

**TEACHING ENGLISH LITERACY TO  
MEMBERS OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY:**

**Insights for bilingual programming**

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in partial fulfillment of the degree of**

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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The biggest breakthroughs often take place  
when Deaf-hearing teams or friendships develop -  
when both individuals truly value their differences,  
which seems to free them to discover their similarities.  
(Mahshie 1995, p192)

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the perspectives of the students and stakeholders involved in a Deaf literacy programme at the Auckland University of Technology. Education practices in NZ and overseas, predominantly determined by hearing professionals, have resulted in the marginalization of many Deaf students. These students have left school dissatisfied generally with their educational outcomes. As a result there is widespread concern within the Deaf community about English literacy levels as for many it is not only necessary for education and employment, but as the primary means of communication with the non-signing majority. The bilingual programme for adults at AUT acknowledges the Deaf as a linguistic and cultural minority and utilizes NZSL to scaffold English language learning in written form. In keeping with this recognition of the Deaf as the primary stakeholders, the emphasis in this study was placed on involving the Deaf students themselves in order to construct an ‘insider’ view of how these needs are being met. The study found that the students valued reciprocity and partnership in the teaching process, and viewed the role of the Deaf Support Tutor as very important. The students also highlighted the necessity for teachers to become fluent in NZSL and to become knowledgeable in Deaf Culture. Finally it was argued that educators of the Deaf needed to work in collaboration with the Deaf Community in the education of their own people. In conclusion the implications of these findings for further programmes are discussed.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.S.L.	American Sign Language
A.S.E.	Australasian signed English
A.U.T.	Auckland Institute of Technology
C.A.	Cultural Advisor
C.E.L.	Certificate in English Language
D.A.N.Z.	Deaf Association of New Zealand
D.S.T.	Deaf Support Tutor
E.S.L.	English as a second language
E.S.O.L.	English for Speakers of Other Languages
K.D.E.C.	Kelston Deaf Education Centre
L.1., L.2.	First language, second language
N.S.L.	Native Sign Language
N.Z.S.L.	New Zealand Sign Language
R.C.D.S.	Resource Coordinator for Deaf Students

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The history of education for the Deaf has long been problematic. Programmes originally created for hearing students have traditionally been adapted for the Deaf by hearing educators who emphasised the mastery of English skills such as reading, writing, speech production and lip reading (Komesaroff, 1998).

Until recent times, educational institutions have not perceived the Deaf as belonging to a cultural and linguistically defined group. Literacy education programmes designed for the Deaf Community have had a history based on models of medical pathology and language deficit. McKee (2001, pp. 19-20) argues that "the medical profession is apt to perceive deafness in ways that bear no relation to the beliefs, values and experiences of Deaf people." She holds that teaching pedagogies were historically based on the pathological view of deafness as an audiological disability, rather than as a culturally and linguistically defined community, resulting in the forfeiting of meaningful education in favour of attempts to teach children to articulate and lip-read spoken language.

In light of this hearing orientation, researchers directing their attention to deaf education, have tended to 'normalise' Deaf people in relation to the hearing world, and focused on *remedial* teaching strategies. While the outcome of such research is undoubtedly valuable, this deficit model is in direct contrast to those relating to learning English as a discrete and secondary (or additional) language. In simplistic terms, these polar approaches reflect the 'outsider' / 'insider' paradigms. What needs to be asked is what these adult students want and need from their further education, and how this aligns with existing programmes.

Recently there has been a widespread educational shift to view language and literacy learning as socially and culturally embedded. This, combined with increasing attention to learner needs, has resulted in the literacy education of Deaf Communities also undergoing change (Senghas and Monaghan, 2002).

Some of the new approaches consider each country's Native Sign Language (NSL) to be the first language of the Deaf and literacy in the dominant spoken language to be the second language. The New Zealand Sign Language Bill is currently in Parliament and has passed the first of three readings. It is hoped that The New Zealand Sign Language Act will become law in 2005 or 2006 which will mean that NZSL will become the second official language of our country. This would undoubtedly impact positively on Deaf education. It is interesting to note that English, although dominant, is not an official language in New Zealand. Deaf Communities, with their distinctive cultural and linguistic characteristics are regarded as minority language communities within the larger hearing societies (Komesaroff, 1998). Dugdale (2001, p. 240) asserts that learning the 'foreign' English language is one of the hardest challenges many Deaf face, and reveals that the NZSL lexical item for "English" in some contexts also represents the concept of "difficult language". Yet despite the difficulties posed, researchers argue that the development of strong literacy programmes that correspond with the needs of the Deaf is essential if the Deaf are to obtain access to education and job opportunities in a hearing world (Dugdale, 2001; Grosjean, 2001). Ironically, written English, in the form of Deaf publications has also been invaluable in preserving Deaf historical data (Atherton, 2003).

Research on minority language and literacy learning asserts the importance of learners' backgrounds and experiences. Heath (1983) argues the importance of utilising the learner's first language and cultural background to provide a conceptual framework from which to effectively learn a second language. Similarly, Hull and Schultz (2001) recommend teachers make use of "out of school" social practices and literacies regularly employed by the communities and families of school children to improve their "in school" performance. In the context of Deaf education, Padden and Ramsey (n.d.) reinforce this philosophy, advising an approach to literacy that relies heavily on tapping into the social and cultural experiences of the child, through their first language. Bailes (2001) contends that the 'first and natural' language of deaf children is that which is visually accessible i.e. sign language.

The Deaf have been especially disadvantaged operating visibly as part of the majority culture, yet in reality operating in their second language and furthermore in a written medium. While Deaf Communities share many parallels with minority language

communities, they are perhaps unique in that *literacy* in their second language is often the primary means of access to the wider community. A further complicating factor is that the Native Sign Languages of the Deaf are visual spatial languages and do not have written equivalents. This means that Deaf Communities have few existing literacy practices to build on in their second languages.

Sign language cannot be written down, not least because there is no reliable one-to-one correspondence between words and signs, but also because certain other meaning-carrying features, such as the use of non-manual signs, spatial location and directional movement, cannot be encoded in written English. (Swanwick 1998, p.112)

There is an increasing trend in the modern world for the client base to drive education. However in Deaf education, this is not usually the case. Education of the Deaf is still generally determined externally by educators who are not Deaf themselves. Lane (1984) offers a reason for this imbalance:

Why [then] is the education of the deaf one of the few social institutions that resists officially the fundamental principles of our society? It is easy to identify the reason. If the deaf community had major responsibility for the education of the deaf, they would overhaul it: the sign language would play a much larger role, and deaf teachers would be hired in much larger numbers. (Lane 1984, p. 372)

The catalyst for this study has been ongoing comments from Deaf friends, colleagues and young Deaf people regarding the importance of achieving a level of reading and writing in English, which accurately reflects their intelligence and facilitates equity of access to hearing dominated society. Unlike other bilingual ESL learners, Deaf people cannot naturally acquire literacy skills in their own language as sign does not have a written form. English literacy can only be learnt visually by deliberate exposure, suggesting that traditional methods based on modified hearing strategies may fall far short of the mark.

Deaf people don't have enough repetition and reinforcement of English. Hearing people learn English through hearing it spoken all the time...Deaf people really need to read double [the quantity of material] because most of them miss out on the spoken language input. I sometimes think we need a photographic memory to know how English works.

(Interview with Deaf Cultural Advisor, 2004)

Another factor driving my research has been an ongoing and deep-seated interest in Deaf education and Deaf empowerment, together with a desire to see an appropriate evolution from the ‘outsider’ imposition of education to the ‘insider’ ownership of education.

## **1.2 Aim**

Traditionally, studies in the field of Deaf education have explored the teachers’ voice, and the voice of authorities, with little attention given to direct feedback from the Deaf themselves. Furthermore a great deal of this research appears to be conducted by hearing researchers with little or no knowledge of Deaf cultural and linguistic factors, and subsequently little researcher consideration has been directed towards the ‘Deaf voice’ (Komesaroff, 1998).

This study seeks to investigate literacy not only from the viewpoint of the dominant culture but also from the Deaf themselves. The aim is to explore the insights of the Deaf students and to provide an opportunity for them to voice their opinions, preferences and suggestions as to how programmes of such a nature could best meet the demands of Deaf people.

(L)iteracy is important, but it is important because of the instrumental roles reading and writing can play in the planning and execution of functions perceived as significant by the newly literate themselves, rather than as being seen as important by those who would impose literacy policy and literacy standards on them.  
(Olson and Torrance 2001, p.15)

Therefore the purpose of this study is twofold: Firstly it seeks to investigate and represent the views of major stakeholders involved in this unique programme, including the course developers, providers, and in particular the ‘insiders’; the Deaf consumers. The second purpose is to explore ways in which the programme could even better meet the needs of the students.

## **1.3 Scope**

The study is situated at a New Zealand University that offers a Deaf literacy programme designed specifically to cater for the needs of the New Zealand Deaf adults. This programme was selected for study as it represents a unique initiative in New Zealand.



The opportunities for Deaf adults to attend linguistically accessible English literacy classes in this country are limited. AUT offers this programme in a bilingual / bicultural setting, teaching English as an additional language through the medium of NZSL.

The course was instigated in response to an initiative by a Resource Coordinator for Deaf students at AUT, concerned at the frustration experienced by Deaf tertiary students.

He noted:

At that time, AUT did not have a policy for Deaf students to be able to do their course work by using NZSL. I had to either implement a policy for Deaf students to be able to use their most preferred language to complete assignments and exams or establish an English course for the Deaf. I chose to establish the English course as I thought it would be quicker to get things rolling. I felt the course would benefit not only students at AUT, but also other members of the Deaf Community.

The AUT Deaf Literacy programme is conducted in the Deaf Literacy Unit at the AUT School of Languages each semester and is run for four hours each Saturday morning in order to accommodate those who have working commitments.

The Certificate in English Language (CEL) programme offered to members of the Deaf Community through the School of Languages at AUT, provided an opportunity to investigate a unique bilingual method, which incorporated NZSL as the language of instruction and discussion, and English as the target language in written form. In this approach, English was taught not in the traditional 'remedial' sense, but as a second (or additional) language. Although the CEL programme provided a comprehensive framework, it had to be significantly altered. An example of this was the substitution of speaking and listening segments with a logical extension of the reading and writing components. Materials such as worksheets and activities intended for hearing learners of English were also modified and in many cases completely replaced with culturally relevant material calculated to activate existing schema. Materials were designed and collated by the teacher and further supplemented with information supplied by the Deaf support tutor. Although this distinctive programme created a learning environment generated specifically for Deaf students enrolled at AUT, it soon expanded to fulfill a need in the wider Deaf Community, drawing students from as far a field as Whangarei.

The data for this study was gathered from the programme run in the second semester of 2003. The study conducted over a four-month period, comprised interviews with Deaf students, practitioners and other stakeholders, in conjunction with an analysis of programme and curriculum documents and relevant literature. The student participants in the study were self-selected and seized the opportunity to put forward their ideas and insights.

The study explored the programme and the views of those involved, with particular emphasis on the views of the Deaf students themselves. The views of the students and practitioners were analysed, emerging themes were identified and findings were triangulated against a framework of relevant literature as potentially useful information for educators as they attempt to meet the ever-changing literacy needs of their Deaf students.

#### **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

Chapter two discusses concepts of literacy as a background to the study. It visits the literature on minority literacies, literacy in the context of English as a second language, and narrows to discuss Deaf literacy.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach selected for the study: the description of the methods used, the cultural adjustments made within the process, ethical considerations, the rationale for selecting the participants and the strands emerging from the interviews.

Chapter four summarizes the findings and discusses the issues raised by the students and practitioners.

Finally, in chapter five recommendations for future courses and suggestions for further research are made.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Although literacy has historically been defined in various ways, perhaps the most pervasive and longstanding general view of literacy in our society is the ability to read and write English clearly in a tidy hand (Christie, 1987). In reality, concepts of literacy within educational circles have undergone tremendous change, and in accordance with these changes teaching practices have also varied a great deal.

Ironically, for a concept that many consider a neutral vehicle for the transmission and reception of information, literacy has frequently been described in emotive terms. Barton (1994) identified several metaphors that have been used to portray varying ideological positions of literacy. Among these are - the lack of literacy seen as a sickness to be remedied with treatment, a handicap requiring rehabilitation, ignorance to be resolved through training, oppression to be fought with empowerment, deprivation to be countered with welfare, and deviance to be limited through control. These metaphors also suggest that literacy is in fact a godsend and an answer to societal evil.

Barton (1994) however, arguing for a more comprehensive concept proffers a further metaphor, that of literacy as ecological; an organism reflexively interacting on and evolving with the environment. This notion of literacy encapsulates the rich cultural influence of the human element, a perception of literacy, or rather countless varieties of 'literacies'.

The second half of this century in particular has seen a widespread broadening in the concepts of literacy, which has lead to significant shifts in literacy educational practices.

#### **2.2 The development of concepts of literacy**

Historically, the introduction of English literacy to colonized countries was seen as an improving influence; a means of uncivilised cultures crossing the 'great divide' from a history of oral traditions to the advantages and civilising influence offered through literate society (Olson and Torrance, 2001). As part and parcel of this literacy symbol system ideologies of the Western world were conveyed not only through the actual

message carried but also through the existence and imposition of this writing system. In essence the 'haves' and 'have nots' were further divided, giving rise to the deficit model of literacy.

Undoubtedly literacy was perceived as an equalising factor, as in the Commonwealth a great push occurred in the 19th century to offer free elementary education to the working class, a privilege formerly offered to members of the upper echelons of British society. Literacy was perceived by some as a means of civilising the population, as it enabled people to read the bible and other morally uplifting publications which would result in the development of upstanding citizens (Christie, 1987). Muspratt, Luke and Freebody (1997) identified a two-stage pedagogical model for teaching literacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century; 'the basics' and 'the classics'. The first stage, taught to all students emphasised spelling, writing, word recognition and reading aloud. The content of the readers were constructed in a way that emphasised protestant morality and the culture of the British Empire as normative. The second stage, incorporating a study of selected works of literature, was less accessible and favoured students from middle to upper class backgrounds. Large classes resulting from mass education necessitated a shift away from a questioning approach to the more efficient 'skill and drill' approach of reading and writing; an approach that arguably continues to influence educational practices today (Christie, 1987; Olson and Torrance, 2001).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American educational psychology theories impacted on western educational practices. There was a widespread shift from reading aloud to silent individual reading practices, with an emphasis on individual cognitive development. The two-stage teaching method and the individual reading method did have in common the notion that literacy could be taught independent of context. This concept of literacy as a set of elemental skills to be learned and practiced, labeled by Street (1994) as 'autonomous', inferred that literacy was intrinsically neutral, transferable and independent of context. In other words, a good teacher could transmit the literacy learning package to the student who could then use the set of skills effectively. However, such an approach, albeit tidy, overlooked the impact of individual, social, political and cultural factors; it failed to recognise the realities of communicating within the real world (Hannon, 2000).

Literacy cannot be inherently neutral. Teaching philosophies and methodologies are selected for use on the grounds of certain criteria, decisions are made regarding the content and types of material used for educational purposes, and programmes are taught by teachers who have themselves been taught (and have succeeded) within certain educational paradigms. Muspratt, Luke and Freebody (1997) point out that educational practices are selected to support certain ideologies and competencies over others, which in turn means that students of different backgrounds are differentially set up for academic success. Models of reading have been based on models of the social order and how the literate person can and should fit into that order. Ways of reading are not neutral but are indeed correlated with issues of identity and cultural and political power, access to capital, and contemporary configurations of gender, ethnicity, class and citizenship in late-capitalist societies (Muspratt, Luke and Freebody 1997).

In a longitudinal study, Heath (1983) identified the diverse literacy practices employed by members of three distinct communities, linked by a common school. Culturally, these communities used literacy in different ways and for different functional purposes, demonstrating that language (and literacy) was situated within the habits and values of these communities. Heath determined that the children from these communities were differentially prepared to enter the schooling system; those whose home literacy practices most closely aligned with those prescribed at school, i.e. the white middle class students, were deemed educationally much more 'successful' than those whose home literacy practices differed significantly. Heath concluded that the educational system was therefore constructed in such a way as to benefit some and disadvantage others.

The pattern Heath (1983) identified of educational match or mismatch of teaching strategies with the needs of students from diverse backgrounds has indicated a significant barrier to the meaningful literacy education of cultural minorities. However, more than merely hindering effective learning, these traditional approaches may in fact be marginalising minorities even further. Luke, Comber and O'Brien (1996, p.35) argue that literacy should equip students with tools which will enable them to analyse and appraise "the textual techniques and ideologies, values and positions" to which they are exposed. The authors see the most important challenge as finding a way of teaching students how texts work linguistically "at the same time taking up explicitly how texts and their affiliated social institutions work politically to construct and position writers

and readers in relations of power and knowledge (or the lack thereof)” (1996, p. 35). Obviously this approach is of particular interest to educators involved with minority groups.

## **2.3 Literacy and minorities**

Muspratt, Luke and Freebody (1997, p.4) assert that generic teaching methods for ‘nongeneric, heterogeneous learners, places, conditions and times...may actually succeed in constructing highly “restricted” literacies and literates, and at systematically excluding particular groups of learners.’ Or as (Walsh 1996, pp.5-6) asserts, pedagogies, being socially constructed, are either “enabling or disempowering” and must be examined for ideological underpinnings. Freire and Macedo (1987) contend that literacy must not only be made relevant and meaningful to the learners in context, but in addition must be a tool for the empowerment and transformation of the learner’s own world. They argue that only in this way can literacy be equitable. They identify a ‘double bind’ where students, taught through a skill based paradigm, are *prevented* from reaching the level of literacy needed to ‘transform their worlds.’ According to Au and Raphael (2000), minority culture students tend to be taught *skills* as opposed to critical thinking; ‘transmission’ in the cognitive paradigm, as opposed to a ‘transactional’ critical approach. These theorists contend that the critical approach is vital for cultural minorities, and that the ownership of literacy engendered through this method, together with increasing proficiency is essential to effectively empower learners.

### **2.3.1 Acculturation versus assimilation of minorities**

In addition to members of minority groups being faced with receiving ‘generic’ educational instruction in a language and culture not their own, they are academically measured in terms of alignment with educational yardsticks determined by the majority culture (Watts-Taffe and Truscott, 2000). Furthermore, students exposed to a new culture are likely to experience loneliness, emotional exhaustion and a sense of being culturally unsafe. In this situation, it would seem vital to promote student acculturation as such a practice would allow important elements of the students’ own culture to be retained. Mason and Ewoldt (1996) note that if literacy is more than a set of skills it follows that the incorporation of real life experience is essential if literacy teaching is to be meaningful. This is in contrast to assimilation, where the student must accept the majority culture, when seeking membership to the classroom and society. The shaping

of programmes to accommodate assimilation or acculturation, hinges on institutional educational philosophies. An area where this is of particular relevance is teaching English as a second language.

### **2.3.2 English as a Second Language (ESL)**

Carter and Nunan (2001, p.2) define ESL as English being “taught and learned in countries, contexts and cultures in which English is the predominant language of communication.” They state that ESL is typically taught to immigrants who need to use English at work, school or in the community, and includes instruction and practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Class content is likely to incorporate task based activities, questions and answers, turn-taking strategies and patterns of interaction. The emphasis in this setting tends to be placed on the target language; English.

Naturally teaching English as a second (or additional) language involves teaching English to people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This has several implications. Firstly, learning does not take place in a social vacuum. Richards (2001) points out that the students are not blank slates; they bring to the classroom their own experiences and perspectives and tend to transfer concepts from their first language to their second, including learning strategies. Teachers too are influenced by their own culture, experiences and values as much as the student. The teaching and learning of ESL is therefore not the neutral transmission of skills, but is socially and culturally embedded. Richards (2001, p.215) reflects that the learning of English means different things to different learners. “In some cases the learning of English may be the key to economic mobility. In others it may be part of a process of social and economic marginalisation.”

ESL teaching is usually thought of in terms of students from nationalities different to a predominately English- speaking culture. An often overlooked cultural minority within the New Zealand population, is a people with a distinctive first language and way of life; the New Zealand Deaf Community. Educational practices, although still largely determined and taught by hearing practitioners, are beginning to evolve to suit the needs of the Deaf. However, the changes have been too little and too late for many.

### **2.3.2.1 The Deaf: learning English as a Second (or additional) Language**

A feature of ESL courses is the need for teachers to adapt teaching styles and content to best suit the needs of the students. One aspect of an effective teacher is an understanding of how the students learn, utilising the learner's existing strategies, and modifying methodologies accordingly. Another feature of the ESL paradigm is the understanding that the learner is acquiring an *additional* language, and may in fact be a polyglot. As such, creative errors are seen as part of the learning process.

Learners are seen as building up a series of approximations to the target language, through trial and error, hypothesis testing and creative representations of input...The successful language learner is a manager of strategies. (Richards, 2001, p.214)

In contrast to perceiving Deaf students as being deficient in English literacy skills, the paradigm of ESL teaching acknowledges that the student is learning an additional language, and is also likely to make errors within the learning process. The ESL approach would seem to bypass any potential for paternalism in the teaching process, and further, if the teacher was bilingual, allow a creative comparative analysis between the two languages to facilitate understanding. Akamatsu and Mayer (2003) discuss various paradigms for Deaf literacy education, and while acknowledging the benefits of the ESL paradigm, suggest that even this approach falls short of the mark unless it is significantly modified.

## **2.4 deaf or Deaf?**

Two very different viewpoints exist regarding individuals whose usable audible range falls outside of perceived norms. One viewpoint can be broadly defined as the *hearing* view of someone who perceives deafness as deviating from the audiological norm, and the *Deaf* view of someone for whom their visual language and way of life *is* the norm.



### **2.4.1 The deaf: The pathological model**

The cultural and linguistic characteristics of the <sup>1</sup>Deaf have only recently been recognised outside their own community. Traditionally, individuals with a hearing loss have been viewed by outsiders within a pathological or clinical paradigm; a ‘deficit’ or ‘subnormal’ model. Consequently, medical professionals have historically attempted to ‘normalise’ deaf people with both external and internal audiological devices and medical procedures. This medical paradigm situates deafness as an infirmity, and is defined by medical professionals who focus on biological criterion and consider what ‘treatments’ might best minimise the deviance from the hearing norm, an approach which casts deafness in a negative light (Lane and Fischer, 1993; McKee, 2001). This view of <sup>2</sup>deafness as a pathological condition, is in stark contrast to that of the Deaf themselves.

