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8 | School Language and Shifts in Irish Deaf Identity

Barbara LeMaster

What it means to be Deaf in the Republic of Ireland has been changing over the years (LeMaster 1990; Matthews 1996; Burns 1998). Similarly, what the term *Irish Sign Language* (ISL) refers to has also been changing (LeMaster 2002b). The sociolinguistic expression of Deafness in Ireland is completely embedded in a particularly Irish way of life. To understand both pathological "deaf" and sociocultural "Deaf" identities (or simultaneous "d/Deaf" identities) of people living in Dublin, one needs to consider the historical role of residential school language policies and various d/Deaf social movements within Ireland over time.[1]

THEORY, METHODS, AND THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

As an American conducting research in Ireland, I began my work through the lens of American understandings of d/Deaf group formation. What I found was a rhetoric of Deafness that was expressed in ways familiar to the U.S. situation yet was conveyed through unfamiliar linguistic means. For a number of years, the United States has been fond of describing a Deaf community that uses sign varieties in hegemonic, dichotomous, diglossic (Ferguson 1959) ways, a community in which English varieties of signing are used with outsiders and American Sign Language (ASL) is used among in-group members (Stokoe 1969–1970; Markowicz and Woodward 1978; Padden 1980). Many early researchers linked the primacy of language use to deaf/Deaf group formation and cohesion in the United States (Stokoe 1960; Jacobs 1972; Woodward 1972; Padden and Markowicz 1975; Padden 1980; LeMaster 1983; Padden and Humphries 1988).

This body of research uncovered how ASL often serves as a signal of Deaf culture membership, exclusion of outsiders, or both. Those who could not use ASL would have trouble claiming a Deaf identity and being accepted as a member by other Deaf culture members. Although the American situation has often been presented in dichotomous ways as though the concept "d/Deaf versus hearing" people represents real and clearly bounded groups, the situation is actually much more complex as more recent scholarship suggests (Aramburo 1989; Lucas 1989;

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Lucas and Valli 1992; De Garcia 1995; Ramsey 1997; Metzger 2000; Lucas, Bayley, and Valli 2001; see also Woodward 1976; Shroyer and Shroyer 1984). The appropriate use of ASL plays a vital role in the expression of American Deaf identity nonetheless. Considering the great complexity among American Deaf people's signing, one realizes that the notion of a "Deaf community" is in many ways an imagined reality (Anderson 1983) as Nakamura points out in chapter 11 of this volume, and this imagined reality is always culturally situated.[2]

When I began my research in Dublin in the 1980s, deaf people talked about themselves in terms similar to those used within the U.S. Deaf communities. Although the term *Deaf culture* was not as prevalent in community rhetoric during the early days of my research, the dichotomous view that distinguished "real Deaf" people (alluding to a cultural attribute) from people who are "just deaf" (in the pathological sense) still influenced how Deaf people talked about one another. This idea of legitimate Deaf status was tied to perceptions of skill in ISL (LeMaster 1998).

However, although the rhetoric used in Ireland seemed to mirror the dichotomous American view that ASL (or in this case, ISL) was linked to Deaf identity and that the use of signed versions of English was linked with outsiders, the language practices of the Irish did not seem to match their rhetoric in two ways. First, English-based signing with mouthing was often used during discussions about political Deafness (whether the addressees were deaf or hearing). Second, generation and gender were prominent factors in language and identity negotiations among the Irish more so than distinctions between Deaf and hearing (LeMaster 1990; McDonnell and Saunders 1993; Matthews 1996; Burns 1998; Ó Baoill and Matthews 2000; LeMaster 2002b).

The community's more senior members signed without lip movements and would be more likely to use ISL with hearing people. In contrast, during the 1980s, the younger members of the community often spoke or, at least, used English lip movements with their signing and were more likely to use English-influenced signing with hearing people. Yet, the younger Irish Deaf people were the ones who talked about how they were more culturally Deaf and used more ISL than the older people. Each group would say that the other group did not use ISL or did not use "good" ISL. Yet, clearly, both groups used ISL according to the language conventions of their generation.

From my American perspective, this dichotomy—older folks not being Deaf and younger folks being more Deaf (according to younger folks, mostly)—did not parallel American descriptions of being Deaf (Padden and Markowicz 1975; Stokoe 1969–1970; Woodward 1973a, 1973b). Unlike the American situation, the speaking and more English-influenced signers were the younger and more politically Deaf members of the community whereas the nonspeaking, signing members of the community were the more politically conservative, more senior members and were more accepting of hearing people into the group. Clearly, linguistic expressions of identity and even ideas about identity are embedded in local culture.

The research for this chapter was conducted between 1984 and 1988 in Dublin and then again in the summer of 2000. When in Dublin, I lived with Anne and Laurence Coogan, two leaders in the Dublin Deaf community. My research methods included extensive ethnographic observation, structured and unstructured

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interviews, examination of archival written and film data, and collection of elic-ited and naturally occurring linguistic data. In addition to living with people who used sign language on a daily basis, I worked with four key consultants (two women and two men) and various institutions such as the schools for the deaf, the Dublin Deaf Centre, the National Association of Deaf People (NADP), the Irish Deaf Society (IDS), the St. Joseph's House for Adult Deaf and Deaf-Blind facility, the Irish Sign Language Teachers' Association, Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITE), and others.[3] I spent a lot of time visiting d/Deaf people in their homes. I also spent time with parents of deaf children and the deaf children themselves. For more information about specific methods used in the most extensive phases of field research, see LeMaster (1990).

