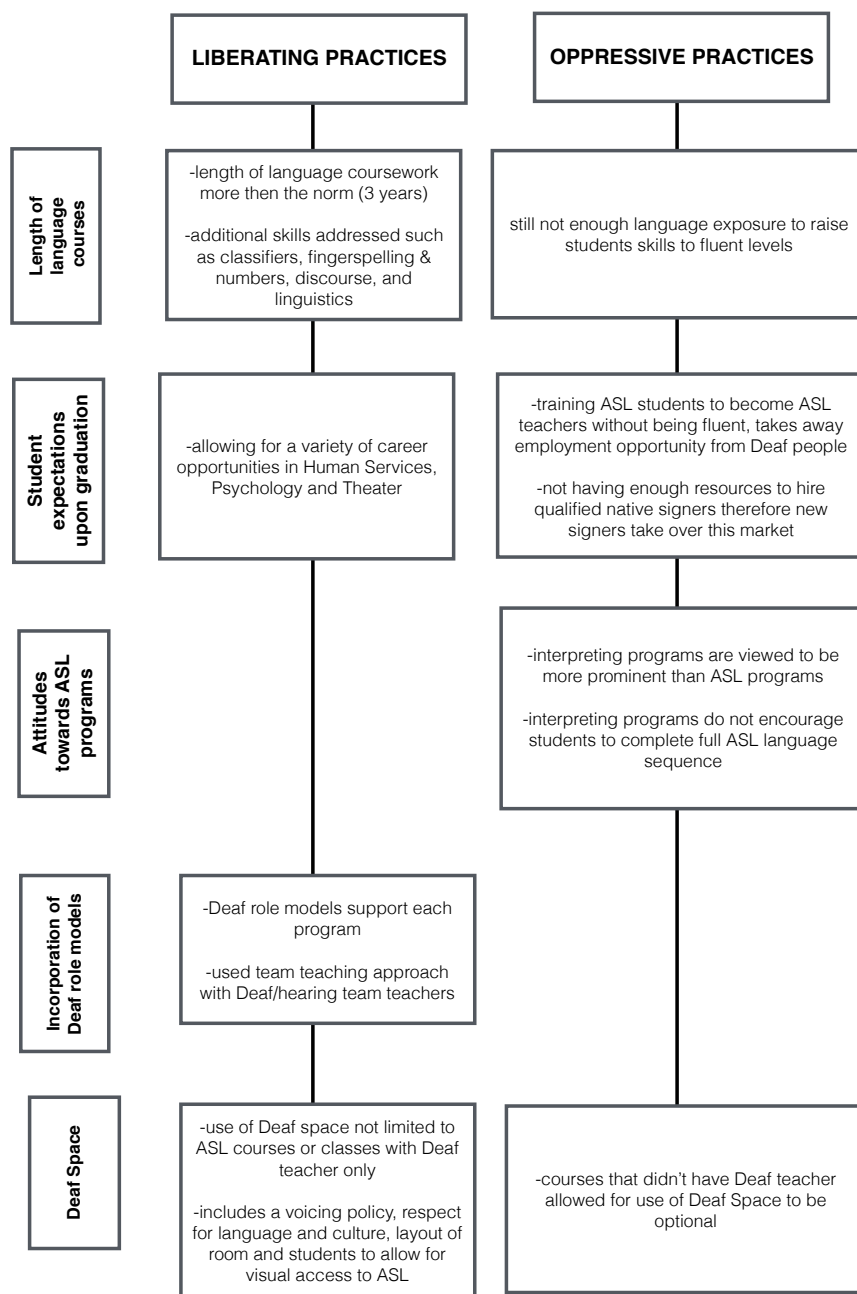
***Incorporation of Deaf role models.*** Incorporation of qualified Deaf native signers as faculty member throughout the program was a clear goal for each program,



emphasized in the interviews with program coordinators. Team teaching introductory level community and culture courses with a hearing and Deaf team was utilized by one institution. This enabled students to learn from the relationship between two teachers and see how hearing students themselves can become Deaf allies. Implementation of the program was in a department that supports the program's goals of being either a language-based or career-based track as discussed during program identity. Ideally, regardless of the track students are in, programs should assure that language skills are sufficiently high and that students are culturally appropriate in their communication and interactions with Deaf individuals and the Deaf community.

***Deaf space.*** Valuing and designing Deaf space is one of the most innovative practices identified in this study that supports the empowerment of ASL. This served to empower the Deaf teacher in each class and set up synthetic situations for students to become comfortable with the idea of a space where they could practice techniques that were respectful to Deaf people. Examples of inclusion of Deaf space in the curriculum found at each of the three institutions includes no spoken English, U-shape sitting formation for everyone to see each other signing, use of ASL and other accessible communication such as writing on the board, so that no one is communicatively oppressed. Other examples included cultural techniques such as attention-getting strategies and cross-cultural considerations. Setting up concise expectations in each and every class emphasizes the value of this for Deaf people and shows students that simple actions can lead to meaningful experiences that are empowering. Basic implementations can include designation of Deaf space in each class including classes other than ASL 1-6.

Furthermore this should be embraced and enforced by all faculty regardless of who are Deaf or hearing. Figure 3 shows the findings explained above.



*Figure 3.* Liberating and oppressive practices.

Based on the discussions related to length of language coursework required, expectations of students upon graduation, attitudes towards ASL program, incorporation of Deaf role models and Deaf space. It is important to carefully look what aspects can be oppressive and to make sure that each of these sections are focused in a way that allows them to empower ASL and the Deaf community.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The intent of the research was to evaluate three ASL programs in place in four-year institutions that allow students to graduate with a degree in ASL. The rationale for this evaluation is to help identify practices that each of these institutions have in place to help pave the way for future establishment of ASL programs. According to the MLA report (2007), ASL is the fastest growing language offered at post secondary levels as beginning level courses (ASL1-2). It also the slowest growing and least offered language at the advanced levels. One reason for this is the lack of resources in place to support institutions with program implementation for advanced studies in ASL. However, even if resources were sufficient, there is insufficient guidance in the literature and in practice to guide the development of ASL degree programs. The findings in this study, it is hoped, address this need.

Cagle (2008) found only 13 bachelor's degree ASL programs in the United States. From those, three programs were selected to be studied for this research. The study included document review of program courses, university bulletins, schedules of ASL courses, syllabi for all courses, course descriptions, program handbooks and history pertaining establishment of ASL programs. The document review was followed up with interviews with each of the program coordinators asking questions about faculty, language policy, enrollment numbers, and other information that could not be gathered by the document review.

The focus of this study addressed program curricula for ASL degree programs in order to provide consolidation of and evaluation of efforts to support program development. The research strived to answer three specific questions: What are curricula

designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs? What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs? How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the community? Ampliative and Analytical curriculum inquiry were used to answer the first two questions. Resulting themes regarding curriculum practices, then, were identified as oppressive or liberating to a Deaf epistemology that is situated in a multicultural context.

### **Methodology**

This research was qualitative, using a critical lens to study the ASL Studies degree programs in three universities. Prior to the selection of the Universities, the list of thirteen ASL bachelor degree programs was perused and programs were selected based on location and which departments the programs were located in and what type of program students were able to graduate in. These three programs contributed different models to the study and shared several fundamental infrastructure requirements.

Two different kinds of curriculum inquiries, which are philosophical in nature, were conducted, analytical and ampliative. While these two different types of inquiries strived to probe specific parts of the curriculum, overall results shared parallel ideology.

Analytical inquiry strived to accomplish three parts. The first part was concept interpretation which defined the curriculum. This was done by focusing on goals and objectives within the syllabi and interviewing program coordinators about student learning outcomes upon graduation. The second part of analytical inquiry was conceptual development which identified the core value of the curriculum. In this process, data used consisted of syllabi, program information, course descriptions and

interviews. The last part of analytical inquiry required a concept structural analysis which identified the model being used. For this analysis, the data used included program information and course descriptions. This three-pronged process allowed for findings that helped answer the research question: What are curricula designs (concept interpretation) and infrastructure (conceptual development and concept structural analysis) of existing ASL degree programs?

Ampliative inquiry was used to analyze assumptions and norms of the three programs being studied. Ampliative inquiry allowed for categorizing assumptions in contrast to norms from the documents received and again categorizing of assumptions and norms based on interviews conducted with the program coordinators. These led to findings which identified four themes which reached saturation point from the data collected. From the document review, two themes that emerged are role of English in the classroom and assessment and placement of students. From the interviews, two themes that emerged are program identity and teacher qualifications. This addressed the second research question which asked: what are the philosophies within the ASL degree program?

The third question strived to identify liberating and oppressive practices with multiple layers of ideology from various scholars such as Banks (1994), Freire (2002, 2005), and Agada (1998). The first layer of ideology utilized addressed the type of approach that is employed by the differing ASL programs. In this analysis, Banks (1994) offers that there are four different types of approaches to multicultural education. Contributive programs have a unit included that addresses multicultural information for a short time. An example of this would be Deaf Awareness Week or Black History Month.

Additive programs go one step further and add the information into the curriculum which implies that the same information is taught but with a new multicultural component added it thus making more information needed to be taught. Transformative curricula do away with the original curricula and redesign the curricula with the multicultural aspect embedded and serving as a foundation to the curriculum. The final approach is one of social action where the curricula transcends knowledge and now makes students become part of a system that battles against social justice. Programs were asked to identify which description fit them best. Utilizing the document review, a classification was assigned and then during the interview, the classification was explained and coordinators agreed with the assignment. This allows for understanding of the process of the curriculum design and where they were at their process.