### **2.4.2 The Deaf: The cultural and linguistic minority model**

‘Insiders’, the ‘capital D’ Deaf, choose to be identified as members of a cultural and linguistic group, consolidated by means of communication through a native Sign Language, and the sharing of certain values and beliefs, regardless of ethnic backgrounds (Baker and Cokely, 1980; Lane and Fischer, 1993; McKee, 2001; Hehir, 2002; Woll and Ladd, 2003).

Lane and Fischer (1993) describe Deaf people’s eyes as being ‘portals’ of the mind. Clearly communication is not then dependent on the aural transmission of sound, but on visual information. For this reason, natural Sign Languages, as opposed to artificially created systems, are constructed very differently to spoken languages. A linear spoken language such as English cannot merely be conveyed in a manual modality. A full translation must take place into a visual, spatial Sign Language for equivalence of meaning. So then, Deaf people are not just pseudo hearing people who happen to use the majority

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<sup>1</sup> Deaf, denoted with an uppercase ‘D’ represent people who identify as culturally Deaf i.e. have a degree of audiological deafness, and who exhibit attitudinal cohesion linguistically (NSL), politically and socially with other Deaf. (Baker and Cokely, 1980) “The term Deaf is a label of cultural identification, a way of being and communicating shared by people who feel most akin to other Deaf, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, education, or nationality.” (McKee, R. 2001, p.11)

<sup>2</sup> The lower case ‘d’ is used here to indicate physical audiological deafness only.

language in a manual form; they are a distinctive culture of people who have unique native Sign Languages and totally different ways of experiencing the world.

For educators to recognise the Deaf as a cultural group is to shift the emphasis from preconceived schema based on the educator's own experience, to an outward looking, interactive educational relationship *with* the Deaf students and the reciprocity this implies. Lane and Fischer elucidate this thought.

To apply a cultural model is to invoke quite a different conceptual framework. Implicit in this posture are issues such as: what are the interdependent values, mores, art forms, traditions, organisations and language that characterise this culture? How is it influenced by the physical and social environment in which it is embedded? (Lane and Fischer, 1993, p.482)

Holcomb and Peyton have identified the shift in thinking of many educators and researchers to recognise that the Deaf face comparable challenges to other linguistic minorities formally acquiring English literacy. They identify the barriers to learning English literacy as having “linguistic, cultural, and educational rather than pathological roots” (Holcomb and Peyton, 1992, p.1).

However, while sharing many characteristics with other minorities, the Deaf are a minority with a profound difference. The challenges for the Deaf in learning English literacy are exacerbated in that they cannot access spoken English in the environment as can their non-native English speaking counterparts.

#### **2.4.2.1 The Validation of Sign Languages**

A watershed paper in 1960 by Stokoe, a young American linguist, identified the signs used by the American Deaf community as possessing all the qualities inherent in a language. This language became known as American Sign Language (ASL), a language possessing its own syntax and grammar. This language developed in deaf children in a similar manner to the way spoken languages develop in hearing children. A short while later in 1965, Stokoe cemented ASL as a real language in linguistic circles with the publication of “A Dictionary of American Sign Language” (Shapiro, 1993; Hehir, 2002). This recognition sparked an interest in the linguistic analysis of relatively untapped native Sign Languages, including an investigation and validation of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) in the late 1980s by Marianne Collins-Ahlgren (McKee, 2001; Collins-Ahlgren, 1989).

These native Sign Languages, passed down through generations, possess rich histories, and are a means of communicating cultural beliefs, attitudes and experiences. Indeed as Padden and Humphries (1988) assert, they are part of a culture which has been historically created and is transmitted across generations.

In light of this quote, one might ask how closely educational practices have traditionally corresponded with the needs and values of the Deaf.

## **2.5 An Overview of the Education of the Deaf**

Historically, education of the Deaf has been fraught in terms of agreement over pedagogical methodologies, whether to use the oral or manual approach; speech and lip reading or Sign. Even the manual approach provides grounds for educators to debate preferred pedagogies; whether to use an artificial introduced system or a native Sign Language. Widell (in Lane and Fischer 1993, p.473) identifies four broad educational paradigms previously and currently employed in western Deaf education.

1. Pre-formation development and the Sign method
2. Cultural deficiency model and the oral method,
3. Cultural difference model as hidden deficiency model, and total communication
4. Cultural difference model as equal cultural model and the bilingual teaching method.

### **2.5.1 Pre-formation Development and the Sign Method**

Under this method, Sign was used as a natural language for education. Widell dates the use of the French Sign Method in Denmark, for educational purposes, back to 1807-1880. The origins of American Sign Language (ASL) can also be traced to French Sign Language (FSL), which was used in the first American *public* school for the deaf, founded in 1917. FSL combined with the gestures used by the students evolved into a distinct language, ASL (Padden and Humphries, 1988). Interestingly, Shapiro (1994) reports that the Deaf students who had been taught in ASL at the American Asylum for the Deaf in the 1850s, developed the same level of literacy as their hearing peers.

### **2.5.2 Cultural Deficiency Model and the Oral Method**

This model revolved around an individual or cultural ‘lack’ to be addressed within the educational system, as evidenced particularly in compulsory oral-only education for the Deaf.

An outcome of the 1880 International Conference for Teachers of the Deaf, which convened in Milan, was the widespread European adoption of the “pure oral method” an oral-only approach, which was declared superior over existing methodologies that included the use of sign. The primary goal of the oral approach was the acquisition of speech and lip-reading skills, arguably at the expense of a meaningful education. This method banned the use of Sign as an educational tool and even as a social means of communication amongst the students. Sign was portrayed at the conference as being imprecise and a barrier to students learning to speak and lip-read (Moore, 1982; McKee, 2001).

Oralism fit well with the conformist spirit of the times. The Victorian culture was unsparing toward minority culture...If one did not have speech then one did not have language and, went the thinking that dated back to Aristotle, was presumably unable to reason. To remain silent then was to be prey to the devil. All this suggested that deafness was a sickness, something that needed to be cured. Oralism held out the hope of correction (Shapiro, 1994, p.90).

The use of Sign Language within schools, both educationally and privately, continued to be widely prohibited over the following century. The oral method, applied by predominantly hearing educators who directed curriculums heavily towards speech therapy and lip-reading, remained dominant in educational policies until the 1960s and 1970s (Baker and Cokely, 1980; Lane and Fischer 1993; Dugdale, 2000).

While welcomed by many countries, the “pure oral method” was not uniformly embraced. In America, oral-only and combined manual/ oral methodologies were hotly debated by two high profile and influential educators, Alexander Graham Bell and Edward Miner Gallaudet. While both had deaf mothers, and indeed Bell married one of his deaf students, their educational philosophies evolved into extreme opposites. Formerly close friends and colleagues, Bell and Gallaudet became irreconcilable rivals. Gallaudet’s father, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, co-founded the first enduring US school for the Deaf with Laurent Clerc, a Deaf Frenchman, in 1864. The school’s educational philosophy was based on the French system which valued and utilised sign

as an educational necessity. E.M Gallaudet, following in his father's footsteps while endorsing the 'manual system', also originally advocated for a combined manual / oral method. Gallaudet vigorously defended Sign Language as integral to the educational success of the Deaf (Moores, 1982)

Bell, on the other hand, advocated the elimination of three factors: educational segregation, the 'gesture language' and teachers of the Deaf who were Deaf themselves (at this time thought to represent one third of American teachers of the Deaf) fearing the congregation and attraction of Deaf people towards one another. Bell went on to suggest legislation preventing the intermarriage of the Deaf, stating "The production of a defective race of human beings would be a tragedy" (Moores, 1982, p.72). Clearly, Bell regarded the deaf in a deficit model in need of being 'fixed', a remarkable position in light of his deaf wife and mother and his reported fluency in American Sign Language (ASL).

The ongoing educational debate between the merits of the 'oral' English and 'manual' approaches stemming from this time are commonly known by the American Deaf as the "Hundred Years Wars" (Lou, 1988, p. 95).

Strong (1988) reported that the use of the oralist methods used to teach deaf students was prevalent in education for many years before educators began to acknowledge that it was generally unsuccessful. Despite the increasing recognition that the traditional<sup>3</sup> oral methodologies were producing low performing deaf students, there remained a continued resistance towards the use of native Sign Languages in educational programmes. Borrowing from Au and Raphael's terminology (2000), education was "transmitted" rather than "transacted".

Symbolically the pupil is seen as an empty blackboard that the teacher can write upon and define. The blackboard can also be seen as a black hole that the teacher is filling up with 'imprints', with what he thinks all Deaf people should have.

(Widell, 1993, p.473)

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<sup>3</sup> Strong defines oral programmes as follows: "Oral programmes use spoken English only, and place great emphasis on speech training, lip-reading and maximal use of hearing aids and residual hearing" (Strong, 1988, p114).

### **2.5.3 Cultural Difference Model as Hidden Deficiency Model and Total Communication**

As educators began to concede that the oral method was not meeting the educational needs of the Deaf, teaching methodologies underwent change. The ‘Total Communication’ philosophy emerged in the 1970s. Total Communication advocated the use of ‘all means of communication’ to develop competency in the English language, and incorporated the simultaneous use of spoken English and artificially created signing systems. These systems were designed to represent English manually, and included such devices as finger-spelt affixes and word for word transliterations. The created signs were often conceptually inaccurate and the grammatical features were those of a linear spoken language as opposed to the simultaneous structure of a native Sign Language. McKee (2001, p.22) describes the shortcomings of the Australasian Signed English (ASE) system used in New Zealand under the Total Communication umbrella as lacking “the grammatical structures that exist in naturally developed sign languages, which take advantage of space and movement for visual efficiency.”

Strong maintained that the Total Communication (TC) philosophy was by allowing ‘all means of communication’ simply “giving a positive label to a programme that otherwise has no coherent philosophy attached to it.” (1988, p. 114). This approach appeared to indicate a surface acceptance of culture, but was again an external view, evidenced by the imposition of artificial signing systems on the Deaf, based on the spoken English language.

If we look at Total Communication programmes in any country it is obvious that sign language as deaf people use it is neglected, considered unimportant or plays a minor role. A whole range of visually supporting efforts are being put to use – only not sign language which is of the highest importance to Deaf people! (Widell 1993, p.474)

### **2.5.4 Cultural Difference Model as Equal Cultural Model and the Bilingual Teaching Method**

This model incorporates an internal and external view where the Deaf minority is ‘different but equal’.

Deafness was not depathologised until the early 1960s when, in recognition of native Sign Language and the Deaf culture, parallels were drawn between the Deaf and ethnic minorities. Despite this philosophical progress Deaf educational opportunities have not, in fact, kept pace with those offered to other minorities (Rudser, 1988; Hehir, 2002). Rudser (1988, p.111) recommends that in the United States “Deaf children should be educated in the language of their community, ASL, and taught English as a second language through the medium of their first language.”

Existing opposition to the use of native sign language within American classrooms, Strong (1988) believes, is likely attributable to a number of factors: a dearth of Deaf teachers or teachers skilled in the use of native sign language, the threat to present teachers, the reluctance to acknowledge ASL as a rich language independent of English, the fact that it does not exist in written form, and the cost in terms of time and disruption to existing curricula. He states that the development of a strong first language base, in this case ASL, not only facilitates the learning of a second language, English, in written form, but also enables metalinguistic discussion to take place. However, while many professionals agree that Deaf children are best able to learn from a broad natural Sign Language base, many begin the schooling process without this advantage.

Learning to read presents a challenge for most children who are Deaf from birth or infancy, because knowledge of spoken language cannot be assumed as a basis for learning to decode the written word. The majority of Deaf children from hearing families arrive at school without a coherent first language, and thus have a lot of basic language development and world knowledge to catch up on in the early years of schooling. (McKee, 2001, p.38)

According to Mason and Ewoldt, (1996, p.293), Bilingual / bicultural teaching methodologies utilise ASL as the language of socialisation and meaning making, and English as a written component. This approach builds on a base of real life experiences and authentic texts, which are discussed in ASL and recorded in written English. In this model, the employment of staff who are fluently bilingual is vital, and the employment of Deaf staff in particular, as native language role models, is not only desirable but necessary (Komesaroff, 2001, 2003 ; Mahshie, 1995).

#### **2.5.4.1 The development of Native Sign Languages as basis for learning literacy in English**

Today there is a strong body of research that indicates that native sign language users can learn English literacy in much the same way as other ESL students. This approach acknowledges the learner's language and culture. However, there are of course significant differences in how the information is conveyed and received – not only in a visual medium, but in the “Deaf Way”(Quigley and Paul, 1984; Paul, 1987).

American educationalists and researchers have determined that the development of a strong base in a native Sign Language provides an effective springboard from which to learn English in written form, and that there is a direct relationship between the development of ASL skills and an improvement in English skills (Hehir, 2002; Schimmel, Edwards and Prickett, 1999; Kelly, Albertini and Shannon, 2001; Wilbur, 2000; Padden, 2000). As Hehir also points out, this approach does not give lip service to ‘ableist assumptions’ that attempt to reframe Deaf students in a deficit hearing model. The bilingual approach not only builds on a useful cultural and linguistic background, but also contributes to the meaningfulness of learning to read and write, and therefore the success of ongoing education. Livingston (1997, pp. xi-xii ) argues:

The thinking is that Deaf students are so different from other learners that their language needs to be unnaturally taught as opposed to naturally caught...when we teach human learners who happen to be Deaf, we do not need to “fix” language. We use the rich, natural sign language of the American Deaf Community in natural contexts... [for] the acquisition of understanding or the making and sharing of meaning in the various disciplines that co-occurs with, supports, and is supported by the acquisition of American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

Lam (2001) raises the point that when an educator teaching in a bilingual environment makes an effort to learn his / her students' language, the motivation levels within the class are likely to increase. By becoming a learner, the teacher is equalising the power differentials within the class.

Many educators and researchers advocate for teacher collaboration when teaching English literacy. One stipulation that recurs is that both the hearing and the Deaf teachers be fluently bilingual, that is, in the native sign language of the students and in *written* English (Gregory, Knight et al. 1998; Pickersgill, 1998). One reason for this is to make a comparative analysis between the two languages to highlight the similarities



and differences. In this situation the strengths of both languages can be modelled and the teachers can work collaboratively without paternalism (Stone and Erting, p. 1990).

Another recommended approach is to utilise bilingual Deaf teachers in English literacy education. Through instinctively knowing what will work, and being able to converse fluently in a native sign language, Deaf teachers can elicit discussion and detect cultural nuances signaling comprehension or lack of comprehension that might evade a non-native signer (Andersson, 1994; Smith, 2003) . There is also the aspect of respecting the expertise of Deaf teachers, who are traditionally relegated to subordinate positions due to a lack of formal qualifications (Mas, 1994).

More research is needed in the area of Deaf education and literacy, particularly with respect to the efficacy of bilingual-bicultural models (Mayer and Wells, 1996; Mayer and Akamatsu, 1999) .

Humphries, Martin and Coye (1989) identify a bilingual-bicultural classroom as a situation where cultural differences are not just remarked on, but are examined. He recommends that teachers in this environment become co-learners with the students.

The debate between proponents of various educational philosophies continues today, but it is generally accepted that sign is of great importance in the education of deaf students without usable hearing (Moore and Miller, 2001).

The education of deaf students in New Zealand paralleled that of deaf students overseas in many ways. However, our education system has until recently remained entrenched in the cultural deficiency model by staunchly promoting oralism, and attempting to eliminate signing for nearly a century. This approach began to change with the introduction of Total Communication in 1979, and moved into the cultural difference model as hidden deficiency model. We did not begin to evidence respect for the language and culture of the NZ Deaf within our secondary education system until the introduction of the first bilingual programme at Kelston Deaf Education Centre in 1995. The next section will trace the history of New Zealand approaches to deaf education in more detail.

### **2.5.5 Education of the Deaf in New Zealand**

Following the recommendations of the 1880 International Convention in Milan, New Zealand educators, with governmental backing, adopted as ideal the new oralist approach. The outcome was the development of a New Zealand educational curriculum for the Deaf. Reflecting the colonising attitudes of the day, it promoted a system of 'oralism' based on the English language over and above native languages, including the budding New Zealand Sign Language (Collins-Ahlgren, 1989).

In an attempt to be at the cutting edge of deaf education, the New Zealand government advertised in London for an educationalist familiar with the oralist method to lead the programme. It is interesting to note that only one of the seventeen respondents, Gerrit Van Asch, matched the criteria of teaching a method of communication by means of verbal 'articulation'. He was employed and established the Summner School for the Deaf in Christchurch where he immediately banned the use of signs in educational practices, and actively prevented children who communicated primarily through the use of signs, from attending the institution (Collins-Ahlgrens, 1989, p. 16). Arguably, this attempt by our government to place NZ education for deaf students at the forefront of deaf education resulted in our students being disadvantaged educationally. Despite less than desirable educational outcomes, the oralist approach held sway in NZ and was staunchly defended for nearly a century (Anton, 2000). McKee encapsulated this succinctly:

Under the oral system that prevailed for the past century, schooling involved heavy doses of mechanistic speech training and rote learning, with students typically leaving school significantly under-educated...Thus, in the current community of Deaf adults, those who have achieved academically are regarded as exceptional (McKee, 2001, pp. 38-39).

The ban on Sign Language continued throughout this period for fear it would prevent the acquisition of speech, and oral education continued uncontested in NZ until the mid 1970s.

In 1975, a teacher of the Deaf incorrectly identified a total repertoire of fifty-five signs in the Auckland Deaf Community. Given the history of Deaf education, it is unlikely that the native 'underground' language would in fact have been revealed to a hearing teacher. As a result of this study, believing the Deaf to have no comprehensive language, this teacher together with Australian counterparts created and introduced a

contrived, English language based signing system, Australasian Signed English (ASE) which even included finger spelled affixes. This system, implemented in 1979, represented the first concession in NZ post 1880, to the educational necessity for the manual representation of language for the Deaf (Anton, 1997). Nevertheless ASE was based on the spoken English language.

While Deaf children were obliged to communicate in class time using Australasian Signed English (ASE), they found the system clumsy and time consuming, preferring to revert to the underground native sign language, NZSL, which was alive and healthy, thriving in school playgrounds and social settings (Collins-Ahlgrens, 1989).

However, one benefit resulting from the introduction of ASE, was that it made signing more publicly acceptable, and through doing so contributed to breaking “the shackles of oralism” (A Dictionary of NZSL, 1997, p. xii). Accordingly, NZSL signers began to use their language more in the public eye.

As a result of much work and self-determinism by members of the Deaf community, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) was finally recognised as the language of the New Zealand Deaf Community in 1985, over a century after the Milan Conference wielded such influence. Since 1995 bilingual / bicultural educational programmes, incorporating NZSL and English, have been implemented in the Auckland based Kelston Deaf Education Centre (KDEC) (Nuthall, 1996), and subsequently in Van Asch College.

However, despite the acknowledgment of the value of NZSL in education, most Deaf are still taught by hearing people today in a curriculum primarily created by hearing educationalists. Most deaf children in NZ are mainstreamed, and are therefore separated from other native signers. Those fortunate enough to be educated with their peers in one of the two Deaf schools in NZ, tend to be taught by hearing teachers, who are at various stages of competency in NZSL.

There is a strong need for programmes particularly in literacy, designed by and for Deaf adults. The programme investigated at AUT was devised to help address this problem and is taught in the paradigm of English as a second language, by an experienced ESOL teacher, and is fully interpreted into NZSL. Pedagogical adjustments have been made and continue to be made as the programme is evolved to continually meet the needs of the Deaf students.

## 2.6 Summary

Various perspectives of literacy have been adopted over the years. Stroud (1994) warns that care should be taken with the use of terminology relating to literacies in order to avoid discriminatory evaluations. Rather than being an autonomous set of skills as traditionally taught, studies such as that conducted by Heath highlight that literacy is not learned in a social vacuum. Conversely, literacy is learned and used in various domains for specific purposes and is underpinned by the ideologies of the community in which it is used. Paul (1998) suggests that the construction of meaning is idiosyncratic; how the Deaf use literacy should not be equated with how others use literacy.

This leads to the second point. Not only does literacy involve learning effective strategies on how to read and write, but also to critique, evaluate and develop a position on what is read (Lane, Hoffmeister et al., 1996). It therefore becomes important for learners to develop competency in critical literacy. In this sense, literacy is ideological.

With relation to the Deaf Community, there is still evidence of skill based practices falling short of their needs. Educators are concerned about ‘low functioning deaf’ who have poor English literacy skills and limited employment options (Bowe, Austin et al., 1988; Leigh and Cummins, 1992; Duffy, Warby and Phillips, 1993; Crabb, 2000). It is not reasonable to assume that this wide spread difficulty with English literacy is related to cognitive impairment. Rather there seems to be a strong correlation between levels of literacy amongst the Deaf and the educational practices designed for them from the perspective of a hearing deficit model. This approach has been prevalent in the New Zealand education system since 1880, and has only recently begun to be receptive to the views of the Deaf themselves. Rather than perpetuate this audio-centric approach, where a different paradigm equals disability, it would seem logical for educators to discontinue this disabling approach and become receptive to the educational needs from the ‘inside’ perspective; that of the Deaf themselves.

This study is designed to offer an opportunity to give ‘voice’ to a small group of adult Deaf students, within an English literacy class, taught in a bilingual setting. There are different motivating factors that influence adults to reenter the education system (Spanard, 1990). Sameshima (1999) undertook a study of Deaf students in NZ universities and polytechnics and found that seventy-five percent of those interviewed reported some degree of difficulty in reading or writing English. They felt that when

examined in their second language, that the lecturers would doubt their intelligence. As Swanwick (1998, p.111) points out, “Literacy for a bilingual deaf person is fundamental to enabling equal participation in a hearing society.” The dilemma is how best to access useful literacy education.

The adult Deaf students in this study were motivated to enter further education through a desire to change their existing situation within hearing society. These students identify as members of a distinctive cultural, linguistic minority and choose to communicate through NZSL. This study provides an opportunity for the students to put their viewpoints across in their native sign language as to what works, what doesn’t work, and their hopes for the evolution of similar programmes in the future.