Many changes had taken place within the Irish Deaf community between 1988 and the summer of 2000. Although no certified professional interpreters served the community in 1988 and no interpreter agency had been established in Ireland at that time, by the year 2000, several certified interpreters were working through interpreting agencies. Clearly, interpreting has become a valued profes-sion in Ireland. Similarly, through the training of sign language teachers, the teaching of ISL has become more professionalized and more available. The Sign Language Teachers' Association (whose members taught classes at the club) branched out to teach sign language in many places throughout Ireland, and the IDS began teaching sign language classes at Trinity College and elsewhere.

In addition, much more information was available by 2000 for and about the Irish Deaf community. Beginning in the fall of 1988, a television program about Irish Deaf people was broadcast in sign language with male and female hosts (who primarily used the male form of signing).[4] Today, signers regularly present news segments on television. The NADP and the Sign Language Association of Ireland (SLAI) sponsored a dictionary project conceived of and directed by Deaf people (*Sign On* 1992). The Linguistics Institute of Ireland, which has conducted studies of spoken and written language since the 1960s, began linguistic projects on ISL directed by Patrick Matthews, a Deaf man. Through this project, two books have been published on the community and the language (Matthews 1996; Ó Baoill and Matthews 2000). Irish people such as Edward Crean (1997), the father of a Deaf son, are also writing about their own experiences. The dictionary of Irish Sign Language, first printed in 1979, was revised and reprinted in 1996 (Foran 1996). The IDS has produced several videotapes on ISL and is amassing an im-pressive library of video and print publications about their community and lan-guage. Trinity College Dublin has just opened a Deaf Centre, which hired its own director and Deaf teaching staff. Deafness is becoming a viable commodity in Ireland, and thus, more Deaf people have been able to participate in the public construction of their own identity and language.[5]

THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICIES

Ireland has a long and rich signing tradition. The main schools for the deaf were signing schools until the 1940s, long after the Milan Conference of 1880 had con-vinced other European countries to adopt oralism. Educational language policies have had profound effects on current Irish Deaf identities. Particularly important is what has happened since the introduction of oralism in 1946. My contention is

that the differences in notions of identity between older and younger community members in Ireland stem from school language policies that required using either sign or oralism. When carried out, these language policies to use sign and, later, oralism each sent strong messages about deafness being either a relatively normal or abnormal condition.

Scholars of education have argued that denying children's culture and language can lead to oppositional stances within the majority language and culture (Ogbu 1987; Ogbu and Simons 1998). They have also argued that treating minority children's primary culture and language as valid and introducing them to other cultures and languages in an additive way leads to higher integration of these children into the majority culture and greater facility with the majority language (Cummins 1986).

Applying these ideas to the Irish example, then, members of the younger, oral generation would be more likely to become militant advocates of a strong Deaf community and Deaf identity and more likely to adopt an oppositional stance toward the hearing majority. This is what I assert happened as a result of the change to exclusive oralism in lieu of sign for most students at the schools described below. Exclusive oralism denies the need of the deaf body for easily accessible visual communication and underscores deficiencies rather than maximizes strengths of deaf children. Signing, in contrast, enables and empowers deaf children to communicate freely because it is the most natural form of communication for their deaf bodies. If deafness is treated as one of the many normal societal variants for the human condition, then deaf people will excel in language and in their participation within a predominantly hearing society.

I argue that imposed, exclusive oral communication for deaf children sends a message to the children and to others in the society that deafness is an abnormal variant of the human condition that requires accommodation to others (see also McDonnell and Saunders 1993). As a result of this daily denial of their deafness through the use of imposed, exclusive oralism and through their continuous struggle with one of the most fundamental aspects of their daily life—communication—deaf people as a group will more likely develop an oppositional relationship with nondeaf others and with deaf others who function well in the hearing world as Ogbu (1987) and Ogbu and Simons (1998) suggest happens for other language minority groups. Oralism per se does not lead to an oppositional stance; instead, the imposition of oralism rather than the choice of the individual to use oralism is what leads to opposition.

SIGNING AT THE CABRA SCHOOLS

In 1846, an all-girls' school called St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls was established in the Cabra section of Dublin. Approximately ten years later in 1857, the boys' school, St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys, was opened. Because the schools are located in the Cabra section of Dublin, they are referred to colloquially as the "Cabra schools." The focal purpose of the Cabra schools was to teach Catholic deaf children to be sufficiently literate in the English language so they could receive the sacraments and thereby "be saved" (O'Dowd 1955). Without these two new Catholic schools, the schools available to deaf children in Ireland were gener-

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What sets the Cabra schools apart from most other deaf residential schools throughout history is the way in which English literacy was taught. It was taught through the use of sign language in a school community where both hearing and deaf people signed. No interactions were in spoken language (LeMaster 1990; Griffey 1994; Crean 1997).

The language policies at the Cabra residential schools have had a huge impact on Irish ideologies of deafness in the Republic of Ireland. For the first 100 years, sign language was used exclusively at the schools, and they were world-renowned for their English literacy success.