With Agada (1998), the lens continued to look at the data and determine if a curriculum of cultural epistemology was utilized. To determine this, knowledge must be deconstructed from the predominately taught white, Eurocentric perspective. Once curriculum offers conflicting information from a traditional lens, then a paradigm shift can be attained. The data were analyzed to determine the knowledge that students may or may not gain from traditional Eurocentric views of the Deaf; that is, the Deaf community is a group of handicapped people who must be helped and cured. This allowed for further clarification regarding whether the curriculum not only was one that advocated for a cultural view of Deaf studies but also one that included a wide range of diversity within their curriculum.

The data were then filtered through Freirean lenses by sorting the findings into two distinctive data groups based on his liberation theory. The groups represented

practices that are oppressive and practices that are liberating. The practices that emerged through a process of saturation were practices that each program implemented.

Interestingly, however, for some programs the outcome of a particular practice was liberating while at another program the practice was oppressive. Such an example was with program's creation of Deaf space. At University 1, Deaf space was used in every class throughout the program and it capitalized on and supported ASL as a language of pride for the Deaf community. However, at other institutions, the concept and practice often was implemented based upon the hearing status of the instructor: Deaf instructors promoted Deaf space in ways that hearing instructors did not. This differential practice, in this study is characterized as oppressive as it continues to oppress ASL because it doesn't tie in to the language but to the individuals who are teaching the class. If the ideology that Deaf space portrays is not consistent in each class within the program then that raises conflicting messages for students. Other examples of oppressive practices that were identified included

- programs coordinated by a hearing faculty member,
- vague communication policies on hearing faculty member's syllabi,
- program being located in a department with a different agenda such as the department that focuses on education while the program focuses on language, and
- programs that had lower requirement of ASL fluency skills yet prepared them for positions with direct engagement with Deaf community members.

Also investigated were practices that were liberating. Examples of liberating practices found in the data included:



- setting up clear boundaries of Deaf space and role of spoken English in the classroom,
- use of current ACTFL standards that align ASL studies with other modern language studies,
- having Deaf teachers or Deaf-Hearing teams teach general education courses for all students through the use of ASL interpreters, and
- requirement of language assignments to be turned in all in video format instead of written English.

These three approaches allowed for the answer to the research question which asks: How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community? Banks' research supported looking into program structures, while Agada's work allowed for a scrutiny into philosophies and Freire's ideology helped to classify the curricula practices into liberating and oppressive components.

Employing all of these lenses gave additional insights throughout the analytical process and offered perspectives to help direct the compilation of practices that were both liberating and oppressive. However, this also presented some difficulty as the researcher struggled to distinguish the application of the lens related to the inclusion of Deaf culture or the inclusion of a diverse community of ASL users. Originally these lenses were selected to help identify which practices help empower ASL and the community in which it is used. This community often is dominated by White Deaf people, marginalizing persons of color who are a historically unrecognized part of the Deaf community. The end result is that the analysis of the liberation and oppressive nature of program's

practices is somewhat helpful, but limited. This important point will be addressed later in the discussion.

## **Findings**

The research questions addressed three areas of interest: the curricula, the philosophies and the program structures or infrastructure. Data were reviewed repeatedly to determine frequency, consistency and level of saturation in order to determine its relevance as a significant theme or practice. Each of the questions were reviewed at prior to, during, and after the analysis to ensure that the questions themselves were being answered.

### **Question 1: What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs?**

For the first question regarding curricula designs and infrastructure of existing ASL degree programs, two types of curricula were identified using the concept interpretation approach, allowing for definition of the curriculum. The first type of curriculum, at University 1 and supported by course goals and objectives, was grounded in an ACTFL standards based curriculum which uses the Five C's approach (communication, culture, connections, comparisons and community). Incorporation of the Five C's was clearly embedded in each of the language coursework and built on in the spiral coursework such as Deaf Culture, Deaf History, Semantics, Linguistics and ASL Literature. The National Standards developed by ACTFL intended to streamline foreign language education and represent best practices within each language discipline. The general framework includes the Five C's. Each C represents a module and within

each module there are two or three standards associated with the module. An example is:

Communities:

*Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World.*

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment. (ACTFL, 1999)

The other two universities, University 2 and University 3 did not use the Five C's approach. They had a more generic curriculum in place. This generic approach aligns with the eclectic method. The various methodologies that can be utilized such as notional-functional, total physical response, and so on, are all lumped together to represent an eclectic curriculum which utilizes a variety of methodology and allows for the teacher to incorporate their strengths or capitalize on students strengths within the class.

For the second part of the question, which utilized conceptual development, the goal was to identify the core value of the curriculum. In reviewing the curriculum content for all three programs, a curriculum of consensus emerged. Illustrating this concept of curriculum was that in a review of the course content, all three universities had a curriculum in place that was more similar than different. While programs were in different parts of the country, different locations, different infrastructures, a consensus of what was important content was apparent. If the courses were not identical, there were content allocations were made so that a consensus was still achieved. Such an example

tied in with Classifiers. University 1 had a specific course in Classifiers, as did University 2. However at University 2, the course was not required. At University 3, the information from classifiers was embedded within the ASL language courses. A review of syllabi and in the interview with the program coordinator, it was determined that the content on Classifiers was comparable with the separate courses offered by the other two institutions.

The curriculum of consensus indicates that at these four-year bachelor's degree programs in ASL, they each include three years of language study (beginning, intermediate and advanced ASL), Deaf Culture, Deaf History, Linguistics (either 1 or 2 semesters), Classifiers, Fingerspelling and Numbers, and ASL Literature. Even though the three programs did not have contact with each other prior to development of these courses, there seems to be a general agreement of the coursework that is recognized to be part of the ASL studies sequence. However, not all of the courses offered at each university made were required at all programs. At University 2, depending on the discipline of the combined major selected, two interpreting courses were required. At University 1, a semantics course was required but not offered elsewhere. At University 3, depending on student options, either more coursework was required in teaching ASL or interpreting.

While there were many points of consensus, there were other factors related to a program's curriculum that were not consistent. Examples of these factors include

- teacher qualifications,
- department location, and
- relationships between existing interpreting and ASL program.

It is related to these issues that sets the programs apart from each other. It seemed that within each institution, a history existed that determined student outcomes as well as relationships between interpreting and ASL programs. Due to the history already in place, the expectations of students were influenced by university and departments. University infrastructure often played a big role in expectation of teacher qualifications. While economic and local resource issues resulted in availability of teachers who met university expectations. The existing interpreting program location determined the ASL program location as well.

For the third part of question one, the concept structural analysis was employed in order to identify the model of the program. Even though the coursework was similar within the three programs, the resulting degrees led to different outcomes. These outcomes determined the model that represented each university. The three models that were identified were: Stand Alone Major, Combined Major, and Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor. Each of these programs were set up in a way that allowed for students to progress through the curriculum and arrive at different outcomes. The Stand Alone Major focused on a language based evolution which allowed for maximum focus on language skills supplemented with knowledge and theory based coursework. The Combined Major required less ASL coursework because the major was combined with another discipline such as psychology, human services or theater. Students in these majors were able to sample some interpreting coursework to distinguish the difference between being a community member and being an interpreter. Students had the opportunity to strengthen their ASL skills by taking additional coursework that was optional. The combined disciplines were selected due to similar collegiality between the

departments which allowed students to have full support from both departments to explore their options. The third program, the Stand Alone Major/Technical Minor allowed for students to progress through the full ASL program sequence and supplement their major with a minor in Teaching ASL or Interpreting. The Teaching ASL component actually consisted of two options: with 33 extra hours of coursework students could qualify for a teaching licensure in ASL, or with 18 hours of additional coursework (on top of the ASL major) students could qualify for which included student teaching. However, completion of this minor would not allow students to obtain a teaching license.

**Question 2: What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs?**

This question was answered using a philosophical curriculum inquiry process of analysis called ampliative inquiry (Haggerson, 1991). This process allowed for assembly and unpacking of assumptions (beliefs about what should happen) and norms (actual practice) from document reviews and interviews. An important influence on this process was that assumptions and norms identified were categorized based on my perspective as a Deaf adult because this allowed for assumptions and norms from a cultural perspective, especially one who is a member of the Deaf community.

From the document review, it was noted that role of English in the classroom as well as assessment and placement practices of students were themes that emerged. Regarding the role of English, each of the programs assumed that a formal language policy was important to clarify the position of using English in the classroom context. This assumption was reflected in course syllabi. This indicated a consensus regarding the importance of a language policy that reinforced the consistent use of ASL, rather than

English, in the classroom. However, the norms indicated otherwise. Interviews data reflected examples of the language policy being differentially enforced in classes with Deaf instructors and not hearing instructors. Hearing teachers did not have rigid policies nor enforced them.

For the assessment portion, a similar development occurred. The assumption was that students who had already taken full language courses could take the university's proficiency interview and satisfy the language requirement. Each program has a process for evaluating students' ASL skills for the purpose of indicating proficiency level and placement in ASL courses. However, as a pattern, students often found themselves placed in ASL 3 even when they had taken coursework elsewhere; therefore, not receiving credit for previous coursework. This supported a consistent philosophy of high expectations in language learning since it wasn't enough that students had experience. In practice, programs were not convinced that students had sufficient skill in applying what they had learned.