The methodology employed was designed specifically for this programme, and appears to be unique. Hopefully this methodology will itself be modified and evolved as more studies of this type are undertaken in this much overlooked area, preferably by the Deaf themselves. This methodology is discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Little research has been performed to date from the perspectives of Deaf students involved in adult literacy education programmes. Much of the available data appears to have been collected and analysed by hearing researchers who display little or no knowledge of Deaf cultural and linguistic factors. As a result little researcher attention has been directed towards the ‘Deaf voice’ as an opportunity for Deaf students to explore their insights and views (Komesaroff, 1998).

This study investigated a unique bilingual literacy programme for Deaf adults offered at a New Zealand University. In the course of this investigation, data provided by those who were involved in instigating and running the programme, the teaching personnel and of course the Deaf students themselves, were analysed and examined for emerging themes. A clear priority of this study was to give “voice” to the Deaf students. The methodology for this study was designed to especially capture this viewpoint.

Due to my strong identification with the Deaf Community, I feel it is important to clearly state my bias.

#### **3.2 The Researcher’s Role**

When field researchers become immersed in the world of the less powerful and understand that point of view, they are expressing a rarely heard perspective. They may be accused of bias because they give a voice to parts of society that are not otherwise heard” (Neuman, 1997, p. 377).

In light of this quote, and following the example of Komesaroff (1998) in the field of Deaf literacy, I need to situate myself as a researcher who possesses strong views regarding Deaf education and acknowledge my biases. Patton (1990) argues that despite the ongoing resolve to reduce distortions, qualitative data is always interpretative, and filtered through the researcher.

I am a hearing researcher, fluent in NZSL. Several family members are hearing impaired, and I befriended a Deaf child at primary school where we made use of a crude form of sign language. Some years later, I was trained in the first Diploma intake for NZSL Interpreters in NZ from 1992-1994 and subsequently worked with the Wellington Deaf Community. On my return to Auckland I worked as a residential social worker in a Deaf school, and continue to work with them as a relief worker. I am also a trained ESOL teacher. As a result of my interaction with the Deaf Community, I have developed a profound respect for the people, their culture and language and continue to deepen my understanding on an informal level.

According to Baker and Cokely's (1980) model, members of Deaf Communities share linguistic, social, political, audiological and attitudinal qualities. Although not an 'insider', I rank as an informed and empathetic 'outsider' fringe member of the Community. For this reason, effective entry to the research site was necessarily effected through a gatekeeper; a Deaf individual highly respected by the core Deaf Community and a bilingual (NZSL / English) educator.

### **3.3 Methodology**

The methodology of this study was designed especially to draw out the perspectives of the Deaf participants. As such, some components of the methodology vary significantly from standard procedures.

#### **3.3.1 Participants**

The participants came to this study from highly diverse backgrounds, and included Deaf students seeking to improve their level of literacy and a mix of hearing and Deaf academic and support staff.

Most of the interviews were conducted at AUT. The possible inhibitions felt by the students in the academic environment were somewhat offset by familiarity with the setting and the convenience of being interviewed in the same building, on a class day, at a time specified by the student. The added benefit to the researcher was access to high quality electronic video recording equipment, designed to encapsulate both the scope

and detail of NZSL. This study was designed to capture the voice of the Deaf, so priority was given to recording the data in original form (Creswell, 2003).

#### **3.3.1.1. Administrator**

The administrator, in the capacity of the Resource Co-coordinator for Deaf Students at AUT, is typically the first contact person for a Deaf student enrolling and/or making enquiries about a course they wish to study. The administrator involved in setting up the Deaf Literacy course has since left the University, but as the driving force behind the programme, his views were sought. He realised that the students either needed to be taught and examined in their own language, or significantly improve their English literacy skills. Consequently the Resource Coordinator saw the need to implement a literacy course designed to support existing Deaf AUT students and approached the Programme Leader of the Certificate in English Language, School of Languages, and a Senior Lecturer on this programme at the AUT School of Languages.

#### **3.3.1.2 Programme Leader and Senior Lecturer CEL, School of Languages.**

In response to the Resource Coordinator's proposition, the programme leader researched available options, including existing Australian bilingual literacy programmes for the Deaf, and in conjunction with the administrator and an experienced TESOL teacher, created and established the AUT Deaf Literacy programme.

#### **3.3.1.3 Senior Lecturer, School of Languages.**

This experienced ESOL teacher, had previously taught Deaf students on mainstream programmes and was familiar with working with interpreters and notetakers. He had also attended NZSL night classes, and was interested in working with a Deaf only class, and was prepared to rework materials, often in his own time. This teacher has now taught the programme for several semesters.



### 3.3.1.4 Gatekeeper

Tolich and Davidson (1999) and Creswell (2003) advise that a suitable gatekeeper must be involved in order for a study such as this to be effective. A gatekeeper enables the researcher access to the participants and the setting, and also serves to increase the accuracy of any findings. The gatekeeper also acts as a cultural advisor to the researcher.

In this study this issue was addressed by seeking the input of a respected representative of the core New Zealand Deaf Community; a cultural insider and advisor. An educator herself, the gatekeeper facilitated the researcher's entry into the Deaf Literacy class and vouched for her credibility. This gatekeeper was integral in checking and suggesting aspects of the project design, a method of reducing distortions due to inappropriate design decisions (Patton, 1990). An example of this was the vetting of information sheets before distribution to the Deaf students. Her role also involved ensuring that Deaf cultural protocols were observed and followed closely.

A significant part of the gatekeeper's role was to explain the purpose of the study to the students, how it would impact on them, and the anticipated benefit; that is to have a voice in education for the Deaf. She emphasised that the study would not be *on* the Deaf this time, but done in conjunction *with* the Deaf. She attended the initial meeting with the students and the researcher and explained the information sheet and the consent form in NZSL in a culturally appropriate way, including examples and role play. The gatekeeper provided students with her contact details, explaining she was a cultural intermediary to protect Deaf rights and to ensure the process was fair and empowering for Deaf students.

The Deaf Community in New Zealand is relatively small. Therefore, privacy was a significant issue. The gatekeeper stressed that she would not be privy to the content of the interviews. Once she had answered all questions to the students' satisfaction, the gatekeeper asked for volunteers.

### **3.3.1.5 Deaf Support Tutor (DST)**

During the consultative process prior to the establishment of the programme, the administrator and the Deaf Association of New Zealand (DANZ) strongly recommended the employment of a Deaf Support Tutor. Despite funding issues, AUT concurred and shortly after the establishment of the course, employed an experienced tutor recommended by DANZ. The DST, who is Deaf herself and bilingual, co-teaches in the class and has input into the programme in terms of content, materials and weekly debriefing meetings with the teacher.

### **3.3.1.6 Students**

The students who attended the class in the second semester of 2003 were invited to participate in the study. Four of the ten enrolled students volunteered to take part. All the students came from hearing families. The participants were all culturally Deaf according to the model proposed by Baker and Cokely (1980), and fell into two distinct categories.

Three were Deaf women, whose ages ranged from the mid forties to sixties. They were involved in teaching NZSL and aspects of Deaf culture to Deaf and hearing students of various ages. They were politically supportive of Deaf goals and were very interested in the empowerment of Deaf people. These women were exposed to spoken language from birth within their home environments and exclusively throughout their formal schooling, yet all regarded NZSL as their first language.

The fourth participant, considerably younger at the age of eighteen, was a highly motivated young man, completing a high school qualification and preparing for tertiary education. Clearly proficient in both English and NZSL, he could comfortably communicate in either language, but sought to further improve his written English skills while enjoying peer support.

All four students identified NZSL as their preferred language for the purpose of this study. Therefore, all interviews were conducted in NZSL.

A factor which may have offset the perceived power differential between researcher and researched, of great importance in a study of this nature, was respecting the Deaf value of spending time over and above 'research time'. Prior to the interview process, I interacted socially with the class for several weeks, continuing to do so during the interview process and long after the interviews were completed. Rather than discussing the study, social time, mostly shared over food, was spent chatting about current affairs and exchanging personal information. In fact, it was this social interaction and peer support that prompted the final participant to volunteer for the study. This social interaction encouraged the development of trust between the researcher and participants; trust that encouraged participants to talk freely to me. The fact that I was prepared to spend this shared time was greatly valued by the students. For this reason, it appears that valid qualitative research might take much longer in the Deaf Community than would usually be expected, and in fact involves a number of significant unspoken interpersonal and intercultural factors.

### **3.3.2 Ethical constraints**

The process of seeking ethical consent was difficult because of the issues involved. Firstly, the students were perceived to be part of a vulnerable minority group. Secondly, the research included video interviewing in a visual language with no written component, the translation process required for transcription in written English, and the back translation into NZSL for student verification. Permission to undertake the study was granted through the university ethics committee.

The New Zealand Deaf Community is very small, which means information networks are interconnected and privacy is at a premium. It can be argued that the Auckland Community, and further the students who attend the AUT Literacy programme are widely known. Although efforts were made to mask individual identities, it is probable that students will be identified. Accordingly, it was essential that consent was properly informed. The possibility that students could be identified was highlighted on the consent and information sheets, stressed by the gatekeeper and raised again in NZSL before interviews commenced.

This study also differed from others in involving people, other than the researcher and the supervisor, who were bound by ethical constraints. Both interpreters are employees of AUT. A great deal of trust is involved in sharing personal information in the presence of any interpreter and arguably more so, when the interpreter is involved professionally as a faculty member. Interpreters are bound by a strict code of ethics which is designed to protect the rights of their clients. The participants were given the option of using different interpreters, however, all chose to use those involved in the programme.

The following issues were addressed.

#### **3.3.2.1 Consent and Information Sheets.**

##### ***Hearing***

The hearing participants were both academics who have conducted research themselves and were experienced with the research process. These consent forms (see Appendix A) and information sheets (see Appendix B) followed standard formatting.

##### ***Deaf***

Many participants identified as not having a high level of literacy, therefore it *was* extremely important to ensure consent *was* as informed as possible in the most appropriate media. As the purpose of the programme is to improve English literacy, it would have been inappropriate to provide information only in written form. To satisfy ethical requirements, the consent sheets and information sheets were reformulated in plain English and presented in NZSL by the gatekeeper (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

#### **3.3.3 Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and recorded on video and/or audio equipment as suited the mode of communication (See Appendix C for the interview schedules). More information regarding the intricacies of using the technology to best effect follows later in this chapter.

### **3.3.3.1 Interviews conducted aurally in English and audio-taped**

Interviews conducted with hearing participants in the study were technically straightforward. A small handheld tape recorder offered the advantages of being unobtrusive and portable, while producing a high quality sound. The tapes were then transcribed and the transcripts returned to the participants for amendment and verification.

### **3.3.3.2 Interviews conducted in written English and emailed or faxed**

Data from the Deaf administrator was received by email as he was not available for a face to face interview. One Deaf student also provided information by fax because his videoed interview could not be transcribed due to technical difficulties. In this instance, the participant was proficient in written English and was happy to write his responses.

### **3.3.3.3 Interviews conducted in English and NZSL and video-taped**

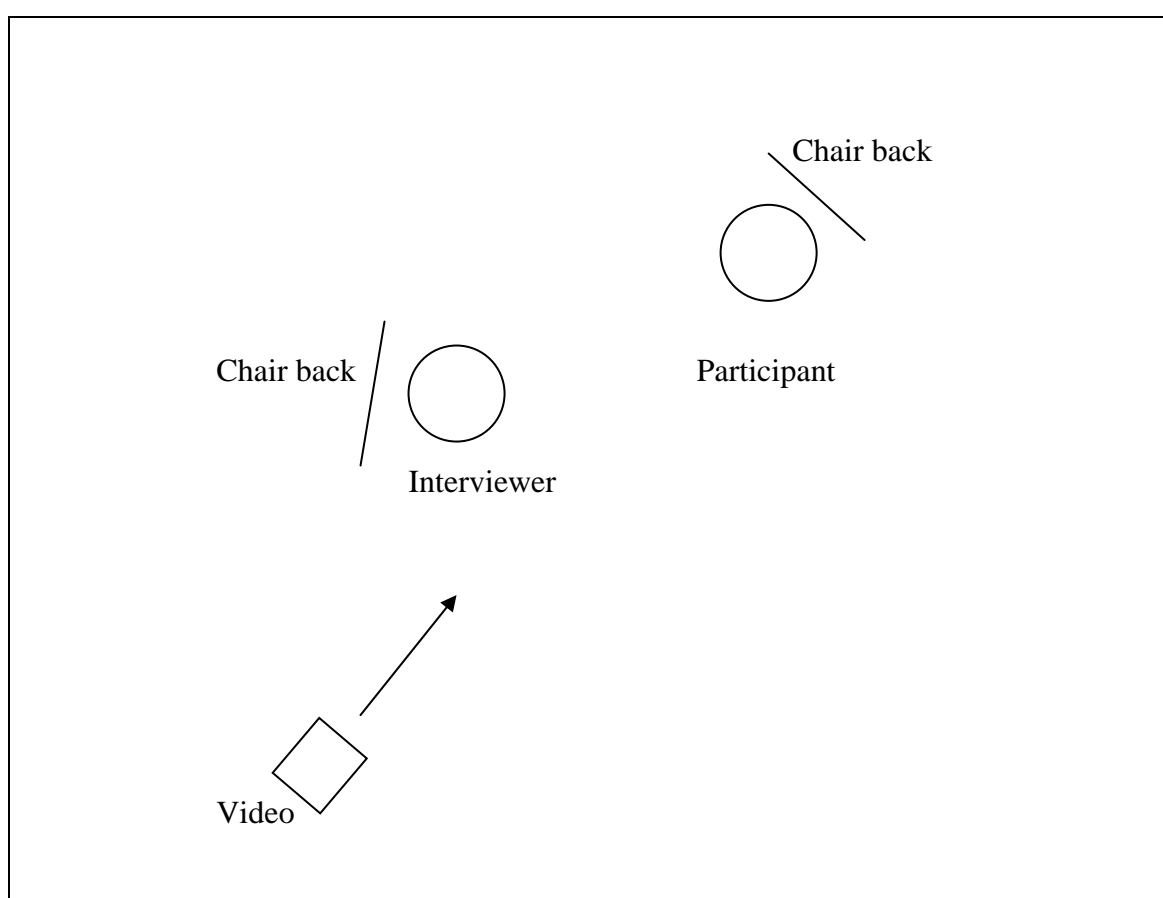
The Deaf support tutor opted to respond in spoken English, supported with signs, in order to eliminate the need for the translation process. Her interview was recorded on videotape, and transcribed from the audio track. This participant, being fluently bilingual, verified the written transcript herself.

### **3.3.3.4 Interviews conducted in NZSL and video-taped**

Student interviews were conducted one on one in NZSL and were videotaped for later translation. This frozen form was then translated into spoken English, recorded on audio cassette, transcribed into written English, and translated back into NZSL for amendment and verification by the participant.

A complicating factor was reading a very visual spatial language from a two dimensional image. Video imagery although extremely useful cannot completely capture the subtleties and flavour of the combination of movement, sound, signs, facial grammatical features and idiosyncratic nuances. This was exacerbated by the need to capture the interaction between the Deaf participants and the researcher who needed to

face each other to communicate comfortably. After some discussion with the gatekeeper, who was experienced in video recording signing pairs, a compromise was reached with a side view of the interviewer, and a direct frontal view of the Deaf participant. The interviewer was working from the written interview schedule, and the questions were thus predictable. The video was set up to capture as much information as possible from the Deaf person. An interpreter's suggestion for the researcher to voice the question in English before signing, to compensate for the compromised camera angle, was considered but rejected on the grounds of breaking the communicative flow between the signers, exacerbating social distance, and therefore compromising the data.



*Figure 3.1 placement of signers for video recording purposes*

Video technology was chosen from three possible options to record the data.

1. Aural – live interpretation of signing recorded on audio cassette.
2. Written – a written questionnaire.
3. Visual / aural – video recording of live interview.

The first option was discarded as the raw data could not be accessed directly for verification. The second option was also rejected as a number of participants had little confidence in their ability to process written English. Although not a perfect system of data collection, the use of video equipment enabled the capture of both aural and visual modes and provided a frozen record. This was the best option readily available at the time.

Video technology made the recording of a three dimensional language possible. It also meant the researcher could refer back to the record after the interview, which avoided the necessity of taking notes at the time. Note taking would have been detrimental to communication as breaking eye contact would have at best resulted in disjointed discourse and at worst offered an insult equivalent to turning one's back on a hearing person. Video recording methods allowed the participants to express themselves in their first language, the 'language of the heart', increasing personal comfort, and therefore decreasing inhibitions, and equalising the perceived power differential involved in any interview process.

However useful, video technology can also have its drawbacks. Although the cameras were discrete units, video recording, by nature, can be quite intrusive. It is possible though that Deaf people, being familiar with the technology as a means of recording significant events, might be more at ease with the prospect than hearing counterparts. The gatekeeper maintains that

Video recording is the best visual technology for Deaf people to record their oral history. It is very visual and conveys the real life motions and linguistic expressions of Deaf people far better than do still photos. Video technology also enables Deaf people to see the evidence of the historical changes in Sign Language. It enables **Deaf people** to be absorbed into the historic lives of Deaf people through **their** native linguistic medium, rather than relying on written texts on the lives of Deaf people. Video camera technology is therefore highly valued within the Deaf Community. (Gatekeeper, personal communication, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2003) Emphasis gatekeeper's own.

In summary, the positioning and angle of video cameras represents a calculated compromise between capturing the fine detail of NZSL, such as facial grammatical features and non-manual signals, and encapsulating the 'signing window' of a spatial language. This flexible approach was adopted to meet the needs of the students.

### **3.3.4 Data Analysis**

The transcripts were examined for emerging concepts. The answers from participants were categorised and arranged into common themes and central issues. As outlined in Patton (1990) the data was labeled and a data index established. The identified themes were then triangulated with other data sources to compare with differing perspectives and reduce biases.

### **3.3.5 The Role of the Interpreter**

Interviews conducted in a spoken language can generally be recorded on audio tape and converted to a written form of the same language for checking by the participant. The human filter in this situation is the transcriber.

However, the interviews in this study were conducted in NZSL, a language that does not have a written equivalent.<sup>4</sup> A necessary and somewhat complex component of this study was the translation of the video interviews into English for transcription purposes, and a translation of the written transcripts back into NZSL. As an interpreter, it would have been feasible for me to perform the translation process. However, in order to eliminate bias, I approached two independent interpreters to perform the task, the first to translate NZSL to English and the second to perform a translation from the transcript back to NZSL for amendment or verification by the Deaf participants.

Several filters were therefore placed between the source data and the verified transcripts which made the participant checking process vital to avoid a case of ‘Chinese whispers’. Live filters included interpreter A (translating NZSL to English), the transcriber (English), interpreter B (primarily translating English to NZSL and interpreting live any amendments and additional data volunteered by participants during the checking process).

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<sup>4</sup> Native sign languages do not have written equivalents used by the Deaf. Linguists have devised notation systems to codify these languages not phonetically as in spoken languages, but by the hand-shapes, orientation, body location and movement of the signs. However, this is neither widely used nor practical for the present study.



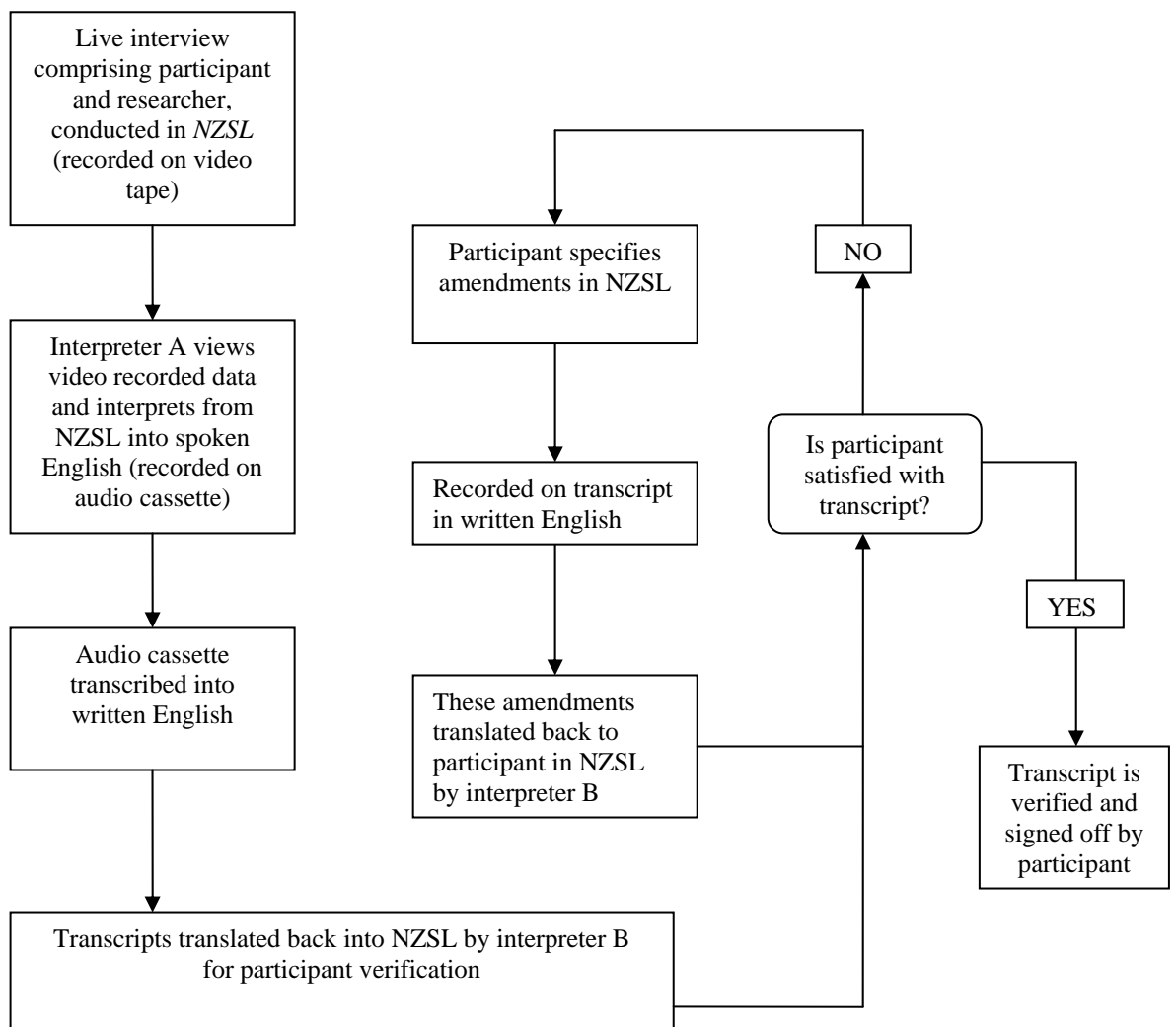


Figure3.2 Flowchart diagram of Transcript Verification Process.