Both of the Cabra schools used sign language as the primary means for face-to-face communication inside and outside of the classroom from the mid-1800s until the middle of the 20th century (LeMaster 1990; LeMaster and Dwyer 1991; LeMaster 1997; see figure 8.1). The language policy to use sign language on campus is not unique to these two schools, but how the policy was carried out is. Hearing people used sign language on the campuses not only with deaf people but also with one another. At other residential deaf schools, when sign language is used, hearing teachers generally sign when they believe a deaf person is "listening," but will otherwise speak to another hearing person without sign. At the Cabra schools, hearing teachers did not speak to one another—ever (Sister Nicholas Griffey, taped personal communication, 1986).[6] The teachers referred to them-

Saint Mary's School for Deaf Girls during the Period 1846–1946	Saint Joseph's School for Deaf Boys during the Period 1855–1957	General Irish Society
• Principal means of communication: Signed language derived from French pedagogical signs; indigenous signs	• Principal means of communication: Signed Language derived from French pedagogical signs; indigenous signs	• Deafness relatively accepted by society; deaf people enjoy "legitimate" (if somewhat circumscribed) positions in Dublin society
• Signed language used by students, teachers, visitors	• Signed language used by students, teachers, visitors	• Burden on hearing people to bridge communication gaps
• Linguistic community relatively isolated from boy's school	• Linguistic community relatively isolated from girl's school	

FIGURE 8.1. The influence of the educational language policy in Dublin's Cabra Schools for the Deaf to use ISL in classrooms for all face-to-face communication

selves as living in a "silent" community where no one used spoken language. The people I interviewed in the 1980s did not know why these communities operated as "silent" communities, just that they did.

At these schools, hearing residents not only signed to one another but also served as interpreters for any hearing, nonsigning visitor. Therefore, the deaf people living at these schools had access to everything that was said both inside and outside of the classroom—as long as they could see the communication. The importance of this widespread use of sign language to the development of d/ Deaf identity is that it created a relatively normal communicative environment for deaf people. The message at these residential schools was clear: deaf people are normal people who use a visual-gestural language, and hearing people must accommodate their communicative needs.

During the time that sign language was used exclusively at the Cabra schools, the schools were owned by the Catholic Church. The residential girls' school was located at the sequestered Dominican Sisters' convent. Within walking distance was the residential boys' school, which was administered by the Christian Brothers who also lived on site. Although the majority of the teachers at that time were from these clerical orders and were hearing, a few of the exceptional deaf students eventually became teachers at the schools and, generally, continued to live on campus.

Another language policy that had a profound effect on the Deaf community was the policy to ensure that every deaf student became proficient in English literacy. Although children were accepted to the schools regardless of their family's religious orientation, the primary purpose of English literacy was to ensure that deaf children would be able to receive the Catholic sacraments. This religious focus had a collateral benefit. The focus to teach competent literacy skills led educators to use sign language as the medium of instruction. Educators also wrote their own textbooks to include mention of deaf people as normal members of Irish society (LeMaster 1990, 78). As a result of these educators' various pedagogical literacy efforts, Irish deaf children acquired extraordinary English skills. In fact, the schools became known for their amazing success with English literacy education.[7]

The sign and English language policies at the schools had at least two effects on deaf identity. The first involves a societal view of deafness as a relatively normal condition, which reinforced this understanding among deaf people themselves. This did not mean that deaf people were not considered to be deaf. Instead, deaf people were viewed as being able to participate in society. Yes, they were still considered to be disabled, but they were people who fit into the fabric of society as deaf people. Most important, deaf people were not required to mask their deafness. Instead, hearing people who did not know sign language were expected to use written English with deaf people or to use an interpreter when on school grounds or when interpreters were otherwise available. (At the time sign language was used at the schools, there were few, if any, interpreters outside of the Cabra schools and some churches.) I do not mean to imply that deaf people did not feel deaf in a predominantly hearing society; they did. Instead, I am arguing that the expectation of the greater society for deaf people to show their deafness in their communication with others—to either sign or write—affects

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After recent conversations with Deaf Irish people, I understand that deafness was perhaps not as normalized as I had described in my earlier writings. Rather than willingly accommodate deaf people's communicative needs, hearing people apparently engaged in writing with deaf people somewhat reluctantly—only when they felt it was necessary. Hearing people sometimes used more convenient means available to them to communicate with deaf people, such as writing in the air. Also, not all hearing employers were willing to take the time to write to employees or fully explain themselves through the written word, which caused resentment on both sides. Nonetheless, what is unique to Ireland is the initial socialization experience at the residential schools where deafness was treated relatively normally in terms of the kinds of communication channels expected to be used within the school by both deaf and hearing people. This accommodation in the schools was significant.

However, this school policy did not always promote harmony among deaf students. Instead, the school policy to use sign language had a probably unexpected and divisive effect. The emergence of gender signs associated with the two schools served to divide deaf people from one another by gender. In short, because the two schools functioned as though they were separate islands, two very different sign vocabularies emerged at the gender-segregated schools. These differences have been detailed elsewhere (see LeMaster and Foran 1987; LeMaster 1990; LeMaster and Dwyer 1991; LeMaster 1997, 2000; see also Crean 1997, 41; Burns 1998; Ó Baoill and Matthews 2000). Although the solution for communicating between the sexes has been that women adopt the male signs instead of their own, research has also shown that this adoption is not complete. The female forms have not been entirely abandoned. So how has the existence of school-generated gender signs affected d/Deaf identity in this Irish community? It produced an age-graded effect. Those who attended residential school when sign language was used (or on the heels of it) know and, in most cases, use these gendered variations. For older Irish d/Deaf people, then, gender became something that needed to be negotiated through language use. Younger signers face a different set of challenges.