From the interviews with program coordinators, two themes emerged: program identity and teacher qualifications. The assumptions and norms provided different views into these two themes. The assumptions for university program identity were that their identity corresponded with the mission of their department, that is, the location and affiliation with which each program was situated. However, the opposite was true for all three university programs studied. While University 1's program was in an education department, it very much identified as a language-based program, while the other two programs were located in a language department and functioned more like a technical or career-based program.

Assumptions about teacher qualifications were equally confusing. From the three programs, there are a total of four faculty and 12 lecturers. The 12 lecturers are all Deaf. Two of the four faculty are Deaf and have master's degrees and are classified as teaching faculty, the other two faculty have doctoral degrees and are hearing.

In all three universities, the assumption revealed by coordinators was that the ASL program operated like other departments within the university and required faculty to have a PhD, a university norm. The university norm for lecturers seemed to be somewhat varied. The norms in the ASL degree programs, however, contradicted this assumption. In the two university programs located in language departments, only one PhD-level faculty member was hired for each program. The remaining full time and part time were all master's level teachers. For the third university program, situated in the education department, tenure-track positions were expected to have master's degrees. The Program Coordinator had a master's degree and stated that hiring qualified teachers was always a struggle. Sometimes hiring teachers without a master's degree could be justified through professional certification such as American Sign Language Teaching Association (ASLTA) Certification. Hiring of lecturers was easier and more flexible in the education department than the hiring masters' level full time faculty. In practice, therefore, there is a high proportion of courses taught by lecturers.

Based on the literature regarding program expectations for success, three areas are emphasized (Davis et al., 2005). These three areas indicate that faculty must be involved with teaching, research and service. For positions where master's is sufficient, this indicates that the faculty will not be engaged in research. This has a significant impact because when there are lower expectations, it is detrimental to the field of ASL because



there is not enough research being supplied to further it. Additionally, some of the roles that are expected of a department or program are not being met (Davis et al., 2005).

These two roles that can't occur without having a qualified coordinator who is engaged in research, include: gaining recognition for the development of scholarship and gaining contact with other groups on a local/national scale through collaborative research.

Another area of concern was raised by Lipsitz (2006) about the oppressive practices that restrict money to some groups. An example of this can be seen with practices that dictate ASL instructor qualifications. Not requiring doctorates restricts the ability of the program to succeed in terms of scholarship and doesn't allow for Deaf people to earn more money. Additionally, not having the resources for Deaf people to earn doctorates in these disciplines perpetuates the cycle of oppression by placing a cap on the teacher requirements.

Davis et al. (2005) talk about the value of research to all students and while students are in school, they will become academic staff and that will become future program professionals. The work they started while they were in school can be continued as they work their way out of school. This type of educational philosophy is significant to the empowerment of ASL, yet the ability of teaching faculty and lecturers to engage students in this type of progress is insufficient due to the lack of research support.

Having a staff of predominantly lecturers, rather than full-time faculty, also limits the contribution to service. The benefits of a good relationship with the local community through service and national contributions through research serve to strengthen program relationships with the local and national communities. The service portion is essential to building a strong relationship with the local community (Davis et al., 2005).

Understanding the negative impact of a lecturer-heavy program and having innovative approaches to battling such a situation to ensure progressive growth in the ASL programs. Lipsitz (2006) reminds people of such an example with the “Negro problem”. In this case, this is the “Deaf problem” which indicates that there are not enough PhDs, therefore, we can’t recruit qualified individuals. It could also be viewed as the “ASL problem” which suggests that due to the youthfulness of ASL as a language and the scant research, there will continue to be meager offerings of degree opportunities in ASL to obtain a doctoral degree. Such a view puts the blame on ASL and the Deaf community and continues to perpetuate the cycle of linguistic and cultural oppression. Humphries (1975) uses this same example, not enough Deaf people have PhDs in his research, and calls this action audist. Audist actions are oppressive and should carefully be looked at instead of shifting the blame and resorting to “problems” instead of solutions. In order to change this cycle of oppression, ASL language programs in universities should internalize these interpretations and address ways oppression can be halted.

**Question 3: How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf community?**

For this third question, three frameworks yielded a plethora of findings which are combined to answer the question posed above. Banks’ (1994) framework allowed for curriculum classification using his model. The three university programs represented two possible classifications. One program adopted an additive curriculum which added cultural components to a regular curriculum. Such an example included biographical type book reports in each of the ASL courses. The other two programs were engaged in a

more transformative curriculum by embedding cultural experiences throughout their curricula. These programs included requirements for making community-based connections with the Deaf community in course requiring community engagement. This is in line with the transformative model from Banks because it shows the curriculum has been transformed to allow the cultural piece to be integrated throughout the program. Based on the literature, it is significant that all of the programs respected and sustained ASL as a full language in its own right. None of the programs offered a watered-down curriculum by including different signed communication modes. Ellis (1999) argues that linguistics does not concern itself with communication; rather, it focuses on linguistic inquiry of language. The three programs taught grammar, non-manual signals and other aspects of ASL thoroughly and did not give any consideration to the value of other ways to communicate other than languages: ASL and spoken English.

The second framework utilized (Agada, 1998) encouraged a focus on cultural epistemology which requires that programs engage in a process of knowledge deconstruction, allowing students to unpack their existing knowledge of ASL and the Deaf community. Knowledge that can be unpacked includes typical stereotypes and assumptions of Deaf people as a disabled group rather than a language minority group. Once this knowledge is unpacked, new ways of understanding resulted in a paradigm shift that builds students' to understanding and appreciation of the deaf experience and how Deaf people navigate similarly and differently. Furthering their understanding in this allowed for additional aptitude in Deafhood (Ladd, 2003), and Deaf culture (Holcomb, 2012; Padden & Humphries, 1998, 2005). Students also developed their

ability to critically filter through these experiences and understand oppression, colonialism as well as audism.

However, what was noticeably absent from all curricula was the presence of an embedded multicultural component regarding Deaf people of color. Sparse evidence of the presence of Deaf people of color included the use of Deaf people of color in textbook videos or mention of Deaf individuals of color who were famous. One institution had a Deaf lecturer who is a person of color.

Deaf history courses made mention of segregated Deaf schools. Otherwise, during interviews regarding the discussion of diversity, the focus was on the diversity of the most prominent Deaf experience, referring to the language they learned (ASL), the school they attended, whether or not they had Deaf parents, and so forth. This is analogous to the diversity of the Deaf community definition presented by Holcomb (2012). When inquired further, there was no mention of an alternate diversity. Knowledge deconstruction, therefore, within the three curricula in the universities studied, exists primarily from a Deaf Eurocentric point of view.

Freire (2002, 2005) prescribed a pedagogy of the oppressed as well as a pedagogy of hope. Based on these pedagogies, oppressive and liberating ideology within these three programs were highlighted. Five themes emerged: length of language courses, student expectations upon graduation, attitude towards programs, incorporation of Deaf role models and Deaf space. Each of these will be discussed along with liberating and/or oppressive practices that were evident within and across programs. This was done by using the dialogics and anti-dialogics used by Freire. To identify oppressive practices I looked at three ideas: conquest, manipulation and cultural invasion. I did not see

conquest nor did I expect to find an example of this here. For liberating or empowering practices I looked for cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis.

***Length of language courses.*** Students learning commonly taught Foreign Languages such as French, Spanish, German or Italian can attain general professional proficiency after 720 hours of training which is equivalent to 24 weeks of use (Hart-Gonzalez & Lindemann, 1993; Jacobs, 1996; Kemp, 1998). These particular languages are classified as category 1 languages which are easier to learn. By contrast, Jacobs (1996) determined ASL is a category 4 language which is the most difficult to learn and requires about 1320 hours to reach general professional language proficiency. The amount of hours indicated fluency mastery occurred around 8 years of language use. Therefore programs have to be accountable to push students to learn as much ASL as they can within their programs. Programs should keep in mind that more frequent opportunities to use language contribute to the number of hours that students are developing towards language proficiency. Theory courses that are sometimes offered in ASL which are also offered alongside with an interpreter should be scheduled so that students are able to take the coursework without depending on an interpreter thus they can continue to progress towards language proficiency. In this study, all programs had three years of coursework which was longer than is typical for most language programs. Additionally, other skills were addressed to support an in depth curriculum which, supported the development of key language knowledge and skills, unique to ASL. Offering more coursework to support further attainment of fluency is liberating in that it provided an opportunity for students to achieve proficiency, even though it took a more intensive curriculum. Yet, at the same time, the academic infrastructure of programs did

not allow for students to complete the full 8 years of the ASL curriculum. Therefore, students, more often than not graduate, do graduate without fluency in ASL. The impact of is that students learn ASL at basic levels of proficiency which does not prepare them to use their language skills effectively in whatever roles they take on in working with the Deaf community. This means that their language proficiency is still at the beginner level therefore language use impedes with a Deaf individual's ability to receive full access to services. If these services are being delivered through the use of a person whose language is categorized as "limited working proficiency" then Deaf individuals are being subjected to language that is rudimentary for their only access to communication. This continues the cycle of oppression of the language where Deaf community members have little or no voice to object working with people who have minimal language skills.