The search for equivalence in conveying the *meaning* as accurately as possible from one language to another, while maintaining a close match with client idiosyncrasies, involves many individual interpreter choices. Some of these choices include affect, intensity, register, style, vocabulary, and the selection of grammatical and structural features appropriate to each language. One feature of NZSL is the appropriateness of expansion and the listing of specifics to convey some concepts expressed in general terms of reference in English (Kennedy, Arnold et al. 1997). An example of this occurred in the study when students were asked what *materials* they would like to see utilised in class. ‘Materials’ was broken down into examples which included ‘handouts,

worksheets, books, etc' with appropriate non-manual signals to suggest the list was incomplete. Therefore, answers were influenced by the necessity of providing examples in NZSL for the generic term 'materials'.

The interpreters used in the study were those used in the literacy programme. Signing styles are very personal and contribute a great deal to communication. Therefore familiarity with student signing styles and the programme content were an advantage in the accuracy of interpretations. However, a very real limitation of using interpreters from the classroom was the possibility of influencing participant comments, particularly in regard to interpreting issues. All students were given the option of working with other interpreters, yet all chose to remain with those selected stating they had established a mutually comfortable working relationship.

Further issues arising during the translation process were identified by the interpreters. The personal factors of this interactive language including live feedback signals natural in a live situation, were somewhat lost in frozen form. This was offset in part by familiarity of the interpreter with the participant and context of the course, and having access to the written version of the interview schedule.

Both interpreters identified the added pressure of knowing the interpretations of a spoken interaction would be frozen in written form, raising the question of register. "Written English is normally more formal and crafted than conversational and spoken English" (Interpreter, personal communication, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2004).

### **3.3.6 Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the small size of the sample and the restriction to one specific situation. The results may therefore not be generalisable (Patton, 1990). A significant limitation is the amount of technical and personal filters between the source data and the verified transcript. Perhaps the most noteworthy limitation is the fact that this research was conducted not by an 'insider', but an informed 'outsider', a fringe member of the Deaf Community.

This chapter has described the methodology employed in the study and the challenges involved. The researcher's role was discussed, and the participants described. The methods of data collection were analysed and the difficulties in obtaining properly informed consent were raised. Working with people who have a manual first language demanded some flexibility in data collection. This chapter also discussed the importance of privileged access to a unique minority community, and cultural protocols to be observed in order to conduct respectful and insightful research *with* the Deaf participants. The next chapter will examine the findings resulting from the methodology employed.

## **Chapter 4**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.1 Background**

This chapter is a summary of the findings of this study. It brings together the viewpoints of those involved with setting up and running the programme, with those of the Deaf students and a Deaf cultural advisor who was invited to become involved in the study to promote and explain the interests of the Deaf participants. In this chapter, it will become evident to the reader that this study focuses primarily on student perspectives. However, to balance these insights, the viewpoints of professional educators and those involved in creating the programme have also been investigated and reported.

The study participants comprise three main groups; those who acted in an advisory capacity during the establishment phase of the programme, those who were actively involved in the programme, and a Deaf consultant who was asked to oversee the study and provide a commentary as a Deaf cultural expert.

The setting out of this chapter presented some challenges and was the subject of much debate. However, the findings have been presented in approximate chronological order of participant involvement in the programme, to provide a paradigm against which the later findings could be properly evaluated. For this reason, the findings relating to the advisors will be discussed first.

#### **4.2 Advisors**

There were two principal advisors in the establishment of the Deaf Literacy programme at AUT, the Resource Coordinator for Deaf Students, and the Programme Leader of a very popular certificate programme offered at the university. Their roles and involvement are outlined below.

#### **4.2.1 The Resource Coordinator for Deaf Students (RCDS)**

The Resource Coordinator for the Deaf (RCDS) was the initial driving force behind the establishment of the AUT Deaf Literacy programme but has since left the institution. He was invited to share his insights and viewpoint. The following data were provided by emailed correspondence.

##### ***The rationale behind the establishment of this programme***

The Resource Coordinator for Deaf Students at AUT perceived a need for this Deaf literacy programme to be established as it filled a unique niche in the tertiary sector. In his role, he was contacted by prospective and existing Deaf students, interpreters and lecturers concerned about the level of literacy skills amongst the Deaf students. He felt it was “critical to stop the cycle of systematic failure in the education system”.

I became increasingly frustrated to see the despair and stress experienced by a number of prospective Deaf students when they expressed their concerns about their level of literacy skills... at the same time [the lecturers] had grave concerns that the students would fail due to English being their second language... It's a terribly frightening prospect for a Deaf student with low [English] literacy skills to enter a tertiary organisation.

The Resource Coordinator determined that one of two courses of action would assist these students. The first option would be for AUT to put in place a policy whereby Deaf students could complete assignments and be examined in their preferred language. The second option and most easily implemented was to establish an English literacy course for the Deaf. The added boon of the second approach was to make the programme accessible to the wider Deaf community. AUT was a logical option, as strong links already existed between the Visual Languages Section, where NZSL interpreters are trained, and the Deaf Community.

##### ***Teacher, NZSL and Deaf Culture***

The RCDS maintained that a general knowledge of Deaf culture and NZ Sign Language was the most important aspect for hearing teachers directly involved in teaching this course. He attributed the lack of knowledge in NZSL and the core issues of Deaf

culture as the predominant factors for the failure of previous programmes designed for the Deaf.

Too many hearing professionals try to establish a course specifically designed for Deaf people without acknowledging key elements of the complications of Deaf issues and NZSL...Hearing professionals do have separate lives, but they must be prepared to put the energy into learning about Deaf culture at some stage if they wish to succeed in establishing a course for the Deaf. You simply can't ignore this advice!!!! (sic)

The RCDS also identified the importance of recognising the impact of previous negative educational experiences for many Deaf.

A Teacher needs empathy for the Deaf students, to understand how years of systematic oppression and lack of access has affected them. The students may be expecting the system to let them down again.

### ***The value of reciprocity***

The Resource Coordinator saw the programme as the result of equal collaboration between Deaf and hearing professionals, utilising the strengths of both. The hearing participants would contribute knowledge in relation to teaching English as a second language and the RCDS, in consultation with other members of the Deaf Community who would contribute knowledge on Deaf issues.

### ***Sensitivity to the drawbacks of a small community***

One of the issues raised was the likelihood that long standing relationships between the students as members of a small community would impact upon their classroom participation either positively or negatively. He argued that one of the roles of a successful teacher included mediation where necessary to lessen the drop out rate, and help ensure the continuation of the course.

### ***Queries in class, face, and the 'Deaf nod', gauging Feedback***

The 'Deaf nod' or 'nodding syndrome' as the RCDS put it was also marked as vital for the teacher to recognise. He emphasised the importance of the teacher comprehending

feedback and ensuring that the students understand fully without being patronised. It is essential that students are not placed in face-threatening situations. He noted that a large number of Deaf students “won’t have the confidence or courage to ask questions and won’t like to appear stupid or risk ridicule or criticism which could be from their fellow students”.

### ***Barriers***

As mentioned earlier, a significant barrier for the students was the apprehension experienced when re-entering education, after previous education had failed them. However, another major difficulty was the funding issue, as the initial aim was to restrict numbers to ten students, and the RCDS identified the need for interpreters and a notetaker. A further challenge was identified in selecting a teacher who was enthusiastic enough to teach English literacy to the Deaf.

### ***Attitude***

The RCDS identified as fundamentally important the correct attitude of the course providers and instigators. He considered it crucial that the course was not designed *for* Deaf people, but in collaboration *with* Deaf people, if it was to have a measure of success.

The key to success in meeting the needs of Deaf people is the attitude of those involved in establishing programmes...I have seen again and again, hearing people build their own empire by absorbing knowledge from Deaf people for their own benefit then excluding those Deaf people. At the end of the day, it’s the Deaf people who do not get the credit for their expertise in their specialist field. I am crucially aware of this attitude. AUT showed no signs of this and I felt AUT was the appropriate provider as it had the best resources and the right attitude to ensure this course would be successful.

The RCDS stressed that in a course of this nature, Deaf and hearing professionals must work together as equals, and share their fields of expertise, with a spirit of mutual respect and acknowledgement.

#### **4.2.2 The Programme Leader**

The RCDS, after determining the need to establish an English literacy programme for Deaf students at AUT, approached the Programme Leader who was experienced in designing programmes for teaching English to speakers of other languages, and put to her the merits of establishing the course. In response, the Programme Leader undertook extensive research both here and in Australia, in collaboration with Deaf people and professionals involved with the Deaf Community, and set up the existing programme. Some of her insights, gleaned in an interview, are discussed below.

##### ***Perspective on NZSL***

Following discussions with the RCDS and a thorough investigation of similar programmes offered in Australia, the Programme Leader determined that reading and writing English needed to be taught utilising both NZSL and English. The solution was to find an experienced ESOL teacher and interpret the information into NZSL.

##### ***Perspective on Deaf Culture***

The Programme Leader recognized the importance of establishing a culturally safe environment for the students, and identified several cultural aspects which needed to be taken into account. A primary consideration was to make the information available to the students in visual form. This included ensuring a clear line of sight between students and the interpreter, and the use of equipment such as the overhead projector. She was also aware of culturally appropriate attention getting strategies such as tapping on the shoulder or flashing lights, and other necessary politeness strategies such as looking directly at the Deaf person when communicating through an interpreter.

Other very significant aspects of Deaf culture were identified such as the importance of group support, and an awareness of very real barriers related to the history of Deaf education.

Other barriers are [a] history of educational, so called failure in public education, or in any education system. Where people haven't had the opportunities perhaps they should have had, and haven't had the support they should've had and



therefore had not been successful, [they] find the classroom such a tremendously threatening place.

The Programme Leader also ascertained that Deaf people are likely to feel constrained when amongst hearing people in class. This and the promotion of cultural safety led the team to incorporate the services of a Deaf Support Tutor.

Another characteristic of the Deaf Community identified by the Programme Leader was the importance of both personal interaction and of taking the time to share information from one's own background.

### ***Perspective on Teacher Attitude***

Perhaps the most important decision was the choice of teacher for this class. The Programme Leader identified the following characteristics as important.

We needed someone who had enough humility to know that they didn't know everything and were willing to learn from the students, and to realize that perhaps they had a lot to learn about Deaf culture, and about teaching these people... [and] who was willing to have a go.

## **4.2 Participants Actively Engaged in the AUT Deaf Literacy Programme**

The second group of participants includes the people taking part in the programme. This group includes the students, the Deaf Support Tutor and the teacher.

### **4.3.1 The student participants**

A brief exploration of the commonalities and differences in the educational backgrounds of the student participants has been included in this study. This background is relevant as most participants regarded their schooling experience in a negative light; all had experienced difficulty with English as a school subject and all viewed their own level of receptive or expressive ability in written English with some degree of dissatisfaction. This previous experience was therefore germane to gauging the students' expectations of, and satisfaction with, the AUT Deaf Literacy programme. As mentioned in chapter three, interviews were conducted in the language in which the

students were most comfortable. For most of the students, this study provided the first opportunity to contribute their insights as to the significance of written English as a principal means of communication, education and empowerment for the Deaf, within a non-Deaf world.

The four students fell into two distinct groups. Three of four participants were educated as children under the 'oral' system which placed a strong emphasis on the development of speech and lip-reading skills. Educational information was also provided through these channels. However, as they were all profoundly Deaf, these students reported being unable to operate successfully within the oral system as, ironically, success depended largely on the use of residual hearing to utilise aural cues. Their schooling experience was described as baffling and their education as largely inaccessible. They said that they depended on the 'clever' ones, with sufficient residual hearing, to lip-read the teachers and in turn to sign explanations privately. These three explained that signing was banned at school and punishable, even in private time. They expressed their frustration that these formative educational years were wasted, and that as a direct result their career options were severely limited. One student summed her experience up succinctly "Education was lost."

When asked how they managed to learn English, these three participants confirmed benefiting most from bilingual peers who acted as informal tutors, and through watching the questions and responses of other students at school. All four participants stated that the process of learning to read and write English was extremely arduous.

Despite these challenges these students demonstrated great perseverance in pursuing their individual goals of mastering written English. One tried to work through an English grammar book without assistance and spent her lunch breaks with her hearing employer exchanging information about written English and NZSL. The student was trying to establish links between the language with which she was familiar and comfortable (NZSL) and the unknown territory of written English. Because this was a way of improving her English with which she was comfortable she also flew regularly to another city to attend a Deaf Studies programme with a view to determining English language rules from an NZSL basis. Another student examined documents at work in order to identify common patterns and sentence structures, while the third analysed

business correspondence. After years of pursuing improvement in her English literacy abilities, one participant recalled arriving at an interpreted tertiary programme, and indicating a wall of texts, asking the teacher “But what are books for?” The reply that book reading not only provided information, but also pleasure, struck the student as incredible.

The discussion in chapter two demonstrated that Deaf education has undergone significant changes in recent times. The fourth participant, who completed his secondary school education in 2003, experienced the education system initially through the medium of signed English, a manual system created by hearing educators, and more recently spoken English interpreted into NZSL, the language used by the Deaf Community, in a mainstreamed environment. He described the access to information and interaction provided through the NZSL interpreter as invaluable. However, although this student was fortunate to be exposed to an education system that recognised NZSL, a lack of interpreters meant the actual educational support did not match the proposed support in his final year. He described his mainstreaming experience as academically challenging but socially isolating.

All participants identified their preference for communicating with other Deaf in NZSL as this ensured a ‘deep understanding’ and facilitated easy communication. However, when communicating with non-signing hearing people, the participants used English in various forms, employing a raft of strategies. These included gesturing, pointing, lip-reading and speech, and manually coded signed English. However, without exception, all participants agreed that *written* English was essential for communication within a hearing world, and was the most effective visual means of communicating with the non-signing population. Nonetheless, despite the consensus that written English was the most useful means of communicating with non-Deaf, it is important to note that all participants expressed a degree of discomfort when using written English and perceived their own levels of skill in this area as deficient.

The students uniformly expressed the desire to achieve mastery in English through becoming comfortable with reading and writing English. The other two components of English commonly taught, listening and speaking, were not alluded to by the students and appeared to be irrelevant as the students could not hear and did not wish to speak.

All expressed the belief that the gatekeeper between the worlds of the Deaf and the non-Deaf was literacy, and that the mastery of reading and writing English was the key.

Because of the negative associations surrounding their introduction to English literacy, the participants clearly had a number of reservations when they enrolled for the AUT Deaf Literacy programme. All these students, at times, felt that their former educators had low expectations of Deaf students, often leaving them feeling inadequate and unchallenged. All had experienced restricted access to information at school at some point, in terms of the information not being presented by means of a visual language, and were left to rely on individual coping strategies. Students had not only encountered linguistic barriers, but also reported missing out on study techniques such as how to use a dictionary.

However, despite the difficulties formerly encountered in learning English, which in some cases had resulted in a dislike of the language, all participants emphasised the necessity of mastering English for their own empowerment as this would benefit not only themselves, but their families and the Deaf Community as a whole. They showed tremendous commitment to achieving this end. The students therefore were encouraged to express their aspirations relating to English literacy, asked to make explicit their opinions regarding various aspects of the AUT programme, and to contribute ‘insider’ suggestions for future courses. The major findings emerging from these interviews have been grouped and outlined below.

#### **4.3.1.1 Student Perspectives on the Teacher**

##### ***Perspectives on the Teacher and NZSL***

The students clearly considered the teacher’s knowledge of English to be extremely important. However, the students also pointed out the importance of a teacher’s proficiency in NZSL, in order to be able to draw parallels and contrasts between the two languages.

Of course it's important for that person to have high level English skills, in order to teach English! But to be able to teach English as a second language to Deaf people, a high level of proficiency in NZSL is necessary. You need sign language skills and you need to have studied the grammar and studied both language structures to be able to teach English as a second language to Deaf people. (S1)

Distinctions in language structure were raised by students who had put considerable effort into researching the variance in language structures included the linear English use of suffixes, the linguistic norms of expressing tense in both languages, and in English the discrepancy between spoken and written forms, not encountered in NZSL. Students emphasised the importance of understanding the rules of English, and comparing these rules with those of NZSL to facilitate understanding.

While the students uniformly emphasised the value of the interpreters who enabled access to the information provided in this programme, they did express the desire to communicate directly with the teacher in NZSL, to eliminate unnecessary filtering.

Maybe in the future we could communicate directly with the teacher in NZSL and not have to go through interpreters, then we could just use a notetaker. (S3)

Issues raised by students included the challenges faced by interpreters when converting spoken English into a different register in NZSL. One student commented that if teachers were able to converse directly and fluently in NZSL in a conceptually accurate manner, the teacher would pick up on cultural sub-linguistic cues, such as the 'Deaf nod', and therefore gauge student progress more accurately, and interact more closely. They also identified teacher repetition which appeared to be used to fill interpreting lag time. This lag time, is the delay in interpretation resulting from the time required to receive a message in one language, extract the meaning, and convert it accurately into the target language. Lag time is essential for a precise interpretation.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher and Deaf Culture***

The students were impressed that this class was conducted in NZSL. For many this was the first time English had been taught to them as a second or additional language. The students emphasised the importance they placed on teacher familiarity with Deaf

culture, and they stressed that cultural factors needed to be incorporated into English literacy programmes for the Deaf if they are to be successful.

[Our teacher's] got ESL skills, and clearly he can't learn about every single culture of every person he's teaching. For example other cultures can have different perceptions of time. But I think Deaf people are a little different because a teacher can use body language and be very physical, very visual, use movement or better yet, signing. (S1)

The importance of teachers understanding Deaf culture was stressed by the students. As mentioned in the previous section, while students identified a bilingual / bicultural teacher as ideal, the students unanimously stated that teachers of this programme must be willing to learn about the language and culture of the Deaf, while the students learn English. The students clearly saw the process of learning as a reciprocal one, and considered their own roles as informal teachers of NZSL and Deaf culture a given.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher as learner – the value of reciprocity***

The student perception that the teaching process was reciprocal appears to be unique to the Deaf Community. This deep seated belief that the teachers were equally learners in NZSL and Deaf culture was stated by both generations not as a suggestion, but as a necessity for an effective learning environment.

I do realise that [our teacher] and other ESL teachers can teach Deaf regardless of experience and knowledge of Sign Language and Deaf culture, but it's more difficult for them. It's unusual to find bilingual / bicultural teachers who understand the Deaf students, so often it ends up being a sort of relationship where they teach us English and we teach them sign or we teach them Deaf culture. (S1)

It's important that they [teachers] understand the Deaf. I feel there is a big difference for us Deaf students, you know, we explain and try and talk and try to effect changes. (S2)

The students saw their responsibilities reach beyond their own English literacy learning process, to nurture and encourage the teacher in his/her development of NZSL and Deaf culture. A possible reason for this reciprocal teaching process may be the equalising of the power differential between teacher and student, perhaps in response to un-empowered schooling experiences. The youngest student saw the learning process of the teacher as a distinct advantage.

I think the teacher should know about Deaf culture, but not compulsory though and I think it would be good to get a teacher who didn't know much about Deaf culture as this will help the tutor learn about Deaf culture while Deaf students learn English. (S4)

An important aspect of this reciprocity however, is the teacher's attitude and willingness to learn. The students of this programme all identified their teacher as having a positive attitude towards them as individuals and a healthy respect for their culture. Without this attribute, it appears that students would not feel as comfortable, or indeed obligated, to take on the responsibility of teaching the teacher.

He wants to be involved so we support and share some signs, and he's very helpful. (S2)

Another reason for students to 'teach the teacher' may be the desire to shape the education process to more accurately match the needs of existing and future students as a joint responsibility of the wider Deaf Community. This latter proposition appears to be borne out through the emphasis placed on the importance of understanding and facilitating turn-taking within the context of Deaf protocol, and attention getting strategies such as arm waving, physical tapping on shoulders and light flashing, that are definitely cultural.

If the teacher is trying to pass on instructions and we're not looking he needs to either use specific techniques such as physically tap us or flick the light switches to get our attention. He can't just rely on sound as you would with other hearing ESL learners. In our culture and our language, touch is very important as an appropriate communication technique and I think the hearing teacher needs to understand a little bit about Deaf culture in that respect. So I think yes, it's important for them to learn about Deaf culture... We also give the teacher instructions [on] techniques for turn taking and so on, but the relationship is reciprocal." (S1)

The notion of reciprocity as expressed by these students included social interaction with the teacher and the mutual sharing of personal information. The students agreed that this social factor was culturally very important, and directly influenced their level of comfort and willingness to communicate openly with the teacher.

### *Perspectives on the Teacher and socialisation*

The significance placed on the value of regular social interaction with the teacher was explained as evidence of the teacher's interest in the students personally, his commitment to learning to communicate through NZSL, and his willingness to gain a greater understanding of the Deaf culture. A related issue that was raised, was the expectation that the teacher should be prepared to show a degree of personal openness including the willingness to discuss his/her professional background and in particular his/ her motivation for becoming involved with teaching the Deaf.

I don't know how he became a teacher of the Deaf with twelve Deaf students. I thought he started this year but I'm not sure of his history... he looks okay. .. I thought it would be good if he stayed and shared lunch with us and communicated with us. (S2)

These cultural values and expectations appear to differ markedly from those of ESOL learners in general, and would possibly be considered unreasonable by many teachers. In fact, during the presentation of preliminary findings, a teacher with no professional connection to the programme, claimed that social interaction was a part of any good teaching practice with at least one class outing. However, what is referred to here is not so much formally planned outings as the expectation of regular daily social interaction with students on the teacher's own time. Rather than infringing on student privacy, this level of personal input and teacher availability appeared to be considered crucial by these Deaf students, shaping not only their perception of the teacher as a person, but also his/her effectiveness within a teaching role.