CHANGE FROM SIGN LANGUAGE TO ORAL EDUCATION

The next significant effect of the Cabra educational language policies came in the change from exclusive use of sign language to exclusive use of oralism (lip- or speechreading and speaking) in the mid-20th century (see figure 8.2). Former Deaf Cabra students were in favor of adding oralism to their curriculum, according to Sister Nicholas Griffey during a taped interview in 1986. Sister Nicholas explained that Deaf workers would go to England when no work was available in Ireland, which was, and still is, typical for anyone, hearing or deaf. Once in England, they were held to the British societal expectations of deaf people to accommodate to hearing norms through the use of speechreading and speaking. Because British employers expected British Deaf people to be able to speak and speechread, they were reportedly unwilling to write notes between themselves and their Irish Deaf employees. Instead, British Deaf people were used as interpreters. Imagine that

Saint Mary's School for Deaf Girls during the Period 1946–Present	Saint Joseph's School for Deaf Boys during the Period 1957–Present	General Irish Society
• Principal means of communication: Oralism (method of speaking and speech-reading)	• Principal means of communication: Oralism (method of speaking and speech-reading)	• Societal stigma against the use of sign language
• Oral methods used by students, teachers, visitors (except in manual section of school)	• Oral methods used by students, teachers, visitors (except in manual section of school)	• Burden on deaf people to bridge communication gaps
• Children segregated by hearing abilities and oral abilities	• Children segregated by hearing abilities and oral abilities	
• Girls' school now has social events with boys' school	• Boys' school now has social events with girls' school	

FIGURE 8.2. **The influence of educational language policy in Dublin's Cabra Schools for the Deaf on the use of oralism in classrooms for all face-to-face communication**

situation: British Deaf people had to speechread the employer, then sign to the Irish Deaf person (after deciding whether to use British or Irish Sign Language), then the Irish Deaf person would sign back to the British Deaf person who would speak on behalf of the Irish Deaf person. Sister Nicholas also reported that Irish people felt disadvantaged in this kind of situation. Although Irish Deaf people felt they had an advantage in terms of their high literacy skills, they disliked having to use British Deaf people as interpreters. During a taped interview Sister Nicholas explained that because of this perceived disadvantage, Deaf Irish adults asked the schools to add oralism to the curriculum. They did not ask, however, to have sign language removed.

In the same interview, Sister Nicholas said that, because Deaf people requested oralism be added to the curriculum, she went to Holland to learn how to do that (but see Griffey 1994). In Holland, she learned to exclude sign language when using oralism with deaf people. She also explained that the reason signs and oralism could not be used simultaneously was because deaf people would look at the signs and not at the lips. For this reason, sign language was strictly excluded from use at the girls' school when oralism was introduced in 1946. Be-

cause the boys' school was run by a different order, the Christian Brothers, it did not institute the oral language policy until 1957, at about the time that the Department of Education took over financial responsibility for both schools.

Although not verified by any official person, my perception was that the boys' school was not as strictly oral as the girls' school during my first two visits in 1984–1985 and 1986 but was certainly exclusively oral during my visit in 1988. Yet by the year 2000, sign was being used again in a limited way among oral children, and now in 2002, ISL-using Deaf teachers are working at a newly opened preschool on the campus.

During my first visit in 1984–1985, the boys' school allowed Deaf adults to come onto campus where I videotaped their production of gendered signs. In 1986, I witnessed several teachers signing to boys in front of the school when their attempts to speak to them failed. However, by 1988, I saw no evidence of sign used at the school with the exception of the multiply handicapped unit at the school, and the Christian Brothers I had known who could sign had been transferred out of the school.

Until very recently, only two general exceptions to the "no sign" policy had been allowed officially at the two schools. Multiply disabled children and nonoral deaf children had been allowed to sign. The nonoral deaf children had been allowed to sign at school only if they were transferred to the multiply handicapped section with parental permission. Yet deaf adults and some parents of deaf children told me that parental permission to transfer from the oral part of the school to the manual part had not often been granted. For these parents of deaf children, the manual part of the school took on a stigma of "oral failure" for their child and an implication to the outside world that their child had multiple disabilities. As with most parents who do not have sufficient evidence to the contrary, these parents reported to me that they felt they were making the best decision for their deaf children by leaving them in an oral program. Oralism, the parents said, would better prepare their child for mainstream life among hearing people after graduation.

To better contextualize both of the schools during the change from sign language to oralism, it is essential to point out other changes that were occurring simultaneously.

1. The Department of Education took over financial administration of the schools, which led to most non-university-certified deaf teachers leaving the school or being transferred to work in the multiply handicapped manual section of the school.
2. Hearing teachers who could sign were transferred out of the schools, and new, nonsigning hearing teachers were brought in.
3. Deaf, signing employees were asked not to sign in front of the oral deaf children.
4. Children were increasingly segregated by hearing abilities. More and more, students with residual hearing, students with profound loss, and manual students were not allowed to have social times together.
5. In at least one case, oral and manual siblings were instructed to go through interpreters at home rather than talk directly to each other.
6. In another case, deaf oral children were instructed to use their oral mother as

an interpreter to talk to their manual father and to a sibling who was not in an oral school program.

7. School curriculum was expanded to include college preparatory courses while English literacy skills greatly declined.

8. Few oral deaf children had good access to standard versions of sign language, so many new forms of sign emerged from both schools.