***Student expectations upon graduation.*** Drawing from the same literature, students who have 720 hours or 24 weeks of coursework can achieve from a limited working proficiency towards a general working proficiency for commonly taught Category 1 Foreign Languages such as Spanish, French, Italian and German (Hart-Gonzalez & Lindemann, 1993; Jacobs, 1996; Kemp, 1998). To meet a similar proficiency with ASL students, they must have 1320 hours or 44 weeks to achieve from limited working proficiency towards a general working proficiency (Jacobs, 1996). Since the University infrastructure is designed to satisfy general working proficiency outcomes with current degree programs, ASL programs need to advocate for similar outcomes for their students. This can't be done if ASL degree programs are held to the same type of framework and course outlines as other commonly taught foreign languages. Universities need to be made aware that more difficult higher category languages require

more time to learn, therefore additional coursework should be supporting the advancement of each student's language bank. Language programs should not be taken in concurrence with other disciplines that require a strong language foundation. For example, interpreting programs should be pursued after students complete their language studies. Since each ASL program was preceded by an interpreting program, ASL program offerings were usually tied in with Interpreting offerings, which, program coordinators said was limiting because it competed with student's abilities to strengthen their ASL. This relationship set up an expectation that a technical or career-based path was expected. Through the years, other linkages to areas of study have been developed, including teaching ASL and teaching deaf students. However, the opportunities for graduates are limited.

Liberating practices allowed for broader scope of jobs that students could enter, rather than the same three jobs that are traditional. The broader possibilities promoted by one university program included occupation in fields related to human service, psychology and theater.

An additional liberating aspect that was identified was the offering an ASL degree program that provided a focused, fully developed study of ASL and culture replicating other languages and full equality with other languages that are offered on a language-based track.

Other examples of practices that did not support equitable status of ASL degree programs included training and hiring of hearing students to become ASL teachers who were not fluent in ASL. An indirect outcome of this practice is that students/graduates are likely to obtain an ASL teaching credential, taking away potential teaching

opportunities from Deaf people. Insufficient resources to hire native signers allowed for students, with limited experience and fluency in ASL, to be hired. The reality is that there are few Deaf people who can fill positions that are offered to students at the Universities. One coordinator candidly explained that their program did not have Deaf students because of the admission requirements for students upon enrollment. It was very competitive and Deaf students rarely met the university's criteria. Since Deaf students were not able to attend that university or that program, the resources were limited to hearing students who were not native signers.

*Attitudes towards ASL programs.* Traditionally, interpreting programs were established to cater to a specific need of creating a pool of qualified people to interpret for the Deaf community. However, as this task progressed, interpreting programs found themselves unable to handle the demand of the ASL classes and allowed for ASL programs to co-exist within their departments. This established that the ASL courses and eventually the programs were designed to grow students for the Interpreting programs, thus driving the career or technical focus of the ASL programs. As the ASL programs continue to become popular, there is an incentive for independence to push the language focus instead of a career-focus since this continues to build up student's skills before they move on to another focus.

ASL programs in this study, and in most programs, were preceded by an interpreter program, setting up a hierarchy status. This indicated that the Interpreter program took on a more prominent ranking than the ASL program as the ASL language courses were developed to serve the interpreter program. Furthermore, the interpreter programs did not require that students take more ASL classes than students who were



taking ASL for foreign language credit. The interpreter programs in the universities in this study only required two years of ASL. A few other specialized coursework was required while the rest was optional. In reality, then, interpreting programs ignore the language teaching resource in their own backyard. Based on the interviews, there was a sense of superiority towards the interpreting programs while the ASL programs were looked down on. It could be because interpreting programs thought they could do a better job. It could also be that they wanted to do it in the context of the technical training program. Or they could have placed more importance on the study of the skill rather than the study of the language. Since interpreting program coordinators were not interviewed, the exact reason for this phenomenon remains unidentified.

Based upon the findings in this study, the location of programs within the university structure contribute to this. The current prototype for most ASL degree programs, placing both programs within existing departments is problematic and places the study of ASL language and culture and other programs in competitive positions. Woods (2004) proposes that an interdisciplinary model might be more fitting since this approach allows for more fluid, flexible, open-ended structures that wont class with the demands of the academic institutions with traditional models. Such a model could incorporate other disciplines that are ASL friendly and dissociate themselves from a traditional model and expectations that would be oppressive to ASL. When politics and educational practices collide, we have situations where the possessive investment of whiteness continues to discriminate and oppress minority groups (Garan, 2004). Avoiding such collisions is desirable and beneficial to the empowerment of ASL and the Deaf community.

***Incorporation of Deaf role models.*** Incorporation of Deaf role models was embraced in all three programs. Utilization of native language users, such as Deaf adults who grew up using ASL, allows students to see ASL at its best. It also allows for full exposure of the language throughout the curriculum as well as cultural awareness to the lives and experiences of the Deaf community. Some of the strategies for incorporating role models/instructors included employing Deaf, native ASL users for teaching of all of the language courses. Teachers also introduced students to Deaf community and cultural concepts by having guest presenters. This practice was liberating because giving preference to Deaf, native ASL users allowed for more openings for a pool of individuals that are normally denied. Use of Deaf, native ASL users also allowed for team-teaching approaches to occur between Deaf/hearing teaching teams. However, just incorporating Deaf role models as instructors, guest speakers, etc. does not provide the level of expertise for language study. Increasing the bar of the ASL programs to strengthen research, service and teaching opportunities by advocating for tenure-track positions desiring Deaf teachers with PhDs was not capitalized and should be a focus.

***Deaf space.*** Davis et al. (2005) as well as Kemp (1998) supported the specific classroom design by stating that teaching and facilitation addressed a variety of layouts including small group and independent learning which allowed for a variety of learning styles to be met. Programs in this study used Deaf space to accomplish some of the same goals. In syllabi and in practice programs emphasized the creation of an environment in classrooms that allowed for equal language footing between hearing and Deaf people within the same space. It also gave status to ASL as the language of instruction in the classroom. Additionally, it allowed for a room set-up that was not only visual and

accessible for all participants, but also culturally empowering for ASL. Deaf space acknowledged voicing policies, respect for language and culture, layout of room and students to allow for visual access to ASL. The role of English was clear and was not ambiguous. Learning technologies were utilized while keeping the ASL friendly face-to-face format instead of opting for online courses. In creating Deaf space, the programs liberated ASL by recognizing that ASL flourishes in a specific setting when respect is given to the language and use of ASL empowers the community of users who are normally oppressed by spoken languages.

An oppressive practice of Deaf space occurred when it was “optional” for hearing faculty or lecturers. This gives the impression that the creation of Deaf space is for Deaf people only and not served to empower the language. A clear, consensual discussion is needed to understand the function of Deaf space and what it means to these three universities.

### **Summary of Findings**

From this research, specific components of ASL curricula, philosophies and infrastructure were identified that we need to take into consideration when establishing a new ASL program or reviewing existing ASL programs. Additionally, from a broader view, this study allows other programs to see models already existing and what outcomes are associated with each model. Since ASL has the largest gap between beginning level and advanced level course offerings, these findings can support additional program growth to lead to more advanced course offerings or ASL degree programs (Furman et al., 2007). Based on what was gleaned from the research, an inventory of explicit and implicit findings are noted.

In terms of design and infrastructure, there were similarities among the three programs. Explicit similarities related most with the language courses. Each of the programs had three years of language courses: Beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of ASL. The information covered in all of these courses is similar and follow the *Signing Naturally* series which also has a beginning, intermediate and advanced textbook. As the field is relatively new, the number of textbooks available is limited. Thus, the use of the same textbook facilitates consensus on the language curriculum. Furthermore, each of the three programs has at least two courses in community/history and culture. Two programs were in world language departments while one was in education. During the initial review of the thirteen programs, these two departments were where most of the programs are found in. While several communication disorders or related departments have beginning level ASL coursework, none of the programs in these departments had a degree program in ASL at the time of research. This information is crucial in understanding the shape and focus of ASL programs, based upon the type of department in which it is located. In this research, it was clear that world languages or education departments allowed for a full curriculum of ASL to be offered. The world language department allowed for more flexibility yet the program outcomes aligned with technical or career-based outcomes similar to Interpreting programs they were situated with. Education departments are traditionally technical or career-based in nature and expect their programs to have similar outcomes. Thus ASL programs that want the right to determine their own outcomes are better off seeking placement within world language departments.

Another explicit finding was the clear presence of a communication policy. Every syllabi was explicit in indicating policies that included no voicing in class, Deaf space, and the importance of creating an immersive environment to learn ASL, where spoken English is not used at all. The role of written English was more implicit. Some programs allowed for its use along with teaching gloss while others discouraged the use of English, in any form, as often as possible.

Additionally, analysis revealed an emergence of two types of program philosophies: a program philosophy that emphasizes language learning with no influence of future career outcomes and a program philosophy that results in a specific chosen career track in an area of study where ASL is a key part of the professional preparation. The exact format of the career track depended on the focus on the program. One program had equivalent credits in ASL within a combined majors (not to be confused with double majors where both programs need to have the full credits to complete their majors). In this case, each major has a reduced amount of credits required, thus the student has dual areas of expertise. However, this limits the levels of ASL proficiency students can reach. Another program focused on ASL predominately, offering minors to supplement the ASL expertise. Both minors were specifically related to ASL and supported the language as a whole while leading to a technical or career-based opportunity. The minors allowed for an edge for students to continue additional studies in the same field as their minor after graduation such as interpreting or ASL Teacher training.

In terms of more implicit findings, it was interesting to note that each of the programs studied was preceded historically by an interpreting program. One program

continues to have two parallel majors, one in ASL and one in interpreting. Another program combined the ASL and interpreting major and also offered other combinations. Another program also revamped their interpreting program and made it a minor to the ASL major. There was already support for a sign language program development due to the existence of the interpreting program. However, the ASL program continues to struggle for an identity of its own.