It really depends on the teacher / student dynamics as to whether people pick up language. (S3)

This may be explained in part by the Baker and Cokely model (1980) which describes the avenues into the Deaf Community. In this model social, linguistic, political and audiological aspects intersect, and are bound together by the right kind of attitude. As a hearing teacher it is clearly impossible to possess all these attributes and so become a core member of the Deaf Community. However, it is possible to become accepted at a trusted and functional level within the Deaf Community by developing the first three attributes, suffused with genuine 'attitudinal Deafness'. 'Attitudinal Deafness' according to the perspective presented by Baker and Cokely, means an attitude of



supporting the goals and values of the Deaf, or taking a cultural view as opposed to a pathological view. Plainly this level of commitment is extremely challenging, and requires a great deal of motivation and sensitivity.

In practical terms, the students agreed that to complement their teacher's positive attitude and evident willingness to communicate, they would like him to share their break times. All expressed the desire to converse socially and directly with the teacher during break time, and expressed their interest in him as a person and not just a teacher.

I think teachers should be involved more socially. For example, it would be great to have him stay with us at lunch. I would also like to talk more with [the teacher] socially, perhaps without the interpreter. (S2)

In contrast to the advantages of the social 'intimacy' within the Deaf Community, most of the students raised the importance of teacher sensitivity to the *drawbacks* of intimacy, which may not be obvious to an outsider new to the Deaf Community.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher's Sensitivity to the Drawbacks of a Small Community***

Perhaps the most significant factors of working with members of a small community is the issue of privacy. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these students possess a strong sense of cohesiveness and solidarity as members of the Deaf Community with certain shared experiences and views. However, as with other small communities, hierarchical dynamics and the preservation of 'face' come into play.

As described previously in this thesis, three of the four students interviewed retained extremely negative memories of previous educational programmes, and all to varying degrees expressed dissatisfaction with their resulting educational outcomes despite their high level of commitment to learning. The three students argued that their formative educational years had been wasted under the oralist régime of speech and lip-reading and this had led to the loss of opportunities as adults. These three also identified those with more residual hearing as 'the clever ones' as they were more suited to the oral system. As a result, these students believed an education in written English was nigh impossible for the Deaf but nevertheless was crucial to social and economic survival in a hearing world.

Therefore students entering this programme as adults who had suffered difficult learning experiences were concerned that educational activities should not be face threatening.

Something happened three weeks ago, and I was trying to express myself but I didn't have enough time to express myself to the teacher, and other students started to laugh and I felt frustrated. I really wanted to contribute but I decided to hold back. So really it's the same frustrating feeling I've had through my life, it makes me a little nervous. (S2)

In fact, all the students interviewed expressed the need for privacy when their written work was corrected, with particular emphasis on personal compositions such as essays. They wanted to receive personal feedback directly from the teacher in a one on one situation, with the assistance of an interpreter who was already established in a confidential professional role. They did not want to have their work displayed for class discussion, even if the name was removed. The size of the community, social knowledge and context would indicate whose work it was and leave the author open to losing face.

Feedback via email was appreciated by those students who had email, but all preferred the immediacy of correction and the accuracy of communication face to face where contextualised discussion was possible. Receiving information in their first language ensured that the students fully understood and could gauge the tone of the feedback. This also gave them the opportunity to ask questions in live time. Emailed feedback was problematic in that it was conveyed in written English, the medium with which the students were struggling. Perhaps the greatest advantage of one on one feedback was the privacy of correction, which ensured the preservation of face and reputation.

The students also raised the issue of the teacher acting as a facilitator within the class, recognising the rules of Deaf turn-taking and being sensitive to the group dynamics. Some students indicated frustration with being 'talked down' or laughed at within the group, or not being observed to want to participate because of hierarchical dominance within the group.

However, the constraints mentioned regarding the interaction between members of a small cultural group, are significantly outweighed by the advantages presented. These advantages, which were explored earlier, include the group cohesiveness and solidarity stemming from shared experiences and views, and the ability to communicate with ease amongst one another. With respect to previous educational experiences, three out of four of these Deaf students relied heavily on peers to explain concepts in NZSL for a deep understanding. This last learning strategy has been incorporated into the AUT Deaf literacy programme.

The opportunity is built into this programme, for students to discuss concepts in NZSL amongst peers to ensure understanding, before being required to put pen to paper or answer questions. In this way the old schema for learning informally from one's peers can be reactivated and used openly as part of the teaching strategies. Students are therefore able to benefit from formal and informal teaching, which continues at break times.

### ***Perspectives on Queries in class, Face, and the 'Deaf nod'***

As mentioned the students emphasised the benefits of discussing their class-work amongst themselves in NZSL, to establish a strong conceptual basis of the topics. All four participants highlighted the importance of asking and answering questions of the teacher and one another within the class context. Although the constraint was far greater when questioning the teacher, the students also indicated significant constraints when answering questions in front of their peers. The difficulties appeared to stem from a combination of turn-taking protocol and preservation of face. Even in this very small group of students there were conflicting viewpoints about participating in class. Students who lacked confidence in the educational setting were afraid of other's derision, and as a result often kept quiet. The more confident students felt frustrated with the differences in understanding, and described their less confident peers as asking "stupid" or "ridiculous" questions. There was also a view that answering another student's question would be useful in that it would allow modeling while at the same time protecting against a loss of face. Ironically, this approach was sometimes misconstrued as bragging. Many questions were directed towards the teacher. However, according to the students, most questions would be directed towards the Deaf Support

Tutor or to other peers in a quiet way, so as to not draw attention to themselves or interrupt the flow of the teaching. The reality was that a great deal of this interaction occurred at break time.

One student, who felt extremely challenged in the classroom, would pay close attention to the questions and responses of other students rather than risk an incorrect answer. If these answers were confirmed by the teacher, and concurred with what the student had surmised, a response would be put forward.

At the other end of the spectrum, a confident student would gauge the other students' understanding and frame her questions so the others could benefit from the teacher's clarification. This student took on the responsibility of ensuring the other students would receive and process the information in a meaningful way and sought to resolve issues arising from signals of comprehension and lack of comprehension that the teacher did not identify. An example of this was the 'Deaf nod'. When Deaf people do not understand someone they may nod as if agreeing and might possibly smile. Most hearing teachers would assume the "Deaf nod" was a signal of understanding, but in fact it often means exactly the reverse. The confident student recounted the following:

A little later on I asked the person next to me if they'd understood. Of course they nodded and said they did. I wondered if they'd understood the meaning, and so asked her to explain it to me. When she did, it became clear that she had grasped the wrong meaning. I explained the story again in depth, using full sign and she laughed, laughed and laughed. So when I gave them a deep meaning through [NZ] sign language, they understood it. (S1)

This student on another occasion observed the Deaf nod over something she thought quite important. She emailed the teacher privately and asked for that particular section to be repeated in class. When it came up, she asked very targeted questions of the teacher until she felt the class had grasped the concept presented. An interesting outcome of this type of behaviour that was designed to save her class-mates' face, was that she was labeled 'question girl' with slightly derogative overtones. By breaking out of the 'Deaf nod' this student was in a way breaking solidarity with her peers and risked exposing their lack of understanding.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher Gauging Student Feedback***

For Deaf people...teachers also need to give complete explanations and watch for comprehension before moving on. If something is not explained in enough detail [for us to] understand, then people get lost. But if the explanations are quite short, clear and to the point then we can get the picture. (S3)

An issue raised by the students that relates to the 'Deaf nod', is the importance placed on the teacher's ability to gauge and give appropriate feedback. These feedback signals are unrelated to what is commonly referred to as 'body language', but rather are defined as cultural and linguistic components of communication within the Deaf Community which carry specific meaning. Non-manual aspects of sign language, described in *A Dictionary of NZSL* (Kennedy, Arnold et al., 1997 p. xviii), 'include various movements of the head or shoulders or trunk, raising or lowering of the eyebrows, and movements of the cheeks, lips and tongue.' While non-manual signals are features of NZSL and can be interpreted, it is not feasible to rely on an interpreter to identify all the meaningful non-manual signals of all the students while fully engaged in the process of interpreting. It would therefore be useful for the teacher to have knowledge of this aspect of Deaf culture and NZSL, and to have the ability to receive and give appropriate feedback, and in doing so, interact with the class more closely and effectively.

The indirect exchange of information between teacher and students through an interpreter, also gives rise to other issues.

### ***Perspectives on Working with Interpreters***

Yes, [working with an interpreter] is effective. I can't see what the teacher says. I can't lip read him. Some Deaf people manage to, but I just focus directly on the interpreter. (S3)

The students agreed that the interpreters were a necessary and extremely beneficial component of this class as it is currently taught. The students claimed that interpreters allowed for fluent communication with the teacher and therefore provided access to information. The students also pointed out that interpreters assisted in preserving privacy when discussing corrections, an important aspect of saving face. The students raised the importance of the teacher's ability to work effectively with interpreters.

### ***Perspectives on Interpreter Time lag and Teacher Repetition***

An aspect of interpreting which must be recognised by the teacher is the time lag, essential for a good interpretation. This time lag is used to deconstruct the source language (L1) and reformulate the message into the target language (L2) in a package that is semantically and grammatically accurate. This time lag can result in the speaker assuming that the interpreters are struggling, or that the Deaf recipients do not understand. The time lag can also result in the speaker feeling uneasy with unaccustomed silence, or the delay in delivering their spoken message and receiving the feedback. Some students stated that they were confused by the teacher when he repeated himself as he appeared to strive to fill uncomfortable silences left by the interpreting time lag. They found this repetitive and very tiring on the eyes, which caused them to switch off mentally. In this situation, the ability to understand student feedback would also be of value.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher's Use of Physical Teaching Space***

I believe it's a hearing trait to wander around and talk. (S1)

The students all highlighted the need for a clear line of sight between themselves and the interpreter. The layout of the classroom was set up to facilitate this, with the chairs placed in a horseshoe arrangement facing the board, with the interpreter to one side of the board. However, it was important that the teacher did not disrupt this line of sight by inadvertently moving between the students and the interpreter. Another issue regarding physical teaching space was when the teacher unintentionally cut off communication with other students by moving forward to interact with an individual. In this respect, the teaching of this group differs markedly from teaching other ESOL classes, where the teacher may feel she or he needs to approach various students, or generally move about, as part of good teaching practice. The students stated a clear preference for the teacher to choose and maintain a position that was not visually distracting and did not interfere with the students' line of sight to the interpreter or each other.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher Gesturing***

Another aspect of teaching which differs from other ESOL environments is the importance of limiting gestures. The students receive their information visually by observing the NZSL / English interpreter. Therefore, when the teacher gestured, the students would naturally look at the teacher assuming it was language, but in effect ended up missing the interpreted message. This gesturing, far from creating a sense of rapport between teacher and students, was in effect ‘visual noise’ and may have been distancing students. The students clearly preferred the teacher to restrict gestures as, to them, it did not carry linguistic information and was distracting.

### ***Perspectives on Eye strain***

We have to sit and watch the teacher a lot, so it’s good to have breaks, and activities to sort of break up the intensity...Like an idea or a game, something to liven it up and keep us awake. Because watching for long periods of time is exhausting... it’s better to pace it with breaks and have time to stretch as you go along. This makes it much more pleasant. (S2)

The students suggested related activities designed to break up the teaching time, with particular reference to games and physical movement. Despite a lengthy break mid-way through the teaching time, the students stated the need for regular changes of activity between segments, and time for stretching. Far from pandering to lazy or unmotivated students, the insertion of breaks is necessary to reduce eye strain as the process of taking in concentrated information visually is very tiring on the musculature of the eye. In NZSL teaching, these regular integrated ‘breaks’ are an understood feature of language teaching practice, and could be utilised effectively in a bilingual literacy classroom.

### ***Perspectives on the Teacher’s Attitude***

We have a really good, good teacher, who tries hard to explain things to the Deaf students. I can understand where he’s coming from and it’s good that he’s helpful, giving us information. I find that there are the Deaf students there that support the hearing teacher and it’s a reciprocal kind of relationship; we give Deaf cultural perspectives, our way, how our way works. (S2)

The single most outstanding comment that came to light when students considered the teacher's role, was that she or he must exhibit the right *attitude* regardless of signing ability or knowledge of the Deaf culture. This value reflects the Baker and Cokely model (1980) of avenues into the Deaf Community.

Of significance in this study was the students' warm regard for their teacher. All emphasised his professional approach and willingness to share information. The youngest student, who appeared to have enjoyed his secondary schooling the most, stated that he found the teacher of this programme the most approachable of all his hearing teachers to date. Above all, the teacher was perceived by his students as having the right attitude, and the willingness to be taught himself.

It's important that they understand the Deaf. I feel there is a big difference for us Deaf students, you know; we explain and try and talk and try to effect changes.  
(S2)

From a Deaf perspective, this attitude included the willingness to operate within a reciprocity model, where information was not simply transmitted to the students, but rather *exchanged* in a dual learning situation. A function of this may be to minimise the power differential between hearing and Deaf as both assume teaching roles, or more importantly to have a hand in shaping their own education as informed consumers.

Exhibiting an appropriate attitude also included a willingness to interact directly with the students socially, outside of class time. Possible reasons for this may include evidence of genuine interest in a Deaf perspective, or an opportunity to share information to build rapport and situate each other. An additional reason for the value students placed on personal interaction with their teacher may be related to the social distance experienced in their own schooling days under the oral system.

A feature of NZSL is also that by nature it is communicated face to face being a visual language, and requires people to interact in person to convey the message without information loss. This 'intimate' component of communicating with the Deaf students appeared to be well understood and employed by the Deaf Support Tutor, who was an established and respected member of the Deaf Community herself.



#### **4.3.1.2 Student Perspectives of the Deaf Support Tutor**

A role that was constantly referred to by the students was that of the Deaf Support Tutor. This position was considered integral to the success of the course by all the participants and was established to provide cultural and linguistic support to the teacher and the students. Far from merely being a useful component to the course however, the students stressed the essential nature of the position and in particular the extreme importance placed on the choice of person to fill this role.

The students not only identified the Deaf Support Tutor's role as providing support to themselves, but also to the teacher. They identified a major function of the Deaf Support Tutor as being the teacher's tutor.

She's trying to encourage the teacher to be more visual, to use the board, and to have more activities, not just to speak and lecture us, because the dynamics in a Deaf class are very different to those in a hearing class, and he often doesn't realise. He's gradually learning about Deaf culture and how to teach Deaf people more effectively. (S3)

The students recognised that the Deaf Support Tutor provided the teacher with insights into Deaf learning strategies from an 'insider' perspective, assisting with modifying teaching practices to incorporate the 'Deaf way'; appropriate Deaf cultural practices.

I see how the Deaf Support person is very, very effective. She can often determine what might be a little too hard, or make suggestions on how to do something in a better way. (S3)

The Deaf Support Tutor was perceived by the students as much more than an assistant in the classroom; she was seen as the 'Deaf voice' in the programme and an advocate for shaping education for the Deaf. Not only did her role include identifying learning needs and providing feedback to the teacher, but also included the responsibility for keeping the communication channels open between teacher and students. The students perceived her influence as crucial to the success of the learning experience and respected her tact when dealing with face and power issues.

Something I found very interesting was that the Deaf support tutor regularly stayed and spoke with the teacher for about half an hour after we'd all gone. I didn't realise this initially, but I found it interesting because it demonstrated to me that there's actually some discussion going on between the teacher and the support person about how to improve the course, which I think is brilliant... (S1)

The Deaf Support Tutor in addition to cuing the teacher into the needs and perspectives of the Deaf students also made the programme accessible to the Deaf students in terms of linguistic skill, support and the non-judgmental scaffolding of information.

A strong rapport with the students is an essential component of the Deaf Support Tutor's role in the classroom. This tutor, a well known member of the Deaf Community, had 'street credibility' with the students. She was of similar age to most of the students interviewed, and was a respected peer who had the benefit of better access to education. Her role required a sensitivity that went beyond a job description, and involved shared experiences and an understanding of the students. One student described her decision to drop out because of personal and professional constraints. The Deaf Support Tutor had the perceptiveness to recognise a problem and encouraged the student to continue in the programme, providing personal support.

Another student described the benefits of being able to communicate directly with the Deaf Support Tutor without any filters and stated her preference for asking her questions of the tutor rather than the teacher. This allowed the student to preserve face within her peer group and gave her the confidence to query points that needed clarification.

The youngest student, whose prior educational experience had been comparatively enjoyable, described this Deaf Support tutor as "fantastic" and said she was by far the most accessible teacher he had experienced to date. All the students expressed a high level of comfort with her, and stated their confidence not only in her knowledge and skill in both languages but also in her ability to answer questions about the course content. The students trusted her integrity sufficiently to expose areas of personal weakness they wished to work on within the course. The students who sought more support began, quite naturally, to sit around her usual seat in the class, so they could ask her for discreet clarification during lessons.

One student stated that the Deaf Support Tutor was invaluable because she “double explains” meanings to the students. Rather than merely translating concepts from one language to another, she had the ability to contextualise concepts within both cultures. Her abilities went well beyond linguistic competence in both languages; this Deaf Support Tutor had the capability to draw parallels between the two languages and explain the concepts in a Deaf way.

Sometimes if the explanation or message comes through that is a little tricky, and the meaning seems a little strange, we ask for the support tutor ... to explain it more specifically for the Deaf students, so it is marvelous. Really we get an explanation that ensures we get the meaning. (S2)

An extremely positive feature of the programme was the time built in for discussion in NZSL, before students were asked to complete tasks. This meant the Deaf Support Tutor could monitor the discussion and keep it on track.

In addition to the ability to ‘double explain’ concepts in a meaningful way to the Deaf students as an ‘insider’, this DST also acted as a cultural intermediary between teacher and students. This Deaf Support Tutor was not merely knowledgeable *about* the Deaf, she *was* Deaf. Arguably this paradigm cannot merely be learned, it must be experienced. The students saw her role as acting in an advisory capacity to the teacher as well as a support to the teacher. They also perceived her as an advocate in terms of suggesting Deaf learning strategies from an insider perspective and for raising concerns such as the physical constraints of learning visually.

The Deaf Support Tutor took her breaks with the students, often clarifying some point or other informally, and made herself available by email to the students. Her motivation for being involved with the programme was well known to the students, and the students recognised that she was working towards the empowerment of the individual Deaf students and the Deaf Community at considerable personal cost. By maintaining solidarity with the students, and making herself available during ‘break’ times, the DST acted as both tutor and peer, equalising perceived power differentials between the students and herself. Arguably, this could be a reflection of the Deaf Community where less formality and social distance observed within roles and attitude is the measure of the person.

The DST not only teaches within the Deaf Community but also lives within the Deaf Community. The position entails professional access to extremely sensitive issues, therefore the tutor must be trusted by the students and have a great deal of personal integrity. The students viewed the DST as having mana<sup>5</sup> and expected her to maintain their confidentiality.

In addition to being fluent in both languages, and capable of providing explanations to students in a culturally meaningful way, the students also identified the DST's role as gauging the difficulty of the work relative to student abilities and modifying the information accordingly. The 'Deaf nod', face, and feedback signals appeared to be largely left for the DST to recognise and resolve. The students expressed confidence in her grasp of both languages and the respective rules, and informally divided into two groups. As noted, those seeking more scaffolding gravitated to seats close to the DST. Not only could they direct discreet queries but they could also test conclusions before participating openly in the class.

While the students appeared to see the Deaf Support Tutor as 'our other tutor' with the same level of authority as the teacher, they realised that she was not perceived on the same level by the institution as she was "only a tutor" not a teacher. It is also interesting to note the comment "she doesn't have it in her CV" indicating yet again the student perception of the power of the written word.

I'm really comfortable with (Y) as a support teacher, but she hasn't been in teacher training, she doesn't have it in her CV. She's not an actual teacher, only a tutor. She's been doing that for a long time, going to different classes and supporting the hearing teachers, but she's still not become a full teacher, not yet. And I think it would be good for her to become one of these teachers. I'm trying to convince her that it would be a good idea. (S3)

The wish to see this DST elevated beyond a support role, trained and recognised as a teacher of the Deaf was echoed and broadened by another student who expressed the belief that hearing students would also benefit through learning from Deaf teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> Mana (Maori) is defined in English as authority, control, influence, prestige, power or honour.

I'd like to see Deaf teachers communicating more and more with Deaf students... And have the mainstream having Deaf teachers as well. Why can't they? What's the difference? Deaf teachers can learn to communicate with hearing students, they can share and work together; that's the future, that is what I'd like to see. (S2)

#### **4.3.1.3 The Students' perspective on materials and critical literacy**

##### ***Perspective on materials***

The students offered various suggestions for classroom materials which they would find useful. They ranged from newspapers to the "Woman's Day" magazine, grammar books, templates for certain types of letters, and a specially designed text book. A major feature was the wish for the incorporation of literacy related *activities* on a very regular basis, to cement the learning and afford their eyes a much-needed rest.

Students also wished to become familiar with formats for personal and business transactions such as letters, funding applications for clubs, and job applications. They requested a workbook to keep the information together and make personal notes. One student recalled a previous literacy course that involved creating her own book. She said that this was a personal highlight and allowed her to be creative with her use of literacy. Another student who requested a text book designed for Deaf adults, felt that it would help alleviate the frustration felt by the more advanced students in a class comprising different levels in literacy. This student suggested the incorporation of graded extension activities, based on common content, and stressed the value of having a text book for independent study.

These practical requirements led the students to talk about the need to understand how written English is used and the importance of understanding the nuances of the written language.

##### ***Perspectives on critical literacy***

Most students raised the point that a significant difference in cultural values included the tendency for hearing people to be indirect as opposed to the Deaf value of being 'straight'. They recognised that this was reflected in written practices, yet were unsure

of the 'rules'. One student raised a personal example of cultural misunderstandings arising from communicating in writing, without the contextualisation of communicating face to face.

When writing a complaint, I need to learn how to phrase it in an acceptable way. For example, I wouldn't want the recipient to take my direct language as a threat! To avoid any misunderstandings, I always write at the bottom of a fax "English is my second language." This also avoids the possibility that the recipient might look at my English language structure and draw the conclusion that I was stupid, and discard my message.