9. Many other deaf schools emerged in different locations within the Republic, some using the "total communication" approach. Therefore, the two Cabra schools, while still the largest in the Republic, no longer produced long-reaching effects as they had done before.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, the current language situation at the schools is undergoing further changes. At the girls' school, the very first deaf woman has been promoted to an administrative position. This person is Maura Buckley, who is bilingual in ASL and ISL and equally competent in spoken and written English. The boys' school is using more signing among some deaf students, although those signs do not always match the vocabulary of native ISL users (according to stories told to me by these students). Finally, as mentioned above, a preschool that will use ISL has been established on the grounds of the boys' school.

EFFECTS OF ORAL EDUCATION ON d/DEAF IDENTITY

So what effect did the change of school policy from exclusive sign to exclusive oralism have on a d/Deaf identity? First and most critically, by requiring deaf children to speechread and speak as their only options for face-to-face communication and by not allowing them to sign in school, children were asked to mask their deafness. Although many deaf people may want to have the option of being able to lipread and speak when they choose to do so, requiring children to rely on oral strategies as their only method of face-to-face communication sends them a message that being deaf is not okay. In this sense, speaking and speechreading is not an additive component to their education. It is not one of the many ways that they may choose to communicate. Instead, oralism in these situations is instituted to replace sign language. In this kind of situation where the natural language of children is forbidden, a stigma develops (as Cummins 1986 argues for other similar language-minority situations).

Many of these deaf children became aware of how much hearing they had, worried about whether or not they could hear on the phone, and became concerned about the intelligibility of their speech. This kind of language socialization experience occurred for both girls and boys. For most of the students at these schools, their acquisition of sign language occurred covertly through informal networks. As happens in so many oral educational situations, children invented signs when they did not have access to currently existing signs. After graduation, they found a wider variety of signs in use among their age group, and many of their signs differed from the signs used by the older, sign-only generation (see LeMaster 1990). This younger cohort is no longer concerned with gender differences but, instead, is concerned with oppositional and hegemonic deaf-versus-hearing issues.

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EXPRESSION AND POLITICIZATION OF D/DEAF IDENTITIES IN COMMUNITY GROUPS

The adult Deaf community has members from both the sign and oral periods in Irish Deaf education. Although several organizations of and for deaf people have been established in the area during the 1980s and today, from my perspective, three organizations have been central in the social and political lives of the adults with whom I worked (see LeMaster 1990). They are the Dublin Deaf Centre (their Deaf club) where the Dublin Deaf Association (DDA) resides, the NADP, and the IDS.

THE DEAF CLUB AND THE DUBLIN DEAF ASSOCIATION

At the time of my most intensive field research during the 1980s, the Dublin Deaf Centre was the central public place where deaf people gathered (see Crean 1997, 75). The DDA is the largest and oldest deaf association in Ireland (see http://www.deafbase.com). It comprises self-managed sports as well as social and cultural clubs that are both nonpolitical and nondenominational. When the club was in Rathmines in the center of Dublin, it offered a wide range of activities, including sign language classes. Also located at the club were the Community Information Centre for the Deaf (National Social Services Board), Irish Deaf Sports Association (a national and international group), and offices for the NADP social worker, club leaders, and the Catholic Institute for the Deaf (CID). I cannot underscore enough the importance of this club. It was well used by d/Deaf people of all ages and, perhaps equally important, by all Deaf political affiliations. In other words, Deaf people who had competing agendas for how Irish deafness should (or should not) become politicized within Dublin all used the same Deaf club.

My attending the social nights at the club became important in my research. As is typical for Deaf people around the world (see Hall 1991 for a U.S. example), d/Deaf people of all ages convened at the centralized deaf club in Dublin. They interacted with one another even though some of them were monodialectal users of oralism, some spoke or mouthed and speechread while using sign language, and others signed without lip movement. When I was there in the 1980s, most of the leaders were male and signed without lip movement. The younger leaders generally grew up oral, learning sign covertly or acquiring sign as adults. The signs used by the younger and older generations were not always the same, so they struggled to understand one another. Yet, they all made the effort to try to understand one another's signing.

However, during the 1980s, the club moved from Rathmines to a beautiful facility north of city's center. It is fair to say that fewer people attend the club now than during the 1980s, preferring to meet elsewhere in age-group cohorts, generally at pubs throughout the city. Yet, the club still provides a place for people to meet, especially in large groups. Yearly meetings of organizations are held in the club's large auditorium, as are special lectures and other activities requiring space for large groups. Scheduled activities such as the seniors' luncheons on Tuesdays continue at the club. Community members conducting research on sign language and related issues also use space at the club. So although the club is

perhaps not attracting as large a crowd on social nights as it once did, it is still an important part of the community.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEAF PEOPLE

Another important organization was and is the NADP. In the 1980s, it housed the only social worker for deaf people in the Republic of Ireland. Until 1986, this social worker was the only person in the office who knew how to sign. The structure of the NADP included deaf and hearing adults on the board of directors, who represented prominent society members and less well recognized people.