Another area for future study because the findings were implicit is related to the role of voicing in classes with hearing faculty. Program coordinators have expressed some colleges in other locations continue to struggle with a clear voicing policy which is one of the reasons why it is emphasized in their programs. In courses taught by a hearing person, there were no clear explanations of how voicing would be tolerated in classes they taught. Interpreting courses were not looked at so this specifically addresses language or culture or linguistics courses where the teacher is hearing. It is possible that there is no need for a policy because there is no voicing. However, in order for hearing students to develop respectability to the Deaf community, students need to see actions of hearing people reflecting a respectful stance toward the language in order that students can become allies, themselves, for ASL and Deaf culture.

Another implicit finding was related to the role of courses that support languages such as literature courses. The only thing overt about the course were the objectives and assignments. The actual instruction of ASL literature coursework was so varied that courses either expected students to be proficient and produce their own work or learned about different types of ASL literature without requiring extensive ASL skills. The role of literature was not as straightforward. Other than touching on different types of ASL

literature, the courses imply that knowledge and skills are superficial. If this is indeed true, what is the purpose of having students take such a course? The limited scope of resources and research related to ASL literature could be problematic. Within foreign language fields, the amount of language specific literature courses is extensive while the opposite is true for ASL. Some programs have one ASL literature course if they have one at all. Most foreign language programs have several literature courses provided, although their language allows for higher fluency in a shorter amount of time.

Finally, in the data analyzed there was that there was no mention of the different types of sign languages used by diverse community members. One program includes a course related to the DeafBlind community and one program requires a book report every semester which allowed for students to reflect on the experience of the DeafBlind individual they read about. One program also requires students to analyze comparisons between ASL with another sign language in the world. Assignments like this open up students' eyes to other ways of communicating. Yet, within our own American Deaf community, there is no mention of how ASL is use within diverse community members. This reflects the need for the Deaf community to reexamine their own understanding of the changing epistemology of their own cultural identity.

### **Advocating for Full Language Acceptance and Respect**

To be fully respected as a language of study within this profession of modern language, teachers and organizations such as the Modern Language Association or American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages need to be engaged in similar endeavors as our foreign language counterparts. Obstacles that prevent this are numerous. There is only one master's level teaching training program in teaching ASL

and it is new. Much of the field of languages are closely intertwined with literature and cultural studies. Comparative literature is a popular profession for many faculty in these disciplines. The scholarship of ASL literature is very small. There are barely any textbooks and only a few videos of particular artists who have published their work. One semester of ASL Literature is not equivalent with multiple courses of other languages. The biggest obstacle of all lies with the framework of language programs. The romance languages such as French and Spanish are more easily acquired and about two years is assumed to be sufficient time to be fluent in the language. This time frame can be reduced if language immersion is utilized.

Fully understanding the role of foreign language education and how ASL fits in the big picture is crucial to developing and maintaining a successful relationship within the field of foreign languages. Advocating for similar student outcomes within language departments will allow for more extensive study for ASL as well as lead to further opportunities to continue specialized areas of ASL related instruction as graduate areas of studies.



## CHAPTER 6: REFRAMING THE ASL CURRICULUM

The focus of the three research questions from this study identified the curriculum design, program philosophy, infrastructure as well as brought empowering and oppressive audist practices to light. Using this information, a reframing of the ASL Curriculum is now needed in order to ensure that the field of ASL takes emancipatory steps towards full functionality as a language of study within post-secondary institutions.

### Curriculum Design

Since there was a curriculum of consensus that occurred among the programs studied, that leads one to understand that the ASL field looks at other programs for a general framework which leads to similarly designed programs nationally. However, what we know about the complexity and length of acquisition for American Sign Language should be at the forefront of curriculum decisions rather than developing a course sequence that is similar to commonly taught foreign languages. Category 1 languages require 720 hours and allow students to have general working proficiency (minimal acceptable competence to start working). The number of credit hours required translates to approximately 16 courses for students to take for their major in their category 1 language. However, counting the required courses for the ASL Studies curriculum of consensus brings the count to about 15 courses (depending on the program requirements). See table 13 for the list of courses in the curriculum of consensus.

Table 13

#### *Current Curriculum of Consensus for ASL Studies Programs*

Course Number	Name of Course(s)	Credit Units / Hours
1-6	ASL 1-6	18/270

7	Semantics	3/45
8	Introduction to the Deaf Community	3/45
9	Deaf Culture	3/45
10	Deaf History	3/45
11	ASL Linguistics 1	3/45
12	ASL Linguistics 2/Sociolinguistics	3/45
13	Classifiers	3/45
14	Fingerspelling & Numbers	3/45
15	ASL Literature	3/45
<hr/> Total: 15 courses		45/675 hours

These required courses required add up to very similar numbers of coursework for category 1 languages. However, ASL is at more of a disadvantage because it is not a category 1 language and the total number of courses includes other courses such as Introduction to the Deaf Community, Deaf History and Deaf Culture. This deducts from the original 15 courses and leaves 12 courses that offer the language environment for ASL growth.

With this in mind, students who are ASL majors should have every opportunity to obtain a general working proficiency upon graduation. As indicated by Jacobs (1996), this means that students should have at least 44 weeks or 1320 hours of language exposure in ASL, a category 4 language. This translates to approximately 29 classes. Since this number is double the typical curriculum currently offered, this is an area of concern.

While there is no specific approach that will rectify this gap to ensure students master general working proficiency, there are a few areas that can be addressed to reduce this gap and increase opportunities for building students' language proficiency.

First and foremost, all courses within the ASL curriculum need to be offered in ASL only. Courses that are targeted for general education students can be offered, as such, with an interpreter but should not be counted for credit for ASL majors. Separate courses should be specifically tailored for these students and taught in the target language. This offers students the opportunity to use academic ASL to discuss theoretical constructs rather than just focus on conversational ASL within their ASL studies.

Secondly, students need to have more courses that allow them to discuss various topics, similar to literature courses offered by other foreign language majors. Specific literature courses can focus on a time-period, a political stance, works of a particular poet, writer, movie director and so on. These varieties of topics allow students to become engaged in cultural, socioeconomic and political conversations about the language in the target language.

With this in mind, the same type of ideology should be accomplished within the ASL Studies program as well. A few ideas for this could be: a De'VIA course, a film course focusing on how deaf people are negatively portrayed in the industry, or the opposite a film course where deaf people are shown in a liberating manner or a combination of the two. Another idea could focus on the history of Black Deaf Americans, how they were segregated in the past and lead to the current research of Black ASL. Courses like this will allow for more diverse topics to be included that help

steer them away from the traditional Eurocentric stance. Each of these courses should be offered in ASL and offered after students complete enough ASL courses to be able to communicate well enough to take the class in ASL only. Usually this will mean the course can be taken after students complete either ASL 4, 5, or 6. A good way to end the major area of study would be with a capstone or a special topic course that reflects on current issues.

Another aspect that should be addressed is the offering of non-traditional coursework with a large amount of hours instead of the traditional 45 hours for a 3-unit course. This type of course could be similar to a fieldwork course where students need to do community engagement type of work where they are immersed in an ASL environment. Suppose a course requires 135 hours of fieldwork, equivalent to 3 traditional courses. If a program requires freshman and sophomores to satisfy 90 hours of fieldwork and juniors and seniors to satisfy another 135 hours of fieldwork class this allows for a wider opportunity for students to develop their ASL growth outside of the ASL curriculum.

Finally, language courses should not be counted towards courses required which will allow programs to require more courses with higher expectations. These courses are required to take all of the other courses in the major but they would not be required for the major. If an ASL literature course has a prerequisite of ASL 6 before students can take it, students will still need to take all of the language courses but they don't need to be counted toward the requirements. The reason for this is to still aim for the 29-course objective while working within university constraints. If a university requires about 48 units towards a major that converts to 16 courses which is still insufficient for Category 4

language majors which should have about 29 courses. See table 14 for a list of courses students should take.

Table 14

<i>Proposed ASL Studies Curriculum to Maximize Hours for Language Competency</i>		
Course Number	Name of Course(s)	Credit Units / Hours
1-6	ASL1-6	0 /270 hours
7	Semantics	3/45
8	Introduction to the Deaf Community	3/45
9	Deaf Culture	3/45
10	Deaf History	3/45
11	ASL Linguistics 1	3/45
12	ASL Linguistics 2/Sociolinguistics	3/45
13	Classifiers	3/45
14	Fingerspelling & Numbers	3/45
15	ASL Literature	3/45
16	De'VIA	3/45
17	Film course	3/45
18	History of Black Deaf Americans and their language	3/45
19/20	Freshman Fieldwork class	3/90
21/22	Sophomore Fieldwork class	3/90
23/24/25	Junior Fieldwork class	3/135
26/27/28	Senior Fieldwork class	3/135

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 Total: 29 courses

51/1305 hours

This type of model roughly fits the number of courses to bring students up to general working proficiency. However this is slightly over 48-unit requirement and that might be allowable depending on college or university protocol. If students aren't allowed to exceed 48 units for a major, another possibility would be to offer lab units for ASL courses and that would increase the number of hours for the language courses but still keep the requirements out of the major if the program doesn't count the language courses toward the major.

If students supplement their coursework with a minor related to ASL, this is a good way to have additional coursework taken in the target language. It is important that the minor serves to support the major and not vice versa.