The students requested more than just the building blocks of English; they wanted to learn how to use English in a hearing way to communicate on the same wavelength and so avoid misunderstandings. In short, how to become empowered rather than remain marginalised.

Yes, even short sentences have lots of hidden meanings. The meanings need to be overtly explained more for Deaf people in order to make sense, as we don't come across these language forms naturally in context. Once the meaning is clear, we can make progress. (S1)

#### **4.3.2 The Teacher**

The teacher in this programme was selected on the basis of many years of experience in ESOL teaching and his interest in the Deaf Community and NZSL. He had taught Deaf students English in the mainstream environment and so had had some exposure to the culture and language. Most importantly, the people who established the programme recognised that this teacher had the crucial attribute of accepting and valuing these students as members of the Deaf Community, a distinctive cultural and linguistic group. He also showed a willingness to learn from the students themselves. As the Programme Leader noted:

We needed someone who had enough humility to know that they didn't know everything and were willing to learn from the students, and to realize that perhaps they had a lot to learn about Deaf culture, and about teaching these people...[and] who was willing to have a go... We were lucky that we found a person that had all of those qualities. He had actually worked with Deaf people before in the hearing classes who could work on Saturdays, who was extremely dedicated and hard working, and who was willing to learn.

The teacher strongly affirmed the use of NZSL in this programme. He recognised the value of activating the students' schema and the benefits of discussion in NZSL, particularly with regards to encouraging participation even by the more reticent students. By providing ample opportunities for discussion in NZSL, the teacher allowed the students to exchange ideas with the Deaf Support Tutor and one another, and develop a strong conceptual basis from which to learn written English.

It's essential that you recognise the importance of students' L1 which is sign language, and it's crucial that you give students opportunity to discuss things in their own language.

However, despite the benefits of this approach, there do appear to be significant limitations for non-signing teachers. The first limitation is a lack of direct access to conversations, and as a result, the 'eavesdropping' technique and spontaneous comments that teachers use to check that students are on track, are only possible through an interpreter.

The second limitation was raised by the teacher. In order to usefully compare and contrast the two languages NZSL and English, a teacher would have to be bilingual, have a sound knowledge of linguistic aspects of both languages and have the ability to *recognise* and discuss these aspects accurately in both languages.

...you have to make salient, I suppose, those aspects of language that are not present in their first language, and here I'm at a disadvantage because I'm not fluent in sign language, I'm not fluent in NZ Sign and so I'm not able to make those contrasts of differences salient.

One point of significant difference in perception between the teacher and the Deaf students however, was the level of discomfort expressed when personal work is used for teaching purposes.

... [The students are a] little bit shy of you know baring their soul if you like. But I've overcome that, any fax that they send me, I use it now, now every one, but you just take the name off it. There's always a chance that the students will feel embarrassed but the affective dimension in this class... is quite good, so I don't think any of the students really feel threatened, because they're all in the same boat.

As the population of the local Deaf Community is relatively small, information travels quickly around the Community. Taking into account the particular sensitivity surrounding the educational background of the Deaf, privacy is therefore at a premium. Removing names would not necessarily mask the identity of the writers. The students reported a loss of face in exposing weaker aspects of their written English language production in front of the other students. It would be unfortunate if, as a result of displaying private work, the students became reluctant to communicate by fax or email with their teacher.

The teacher identified an extremely useful method of tailoring the programme to the needs of the Deaf students. At the conclusion of each teaching session, the DST met with the teacher, and provided feedback on what seemed to be successful and what was less so and made suggestions about future lessons.

...so much of what goes on in the classroom now has evolved from, not only from the needs analysis itself, but also through feedback, ongoing feedback...The input from the bilingual support tutor, that's been invaluable, and also student input as well.

Another method the teacher identified as invaluable for the students is the use of peer feedback and discussion in NZSL during class time.

...here you utilise the students' L1... all the discussions are done in Sign Language. And that in a way activates their schema so when they come to the reading task they have some idea of what they are going to be reading. They've made some inferences; if one individual student wasn't quite sure of the topic then they can feed off the others and they can share their ideas and they come to a general understanding.

As mentioned previously, the teacher identified the advantages of working with the DST with regards to feedback and the continual modification of the programme. As a Deaf person herself, she acts as a cultural and linguistic intermediary. The teacher maintained that the additional cost of employing a DST in this context was not only outweighed by the benefits gained, but felt that the role was essential to the success of a programme of this nature. The teacher also recognised that a large component of the DST's role was to scaffold and support both the weaker and advanced students, in a class that comprised many different levels of competency in English literacy. At one point, the class was divided into two groups, and the DST took the students who needed



more support. However the teacher reported limitations with this approach, due to the DST's apprehension about teaching without formal training and the time constraints involved in preparing two sets of materials.

One of the difficulties of this course as outlined by the teacher is the variance of levels amongst the students. As a result compromises have been made in terms of approach.

But the difficulty as I've said is that this group is multi level and so those that are at the school based level, the critical approach just goes over their heads... but to help those who have more language you have to take on the whole language approach, look at the whole text, how the text is organised and also the critical approach.

The teacher identified limitations of the programme as it currently exists in terms of the teacher time and effort involved and the expense. For these reasons, he cannot see it extending past the existing four hours per week.

...if there was (sic) unlimited resources and opportunity it would make this course quite difficult because four hours, even though it's a constraint [it] is at the moment...quite adequate. It's a very labour intensive course and it's [an] expensive course to run, because of the interpreter[s].

### ***The Teacher's perspective on materials***

The teacher reported the immense amount of preparation required to teach this class. Many materials needed to be adapted or created specifically, and this was often done in the teacher's own time. Some texts were altered from existing materials designed for teaching English to immigrants, however, the teacher found these largely inappropriate for use in this context. Texts were taken from local newspapers to provide contextualised access to general knowledge, while other materials were sourced collaboratively from other teachers, the DST and the Deaf students. A strong visual component linking graphics to text in materials was identified by the teacher and programme leader as very important. Their preferred layouts allowed for more 'white space' on the page. The teacher also selected material with content relevant to the Deaf students in order to stimulate their interest and activate existing knowledge.

### 4.3.3 The Deaf Support Tutor (DST)

The title of Deaf Support Tutor suggests a role similar to that of a teacher aide for the students. However, as the study progressed it became apparent that this position was very much more than the title suggested. It was in fact, arguably the most complex role in the entire programme. As indicated in the previous section, the DST played a pivotal role in creating an environment of cultural safety and comfort. In addition to this, she shaped the education process within the class by providing ongoing feedback to the teacher relating to communication strategies and effective visual learning styles.

The DST referred to the importance of Deaf culture within the classroom, and identified the unique ‘Deaf way’ of thinking and learning. She emphasised the importance of having a teacher who shows a commitment to becoming enculturated himself. She saw part of her role as a cultural intermediary, mediating between the hearing teacher and the Deaf students.

Well I can tell you that I think [the teacher] has gained more of an insight into Deaf culture through me. He’s really happy to learn a different way of thinking. A Deaf way of thinking...Deaf people are learning now that it’s ok to speak up without fear of ridicule ...we can express ourselves more freely.

An issue raised by the DST was the ‘Deaf nod’. The DST raised the propensity for the Deaf to use the ‘Deaf nod’ with hearing teachers, while admitting to a Deaf person that they do not understand. The DST being privy to this information must then make the teacher aware of aspects that need clarification. She pointed out that as a Deaf person herself she could read the students’ lack of comprehension, and detect signals that would be invisible to many hearing teachers.

So, if a teacher says something and I see it going past the Deaf people, you can see that blank look...they won’t tell a hearing person that they can’t understand...they feel more comfortable admitting to another Deaf person that what the hearing teacher is saying is a bit over their heads. I can say “Excuse me, I’m not sure they understand that” and then [the teacher] can go on elaborating what it means.

The DST described her role as liaising between the students and the teacher. She explained that interpreters cannot perform this function as they must adhere to a

professional code of ethics that precludes them from acting as advocates, support people, or intermediaries.

The idea being of course there are not enough Deaf teachers, so get a hearing teacher and a person like me to act as an intermediary... I'm the one who understands the culture...and how to explain things but I am also learning from the teacher.

Two issues were raised by the DST relating to the indirect nature of communication between the teacher and the students. The first was the lag time involved in live translation:

This morning [S1] had a question for [the teacher] and I could understand it even before the interpreter... and then [the teacher] had to think about it. So I just said "Well..." straight away. I just said the answer. It's more direct, much more direct...I'm watching him, I'm watching the students, I'm watching [the interpreter] and I might miss something and I think "Hang on. What's going on here?" The students can understand each others' faces and I can understand them straight away because we're Deaf. That's the best situation. Here we've got three ways. It's a time lag.

The second issue relating to the teacher working through an interpreter was the amount of redundancy resulting from the teacher repeating information when waiting for a response. The students echoed this and felt it was a contributing factor for eye strain.

The DST identified an interesting divergence in communication styles between Deaf and hearing.

I think teachers like talking, and they talk, talk, talk. I think Deaf people can't handle that. It's too much. You need to have breaks, *do* things...It's a lot of strain on the eyes... The hearing people use words all the time, too much elaboration, too many details [when] you don't need them, but it's their 'way' so you can't just say "It's no good" but for Deaf people they want to *see* and *do*!

She pointed out the importance of avoiding eye strain and presenting the information in a culturally appropriate way. The point of adapting the presentation style is not only for physiological reasons, but to utilise the 'Deaf Way' to maximise learning.

I'll be watching [the teacher] talking and then I'll start thinking "He's talking too much. It will be going past them and they won't really understand that." ... If there are too many words they'll stop listening because they don't have any

relevance to things... They want to be *looking*. They want something to be *happening*... Sometimes people will just go off somewhere [mentally], because it is too monotonous. You need change to keep them [all looking with rapt interest]. You have to use hands on things, games and visual things, interesting things to break it up.

According to the DST, effective teaching pedagogy for the Deaf includes not only activities but also the use of examples, a feature used frequently in NZSL.

Last week [the teacher] was saying we can't make it too easy for them, that they have a responsibility for themselves. I thought "Yep, right, but on the other hand they need to be shown and given examples"... He said "I want you to write a sentence about this." How would they know what he means?... I was too late to say "Give them an example" ... first we have to show them what to do. We have to give them some...this is where I get [stuck]. I think I know there is a way of doing this. It's playing, playing... Maybe on the board... It would be more fun for them to go up, helping, saying "You missed one, that one, that one..." it's just *doing* it. The interaction is more fun.

However despite her experience the DST also had communication difficulties with the teacher. Occasionally she could not follow his instructions, especially when no interpreter was present, and found that maintaining eye contact was difficult. These kinds of interactions are disempowering for the DST and lead to misunderstandings. From time to time the DST was unsure of what to do with teaching materials given to her to use with some of the students. She felt that more detailed instructions were necessary. She was also uncertain as to whether she could or should proffer advice, and did not want to give offence. For this reason she felt the DST role needed to be formalised.

I don't know how to suggest improvements without coming across as criticising... So I have to define my role. I think it has lots of potential if I wanted to develop it further.

The DST's difficulties with the teacher's instructions highlighted another Deaf value; the appreciation of direct information and explicit rules. The indirectness of hearing people is often perceived by the Deaf as another excuse to keep on talking.

You need rules...Deaf people like rules...first of all [the teacher] has to learn to tell them right at the start when they have to be at class. The first semester I worked with [X], people were staying away and [X] was quite concerned... I said to [the teacher] to tell them right at the beginning so that they know. From then on

we had a special talk at the beginning of the first class saying these are the rules...If you want the certificate, you have to come. This class is free. You can't take it for granted. If you don't want to come, that's fine, there are other people waiting. That's good. You have to be firm. Deaf people understand this.

The DST was in effect taking on a teaching role, without the benefit of specific training. She expressed the need for teacher training to effectively support her in her role.

I'm the one who understands the culture...and *how* to explain things but I am also learning from the teacher. ..I thought, "Oh, I'd like to teach English" but I found out that I can't explain 'why' and Deaf people have a habit of asking "Why? Why is it that and not that?" ... How do you explain that to them? I'm not a teacher and I think if I went to teacher training, maybe I'd be taught how to say those things. I often think if *I* could go to teacher training, *I* could do it...I don't have any rules. I don't have any formulas to draw on. I don't have the time. If I had the time yes I would [teach English literacy to the Deaf]... I would like to do that – an ESOL course...I think it would give me teaching skills which is what I need.

### ***Perspective on materials***

An important point raised by the DST was the need for more activities, to suit the preference of Deaf students to "see and do". She saw the emphasis on activities as of immense importance when designing materials for the Deaf. The DST brought up her concern that materials needed to be developed on a larger scale for adult Deaf students in terms of English literacy. Over the years, the DST has examined an enormous amount of material designed for hearing classes and adapted those she considered relevant. In particular the DST stated that the rules of English grammar needed to be made explicit and organised in a way that could be drawn on by others. The DST also emphasised the importance of teaching with texts containing content relating to general knowledge, in order to fill gaps left from deficits in previous education, and suggested investigating different genres. Above all, the DST wanted to have the time and resources available to draw all this information together and be involved in compiling a suitable text, to fulfill a critical need in the education of Deaf adults.

### ***Perspective on English and NZSL***

The DST recognised the value of bilingual teachers comparing and explaining similarities and differences between English and NZSL. She recounted a student asking

the teacher about a feature of English, which was expressed very differently in NZSL. This was a query regarding a written text where ‘he said’, ‘he replied’ and ‘he answered’ related to the same speaker. The teacher’s response was that it was more interesting to read, rather than just repeating ‘he said’. In NZSL interest would be held, not by signing lexical variations, but by non-manual features expressed on the face and the spatial positioning of the ‘speaker’ which is indicated initially and maintained through role-shifting. Once the meaning was made explicit, the Deaf student immediately understood and responded, “Instead of having a boring consistency using the same word you can be creative. I never realised this, I didn’t know the rules. But now I’ve got it”. Here the DST has emphasised that knowledge of the conventions underpinning effective writing is important.

### ***Perspective on critical literacy***

The DST also highlighted the importance of conventions and assumptions inherent in both languages and perceived literacy in the fullest sense as vital for the Deaf to access a non-Deaf world. She emphasised the importance of students becoming familiar with the norms of English usage, such as underlying messages and politeness strategies and how these differ markedly from those of NZSL. For example, the DST identified the tendency for hearing people to ‘waffle’, whereas Deaf people tend to be very direct. She was clear that such values and differences need to be made explicit in order to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.

#### **4.3.4 Cultural Advisor**

A respected member of the Deaf Community and an educator herself, was approached to oversee this study in the capacity of cultural advisor. This contribution was considered essential by the researcher as a ‘cultural yardstick’ and to maximise the validity of the findings. The cultural advisor was involved in overseeing the project design, explaining the study and the purpose of the study to the students and facilitating the researcher’s access to the ‘insider’ views of the Deaf students. Without her assistance it is doubtful that the students’ feedback would have been as forthcoming or as forthright. The following insights are among the comments offered by the cultural

advisor in relation to her own views on what would be preferred in a programme teaching English literacy to the Deaf.

The cultural advisor (CA) stated a clear preference for a bilingual teacher who could compare and contrast NZSL and English. She explained that the similarities and differences could then be conveyed to the students both directly and swiftly.

It would be fantastic if there was comparison between English and Sign Language; it would be fantastic if they were compared and contrasted but there are not many teachers who are bilingual. A bilingual teacher would be ideal because they can quickly explain the differences between the two languages.

She did however identify the dearth of teachers in this field who are truly bilingual. If it were not possible to have a bilingual teacher, it would be of value for the teacher to be experienced within the Deaf Community, and there are avenues available from which to gain this knowledge. One way she suggested was reading available literature on the 'Deaf way' and visual learning. She advocated that more research into the teaching of Deaf students should be carried out

A teacher who engages in research and tries to apply the research to their teaching will make the Deaf students feel respected...It would also be good if the teacher was up to date with information [that relates to Deaf people]...It is worthwhile to bring that kind of material into the class because the students will feel that it is beneficial and that their world is becoming richer and that the teacher is learning from the Deaf Community.

Another recommended avenue from which to gain experience and knowledge within the Deaf Community is through socialising with the Deaf. Regardless of linguistic proficiency, spending time socially and evidencing an attitude of being willing to try is generally valued by Deaf people, and again reinforces the value of reciprocity. The teacher learns while the students learn, in an atmosphere without the overt power differentials intrinsic in the educational setting.

It's up to [the teachers] if they want to find out more. Good on them if they do. It would be good if the teacher attended cultural events, Deaf drama, but of course they can't be expected to do that all the time.

While attending social events would clearly be valued by the Deaf, socialising can be as simple and informal as attending morning tea and showing the willingness to communicate.

The cultural advisor placed a great deal of importance on the teacher's attitude in relation to the Deaf students and the evidence of respect for their language and culture.

If a person is uninformed about the Deaf community, their culture and their language, they can cultivate an attitude of being interested, wanting to find out and eager to learn. That kind of attitude will take them far; having a warm personality. It's also important knowing how to keep your boundaries and not to overstep them or to try and take control.

According to the cultural advisor, a good attitude can, in part, compensate for a lack of proficiency in NZSL or knowledge of Deaf culture if they feel "comfortable...unafraid... and have the attitude of 'willing to have a go'." This might well be related to the hearing teacher choosing to become a learner and risk the culture shock of being in the linguistic minority while communicating. Clearly, this perspective is one of empowerment, equality and respect as opposed to one of 'helping' which further marginalises the Deaf.

Possessing empathy helps create a good attitude, draws you closer to the line. It can be difficult if you don't share similar experiences that you can relate to and don't understand how a person perceives the world...You're there to empower Deaf people. You have to decide what you're there for, to help or to encourage.

In line with a healthy appreciation and understanding of the students' language and culture, the cultural advisor raised other cross cultural considerations for teachers to be aware of. The advisor pointed out the preference of some Deaf people to work using computers, as work can be easily adjusted over time without showing a trail of corrections or incorrect answers. She also suggested the use of videos showing examples from real life to teach written English, and signed presentations on video, which the students could express in written English. Photographs, pictures, and CD Roms could also be valuable teaching aids. The cultural advisor suggested the use of 'powerpoint' as the teacher can type in words immediately and so be more interactive with the students. Another option raised was the communication between students and teacher online, providing a real purpose for using written English, enabling students to



work from home and to increase confidence. She also pointed out the importance of reinforcing all the teaching points visually. One way is to record the points on the whiteboard, and another effective strategy is to use the computer to underpin the points visually. She stressed the importance of a continual correlation between theoretical and practical components.

The Cultural Advisor also emphasised the importance of teachers understanding the students and responding to their feedback signals.

[Teachers] also need to know how to elicit things from the Deaf students. It's easy for students to misunderstand something that is being taught and for the teacher to carry on oblivious to the misunderstandings...A hearing teacher does have a responsibility to identify misunderstandings.

The cultural advisor, in parallel with the DST and the Deaf students, also recommended that teaching time be broken up with regular activities to reduce eye strain and to give the students the opportunity to clarify points with the teacher.

The lecturing part should be a maximum of twenty minutes long. In my sign language class I teach for ten minutes, [and] then engage the students in activities. The activities vary, sometimes the students find them easy or they find them challenging and interesting. If a lecturer has no choice but to lecture, it should be a maximum of one hour; otherwise the students' eyes become too tired.

### ***Perspective on materials***

The Cultural Advisor recommended the use of real life material that the students would find useful and applicable to their lives. Like the teacher, the CA viewed the incorporation of materials from newspapers as beneficial because it also helped to fill the gap in general knowledge left by former inadequate education.

While supporting the use of materials relevant to the cultural Deaf Community, she advised against the use of material regarding audiological or pathological views of deafness as inappropriate or irrelevant to most of the students.

### *Perspective on critical literacy*

If I was the teacher I would be selective about what I taught. I would make sure the content was relevant to their lives. For example, I would find something that was applicable to their jobs which could be used to improve their English at work thus empowering them to meet job expectations.

Another factor the cultural advisor thought important is the very different way hearing people and Deaf people express themselves. In order to avoid embarrassing mistakes and to ensure they comprehend and are understood correctly when expressing themselves in written English, Deaf people need to learn how to work with these differences to convey the intended meaning, and avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Yes, different skills could be taught on how to find the hidden meanings and how to 'read between the lines'...Hearing people are very good at being indirect and ambiguous in their language, whereas Deaf are very direct... The teacher can show how something can be written politely, or directly, or offensively.

The CA also raised the English use of idioms, proverbs and lexical items with multiple meanings which can be very confusing for a second language learner. She also discussed the issue of register, and cultural politeness strategies which need to be made explicit. She provided an example.

I studied English for business which I found very useful. I learned how to write a letter to a boss using appropriate and polite language, and how to be inoffensive, and to use less of the word 'you' and more of the word 'I'. There are many Deaf people who don't know this.

#### **4.4 Summary**

What has emerged from the data clearly indicates that these Deaf students are not merely second language learners; they are unique in the way their primary language is formed and structured. Their language is unique not only in the three dimensional spatial aspect, but also in the way concepts are developed visually. The belief systems and values of Deaf culture underpin learning within the classroom. This cultural aspect has not been emphasised simply to be 'politically correct', but has clearly been confirmed by *all* participants in this research as a profound and essential constituent of

meaningful learning within the Deaf Literacy programme; one which needs to be learnt deliberately by non-Deaf teachers in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings. It is obvious that the Deaf participants strongly believe that the ‘what’ of learning is encapsulated in the ‘how’ of learning. Participants also made it clear that in order to optimise the learning environment teachers need to be familiar with both the Deaf culture and the importance of reciprocity in the teaching and learning process.

A significant finding was the value placed on the Deaf Support Tutor by the students and teacher alike, and the complexity of the role. The students expressed the wish for this DST to be offered formal teacher training, so that she could teach the students directly in NZSL and be recognised as a teacher. The Deaf participants in this study noted that ‘in a perfect world’ they would be taught English literacy by bilingual Deaf professionals without filters and in a way best suited to their learning requirements, particularly with regards to minimising eye strain and increasing the kinetic component within the classroom.