The structure of the NADP and its history as the state-sanctioned organization serving Irish deaf needs (until the late 1990s) gave it an advantage over any other deaf organization in Ireland, particularly the newly formed IDS, which was newly established at the time I was there in the 1980s. Given that the NADP Board had prominent society members, the organization had been favored in the past by the Irish government with respect to governmental funding for projects related to deafness. In 1986, the chairman of the Irish NADP was the Honorable Niall McCarthy, a judge who served on an Irish court equivalent to the U.S. Supreme Court.[8] McCarthy was instrumental in hiring staff members who could sign such as the chief executive, Niall Keane. When I returned in 1988, the new on-site staff at NADP could sign. Also during the 1980s, the new projects funded by the NADP were largely those designed, executed, and performed by Deaf people themselves.

According to the NADP Web site (http://www.iol.ie/~nad/nad-homepage .html), which provides a statement of purpose and a range of other information, their mission is to

- Promote the right of every deaf person to enjoy an equality of opportunity in all aspects of life, and to develop full independence and citizenship.

- Promote the right of parents of deaf children to enjoy access to the full range of appropriate supports and services, and to take an active role in their child's education and development.

- And plan to fulfill this mission
  - through advocacy for equal opportunities.
  - through development of direct services.
  - through encouraging the development of services by others.

- Deaf people are full members of society.

- They have equal rights, should be afforded equal respect and must be able to exercise equal opportunities.

- Deaf people have the right to equality of access to information and full participation in society.

- In providing services, full account must be taken of deaf people and other consumers, their experiences, their values, their rights and their opinions.

The NADP continues to serve as an umbrella service organization for deaf people and their families, offering a wide variety of services to help deaf people manage their lives.

The Irish Deaf Society

The IDS began as the Deaf Action Group in 1981, the International Year of the Disabled Person. According to my fieldwork interviews, Stan Foran and Anne Coogan were among the original founders of the Deaf Action Group, which was originally formed to bring to the Irish people's attention the needs and strengths of d/Deaf people. Feeling that they had met their original goals, Foran and Coogan had stopped their association with the organization by the time I had arrived in 1984. New leadership took over the Deaf Action Group and resurrected it as the IDS in 1983.

In the 1980s, the IDS clearly vied for official recognition within Ireland. With new leadership, the IDS competed with the NADP for recognition by the government and others as the primary representative group of Irish Deaf people, and sought to gain greater prominence within Ireland. The state seemed to be greatly reluctant to replace the NADP, a long-standing organization that had the support of established d/Deaf leaders. In contrast to the ties that the NADP had with the Irish government and because the NADP received great financial and social support from various established philanthropists, the newly established IDS organization was still considered to be fledgling within Ireland at that time.

Although the IDS had not yet gained prominence within Ireland during the 1980s, it had captured the attention of many Deaf youth. IDS had also positioned itself in the world as Ireland's representative to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and the Euroaction Working Group in the European Union. By the summer of 2000, the IDS had clearly gained the respect of many Irish d/Deaf people and had gained the recognition of the Irish government. The IDS had successfully competed for a £600,000+ grant from the government to study adult literacy among Deaf people. The IDS had also worked with Trinity College Dublin to establish a Deaf Centre and had worked with the government and St. Joseph's school to have an ISL-using preschool opened on the grounds of St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys and to have it staffed by Deaf teachers.

The IDS Web site (http://indigo.ie/~ids/) posts their mission statement:

> The Irish Deaf Society as Ireland's National Association OF the Deaf, strives to highlight the societal needs of all sections in the Deaf community, advocates the human rights of the Deaf through empowerment and ... equal access in all aspects of life endowed by the full Irish citizenship. The empowerment and equality shall be through upholding the status of Irish Sign Language and its related culture and norms.

During my fieldwork in the 1980s, IDS was clearly positioning itself as a culturally Deaf organization by promoting itself as an organization run by Deaf people for the interests of Deaf people. The goals of the IDS reminded me of the goals of American Deaf people in the 1970s when they were asserting their rights to govern themselves and were working toward greater recognition and acceptance of ASL both within their own community and more broadly.

However, the Irish situation, though familiar to me from my experience in the United States, was also unfamiliar. The presentation of Deaf culture was uniquely

Irish, which differed in interesting ways from what I knew in America. For me, a conundrum in the 1980s was that the membership of the IDS seemed to include more oralists (who signed while mouthing) than signers (who did not mouth while signing). In the United States, the strongest advocates for Deaf culture did not speak and sign simultaneously but required ASL both in public and in situations in which ASL had previously not been used. From my perspective, the strongest spokesperson for the IDS during the 1980s was a very intelligent, charismatic woman who had attended St. Mary's school at the time it was oral. She had married a nonoralist signer, was completely bilingual in ISL and English, and was a very competent speechreader. What puzzled me was that, in most of her interactions with hearing people that I had observed, she would speak and speechread rather than sign—even when talking about Deaf culture and ISL issues. She became, in a sense, the quintessential cultural broker who could function effectively in a hearing world and a Deaf world, and she was representing the Deaf political cultural position.

The reason so many IDS members in the 1980s held an oralist orientation was probably because the IDS seemed to attract more young d/Deaf people than older d/Deaf people at that time. These younger Deaf members had attended the Cabra schools when they used the oral-only language policy. Once, in talking with a younger IDS person, he chastised me for not talking or mouthing English words while I was signing; I had been signing without speaking English. I had become accustomed to signing without mouthing in Ireland with older, nonoral Irish signers. When interacting with politically active, culturally Deaf Irish people, I automatically switched to the signing style I most associated with that political stance in America. But in Ireland, that approach was not what was expected at the time. Cultural Deafness in the 1980s, according to my perception, did not conform to my understanding of language use among politicized cultural Deaf people in the United States. Although the Deaf political rhetoric used in Ireland was familiar to me, the use of mouthing English while signing in this context was not as familiar. As a linguistic anthropologist, I found this cultural difference fascinating.