### **Program Philosophy**

Regarding program philosophy, in the three programs reviewed for this study, this seemed to be an area with the most divergence. As emphasized earlier, the ASL program needs to be valued for building a strong language foundation prior to adding on other disciplines related to ASL. However, this was not the case in the study. A possible explanation for this stems from the emergence of ASL as a “foreign language”. ASL was not recognized as a foreign language for many years due to a variety of reasons such as, one cannot go to a different country to learn ASL, it is not a written language, thus there is no body of literature tied to it, and there is no differing culture for the users of ASL (Corwin & Wilcox, 1985). Thus, the ability to offer ASL originated in locations other than

foreign language departments. Courses were offered within Education or Linguistic Departments. Since these courses were the first of its kind, these compromises influenced the development of ASL programs. These compromises included offering ASL for the explicit purpose of studying the language to lead to a career such as interpreting or teaching deaf students. Since this relationship allowed for ASL to grow as a language offered in educational environments, the fact that ASL was treated differently than other foreign languages was excused by people involved in this field. However, the fact is that in this age of foreign language acceptance for ASL, the field of ASL Studies is still functioning as an apologetic stepchild of foreign language education. Career professionals in the field of ASL have long perpetuated that ASL is different, therefore, the language focus is not emphasized. Is it so different that the value does not need to be on language fluency but on occupational fluency instead?

There is alarming evidence that language proficiency and opportunities for students to develop additional concentrations is even more crucial for students learning ASL. Therefore studies in ASL that subtract from building a strong language foundation serve to oppress the student and the community of users that the student eventually will work with. This is a no-win situation. Instead, the focus primarily should be on supporting ASL as a bona fide language and allowing students to pursue a full degree in ASL Studies with options for minors that do not deduct from the original purpose of building a language foundation. To ensure this is met, programs should require students satisfy a proficiency assessment prior to graduation. This will allow for program and student accountability.

Minors that are offered with the intent of directing students to an explicit future area of employment are encouraged as long as they support the original intent of language foundation. ASL strives to be a leader in foreign language education by offering tracks in fields that students can pursue. These tracks should continue to be supported but should not be in direct competition with the ASL Studies program or be the reason for an ASL Studies program. Interpreting training programs, which are very specialized areas of study should be offered as graduate studies. The reasoning for this approach is two-fold; when the interpreting field is raised to a graduate level, this ensures that interpreting students have already met the minimum requirements for language foundation in both ASL and English, as well as raising the bar to ensure that more Deaf people have access to higher-level types of interpretations. The more educated interpreters are, the more they can accurately convey a variety of messages complying with the needs of the Deaf community. This aligns with other areas of studies for ASL majors such as future educators of Deaf children or Teaching ASL; both graduate level disciplines.

### **Infrastructure**

Based on this study, where the ASL Studies program was housed resulted in a few examples of assumptions and norms that clashed. For instance, it is assumed that an ASL program housed within an education or even a special education department would be oppressive and focused on actions that reflect a helping stance towards the Deaf Community which takes control for them rather than a supporter stance which encourages Deaf people to make these changes for themselves. Another assumption was that programs within an education related discipline were more likely to be programs that



directed students towards technical tracks such as teaching deaf children, interpreting or teaching ASL. One might also assume that programs located within foreign language departments more likely would focus on language, similar to other foreign languages.

This study provided evidence that these assumptions were not valid. In the education related discipline, the ASL program was strong enough to battle against the typical oppressive stereotypes within that department and embraced a curriculum which empowered the language. This particular program also focused on providing a strong language foundation yet the program simultaneously felt pressure from the aligned interpreting program and from the department to assimilate students towards career opportunities. Within the foreign language departments, the ASL programs continued to differ from the other languages offered in the department by being the only ones to offer an interpreting program or minors in interpreting or teaching ASL. Seeing how the assumptions and norms clashed, regardless of which department the ASL programs were situated in, allows us to understand that there is a struggle to fit within the higher education infrastructure despite the strides that have been made over the years.

It is beneficial for all Deaf and ASL related disciplines to stay together in order to offer the most support. At the same time, this presents a struggle because we don't know where exactly is the best place for all of these programs to co-exist? Establishment of a Deaf Studies department, which would be able to house all of these programs in their entities, would be beneficial. Looking at a similar model, Women's Studies struggled to find a home that allowed them to embrace interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and transnational discipline rooted in feminist theory which is influenced by social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. With all of those contributions, the development of a

stand-alone department in Women's Studies made the most sense (Schmitz, 1995). A similar approach should be investigated for Deaf Studies in a school or college that allows for a variety of disciplines to align with each other.

Development of such a department would allow for a variety of emancipatory acts to take place to serve to empower ASL as a language and the Deaf community.

Examples of these acts include; ability of independence and autonomy to develop and regulate programs that reinforce each discipline and ensure that each program has the full potential to succeed, opportunity for majors for Deaf students to study and lead to a larger pool of qualified native Deaf users of ASL for future employment opportunities.

Furthermore, Deaf students would be better able to access direct instruction in ASL and have opportunities to continue their ascent into higher education than they would if courses were not offered in ASL. These same students are now able to learn more about their language and culture which often is not available to them in their primary and secondary education careers. Having programs together also creates more opportunities for interdisciplinary studies. Students in ASL would have more choices from a variety of courses offered in ASL.

With a dedicated Deaf Studies department, there should be no misconceptions between the assumptions and norms of program philosophy and student outcomes. Additionally, programs can work together to best support each outcome in a way that leads to empowering ASL and the Deaf community.

### **An Empowering ASL Curriculum**

Having a curriculum in place that celebrates ASL and values it as the language of the Deaf community is crucial because it will lead to empowering behavior from hearing

people. Deaf people live their lives daily as an oppressed minority and in teaching ASL as a foreign language, the ability for hearing people to continue the cycle of oppression is very real, as well. ASL classes that are taught can be oppressive for the Deaf community because they create a new pool of students learning ASL and becoming more familiar with rules of Deaf culture than Deaf people may actually know themselves. Many Deaf people have no formal education in ASL as a language or in Deaf Culture because the Deaf Education curriculum is often focused on immersing Deaf students into mainstream society rather than using the language and culture of the Deaf community to support their academic and personal growth. It can be very threatening to Deaf people when a hearing person knows more about ASL grammar and usage than Deaf people. At the same time, there is an oppressive climate that hangs over Deaf people in terms of learning ASL. Deaf people have long been preached to about the significance of learning English. This has superseded the value of learning ASL, even though it is a naturally accessible language for Deaf people. This has led to Deaf people prioritizing English over ASL. Since this learned behavior has been reinforced by a variety of professionals working with the Deaf community, it has, in turn, become reinforced by Deaf people themselves. Many Deaf people now believe that learning ASL has no value and they do not need formal instruction in ASL, because they feel they know it intuitively. If this same argument was used by hearing people who grew up here in the United States, it would not be acceptable. So why is it acceptable for Deaf people to grow up in mainstreamed schools or schools for the Deaf and not be formally taught ASL? When Deaf people are queried about this, many of them are shocked to see the double standard that affects Deaf people and never realized this.

Knowing that teaching ASL to hearing students can be oppressive to Deaf people, it must be addressed with caution. Hearing students will never experience the same kind of oppression or audism that Deaf people experience daily and that needs to be at the forefront of the ASL curriculum. Teachers and students must be aware that no matter how much emphasis is placed on this one fact, it will still not be enough. There are many ways to ensure that students are vividly aware of this oppression and addressing this will require discussing a variety of topics including Deafhood, code-switching and the Deaf perspective.

Deafhood is referred to knowing where one stands in their Deaf identity journey. Since this is a process, it means that individual people will be at a different stage in their journey. It is important that this concept be emphasized in the ASL curriculum because this concept will explain why some Deaf people are more accommodating towards hearing people (because of how they grew up and their expectation that they need to fit into the hearing world) while other Deaf people are more reluctant to accommodate themselves to the hearing community (due to the fact that they have already determined that hearing people expect Deaf people to talk and hearing people never try to accommodate themselves towards Deaf people). Use of concepts such as Deaf militant, which describes the Deaf people who have already progressed to a higher plane of understanding regarding their audist experiences, is oppressive because hearing people may feel threatened by this behavior. Instead it should be considered empowering because these Deaf people are learning to stand up for themselves and advocate for the betterment of the Deaf community.

Code-switching is a specific act that continues to oppress ASL because when a Deaf person feels they need to code-switch from ASL to a more English type of signing or adding spoken words while signing, this devalues ASL as a full language and sends the underlying message that ASL is not a language deserving of full respect. Therefore, when students are exposed to code switching, they need to be aware of the implications that are being conveyed. Teachers must be mindful so that code-switching is not being done by them and students need to understand that if code-switching is done towards them that means that the Deaf person has conveyed a cultural message by saying that the individual is not fluent enough to understand ASL. Possibly, the Deaf person deems it too much effort to try to communicate with that hearing person. Being aware of such acts like these allow students to experience “reverse oppression” in a manner similar to what Deaf people may experience themselves.

The Deaf perspective is very unique and varies as much as the experiences of Deaf people themselves. These varying perspectives need to be incorporated into the ASL curriculum because every Deaf teacher that students have will bring a different experience. Therefore, the best experiences are the ones where students can have a variety of teachers with a variety of perspectives to share. There should be no “one size fits all” mentality emphasized. Yet, at the same time, best practices include recognizing stereotypes and myths and how students can battle against these.

To ensure that students are indeed culturally sensitive and have good intentions and are not taking part in oppressive actions towards the Deaf community intentionally or unintentionally, a formal admission or screening should be done to evaluate students prior to being accepted to pursue a major in ASL Studies. The screening should not be

limited to signing ability and also include an interview about how they would handle themselves in a variety of oppressive situations to verify that they are aware of actions that are troublesome for Deaf people.