It was also found that students appreciated the positive attitudes of the course providers and in particular the teacher. The students uniformly praised the teacher in terms of his expertise, openness to Deaf viewpoints and willingness to develop the programme to best suit their needs.

These findings show an evolving programme and provide concrete evidence that the development of materials and teaching practices in future literacy programmes must take into account the particular needs of the Deaf from a Deaf perspective.

The next chapter will discuss recommendations for changes in the programme arising from the data collected, and will outline suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings arising from the data collected.

There are four broad conclusions that can be drawn from the material. The four conclusions all relate to the culture of the Deaf community. In this community:

- Reciprocity and partnership in any teaching / learning situation are highly valued.
- Teaching staff who are regarded as “insiders” by the Deaf play a highly influential role, e.g. the DST.
- While the teacher’s attitude is of paramount importance, knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture is greatly valued. So too is the willingness to gain these insights and knowledge.
- Collaboration is a fundamental value. The Deaf wish to work alongside their hearing colleagues to further the interests of Deaf students.

#### **5.5 The Importance of Reciprocity and Partnership in the Teaching Process**

Reciprocity has been highlighted many times throughout this study. The Deaf Resource Officer, the Cultural Advisor, the DST and all the students; in short, all the Deaf participants who have contributed to this research project have raised the importance of both Deaf and hearing sharing expertise, resources and working in full collaboration.

A facet of this reciprocity is the identification and sharing of values across both cultures, and the acknowledgment and exchange of the two languages. In view of the negative schooling experiences of the older Deaf in particular, and the fact that their language was driven underground by ‘oral’ educators, this acknowledgement and appreciation of NZSL represents a significant step forward, and an opportunity to begin shaping the education process that better suits the needs of the Deaf.

A comment that was made by the students was the importance of the teacher spending time socially with them. This was not in the form of special outings, but a daily chat

face to face, without the interpreters. When questioned, the purposes of this appeared to be multiple, and included the Deaf value of communicating face to face, to underpin the teacher's positive attitude and interest in the students, Deaf culture and NZSL, and to equalise the teacher student power differentials by casual interaction and the willingness of the teacher to become a learner. The students identified the break time as ideal for this, and wanted the teacher to share their lunch break and communicate directly with them.

### **Recommendation:**

Students could be involved in teaching the teacher. A suggestion is that twenty minutes per class be set aside for the students to present aspects of Deaf culture and NZSL in their preferred language which could then be translated with the help of the interpreters. The students could present this in anyway they felt appropriate. This approach would support the teacher's objective of working closely with the students and provide a number of benefits. The students would likely gain more confidence in class from shared participation which would balance the power differential inherent in educational settings. Their culture and language would be acknowledged on a practical level by following the Deaf value of "don't just say, but do", and the teacher would have the rare benefit of first hand education from the community he / she is supporting. The teacher would also gain an insight into the 'Deaf way' of teaching and could utilise some of these strategies when teaching. This suggestion would also align with the Deaf value of reciprocity.

In promoting this reciprocity, the role of the DST is a key one.

### **5.3 The Importance of the Role of the Deaf Support Tutor (DST)**

The students regarded the DST with the highest esteem. They viewed her not so much as their support tutor, but as a co-teacher without official recognition.

I'm really comfortable with (Y) as a support teacher, but she hasn't been in teacher training, she doesn't have it in her CV... I think it would be good for her to become one of these teachers.

The students identified the DST as the first avenue to supply answers because she knew the answers and could explain directly in NZSL to the students, without the time delay and filtering of the interpretation process. The students also identified the DST as having a good grasp of both languages, and having the ability to draw parallels and contrasts.

Another important component of the DST's role was the ability to identify student comprehension or lack of comprehension and if necessary ask the teacher for clarification of a point, without students experiencing loss of face. In particular she could identify the 'Deaf nod', and because she herself was Deaf the less confident class members communicated more openly with her.

A very important aspect of the DST's role which was raised by the students was the cultural mediation between the teacher and the students, regarding the appropriateness of course content, focus, presentation and suggestions for the evolution of the course on a weekly basis. The students saw her input, particularly in the half hour debriefing session at the end of class, as evidence of their voice being heard in their education. The responsibility for this is enormous and the efficacy of this input rests on the assertiveness and confidence of the DST.

Mediation between students also formed part of the DST's unofficial role. This mediation component resonated with both the Deaf Resource Officer and the Cultural Advisor's expectations of the teacher's role. Because the Community is small and insular, students may have known each other for a very long time and have a history of friendship or disagreements.

A significant issue that arose from this study was the need to formalise the DST's role. She expressed uncertainty over her professional boundaries, and was hesitant to convey all her ideas for fear of giving offense.

### **Recommendations:**

It would seem appropriate to upgrade the DST's role to that of co-teacher. This would indicate more of a partnership between the DST and the teacher and provide more scope for the development of the programme. In this vein, some classes could be taught by the DST, and others by the teacher. The DST indicated the wish for teacher training to provide more resources for her to draw on, and to help to define her role. To support the DST within this role, in-house teacher training could be provided, or funding for teacher training elsewhere could be offered. Valuing the DST's contribution would also serve to emphasise the importance placed on the contribution of the Deaf Community itself.

In light of issues brought up regarding the DST, it is very important to examine the teacher's role.

### **5.4 The importance of the teacher familiarising himself / herself with NZSL and Deaf Culture**

An interesting point raised by the students and supported strongly in the literature, was the importance of teachers in a bilingual programme being themselves bilingual in NZSL and written English, with a significant knowledge of the linguistic makeup of both languages and the ability to draw parallels and contrasts. This was felt to be important in both Deaf and hearing teachers. A facet of this bilingual / bicultural familiarity includes knowledge of how Deaf people learn and the ability to adapt cross-culturally to recognize and overtly teach effective learning strategies. Schirmer and Williams (2003), Paul (2003) and Bailes (2001) argue that strategies for reading and writing English must be explicitly taught.

A facet of becoming bi-culturally aware is the importance of recognising the need for the students to preserve face, as they interact in such a small community. Pursuing the issue of face, it is significant that these students would override the need for privacy in

order to participate in the study to give ‘voice’ to their insights in an attempt to help shape their education.

### **Recommendation:**

A distinct advantage for teachers wishing to engage in teaching this programme, would be linguistic competence in NZSL. However, foundation knowledge could be provided through completing NZSL modules, a module in Deaf Culture, and preferably significant exposure to the Deaf Community prior to taking the class. Undertaking a module on the comparative analysis of NZSL and English would also be extremely advantageous. As well as enabling the teacher, undertaking this kind of study would evidence the teacher’s ongoing commitment to the Deaf Community. These modules could be offered as professional development by the University and would provide a foundation of support for the teacher. Unfortunately, it is problematic to expect a teacher to acquire a native Sign Language while teaching and coordinating or creating resources. A possible solution to this situation would be to give the existing teacher a time allowance so that he / she can immerse himself/ herself in the language and culture through study and exposure to native language users. If this is not possible, developing basic communicative competence in NZSL and getting to know each student’s name sign would be an advantage.

However, the onus of promoting more informed interaction does not lie with the teacher alone. The students must realise that the teacher is not Deaf and never will be, and so must be treated as an empathetic professional. The expectations of the students may not completely align with those of the teacher; therefore in this partnership, a degree of compromise will always be necessary.

Nevertheless, none of these goals can be achieved without the collaboration of the Deaf Community.



## **5.5 The Importance of Collaboration with the Deaf Community**

A recurring theme from the data collected and supported heavily by literature, is the importance of developing programmes for the Deaf from the *inside*. This means not only taking into consideration Deaf culture and NZSL, but ensuring the Deaf ‘own’ the programmes by contributing to the design and being involved at all levels.

### **Recommendations:**

#### ***Guidelines***

As Deaf and hearing operate within different cultures, paralinguistic communication in the hearing world is often at odds with NZSL. For example, the sign for *hold* can be used to facilitate turn-taking by asking someone to pause. *Hold* is formed by a closed fist, the palm vertical (and for a right handed person) facing left. The sign is directional, which means in this case it is pointed towards the person addressed. In NZSL this is a widely accepted sign. However, this turn-taking device is in no way equivalent to the widely accepted gesture which would likely be interpreted by hearing people as threatening. Another example of differing perceptions of etiquette is the issue of pointing which is a feature of NZSL and yet would likely be considered rude in the hearing world. These cultural misunderstandings might not be identified as such because the participants share the same nationality.

A useful resource would be guidelines put together collaboratively by members of the Deaf Community and teachers. These guidelines could include cultural information for hearing teachers and the Deaf students, covering differing cultural aspects such as politeness strategies, and the importance of maintaining eye contact with the Deaf.

#### ***Deaf Cultural Advisor***

In order for a hearing teacher to work effectively within the Deaf Community, he or she does need the support of a cultural advisor, such as the one who contributed to this study. A respected member of the Deaf Community who is prepared to work with a teacher to provide insights and discuss educational issues from a Deaf perspective

would be invaluable and moreover serve as bridge between cultures. Part of the Deaf Community contribution would be making a Deaf support person available.

### ***Broadening the current teacher support base***

As the course evolves further, the teacher / course coordinator with faculty support from AUT, could utilise his or her experience and insights by encouraging Deaf people to come up through the ranks initially to take on supportive roles by sharing the workload, with a view to becoming teachers. The ideal choice of teachers would be trained bilingual people (bilingual in terms of NZSL and written English). The re-absorption of former students who are motivated to continue as mentors or as DSTs would in itself provide motivation to continue in the programme, and provide a support network for those wishing to train as teachers in the future. It would also align with the value of reciprocity in Deaf culture and be an empowering step for Deaf to have input into their own education.

Another option would be to encourage Deaf or hearing bilingual people to enter teacher training. A possible option includes sponsorship being obtained through tertiary institutions in the form of providing access to ESL teacher programmes. Applicants would be invited from the full Deaf Community.

Another option would involve obtaining external sponsorship by lobbying the government for funding specifically allocated for the training of Deaf teachers.

### ***The advantages of teaching directly in NZSL***

The advantages of teaching this programme directly in NZSL include the elimination of the time lag necessary for interpretation, the promotion of direct communication without intermediary human filters, an increased awareness of student comprehension by the teacher including the use of the 'Deaf nod' and other non-manual signals, and the reduction of the number of factors Deaf students have to incorporate visually from which to glean information.

As the programme exists there are at least four information sources for the students to assimilate simultaneously; that is the interpreter, the teacher, classmates and any visual aides such as the whiteboard or overhead projector. If the class was taught directly in NZSL the need for the interpreters would be eliminated. A signing teacher would be well aware of the need for related activities, for both reinforcement and the reduction of eyestrain inherent in this visual form of learning. Appropriate lengths of teaching segments would also fall naturally into place without the need for arbitrary time spans.

### ***Ongoing feedback from the Deaf Students***

Student evaluation of the programme is currently performed on a questionnaire type form with multi-choice options. The students are encouraged to discuss their views in NZSL before committing their opinions to paper. However, it seems unlikely that data gleaned from written feedback sheets will reliably reflect the opinions of people who feel constrained when writing English, and who are being asked to comment on an English literacy class. Furthermore, multi-choice options also tend to circumscribe answers and may result in default answers. Again the options are very difficult for these people who have a lot to say.

### **Recommendation:**

Feedback would ideally be conducted in the students' language of choice, with the students electing the manner in which they would like to respond. The written form may in fact suit some students. However, taking into account that all the students initially opted to participate in this study through the use of NZSL, it is likely that student evaluations of the programme conducted in NZSL would be a great deal more comfortable for the majority of participants. A further suggestion is that the feedback process should be conducted by independent bilingual individuals to avoid inherent teacher / student power differentials. The responses could be videoed, interpreted into English, transcribed and names masked if necessary. Alternatively, the bilingual individual could record the points in written English as they are raised, with the approval of the student.

## ***Recruitment of Students***

Currently students become aware of the course through a number of avenues including the Deaf Association, 'word of mouth' and notices placed on the notice board at the Auckland Deaf Club. One of the concerns raised is the relatively small numbers of students who apply for a placement on the course, resulting in a class with a challenging range of needs and existing literacy abilities.

The majority of students interviewed related an initial strong apprehension of attending the course, largely due to previous negative schooling experiences. These students stated that they attended on a trial basis only, to 'check out the course', spurred on by the need to improve their literacy skills.

### **Recommendations:**

In relation to the deep seated Deaf value of meeting face to face, and the cultural importance of personal involvement, the numbers might be boosted by the teachers and related personnel visiting the Deaf Club, the Deaf Association, and Schools in person, with an interpreter, and ideally with past or present students to vouch for the staff and course and relate their experiences. An extension of this idea would be to demonstrate an actual lesson with former students at these venues. Prospective students would be free to participate if they wished. This approach would demystify the process, convey the message that it's 'ok' to be seen to participate in an English literacy class, and would also align with the cultural value of 'seeing' and 'doing'. A working relationship could also be established with Kelston Deaf Education Centre, particularly with the transition programme which caters for older students, and the course presented as a logical follow-on point for ex-students.

An alternative or supplementary option could be video promotional material. This would ideally include a signed outline of the programme by a recognised member of the Deaf Community who introduces the teaching team and explains what to expect, and individual student stories about personal experiences and benefits gained from the course. Emphasis should be placed on the course not being 'just another hearing

programme' but rather a collaborative partnership with the Deaf and an opportunity for students to have an input in shaping future English literacy education for the Deaf.

### ***Text book***

Currently, the teacher is obliged to significantly alter existing texts designed for teaching English to immigrants and in many cases seek out more appropriate examples. Not only is this time consuming but dependent on resource availability. The teacher stated that a great deal of time was spent adapting or creating new resources for use in the classroom. The allocation of paid time to do this was limited and so the teacher often pursued this aspect in his/her own time.

A common theme amongst the programme leader, teacher and the Deaf Support Tutor has been the dearth of existing resources from which to teach this programme. The students and the DST stated the preference for texts not only adapted but specifically designed in collaboration with and for adult Deaf students. One student requested the incorporation of a text book to challenge the stronger students, and scaffold the weaker ones.

Some of the preferred qualities in materials as outlined by the teacher and programme leader included a strong visual component linking graphics to text, a layout that allowed more 'white space' on the page, and content relevant to the Deaf students to activate schema and promote student interest.

The students and the Deaf Support Tutor included a preference for texts about the Deaf Community and related issues, but also expressed a wish to be exposed to texts relating to general knowledge to fill the gaps left by their previous education. The students and DST requested more English grammar rules and examples of different genres to use for practice and as templates in everyday life. These would include such things as writing facsimiles, business letters, and job applications. They also requested materials that included related games and activities and a specific section in which to write homework.

**Recommendations:**

The compilation of a set of workbooks and reference material specifically designed with and for Deaf adults, would ease the burden on the teacher, fulfill the criteria of the students and provide a useful resource for relievers or other teachers wishing to work with Deaf students.

The advantages to the teaching staff would be a very significant decrease in teacher preparation time, the standardisation across different student groups making coordination possible, and enabling course content to be easily measurable by external standards. The creation of such a text would allow for exercises to be graded accommodating different levels of students and acknowledge the time and effort already contributed by the teacher by preserving existing lesson material.

The benefits to the students would also be manifold. Firstly the creation of such a text in collaboration with the Deaf would be empowering, and provide the opportunity for the Deaf to have input into their own education. It would be culturally appropriate and designed with the Deaf, for the Deaf rather than merely adapted from hearing styled materials; it would have a strong visual component, incorporate activities and be designed to use independently or in class. The text could incorporate space for the students to write their own work and impressions and therefore become a tangible validation of their work.

A useful adjunct would be a booklet incorporating cultural information and communication strategies for teachers, and a section on how to work with interpreters and their code of ethics. Advice could also be given regarding the role of note-takers.

Over the years, a great deal of material has been developed by NZSL tutors, and members of the Deaf Community. Some of these resources could be gathered together and adapted for inclusion in the text, thus utilising the 'how to' expertise of these tutors.

The collaborative development and publishing of texts for use with Deaf adults in New Zealand would be ideal. However, the project would unlikely to be financially viable for a publisher due to the relatively small target audience. Therefore, specific funding

would need to be sought for the purpose. An intermediate solution would be the development and trialing of a module book developed by educators in collaboration with the Deaf Community and students. A further possibility would be to research overseas provisions for adult Deaf students in bilingual literacy programmes and investigate and adapt resources used successfully.

## **5.6 Further Research**

A significant point is the dearth of information available about literacy and the education of NZ Deaf adults, and about the NZ Deaf Community itself. There is ample scope for further investigation of NZSL and Deaf culture, particularly from within the Deaf Community, but also as collaborative ventures between Deaf and hearing individuals.

Critical literacy in particular was raised by all the Deaf participants of this study, and the need to read between the lines. The Deaf people interviewed all regarded literacy in written English as the gatekeeper between the Deaf World and hearing society. The students reported that their degree of fluency in written English determined further education prospects, access to employment opportunities, and influenced other areas of life. In short, good access to education in English literacy represented potential for empowerment and therefore equality with hearing society. There is definitely a need for further research in the area of critical literacy and Deaf students. As one of the participants noted,

I want to be able to extrapolate the meaning of messages... I would like to be able to identify the undercurrents and meanings hidden within texts. I want to be able to read between the lines.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **CONSENT FORMS**

**Consent to Participation in Research**  
(For emailed data)

**Title of Project:** Teaching English literacy to members of the Deaf Community:  
Insights on a bilingual programme

**Project Supervisor:** Dr Pat Strauss

**Researcher:** Jackie Thompson

- **I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.**
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be conducted in written English by email.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all written material, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I understand that it might be possible for a third party to identify me from this research, although all efforts will be made to mask my identity.
- **I understand that only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.**
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant name: .....  
Participant signature: .....  
Date: .....

Project Supervisors' Details:

**Dr. Pat Strauss**  
MA in Applied Language Studies Supervisor  
School of Languages  
Auckland University of Technology  
Email: [pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz](mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz)  
Tel. (09) 917 9999 ext. 6847

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**

**Autec Reference Number 03/106**

**Consent to Participation in Research  
(For video recorded data)**

**Title of Project:** Teaching English literacy to members of the Deaf Community:  
Insights on a bilingual programme

**Project Supervisors:** Dr Pat Strauss

**Researcher:** Jackie Thompson

- **I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.**
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interviews will be video-taped, interpreted and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts and written material, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I understand that it might be possible for a third party to identify me from this research, although all efforts will be made to mask my identity.
- **I understand that only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.**
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant name: .....

Participant signature: .....

Date: .....

**Project Supervisor's Details:**

**Dr. Pat Strauss**  
 MA in Applied Language Studies Supervisor  
 School of Languages  
 Auckland University of Technology  
 Email: [pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz](mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz)  
 Tel. (09) 917 9999 ext. 6847

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**  
**Autec Reference Number 03/106**



**Consent to Participation in Research  
(For audio recorded data)**

**Title of Project:** Teaching English literacy to members of the Deaf Community:  
Insights on a bilingual programme

**Project Supervisors:** Dr Pat Strauss

**Researcher:** Jackie Thompson

- **I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.**
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts and written material, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I understand that it might be possible for a third party to identify me from this research, although all efforts will be made to mask my identity.
- **I understand that only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.**
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant name: .....  
Participant signature: .....  
Date: .....

Project Supervisors' Details:

**Dr. Pat Strauss**  
MA in Applied Language Studies Supervisor  
School of Languages  
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Tel. (09) 917 9999 ext. 6847

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**  
**Autec Reference Number 03/106**

### **Permission to Use Transcript**

I have checked the transcript of my interview and  
I am happy for Jackie to use the information in her study.

Sign: .....  
Date: .....

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INFORMATION SHEETS**

## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **(Deaf students)**

**Project Title** Teaching English Literacy to members of the Deaf Community: Insights on a bilingual programme.

### **Invitation**

My name is Jackie Thompson and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am enrolled for the MA in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages. I would like to invite you to be involved in my study. I will also ask your teachers to be involved and other people who helped set up your course.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

I would like to ask for your ideas about your language needs and learning needs on AUT Deaf Literacy course. I would be very interested in anything you have to say. I will be asking questions like:

1. How did you find out about the course?
2. Why did you decide to attend the course?
3. What do you want to learn from the course?
4. What subjects, activities and resources were most useful?
5. What subjects, activities and resources were least useful?
6. How has the course been useful to you outside school? (e.g. at home, at work, in the community)
7. What is the best way for you to learn? (e.g. language, groups/ individually)
8. What would you like to see changed?
9. What other ideas do you have that might help Deaf people to learn in the classroom?

I will also be asking questions about your age group, your cultural groups and what languages you use.

Your experiences and knowledge could help to shape other Deaf literacy courses.

### **What happens in the study?**

1. I will read the curriculum material and other available information about literacy.
2. I will interview Deaf students who are happy to volunteer their ideas and experiences.
3. I will interview teachers for their ideas and experiences.
4. I will interview other people who have been involved in setting up your course.

If you decide to be involved, I will ask you questions in an interview. This will be confidential. The interview will probably take 45 – 60 minutes. I will use a video camera so I do not miss what you are saying. Later an interpreter will interpret what you have said and this will be typed out for you to check. You can decide to withdraw from the study up until everyone's information has been collected. This study will not affect your course.

**What kind of information will be explored in the interviews?**

Literacy can mean being able to use language well and in the right way. Literacy means being able to read and write. This can be at work, school, in the community or at home. People's ideas about what literacy means are always changing.

In this study, I will look at the curriculum of your course. I will also talk to students who are willing to help, teachers and other people who have supported the course at AUT. I will be very interested in your own ideas and insights.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

Because the Deaf Community is small, and because there is only one AUT Deaf literacy course at AUT, other people might guess who you are. But, I will do my best to hide who you are and what you say.