The leadership of the IDS has changed since the 1980s, and the IDS is now a much more ISL-focused organization. In my most recent visit during the summer of 2000, I found the IDS to be a growing and vital organization. Although its members use a variety of language styles that are consistent with language norms of the community, the IDS promotes ISL, and the leaders, who are all Deaf, use it, especially during public functions.[9] The new IDS leadership is rather young for such a powerful organization. Most of the leaders are in their 20s or 30s. From my discussions with older d/Deaf people, the new IDS organization has gained their confidence, and many of the older generation have taken membership in the IDS.

The several meetings and social gatherings of the IDS that I attended in the summer of 2000 were all conducted in ISL. When non-ISL signers were present or expected to be present, interpreters were provided. IDS has also produced videotapes to teach ISL to others. The organization is politically active, and its members have fought diligently to have ISL used both in the homes of deaf children and in schools. The IDS is currently fighting for national recognition of ISL as the legitimate first language of Irish Deaf people.[10]

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INFLUENCES FROM OTHER DEAF COMMUNITIES ON IRISH DEAF IDENTITY

One of the most significant factors contributing to ever changing d/Deaf ideologies in this Dublin Deaf community is the influence of outside communities. Irish d/Deaf people have read literature and met with people from many nations, and they have learned how d/Deaf identities are constructed elsewhere. There has been a strong connection between Ireland and Gallaudet University that has led to student exchanges and other collaborations. But perhaps what is most immediately important to the community is that Irish Deaf people have been able to interact with other Deaf people in the European Union. Travel and conference monies have been made available to Irish Deaf people that have enabled many to learn firsthand about d/Deaf experiences elsewhere and to share their own experiences with others.

Within this more European and sometimes more international context, the relationship of d/Deaf identity to language type and variety has entered into discussions of the Irish d/Deaf identity. These discussions occur particularly among younger d/Deaf people, those who had attended school when oralism was the primary method of classroom communication. These "oralists" now talk about the necessity to differentiate between ISL and versions of signed English. Although they are able to sign both ISL and English-based signing styles, this group is more likely to use English-based language with non-ISL signers, which is a completely natural linguistic accommodation made by bilingual people. And it is more generally the younger bilinguals in this community who claim Deaf cultural identity.

The older, "signing" generation takes little part in this kind of public discourse about Deaf ethnicity and ISL. These more senior members of the community are the people who used sign without mouthing in school, who learned to distinguish between "proper" signing (Signed English) as they call it and deaf signing (ISL). They still use both versions of sign in public discourse and often refer to the "proper" signs as the "correct" signs for use in public settings because those were signs that had been acquired at school (see LeMaster 2002). And yet, although more senior members are aware of d/Deaf identity issues, few take part in public discourse about Deaf ethnicity as it may be linked to signing practices. The leaders from this older age group are often more concerned with the process of publishing information about their language in the form of ISL films and videotapes, dictionaries, and children's books as well as with the publication of previously handwritten documents about sign (Foran 1994; Foran 1996; Buckley 1998; and David Breslin's privately held films and videotapes).

The differences between the generations and their attitudes toward ISL, signed English and oralism as well as whether or not they identify themselves as culturally Deaf can be explained by linking school language policies and practices to d/Deaf socialization (LeMaster 1990; LeMaster 2002b). The older, signing generation grew up during a time when deafness was acknowledged at school and when sign language was accepted as a normal part of being deaf. This generation has excellent literacy skills, giving them a means to interact with nonsigning hearing people and a key to English language resources. The important aspect of their life stories is that, by being expected to learn sign language and written English—

both forms of visual communication well suited to deafness—these deaf people were not expected, either by society or by themselves, to deny their deafness.

The younger deaf people, on the other hand, have largely experienced societal rejection of their deafness through the use of oralism in the schools and the prohibition of signing. Every act of oralism reminded them that they were required to accommodate hearing people's communicative needs and deny their deafness (LeMaster 1990). In this context, deafness is not viewed as normal but as a disability that is further stigmatized if they choose to use sign language, which visibly marks the disability. This group of people—who were ostracized through oralism because of their deafness—are the people who embrace the literature on Deaf ethnicity and values that mark the differences between deaf and hearing people, and they are the people who give validity to the d/Deaf experience.

I am not arguing that Deaf culture emerges only in this context. Indeed, the argument is that if deafness is denied by exclusively using oralism, by replacing the use of sign language rather than adding to their knowledge of sign, then the message sent to deaf children is that they need to mask their deafness and deny who they are. This is not about the use of oralism per se but, rather, about the imposition of exclusive oralism that supplants sign language as a mandate rather than a choice for deaf people. This situation is similar to so many other situations of language minority children who are required to deny and replace their native languages by exclusively adopting a majority language. In these cases, as in this Irish case, oppositional identities often emerge (see Cummins 1986; Ogbu 1987; Ogbu and Simmons 1998). In this Irish case, an oppositional Deaf identity emerged among the children who were raised with exclusive oralism practices that supplanted sign language. Although the sentiments of a Deaf identity in opposition to a majority hearing population mirror the U.S. situation in many ways, the linguistic markers of this identity differed dramatically during the 1980s. However, on my return in 2000, the scene was more familiar to what I have known in the United States. I saw many more similar uses of ISL linked to expressions of a Deaf cultural identity, yet, they were clearly still not identical to the U.S. situation. How Irish people mark their political Deaf identities is uniquely Irish.