ASL programs need to take full ownership of how students are introduced and assimilated into the Deaf community. Too often, students attend events that are not appropriate for ASL students which make for bad experiences for students and resentful behavior by Deaf people towards ASL students. Examples of poor preparation for student exposure include teachers asking for students to show proof of event by requiring students to take picture of the Deaf person with the student as if the Deaf person is an exhibit. This is insulting and derogative behavior towards the Deaf community. Another example is when ASL students swarm an event that is not appropriate for students such as a storytelling event for young Deaf children. Deaf children should have an opportunity to watch storytellers in ASL without an overbearing audience that makes them feel like they are on exhibit, as well. Teachers and students need to practice mindful behavior and always practice cultural sensitivity when attending Deaf community events. If there are not plentiful opportunities for events, then it is up to the ASL program to create their own events.

ASL programs should be responsible for ASL mentoring as well. The same values that have been discussed related to being attentive towards oppressive actions and creating empowering situations need to be included when developing mentoring opportunities. Often interpreter training programs bypass the ASL program and go directly to the community to set up mentoring, without taking advantage of the expertise and relationships that the ASL program has already developed. This type of action is not

respectful to the Deaf community, the mentors, or the ASL program and it's role and responsibility in growing global Deaf partners.

Interpreter training programs and Deaf education programs typically train students based on ideal outcomes. However, these two disciplines often send the most inexperienced graduates to work with primary and secondary Deaf students who cannot advocate for themselves. Even if a recent graduate is trained in empowering actions, they still have no credibility as a new interpreter or educator and advocating for change for Deaf students is almost impossible. For this very reason, the academic institutions that train students for these type of jobs should be at the forefront encouraging higher standards for Deaf children and not allowing newly graduated students to work with the most vulnerable members of the Deaf community. Raising standards by expecting these disciplines to be graduate level is a strong push for higher standards. With ASL Studies as a foundation, graduates will be more fluent in ASL. When they train in these areas of study, they will have more experience, more knowledge and higher skills so that they will be better prepared to be successful communicators with Deaf people. A result is an emancipatory curriculum.

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## Appendix A:

### Documents requested from each institution:

1. Proposal for program implementation
2. Meeting minutes from program implementation committee
3. Course of study for the program
4. Syllabus for each course outlined in the course of study
5. Program relationship to Department/School/College mission
6. Effects of the program/resources needed to carry out the program
7. Program justification if any
8. Bulletin Copy
9. Program demographics:
  - a. Classes offered every semester
  - b. Student enrollment
  - c. Number of sections available
  - d. Number of students taking classes for credit
    - i. General Education/ Foreign Language
    - ii. For other majors/minors
    - iii. As ASL Degree student
10. Any other relevant documents

## Appendix B:

### Questions asked when interviewing institutions:

#### Questions regarding:

##### 1. Personnel Selection:

What are your teacher(s) qualifications? Are these the same qualifications required by the University?

##### 2. Curriculum:

What is the ASL Program Philosophy? What are the goals for students when they graduate? Do you follow a particular textbook or approach? What do you focus on in advanced level courses (ask for each advanced level course such as: ASL Linguistics, Classifiers, ASL Literature, etc.)? How does this program fit in the disciplines taught in the whole Department/College? From Kemp (1998): Was it developed with a content specialist and curriculum specialist's input? Does the curriculum address both program goals as well as student's achievement levels? Does the curriculum address each course's specific performance objectives?

##### 3. Placement Interview:

Do you allow students to transfer in with an ASL Background? How are they evaluated for ASL skills and placed in appropriate classes?

## Appendix C:

Table C1

*Information Requested from Each Institution*

Document requested	Stand Alone	Stand Alone Option	Not Stand Alone
Proposal for program implementation	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview
Meeting minutes from program implementation committee	none	none	none
Course of study for the program	Online search/ advising document	Student handbook	Online search
Syllabus for each course outlined in the course of study	14 syllabi	12 syllabi	11 syllabi
Program relationship to Department/School/College mission	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview
Effects of the program/resources needed to carry out the program	None	None	None
Program justification	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview	Elicited in interview
Bulletin Copy	Online search	Online search	Online search
Program demographics	Online/interview	Online/interview	Online/interview
Any other relevant documents	Advising document	Student handbook	Supplements to syllabi for course projects

## Appendix D:

## Templates for Analysis

Analytical inquiry for research question: What are curricula designs and infrastructure of existing American Sign Language degree programs?

	University 1	University 2	University 3
Conceptual Interpretation “Defining the Curriculum”			
Conceptual Development “Core Value of the Curriculum”			
Conceptual Structure Assessment “Identifying the model”			

Ampliative inquiry for research question: What are the philosophies within the American Sign Language degree programs?

	University 1	University 2	University 3
Assumptions from document review			
Norms from document review			
Assumptions from interviews and observations			
Norms from interviews and observations			

Research question: How do program structures, philosophies and curricula serve to empower or oppress the linguistic and cultural aspects of ASL and the Deaf Community?

	University 1	University 2	University 3
Classification from Banks?			
Cultural Deconstruction?			
Empowering practices?			
Oppressive Practices?			

## Appendix E:

*Signing Naturally* Units

(Lentz, Mikos, & Smith, 1992; Mikos, Smith, & Lentz, 2003; Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 2008a; Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 2008b)

1. Getting to know you
2. Exchanging personal information
3. Discussing living situations
4. Talking about family
5. Talking about activities
6. Storytelling
7. Giving directions
8. Describing others
9. Making requests
10. Talking about family and occupations
11. Attributing qualities to others
12. Talking about routines
13. Locating things around the house
14. Complaining, making suggestions and requests
15. Exchanging personal information: Life events
16. Describing and identifying things
17. Talking about the weekend
18. Narrating unforgettable moments
19. Sharing interesting facts
20. Explaining rules
21. Telling about accidents
22. Talking about money
23. Making major health decisions
24. Discussing health conditions
25. Storytelling

*Learning American Sign Language* Units  
(Humphries & Padden, 2004)

1. Introductions and personal information
2. Learning ASL
3. Politeness
4. Descriptions
5. Requests
6. Expressing yourself
7. More descriptions
8. Family and friends
9. More descriptions
10. At home and daily living
11. Food and food shopping
12. Offering and declining



13. More ways to express yourself
14. Experiences and current activity
15. Future plans and obligations
16. Directions and instructions
17. Suggestions and advice
18. Attitudes and opinions
19. Recreational activities
20. Travel-places and experiences
21. Occupations and professions
22. The body, health and emergencies
23. Current events
24. How things are done

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Amy June Rowley

## Education

ASL Specialist Certification, Western Maryland College,  
Westminster, MD. 2001

M.S. Western Maryland College, Westminster, MD. 2000  
Major: Deaf Education

B.A. Gallaudet University, Washington, DC. 1996  
Major: Biology

Dissertation Title: American Sign Language Advanced Studies Programs:  
Implementation Procedures and Identifying Empowering Practices

## Teaching Experience

2011 to present, California State University - East Bay  
Associate Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

2007 to 2011, California State University - East Bay  
Assistant Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

1999 to 2007, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.  
Associate Clinical Professor and Coordinator, American Sign Language  
Programs, Department of Exceptional Education.

## Proficiency Level

ASLPI- 5      American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI), top score  
earned (equivalent to Native speaker of the language).

## Publications

Rowley, A.J. & Kovacs-Houlihan, M. (2014) Bridging the gap between ASL and  
interpreter education programs. In D. Hunt & S. Hafer (Eds.) *2014 CIT Conference  
Proceedings. Our roots: The essence of our future* (pp. 218- 227). Portland: OR.

Rowley, A.J. & Eckert, R. C. (2014) Commentary: Audism: A Theory and  
Practice of Audiocentric Privilege. *Deaf Studies Digital Journal*, 4.

Eckert, R.C., Rowley, A. J., (2013). Audism: A Theory and Practice of  
Audiocentric Privilege. *Humanity and Society*. 37(2) 101-130.

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## Translations

### National Catholic Office for the Deaf- Religious Sign Project

#### Prayers translated for the Catholic Mass:

- Our Father (Pater Noster)
- Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)
- Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus)
- Lord, I'm not worthy (Domine non sum dignus)
- Nicene Creed (Credo)
- Gloria
- Confiteor
- Suscipiat
- Kyrie
- Basic Dialogue
- Preface Dialogue
- Dismissal Rite
- Opening to Scripture Readings
- Memorial Acclamations

## Presentations at workshops, seminars and institutes

October 2014 **Workshop Presenter** "Bridging the Gap Between ASL and Interpreter Education Programs" Conference of Interpreter Trainers, Portland, Oregon.

March 2014 **Workshop Presenter** "Looking at 30 Years of Rowley: Implications for the Future" Daviess County Public Schools, Owensboro, Kentucky.

March 2014 **Workshop Presenter** "Deaf Education: A Ton of Choices" Daviess County Public Schools, Owensboro, Kentucky.