**What are the benefits?**

I hope that this study will help:

1. Members of the Deaf Community say what they need from literacy education and how best to get it.
2. Teachers teach English literacy to the Deaf.
3. People who train teachers
4. People who make policy decisions about education
5. Researchers of Deaf and minority literacy education

**How is my privacy protected?**

Only four people will be able to see the original data. These people are:

1. Jackie Thompson (researcher)
2. Dr Pat Strauss (project supervisor)
3. A confidential typist (who will not keep any of the information)

The information will be kept locked up at AUT.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you are interested in being involved with the study, please sign the consent form. If you have any questions you are most welcome to contact either the project supervisor or me:

Dr Pat Strauss	917 9999 ext 6847	email <a href="mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz">pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz</a>
Jackie Thompson	025 6789 069	email <a href="mailto:jackie_thompson@fastmail.fm">jackie_thompson@fastmail.fm</a>

**Participant Concerns**

If you are worried about this study, please contact Dr Pat Strauss. If you are worried about the behaviour of the researcher, please contact the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext 8044.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003. AUTEK Reference number 03/106**

## **Participant Information Sheet**

**(Gatekeeper)**

**Project Title** Teaching English Literacy to members of the Deaf Community: Insights on a bilingual programme.

### **Invitation**

My name is Jackie Thompson and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology. Currently I am enrolled for the MA in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study, along with other practitioners and stakeholders.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

This project aims to investigate the English literacy curriculum and its implementation in the AUT Deaf literacy programme with respect to literacy, literacy needs, and the learning needs of Deaf students. The underlying purpose is to provide an educational synthesis of relevant documents and information gleaned from the experiences and knowledge of students, practitioners and stakeholders.

### **What happens in the study?**

For the purposes of this study, I will investigate aspects of the Deaf Literacy programme established at AUT. Initially, I will analyze curriculum documents, other relevant documents and material that deal with existing approaches to literacy, literacy needs, and learner needs. Following this, I would like to interview students, practitioners and key stakeholders involved in the programme for their ‘insider’ views and insights.

### **What kind of information will be explored in the interviews / meetings?**

Literacy can be broadly defined as the ability to use language proficiently and appropriately. It has come to include not only the traditional western skill based view of literacy as the ability to read and write, but also the literacy practices employed in everyday life, in the community or at home. In a world of continually changing technologies, definitions of literacy must reflect that dynamism and Deaf literacy is part and parcel of this ever-changing challenge.

I would like to ask you act as gatekeeper in this study, to provide a cultural interface in order to protect the rights of the other participants, and also to assist with identifying key stakeholders who should be approached. I envision this process as a series of informal meetings, the minutes of which will be recorded and returned to you to verify accuracy. In addition, I would like to interview you to explore your

experience in this area of Deaf education and to discuss your insights and opinions. The interview will probably last between 45 – 60 minutes. The interview will be video recorded, later interpreted by an independent qualified interpreter and transcribed - a copy of which will be sent to you for confirmation. You may withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

#### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Owing to the small size of the Deaf Community and the uniqueness of the AUT Deaf Literacy programme, it is likely that you will be identified.

#### **What are the benefits?**

We expect that the results of this project will benefit teachers of English literacy to the Deaf, teacher educators, policy makers, members of the Deaf Community, and researchers of Deaf and minority literacy education

#### **How is my privacy protected?**

Only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor, Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.

#### **Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you are interested in becoming involved I have enclosed a consent form to be signed before beginning the study. If you have any further questions you are most welcome to contact either the project supervisor or me:

Dr Pat Strauss	917 9999 ext 6847	email <a href="mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz">pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz</a>
Jackie Thompson	025 6789 069	email <a href="mailto:jackie_thompson@fastmail.fm">jackie_thompson@fastmail.fm</a>

#### **Participant Concerns**

If you have any concerns about the nature of this project please notify the Project Supervisor. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext 8044.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003 AUTEK**  
**Reference number 03/106**

**Participant Information Sheet**  
**(Stakeholder)**

**Project Title** Teaching English Literacy to members of the Deaf Community: Insights on a bilingual programme.

**Invitation**

My name is Jackie Thompson and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology. Currently I am enrolled for the MA in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study, along with other practitioners and stakeholders.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This project aims to investigate the English literacy curriculum and its implementation in the AUT Deaf literacy programme with respect to literacy, literacy needs, and the learning needs of Deaf students. The underlying purpose is to provide an educational synthesis of relevant documents and information gleaned from the experiences and knowledge of students, practitioners and stakeholders.

**What happens in the study?**

For the purposes of this study, I will investigate aspects of the Deaf Literacy programme established at AUT. Initially, I will analyze curriculum documents, other relevant documents and material that deal with existing approaches to literacy, literacy needs, and learner needs. Following this, I would like to interview students, practitioners and key stakeholders involved in the programme for their 'insider' views and insights. Each interview will be semi-structured and probably last between 45 – 60 minutes. The interview will then be transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be sent to you for confirmation. You may withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

**What kind of information will be explored in the interviews?**

Literacy can be broadly defined as the ability to use language proficiently and appropriately. It has come to include not only the traditional western skill based view of literacy as the ability to read and write, but also the literacy practices employed in everyday life, in the community or at home. In a world of continually changing technologies, definitions of literacy must reflect that dynamism and Deaf literacy is part and parcel of this ever-changing challenge.



The interview will be semi-structured and will cover the following types of questions:

- Involvement and experience with the AUT Deaf literacy programme.
- The reason for the development of the programme (where appropriate)
- Involvement with the Deaf Community
- Any additional comments

#### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Owing to the small size of the Deaf Community and the uniqueness of the AUT Deaf Literacy programme, it is possible that you could be identified. However, every effort will be made to mask individual identities.

#### **What are the benefits?**

We expect that the results of this project will benefit teachers of English literacy to the Deaf, teacher educators, policy makers, members of the Deaf Community, and researchers of Deaf and minority literacy education

#### **How is my privacy protected?**

Only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.

#### **Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you are interested in becoming involved I have enclosed a consent form to be signed before beginning the study. If you have any further questions you are most welcome to contact either the project supervisor or me:

Dr Pat Strauss	917 9999 ext 6847	email <a href="mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz">pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz</a>
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#### **Participant Concerns**

If you have any concerns about the nature of this project please notify the Project Supervisor. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext 8044.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**

**AUTEK Reference number 03/106**

**Participant Information Sheet**  
**(Deaf Support Tutor)**

**Project Title** Teaching English Literacy to members of the Deaf Community: Insights on a bilingual programme.

**Invitation**

My name is Jackie Thompson and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology. Currently I am enrolled for the MA in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study, along with other practitioners and stakeholders.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This project aims to investigate the English literacy curriculum and its implementation in the AUT Deaf literacy programme with respect to literacy, literacy needs, and the learning needs of Deaf students. The underlying purpose is to provide an educational synthesis of relevant documents and information gleaned from the experiences and knowledge of students, practitioners and stakeholders.

**What happens in the study?**

For the purposes of this study, I will investigate aspects of the Deaf Literacy programme established at AUT. Initially, I will analyze curriculum documents, other relevant documents and material that deal with existing approaches to literacy, literacy needs, and learner needs. Following this, I would like to interview students, teachers and key stakeholders involved in the programme for their ‘insider’ views and insights. Each interview will probably last between 45 – 60 minutes. I would be very interested in interviewing you if you agree and am happy to interview you in English or NZSL (I am a qualified interpreter) according to your preference. The interview will be video recorded, interpreted by an independent qualified interpreter (if conducted in NZSL), transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be sent to you for confirmation. You may withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

**What kind of information will be explored in the interviews?**

Literacy can be broadly defined as the ability to use language proficiently and appropriately. It has come to include not only the traditional western skill based view of literacy as the ability to read and write, but also the literacy practices employed in everyday life, in the community or at home. In a world of continually changing technologies, definitions of literacy must reflect that dynamism and Deaf literacy is part and parcel of this ever-changing challenge.

The interview will be semi-structured will cover the following types of questions:

- Your professional background outside and within the Deaf Community.
- Planning and delivering programmes at AUT
- Working within an ESOL curriculum: adaptations, student responses.
- Meeting the students' needs
- Drawing on support systems, collaboration and resources.
- Any additional ideas and insights.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Owing to the small size of the Deaf Community and the uniqueness of the AUT Deaf Literacy programme, it is likely that you could be identified. However, every effort will be made to mask your identity.

#### **What are the benefits?**

We expect that the results of this project will benefit teachers of English literacy to the Deaf, teacher educators, policy makers, members of the Deaf Community, and researchers of Deaf and minority literacy education

#### **How is my privacy protected?**

Only the researcher, Jackie Thompson, the project supervisor Dr Pat Strauss and a confidential typist (who will not retain any copies of the information) will have access to the original data, which will be securely stored at AUT.

#### **Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you are interested in becoming involved I have enclosed a consent form to be signed before beginning the study. If you have any further questions you are most welcome to contact either the project supervisor or me:

Dr Pat Strauss	917 9999 ext 6847	email <a href="mailto:pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz">pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz</a>
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#### **Participant Concerns**

If you have any concerns about the nature of this project please notify the Project Supervisor. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext 8044.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**

**AUTEK Reference number 03/106**

**Participant Information Sheet**  
**(Senior Lecturer - Teacher)**

**Project Title** Teaching English Literacy to members of the Deaf Community: Insights on a bilingual programme.

**Invitation**

My name is Jackie Thompson and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology. Currently I am enrolled for the MA in Applied Language Studies in the School of Languages. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study, along with other practitioners and stakeholders.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This project aims to investigate the English literacy curriculum and its implementation in the AUT Deaf literacy programme with respect to literacy, literacy needs, and the learning needs of Deaf students. The underlying purpose is to provide an educational synthesis of relevant documents and information gleaned from the experiences and knowledge of students, practitioners and stakeholders.

**What happens in the study?**

For the purposes of this study, I will investigate aspects of the Deaf Literacy programme established at AUT. Initially, I will analyze curriculum documents, other relevant documents and material that deal with existing approaches to literacy, literacy needs, and learner needs. Following this, I would like to interview students, practitioners and key stakeholders involved in the programme for their 'insider' views and insights.

I would like to interview you around the time the programme starts, to explore your experience in this area and to discuss with you your insights and opinions about this area of Deaf education. I would also like to interview you again a second time in the mid-term break to capture your reflections on the first half of the course, together with any changes or adaptations to the programme you might wish to make. The interviews will probably last between 45 – 60 minutes each. They will then be transcribed and copies of the transcriptions will be sent to you for confirmation. You may withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

**What kind of information will be explored in the interviews?**

Literacy can be broadly defined as the ability to use language proficiently and appropriately. It has come to include not only the traditional western skill based view of literacy as the ability to read and write, but also the literacy practices employed in everyday life, in the community or at home. In a world of continually changing technologies, definitions of literacy must reflect that dynamism and Deaf literacy is part and parcel of this ever-changing challenge.

The interviews will be semi-structured. The first interview will cover the following types of questions:

- Your professional background outside the Deaf Community.
- Your professional background within the Deaf Community.
- Meeting the students needs generally and within an ESOL curriculum.
- What kinds of adaptations to the ESOL curriculum are needed?
- The philosophy behind this approach to teaching literacy.
- Individual interpretation of curriculum documents and other relevant material.
- Ways in which curriculum documents are translated into classroom practice.
- Strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum
- How students respond to the curriculum
- Planning and delivering a programme
- Adaptation of a programme to meet particular needs within a course.
- Drawing on support systems, collaboration and resources.
- Any additional ideas and insights

The second interview will explore your reflections on the course, any changes or innovations you might be contemplating and the reasons behind them.

#### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Owing to the small size of the Deaf Community and the uniqueness of the AUT Deaf Literacy programme, it is very likely that you will be identified. However, every effort will be made to mask your identity.

#### **What are the benefits?**

We expect that the results of this project will benefit teachers of English literacy to the Deaf, teacher educators, policy makers, members of the Deaf Community, and researchers of Deaf and minority literacy education

#### **How is my privacy protected?**

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#### **Opportunity to consider invitation**

If you are interested in becoming involved I have enclosed a consent form to be signed before beginning the study. If you have any further questions you are most welcome to contact either the project supervisor or me:

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**Participant Concerns**

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**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 24 July 2003**

**AUTECH Reference number 03/106**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

## Email Question Schedule for Administrator (Deaf Resource Officer)

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1. I understand you were instrumental in establishing the Deaf English Literacy programme at AUT. Can you outline your involvement?
2. Where did the impetus come from to establish the course?
3. Why did you think it was needed?
4. What led you to approach AUT as possible course providers?
5. What outcomes did you hope to see as a result of setting up this course?
6. To what extent do you think these outcomes are being reached? Please explain.
7. Who was the programme originally designed for?
8. What client needs was this programme designed to meet?
9. To your knowledge has the client base / client needs changed over time? Please enlarge.
10. What were the entry criteria for students?
11. What led you to approach the TESOL at the School of Languages to establish the course?
12. What were the difficulties encountered in establishing this programme? How were they overcome?
13. What did you think was important for the teachers / course providers to know about Deaf culture and NZSL?
14. What was involved in presenting a bilingual / bicultural programme?
15. What direction would you like to see the programme take in the future?
16. What advice would you give to someone interested in setting up a similar course?
17. Do you have anything you would like to add?



## **Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview with Programme Leader**

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### **General background experience**

- How did you become involved in this programme?
- How did you become interested in the Deaf Community? (e.g. socially, through educational contact etc)

### **Why was the programme developed?**

- What was the motivation behind setting up this programme? Why did you do it?
- Who was involved in instigating the programme? (e.g. Educational institution / Deaf community)
- What was the main aim in developing this programme?
- What are the outcomes you would like to see as a result of this programme?
- How do you define literacy?
- How do you define Deaf literacy?
- What are your hopes for the future?

### **How the programme was developed**

- Can you tell me about the process you went through to set up the programme? How did you do it?
- Who did you speak to?
- What were their reactions?
- How did you choose the teacher/s?
- How much of the course is based on CEL?
- The CEL structure incorporates 4 components; reading, writing, listening and speaking. How are listening and speaking compensated for in the programme?
- What influence has the CEL programme had on the Deaf literacy programme?

### **Students**

- How do students find out about the course?
- What are the criteria for entry to the programme? (e.g. language competencies? Measured?) How do you select successful applicants?

### **Bilingual context**

- In your article (p65), you advocated for a bilingual / bicultural environment. Can you expand on this for me?
- What impact in your view has the addition of the Deaf bilingual tutor made to classroom dynamics / materials?
- In your article (p 66), you also mentioned barriers for Deaf adults entering adult literacy education programmes as identified in an Australian study. Please tell me more about this.
- What solutions can you see to overcoming these barriers?
- In the concluding remarks of your article, your recommendations included the importance of teachers having a good knowledge of Deaf culture. Won't you enlarge on this for me?

### **Materials and Resources**

- A further recommendation was the use of appropriate visual teaching strategies. Can you identify some of these for me?
- Lastly, you mentioned the importance of working with topics of interest to Deaf people. How are these topics determined and appropriate resources selected? How would you suggest they be used?

### **Meeting student needs**

- How are student's needs assessed?
- In your article, teachers comment on student perspective. How was this measured? Can you enlarge on the methodology used?
- If student perspective was gained from feedback, how was this feedback given? (e.g. in writing, survey forms, to a hearing teacher, to a deaf teacher...)

### **How are the assessments done?**

- What processes are in place for assessing students' progress?
- Are they the same as for CEL courses? Have they been altered? What do you do about the categories of competencies? (e.g. Do you double the reading / writing component?)
- What are the competency levels under the CEL programme? (e.g. What are the competencies a post-beginner must have?)
- In your opinion, how well do Deaf learners needs align with the CEL competency-based framework?

### **Evaluation**

- What are some of the challenges of providing this programme?
- How is the course evaluated?

### **Any other comments you would like to make.**

## **Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview with Senior Lecturer (Teacher)**

---

### **General background experience**

- How did you become involved in this programme?
- How long have you been involved in teaching this programme?
- In your December 2002 paper, you mentioned the process of becoming aware of your own assumptions and values as far as literacy is concerned. Can you elaborate on this for me?
- How do you define literacy?
- How do you define Deaf literacy?

### **Why was the programme developed?**

- Who was involved in instigating the programme? (e.g. Educational institution / Deaf community)
- What was the main aim in developing this programme?
- What do you consider the most important thing to teach?
- Dec2002. One of the course goals is to “To help learners a level of literacy which enables them to participate fully in all aspects of life.” Can you expand on this for me?

### **How the programme was developed**

- How much of the course is based on CEL?

### **Students**

- How do students find out about the course?
- What are the criteria for entry to the programme? (e.g. language competencies? Measured?) How do you select successful applicants?

### **Materials**

- How do you determine suitable texts for the class? What kind of texts do you use and why?
- Dec 2002. The support tutor suggested that students bring “the kinds of texts they use and produce in their daily lives”, yet only one did so. Why do you think this was the case?
- How beneficial do you find computer software in teaching literacy?

### **Bilingual context**

- Dec 2002. “The class is conducted in a bilingual context.” Please elaborate on this for me.
- Please tell me about the classroom situation and how it works for you.
- What is the role of the Deaf support tutor?
- What impact in your view has the addition of the Deaf bilingual tutor made to classroom dynamics / materials?
- How do you view the role of the interpreter?
- How do you view the role of the notetaker?

### **Meeting student needs**

- How are student’s needs assessed?
- Dec 2002 “The principle of learner centred-ness emphasizes the importance of identifying students subjective needs (that is, those identified by the students themselves, not assumed by outside course developers.”) Tell me more about this.
- How well do learners’ needs align with the CEL competency-based framework?
- I found it very interesting that you identified 3 specific needs
  1. The understanding of current topics of interest in the printed news media, and for some to translate these understandings into L1. L1 and L2 equally important, therefore bilingual approach recommended.
  2. Developing vocabulary
  3. Improving mastery of English grammar to help understanding and production of texts.)Can you talk a little more about this?

### **How are the assessments done?**

- What processes are in place for assessing students progress?
- Are they the same as for CEL courses? Have they been altered? What do you do about the categories of competencies? (e.g. Do you double the reading / writing component?)
- What are the competency levels under the CEL programme? (e.g. What are the competencies a post-beginner must have?)
- What kind of “compensatory reading strategies” did you observe?

### **Evaluation**

- What are some of the challenges of teaching this programme?
- In your December 2002 paper, you mentioned that courses constantly evolve. What factors have influenced you in this decision-making process? What trends have you noticed emerging?
- How is the course evaluated?
- Can you enlarge on the bilingual approach to the evaluation process?

### **Are there any other comments you would like to make?**

## **Follow-up Semi-Structured Interview with Senior Lecturer (Teacher)**

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### **Approaches to teaching**

- What are some points of difference between teaching Deaf and other minorities?
- What adjustments need to be made when teaching literacy to Deaf?
- Given more teaching time, what areas of Deaf literacy would you like to see addressed and why?
- What kind of teaching philosophy do you see as most beneficial and why? ( e.g. skill based, whole language, critical approach)
- How is turn-taking or answering questions addressed in the class? (e.g. hands up, confused expressions, indicated by interpreter etc?)

### **Materials**

- Given unlimited time and resources, what genres and materials would you like to use in class? What content would you like to see covered?

### **Evolution of Course**

- Previously you mentioned that courses constantly evolve. What factors have influenced you to make changes?
- What trends have you noticed emerging this semester?
- Given unlimited resources and opportunity, how would you like to see this course evolve?

### **General**

- What are some insights or advice you would pass on to a teacher of a similar programme (or a reliever)?
- Please feel free to add anything. These questions are only a guideline.

## **Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview with Deaf Cultural Advisor**

---

### **Literacy**

- What significance does literacy have for the Deaf community?
- What educational needs can you identify in relation to Deaf literacy?

### **Deaf Education**

- In your opinion, what is the ideal way to teach English literacy to the Deaf?
- What are some major considerations when teaching a Deaf class?
- What are your views on mainstreaming Deaf students in an ESOL class versus a Deaf class?
- What qualities are important to you in a teacher?
- What role should Deaf people hold in their own education?
- What are your feelings regarding ESL and Deaf literacy?
- What do you see as the most interesting / useful types of materials to be used in Deaf literacy education? (e.g. genre, content, real life or decontextualised )
- What sort of environmental factors do you see as important in Deaf education?

**Do you have anything you would like to add?**

## **Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview with Deaf Support Tutor**

---

### **Background**

Tell me about the languages you use?

What is your preferred language?

### **General background experience**

Tell me about your background in the education field.

How did you become involved in this programme?

### **Teaching**

Can you tell me about your role in the programme?

What do you consider the most important thing to teach?

How do you feel about teaching students of different levels in one class?

### **Students**

Why was the programme developed?

What do you see as the needs of the Deaf students?

### **Bilingual context**

What are your views on bilingual education?

Tell me about the classroom situation and how it works for you?

As a Deaf bilingual tutor, what impact have you made on classroom dynamics / materials?

### **Materials**

In Kevin's paper in 2002, he mentioned that the students were asked to bring "the kinds of texts they use and produce in their daily lives", yet only one did so. Why do you think this was the case?

What materials would you like to see used?

### **Evaluation**

What are some of the challenges of teaching this programme?

What trends have you noticed emerging?

**Any other comments you would like to make.**

## **Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview with Deaf Students**

---

### **Background**

Tell me a little about yourself

How old are you?

Where did you grow up?

What language/s does your family speak?

What languages do you know?

What language is most comfortable for you?

### **Schooling**

Tell me about your schooling

Why did you stop then?

Have you done any courses since leaving school?

### **AUT Deaf Literacy Course**

Why did you start again?

Why did you choose this course?

Have you been to this course before?

What are you hoping to get out of the course?

What do you enjoy in the course?

What don't you enjoy about the course?

What makes learning easier for you in the course?

What makes things harder for you in the course?

What would make this course better for you?

Is there anything you would like to see changed?

### **Teachers**

How do you communicate with your teachers? Does this work well?

What do you think a teacher of the Deaf ought to know about Deaf culture?

What do you think a teacher of the Deaf ought to know his/her students?

What qualities are important to you in a teacher?



**Class**

Which do you prefer:

1. Being mainstreamed with other people at your level? or
2. Learning with other Deaf who are at different levels?

Do you like working individually or in groups?

If you are not sure of something in class, what do you do? Why?

How big do you think your class should be?

**Class layout**

Where do you like to sit in the class?

What is the best way to arrange furniture in the classroom?

Can you see everything you need to see easily?

Do you have suggestions for setting up the classroom differently?

**Materials**

Tell me about the materials you learn from.

Where does the information come from?

What are the most interesting materials to use?

What are the most useful materials to use?

Do you like to use your own written work to share in class? Why / why not?

What materials would you choose to use?

**How materials are presented**

Homework

Use of equipment e.g. OHP

Handouts

**Any other suggestions?**

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