What is constant among d/Deaf people in Ireland is a strong sense of affiliation with one another. A sense of Deaf culture and Deaf community exists whether the main form of communication is sign without voice or mouthing with accompanying signing. What is remarkable, however, is that, within less than 50 years, a series of dramatic changes have occurred within the composition of the community, and the expression of their d/Deaf identity has changed. Deafness went from a relatively unmarked, relatively accepted status to a more highly marked, disabled status. Gender identity went from being a focal point to being largely unimportant within a very short period. The change in educational language policy was an important contributor to this identity shift, but the discourses about deafness held in other parts of Europe, in the United States, and elsewhere were also important. These factors led to the increased recognition of "Deafness" as a distinctive identity attribute among this younger group of Irish Deaf people.

WHAT CAN BE GAINED FROM CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES?

One goal of oral education is to mainstream deaf children into the broader, hearing society. Because the majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents who

have no experience with deafness before the birth of their deaf child, the parents generally favor oralism. These hearing parents would certainly prefer their children to use language as they do (in the oral channel). The use of speech and speechreading masks the condition of deafness, an otherwise invisible handicap. Deaf children who use oralism may look like other children who are not deaf. Also, they will be using the same mode of communication that their future employers, teachers, government leaders, and others will most likely use.

Yet, as in all situations of oral education, sign language still persists within Deaf communities—even in "purely" oral schools. Sign language survives because monochannel oralism is too difficult for the daily communication needs of most deaf people and because deaf people cannot achieve the hearing identity that is often so fervently sought after by many hearing parents and educators through the use of exclusive oralism with deaf children. The frustrations experienced through oral communication remind deaf people of their deafness in almost every interaction. It emphasizes precisely the limitation of deafness: the inability to hear. Even though deaf people may try to adopt the communication strategies of hearing people, they can never become hearing people; in short, they cannot adopt a hearing identity. It is not accessible to them while they live in a deaf body. When society forces deaf people to use oralism at the exclusion of sign language, deaf people will often reject oralism to release themselves from society's pressure to adopt the inaccessible hearing identity.

Why, then, is oralism maintained in the linguistic repertoire of younger signers in the Dublin Deaf community who champion Deaf identity? The answer is simple. The ability to speak and speechread, though not without its costs, can be an asset when interacting with the majority hearing and speaking population—as long as it is just one of the many tools Deaf people may choose to use at will. It is primarily this orally schooled group of Deaf people who have championed Deaf rights and who now seek official, governmental recognition of their natural sign language, ISL. How all members of this Dublin Deaf community use language variation in their negotiations of political agendas and selfhood are uniquely Irish.

Further investigation is needed to better understand how Deaf identities are culturally situated. From this cross-cultural example, we learn that expressions of Deaf culture are not universal and may not even be uniform within the same deaf community (which is true also for the American situation). We would benefit from ethnographic studies that explore the cultural situatedness of Deaf identity.

NOTES

1. Consistent with American conventions, the lowercase *d* in *deaf* is used to represent biological or pathological deafness, and the capital *D* in *Deaf* connotes social deafness. Use of *d/Deaf* represents both of these ideas simultaneously.

2. For an interesting discussion of Deaf ethnicity, see Johnson and Erting's 1984 and 1989 discussions and LeMaster's modification to this idea in 1990. Johnson and Erting developed their argument for Deaf ethnicity through use of anthropological scholarship, notably, Barth (1969), Cohen (1974), Isajiw (1974), and Fishman (1977).

3. My consent forms guaranteed anonymity, so I cannot provide names of consultants at this time.

4. Predominantly women born before 1930 and men born before 1945 acquired

gendered forms of sign (a male and a female version) from the Dublin residential schools for the deaf (see LeMaster 1990).

5. I will not discuss this idea of "deafness as a commodity" here but have presented it at the 97th meeting of the American Anthropological Association, November 1999, in a paper titled "Language Movements in Deaf Ireland" and again in a public lecture titled "Changes in Irish Sign Language" that was given in Ireland at the Deaf Club, and finally at the International Gender and Language Association in England in 2002. I am working on this idea for future publication.

6. Sister Nicholas, a Dominican Sister, worked at the school when sign language was used and was the primary force behind the conversion to an oralist program (LeMaster 1990).

7. In a meeting with representatives from a local school district, I was told that deaf students in the United States still graduate with a reading level of second to fourth grade.

8. Sadly, Niall McCarthy and his wife, Barbara, were killed in a head-on collision on a holiday trip to France.

9. The chairperson, vice chairperson, honorable secretary, and honorable treasurer are, respectively, Kevin Stanley, Eddie Redmond, John Bosco Conama, and Eilish Bradley (see http://indigo.ie/~ids/boardmbrspic.htm). The directors are Patricia Breen, Charles Grehan, Susan O'Reilly, Noel Ball, Brian Crean, Michelle Quinn-Campbell, and Larry Stanley.

10. For more information about the IDS organization and scope of their projects, see their website (http://indigo.ie/~ids/).

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Many Ways to Be Deaf

INTERNATIONAL VARIATION
IN DEAF COMMUNITIES

Leila Monaghan,
Constanze Schmaling,
Karen Nakamura,
and Graham H. Turner,
Editors

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