- July 2013 **Workshop Presenter** “Prospecting the Meaning of ASL Education”  
ASLTA 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial National Professional Development Conference.  
Charlotte, North Carolina.
- January 2013 **Workshop Presenter** “Religious Sign Language Project  
Presentation” National Catholic Office for the Deaf Conference. Phoenix,  
Arizona.
- July 2011 **Keynote Presenter** “Rowley and growing up as a Poster Child”  
Midwest Conference on Deaf Education. Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
- June 2011 **Workshop Presenter** “Audism: A Theory and Practice of  
Audiocentric Privilege”. American Sign Language Teachers Association  
Conference. Seattle, Washington.
- June 2011 **Keynote Presenter** A Deaf Child Growing Up. Wyoming Department  
of Early Intervention Conference. Cheyenne, Wyoming.
- October 2010 **Ralph E. Julnes Memorial Keynote Presenter** “Three Decades of  
the Rowley Case: A Personal Perspective”. 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Pacific Northwest  
Institute on Special Education and the Law. Yakima, Washington
- September 2009 **Workshop Presenter** “Translating Catholic Readings and  
Prayers into American Sign Language”. Minicongress 2009- Diocese of  
Orange. Orange, California.
- March 2009 **Keynote Presenter** “Looking Up at the Big Picture: What Children  
Can Tell Us”. 2009 Special Education Law and Mediation National  
Training Conference, Los Angeles, California.
- November 2008 **Keynote Presenter** “A Deaf Child’s Personal Perspective”.  
Nebraska/Kansas Regional Special Education Law Conference, Omaha,  
Nebraska.
- October 2008 **Workshop Presenter** “Addressing the Standards: Forming  
Meaningful Relationships between Interpreters, Interpreting Students and  
Deaf People”. Conference of Interpreter Trainers, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- September 2008 **Keynote Presenter** “Looking Back at a Historical Event: Setting  
an Agenda for the Future”. 2008 Alaska State Special Education  
Directors’ Conference, Anchorage, Alaska.
- August 2008 **Keynote Presenter** “Using What We Know From Historical Events  
to Pave the Way for the Future”. Utah Institute on Special Education Law  
and Practice, Ogden, Utah.
- June 2008 **Keynote Presenter** “Free and Appropriate Public Education under  
IDEA- Policy and Legal Issues”. 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Utah Education Law &  
Policy Institute, Provo, Utah.
- June 2008 **Keynote Presenter** “A Journey Through Different Educational  
Environments”. 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Intermountain Special Study Institute on  
Deafness, Pocatello, Idaho.
- April 2008 **Plenary Presenter** “25 Years Later: Board of Education vs. Rowley:  
A Look at the Past and Looking Towards the Future”. PEPNet 2008,  
Columbus, Ohio.
- March 2008 **Workshop Presenter** “A Journey Through Different Educational  
Environments”. The 2008 Cal-Ed Conference, San Ramon, California.

- January 2008 **Post-Conference Presenter** “The Lord’s Prayer As You’ve Never Seen It Before”. Co-presented with National Catholic Office for the Deaf Pastoral Week Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- November 2007 **Keynote Presenter** “Amy June Rowley”, Education Law Association, San Diego, California.
- October 2007 **Keynote Presenter** “Making Education Work for Every Child” National Association of State Directors of Special Education Phoenix, Arizona.
- June 2007 **Workshop Presenter** “Practical Approaches to Preventing problem Behaviors: Communication and Sensory Integration Strategies” Waukesha, Wisconsin.
- January 2006 **Workshop Presenter** “Working with the Deaf Mentor Rubrics” for Deaf Mentor Project, Brookfield, Wisconsin.
- January 2005 **Workshop Presenter** “Linguistics of ASL for Deaf Mentors” and “ASL Development in Young Deaf Children” for Deaf Mentor Project, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin.
- February 2005 **Workshop Series** Co-presented with Gina Kuemmel “ASL and the Scripture Series” Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- March 2005 **Workshop Presenter** “ASL Development and Deaf Mentor Rubrics” for Deaf Mentor Project, Jefferson, Wisconsin.
- May 2005 **Workshop Presenter** “Linguistics of American Sign Language and how to apply to ASL Teaching”, Minnesota ASLTA, St. Paul, Minnesota.
- November 2005 **Conference Presenter** “Professional Development Activities for Our State Chapter: Our Annual ASL Weekend Event” American Sign Language Teachers Association, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- August 2004 **Workshop Presenter** “ASL Countdown” for Illinois RID Chicago, Illinois.
- August 2004 **Workshop Presenter** “ASL Countdown” for Illinois RID Jacksonville, Illinois.
- April 2004 **Workshop Series** Part 4 Co-presented with Gina Kuemmel “Liturgy and ASL in Mass” Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- February 2004 **Workshop Series** Part 3 Co-presented with Gina Kuemmel “Liturgy and ASL in Mass” Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- November 2003 **Workshop Series** Part 2 Co-presented with Gina Kuemmel “Liturgy and ASL in Mass” Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- October 2003 **Workshop Presenter** “Semantics of ASL”. Wisconsin ASLTA. Madison, Wisconsin.
- September 2003 **Workgroup Facilitator** “Domestic Violence and Abuse” Wisconsin Center for Independent Living Grant. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- August 2003 **Workshop Presenter** “ASL Classifiers: How to Incorporate into Everyday Interpreting” Professional Interpreting Enterprise Workshop. Greenfield, Wisconsin.
- May 2003 **Workshop Series** Part 1 Co-presented with Gina Kuemmel “Liturgy and ASL in Mass” Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

- April 2003 **Conference Presenter** “The Right Stuff: How to Deal With Common and Uncommon Problems of New ASL Students”. National American Sign Language Teachers Association Conference. Indianapolis, Indiana.
- March 2003 **Workshop Presenter** “What Works and Doesn’t Work in Interpreting Situations from a Deaf Perspective” Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Mid-Year Conference. Minnetonka, Minnesota.
- October 2002 **Conference Presenter** “The Difference Between Teaching Credit and Non-Credit ASL Courses”. Wisconsin Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Conference. Fontana, Wisconsin.
- July 2002 **Conference Presenter** “Teaching ASL at a Distance”. National Association of the Deaf Conference/American Sign Language Teachers Conference. Washington, District of Columbia.
- May 2002 **Conference Presenter** “American Sign Language Linguistics”. ASL Weekend. Rosholt, Wisconsin.
- April 2002 **Panelist**. “Deaf Students in Charter Education Systems” Wisconsin Charter Schools Association. Appleton, Wisconsin.
- November 2001 **Conference Presenter** “New Ideas and Approaches in American Sign Language Teaching”. Wisconsin Association of Foreign Language Teachers Conference. Appleton, Wisconsin.
- October 2001 **Guest Presenter** “Involving the Deaf Community in Distance Teaching and Learning”. Governor’s Wisconsin Education and Technology Conference. Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- October 2001 **Keynote Presenter** “A Case About Amy”. Iowa Special Education Law Conference. Ames, Iowa.
- September 2001 **Deaf Awareness Week Presenter** “Unique Lives” - UW-Milwaukee. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- July 2001 **Keynote Presenter** “Children in Special Education Litigation”. 8th Annual Special Education Institute. Wausau, Wisconsin.
- May 2001 **Conference Presenter** “Classifiers- A Vital Component of American Sign Language”. ASL Weekend. Rosholt, Wisconsin.
- May 2001 **Conference Presenter** “Gestures”. ASL Weekend. Rosholt, WI.
- January 2001 **Panelist**. Sound and Fury Preview. Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Brookfield, Wisconsin.
- October 2000 **Conference Presenter** “American Sign Language Linguistics” Wisconsin Network– Promoting Quality Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Fall Conference. Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.
- September 2000 **Guest Homilist** “An Introduction to Deaf Culture” Deaf Awareness Week, Inc. St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. Mountain Lakes, New Jersey.
- August 2000 **Keynote Presenter**. “Everything You Wanted to Know About Rowley v. Hendrick Hudson School District and More...” Michigan Association of Administrators in Special Education. Thompsonville, Michigan.
- October 1999 **Keynote Presenter** “My Personal Experience as a Child in Special Education Litigation” Fall Conference of Special Education Directors. Columbia, South Carolina.

- April 1999 **Keynote Presenter** “An Educational Journey” 20<sup>th</sup> National Institute of Legal Issues on Educating Individuals with Disabilities. San Francisco, California.
- June 1998 **Keynote Presenter** “Children in Special Education Litigation” The Institute on Legal and Educational Issues. Madison, WI.
- May 1998 **Panelist**. “Parent Forum: A Parent’s Perspective on Quality Education” Tampa, Florida.
- September 1996 **Workshop Presenter** “What is Deaf Culture and How to Work With It?” Wisconsin Association on Alcohol, Drug and Disability Convention. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

#### Awards, Honors and Certificates

- 2010 Ralph E. Julnes Memorial Distinguished Lecturer Award, Pacific Northwest Institute on Special Education and the Law
- 2005 IADES 2005 Fellowship Award, International Alumnae of Delta Epsilon Sorority for Doctoral Research
- 2002 Professional Level Certification American Sign Language Teacher’s Association (attaining highest level in the field on a national standard).
- 1999 Appreciation of Service Award, Wisconsin Association of the Deaf
- 1997 Certificate Training on Deaf-Blindness, Northern Illinois University
- 1994 Biomaterials Fellowship, National Science Foundation/Engineering Research Center for Emerging Cardiovascular Technologies –

#### Affiliations/Memberships/Volunteers

- **Member-** College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences Assessment Team 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 California State University East Bay.
- **Member-** College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences Curriculum Committee Fall 2014
- **Editorial Board** – International Journal of Interpreter Education
- **Advisor-** Student Advocates for Deaf Awareness- California State University East Bay
- **Member-** Committee on Student Success and Achievement, California State University East Bay
- **Member-** Writing Skills Committee, California State University East Bay
- **Member-** Student Evaluation of Teaching Committee, California State University East Bay
- **Member-** Evaluation Revision Committee, American Sign Language Teachers Association
- **Professional Certified Member/Evaluator** - American Sign Language Teachers Association.